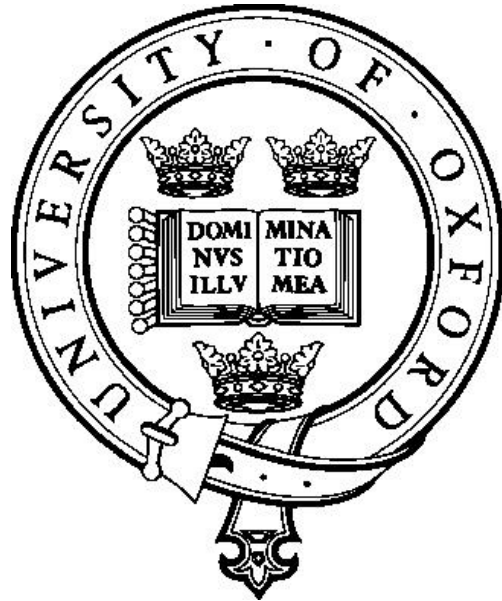


# Kierkegaard, Martensen, and the Problem of Philosophy and Theology



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## ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that Martensen should be considered a key interlocutor for Kierkegaard in the debate about how philosophy and theology should relate. It will be shown that whereas Martensen develops what can be termed a dialectic of unity-in-difference, in which the differences between philosophy, theology, and religion enable a higher unity between these spheres, Kierkegaard develops what can be termed a dialectic of similarity-in-dissimilarity, which underlines the incommensurable gap between philosophy and Christianity. However, it will be argued that Kierkegaard's conception of the relationship as similarity-in-dissimilarity leads to a richer dialogical space between the spheres that keeps the dialectic in continual tension, whereas Martensen's emphasis on unity and epistemological clarity ultimately leads to a break-down in the dialectic he aims to express, as the philosophical sphere is sublated into the religious standpoint and thereby the dialogue cannot be sustained. In contrast, Kierkegaard's clear-cut separation of the spheres and insistence on the continued distance between them prevents the reduction of either sphere as their difference and respective integrity remains intact. The question of the proper relationship between philosophy and Christianity thereby helpfully frames the dispute between Kierkegaard and Martensen. Yet this thesis also suggests that the dissimilarity between Martensen and Kierkegaard might be said to consist to some extent in their similarities. Without considering Martensen as a central opponent for Kierkegaard in this debate, our understanding of Kierkegaard's separation of the philosophical and religious spheres will be impoverished. When viewed in conversation with and, in particular, as polemic against Martensen, we see the full force of the sophistication, innovation, and nuance of Kierkegaard's formulation of his position.

## LONG ABSTRACT

### Project Overview

Kierkegaard's relationship to the Danish theologian Hans Lassen Martensen is typically depicted as a volatile, bitter, and obsessive-mimetic rivalry. However, it has more recently been suggested that the positions and views of these two central figures of the Danish Golden Age are not as diametrically opposed as they appear—or at least as Kierkegaard has made it appear. Rather Kierkegaard seems to owe a substantial intellectual debt to his former tutor's philosophical and existential approach to theology. Despite being a highly esteemed and renowned thinker in his own time, Martensen is today mainly known and studied for being Kierkegaard's rival, as a representative first of speculative thought and the academy, and later of the Danish state church and Christendom. Recent scholarship has increasingly identified Martensen and his thought as crucial not only for understanding Kierkegaard's context, but for fully understanding Kierkegaard's own complex pseudonymous authorship. In light of this scholarship it seems that to truly understand Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authorship, deeper awareness and knowledge of the nature of Kierkegaard's relationship with Martensen and his thought are necessary. This project therefore seeks to contribute to this area of Kierkegaard scholarship, by exploring Martensen and Kierkegaard's personal and intellectual rivalry through their respective approaches to the question of theology and philosophy's relationship.

In nineteenth-century Denmark, the debate about the proper relationship between theology and philosophy and the province of these respective disciplines was a central one. Inspired by the German debate, the discussion took on new life among Danish intellectuals. The question of theology and philosophy is addressed by figures central to Kierkegaard's thought, such as Kant, Schleiermacher, Hegel, Poul Martin Møller, and F.C. Sibbern. However, Thompson suggests that Martensen was for Kierkegaard *the* Golden Age Danish thinker, who “most determined the thought-world or discourse in terms of which concerns should be considered.”<sup>1</sup> And for Martensen the debate about philosophy and theology, specifically their unification, was an absolutely central concern: In his early lectures, Martensen defines the unification of theology and philosophy as the task of the age as well as his own personal life mission. In his memoirs, Martensen describes how seeking the harmonious unity of theology and philosophy, and of faith and cognition was a compulsive pursuit that he could not find rest from until it was accomplished satisfactorily.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, Kierkegaard, in no unclear terms, seems intent on separating theology and philosophy. Already in 1835, the year after Kierkegaard's tutorials with Martensen began, Kierkegaard emphatically states that: “Philosophy and Christianity cannot be united” because of sin. Kierkegaard continued to hold this position throughout his life.

This thesis argues that in addressing the issue of how philosophy and theology should properly relate, Martensen should be considered a key interlocutor for Kierkegaard. Both men should be considered representatives of an existential movement in Danish thought that sought

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<sup>1</sup> Curtis L. Thompson *Following the Public's Chosen One: Why Martensen Mattered to Kierkegaard*, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums Forlag, 2008), 159

<sup>2</sup> See for example, Martensen, *Af mit levnet: Første Afdeling* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag, 1882), 54-55.

to correct a lifeless and one-sided rationalism, and for both what is at stake in this debate is really a question of existence: how we do and should exist as human beings. As a result, both Martensen and Kierkegaard conceive of this relationship as a living dialectic. It will be shown that whereas Martensen develops what can be termed a dialectic of unity-in-difference, in which the differences between philosophy, theology, and religion enable a higher unity between these spheres, Kierkegaard develops what can be termed a dialectic of similarity-in-dissimilarity, which underlines the incommensurable gap between philosophy and Christianity. However, it will be argued that Kierkegaard's conception of the relationship as similarity-in-dissimilarity leads to a richer dialogical space between the spheres that keeps the dialectic in continual tension, whereas Martensen's emphasis on unity and epistemological clarity ultimately leads to a break-down in the dialectic he aims to express, as the philosophical sphere is sublated into the religious standpoint and thereby the dialogue cannot be sustained. In contrast, Kierkegaard's clear-cut separation of the spheres and insistence on the continued distance between them prevents the reduction of either sphere as their difference and respective integrity remains intact. The question of the proper relationship between philosophy and Christianity thereby helpfully frames the dispute between Kierkegaard and Martensen. Yet this thesis also suggests that the dissimilarity between Martensen and Kierkegaard might be said to consist to some extent in their similarities. Without considering Martensen as a central opponent for Kierkegaard in this debate, our understanding of Kierkegaard's separation of the philosophical and religious spheres will be impoverished. When viewed in conversation with and, in particular, as polemic against Martensen, we see the full force of the sophistication, innovation, and nuance of Kierkegaard's formulation of his position.

While there has been an increase in scholarly interest in the thought of Martensen and his relationship to Kierkegaard, and a number of commentators arguing that better understanding of Martensen will improve interpretations of Kierkegaard, there has been no comprehensive study of the Martensen-Kierkegaard relationship in the context of this crucial philosophy and theology debate. In this way this thesis seeks to contribute to this research area by offering the first full-length study of Martensen's and Kierkegaard's conceptions of the relationship between philosophy, theology, and Christianity. In establishing Martensen as a key interlocutor for Kierkegaard in this debate, the thesis furthermore offers the first comprehensive reading of Kierkegaard's 1838 "Telegraph Messages from a Mousvoyant to a Clairvoyant on the Relation between Xnty and Philosophy", which has been largely overlooked in English-language scholarship. Finally, in arguing why Kierkegaard's dialectic of similarity-in-dissimilarity is a better dialogical model than Martensen's dialectic of unity-in-difference, this thesis furthermore conducts comparative conceptual analyses of Martensen's and Kierkegaard's concepts of existence, sin, and freedom, which have not before been carried out, but are central concepts in the authorships of both thinkers.

### **Project structure**

This project is structured in two parts of three chapters respectively. It employs both a contextualising-historical, source-work approach in Part I, and a conceptual-analytical approach, which builds upon the historical insights of Part I, in Part II.

Chapter 1 establishes the intellectual and historical context for the debate about philosophy and theology, first through a source-critical overview of the central German

thinkers, Kant, Schleiermacher, and Hegel, through and against whom Martensen and Kierkegaard developed their respective views. It is argued that these German thinkers' treatment of the relation between philosophy and theology reveal an unstable distinction between these spheres, which in turn has implications for the specifically Danish engagement with this question. The second part of the chapter then establishes the importance of putting philosophy, theology, and Christianity in the right relation in the University of Copenhagen during the first half of the nineteenth century, and especially in the 1830s when Martensen and Kierkegaard were both students.

Chapter 2 explores Martensen's pursuit of unifying philosophy and theology in response to the confusion of their relationship. I argue that the relation Martensen seeks to establish between these spheres must be understood on the basis of what I term Martensen's model of "unity-in-difference" according to which the true difference between the philosophical and religious spheres in turn enables their true unity. While, Martensen seeks to reflect the existential nature of Christianity precisely by articulating a living dialectic relation to philosophy, I will argue that this dialectic fails to find clear expression and ultimately breaks down, as Martensen seeks to sublimate philosophy into his speculative theology.

Chapter 3 starts by establishing Martensen as a key interlocutor and foil for Kierkegaard through a reading of Kierkegaard's largely overlooked student paper from 1838, "Telegraph Messages from a Mousvoyant to a Clairvoyant concerning the Relation between Xnty and Philosophy". Whereas objective philosophy, or speculative philosophy, is deemed to have nothing to do with Christianity, Kierkegaard conceives of a different kind of dialectical relation between subjective philosophy and Christianity. I will argue it is best understood through Kierkegaard's first thesis in *On the Concept of Irony*, in which the similarity of Socrates and Christ lies in their dissimilarity. In this model any similarity between these spheres ultimately becomes an expression of their dissimilarity, and thus the spheres are continually spaced further apart. However, this enables a real and living dialogue between the spheres as the integrity and unique characteristics of each sphere is maintained—a dialogue that Martensen fails to establish through his unity-in-difference model as he ultimately seeks to bring the dialectic between the spheres to resolution.

Part II builds on the insights developed in Part I and seeks to exemplify the claim made in Chapter 3 that Kierkegaard's model of similarity-in-dissimilarity enables a richer dialogue between philosophy and theology than Martensen's model of unity-in-difference through a comparative analysis of how their respective views inform and shape their development of three concepts of particular theological and philosophical significance: *Existence*, *Sin*, and *Freedom*.

Chapter 4 compares Martensen's and Kierkegaard's shared preoccupation with "Existence". While Martensen criticises Kierkegaard for articulating a divisive concept of existence, which opposes thinking, an analysis of existence on the basis of "spatiation" in *Postscript* shows how separation and the ability to make distinctions saves thought in Kierkegaard's view. Comparing Martensen's and Kierkegaard's views of existence helps show that Kierkegaard's separation of the philosophical from the existential-Christian sphere leads not to a reduction of philosophy, but to a more genuine role for philosophy, and richer dialogue between the two based on their distance. However, the concept of existence also shows that both Martensen and Kierkegaard should be considered representatives of an existential

movement in Danish philosophy, which sought to correct the time's dry and lifeless rationalism.

Chapter 5 analyses Martensen's and Kierkegaard's treatment of the concept of "Sin". It is argued that Kierkegaard's separation of philosophy and Christianity forms an effective corrective to Martensen's belief that sin can be coherently defined. This comparison furthermore shows that Martensen fails to dialectically engage or unite philosophy with the theological sphere, despite his claims and attempts to do so. By contrast Kierkegaard's treatment of sin keeps both spheres in a continuous tension and in meaningful dialogue.

The final chapter compares the concept of "Freedom" in Martensen's and Kierkegaard's thought. While both argue that true freedom is ultimately dependence on God, Martensen articulates this apparent contradiction as an expression of unity as for him freedom is developed in a dialectic between human and divine freedom based on their shared divine source. Martensen thus also seems to grant the human being at least a relative freedom and participation in their own freedom and salvation from sin. Conversely Kierkegaard's spacing out of the philosophical and Christian spheres through his similarity-in-dissimilarity model holds human freedom and grace apart in a way that deepens the human dependence on God, without leaving the human passive and taskless. Thereby, if true freedom is dependence, a deeper dependence can also be said to be a freer freedom.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### Kierkegaard

- CA *The Concept of Anxiety*, trans. Reidar Thomte in collaboration with Albert B. Andersen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).
- CI *The Concept of Irony*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).
- CUP *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to 'Philosophical Fragments'* (2 volumes), trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).
- EO *Either/Or* (2 volumes), trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).
- EUD *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).
- FSE *For Self-Examination*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990).
- FT *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).
- KJN *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*, trans. Bruce H. Kirmmse, Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Alastair Hannay, George Pattison, Jon Stewart (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006-2019)
- M *The Moment and Late Writings*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
- PC *Practice in Christianity*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).
- PF *Philosophical Fragments and Johannes Climacus*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).
- POV *The Point of View for My Work as an Author, The Single Individual, On My Work as an Author and Armed Neutrality* (trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).
- SLW *Stages on Life's Way: Studies by Various Persons* trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988)
- SUD *The Sickness unto Death*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).
- UDVS *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

WA *Without Authority*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

## Martensen

- AL *Af mit Levnet*, (3 volumes) [*Of My Life*] (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1882-1883)
- BHK David J. Kangas and Curtis L Thompson (trans. and eds.) *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hans L. Martensen's Philosophy of Religion* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997): *The Autonomy of the Human Self-Consciousness in Modern Dogmatic Theology* trans. by Thompson, pp. 73-147; *Meister Eckhart: A Study in Speculative Theology* trans. by Kangas, pp. 149-243; *Outline to a System of Moral Philosophy*, trans. by Thompson, pp. 245-315.
- CD *Den christelige Dogmatik*, (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1849)
- CEa *Den christelige Ethik. Den almindelige Deel* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1871)
- DO *Dogmatiske Oplysninger. Et Leilighedsskrift*, (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1850)
- GMS *Grundrids til Moralphilosophiens System*, (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1841)
- ME *Mester Eckhart. Et Bidrag til at oplyse Middelalderens Mystik*, (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1840)
- MSA *Den menneskelige Selvbevidstheds Autonomie i vor Tids dogmatiske Theologie* (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1841). Trans. by L.V. Petersen. (Original: *De autonomia conscientiae sui humanae, in theologiam dogmaticam nostril temporis introducta* (Copenhagen: J. D. Quist, 1837)
- NrC / PRC "Nutidens religiøse Crisis," *Intelligensblade*, 1:3,1842, pp. 53-73; Jon Stewart (trans.) "The Present Religious Crisis," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2017, pp. 423-438.
- RSop / RSap "Rationalisme, Supranaturalisme og *principium exclusi medii* i Anledning af H.H. Biskop Mynsters Afhandling derom i dette Tidsskrifts forrige Hefte," in *Tidsskrift for Litterature og Kritik* 1, 1839, pp. 456-473, (English translation) Jon Stewart (trans.), "Rationalism, Supernaturalism and the *principium exclusi medii*," in *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2004, 583-598

# INTRODUCTION

A volatile, bitter, and obsessive-mimetic arch-rivalry—such is the typical characterisation of Søren Kierkegaard’s relationship with Hans Lassen Martensen.<sup>3</sup> There is much truth in this depiction no doubt. However, it has more recently been suggested that the positions and views of these two central figures of the Danish Golden Age are not as diametrically opposed as they appear—or at least as Kierkegaard has made them appear. Rather, Kierkegaard seems to share numerous views with Martensen, and owes a substantial intellectual debt to his former tutor.

Despite being a highly esteemed and renowned thinker in his own time, Martensen is today mainly known and studied for being the *bête noire* of Kierkegaard. Yet, for many years

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Walter Lowrie, *Kierkegaard*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), 505; Alistair Hannay, *Kierkegaard: A Biography*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 50; Joakim Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 80 and Garff, “‘What did I find? Not my I’ On Kierkegaard’s Journals and the Pseudonymous Autobiography,” *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2003, 110-124: 116; Peter Tudvad, *Kierkegaard’s København* (Copenhagen: Rosinante, 2013), 33; Curtis L. Thompson, *Following the Cultured Public’s Chosen One: Why Martensen Mattered to Kierkegaard*, 128; Stephen Backhouse, *Kierkegaard a Single Life* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 27, 68; Clare Carlisle, *Philosopher of the Heart: The Restless Life of Søren Kierkegaard*, (London: Penguin Books, 2020), 33, 114.

he was lauded not only in Denmark, but also internationally, as his substantial writings in dogmatics and ethics were translated into both German and English long before any of Kierkegaard's works appeared in translation.<sup>4</sup> One of the earliest English translators of Kierkegaard, Walter Lowrie, remarked that he was familiar with Martensen's works fifty years before even hearing of Kierkegaard.<sup>5</sup>

Martensen and Kierkegaard both lived, thought and wrote during a period that has become known as the Danish Golden-Age. It is a period marked by deep contradiction as it was at once a time of war and profound economic and political crisis, but also of remarkable cultural flourishing and scientific advancement.<sup>6</sup> Many of Denmark's still most well-loved and highly esteemed artists, writers, thinkers, and scientists were active during this period, and in Copenhagen Martensen and Kierkegaard developed their thought among figures such as Hans Christian Andersen, H. C. Ørsted, Johan Ludvig Heiberg, and N.F.S. Grundtvig.

While both were studying at the University of Copenhagen, Kierkegaard hired the older Martensen as a private tutor in 1834. According to Martensen, Kierkegaard was initially devoted to him, even visiting Martensen's mother for news about Martensen while he was away on his grand tour of Germany and France in 1836.<sup>7</sup> Whether due to devotion or intellectual curiosity, it certainly seems the young Kierkegaard initially looked up to Martensen and his erudition.<sup>8</sup> However, whatever regard Kierkegaard held very quickly turned to disdain. Scholars have identified several different reasons for Kierkegaard's turn against Martensen. It has for example been suggested that Kierkegaard was disappointed in

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<sup>4</sup> Martensen's *Christian Dogmatics* from 1849 was translated into German in 1856 and English in 1866. His first volume of the *Christian Ethics* from 1874 was translated into English in 1884. By comparison, Kierkegaard was not translated into English until 1936 with David Swenson's translation of *PF*. The first German translations had appeared in the 1860s, and the first French translation appeared in 1886.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Lowrie, *A Short Life of Kierkegaard*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 5

<sup>6</sup> Bruce H. Kirmmse, *Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 1-2; Henriette Steiner, *The Emergence of a Modern City: Golden Age Copenhagen 1800-1850*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 19; Jon Stewart, *The Cultural Crisis of the Danish Golden Age: Heiberg, Martensen and Kierkegaard* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2015), 6.

<sup>7</sup> *AL* 1, 78.

<sup>8</sup> See for example Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard*, 31.

Martensen's growing sympathies with Hegelianism during his grand tour;<sup>9</sup> that Kierkegaard was upset that Martensen published an article on Lenau's *Faust*, which Kierkegaard had planned to write on;<sup>10</sup> that Kierkegaard was jealous of the admiration Martensen received, particularly from the Danish cultural elite;<sup>11</sup> that Martensen did not pay him more attention;<sup>12</sup> that Kierkegaard was angered by Martensen taking over the teaching post of Kierkegaard's favourite teacher Poul Martin Møller when he died;<sup>13</sup> or simply, as Kierkegaard himself tells us, that he viewed Martensen to be an inferior thinker, whose philosophical and theological position Kierkegaard genuinely disapproved of.<sup>14</sup> Any or all of these reasons may have contributed in some ways to the growing sense of enmity. As Martensen enjoyed a meteoric rise through the ranks of the university and later in the church, Kierkegaard increasingly turned against him, indirectly polemicising and parodying Martensen in his pseudonymous works and directly attacking and ridiculing him in his journals. In these, Martensen is called "cowardly and pampered"<sup>15</sup>, mocked for his "stately spinelessness"<sup>16</sup>, and branded a "fool," who "must either be terribly worldly minded or very stupid. I think it is more likely the later".<sup>17</sup>

Although one gets the sense that Martensen was left somewhat perplexed by Kierkegaard's violent dislike of him, we find numerous defamatory remarks about

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<sup>9</sup> See for example Hannay, *Kierkegaard*, 80.

<sup>10</sup> See Carl Roos *Kierkegaard og Goethe* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1955), 123; Thompson, "Introduction," in David J. Kangas and Curtis L. Thompson, *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hans L Martensen's Philosophy of Religion*, (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1997), 44; Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel Reconsidered*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 66-67; Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard* 78; David Possen, *Søren Kierkegaard and the Very Idea of Advance Beyond Socrates*, (Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2009), 140-141.

<sup>11</sup> Hannay, *Kierkegaard*, 50-51; Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard*, 80; Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel Reconsidered*, 67.

<sup>12</sup> See Thompson, "Introduction," 45, 46-55 and Carlisle, *Philosopher of the Heart*, 111. Martensen himself suggests this interpretation. See *AL* 2, 142-143.

<sup>13</sup> See for example, Kirmmse, "Socrates in the Fast Lane: Kierkegaard's *The Concept of Irony* on the University's *Velocifère*. Documents, Context, Commentary, and Interpretation," in Robert L. Perkins (ed.) *The Concept of Irony: International Kierkegaard Commentary Vol 2*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2001), 17-99; 95 and Backhouse, *Kierkegaard*, 85

<sup>14</sup> See Carlisle, *Philosopher of the Heart*, 32, 34; see also, *SKS* 19, 136, *Not* 4: 9 / *KJN* 3, 135.

<sup>15</sup> *SKS* 20, 45, *NB*:44 / *KJN* 4, 44.

<sup>16</sup> *SKS* 20, 188, *NB*2: 119 / *KJN* 4, 186.

<sup>17</sup> *SKS* 20, 205, *NB*2: 160 / *KJN* 4, 204.

Kierkegaard in Martensen's own writings. From remembering Kierkegaard as an impossible, sophistic, and argumentative student and portraying him as a Mephistophelian provocateur in his 1884 memoirs to indirectly calling Kierkegaard out as an incoherent, unscientific and aphoristic thinker in his *Dogmatics* in 1849, among Martensen's final mentions of Kierkegaard appears the rather unceremonious statement that Kierkegaard's early death was "fortunate," as Kierkegaard's attack on the Danish State Church in 1854-1855 would "otherwise have ended in the utmost tediousness."<sup>18</sup> In letters to his friend Gude in 1855 at the height of the Church War, Martensen notes that the task must be to defeat Kierkegaard from the standpoint of doctrine, as Kierkegaard's "utterly Jesuitical, yes diabolical ethics, which he admits to in his actions, would not be able to stand up to any serious analysis... This human is after all utterly ruthless."<sup>19</sup>

Kierkegaard's war on the church and the socio-cultural religion of Christendom, which Kierkegaard believed the church espoused, in many ways also becomes the culmination of his decade long rivalry with Martensen. When the primate of the Danish Church J. P. Mynster died in 1854, Martensen—who would succeed Mynster only a few weeks later—gave the eulogy, describing Mynster as a "witness to the truth", a term Kierkegaard had used to describe the Christian martyr who suffers for authentic Christianity, something Mynster and Martensen, representatives of the Danish Church and thereby of Christendom, could not be further from. Thus, Martensen's eulogy can be considered the catalyst for Kierkegaard's furious attack.<sup>20</sup>

Yet, some years before this, Martensen suggests that "a glimmer of something that

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<sup>18</sup> *AL* 3, 19.

<sup>19</sup> Martensen, *Biskop Martensens Breve: Breve til L. Gude 1848-1859* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1955), Letter 66, 11<sup>th</sup> Jan 1855, 133.

<sup>20</sup> For a more detailed account of this, see Matthew D. Kirkpatrick, "Kierkegaard on the Church: Between Rejection and Redemption," Aaron P. Edwards and David J. Gouwens (eds.), *T&T Clark Companion to the Theology of Kierkegaard*, (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 67-86; 79 and David R. Law "Kierkegaard's Anti-Ecclesiology: The Attack on the 'Christendom', 1854-1855," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 7:2, 2007, 86-108; 87.

might resemble an approximation”<sup>21</sup> between him and Kierkegaard took place. Remembering a chance meeting with Kierkegaard while out for a walk on a Sunday afternoon, Martensen writes he could not avoid his conversation, and together the two men walked through Copenhagen, with Kierkegaard following Martensen into the readers’ club, Athenæum, in the city centre. Here, Martensen began to open up to Kierkegaard about the recent argument between Martensen and Professor of Philosophy Rasmus Nielsen, who had used Kierkegaard’s Johannes Climacus works to attack and criticise Martensen’s 1849 *Christian Dogmatics*. Martensen shared with Kierkegaard the indignation he felt about Nielsen’s dubious and improper use of Kierkegaard’s Climacus works, and we get a sense that Nielsen’s interference into Martensen’s and Kierkegaard’s dispute was unwelcomed by both. Although Kierkegaard speaks out against Nielsen in his journals, Martensen notes that Kierkegaard neither disagreed nor attempted to defend Nielsen in this remembered conversation. Instead, after criticising certain aspects of Martensen’s preface to his *Dogmatics*, Kierkegaard finally, according to Martensen, proclaimed that: “Our difference (Kierkegaard’s and mine) is a difference within the Christian [*det christelige*]”.<sup>22</sup> Martensen perceives this statement as an approximation or attempted reconciliation from Kierkegaard’s side because “a difference within the Christian must be able to be evened out, and if our difference is within the Christian, his opposition to me could not be absolute”.<sup>23</sup> And yet, we might also conjecture that Kierkegaard’s meaning may not have been as reconciliatory as Martensen understood it to be. Since Kierkegaard declares that his “whole authorship pertains to Christianity,”<sup>24</sup> and the issue of becoming a Christian, in order to correct the illusion of the socio-cultural Christendom that everyone is simply a Christian, a difference in Christianity may equally suggest a fundamental and meaningful difference that Kierkegaard would not

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<sup>21</sup> AL 2, 145.

<sup>22</sup> AL 2, 146.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> SKS 16, 11 / POV, 23.

have been interested in overcoming. Nevertheless, it still shows that Kierkegaard continued to seek out Martensen's conversation as late as the 1850s, implying at least a grudging respect or perhaps the irresistible draw of a worthy opponent. Although Martensen concludes this account by admitting that he did not feel he could trust Kierkegaard and therefore had to accept that each would have to be left to their own devices, this memory thus also hints at an intriguing ambivalence in Kierkegaard's and Martensen's relationship. In his memoirs, Martensen acknowledges Kierkegaard's brilliance as a writer, and even notes that it would be a terrible shame if his authorship's richness and genius should bear no fruit for the future. However, in a word of warning to any future Kierkegaard scholars, Martensen advises that "great patience and great love will be challenged in those who must work through [Kierkegaard's] mask".<sup>25</sup>

The Danish literary scholar Paul V. Rubow suggests that the heated disagreement and rivalry between Martensen and Kierkegaard is so interesting precisely because they were so similar—they were "on the same wavelength," read the same books, were both Lutheran "aesthetes and theologians," and both approached the question faith in the "same very free, mythical and speculative way as the time's German philosophers."<sup>26</sup> Nearly 60 years later, Curtis L. Thompson has echoed Rubow's view, arguing that Martensen only became the target of Kierkegaard's consuming criticism because he was "a thinker, and maybe even a person, of some substance."<sup>27</sup> In tandem with the rise of source-work research in Kierkegaard scholarship and a recognition of the importance of understanding Kierkegaard in his context, interest in Martensen has also grown.<sup>28</sup> Recent scholarship has increasingly identified

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<sup>25</sup> *AL* 3, 22

<sup>26</sup> Paul V. Rubow, *Kierkegaard og Hans Samtidige*, (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Forlag, 1950), 27. Rubow is also a rare commentator whose sympathies lie wholly with Martensen and not Kierkegaard.

<sup>27</sup> Thompson, *The Cultured Public's Chosen One*, 121.

<sup>28</sup> Jon Stewart, "Introduction," in Jon Stewart (ed.) *Hans Lassen Martensen: Theologian, Philosopher and Social Critic*, (Copenhagen Museum Tusulanum Press, 2012), 9. See also Jon Stewart, "Kierkegaard and the Danish Golden Age: The Strengths and Limits of Source-Work Research", *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2018, 207-221, for a helpful overview of source-work research in Kierkegaard scholarship.

Martensen and his thought as crucial both for understanding Kierkegaard's context and for fully understanding Kierkegaard's own complex pseudonymous authorship, as well as being a thinker significant in his own right.

While a number of substantial biographies and monographs on Martensen appeared in Denmark in the early twentieth century,<sup>29</sup> the first English-language dissertation on Martensen, *Positivity and Dialectic: A Study of the Theological Method of Hans Lassen Martensen* by Robert Leslie Horn, did not appear until 1969 and remained unpublished until 2007. In it, Horn concluded that “until Kierkegaard's relation to Martensen is understood in detail, we will have little chance to understand Kierkegaard at all.”<sup>30</sup> In 1980 an English translation of Niels Thulstrup's *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel*, originally published in Danish in 1967, appeared. Thulstrup's work emphasised the importance of studying Kierkegaard's context and provided exposition and overviews of Martensen's writings, lectures, and Kierkegaard's references to Martensen.<sup>31</sup> In 1985, Thompson completed his dissertation *The Logic of Theonomy: Hans Lassen Martensen's Theological Method*. Together with David J. Kangas, Thompson later made a major contribution to Anglophone Martensen-scholarship with the 1997 translation of three of Martensen's most important early works, published under the title *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hans L. Martensen's Philosophy of Religion*. In his seminal *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel Reconsidered* from 2003, Jon Stewart argues that Kierkegaard's originality contributed to the sense that Kierkegaard is a lone thinker, who relies on no sources and is completely out of rhythm with his own times, resulting in the study of Kierkegaard's contemporaries being neglected.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See for example V. Nannestedt, *H.L. Martensen. Nyt Bidrag til en Karakteristik af Dansk Prædiken i det nittende Aarhundredes sidste Halvdel*, (Copenhagen: Schönberg, 1897); Josepha Martensen, *H.L. Martensen, i sit Hjem og blandt sine Venner*, (Copenhagen: J. Frimodt, 1918); C. I. Scharling, *H. L. Martensen: Hans Tanker og Livssyn*, (Copenhagen: P. Haase, 1928); Skat Arildsen, *H. L. Martensen: Hans Liv, Udvikling og Arbejde*, (Copenhagen: Gad, 1932).

<sup>30</sup> Robert Leslie Horn, *Positivity and Dialectic: A Study of the Theological Method of Hans Lassen Martensen* (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel, 2007), 228.

<sup>31</sup> Niels Thulstrup, *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

<sup>32</sup> Jon Stewart *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel Reconsidered*, 27.

Stewart interprets what has previously been viewed as Kierkegaard's critique of Hegel as a sustained and targeted attack on the Danish Hegelians, in particular Martensen. Stewart has since continued to advance research on Martensen through translations and further monographs and edited volumes on Martensen, Kierkegaard, and other Danish Golden-Age figures.<sup>33</sup> In 2008 Thompson published a thorough monograph discussing why Martensen mattered to Kierkegaard. This work claims that Martensen is one of and possibly *the* thinker among Kierkegaard's contemporaries "who most determined the thought-world or discourse in terms of which concerns should be considered and who most determined also the issues themselves to be dealt with".<sup>34</sup> In his 2009 dissertation *Søren Kierkegaard and the Very Idea of Advance beyond Socrates*, David Possen insists that Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works are pervaded by a ferocious, yet under-researched, polemic against Martensen.<sup>35</sup> What is suggested by this recent scholarship then is that to truly understand Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authorship, deeper awareness and knowledge of Martensen's thought and the nature of Kierkegaard's relationship with Martensen are necessary.

Following Thompson's claim that Martensen in particular determined and shaped Kierkegaard's thought-world, discourse, and concerns, this project seeks to contribute to this growing area of scholarship by exploring Martensen's and Kierkegaard's personal and intellectual rivalry through the lens of what was arguably Martensen's own greatest preoccupation: the relationship between philosophy and theology, which in turn is also a key concern for Kierkegaard. I believe a closer inspection of this discussion as it manifests itself in Kierkegaard's and Martensen's respective oeuvres will not only help us understand their differences, but also put into relief their many similarities, despite their complex and often

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<sup>33</sup> See for example, Stewart, *A History of Hegelianism in Golden-Age Denmark: The Martensen Period 1837-1842*, (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 2007); Stewart (ed.), *Hans Lassen Martensen: Theologian, Philosopher and Social Critic*, (Copenhagen Museum Tusulanum Press, 2012).

<sup>34</sup> Thompson, *The Cultured Public's Chosen One*, 159.

<sup>35</sup> Possen *Advance Beyond Socrates*, 248.

antagonistic relationship, showing that Kierkegaard's relationship to Martensen is not simply one of conflict and polemics: It is also a personal and complex relationship of influence, productive disagreement, and valuable appropriation.

### **Argument and Contribution**

This thesis argues that in addressing the issue of how philosophy and theology should properly relate, Martensen should be considered a key interlocutor for Kierkegaard. Both thinkers should be considered representatives of an existential movement in Danish thought that sought to correct a lifeless and one-sided rationalism, and for both what is at stake in this debate is really a question of existence: how we do and should exist as human beings. As a result both Martensen and Kierkegaard conceive of this relationship as a living dialectic. It will be shown that whereas Martensen develops what can be termed a dialectic of unity-in-difference, in which the differences between philosophy, theology, and religion enable a higher unity between these spheres, Kierkegaard develops what can be termed a dialectic of similarity-in-dissimilarity, which underlines the incommensurable gap between philosophy and Christianity. However, it will be argued that Kierkegaard's conception of the relationship as similarity-in-dissimilarity leads to a richer dialogical space between the spheres that keeps the dialectic in continual tension, whereas Martensen's emphasis on unity and epistemological clarity ultimately leads to a break-down in the dialectic he aims to express, as the philosophical sphere is abandoned for the religious standpoint and thereby the dialogue cannot be sustained. In contrast, Kierkegaard's clear-cut separation of the spheres and insistence on the continued distance between them prevents the reduction of either sphere as their difference and respective integrity remains intact. The question of the proper relationship between philosophy and Christianity thereby helpfully frames the dispute between Kierkegaard and Martensen. Yet this thesis also suggests that the dissimilarity

between Martensen and Kierkegaard might be said to consist to some extent in their similarities. Without considering Martensen as a central opponent for Kierkegaard in this debate, our understanding of Kierkegaard's separation of the philosophical and religious spheres will be impoverished. When viewed in conversation with and, in particular, as polemic against Martensen, we see the full force of the sophistication, innovation, and nuance of Kierkegaard's formulation of his position.

While there has been an increase in scholarly interest in the thought of Martensen and his relationship to Kierkegaard, and a number of commentators arguing that better understanding of Martensen will improve interpretations of Kierkegaard, there has been no comprehensive study of the Martensen-Kierkegaard relationship in the context of this crucial philosophy and theology debate. In this way this thesis seeks to contribute to this research area by offering the first full-length study of Martensen's and Kierkegaard's conceptions of the relationship between philosophy, theology, and Christianity. In establishing Martensen as a key interlocutor for Kierkegaard in this debate, the thesis furthermore offers the first comprehensive reading of Kierkegaard's 1838 "Telegraph Messages from a Mousvoyant to a Clairvoyant on the Relation between Xnty and Philosophy", which has been largely overlooked in Kierkegaard scholarship. Finally, in arguing why Kierkegaard's dialectic of similarity-in-dissimilarity is a better dialogical model than Martensen's dialectic of unity-in-difference, this thesis furthermore conducts comparative conceptual analyses of Martensen's and Kierkegaard's concepts of existence, sin, and freedom, which have not before been carried out, but are central concepts in the authorships of both thinkers.

### **Project Overview and Structure**

This project is structured in two parts of three chapters respectively. It employs both a contextualising-historical, source-work approach in Part I, and a conceptual-analytical

approach, which builds upon the historical insights of Part I, in Part II. As Stewart explicates, the source-work research methodology recognises that any thinker is embedded in a real historical world and context, in which he or she must be seen in order to understand what such past thinkers might have thought. However, Stewart also notes that while source-work research is both important and “highly useful and fruitful”<sup>36</sup> when it comes to an eclectic and widely-read thinker like Kierkegaard, using any method has its limits which must be recognised, for “any methodology that is made absolute and pushed beyond a certain limit will end up in absurdity”.<sup>37</sup> For this reason, I have supplemented the historical source-work research with conceptual comparative analyses of categories important to Martensen and Kierkegaard’s debate about the relation between philosophy and theology.

Chapter 1 establishes the intellectual and historical context for the debate about philosophy and theology, first through a source-critical overview of the central German thinkers, Kant, Schleiermacher, and Hegel, through and against whom Martensen and Kierkegaard developed their respective views. It is argued that these German thinkers’ treatment of the relation between philosophy and theology reveal an unstable distinction between these spheres, which in turn has implications for the specifically Danish engagement with this question. The second part of the chapter then establishes the importance of putting philosophy, theology, and Christianity in the right relation in the University of Copenhagen during the first half of the nineteenth century, and especially in the 1830s when Martensen and Kierkegaard were both students.

Chapter 2 explores Martensen’s pursuit of unifying philosophy and theology in response to the confusion of their relationship. I argue that the relation Martensen seeks to establish between these spheres must be understood on the basis of what I term Martensen’s

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<sup>36</sup> Stewart, “The Strengths and Limits of Source-Work Research,” 221

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

model of “unity-in-difference” according to which the true difference between the philosophical and religious spheres in turn enables their true unity. While, Martensen seeks to reflect the existential nature of Christianity precisely by articulating a living dialectic relation to philosophy, I will argue that this dialectic fails to find clear expression and ultimately breaks down, as Martensen seeks to sublimate philosophy into his speculative theology.

Chapter 3 starts by establishing Martensen as a key interlocutor and foil for Kierkegaard through a reading of Kierkegaard’s largely overlooked student paper from 1838, “Telegraph Messages from a Mousvoyant to a Clairvoyant concerning the Relation between Xnty and Philosophy”. Whereas objective philosophy, or speculative philosophy, is deemed to have nothing to do with Christianity, Kierkegaard conceives of a different kind of dialectical relation between subjective philosophy and Christianity. I will argue it is best understood through Kierkegaard’s first thesis in *On the Concept of Irony*, which states that the similarity of Socrates and Christ lies in their dissimilarity. In this model any similarity between these spheres ultimately becomes an expression of their dissimilarity, and thus the spheres are continually spaced further apart. However, this enables a real and living dialogue between the spheres as the integrity and unique characteristics of each sphere is maintained—a dialogue that Martensen fails to establish through his unity-in-difference model as he ultimately seeks to bring the dialectic between the spheres to resolution.

Part II builds on the insights developed in Part I and seeks to exemplify the claim made in Chapter 3 that Kierkegaard’s model of similarity-in-dissimilarity enables a richer dialogue between philosophy and theology than Martensen’s model of unity-in-difference through a comparative analysis of how their respective views inform and shape their development of three concepts of particular theological and philosophical significance: *Existence, Sin, and Freedom*.

Chapter 4 compares Martensen's and Kierkegaard's shared preoccupation with "Existence". While Martensen criticises Kierkegaard for articulating a divisive concept of existence, which opposes thinking, an analysis of existence on the basis of Kierkegaard's concept of and use of "spatiation" in *Postscript* shows how separation and the ability to make distinctions saves thought in Kierkegaard's view. Comparing Martensen's and Kierkegaard's views of existence helps show that Kierkegaard's separation of the philosophical from the existential-Christian sphere leads not to a reduction of philosophy, but to a more genuine role for philosophy, and richer dialogue between the two based on their distance. However, the concept of existence also shows that both Martensen and Kierkegaard should be considered representatives of an existential movement in Danish philosophy, which sought to correct the time's dry and lifeless rationalism.

Chapter 5 analyses Martensen's and Kierkegaard's treatment of the concept of "Sin". It is argued that Kierkegaard's separation of philosophy and Christianity forms an effective corrective to Martensen's belief that sin can be coherently defined. This comparison furthermore shows that Martensen fails to dialectically engage or unite philosophy with the theological sphere, despite his claims and attempts to do so. By contrast Kierkegaard's treatment of sin keeps both spheres in a continuous tension and in meaningful dialogue.

The final chapter compares the concept of "Freedom" in Martensen's and Kierkegaard's thought. While both argue that true freedom is ultimately dependence on God, Martensen articulates this apparent contradiction as an expression of unity as for him freedom is developed in a dialectic between human and divine freedom based on their shared divine source. Martensen thus also seems to grant the human being at least a relative freedom and participation in their own freedom and salvation from sin. Conversely Kierkegaard's spacing out of the philosophical and Christian spheres through his similarity-in-dissimilarity model holds human freedom and grace apart in a way that deepens the human dependence on God,

without leaving the human passive and taskless. Thereby, if true freedom is dependence, a deeper dependence can also be said to be a freer freedom.

### **Reading Kierkegaard's Pseudonyms**

The matter of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms—what they mean, how they relate to each other and to Kierkegaard, and how we should read them—is a fascinating issue, rightfully treated as its own subject of research.<sup>38</sup> There are several different schools of thought on how to approach the pseudonyms, ranging from the belief that nothing written under the pseudonyms can be ascribed to Kierkegaard, to those who do not distinguish between the voices of the pseudonyms and Kierkegaard himself. This is further complicated by Kierkegaard's own complex deliberations on his pseudonymity as he claims that the pseudonymous writings are “mine, but only insofar as I...have placed the life-view of the creating, poetically actual individuality in his mouth... I am impersonally or personally in the third person a *souffleur* who has poetically produced the *author*... Thus in the pseudonymous books there is not a single word by me.”<sup>39</sup> At times pseudonyms are considered and deliberate, at others, we see that Kierkegaard decides to publish particular works under a pseudonym at the last minute after originally planning to publish them under his own name.

Kierkegaard's pseudonyms can be considered a means for kaleidoscopically exploring different theological, philosophical, and psychological positions, life-views, or perspectives from within and from a distance, and communicating these indirectly, without Kierkegaard having to explicitly endorse these as his own. Considering Kierkegaard's pseudonyms as distinct from himself precisely shifts focus away from Kierkegaard himself—his identity, his

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<sup>38</sup>For recent studies of Kierkegaard's pseudonyms and pseudonymous authorship see for example Joseph Westfall (ed.) *Authorship and Authority in Kierkegaard's Writings* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018) and Katalin Nun and Jon Stewart (eds.), *Kierkegaard's Pseudonyms* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015). See also Garff, “On Kierkegaard's Journals and the Pseudonymous Autobiography,” in which it is argued that even Kierkegaard's journals should be considered a part of his pseudonymous authorship.

<sup>39</sup> *SKS* 7, 569-570/ *CUP*, 625-626

opinions, and his intentions—to avoid distorting the reader’s immediate engagement with the text. However, Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms are not about obscuring his real identity. Instead, as Joseph Westfall puts it, Kierkegaardian pseudonymity is about “the unity of the positive and the negative, resulting in what [Kierkegaard] takes to be a maieutic deception into the truth.”<sup>40</sup> Kierkegaard himself suggests that “all the pseudonymous writings are *maieutic* in nature...whereas the directly religious...carried my name”.<sup>41</sup> In other words, the texts are meant for the reader’s edification, and the pseudonyms are a way of preventing a reader’s admiration for or dislike of Kierkegaard himself interfering with his or her own reflections and task of becoming a self. Focus is thereby meant to be on the reader not the author. While there are important nuances and insights to be drawn from closely considering the pseudonyms, this does not mean that Kierkegaard’s own views cannot overlap with those of his pseudonyms. In this thesis I will distinguish between Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms, but this is not to suggest that Kierkegaard rejects the views of his pseudonyms.

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<sup>40</sup> Joseph Westfall, “Pseudonymity,” Steven M. Emmanuel, William McDonald, and Jon Stewart (eds.), *Kierkegaard’s Concepts: Objectivity to Sacrifice Tome V* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 153-158; 158.

<sup>41</sup> SKS 13, 13-14 / POV, 7

## CHAPTER 1

# *PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: FROM KANT TO THE DANISH HEGELIANS*

Martensen's and Kierkegaard's shared preoccupation with the question of how philosophy and theology relate becomes evident from the latter half of the 1830s. In various writings and lecture from this time, Martensen programmatically declares that the task of the age is to reconcile philosophy and religion, and re-establish the inner unity of philosophy and theology.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Kierkegaard's journals from this period demonstrate a growing interest in the relationship between philosophy and theology, including Kierkegaard's equally programmatic 1835 AA13 entry that "*Philosophy and Christianity can never be united,*"<sup>43</sup> characterised by Jon Stewart as a battle slogan.<sup>44</sup> To contextualise and frame Kierkegaard and Martensen's already apparent disagreement in this debate, it is necessary to consider their shared intellectual background. Their ideas did not arise in a vacuum, but form part of and

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<sup>42</sup> See *MSE*, 1-2 / *BHK*, 76; *Pap.* II C 26-27, 4.

<sup>43</sup> *SKS* 17, 30, AA:13 / *KJN* 1, 25.

<sup>44</sup> Stewart, *Cultural Crisis of the Danish Golden Age*, 162

are shaped by a much larger debate—for the debate about philosophy and theology’s proper relationship is a vexed and longstanding one.

In the 2010 book *Between Philosophy and Theology: Contemporary Interpretations of Christianity*, the editors Christophe Brabant and Lieven Boeve conclude that the volume’s contributions give the impression that the boundary between philosophy and theology is “no longer well-defined or distinguishable in a precise manner.”<sup>45</sup> However, the question is whether these disciplines were *ever* truly well-defined and distinguishable. Considering this debate in the nineteenth century certainly shows that the borders between philosophy and theology at this time were by no means stable, with much ambiguity, discussion, and re-negotiation taking place. While a full genealogy of theology and philosophy is beyond the scope of this project, it is important to bear in mind that philosophy and theology’s relationship has been subject to constantly changing perceptions. While Ingolf U. Dalferth suggests that the fate of these disciplines has been inherently linked from the very beginning, with the theologian and philosopher being “related more closely than is sometimes admitted,”<sup>46</sup> James Alfred Martin notes that it is precisely because of this close relationship there has been a “continuing need for clarification of the ground rules and purposes of the dialogue” between philosophy and theology as well as “for re-examination of the distinctive commitments and contributions of the two.”<sup>47</sup> This is well-exemplified by the way in which this relationship was engaged in nineteenth century Denmark—a debate which in turn was given its contours by German philosophy and theology, specifically as these are represented by the key figures Immanuel Kant, Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, and Georg W. F. Hegel. The history of German theology and philosophy in important ways frames but also stokes the

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<sup>45</sup> Lieven Boeve and Christophe Brabant, “Conclusion: Lessons from Philosophy for Theology, and vice versa” in Lieven Boeve and Christophe Brabant (eds). *Between Philosophy and Theology: Contemporary Interpretations of Christianity*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 213-229; 213 (my emphasis).

<sup>46</sup> Ingolf U. Dalferth, *Theology and Philosophy*, (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2001), vii.

<sup>47</sup> James A. Martin Jr., *The New Dialogue between Philosophy and Theology*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1966), 11-12.

fire of Martensen's and Kierkegaard's increasingly antagonistic conflict. Kierkegaard not only studied all three of these thinkers under Martensen, but also strongly criticised Martensen—who claimed to have gone beyond not just Kant, but Schleiermacher and Hegel too—for bolstering his own academic position through reference to past thinkers, whom Kierkegaard believed Martensen had not properly understood.<sup>48</sup> The first section of this chapter will therefore provide a source-critical overview of the 'Kant to Hegel' arch, as Martensen and Kierkegaard perceived it. This overview lays the foundation for the larger part of this chapter, which considers in detail the philosophy and theology taught at the University of Copenhagen during the time of Martensen's and Kierkegaard's student years. It will be shown that in nineteenth-century Denmark the debate about the proper relationship between theology and philosophy and the province of these respective disciplines was a central one.<sup>49</sup>

The purpose of this historical contextualisation is firstly to establish the importance of this question of philosophy and theology's relationship at the time. Secondly, this chapter shows that Martensen and Kierkegaard both begin the development of their thought in a time and place where philosophy and theology found themselves curiously intermingled, and where the debate about the proper relationship between these disciplines finds no unequivocal answer or clear-cut definition, but resonates with a sense of confusion. It will be suggested that this would motivate both thinkers to respond to this confusion. However, as we shall see, Martensen and Kierkegaard do so in very different ways.

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<sup>48</sup> Kierkegaard for example suggests that Martensen adds profundity and validity to his own ideas by hiding behind great philosophical figures, remarking that: "What is corrupting about Martensen is this continual talk about Kant, Hegel, Schelling, etc. It provides a guarantee that there must be something to what he says. It is just like when the newspapers write in the name of the public." (*SKS* 22, 163, *NB12*: 35 / *KJN* 6, 16).

<sup>49</sup> See Carl Henrik Koch, *Strejftog i den danske filosofis historie*, (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 2000) 38; Stewart, *Cultural Crisis of the Danish Golden Age*, 145.

## 1.1 Philosophy and Theology from Kant to Hegel

### 1.1.1 *Kant and the Conflict of the Faculties*

In the winter semester of 1838-1839, Martensen offered a new lecture series entitled “Lectures on the History of Modern Philosophy from Kant to Hegel in Its Relation to Theology”, which Kierkegaard attended along with hundreds of other students. Martensen thus likely provided Kierkegaard with an early systematic introduction to Kant, Schleiermacher, Hegel and other German philosophers. Furthermore, in a rather strange twist of fate, it is through Kierkegaard’s copious lecture notes that we have a record of Martensen’s lecture series at all. However, Ronald M. Green suggests that Kierkegaard “endured” rather than enjoyed Martensen’s lectures, which only convinced Kierkegaard that Martensen and his followers were “ill-versed in the writings of philosophers whose work they purported to have transcended.”<sup>50</sup> Based on his lecture notes, Kierkegaard was in particular unimpressed with Martensen’s teaching on Kant. Breaking off from his note-taking, Kierkegaard remarks: “an Ode by Marthensen, one of the worst he has delivered so far, a forced cleverness [*Aandrigthed*]”.<sup>51</sup> It is not clear what in particular caused this outburst, however, Kierkegaard and Martensen had very different reactions to Kant’s critical philosophy. Although Martensen expresses reverence for Kant and defies anyone to be uninspired by his moral philosophy,<sup>52</sup> Martensen is also deeply critical of Kant’s limitations of theoretical knowledge and its implications for theology, for it has rendered theoretical reason “totally blind in divine matters” and clips “the wings of high-flying spirits”.<sup>53</sup> Conversely, Kierkegaard regularly praises Kant for his epistemological honesty in both his

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<sup>50</sup> Ronald M. Green, *Kant and Kierkegaard: The Hidden Debt*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 218. Green even argues that Kierkegaard specifically used and made obscure references to Kant in his writings to undermine Martensen.

<sup>51</sup> *SKS* 19, 136, Not 4: 9 / *KJN* 3, 135.

<sup>52</sup> See *GMS*, x / *BHK*, 249.

<sup>53</sup> *MSA*, 42 / *BHK*, 101.

journals and his pseudonymous authorship. Kierkegaard writes: “Let us rather say it openly, along with honest Kant, who declared the relation to God to be a sort of madness, a hallucination.”<sup>54</sup> A year prior to this, Kierkegaard’s philosophical pseudonym Johannes Climacus remarks that when “a man like Kant, standing on the pinnacle of scientific scholarship,” responds to proofs of God’s existence in the following way: “Well, I do not know anything more about that than that my father told me it was so,”<sup>55</sup> this is not only humorous, but also more informative than a whole book of ontological proofs.

Kant’s critical philosophy and epistemology formed a watershed and challenge for any post-Kantian thinker wanting to talk about God—including Kant himself<sup>56</sup>—and in turn had profound implications for the relationship between philosophy and theology, a relationship, which Kant directly addresses in his 1798 *The Conflict of the Faculties*. However, despite this essay’s call for a strict demarcation of theology and philosophy, I will show that Kant’s position is less clear-cut than he claims it to be, as he seems to blur the boundaries between these faculties in subtle, but significant ways—something which is also reflected in Martensen’s and Kierkegaard’s readings of Kant.

This essay, one of the few of Kant’s works that we know Kierkegaard read, outlines the lower faculty of philosophy’s conflict with the so-called higher faculties of theology, law, and medicine. In Kant’s own words, this essay above all “argues for the Philosophical Faculty’s right to sit as an opposition bench against the Theological Faculty.”<sup>57</sup> Kant explains that the higher faculties are considered so as they serve the government, whereas “the faculty

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<sup>54</sup> SKS 20, 229, NB2: 235 / KJN 4, 229. As Green has suggested Kierkegaard’s understanding of Christ as the absurd “presupposes Kant’s epistemology” (Green, *Kierkegaard and Kant*, 136). However, as Joel D. S. Rasmussen points out, while it seems accurate to ascribe “at least a rough-and-ready Kantian epistemology to Kierkegaard,” it is important to keep in mind that Kierkegaard does not share Kant’s preoccupation with the careful work of distinguishing between categories such as understanding, reason, imagination, and sensibility. (Rasmussen, *Between Irony and Witness*, (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 90n).

<sup>55</sup> SKS 7, 502 / CUP, 552-553.

<sup>56</sup> See for example, Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Is It Possible and Desirable for Theologians to Recover from Kant?,” *Modern Theology* 14:1, 1998, 1-18.

<sup>57</sup> Kant, *Correspondence*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 491.

whose function is only to look after the interests of science [*Wissenschaft*] is called lower because it may use its own judgment about what it teaches.”<sup>58</sup> This distinction is thus really between utility and truth, and because philosophy is concerned with truth, Kant argues that philosophy’s role is to police the higher faculties “and, in this way, be useful to them, since *truth*... is the main thing, whereas the *utility* the higher faculties promise the government is of secondary importance.”<sup>59</sup> Thus Kant also offers a solution to this conflict: Philosophy, which is answerable only to individual and autonomous reason, has the right and duty to determine (and uphold) the rational limits of the other faculties.

With its first principles of truth and reason philosophy is set apart from the theology faculty (and the other higher faculties), whose teachings depend on external authorities, such as revelation and historical sources, and not pure reason. But if theology “presumes to mix with its teachings something it treats as derived from reason, it[...] encroaches on the territory of the philosophy faculty”.<sup>60</sup> Therefore Kant argues that there must be separation between these faculties. In an attempt to avoid censorship, he couches this as being to the benefit of theology faculty, which “take great care not to enter into a misalliance with the lower faculty, but must keep it at a respectful distance so that the dignity of [its] statutes will not be damaged by the free play of reason.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, theology must not invade philosophy’s territory for its own sake. Yet, the same does not apply to philosophy. A closer exploration of Kant’s descriptions of the relationship between theology and philosophy reveal a pervasive ambiguity in Kant’s call for a strict demarcation of these two disciplines. To some extent this ambiguity is an intentional ruse for avoiding censorship, for as Nicholas Boyle bluntly puts it Kant’s solution to the conflict seems to simply be that theology must surrender to philosophy

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<sup>58</sup> Kant, *Conflict of the Faculties*, (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1992), 25, 27.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

unconditionally.<sup>62</sup> Thus, we for example get Kant’s cleverly ambiguous pronouncement that: “We can also grant the theology faculty’s proud claim that the philosophy faculty is its handmaid (though the question remains, whether the servant is the mistress’ torchbearer or trainbearer), provided it is not driven away or silenced.”<sup>63</sup> The deliberate ambiguity goes neither unnoticed nor unappreciated by Kierkegaard, who with amusement comments that: “From his standpoint Kant puts it pertly [*rask sagt*]...: So, as far as I am concerned people may certainly call philosophy the handmaiden of theology, whether she walks behind, carrying the train—or walks ahead, carrying the torch.”<sup>64</sup> Like Kierkegaard, Daniel Weidner has noted this ambiguity, and argues that Kant’s apparent dividing line between theology and philosophy, reason and faith, is anything but firm, for it is repeatedly crossed by philosophy.<sup>65</sup> This becomes overt in Kant’s suggestion that a philosophical hermeneutics in biblical studies forms a way of solving the conflict. This philosophical interpretation extends to theological concepts such as grace and sin as well. But if we look closer, Kant is not only suggesting that philosophy has the right to study theology’s subject matter, but also offers a philosophical reinterpretation of these central doctrinal categories to delimit a religion within the boundaries of reason. Kant’s issue with the traditional theological reading of grace and sin is that these doctrines call for a merely passive surrender to an external higher power, which violates human autonomy. Such scriptural texts “must, then, be interpreted differently,” according to Kant, who instead argues that human beings themselves must work at developing their moral predisposition.<sup>66</sup> However, Kant concedes that this predisposition “does point to a divine source that reason can never reach... so that our possession of it is not

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<sup>62</sup> Nicholas Boyle, “Biblical Hermeneutics: From Kant to Gadamer,” in Nicholas Boyle, Liz Disley and Nicholas Adams (eds.) *The Impact of Idealism: The Legacy of Post-Kantian German Thought. Volume 4, Religion*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 114-141; 120.

<sup>63</sup> Kant, *Conflict*, 45.

<sup>64</sup> *SKS* 23, 143, NB16: 70 / *KJN* 7, 145.

<sup>65</sup> Daniel Weidner, “Kants Säkularisierung der Philosophie, die politische Theologie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft und die Kritik der Bibel,” *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 59:2, 2007, 97–120, 100.

<sup>66</sup> Kant, *Conflict*, 75.

meritorious, but rather the work of grace.”<sup>67</sup> As many have noted, Kant’s somewhat inconsistent treatment of both sin and grace clearly goes against his own established boundary of reason.<sup>68</sup> However, Kant quickly pre-empts any criticism or objections theologians may raise against his philosophical biblical hermeneutics:

But I hear biblical theologians cry out in unison against the very idea of a philosophical interpretation of Scripture. Philosophical exegesis, they say, aims primarily at a natural religion, not Christianity. I *reply* that Christianity is the Idea of religion, which must as such be based on reason and to this extent be natural.<sup>69</sup>

Kant thus seems to suggest that philosophy is intricately affiliated with Christian theology and has an inherent right to discuss its subject matter. But Kant goes further than simply suggesting that theology and philosophy share a subject area. In fact, for Kant, only a moral-philosophical reading of scripture is an *authentic* theological reading:

Only a moral interpretation, moreover, is really an authentic one—that is, one given by the God within us; for since we cannot understand anyone unless he speaks to us through our own understanding and reason, it is only by concepts of *our* reason, in so far as they are pure moral concepts and hence infallible, that we can recognize the divinity of a teaching promulgated to us.<sup>70</sup>

In spite of Kant’s initial emphasis on the importance of avoiding mixing philosophy and theology, Kant is then really arguing for philosophy’s right to address and interpret theological and doctrinal content, or simply, Scripture. In other words, the true conflict is between different approaches in and to theology. As Karl Barth puts it, Kant, “upon the border between philosophy and theology... was not able to avoid taking half a step over this

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> See for example Allen Wood, *Kant’s Moral Religion* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1970), 209.

<sup>69</sup> Kant, *Conflict*, 77.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 85.

border, [and] did in effect intrude upon theological matters as a philosopher”.<sup>71</sup> Of course, Barth seems to validate this intrusion by the very fact that he has included Kant in his survey of nineteenth century *theology*. In fact, Martensen does something similar, as he includes Kant in his 1837 dissertation *The Autonomy of Human Self-Consciousness in Modern Dogmatic Theology*. Here, Martensen criticises the fact that Kant associates religious convictions with the human’s moral-philosophical convictions, as this makes “practical reason the basis for the entire theology,”<sup>72</sup> grounding religion in human autonomy rather than divine revelation. And yet, Martensen consistently terms Kant’s thought “a theology”.<sup>73</sup>

For Kant, philosophy’s intrusion into theology seems to be entirely intentional. What at first glance is made out to be a clear division of the two faculties can rather be identified as philosophy’s “strategy of discursive self-empowerment,” as Weidner terms it.<sup>74</sup> Weidner points out that while the *declared* aim of *Conflict* is to establish stable conditions and relations between the faculties, Kant’s short essay does the opposite: In solving the conflict between theology and philosophy, Kant produces an amalgam of these disciplines: philosophical theology. Weidner suggests that Kant’s philosophy of religion then makes a double movement, as it is simultaneously a “speaking-about religion” and a “religious speaking”,<sup>75</sup> making it a discourse through which philosophy seeks to inherit the best of theology without having to accept its limitations. Kant seeks to reverse the power of the higher faculties and show why philosophy must be the victor in this disciplinary coup, as only philosophy is free to act according to reason alone, and thus has the right to police the other faculties. Thus, *Conflict* is about demarcating the faculties only insofar as it sets philosophy free. Yet, it also results in a certain destabilisation of the disciplinary borders.

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<sup>71</sup> Karl Barth, *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century: Its Background & History*, (London: SCM Press, 1959), 192.

<sup>72</sup> *MSA*, 44 / *BHK*, 102.

<sup>73</sup> *MSA*, 46 / *BHK*, 104.

<sup>74</sup> Weidner, “Kants Säkularisierung der Philosophie,” 100.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

On Kierkegaard's reading, however, Kant's delimitation of what properly belongs to knowledge and that which belongs to faith is beneficial to both theology and philosophy as it can be viewed to clarify the proper remit of each sphere: In other words, philosophy can never speak of the divine, and thus Kant's limiting of knowledge really does make room for faith for Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard therefore suggests that not only has philosophy become "fantastic" since abandoning Kant's "honest path",<sup>76</sup> but theology too "has gone astray".<sup>77</sup>

By contrast, Martensen views the result of Kant's critical theology to be an improper relationship of the philosophical and religious spheres, as modern theologians after Kant have come to seek "more an anthropology than a theology,"<sup>78</sup> and made criticism the substance of their dogmatics. Martensen therefore accuses Kant of not only placing ethics in a crooked relationship to religion but to all of reality too,<sup>79</sup> and views Kant's thought to be detrimental to philosophy *and* theology. For Martensen Kant then cannot offer a true unity of philosophy and theology, for the kingdom established is not a true theological kingdom of God, but merely a kingdom of the human.<sup>80</sup> Whereas Kierkegaard signals some level of awareness and amusement with Kant's intentionally ambiguous statement about philosophy's status in relation to theology, Martensen's commentary on Kant expresses its own destabilisation of the boundary between philosophy and theology. Martensen not only includes Kant as a central interlocutor in his dissertation on modern theology alongside Schleiermacher and Hegel, but also interchangeably categorises Kant's thought as a critical philosophy and a critical *theology*, albeit a theology of subjective idealism and solipsism which dissolves any

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<sup>76</sup> *SKS* 22, 215, NB12: 121 / *KJN* 6, 217. The reference to Kant's "honest path" first occurs in *SKS* 19, 170, Not4:46 / *KJN* 3, 167, and later also in *SKS* 6, 142 / *SLW*, 152.

<sup>77</sup> *SKS* 19, 300, Not 10: 9 / *KJN* 3, 298.

<sup>78</sup> *MSA*, 52 / *BHK*, 108.

<sup>79</sup> *GMS*, 6 / *BHK*, 257.

<sup>80</sup> *MSA*, 44 / *BHK*, 102.

dogma of or dependence on God.<sup>81</sup> Although Martensen chastises Kant for his false unity of philosophy and theology, he himself seems to confirm it.

A few years after Kant published *Conflict*, Schleiermacher would argue that it is theology that must be freed and made independent from philosophy rather than vice versa.

### *1.1.2 Schleiermacher's Separation of Theology from Philosophy*

Schleiermacher is important for both Martensen and Kierkegaard in formulating their respective views of the relationship between philosophy and theology. In September 1833, Martensen met Schleiermacher in Copenhagen, a visit that electrified Martensen as a young theology student who had devoted his independent studies to Schleiermacher and Hegel. Martensen's detailed accounts of this meeting still brim with palpable excitement five decades after the fact.<sup>82</sup> While touring the art collection of Christiansborg Castle in Copenhagen Martensen recalls that Schleiermacher stood completely still for a second and then, with great energy, pronounced that: "Theology must be separated from Philosophy."<sup>83</sup> Martensen considers these words to be weighty and unforgettable, but declares himself unable to follow Schleiermacher, being instead persuaded by Hegel's speculative philosophy and the appeal of its harmonising view. Regardless, Martensen's meetings with Schleiermacher had a lasting impact, and Martensen would continue to speak of Schleiermacher for years to come—something which Kierkegaard notes with great annoyance as late as 1849 chastising Martensen for constantly citing "Schleiermacher, whom he corrects. This means that he profits, without acknowledgment, from what has come out since Schl[eiermacher] and that he also profits by correcting Schl[eiermacher]."<sup>84</sup> However,

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<sup>81</sup> *MSA*, 47 / *BHK*, 105.

<sup>82</sup> See *AL* 1, 67-76.

<sup>83</sup> *AL* 1, 71 (my translation) About this art tour, Martensen notes with dramatic infatuation: "I saw as good as nothing of the paintings, I saw only him".

<sup>84</sup> *SKS* 22, 167, NB12: 47 / *KJN* 6, 167.

Schleiermacher also plays a significant role in Martensen's and Kierkegaard's relationship as his *Glaubenslehre* or *The Christian Faith* (1821-22/1831) was the subject matter of their 1834 tutorials.

It has been surmised that these tutorials very likely occasioned Kierkegaard's declaration that philosophy and Christianity can never be united, in opposition to Martensen's view—for in contrast to Martensen's outright rejection of Schleiermacher's view, Kierkegaard's position can be considered a restatement of Schleiermacher's separation of these spheres.<sup>85</sup> Several papers from 1834 demonstrate Kierkegaard's thorough, but not uncritical, engagement with Schleiermacher.<sup>86</sup> In 1837, Kierkegaard emphasises Schleiermacher as the first "standpoint of actual orthodox dogmatics," but in the very same sentence, that Schleiermacher's dogmatics is important *in spite* of "how heterodox it is in many respects."<sup>87</sup> Richard E. Crouter argues that Kierkegaard's reference to this first standpoint of dogmatics refers to Schleiermacher's aim to separate theology from philosophy, indicating that Kierkegaard found this position highly significant.<sup>88</sup> Kierkegaard therefore concludes that, "in many points [Schleiermacher's] position is right... his whole position is that of wonder, and his entire self-awareness is a completely new Christian self-awareness."<sup>89</sup>

Unlike Kant, Schleiermacher seeks not to free philosophy by separating these disciplines, but rather to validate theology's independence from philosophy and any other discipline specifically within the setting of the new research university. Nevertheless,

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<sup>85</sup> Jon Stewart argues that AA:13-18 are a reframing of Schleiermacher's separation of philosophy and theology, and that these journal entries were likely motivated by tutorials with Martensen ("Philosophy and Christianity Can Never Be United": The Role of Sibbern and Martensen in Kierkegaard's Reception of Schleiermacher," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2017, 291-312.; 309). Thompson goes further and suggests that it may even have been Martensen's idea that Kierkegaard keep a journal in the first place. (Thompson "Introduction," 43).

<sup>86</sup> See for example *SKS* 27, 44, *Pap.* 9:2 / *KJN* 11, 39, and *SKS* 27, 42, *Pap.* 9:7 / *KJN* 11, 40.

<sup>87</sup> *SKS* 17, 249, *DD*:86 / *KJN* 1, 240.

<sup>88</sup> Richard E. Crouter, "Schleiermacher: Revisiting Kierkegaard's Relationship to Him," in Jon Stewart (ed.), *Kierkegaard and His German Contemporaries Tome II: Theology* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 197-232; 208-209.

<sup>89</sup> *SKS* 17, 249, *DD*:86 / *KJN* 1, 240.

Schleiermacher's view continues to show how there is a certain instability of the boundaries between philosophy and theology in the nineteenth century.

In *The Christian Faith*, Schleiermacher remarks that the confusion of philosophy and theology began early on as the “prevalent method of inflating Christian doctrine with rational proofs and criticism had its origin in the confusion of Dogmatics and philosophy in old Patristic times.”<sup>90</sup> This intermingling of philosophy and theology increased in the Middle Ages and Schleiermacher especially blames Scholasticism “by which philosophy...and real Christian Dogmatics were frequently mingled.”<sup>91</sup> Because philosophy and theology have then always enjoyed a “lively and manifold” dialogue, Schleiermacher notes that this intermingling is not only inevitable, but seems to have become permanent, as “much has remained permanently under philosophical treatment which belonged only to the dogmatic, and *vice versa*.”<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, Schleiermacher does not consider this mingling of theology and philosophy conducive to either discipline. With philosophy being the first to separate itself from this union, Schleiermacher declares that it is now time that theology separate itself from philosophy too, but without resorting to philosophy to do so. This separation is especially important for theology, because theology cannot

stand on its proper ground and soil with the same assurance with which philosophy has so long stood upon its own, until the separation of the two types of proposition is so complete that, e.g., so extraordinary a question as whether the same proposition can be true in philosophy and false in Christian theology and *vice versa* will no longer be asked, for the simple reason that a proposition cannot appear in the one context precisely as it appears in the other: however similar it sounds a difference must always be assumed.<sup>93</sup>

In direct opposition to Kant's reformulation of religion as practical reason, for

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<sup>90</sup> Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, (London: T&T Clark, 1999), 137.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

Schleiermacher religion is not about knowing or doing, but about feeling.<sup>94</sup> Schleiermacher therefore argues that knowledge cannot be the essence of Christianity, it must rather be feeling, or piety: “The piety which forms the basis of all ecclesiastical communions is...neither a Knowing nor a Doing, but a modification of Feeling, or of immediate self-consciousness.”<sup>95</sup> Whereas theological propositions arise from thought originating from “religious moods of minds”, speculative philosophical propositions arise from logical and scientific trains of thought. Theology is still related to thought—not logical, scientific or speculative thinking—but to thought that has its source in religious feeling.<sup>96</sup> Despite their deep intermingling throughout history, theology and philosophy are thus separated by their distinct sources, and this distinction must be upheld to avoid the harmful confusion of these spheres. However, in Schleiermacher’s work to reform and defend theology’s place within the modern research university, we might say he resorts to philosophy after all.

Schleiermacher was instrumental in the preservation of theology as a university discipline with Wilhelm von Humboldt’s establishment of a new university in 1809. Since the Reformation, theology held a dominant status in European universities. However, the Enlightenment impacted educational ideals, specifically the championing of critical and scientific approaches and increased independence from the church. These new ideals also promoted a transition from viewing knowledge as a stable entity to be preserved, transmitted, and regurgitated to education which promoted productive thought aimed at generating new knowledge. As David Kelsey points out, because theological education was largely based on ancient texts, the emergence of the new research university, which institutionalised the Enlightenment ideals, created deep tensions between theology and its home in the

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<sup>94</sup> Schleiermacher first argues this in 1799, the same year Kant’s *Conflict* was published. See *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 28.

<sup>95</sup> Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, 5.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 81-82.

university.<sup>97</sup> For a decade it was debated whether theology even lived up to the requirements and values of the new university. Schleiermacher argued that it could.

For Schleiermacher, theology's inclusion as a university discipline was justified by its indispensable societal purpose—the training of church officials. As a result, theology must be considered a positive rather than a pure science. In his *Brief Outline of Theology as a Field of Study* (1811/1830), Schleiermacher argues that the study of Christian theology without a connection to ecclesial practice is no longer theological.<sup>98</sup> As Zachary Purvis points out a purely practical-theological focus, however, was not enough to include the theologian in the modern research university.<sup>99</sup> The theologian therefore also had to become a scientist (*Wissenschaftler*) grounded “in the philosophy faculty and the study of pure science (*Wissenschaft*).”<sup>100</sup> Nevertheless, true theologians are never merely scientists or academics because of their practical task of serving the church. In a letter to his friend Gottfried Lücke, Schleiermacher writes that he aimed to balance these aspects; “to create an eternal covenant between the living Christian faith and an independent and freely working science,” in which “science is not hindered and faith is not excluded”.<sup>101</sup> The question becomes whether such a balance is possible. As both Kelsey and Purvis suggest, Schleiermacher's attempt to justify theology's place in the university by making theology both professional and scientific results in a less decisive separation of philosophy and theology.<sup>102</sup>

In claiming theology's place in the university, Schleiermacher proposes unifying theology's previously fragmented curriculum through a trilogy of philosophical, historical,

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<sup>97</sup> David H. Kelsey *Between Athens and Berlin: The Theological Education Debate*, (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 1993), 85.

<sup>98</sup> Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline of Theology as a Field of Study*, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 4.

<sup>99</sup> Zachary Purvis, *Theology and the University in Nineteenth-Century Germany*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 148.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>101</sup> Schleiermacher, *On the Glaubenslehre: Two Letters to Dr Lücke*, (Chico: Scholars, 1981), 63.

<sup>102</sup> Kelsey, *Between Athens and Berlin*, 88; Purvis, *Theology and the University*, 149.

and practical theology.<sup>103</sup> Thus, Schleiermacher allows that one of the three main areas of theological study is *philosophical*. Moreover, both historical and practical theology draw presuppositions from philosophical theology. Historical theology forms the study of what is given historically, and philosophical theology helps determine *which* historical events or phenomena can be considered *Christian*. Practical theology, a normative discipline for critically discerning the rules of ecclesial practice, derives its information from historical theology and philosophical theology. Schleiermacher identifies the task of philosophical theology as defining “the distinctive nature of Christianity”.<sup>104</sup> This also means philosophical theology is in charge of assessing and responding to questions of Christianity’s value and truth, not just corroborating facts. Schleiermacher underlines that Christianity can neither be “construed purely scientifically” nor “apprehended in a strictly empirical fashion.”<sup>105</sup> Just as it is impossible to construe a scientific model of a person’s distinctiveness it is also impossible when it comes to the collective, moral entities of religious communities. However, philosophical theology’s critical reflection on Christianity’s truth, meaning, and essence forms a process of theorising from the historical material to generate the normative essence and practice of Christianity. Thus, Schleiermacher’s outline of theological study places a moment of philosophical theorising between theology’s source and practical application.

Schleiermacher’s distinction between philosophical theology and practical theology is that whereas the former relates to “certain purely scientific constructions” and has a more universal character, the latter is a “technical discipline”, which relates to the particular and individual.<sup>106</sup> According to Franklin I. Gamwell this distinction is central to understanding Schleiermacher’s separation of theology and philosophy. Because religion can never be

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<sup>103</sup> Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline*, 14.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

general, but awareness of God is always specific to subjective religious feeling, no statement pertaining to religion can be philosophically true or false precisely because there is no common human experience of God in relation to the world.<sup>107</sup> However, in *Brief Outline* this otherwise clear distinction is seemingly blurred. Schleiermacher specifically points out the necessity of each person producing an individual philosophical theology: “Everyone’s philosophical theology essentially includes within it the principles of one’s whole theological way of thinking. Thus, every theologian should produce the entirety of this part of one’s theology for oneself.”<sup>108</sup> In *The Christian Faith* Schleiermacher writes how he has spent the introduction collating and applying propositions borrowed from the scientific studies ethics, philosophy of religion and apologetics.<sup>109</sup> Similarly in *Brief Outline*, Schleiermacher argues that a philosophical approach forms the starting point of theology in order to provide the concepts, definitions, and language needed to conduct theology as a university discipline. Thereby Schleiermacher seems to justify the study of theology *through* philosophy, making theology dependent on philosophy for its survival.

This is something Martensen also picks up on and criticises Schleiermacher for. Martensen notes that it is very well that thinkers like Schleiermacher argue theology can and should be developed “*outside* of philosophy”. But Martensen points out that in discussing such things,

one still makes use of thinking and that even a systematic form of thinking; one talks in logical categories and makes dialectical use of them; by the help of thinking is developed the intelligible and inner Nexus in everything which the human maintains by faith. Consequently, if one is to be able to grasp the meaning of the proposition that theology should be separated from philosophy, one seems to be allowed to take refuge in Criticism’s distinction between *theoretical* and

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<sup>107</sup> Franklin I. Gamwell, “Schleiermacher and Transcendental Philosophy,” Brent W. Sockness and Wilhelm Gräb (eds.) *Schleiermacher, The Study of Religion, and the Future of Theology: A Transatlantic Dialogue* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 135-149; 142.

<sup>108</sup> Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline*, 29.

<sup>109</sup> Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, 5.

*practical* philosophy.<sup>110</sup>

Martensen is here suggesting that although Schleiermacher seeks to correct Kant in separating theology from philosophy without philosophy's help, he is doing so by drawing on Kant's philosophy (or theology). Where Kant has made practical reason theology's principle of knowledge, Schleiermacher has made feeling the principle of knowledge, but the result is that in both systems the "human self-consciousness becomes the judge and constitutor in everything," and for this reason both theologies must "receive the name of *rationalism*"<sup>111</sup> as thinking in both has the anthropological and not the theological as its principle. By contrast, Kierkegaard emphasises Schleiermacher's distinction between the religious sphere and philosophical knowledge, for example, in *SLW*, "Schleiermacher so enthusiastically declares that knowledge does not perturb religiousness."<sup>112</sup>

Schleiermacher protests that his dependence on philosophy is "only in form,"<sup>113</sup> because philosophy itself does not have access to the religious feeling, which theology expresses and systematises through philosophical forms. Whereas Schleiermacher on the one hand claims that philosophical theology determines and tests the truth and meaning of Christianity, on the other he declares that it makes no sense to ask whether something that is true in philosophy can be true in theology; a phrase that Kierkegaard affirms. However, this does in fact become an important question. For, if Christianity is true, and truth in theology is to be identified and tested philosophically, it only seems pertinent to assert that a true theological statement can also be true in philosophy.

Importantly though, Schleiermacher's separation of philosophy and theology, seems to distinguish between two different *kinds* of philosophy: A philosophy as a critical method of

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<sup>110</sup> *MSA*, 76 / *BHK*, 124.

<sup>111</sup> *MSA*, 78-79 / *BHK*, 125.

<sup>112</sup> *SKS* 6, 441 / *SLW*, 479.

<sup>113</sup> Schleiermacher, *Christian Faith*, 93.

inquiry and reflection and a philosophy as *speculation*, which pursues speculative knowledge, something we also find in Kierkegaard. The separation of philosophy and theology is for Schleiermacher specifically the separation of speculative philosophy and theology, for the theologian's purpose is not to acquire speculative knowledge of God. Philosophical theology is not about knowledge of God either, but is rather focused on the definition of Christianity's essence with a view to establish the normative practices of the Christian community. Schleiermacher's vision of theological study thus brings about a new kind of rationality; an affective and practical understanding of God through the human's relationship with God in the experience of faith. Thus, Schleiermacher simultaneously accepts the Kantian epistemological limits, while seeking to overturn philosophy's dominance in favour of theology.

In 1855, the Danish theologian Hans Helweg, described Schleiermacher as “too decidedly a theologian to be trusted; German theology's safe port from the storm of philosophy!”<sup>114</sup> Martensen may have been inclined to agree with this. Martensen describes he above all sought to discover how Schleiermacher felt about philosophy and the possibility of knowledge of the absolute truth—of God: “One time I asked rather naively, whether [Schleiermacher] assumed that philosophical knowledge could be gained of God's being in itself, of the inner, eternal life-process in God.”<sup>115</sup> Martensen recounts that Schleiermacher answered calmly, “Ich halte es für eine Täuschung [I think it is a delusion].”<sup>116</sup> Martensen notes that Schleiermacher was clearly thinking of Hegel although Schleiermacher would not willingly speak of him.<sup>117</sup> By contrast, Crouter remarks, if “Schleiermacher[...] was too bold for the Danes, it was just this quality of mind that drew Kierkegaard to his work.”<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Hans Friedrich Helweg, “Hegelianismen i Danmark,” in *Dansk Kirketidende*, 10:51, 1855, 825-852; 825, (my translation).

<sup>115</sup> *AL* 1, 69.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> Crouter, “Schleiermacher”, 222.

Kierkegaard even seems to personify Schleiermacher's distinction between philosophy as critical reflection and as speculation in his famous distinction between Schleiermacher and Hegel in *Concept of Anxiety*: Its pseudonym Vigilius Haufniensis, the vigilant watchman of Copenhagen, who demonstrates a keen interest in the proper distinction of scientific disciplines, highlights Schleiermacher's "immortal service" to dogmatics, and laments how he nevertheless

was left behind long ago when men chose Hegel. Yet Schleiermacher was a thinker in the beautiful Greek sense, a thinker who spoke only of what he knew. Hegel, on the contrary, despite all his outstanding ability and stupendous learning...was in the German sense a professor of philosophy on a large scale, because he *à tout prix* must explain everything<sup>119</sup>

In this, Haufniensis expresses an appreciation for Schleiermacher's acceptance of the limits of knowledge and explanation, while lamenting Hegel's ruthless determination to clarify everything. Although it would no doubt be to the chagrin of both Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard, this brings us to Hegel.

### *1.1.3 "Philosophy is Theology, Theology is Philosophy": Hegel's Reconciliation of Philosophy and Theology*

The introduction of Hegel's thought and his dialectical method of mediation into Danish intellectual life sparked a heated debate among theologians, philosophers, and poets and cultural figures alike. It has been pointed out that this debate was not limited to philosophy, but was equally concerned with theological questions, and specifically with the relationship between theology and philosophy, as Hegel seemed have to synthesised theology and philosophy once and for all.<sup>120</sup> One of Copenhagen's most illustrious cultural personages, the

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<sup>119</sup> SKS 4, 327-328 / CA, 20.

<sup>120</sup> Marius Timmann Mjaaland, *Autopsia: Self, Death, and God after Kierkegaard and Derrida*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 23.

poet and playwright Johan Ludvig Heiberg wholly embraced and advocated Hegelianism for making a synthesis of philosophy and theology possible.<sup>121</sup> Unlike Heiberg, both Kierkegaard and Martensen reacted critically to Hegel's unification of philosophy and theology,<sup>122</sup> however, as we shall see, for different reasons.

In his memoirs, Martensen notes that Hegel "formed a great antithesis to Schleiermacher," by rejecting that religion should be limited to feeling and piety and complained that modern-day theology had become "emaciated, shrivelled and contentless."<sup>123</sup> In 1822, Hegel makes this specific point, targeting not only Schleiermacherian theology, but also Kantian philosophy, in his foreword to H. F. W. Hinrich's *Die Religion im inneren Verhältnisse zur Wissenschaft*. Hegel begins by noting how the age-old opposition of faith and reason, which has preoccupied not just scholars, but the whole world for centuries, seems to have been finally reconciled. However, Hegel suggests this reconciliation is not genuine since apparent peace can also be born out of an "indifference to the depths of spirit, a peace made up of frivolity and barrenness."<sup>124</sup> Such false reconciliation might arise, writes Hegel, when faith and reason have been devoid of objective content, and simply become matters of subjective conviction. As Hegel notes: "How should there then be the possibility of any great discord between faith and reason if neither of the two any longer comprises any objective content, and thus any object of dispute?"<sup>125</sup> In other words, without their own distinctive objective content there is nothing for reason and faith to disagree about and in this way a false reconciliation has occurred.

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<sup>121</sup>Heiberg, *On the Significance of Philosophy for the Present Age and Other Texts*, (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 2005), 98-99.

<sup>122</sup> This is also noted by J. H. Schjørring, "Martensen" Niels Thulstrup and Marie Mikulová Thulstrup (eds.) *Kierkegaard's Teachers, Bibliotheca Kierkegaardiana* 10, (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel, 1982), 177-207; 197.

<sup>123</sup> *AL I*, 66.

<sup>124</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, "Foreword to Hinrich's *Religion*" in Peter C. Hodgson (ed.) *G.W.F Hegel: Theologian of Spirit*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 155-171; 156.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

Hegel therefore concludes that in both the philosophy and the theology of his day “there swaggers the *beastlike ignorance of God* and the *sophistry of this ignorance* that substitutes individual feeling and subjective opinion for the doctrine of faith as the principles governing rights and duties.”<sup>126</sup> Instead, Hegel not only seeks to set right the relationship between reason and faith, but to thoroughly recast the terms, in order to bring about a genuine reconciliation. Hegel defines philosophy as “the science of thinking reason,” and faith as “the consciousness of and the absolute taking-as-true of the reason provided for representational thinking”.<sup>127</sup> For this reason the common need of both philosophy *and* theology is “*directed to a substantial, objective content of truth.*”<sup>128</sup> What for Hegel most defines the Christian community is that it is a community to which God’s divine Holy Spirit is sent. But for Hegel spirit or *Geist* is not sensuousness or feeling, but only “thinking, knowing, cognizing”, and therefore this spirit leads the Christian community to cognition of God. The Christian community would not exist without this cognition: “What is a theology without cognition of God? Just what a philosophy is without cognition of God, a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal! (1 Cor. 13:1).”<sup>129</sup>

Thus, the relationship between philosophy and religion for Hegel is really the relation between two different forms of cognition, representation (*Vorstellung*) and thought (*Denken*). While philosophy and religion are reconciled because they share content, they are distinguished by their form. Whereas philosophy must take place in thought, religion is connected with representational forms of cognition. We might therefore call into question whether Hegel presents a justifiable distinction between philosophy and theology at all. While he considers the theology of his time to be underdeveloped and the philosophy of his time to be misguided, he for example does not distinguish between the scholastic

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 170-171.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 170.

philosophers and theologians, but explicitly notes that scholastic philosophy is “identical with theology; theology is philosophy and philosophy is theology... These great men—Anselm, Abelard, etc.,—built up theology out of philosophy”.<sup>130</sup> Furthermore, Hegel idiosyncratically critiques Schleiermacher’s *Glaubenslehre*, a theological work, as an argument in epistemology. But more importantly, Hegel does not strictly conduct this discussion of how different disciplines or intellectual economies relate through the classic philosophy-theology distinction, but rather through the level of forms of cognition or thinking.

Martensen thus argues that Hegel made thinking the fundamental power of religion, and thereby honoured theological orthodox dogmas by reproducing them in a “new and fresh form”.<sup>131</sup> In particular, Martensen saw possibilities in Hegel’s dialectic and its sublating movement, or *Aufhebung*, through which a term is both preserved, transformed, and advanced through its dialectical interaction with another concept. However, as Terry Pinkard has noted, the relation of Hegel’s philosophy to Christianity is possibly the most disputed part of his thought precisely because Hegel characterised himself as a Christian philosopher and his thought as Christian truth.<sup>132</sup> This complication also reflects the Golden-Age Danish discussion of Hegel. While Heiberg viewed Hegelianism as a distinctively Christian philosophy based on Christian revelation, in which Hegel’s *Geist* is identical with the Christian God,<sup>133</sup> Martensen questions whether Hegel’s philosophy truly replicates orthodox Protestant Christian truth. He remarks how “serious voices” suggested Hegel’s philosophy conceived of Christian revelation not as truth, but as a “kingdom of representation”, which must be transformed by philosophy from representation into concept (*Begriff*) by

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<sup>130</sup> Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, One-Volume Edition: The Lectures of 1827*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 80.

<sup>131</sup> *AL* 1, 66.

<sup>132</sup> See Terry Pinkard, *German Philosophy 1760-1860 The Legacy of Idealism*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 300.

<sup>133</sup> Heiberg, “Review of Dr Rothe’s *Doctrine of the Trinity and Reconciliation*,” Jon Stewart (ed. and trans.), *Heiberg’s Perseus and Other Texts*, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2011), 113.

philosophy.<sup>134</sup> In other words, philosophy becomes the truth of Christianity. Hegel's thought offered Martensen a way to make objective theological knowledge possible and thus unify philosophy and theology, and for this reason Martensen argues that Hegel's system "has to a great extent advantages over" Kant and Schleiermacher's "subjective theology."<sup>135</sup> However, Martensen rejects that the absolute knowledge Hegel speaks of is the same as "God's own knowledge".<sup>136</sup> For Martensen, Hegel has ignored Christian revelation and wrongly reduced religion to a lesser form of cognition. Martensen seeks instead to invert this structure, uniting philosophy and religion by making revelation the source and culmination point of all knowledge.

For Kierkegaard what has been particularly harmful about Hegel's philosophy is not that it opposes Christianity, but rather that it claims to be in agreement with Christianity, and precisely has blurred the lines between speculative philosophy and faith. Similarly, Kierkegaard's brother, Peter Christian Kierkegaard, remarks that had Hegel directly opposed Christianity, it would have caused much less confusion: "when he according to my conviction distorts [Christianity], uses its expressions to describe his speculative ideas and claims the identity of both, then this playing with words becomes just as tedious as it is the truth-loving man unworthy".<sup>137</sup> Like his brother, Kierkegaard suggests that any agreement between Hegel's philosophy and Christianity has only occurred because Hegel distorted and "changed Xnty,"<sup>138</sup> to make it agree with his philosophy:

now fakery is the only is the only Xnty we have—and this is precisely what is most dangerous.

Thus there is no philosophy more harmful to Xnty than was the Hegelian. For earlier philosophies were at least honest enough to let Xnty be what it is—but Hegel had the effrontery to solve the

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<sup>134</sup> *AL* 1, 66-67.

<sup>135</sup> *MSA*, 108 / *BHK*, 145.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> Letter quoted in Otto Holmgaard, *Peter Christian Kierkegaard. Grundtvigs Lærling* (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger, 1953), 20-21 (my translation).

<sup>138</sup> *SKS* 24, 442-443, NB25:7 / *KJN* 8, 449.

problem of speculation and Xnty by distorting Xnty.”<sup>139</sup>

This confusion becomes even more evident when we consider more closely the way in which Hegel conceives of religion as a form of thinking. As Nicholas Adams has pointed out, in contrast to the dominant view that for Hegel Christianity, religion and theology must ultimately be superseded to reach the pinnacle of philosophy’s conceptual truth, representation is *still* a form of thought, which Hegel does not necessarily displace, but even preserves.<sup>140</sup> But for Kierkegaard it is precisely the fact that religion is made a kind of thinking that represents Hegel’s distortion. With this, Hegel’s concrete distinction between philosophy and theology becomes even less clear. In his 1827 Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, Hegel emphasises that because religion and philosophy have the exact same object, God as the eternal truth, philosophy “is only explicating *itself* when it explicates religion, and when it explicates itself it is explicating religion... religion and philosophy coincide in one.”<sup>141</sup> Hegel therefore notes that the opposition between faith and thinking is an entirely false one:

Faith and thought have so often been opposed to one another that it is said “one can be convinced of God and of the truths of religion in no other way than through the way of thinking”. But the witness of the spirit can be present in various different ways. It is not required that truth be produced for everyone in philosophical ways...It depends on one’s state of development.<sup>142</sup>

This opposition is false because for Hegel philosophy and religion are not two opposing spheres, but simply different forms of thinking, which produce the same faith. In witnessing the spirit, Hegel argues, human beings do not simply remain in the immediacy of this

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<sup>139</sup> SKS 25, 272, NB28:69 / KJN 9, 274.

<sup>140</sup> Nicholas Adams, *Eclipse of Grace: Divine and Human Action in Hegel*, (Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 174.

<sup>141</sup> Hegel, *Lectures of 1827*, 78.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 398.

testimony, but start to deliberate and consider this witness. It is these thoughts and deliberations that result in a developed religion, and the most developed form of this religion is “theology or scientific religion.”<sup>143</sup> Unlike simply religious people who “do nothing but read the bible...and...lead a very pious, religious life,” true theologians seek to explain, interpret and discover the Bible’s meaning and thus “embark upon the process of reasoning, reflection, thinking”, in other words, theology *is* a form of thinking. Philosophy on the other hand is “the investigation of these forms of thought,”<sup>144</sup> that is, philosophy is a form of second-order discourse, that investigates theological thinking, rather than being theology itself. Philosophy cannot do the kind of thinking theology does, and theology is unable to investigate its own thinking, but requires philosophy to do so. For this reason, Hegel notes “theology itself does not know what it wants when it turns against philosophy”.<sup>145</sup>

Just as Kierkegaard believes that philosophers like Hegel have forgotten that they exist,<sup>146</sup> Hegel states that theologians have forgotten that they *think*: “Theologians are like the Englishman who didn’t know that he was speaking prose; because they work exegetically...in a passively receptive way, [they] have no inkling of the fact that they are thereby active and reflective.”<sup>147</sup> The result of this according to Hegel is that theology no longer is able to think the divine: “if thinking is merely contingent, it abandons itself to the categories of finite content, of finitude, of finite thinking, and is incapable of comprehending the divine in the content.”<sup>148</sup> Because of this finite thinking, Hegel argues that Christianity’s truths have disappeared from dogmatic theology and instead “are conserved and preserved by philosophy”.<sup>149</sup> By neglecting the philosophical investigation into its own thinking, theology

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 400.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 402.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> See for example *SKS* 18, 302, *JJ*:488 / *KJN* 2, 279; see also *SKS* 7, 282 / *CUP*, 309.

<sup>147</sup> Hegel, *Lectures of 1827*, 403.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 403-404.

has catastrophically lost Christianity's truth, which it can only regain through establishing the proper relationship with philosophy. Concluding the *1827 Lectures*, Hegel suggests that the theological or religious content—God's reconciliation with his creation and himself as the Trinity—is finally expressed in philosophy through the process of thinking which seeks and is not satisfied before it reaches philosophical thinking, thus reconciling theological content and philosophical form. This reconciliation *is*

philosophy. Philosophy is to this extent theology. It presents the reconciliation of God with himself and with nature, showing that nature, otherness, is implicitly divine... This reconciliation is the peace of God, which does not "surpass all reason" but is rather the peace that *through* reason is first known and thought and is recognized as what is true.<sup>150</sup>

In other words, reason can only be recognised as truth through the peace of God (Phil 4.6). Philosophy as theology *is* the reconciliation, or the place where the movement of thought which seeks unity finally finds rest. Adams suggests that Hegel can ultimately be viewed as "a willing servant to theology," albeit also "a servant frustrated with his queen"<sup>151</sup> because the queen thinks she has no need for servants. And yet, perhaps this simply brings us full circle, back to Kant's ambiguous question of whether philosophy as theology's handmaiden goes behind theology carrying its train or before theology with the lamp, which Kierkegaard found so amusing, for it seems unclear on which side Hegel falls—something which is expressed by the two very different factions into which his later followers would divide themselves.

Whereas Martensen is keen to invert the idea that philosophy is the truth of religion, he is not troubled by Hegel's blurring of the borders between philosophy, theology, and even Christianity. By contrast, it is this confusion of philosophy and Christianity and with it the

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 489.

<sup>151</sup> Adams, *Eclipse of Grace*, 178.

distortion and reduction of Christianity into a kind of thinking that in particular turns Kierkegaard against Hegel. Unlike Martensen, there is no ambiguity in Kierkegaard's assessment of Hegel as he declares Hegel's philosophy to be entirely opposed to true Christianity rather than united with it.<sup>152</sup> Kierkegaard declares that Hegel could not be further apart from true Christianity, for where Hegel ends, Christianity begins.<sup>153</sup> In this way Martensen's and Kierkegaard's readings and commentaries on Kant, Schleiermacher, and Hegel helped shape and clarify their own contrasting views and approaches to the blurring of philosophy and theology's boundary.

This breakdown in clear distinction between these spheres was decried in the 1830s by the poet Heinrich Heine who contends that as soon as "religion looks to philosophy for help, its downfall is inevitable,"<sup>154</sup> as German scholars "performed countless experiments on" religion; wanted "to renew its youth", and drained religion of "the blood of superstition".<sup>155</sup> Later the intermingling of these spheres would prompt Friedrich Nietzsche to exclaim that German philosophy is at its core "an underhanded theology."<sup>156</sup> This link so polemically identified by Nietzsche has more recently been pointed out by Gary Dorrien, who argues that Kantian and post-Kantian idealism played an instrumental role in the founding of modern Christian theology.<sup>157</sup> This close, overlapping relation of German philosophy and theology is similarly seen in the intellectual atmosphere of Golden-Age Denmark, and a principal theme

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<sup>152</sup> Already in his AA Journals, Kierkegaard demonstrates a critical stance towards Hegel: "Insofar as Hegel was fructified by Xnty, he tried to skim off the humorous element in it... and thus reconciled himself completely with the world, ending in a quietism" (SKS 17, 49, AA:36 / KJN 1, 42).

<sup>153</sup> See SKS 23, 68, NB15:96 / KJN 7, 67. In this entry, Kierkegaard also notes that "the misunderstanding is simply that Hegel think that *there* he is finished with Christianity—indeed he has gone much farther. It is simply impossible for me to refrain from laughing whenever I think of Hegel's comprehending Xnty, which defies comprehension." (SKS 23, 68-69, NB15:96 / KJN 7, 67).

<sup>154</sup> Heinrich Heine, *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany and Other Writings*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 64.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>156</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 9.

<sup>157</sup> See Gary Dorrien, *Kantian Reason and Hegelian Spirit: The Idealistic Logic of Modern Theology*, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

of Danish Golden-Age philosophy is its intricate relationship to theology, and vice versa. The close intermingling of philosophy and theology especially manifested itself and can be considered a prevalent feature of both the philosophy and theology faculties of the University of Copenhagen in the first half of the nineteenth century, and specifically during Martensen's and Kierkegaard's student years.

## **1.2 Philosophy and Theology at the University of Copenhagen**

The University of Copenhagen was founded in 1479 as part of the Roman Catholic church, with the traditional four faculties of Theology, Law, Medicine and Philosophy. However, theology was the most important and largest faculty, as the university's main purpose then and for centuries was to educate church officials. After the Reformation, in 1537, it was re-established as a Lutheran seminary. Moreover, the university was founded on profoundly theological grounds as a way to alleviate and correct the effects of the Fall, which had given rise to the "misfortune that mortal humans, if they did not establish laws and customs to live according to, would prefer to lead a brutish rather than a human life."<sup>158</sup> The university was thus perceived as responsible for the moral and religious upbringing of its students and its employees and science itself served a normative function as a kind of spiritual police educating and bringing up god-fearing and law-abiding humans capable of abandoning their sinful natural inclinations.<sup>159</sup> However, in 1788 a comprehensive reform brought about significant changes throughout the university. The university shifted from a main focus on educating clergy to a two-part focus on educating church *and* state officials. By the time Martensen and Kierkegaard matriculated into the university, Danish academic theology and philosophy were entrenched in the rationalism of the German philosopher Christian Wolff

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<sup>158</sup> Jan Pinborg (ed.), *Universitas studii Hafnensis: Stiftelsesdokumenter og statutter 1479*, (Copenhagen: Hafniae, 1979), 102.

<sup>159</sup> Gritt Bykærholm Nielsen and Nathalia Brichet, "Det Frie Universitet: Forestillinger om universitetets frihed og nytte fra 1479 til 2003," *Uddannelseshistorie*, 41, 2007, 65-87; 68.

(1679–1754), which emphasised ordered and clear explication of all subjects through the power of reason. By contrast, figures such as the revivalist pastor N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783–1872) and the theologian and later Bishop of Zealand J. P. Mynster (1775–1854) sought to bring about spiritual awakening in Danish theology and religious life. An increasing contrast between religious life and university theology developed, propelling the latter into a deepening crisis and a sense arose that it had to be renewed through philosophy. The major Danish philosophers saw their philosophical task to be the formulation of a Christian philosophy relevant to real Christian life. The fluid borders between these faculties is further demonstrated by the fact that the majority of the university's philosophy professors were originally trained in theology, while numerous theology professors likewise held degrees in philosophy and wrote on moral philosophy, and often theology and philosophy professors taught in both faculties.

The less-than-clear boundary between philosophy and theology is also reflected in Martensen and Kierkegaard's own student experiences. Martensen matriculated in 1827 and submitted his licentiate thesis in theology ten years later in 1837. Martensen spent his first year studying philosophy, but ultimately decided to pursue theology. While Martensen was greatly influenced by leading theologians of the time, such as Mynster, Grundtvig, and the Chair of Theology H. N. Clausen, it was especially the university's Chair of Philosophy, F. C. Sibbern, who shaped the young theologian's thought in the direction of the speculative theology, for which he would become so famous. Kierkegaard matriculated four years after Martensen in 1831, enrolling in the Theological Faculty at the wish of his father. Although Kierkegaard completed his theology degree in 1840, he pursued advanced studies not in theology, but in philosophy, completing his magister in philosophy in 1841 with his

dissertation *The Concept of Irony* supervised by Sibbern.<sup>160</sup> Despite both being (mainly) theology students, Martensen and Kierkegaard drew their main inspiration not from the university's theologians, but from its philosophers.

### *1.2.1 The Philosophical Faculty and the Question of Theology 1800-1838*

Just as Kant describes in *Conflict*, the Philosophical Faculty was considered the lower of the four faculties. While the 1788 reform brought about increased independence for the Philosophical Faculty as the training of clergy was no longer the university's only purpose, essentially the philosophical faculty functioned as a type of "pre-schooling" in study skills to train students in the higher faculty in the approaches of scientific [*videnskabelig*] research. Every student was therefore required to take the philosophical pre-exam, the *filosofikum*, as part of their general education. The 1788 charter outlined the learning outcomes of this exam as "skills that might be necessary and useful for everyone, whatever main field of study one has chosen."<sup>161</sup> This very broad definition and lack of a distinct identity therefore makes it challenging to characterise philosophy as a separate discipline in the University of Copenhagen. The Philosophical Faculty was really a hodgepodge of what today would be categorised as the humanities encompassing everything from philology and languages to history, literature, and, of course, the actual philosophical disciplines, (for example metaphysics, aesthetics, logic, and ethics). However, following the 1788 reforms, these philosophical disciplines were taught by only two professors; Børge Riisbrigh (1731-1809)

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<sup>160</sup> In the introduction to the recent 2019 edited volume *The Kierkegaardian Mind*, it is incorrectly stated that Kierkegaard "almost never refers to himself as a philosopher, and while his magisterial thesis was largely focused on philosophy...it was actually written for a theology degree." (Adam Buben, Eleanor Helms, and Patrick Stokes, "Introduction: Kierkegaard's Life, Context, and Legacy," in Buben, Helms, and Stokes (eds.) *The Kierkegaardian Mind*, (New York: Routledge, 2019), 1-14; 8).

<sup>161</sup> Quoted from Ole B. Thomsen, *Embedsstudiernes universitet: En undersøgelse af Københavns universitets fundats af 1788 som grundlag for vores nuværende studiestruktur, Vol II*, (Copenhagen, Akademisk Forlag, 1975), 704 ff. (my translation).

and Anders Gamborg (1753-1833) both of whom were Wolffian rationalists originally trained in theology.

Prior to this the philosophy at the University of Copenhagen could be characterised as a form of primitive, schematic Aristotelianism as found in other Protestant universities in Northern Europe. In the 1740's, however, Wolffian rationalism became the *Schulphilosophie* of the period dominating not only academia, but also wider Danish culture.<sup>162</sup> However, towards the end of the eighteenth-century, while David Hume's scepticism rocked the Wolffian confidence in human reason, it was Kant's thought that sounded the death knell for Wolff's rationalism in Denmark. Although Riisbrigh and Gamborg remained critical of Kantian transcendental philosophy, they were unable to extinguish their students' and younger academics' enthusiasm. In an anonymously published journal from 1795, established by the theology graduate Malthe Møller, Kantian philosophy was celebrated and described as overtly Christian, as Kant "developed...from the spiritual nature of the human being, that great theme, which Jesus in ancient times established, and kept his promise: 'He shall receive of mine, and shall show unto you'."<sup>163</sup> This verse from John 16:14 was traditionally interpreted as a prophesy about the works of the Holy Spirit, and thus Kant is here described as fulfilling a divine promise. However, in contrast, Tyge Rothe, a Danish author and historian, opposed Kant precisely on religious grounds because Rothe believed Kant's limitations on reason ran counter to Christianity itself. Rothe states that Christianity is "a practical moral system," a "system of religion," that "must be based on general reason, that is ideas and truths, which unconditionally apply to the human in his condition; it thus becomes

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<sup>162</sup> See Svend Erik Stybe, "Filosofi" in *Københavns universitet 1479-1979, vol. X: Det filosofiske Fakultet*, (Copenhagen: Gad, 1980), 1-134; 28. See also the introduction in Carl Henrik Koch, *Dansk oplysningsfilosofi 1700-1800*, (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2003).

<sup>163</sup> Malthe Christian Møller (ed.), *Repertorium for Fædrelandets Religionslærere, Hefte 1* (Copenhagen, 1795), 26f. This first issue is dedicated to Professor of Philosophy Børge Riisbrigh.

a system of reason.”<sup>164</sup> Danish academic theology would therefore continue to cling to Wolffianism even up to the middle of the nineteenth century. In Danish philosophy, however, Kant’s philosophy formed a transition to Romantic thought and idealism in which the distinction between *Ding-an-sich* and *Ding-für-uns* was collapsed, and the real world was considered identical with what appears to human consciousness. J. G. Fichte, F. W. J. Schelling, and later Hegel, became the next fashionable philosophers in Denmark, and Romanticism and Idealism would dominate Danish philosophy, theology, and cultural life until positivism’s entrance in the 1880s. Danish academia was thus inextricably linked with the development of German thought. However, the best way to get a sense of the character and tendencies of Danish philosophy at this time, is to take a closer look at three Danish philosophers of the nineteenth century who set the tone and agenda: Henrik Steffens, F. C. Sibbern, and Poul Martin Møller, who all sought to bring together philosophy and religious life.

### *Henrik Steffens*

Of the three, Henrik Steffens (1773–1845) is a bit of an outlier as he was never employed by Copenhagen University despite his own aspirations.<sup>165</sup> His acclaimed lecture series *Indledning til Philosophiske Forelæsninger* are today viewed as the starting point of Danish Romanticism, as Steffens, like Coleridge in England, is credited with introducing German idealism and Romantic philosophy into Danish intellectual life—movements which would dominate Danish thought for almost a century. Steffens’ lectures are important, because, as Hal Koch points out, they defined a specific task for philosophy—a task which combined

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<sup>164</sup> Tyge Rothe, *Om Hierarkiet og Pave-Magten: eller Kirke-Regimentet fra de Apostoliske Tider af, indtil Reformationen*, Første Deel (Copenhagen: Augustin Friedrich Stein, 1778), 22.

<sup>165</sup> Steffens had hoped for a position in the Philosophical Faculty, but it went to the rationalist Niels Treschow, a critic of Kantian and post-Kantian philosophy.

philosophy and religion.<sup>166</sup>

Steffens began his academic career as a natural scientist, but a study trip to Germany, during which he met Schelling, Fichte, and German Romantics such as Novalis, Ludwig Tieck and the Schlegels, impelled him to pursue philosophy. Schelling in particular had a strong impact on Steffens, as his philosophy presented a holistic world in which the thinking human being was fully embraced. Within this world, nothing exists without its counterpart, and yet all opposing concepts ultimately join together expressing the wholeness of the world. This idea significantly shaped Steffens' philosophy and permeates his famous lectures.

Of this series only the introductory lectures are preserved. These were given in November 1802 at the student dormitory Eler's Kollegium in Copenhagen, attended by a large crowd, including such household Golden-Age figures, such as Steffens' then 19-year-old cousin Grundtvig, Mynster, the poet Adam Oehlenschläger, A.C. Ørsted the later Prime Minister of Denmark and his brother H.C. Ørsted, the physicist and later rector of the university. The cultural importance of these lectures cannot be underestimated, as Kondrup writes: "The rhythm of nineteenth-century Danish intellectual life was punctuated by three epoch-making lecture series,"<sup>167</sup> with the first of these being Steffens' lectures; the second Martensen's 1837-1838 "Lectures on the History of Philosophy from Kant to Hegel in its relation to Theology", and the third, Georg Brandes' 1871 lectures on "Emigrant Literature", which signalled the end of the nineteenth century's idealism.

In strongly Schellingian terms, Steffens states that: "Philosophy...must become a living system, not a dead classification."<sup>168</sup> The aim of his lectures, Steffens explains, is to introduce to his listeners the problem of philosophy by means of awakening "*Ahnelser*", which Steffens defines as a sense of the presence of something eternal in the finite world. It is

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<sup>166</sup> Hal Koch, *Den Danske Kirkes Historie VI, 1800-1848* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1954), 133

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>168</sup> Henrik Steffens, *Indledning til filosofiske forelæsninger* (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzels Forlag, 1996), 11 (my translation).

through *ahnelse*, not facts or evidence, that truth is discovered. *Ahnelse* might here be translated as inkling or intuition (*Anschauung*). However, it seems that Steffens may have chosen *ahnelse* rather than the more typical Danish *anskuelse*, precisely to set himself apart from Schelling. Steffens defines the problem of philosophy in his eighth lecture as the “imprint of the Eternal,” revealed in history and which “must be comprehended [*erkjendes*] by a view, which independent of time, comprehends the Eternal itself as its centre. To find this is the problem of philosophy.”<sup>169</sup> In other words, the object of philosophy is the infinite and the eternal’s mark on the finite world, and this problem is not simply an objective scientific pursuit, but requires personal, individual engagement: “Each person must give this problem to them self before it can be solved in a satisfactory way. Every person must solve their own problem.”<sup>170</sup>

Steffens argues that originally the source of all being is religion and thus the eternal was immediately comprehensible and perceivable to human beings.<sup>171</sup> In Greek Antiquity, however, this “religious centre”, which “connects humans and nation, gives lustre to their lives, depth to their thought, and meaning to their action,”<sup>172</sup> died away leaving only a finite reality in which the eternal is no longer immediately known. With the rise of Christianity a reconciling divine principle manifests itself as Christianity despises the finite and its meaninglessness, and points to the eternal. Catholicism forms the first attempt to reintroduce religion and thus mythology back into life, but was destroyed by the Enlightenment’s irreligious “restrictive mass of reason,”<sup>173</sup> which continues to mark the present day. Steffens views Protestantism to oppose the Enlightenment because of its focus on the individual in which *ahnelse* is precisely to be found. Protestantism finds its highest expression in German

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 120-21, 123.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid., 140.

idealism and Romanticism, which Steffens believes will accomplish a spiritual renewal in history, for this “newer, awake Philosophy promises a more magnificent time”.<sup>174</sup> Steffens thus implies a reciprocal and overlapping relation between theology and philosophy: Protestantism is best expressed by Romantic philosophy or idealism, and religion must be renewed by philosophy. Philosophy in turn finds its source and object in the eternal, or in God.

The final introductory lecture discusses the relationship between the infinite and finite. Steffens ultimately rejects the possibility of the finite human grasping the infinite, but emphasises the necessity of the individual *attempting* or *striving* to raise itself to a view of the eternal to avoid deadly scepticism. Kierkegaard therefore compares Steffens to the “honest” Kant,<sup>175</sup> as Steffens acknowledges the impossibility of cognising the infinite. Yet, Steffens also suggests it is existentially necessary to cling to the infinite.<sup>176</sup> Steffens concludes by arguing that the infinite and finite presuppose and depend on each other, yet we can only ever have an *ahnelse* of the infinite. Ultimately, the question of whether this *ahnelse* can really be the basis of our knowledge is a matter of faith:

We claimed that all finite things merely have their reality in and by the eternal, and yet we deduced the eternal from the finite, and yet a reality of the finite must again be established by the eternal. It is an obvious circle... The eternal became a mere *ahnelse*. Can an *ahnelse* be the foundation for all evidence? All that I have presented collapses with the most simple scepticism. Our absolute axiom must stand on its own—or our whole philosophy has no reality.<sup>177</sup>

For Steffens, then, philosophy is the highest science because it aims to cognise the eternal on the basis of the finite. However, this is a subjective, rather than objective task, which cannot

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>175</sup> SKS 20, 229, NB2: 235 / KJN 4, 229.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 153.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 155.

be fully achieved, as knowledge of the divine and the eternal has to be a matter of faith. Despite this Steffens emphasises that the individual must strive to fulfil this task of philosophy by seeking out the infinite even though it goes beyond the scope of human cognition. These closing remarks express not only a remarkable intellectual honesty, but also a deep intellectual vulnerability or precariousness as Steffens acknowledges that this philosophical task becomes a leap of faith.

Despite the later impact of these lectures, their immediate reception was poor, as Steffens' system was too fanciful to appeal to philosophers at the time. Grundtvig scoffed at his cousin's lectures stating that Steffens "wanted to bring down Kant and Fichte and raise himself on their ruins."<sup>178</sup> However, 40 years later, Grundtvig remembers Steffens as the thinker who replaced dry rationalist theology with living religion.<sup>179</sup> Steffens' task for philosophy would be taken up in Danish academic philosophy, specifically by Sibbern and Møller, who both sought to formulate philosophies that supported the whole of life in general and religious life in particular.

### *Frederik Christian Sibbern*

As a 17-year-old, Frederik Christian Sibbern (1785–1872) attended one of Steffens' first lectures and was entirely unimpressed. The young Sibbern deemed Steffens' ideas the ramblings of a mad man and refused to go to the remaining lectures. A decade later Sibbern would rank Steffens above Schleiermacher, Fichte, and Schelling.<sup>180</sup> Sibbern himself played a major role in the development of Danish philosophy and was both highly esteemed as a philosopher and greatly beloved as a person. Martensen describes how conversations with

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<sup>178</sup>N. F. S. Grundtvig, *Dag- og Udtogsbøger 1*, (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1979), 16.

<sup>179</sup> In a commemorative poem "Henrich Steffens" published a month after Steffens' death in February 1845, Grundtvig likens Steffens to the angel who removed the stone from Christ's tomb and to Thor and Odin in Norse mythology. (*Berlingske Tidende*, March 14th, 1845). Poul Martin Møller also wrote a poem entitled "Hilsen til Henrik Steffens".

<sup>180</sup> See Jens Himmelstrup, *Sibbern: En monografi*, (Copenhagen: J. H. Schultz, 1934), 17.

Sibbern gained their unique appeal from their “unaffectedness and natural freshness that also marked his individuality and which entailed that one felt renewed and refreshed every time one spoke with him.”<sup>181</sup> Hans Christian Andersen wishfully wrote of Sibbern: “If only every poet was as much a philosopher, as this philosopher has proven he is a poet.”<sup>182</sup>

Sibbern, a law graduate, completed his doctorate in philosophy in 1811. The then Chair of Philosophy, Niels Treschow, Riisbrigh’s successor, recommended Sibbern as his replacement. Before undertaking the professorship, Sibbern embarked on the obligatory grand tour in Germany, where he met illustrious figures like Fichte, Schleiermacher, Goethe, Schelling, and Hegel before taking up the philosophy chair in 1813. Sibbern held this post for a remarkable 57 years from 1813 until 1870, when he reluctantly retired, and he lectured and wrote on everything from logic, metaphysics, aesthetics to psychology, ethics and politics.

Sibbern’s philosophy echoed Schelling’s and Steffens’ philosophical searches for unity and their emphasis on dynamism and life as this principle of unity. Carl Henrik Koch suggests that Sibbern’s philosophy can be defined as a personalist humanist *Bildungsphilosophie*, as the geological, biological, and cultural world develops teleologically and dialectically towards human beings’ realisation as autonomous individuals. The final goal of this development is, as Koch writes, “the full and complete development of the human being as a moral and spiritual being, that is, as a person.”<sup>183</sup> In a strong nod to Kant, Sibbern viewed the full development of the human being as a person to result in the realisation of what he termed “the Realm of God”. Sibbern thus viewed the culmination of philosophy to be a philosophy of Christianity, which he strived to formulate for years, but never completed. This was likely due Sibbern’s own changing views of Christianity, as he

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<sup>181</sup> *AL* 1, 64.

<sup>182</sup> Hans Christian Andersen, *Vignetter til danske Digtere*, (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1832), 30.

<sup>183</sup> Carl Henrik Koch, “Frederik Christian Sibbern: ‘The lovable, remarkable thinker, Councillor Sibbern,’ and ‘the political Simple-Peter Sibbern,’” in Jon Stewart (ed.), *Kierkegaard and his Danish Contemporaries: Tome I, Philosophy*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 229-260; 234.

would later promote an unorthodox Christian humanism free from dogmas and faith, distilling Christianity's essence to a moral philosophy based on neighbour love.<sup>184</sup>

Furthermore, he became deeply critical of the Danish Church, and argued that religion's worth came purely from being independently appropriated through personal engagement.<sup>185</sup> Some of these views would prompt Kierkegaard to note that Sibbern "has become an empty-head [*Tossehoved*] in recent years,"<sup>186</sup> and distinguish between Sibbern, the "loveable, idiosyncratic thinker", and Sibbern, the "political simpleton [*Tosse-Peer*]."<sup>187</sup> Insofar as he articulated it, Sibbern's philosophy of Christianity can be characterised as a speculative theology where Christianity and philosophy could find a unity that compromised neither thought, faith, nor revelation.

In 1829, Sibbern was accused of allowing philosophy to overtake theology in his works on psychology.<sup>188</sup> Sibbern's response is in many ways an ambiguous one, warning against the intermingling of theology (specifically dogmatics) and philosophy, but also highlighting the profound philosophical and speculative moments of Christianity. Sibbern writes that his accuser fails to recognise that the separation of theology and philosophy can only occur if theology limits itself to presenting the Christian dogmas and avoids anything philosophical.<sup>189</sup> But while theology can avoid mixing with philosophy, philosophy should

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<sup>184</sup> See for example, Sibbern, *Bidrag til at opklare den christelige og kirkelige Frihed saavel i Almindelighed som med Hensyn til Danmark i Særdeleshed*, (Copenhagen: Schulz, 1847), in which Sibbern notes that one can still belong to the kingdom of Christ without knowing Christ. In his *Om den christelige Ytringsfrihed i kirkelig Henseende*, (Copenhagen: Schulz, 1846), Sibbern furthermore contests the Bible's central importance for Lutheranism, instead noting that the "Spirit's free activity...should ultimately alone become our Alpha and Omega," (Ibid., 55).

<sup>185</sup> See, Sibbern, *Meddelelser af Indholdet af et Skrift fra Aaret 2135*, vols 1-2, (Copenhagen: 1858-1878). This strange work of science fiction remained unfinished, but in particular contains Sibbern's later criticism of religion and his own age. See also, Stybe, "Filosofi", 52.

<sup>186</sup> *SKS* 22, 85, NB11:146 / *KJN* 6, 81.

<sup>187</sup> *SKS* 27, 493-494, *Pap.* 416 (my translation).

<sup>188</sup> Sibbern first wrote the psychological work *Menneskets aandelige Natur og Væsen: Et Udkast til en Psychologie* (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandel, 1819) and one year later in 1820 published the continuation of his first work, *Psychologisk Patologi*, later published as *Læren om de menneskelige Følelser og Lidenskaber* (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel, 1828), which was reprinted up until 1885.

<sup>189</sup> Sibbern, "Bidrag til Bestemmelsen af Philosophiens Forhold til Theologien. Et Gjensvar paa en imod mig nedlagt Protest," in his *Philosophiskt Archiv og Repertorium*, vol 1, (Copenhagen: [Published by Sibbern], 1829), 58-92; 59 (my translation).

not be denied the right but rather be encouraged to make theological content the object of its study and observation.<sup>190</sup> In other words, Sibbern here views philosophy as a general discipline, which may not have its own specific subject matter, but which as an auxiliary science can shed light on any object. Whereas philosophy is the *spirit* of Christian knowledge, Sibbern maintains that it is the faithful practicing Christian, who is the “soul of the entire Christian existence, in which the philosophical is only a moment”.<sup>191</sup> And yet, philosophy, Sibbern cannot help but add, “is an essential fundamental moment,” which for all times has been in “living movement in the Christian church”.<sup>192</sup> Sibbern even argues that such a philosophical-speculative element can be found not just in Luther, but in Paul too, who “on almost each page of his letters” sets the “speculative in movement in us.”<sup>193</sup> Sibbern summarises his hope of showing “that the claim that avoiding all so-called intermingling of theology and philosophy, belongs to the commonly occurring claims, which are easily made, but just as easily fall away again.”<sup>194</sup> Although Sibbern ultimately attempts to defend himself from the charge of mixing philosophy and theology, he moves back and forth between these positions, and ultimately cannot resist noting that despite this separation “must not the theologian and philosopher necessarily have something to do with each other?”<sup>195</sup>

Nevertheless, as Stewart has pointed out, Sibbern would more explicitly align himself with Schleiermacher’s separation of dogmatics and philosophy. In an article on what dogmatics is with reference to Schleiermacher from 1830, Sibbern writes, “pure philosophical propositions can never as such become theological ones, and genuine theological propositions can never become pure philosophical ones.”<sup>196</sup> Thus Sibbern

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>196</sup> Sibbern, “Bidrag til Besvarelsen af det Spørgsmaal: Hvad er Dogmatik. Indledet ved en Kritik af Schleiermachers Begreb derom,” *Philosophiskt Archiv og Repertorium*, vol 3 (Copenhagen: [Published by

distinguishes between Christian *philosophy* and Christian *faith*, respectively, the spirit and soul of Christianity. Philosophy and faith must exist in an interactive, reciprocal relationship as philosophy must strengthen and clarify faith, but faith is the presupposition for this philosophy because faith reveals Christ as saviour. As Sibbern writes in 1838: “The point is not that philosophy...or a Christian philosophy should take the place of Christian faith. That would be as strange and unnatural as letting one’s philosophy of love replacing love itself. The foundation of love can never be anything but love itself.”<sup>197</sup> Philosophy still has the central task of speculatively clarifying “everything given—all of the real content of life.”<sup>198</sup> It is this emphasis on clarity and truth as a meeting point of thought and faith that Martensen picks up. He had attended Sibbern’s 1833-34 lectures on the Philosophy of Christianity (as had Kierkegaard), and describes how Sibbern helped him realise that if

Christianity is the highest power on earth, it cannot merely be in practical life but also in the world of thought, it must be able to answer the human thought’s deepest questions—insofar as such answers are possible within the limits of worldly life; it should not merely appeal to the individual human being’s heart, but must also set a comprehensive world-view into motion.<sup>199</sup>

Martensen finds in Sibbern a focus on uniting thought and practical religious life. From this Martensen infers that Christianity should not just be a practical guide to life, but also be able to answer the deepest philosophical questions and form a “comprehensive world-view”. Martensen recalls that for Sibbern religion and speculation were unified, and that Sibbern considered it his calling to validate this unification, although not all would understand it. Martensen conceives of Sibbern’s Christian philosophy ultimately as a speculative theology,

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Sibbern, 1830], 277 (Jon Stewart’s translation, see Stewart, “The Relation between Philosophy and Christianity,” 159-160.

<sup>197</sup> Sibbern, *Bemærkninger og Undersøgelser fornemmelig betræffende Hegels Philosophie* (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1838), 63.

<sup>198</sup> Sibbern, *Bemærkninger og Undersøgelser*, 68.

<sup>199</sup> *AL* 1, 62-63.

which went beyond not just rationalism, but orthodoxy too.<sup>200</sup> Sibbern was thus a crucial influence on Martensen, especially during his formative student years.<sup>201</sup>

However, Sibbern's philosophy is also defined by his rejection of Hegelian idealism. Sibbern dismisses Hegel's idea of existence being identical with absolute spirit and instead presents an alternative metaphysics of a material reality, of which the human spirit can gradually gain some knowledge. Cognition and knowledge are gained from the individual striving to organise itself into the whole.<sup>202</sup> According to Sibbern, Hegel disregards the fact that truth functions as an external power that must be cognised and appropriated by personal insight and affection as well as by will. In his textbooks on psychology, Sibbern develops the idea that thinking, feeling, and willing are always connected or "collateral" and not isolated faculties.<sup>203</sup> This is required to give life to cognition and help the individual acquire truth personally. This triad of faculties underpins Sibbern's understanding of knowledge: we only fully possess the object of knowledge insofar as its truth has been appropriated personally, and when this truth is something that moves us to action.<sup>204</sup> Sibbern argues that Hegel's absolute idea is empty of content and never realised in actual existence,<sup>205</sup> and criticises Hegel for articulating a philosophy too abstract to have any connection to real life. Sibbern would explain this to a young Kierkegaard who had asked him what relation existed between philosophy and life in reality during a meeting on *Gammeltorv*, Copenhagen's oldest square. Sibbern recounts how this struck him because he believed his whole philosophy to be concerned with penetrating reality and life,<sup>206</sup> and declared that in contrast Hegel offered no

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>201</sup> See also Thompson, "Introduction", in Kangas and Thompson, *Between Hegel and Kierkegaard*, 5.

<sup>202</sup> Stybe, "Filosofi," 49-50.

<sup>203</sup> Sibbern, *Bemærkninger og Undersøgelser*, 12. See also Gregor Malantschuk's discussion of Sibbern's concept of "collateral" in *Kierkegaard's Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 126-130.

<sup>204</sup> See Sibbern, "Om den Maade hvorpaa Contradictionsprincipet behandles i den hegelske skole, med mere, som henhører til de logiske Grundbetragtninger," in *Maanedsskrift for Litteratur*, 19, 1838, 424-60; 455.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 324, 325.

<sup>206</sup> Quoted in Bruce H. Kirmmse (ed. and trans.), *Encounters with Kierkegaard: A Life as Seen by His Contemporaries*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 215-216.

relation between philosophy and life. Kierkegaard would later note that Sibbern, despite being a professional philosopher, is also someone who philosophises in private, and “thus actually philosophizes in order to philosophize,” in contrast to most people, who think making a living is the most decisive thing in life.<sup>207</sup>

Sibbern is thus also an important teacher for Kierkegaard, and, as Gregor Malantschuk has argued, one in whom Kierkegaard found a model for a non-Hegelian form of philosophical and dialectical thinking, as Sibbern insisted that philosophy must take into account the fullness and richness of real, lived life. This fullness and richness was precisely gained and expressed through contradictory pairs, such as thought and existence, which would outline the content of the whole.<sup>208</sup> However, as Malantschuk notes, Kierkegaard also moved beyond Sibbern.<sup>209</sup> If Sibbern can be said to be the teacher who “gave the most” to Martensen, the teacher who gave the most to Kierkegaard would be Poul Martin Møller.

### *Poul Martin Møller*

In 1830 Sibbern gained a new colleague in the Philosophical Faculty, the poet-philosopher, Poul Martin Møller (1794–1838). Møller studied theology in Copenhagen’s Theological Faculty from 1812-1816 and graduated with top marks. After graduating, Møller began serious studies in classical philology, translated several books of the *Odyssey* and wrote his own poetry and prose. After a stint as a ship’s pastor, Møller taught Greek and Latin in a number of schools in Copenhagen, including to Martensen, who recalls “the brilliant, unforgettable Poul Møller,” whom he and his fellow students “admirably looked up to, and who, without trying, exercised such fruitful influence on us.”<sup>210</sup> Sibbern, who was drawn to Møller’s thought, regularly tried to persuade him to pursue philosophy, and eventually Møller

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<sup>207</sup> *SKS* 20, 43, NB41 / *KJN* 4, 42.

<sup>208</sup> See the chapter on “Kierkegaard’s Dialectical Method,” in Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard’s Thought*, 103-178.

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>210</sup> *AL* 1, 16.

was appointed Professor in Philosophy at the University of Copenhagen, where he lectured on moral philosophy, the history of modern and ancient philosophy, metaphysics, logic, psychology, and more.

There seems to be some sense among today's scholars that Møller did not fully live up to his potential. Stewart for example notes that one of the reasons for Møller's obscurity is his mixed profile as a scholar who dabbled in many fields but never composed a true *magnum opus*. Finn Gredal Jensen suggests that Møller's real talent was in poetry and philology *not* theology or philosophy.<sup>211</sup> However, in a letter to Sibbern from January 1<sup>st</sup> 1829, Møller expresses the joy philosophy brings him, and, additionally, gives us an interesting glimpse into the state of philosophy at the University of Copenhagen:

I am very pleased that I have come to preoccupy myself solely with philosophy, which now interests me above all else in the world. When I think about the philologist's efforts... they seem to me to be concerned with trifles. It is natural that the person, who studies philosophy, leads a much more uneasy life, disoriented [*fortumlet*], and becomes so more often; but it is certain and true that, although I often doubt my calling to philosophy, I can never be brought to doubt the reality of this study.—Great independence belongs to standing up as an academic teacher in philosophy day in and day out—wholly on one's own two feet, without being told by anyone whether one does one's work well or poorly. It must have been burdensome for you, that you for so many years had to philosophise alone, without being understood by a single colleague; for in the year 1813 there was almost no one in Copenhagen who had any interest in philosophy.

However, now there are several philosophers.<sup>212</sup>

This letter presents a tension between Møller's doubts about his own abilities in philosophy and his passion for and certainty about philosophy's importance. This letter also emphasises

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<sup>211</sup> Finn Gredal Jensen, "Poul Martin Møller: Kierkegaard and the Confidant of Socrates", in Jon Stewart (ed.) *Kierkegaard and His Danish Contemporaries, Tome I, Philosophy*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009), 101-67; 105; Stewart, "Poul Martin Møller and the Danish Debate about Immortality in the Wake of Hegel's Philosophy", *Estudios Kierkegaardianos. Revista de filosofía*, 1, 2015, 114-46; 119.

<sup>212</sup> Møller, *Poul M. Møllers Efterladte Skrifter Første Bind. I Udvalg ved Christian Winther* (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel, 1839), 132.

how the specifically philosophical disciplines were not popular in the 1810s.

Møller's philosophical authorship is conducted through a few articles and collections of aphorisms, or what he called *Strøtanker*—scattered thoughts. One such scattered thought reflects on the relationship between theologians and philosophers. Møller suggests that theologians who are not simultaneously philosophers live in constant fear that philosophical systems may include hidden heresies. This fear arises because theology feels incapable of controlling the philosopher's speculative movements, and therefore every significant new philosophical system has without exception been condemned by these “unphilosophical” theologians. He envisions these theologians as relating to philosophy like anxious mother hens “who have hatched chicks and who now with anger and apprehension run around the edge of a watering hole unable to continue watching over the offspring in their care.”<sup>213</sup> This particular image reveals that Møller, like Steffens and Sibbern, views religion or theology as providing the source material for philosophical study. Indirectly, however, he is also suggesting that the true theologian must simultaneously be a philosopher, for theologians who are not philosophical theologians will simply run about in indignant fear of what they do not understand and cannot control.

Many of Møller's aphorisms reveal particular preoccupation with Hegel, whom Møller zealously studied, writing to Sibbern in 1829 that no one admired Hegel more than he, but adding: “although I do not like his personality.”<sup>214</sup> Møller's Hegelian period lasted over a decade, and it was not until the final few years of Møller's life that his misgivings surfaced. Frederik Christian Olsen, a friend and biographer of Møller, recalls how Møller, when asked about Hegel's philosophy, responded that Hegel was mad and suffered from “Monomania”.<sup>215</sup> Olsen describes how Møller complained that Hegel's philosophy was empty

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<sup>213</sup> Møller, *Skrifter i Udvalg, Andet Bind*, (København, G.E.C. Gad, 1930), 396.

<sup>214</sup> Møller, *Breve*, Letter 102, 221.

<sup>215</sup> Frederik Christian Olsen, *Poul Martin Møllers Levnet, med Breve fra hans Haand*, (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1843), 153f.

schematics, devoid of true religious content. For Møller had come to view Christianity as the necessary foundation and precondition for a true world-view in his main philosophical work, the 1837 article “Thoughts on the Possibility of Proofs of Human Immortality, with Reference to the Most Recent Literature Belonging Thereto”.<sup>216</sup>

This article engaged with one of the key disputes surrounding Hegel’s philosophy of religion: Whether or not it contained a theory of immortality. Møller argued that Hegel did not have a theory of immortality, a fact that could and should not be ignored. While this article was understood as Møller’s decisive break with Hegelianism, it more accurately targeted Hegel’s followers, especially the Right Hegelians’ claim that Hegel’s philosophy contained a theory of immortality, but also the Left Hegelians’ total denial of this doctrine.

Møller highlights the tension between doctrinal content and the exclusivity of academic philosophy, criticising how the philosophical account of immortality is only accessible to a select few academics and philosophers, when it is a doctrine of personal significance to all people. This esotericism leads the public to demand clearer answers from philosophy. However, Møller argues that immortality is not simply a matter of philosophical proof, but suggests that such longing for proof of immortality springs from the unreasonable desire to “keep the prose of one’s daily life unabridged, and in the midst of it maintain a sensorial-rational certainty of the reality of the extra-sensory.”<sup>217</sup> To exemplify this, Møller tells a story about an accountant and a theological graduate. The accountant demands that the theologian provide a clear and simple proof of the immortality of the soul in “good broad Danish” before the accountant’s carriage arrives.<sup>218</sup> The theologian tries by drawing on various theories, but fails to satisfy the accountant’s request, who pronounces:

Skip the form and explain to me the content in the language your mother taught you: that is

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>217</sup> Møller, “Tanker over Muligheden af Beviser for Menneskets Udødelighed,” in *Maanedsskrift for Litteratur* 17, 1837, 1-72 and 422-453; 17 (my translation).

<sup>218</sup> Ibid., 20.

something we both understand. But here is my carriage. You have wasted our time by repeating old sentences from Balle's textbook instead of providing me with a stringent proof. Goodbye!<sup>219</sup>

A particularly interesting aspect of this story is that the figure of the academic theologian seems to be interchangeable with that of the academic philosopher. For Møller philosopher or theologian is simply used as shorthand for the time's rationalist academics. Turning specifically to Hegelian philosophy, Møller not only concludes that speculative dialectics can provide no proof of immortality, but also suggests that speculative philosophy has completely eradicated the idea of the soul's immortality.<sup>220</sup> However, Møller's point is that *both* academic theology and philosophy fall short, for it is impossible to *prove* immortality rationally or speculatively because immortality is a question of personal existence unlike mathematical or logical proofs, which belong to the sphere of ideality, which cannot possibly encompass real personal existence. Instead immortality requires a new kind of proof, based on what Møller terms a theory of *Verdensanskuelser* or worldviews. A philosophical system can never be more than a reflection of a particular worldview, for philosophy cannot comprehensively explain existence. For Møller, the only true worldview is the traditional Christian one. Therefore, a complete worldview must include immortality, and any worldview which deviates from orthodox Christian belief must be rejected.<sup>221</sup> Hegel's system thus builds on a false worldview in which the doctrine of immortality does not exist.<sup>222</sup>

Møller argues that any complete worldview has two sides, being partly rooted in the sensory phenomenological world, and partly having to lose itself in Christianity's extrasensory sphere. These two extremes are brought together in a third, which gives human

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid., 21. "Balle's textbook" is here a reference to Bishop N. E. Balle's 1791 *Lærebog i den Evangelisk-Christelige Religion* [*Textbook in Evangelical-Christian Religion*] (Copenhagen: Schulz, 1791), which was mandatory reading in state schools. This textbook was later perceived to espouse Rationalist views.

<sup>220</sup> Møller, "Tanker," 14.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 29-32.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 34.

life its true fullness: “The third to these two extremes, which for us in the present order of things has the most perfect reality and gives human life its actual fullness, is the presence of the extrasensory in the sensory.”<sup>223</sup> Møller thus believed that God and the immortality of the soul could somehow be poetically intuited in concrete and individual existential experience.

While Martensen had appreciation for Møller, Kierkegaard was more strongly impacted by this poet-philosopher. In a journal entry from 1837, Kierkegaard comments on Møller’s article:

The episode Poul Møller has included in his treatise on the immortality of the soul... is very interesting. Perhaps relieving the strict scholarly tone in this way with lighter passages, in which life nevertheless emerges much more fully, will become the usual thing, and will in the scholarly domain compare somewhat to the chorus, to the comic parts of romantic dramas.<sup>224</sup>

Møller’s less scholarly tone can thus be viewed as an important model for Kierkegaard’s own authorship, as Kierkegaard too engages scholarly debates in a mode of lightness, poetry, and comedy. However, in the following year, Møller died aged 44. Kierkegaard dedicated his *Concept of Anxiety* to Møller as “The happy lover of Greek culture, the admirer of Homer, the confidant of Socrates, the interpreter of Aristotle—Denmark’s joy...the object of my admiration, my profound loss.”<sup>225</sup> While the actual closeness of their relationship may be something of a modern-day myth, partly powered by this passionate dedication, Møller is certainly an important teacher for Kierkegaard. Jensen suggests that Kierkegaard himself viewed Møller as a spiritual guide who helped rid him of his youthful excesses and led him in the right direction, enabling him to “come to his senses, concentrate and later reflect upon sin.”<sup>226</sup> Furthermore, Møller served as an example of how one might engage scholarly

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>224</sup> SKS 17, 134, BB:41 / KJN 1, 127-128.

<sup>225</sup> SKS 4, 311 / CA, 5. See also, SKS 17, 252, DD:96 / KJN 1, 252.

<sup>226</sup> Jensen, “Møller,” 113.

debates in an alternative way.

Upon Møller's early death in 1838, Martensen temporarily took over Møller's lectures on moral philosophy, with Rasmus Nielsen hired later as a permanent replacement. As Bruce Kirmmse suggests, however, Martensen's replacement of Møller took on more sinister overtones in Kierkegaard's view. To him, Møller was irreplaceable, making Martensen a mere usurper. According to Kirmmse, 1838 would mark a definitive breakdown in Kierkegaard's relation to Martensen.<sup>227</sup>

### *A Summary of Nineteenth Century Danish Philosophy*

From exploring these representatives of Danish philosophy it is thus possible to make a couple of observations about the peculiarities of Golden-Age Danish philosophy in relation to theology: Firstly, it is implicitly religious, specifically Christian. Remarkably many trained theologians held posts in philosophy, and it is perhaps no surprise then that theological concerns and doctrinal questions were considered a natural object of philosophy. Steffens, Sibbern, and Møller all articulate philosophy's task to be the clarification of these theological questions in relation to human existence. In a journal entry from 1844, Kierkegaard suggests that if a Danish philosophy were to exist it should, unlike German philosophy, not begin

with nothing or without any presupposition, or 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. By being incorporated into philosophy, this proposition will provide the due corrective and will also cast a humorous-edifying perturbation over it all.<sup>228</sup>

This characterises well the philosophical attitude of Steffens, Sibbern, and Møller, who all start from the proposition of a highest truth or the divine—from faith—insisting that

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<sup>227</sup> Kirmmse, "Socrates in the Fast Lane," 95.

<sup>228</sup> SKS 18, 217, JJ:239 / KJN 2, 199.

philosophy must be guided and corrected by the idea that while philosophy has an important clarifying role, it is ultimately inadequate, as truth has a supernatural, divine source, richer than what can be encompassed in philosophical reasoning. Just as Hamlet reminds Horatio, these philosophers underline that, “There are more things in heaven and Earth... Than are dreamt of in your philosophy”. In accordance with this, they all underline the necessity of expanding the concept of knowledge to incorporate the whole of a human being—not just its reason, but also its sense of the eternal; its will, feelings, actions, and its lived existence.

Secondly because of the Philosophical Faculty’s general nature, the view of philosophy as an auxiliary science to the higher faculties remains ingrained in the thought of all three philosophers discussed above, and is manifested in their views that philosophy supports not only theology, but personal faith too. Finally, these three philosophers were all strongly occupied with formulating existentially-oriented philosophies that engender action and aid people to live their lives. However, this spelled trouble for the Theological Faculty.

### *1.2.2 The Theological Faculty and the Question of Philosophy 1800-1838*

From 1800-1850, the University of Copenhagen’s Theological Faculty went from holding a leading position in both the university and wider society to being increasingly called into question, criticised, and even ridiculed. While theology students still made up at least half of the entire student body of Copenhagen University around 1830, the faculty was in crisis.<sup>229</sup> With the 1788 charter, university study was no longer aimed only at training clergy, but also at developing scientific knowledge and training state officials. With this shift, previously unassailable authorities were called into question and reason reinstated as a new authority. Furthermore, the new charter had decreed that only five professors could be employed in the

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<sup>229</sup> See Leif Grane, “Det teologiske Fakultet 1830-1925”, in Leif Grane (ed.) *Københavns Universitet 1479-1979, bind V, Det teologiske Fakultet* (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gads Forlag, 1980), 325-500; 325.

Theological Faculty. As the biggest faculty, this meant there were at least 100 students to each faculty member throughout the nineteenth century. Lecturing therefore became the main method of teaching, covering the subject areas, Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, Dogmatics, and Moral Theology with Philosophy of Religion,<sup>230</sup> creating the need for private docents for additional teaching and private tutorials.

Around this time, the Theological Faculty was, like the Philosophical Faculty, under the influence of Wolffian rationalism, and many of the theology professors were particularly motivated by questions of moral philosophy. For example, the rationalist Claus Frees Hornemann (1751-1830), appointed Professor of Theology in 1776, conceived of the biblical prophets as a form of early moral philosophers.<sup>231</sup> Professor Friedrich Münter (1761-1830), who eventually replaced N. E. Balle as the bishop of Sjælland, expressed that Christian clergy must express their faith in clear concepts, and notes that a mixing of philosophy and religion was therefore inevitable.<sup>232</sup> Peter Erasmus Müller, Professor of Theology in 1801, had degrees in both theology and philosophy, and lectured in both faculties. His *Christelig Moralsystem* 1808 and *Christelig Apoloetik* 1810 were lauded for providing Danish theology and Danish clergy with a true rational foundation for Christianity, granting theology independence from philosophy.<sup>233</sup> However, the impulses driving the French Revolution started to be felt in Denmark, and by the 1790's a vehement criticism of Christianity, the church, and university theology was unleashed by radical writers, such as the theologian Otto Horrebow, the philologist and writer P.A. Heiberg (J. L. Heiberg's father) and journalist and

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<sup>230</sup> See examples of lecture lists from 1837 and 1838 in H. N. Clausen's *Historisk Fremstilling af Kjøbenhavns Universitets Virksomhed i Rectoratet: fra Juni 1837 til November 1838*, (Copenhagen, 1839).

<sup>231</sup> Knud Banning, "Det teologiske Fakultet 1732-1830" in Leif Grane (ed.) *Københavns Universitet 1479-1979, bind V, Det teologiske Fakultet* (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gads Forlag, 1980), 213-324; 293.

<sup>232</sup> Frederik Münter, *Haandbog i den ældste christelige Kirkes Dogmehistorie I*, (Copenhagen: Fr. Brummer 1801), 33. See also Münter, *Betragtninger over den naturlige Teologi* (Copenhagen: J.F. Schultz, 1805), 182.

<sup>233</sup> See Paul Nedergaard, "Af Gierslev Sogns Historie: Præsten Joachim Friderick Phister og Udskiftningen i Gierslev 1783-94", in *Fra Holbæk Amt Aarbog 1925*, 1925, 113-144, 114; see also, Banning, "Det teologiske Fakultet 1732-1830", 323.

writer M.K. Brun, leading to dwindling church attendance and a loss of respect for clergy.<sup>234</sup>

Demonstrating again the fluidity between philosophical and theological disciplinary lines, a debate about Kant between A. S. Ørsted and Horrebow would change the tide of this attack.

Whereas Horrebow dismissed Kant, arguing that Christianity could not be justified cognitively, Ørsted argued that Kantian philosophy showed that the moral law was given by God and the church could be considered an ethical community.<sup>235</sup> Despite the use of Kant to defend the Church and Christianity, Kantian philosophy was a double-edged sword for Danish theology. Kant's distinction between phenomenal and noumenal and faith and knowledge meant that the physical world was no longer within theology's grasp. But theology was granted a new epistemic sphere as Kantianism had set in motion the internalisation of religion. The later transition to the Romantic and idealist emphasis on human beings' inner world expanded epistemological possibilities, and, as Leif Grane comments, theology and philosophy seemed to find a meeting point here.<sup>236</sup> However, most Danish theologians refused to risk the dangers of Kant's thought, remaining with rationalism, which was increasingly considered not only uninspired, but divorced from true religious life.

The opposition against rationalist theology manifested itself in various ways. In 1825 a highly publicised dispute between Grundtvig and Professor of Theology Henrik Nicolai Clausen (1793–1877), one of the main faculty theologians and six-time rector of Copenhagen University, broke out over the publication of Clausen's *Catholicismens og Protestantismens Kirkeforfatning* (1825). Clausen, a proponent of a liberal rationalism and Schleiermacher, argued that while the church creates its beliefs and practices on the basis of scripture, the academic theologian's task is to clarify scripture through rational scientific research, to which the Church must submit. Grundtvig found this deeply problematic as Christians were made

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<sup>234</sup> Otto Horrebow particularly attacked Bishop N. E. Balle in his polemical writings.

<sup>235</sup> See, Ørsted, *Af mit Livs og min Tids Historie I*, 29-34.

<sup>236</sup> Grane, "Det teologiske Fakultet 1830-1925," 362.

dependent on academics for access to revelation, making Denmark “an exegetic papacy.”<sup>237</sup> Grundtvig’s retort was so defamatory that Clausen sued him and Grundtvig was sentenced to life-long censorship. Grundtvig’s reading of Clausen was not particularly nuanced, and as Hugh S. Pyper points out, Clausen was not as naive as to claim that scholars alone had all the answers. Instead he distinguished between the answers sought by church historians and the answers that could suitably be given to the private believer’s questions.<sup>238</sup> The controversy, however, meant that Clausen would be continually associated with rationalism. Mynster, who became Bishop in 1834, was scathing of Clausen’s writings, and a whole host of leading church officials turned against Clausen following the dispute.<sup>239</sup> Martensen too was critical of Clausen’s theological approach, wishing Clausen had included a mystical and speculative element. However, Martensen defends Clausen against Grundtvig, deeming Grundtvig’s accusation either “unconscionable” or “a ridiculous, but very harmful exaggeration”.<sup>240</sup> Compared to earlier rational theology, Clausen’s theology was still a “significant forward movement towards positive Christianity,”<sup>241</sup> and Martensen expresses both fondness and admiration for Clausen, whose lectures offered “a clarity and a freshness, a spirit of research, that could only appeal. Mainly, however, he won me over with his personality, which already at the teacher’s desk had a great impact through a certain elevated peace, a touch of fineness and dignity.”<sup>242</sup> Kierkegaard too studied under Clausen, and while his opinion of Clausen is not clear from the very limited mentions he makes, Pyper suggests that in launching his

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<sup>237</sup> Grundtvig, *Kirkens Gienmæle mod Professor Theologiae Dr. H. N. Clausen*, (Copenhagen: Wahlske Boghandlings Forlag, 1825), 33. For a helpful overview of this dispute see also Grane, “The Incipient Breakdown of the Humanist-Christian Cultural Synthesis in Denmark”, *Meddelelser fra Thorvaldsens Museum*, 1997, 106-113.

<sup>238</sup> Hugh S. Pyper, “Henrik Nicolai Clausen: The Voice of Urbane Rationalism,” in Jon Stewart (ed.), *Kierkegaard and His Danish Contemporaries, Tome II, Theology* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 41-48; 42

<sup>239</sup> Grane, “Det teologiske Fakultet 1830-1925,” 354.

<sup>240</sup> *AL* 1, 55.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-56.

<sup>242</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

attack on the church Kierkegaard was inspired by Clausen's attitude during the 1825 controversy.<sup>243</sup>

In the following years, a rift between the church and the Theological Faculty began to appear. While Danish church life was experiencing a revival through the Grundtvigian movement and Mynster's approach, the Theological Faculty remained entrenched in rationalism.<sup>244</sup> Disconnection from the Church would undermine the Faculty's entire purpose. Various testimonies from this time therefore echoed Grundtvig in emphasising that the Theological Faculty, with its rationalist approach, was lacking a truly living Christian spirit and thus could not provide theology students with the spiritual nourishment they needed to become good clergymen.<sup>245</sup> Martensen emphasises this sense of revival made possible through Schleiermacherian theology and idealist philosophy, describing how rationalism was coming to an end:

Rationalism, which had so far been in power, suffered one defeat after another... Scientifically it was overtaken by Schelling and Hegel's systems; and Schleiermacher's new theology... managed to inflict upon it [Rationalism] deadly wounds and formed a transition to a deeper Christian direction in both religion and theology.<sup>246</sup>

Yet, Koch argues that the Theological Faculty's rationalism was exaggerated and suggests that it rather promoted a form of mediation theology rather than a strict rationalism. The Faculty's professors, like Clausen, all still explicitly advocated a supranaturalist view, insisting on the necessity of revelation, particularly Christ as God's revelation and humanity's saviour, and promoting a Lutheran biblical theology overall. However, this was combined with the requirement of scientific rigorousness and validation of historical

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<sup>243</sup> Pyper, "Clausen," 45.

<sup>244</sup> Hal Koch, *Den Danske Kirkes Historie VI*, 315.

<sup>245</sup> Grane, "Det teologiske Fakultet 1830-1925", 343.

<sup>246</sup> *AL* 2, 24-25.

criticism. Reason was emphasised as the capacity with which human beings can cognise and evaluate the truths provided by revelation. Without rationalism there was a fear that theological studies would regress into fanaticism and obscurity.<sup>247</sup> While it is important to bear this nuance in mind, it does not change the fact that academic theology in Copenhagen was still *perceived* as overly rationalistic.

With these mounting tensions between church and academy, the faculty was not only becoming alienated from the institution whose officials it sought to train—it was also alienating its own students. Theology students, among them the young Kierkegaard,<sup>248</sup> simply found the faculty’s teaching dull and were drawn to the philosophical faculty, particularly to Sibbern’s and Møller’s Christian philosophies.<sup>249</sup> A general sense arose that theology required comprehensive renewal possible only through philosophy, which was proving so fruitful in questions of religious life.

A renewal of the Theological Faculty started to take place under Clausen’s leadership from 1830. By 1840 the faculty’s five professors were all between the ages of 28 and 41. These included Clausen, who continued teaching New Testament and Christian Dogmatics; M. H. Hohlenberg who taught Hebrew and Old Testament; C. E. Scharling, who taught New Testament; C. T. Engelstoft who taught church history, and Martensen, who was hired as lecturer in 1838 and made full professor in 1840, teaching systematic theology, dogmatics and ethics.<sup>250</sup> However, while Clausen and Martensen were both praised and appreciated for their teaching, there is little mention of the rest.

It is in a sense then ironic that academic theology was perceived as requiring philosophical renewal due to its adherence to rationalism, the reigning philosophy of the

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<sup>247</sup> Hal Kock, *Den danske Kirkes Historie VI*, 315-323.

<sup>248</sup> As Kirmmse notes, Kierkegaard too was “put off by the aridity of the Theology Faculty and, like many young theologians, gravitated toward the Philosophy Faculty” (“Socrates in the Fast Lane,” 80).

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>250</sup> See Hannibal Peter Selmer, *Kjøbenhavns Universitets Aarvog for 1840*, (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandlings Forlag, 1840), 135-36. See also Grane, “Det teologiske Fakultet 1830-1925,” 328-329.

previous century. As Møller notes Christianity had long been subject to the changing whims of philosophy. In characteristically poetic fashion, Møller suggests that Christianity's

scattered sentences have always in different ways been connected to a whole, and one has, by placing them into diverging philosophical systems, given them separate and from each other diverging meanings. Christianity resembles a venerable temple ruin, whose original form one must in many ways seek to recover through the dotted lines of reason. Thereby an age's particular genius largely determines the way in which Christianity is perceived.<sup>251</sup>

Møller's point is that philosophy affects the way Christian theology takes shape throughout the ages. Although theology's downfall was caused by a philosophical trend, the idea that this crisis-ridden theology had to be renewed through philosophy persisted.

### *Renewing Theology through Philosophy: The Rise of Speculative Thought in the Theological Faculty*

Despite efforts from cultural figures outside of the academy like Heiberg, Hegelianism and speculative thought were met with opposition not only from the Church and the university's theologians, but also its philosophers. Mynster protested against Christianity being reduced to ideas whose truth had to be confirmed by philosophy, and Sibbern and Møller, as we have seen, were both critical of Hegel due to his treatment of Christian doctrines. However, it was eventually through the Theological Faculty that Hegelianism became part of the academic discourse in Denmark. More precisely, through Martensen's popular lectures on speculative dogmatics.<sup>252</sup> Martensen had given the course "Introduction to Speculative Dogmatics" during the winter semester of 1837-38, and the following year he taught his new "Lectures on the History of Modern Philosophy from Kant to Hegel in its Relation to Theology".

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<sup>251</sup> Møller, "Nogle Betragtninger over populære Ideers Udvikling," *Nyt Aftenblad*, 18, 1825, 153-160; 154.

<sup>252</sup> Stewart, *A History of Hegelianism in Golden Age Denmark: Tome 1. The Heiberg Period*, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2007), 5.

Martensen believed it was necessary to go through modern philosophy to truly engage with modern theology.<sup>253</sup> These lectures became an immense success, and, as mentioned above, considered one of the three epoch-making lecture-series of the nineteenth-century. Martensen himself was not at all oblivious to his academic triumph, and in his memoirs he underlines that neither Sibbern nor Møller had succeeded in presenting the history of philosophy as well as he had:

Sibbern was quite preoccupied by his own ideas and only occasionally considered the history of philosophy. Poul Martin Møller had perhaps lectures on the history of philosophy, but did not seem to have gotten through, as his lectures as a whole had not produced any particular effect. His ingenuity lay in a different sphere.<sup>254</sup>

According to Martensen himself, his lectures filled this gap, the effect of which, Martensen writes could “without exaggeration be described as great and extraordinary.”<sup>255</sup> Martensen notes how “new life and excitement,”<sup>256</sup> emerged among Copenhagen’s theology students due to his lectures through which “[p]hilosophical studies exercised their captivating power, and the students conversed ceaselessly about the highest problems.”<sup>257</sup> Martensen explains he could not avoid Hegel, the age’s most famous philosopher, whom he had to lead his listeners through and beyond: “I had to, if possible, inspire their enthusiasm for Hegel, yet, I had to defeat him and bring them to oppose him.”<sup>258</sup> Later Martensen suggests that his lectures only ended with Hegel because Schelling’s system had not yet been published. Nevertheless, it is important to note that although Martensen was so successful in introducing Hegel to Danish students, he was deeply critical of Hegel for the same reasons as his theological and

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<sup>253</sup> *AL* 2, 3.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

philosophical colleagues. Martensen argues that his own theonomical standpoint was in complete contradiction to Hegel's autonomous position:

the perspective of faith and revelation was for me the fundamental in contradiction to the autonomous in Hegel. I could not agree with a school of thought that wanted to bring about its own content. I sought only to consider what had been given by revelation. When it is often said that I was the representative of Hegelianism in this, my early university time, this is then a very uncritical claim, which already ignores my express and motivated declarations in my dissertation, and which have been refuted in each of my works.<sup>259</sup>

Naturally one might question Martensen's retrospective attempt to distance himself from Hegel. However, it is true that in his dissertation, lectures and later authorship, Martensen's agenda always involved going beyond Hegel and inverting Hegel's emphasis on philosophy replacing this instead with a dependence upon God, revelation, and faith. Martensen complains that he was misunderstood both by those who considered him a strict Hegelian and those who opposed his rejection of Hegel.

In his memoirs, Martensen especially emphasises the people who understood him correctly as advocating a religious speculation or cognition that arose not from philosophy, but from faith, in which faith could reach self-understanding. This cognition did not lead away from representational thinking to reach the philosophical concept, but rather sought to clarify the representation through the concept to produce a unity of these religious and philosophical modes of thought.<sup>260</sup> Martensen aimed to apply and invert Hegel's thought to construct his own speculative theology, where, through revelation, faith, and dependence on God, human beings would be able to reach clear and objective knowledge of the world's and

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 7.

God's being. Thus Martensen believed that he successfully brought together the study of philosophy and theology, setting free "the spirits of philosophy".<sup>261</sup>

Despite Martensen's rejection of Hegelianism, his lectures would prompt Heiberg to proclaim that introducing Hegel's philosophy into Danish intellectual life was now a "*causa victrix*".<sup>262</sup> Martensen's lectures also heightened the Theological Faculty's popularity and raised Martensen's own profile. His lectures were some of the most attended and admired at the University of Copenhagen, and praise of Martensen could see no end.<sup>263</sup> In a time of societal upheaval and polemics, Martensen's speculative theology captured the imagination of theology students, and brought about at least a temporary renewal of the theology faculty, in a sense fulfilling the notion that philosophy must renew theology.

Clausen himself acknowledged Martensen's important role in generating interest in theology in the midst of its time of crisis, but also expressed the dangers of being swept up in philosophical fads of the moment.<sup>264</sup> Hegelianism in Denmark and with it speculative dogmatics are then perhaps best perceived as a short-lived "esoteric, student movement."<sup>265</sup> Both soon fell from grace, as students and professors alike noted its pitfalls. M. G. G. Steenstrup stressed the risk that speculative dogmatics posed for impressionable students, as speculative theologians exhibited "a certain dilettantish spirit... a resistance to all influences that are not cast in the right mould."<sup>266</sup> Similarly a theology student wrote that it was "perhaps the most lively and fruitful time, the university had long experienced," but also that: "There was a philosophical glossolalia, which was often about to fall over the edge into the

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<sup>261</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>262</sup> Heiberg, *Prosaiske Skrifter Første Bind*, (Copenhagen, J. H. Schubothes Boghandel, 1841), xv

<sup>263</sup> Harald Høffding, *Danske Filosofer*, (Copenhagen, 1908), 141.

<sup>264</sup> H. N. Clausen, *Optegnelser om mit Levneds og min Tids Historie* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1877), 210-213.

<sup>265</sup> Carl Henrik Koch, *Strejftog i den danske filosofis historie*, (Copenhagen, C.A. Reitzel, 2000), 39.

<sup>266</sup> M. G. G. Steenstrup, *Det theologiske Studium ved vort Universitet*, (Copenhagen, C.A. Reitzel, 1848), 57 (my translation).

toneless droning [*lirumlarum*] of philosophical jargon.”<sup>267</sup> Despite his popularity, Martensen would later be attacked publicly for “corrupting the morals of the youth”.<sup>268</sup>

Just as theology had been let down by its association with rational philosophy, the same philosophy that was meant to renew the faculty, now not only threatened academic theology, but Christian faith itself. The notorious Brøchner-case also brought into focus these Hegelian dangers. In 1842, the theology student, Hans Brøchner, was refused entry to his exam by the Theological Faculty due to his left-Hegelian leanings. Brøchner had translated D. F. Strauss’ *Die Christliche Glaubenslehre* (1840) which, together with Ludwig Feuerbach’s *Wesen des Christentums* (1841), shocked the Danish intellectual and religious community. With these works it became clear how Hegelian speculation rather than fulfilling the promised reconciliation of faith and knowledge instead could lead to an outright rejection of Christianity.<sup>269</sup> Within a mere five years—from 1837 to 1842—the triumph and certainty of speculative theology and its reconciliation with philosophy was replaced with confusion and consternation.

The purpose of the above has been to provide an overview of the climate of Martensen’s and Kierkegaard’s early intellectual development. The purpose has also been to sketch and suggest why the question of how philosophy and theology relate became such a pressing concern for both Martensen and Kierkegaard. As the next chapters will show, Martensen’s and Kierkegaard’s very different approaches to the question of how the philosophical and religious spheres relate can be seen as two different responses to the confusion of this relationship, which characterised both German and Danish nineteenth century thought.

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<sup>267</sup> Frederik Nielsen, *Minder, Oplevelser og Iagttagelser* (Aalborg: M. M. Schultz, 1881), 35 (my translation).

<sup>268</sup> Stewart, *Kierkegaard’s Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 140.

<sup>269</sup> Grane, “Det teologiske Fakultet 1830-1925,” 368.



## CHAPTER 2

# *FROM INNER CONNECTION TO DIALECTICAL TRANSFORMATION: MARTENSEN ON PHILOSOPHY, THEOLOGY, AND CHRISTIANITY*

Before completing his 1837 dissertation and taking up his lectureship, Martensen undertook his own educative grand tour through Germany and Paris, where he met and studied under Steffens, F. C. Bauer, Franz von Baader, Schelling, and Hegel's sons. Kierkegaard would refer to this trip with contempt noting that there is a large group of people "who really only tell tales regarding the union of Xnty with philosophy, since knowing neither party very well, they have got wind of something in a second or third hand way from the Magister who, in his foreign travels, has taken tea with this or that great scholar".<sup>270</sup> Kierkegaard's entry reveals that the Danish readership already affirmed Martensen's pursuit of the unity of Christianity and philosophy. Martensen, however, describes in his memoirs how he at the time had prioritised and thought so deeply about the philosophical side alone that he became ill with a spiritual and physical malaise which manifested itself as a profound ennui and depression.

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<sup>270</sup> SKS 17, 50, AA: 40 / KJN 1, 44.

Attempting self-diagnosis, Martensen believed his condition was a reaction to a “one-sided intellectualism, a one-sided speculative, or, if you will, a one-sided direction of thought and mind, which had all too entirely occupied me.”<sup>271</sup> In retrospect, Martensen suggests his condition came about because he had forgotten faith. This made Martensen strongly aware of the existential, but also epistemological importance of balancing his pursuit of knowledge with faith, as he would come to discover that it is “faith that carries all our knowledge of the personal God and his revelations. It is faith from which knowledge in its deepest meaning draws its life. Where faith pales and becomes powerless, there knowledge will pale too and lose its power”.<sup>272</sup> As a result, Martensen would identify the task of bringing together faith and knowledge as the main task for his times, for himself, and the connecting principle of his thought and writing. In his 1838-39 lectures, Martensen would announce that: “As it is especially philosophy which has inflicted upon religion such deep wounds, it must also heal them. *The age’s task* is thus the reconciliation between religion and philosophy; therefore the theologian must engage with philosophy: become speculative”.<sup>273</sup> This task of reconciliation was to become a compulsive pursuit from which he could not find rest until it was accomplished satisfactorily.<sup>274</sup>

In this chapter I argue that the unity Martensen aims to establish between philosophy and theology must be understood on the basis of what I term Martensen’s model of “unity-in-difference” according to which the true difference between the philosophical and religious spheres in turn enables their true unity. This model develops from 1837 to 1849 as Martensen shifts from viewing philosophy and theology’s relationship as one of inner connection to one of *vekselvirkning*, a term by which I hold Martensen to mean not simply “inter-activity”, but a form of dialectical transformation. Thus, Martensen also demonstrates that in order to unite

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<sup>271</sup> *AL* 1, 104.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>273</sup> *Pap.* II C 26-27, 4.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-55.

philosophy and theology, and religion, these spheres must first be clearly separated and defined. I argue that this shift can to some extent be understood as a recognised development in Martensen's thought in his attempt to articulate living Christian knowledge as part of the wider existentialist movement in Danish philosophy at the time that sought to respond to the dry abstractions of rationalism. While Martensen thereby in some sense aims to resolve the ambiguity and confusion that had marred the debate so far, I suggest Martensen perpetuates this ambiguity. For while he on one hand argues for philosophy's central status, as it is through philosophy theology can be renewed and philosophy serves as the active ally of the religious sphere, Martensen also seems to suggest that philosophy must just culminate and be absorbed into speculative theology. The dialectical unity he seeks to establish between philosophy and theology therefore fails to find clear expression, ultimately breaking down.

## **2.1 Martensen's Philosophy of Religion Period 1837-1841**

In the years 1837-1841, Martensen published three major works all of which centre on the relationship between philosophy, theology, and religion. Martensen seeks to clarify these spheres in order to effect their reconciliation and underline their continuity. The main difference between philosophy and religion, or Christianity, is according to Martensen religion's existentiality as a living relationship between God and human beings. However, this living relationship enables true knowledge of God, and it is upon this basis that Martensen establishes the unity between philosophy, theology, and Christianity, which can thus be characterised as a unity-in-difference.

### *2.1.1 Inner Connection: Religion, Theology and Epistemology*

Returning from his grand tour Martensen completed his dissertation for the theological licentiate degree *The Autonomy of Human Self-Consciousness in Modern Dogmatic Theology* in 1837. Its main aim is to critique modern philosophers, from Descartes to Hegel, for viewing human self-consciousness as entirely autonomous, cut off from anything external to it—even divine revelation. Instead Martensen seeks to develop a *theonomical* position, where human freedom is properly realised only when it uses its self-determination to acknowledge its dependence on God as its source and creator. Human beings therefore cannot reach knowledge of the truth without being in a living faith relationship to God, as it would deny their createdness and creatureliness. Because God is their source, Martensen argues that human beings are fundamentally religious beings. Martensen particularly laments how modern philosophy has neglected the real and personal relationship to God that constitutes the human’s ground-relation [*Grundforhold*]. According to Martensen modern philosophy, in freeing the human self-consciousness from all authority to enable presuppositionless knowledge of the truth, has overlooked two tacit but explicitly *religious* presuppositions: Firstly, that the human cannot autonomously acquire knowledge of the truth when there is a qualitative difference between God’s original knowledge and human beings’ derived knowledge. Secondly, these philosophers misguidedly hold that the human’s ground-relation is a purely metaphysical relation, which Martensen protests and argues is rather “a real and personal relation.”<sup>275</sup>

As Martensen explains, then, religion is differentiated from philosophy. This is more clearly expressed in Martensen’s 1838-1839 lectures, which, somewhat ironically, have only been preserved through Kierkegaard’s notes. Martensen explains that in religion the human being stands an ideal but also an existential relation to the divine. This relation is more precisely defined as “one which through an infinite relation of opposition and dependence

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<sup>275</sup> MSA, 18 / BHK, 86.

mediates the relation of identity and freedom.”<sup>276</sup> This relation cannot be established without revelation through which God objectivises himself for humanity. Martensen therefore argues that religion is both *subjective* and *objective*: If God was not present in his infinite objectivity, he could not be known by humans, and humans’ subjective relationship to God would also become untrue and unfree—for only the true thought of God frees humans to enter into a free relation of dependence with God.<sup>277</sup> This objectivity Martensen notes is necessary for theology, as a science, and he therefore notes that while Schleiermacher was right to distinguish between philosophy and religion, he was wrong to suggest that it matters only *how* one believes, not *what* one believes. The difference between the objective knowledge of God in philosophy and religion, Martensen argues lies in the origin of this knowledge. For the religious idea of God is *revealed*, whereas philosophy mediates its knowledge through speculation and reflection. However, revelation is a presupposition for reflection and thus for philosophy itself.<sup>278</sup> Martensen therefore rejects the strict separation of philosophy and dogmatics of “older times” because it “presupposes an *unacceptable* difference between reason and revelation, for these both have their ground in each other”.<sup>279</sup> The qualitative difference between the two is that philosophy “contains the absolute in its infinite objectivity”, whereas religion “is the infinitely subjective and real existence of the Idea of God in man.”<sup>280</sup> In other words, the human relates itself objectively to God in the former, and subjectively in the latter. Martensen concludes that Christianity can be observed objectively in philosophy and subjectively in religion.<sup>281</sup> As Niels Thulstrup has pointed out, Martensen therefore lauds Schelling and Hegel for breaking down the separation between the

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<sup>276</sup> *Pap.* II C 26-27, 9.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>278</sup> See *ibid.*, 11.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*

subjective and objective, which was necessary “so that the theologians could again rise above the philosophers.”<sup>282</sup>

This distinction is already in place in Martensen’s dissertation, where he declares that unlike the modern philosophers, who define the human as a “being endowed with reason,” the true definition of the human is “a being united with God *in religion*”.<sup>283</sup> Although Martensen agrees that reason is “the universal for everything”,<sup>284</sup> reason is subordinate to the anthropological and theological “living and personal actuality,”<sup>285</sup> which constitutes not just life’s “abstract *forms* but life itself”.<sup>286</sup> However, Martensen’s begins with an epistemological sketch of the relationship between theology and philosophy, specifically their “inner connection”. For theology, like philosophy, is also distinguished from religion, as theology is a human knowledge or science rather than the actual religious-existential relation. Martensen takes issue with the idea that philosophy and theology should have nothing to do with each other, noting instead that no “thoughtful theologian”<sup>287</sup> would claim that theology can be without philosophy. However, he distances himself from the modern theologians who accept philosophy as a purely auxiliary science to theology. Instead Martensen asserts philosophy’s inherent and thoroughgoing importance in theology, writing that if

one on the whole admits that speculative knowledge of God and the divine things is possible—which shall not be proven [*bevises*] here—one can do nothing but agree with the Church’s philosophizing fathers as well as the scholastics of the Middle Age, who taught that theology was philosophy, that the true philosophy was theology, and thus the unity of both was asserted.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>282</sup> Niels Thulstrup, *Kierkegaard’s Relation to Hegel*, 148.

<sup>283</sup> *MSA*, 18 / *BHK*, 86.

<sup>284</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>285</sup> *MSA*, 19 / *BHK*, 86.

<sup>286</sup> *MSA*, 19 / *BHK*, 87.

<sup>287</sup> *MSA*, 1 / *BHK*, 76.

<sup>288</sup> *MSA*, 1-2 / *BHK*, 76 (translation modified).

In other words, the condition for viewing philosophy and theology as united and the very basis for his speculative theology—the belief that speculative knowledge of the divine is possible—is not something Martensen seeks to *prove*, but something he simply assumes. Curtis L. Thompson has here translated the Danish “bevises” with “argued”, which significantly changes Martensen’s meaning. Martensen *does* argue that speculative knowledge of divine things is possible, but he does not *prove* this. He simply agrees with the Scholastics that theology can be seen as philosophy and true philosophy theology, because both are necessitated by a desire for knowledge of the same truth:

what makes philosophy indispensable for the human race is the desire for *knowledge* of the *truth*; but what other than this has called forth theology? The absolute truth or God is the object of philosophy; but theology has no other object, and religion has no other content than God’s revelation to humankind: thus theology and philosophy have the same object, and have emerged from the same inner necessity.<sup>289</sup>

Martensen therefore dismisses outright the idea that distinct or separate truths exist for philosophy and theology, remarking that this would “smack of bad scholasticism”.<sup>290</sup> Instead there is one truth only, and it is knowledge of this truth that underpins the inner connection of theology and philosophy. Because there is only one truth, there can also only be one kind of knowledge. This means there can be no real methodological distinction between theology and philosophy, and Martensen rejects the view that faith is theology’s principle of knowledge, and reason philosophy’s principle. The same truth entails the same knowledge, and likewise the same method. For method, Martensen explains, is the law which truth has imposed on human thought to arrive at its knowledge. Thereby truth, or God, shapes the way truth can be known. The human mind has no autonomy over truth, but is rather a receptive rather than a

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<sup>289</sup> MSA, 2 / BHK, 76.

<sup>290</sup> MSA, 3 / BHK, 77.

productive organ. Method therefore cannot be subjective or arbitrary, but must be necessary and objective, determined by the truth itself and not by individual philosophers or theologians:

It is precisely this complete harmony and agreement between form and content which constitutes the concept of every science... It is therefore an arbitrary procedure to permit philosophy an absolute knowledge of the truth but allow theology to remain at a lower stage and be discredited by a relative knowledge... In whichever way, then, the matter is resolved, whether the investigation of God's essence ought to have faith or also pure rational necessity as its principle, it always lies in the objective character of method that the theological method cannot be different from the philosophical.<sup>291</sup>

Martensen argues that if we doubt the existence of an objective method, we are rejecting a point of contact between God and finite, human knowledge, i.e., the possibility of having knowledge of divine things. In this way then Martensen shows that theology is philosophy, and philosophy is theology.

However, just as theology and philosophy are differentiated from religion, Martensen still demarcates theology and philosophy. Theology takes the religious relationship as its object, and Martensen suggests that theology's task is to maintain both the unity between God and the human being, but also their qualitative difference. Theology as a science arrives at the Christian, dogmas and truths. Philosophy arrives not at the actual dogmas or articles of faith, but rather, at the "knowledge entailed in dogma" or at the "knowledge of dogmatic knowing and consciousness of theological consciousness".<sup>292</sup> That is, philosophy is not a science of the Christian dogmas, like theology, but it is the science of the *cognition* of these dogmas—in other words, philosophy is *epistemology*. Martensen therefore defines

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<sup>291</sup> Ibid.

<sup>292</sup> MSA, 6 / BHK, 79.

philosophy as “the general and fundamental science” and “the science of sciences”.<sup>293</sup>

Nevertheless, while this distinguishes philosophy from theology, Martensen highlights that epistemology forms a crucial point of connection between the two disciplines. Theology is continuously shaped by epistemology and has been since the Middle Ages. Martensen writes:

It is easy to see that the entire reality, value, and meaning of Christian dogma depend on this consideration [epistemology]. In order to remove all doubt in this respect one simply needs to reflect on which consequences for Christian dogmatics flow from the conflict between nominalism and realism, from the philosophical questions of whether ideas have subjective or objective validity; one simply places in plain view the old question of the reciprocal relation between reason and revelation, of faith or reason as the principle of thinking.<sup>294</sup>

Purely rhetorically, this paragraph seeks to demonstrate the self-evidence of epistemology’s importance for theology. The use of terms like “easy [*let*]”; “simply [*blot*]” all work towards underlining theology’s reliance on and development through changing epistemologies, and thereby on philosophy, as being entirely obvious. Martensen even argues that there is scriptural evidence for the necessity of epistemology. He particularly points to 1 Cor 13.12, and 2.14 as supporting this view: “Even at the beginning of Genesis by far the oldest tradition of the human race, we already hear talk about that mystical tree of knowledge. In all these we have a summons to shape our theory of knowledge.”<sup>295</sup> However, in tandem with theology’s shaping through philosophy, philosophical knowledge depends entirely on the religious source of knowledge—God’s grace and revelation. Thus Martensen, like Hegel, suggests that philosophy is a thinking about thinking, whereas theology posits the actual objective content of religion. Unlike Hegel, Martensen inverts the hierarchy, and declares that instead of philosophy being the highest form, philosophy’s “culmination point is speculative

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<sup>293</sup> *MSA*, 5 / *BHK*, 78.

<sup>294</sup> *MSA*, 6 / *BHK*, 79.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*

theology.”<sup>296</sup> The second section of his dissertation is then devoted to explicating what Martensen terms the *religious principle* of philosophy, that is, the religious basis that makes philosophical knowledge possible.

According to Martensen, human thought cannot develop a theory of the highest principles of cognition without God, who is the “constitutive principle for all things.”<sup>297</sup> Because any epistemology “must penetrate into that form of consciousness which as the constitutive and proper *dignitate prius* goes before all things,”<sup>298</sup> God-consciousness, as “the light, that enlightens all human beings,”<sup>299</sup> plays the first and leading role in developing a theory of knowledge. For this reason, Martensen also characterises epistemology as a theory of divine illumination, or more succinctly as a “*light-theory*”, in which God’s illuminating grace brings about knowledge in the human mind.

The human cannot arrive at a knowledge of the truth by its own powers, but only by the help of God’s enlightening grace (*gratia illuminans*). Consciousness will always stand under the divine authority, it will always need God’s assistance, since the human itself is not the truth but has only come to the world in order to know the truth.<sup>300</sup>

However, Martensen qualifies this further, for although God’s revelation in grace forms the source of all knowledge, Martensen argues that true knowledge can only be obtained through *conscience*, in its original sense of shared knowledge or co-knowledge between God and the human being. Rather than a form of moral consciousness or a practical, ethical concept, Martensen redefines conscience as an epistemological category, which clearly and certainly determines human beings’ “absolute relationship... place in the whole universe... position in

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<sup>296</sup> MSA, 4 / BHK, 78.

<sup>297</sup> MSA, 8 / BHK, 80.

<sup>298</sup> MSA, 9 / BHK, 81.

<sup>299</sup> MSA, 8 / BHK, 80.

<sup>300</sup> MSA, 12 / BHK, 82.

relationship to God, and thus throws light on [their] whole way of being and living.”<sup>301</sup> Furthermore conscience “constitutes the rational creature as rational, makes the human human...make[s] up his or her essence.”<sup>302</sup> This means the co-knowledge stems from being in a religious living relationship with God, which in turn finds philosophical continuity as Martensen argues this knowledge is “just as real as ideal (because that knowledge, which the conscience gives the human, is no different from the human’s real existence, since it much more is this existence itself),” and thus “obliges us then to *assign* all our knowledge to God.”<sup>303</sup> However, this co-knowledge also reflects a necessary dynamic interplay between divine and human knowledge. Conscience is equally divine and human, which, “far from being an obscure [*dunkel*] feeling”, is “a clear cognition”.<sup>304</sup> Martensen explains the process of this co-knowledge as relational as human consciousness comes to the realisation that the knowledge it has of God comes not from itself, but from God, who knows it. This connects to the particular anthropology that Martensen formulates which views human beings—thinking creatures—as inherently relational.

What characterizes the thinking creature as such cannot be an absolute self-consciousness which is perfectly identical with itself, which should stand in relation to itself alone (*I=I*), but must be a consciousness of the absolute *relation* (*I* and *Other I*).<sup>305</sup>

With this Martensen implicitly critiques Fichte’s system of pure self-consciousness aligning himself with Hegel. But Martensen seeks to give this philosophical debate about self-consciousness a theological grounding by paraphrasing 1 John 4: “We love God because God first loved us so we also know [*kjende*] God because God first knew

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<sup>301</sup> *MSA*, 9 / *BHK*, 81.

<sup>302</sup> *MSA*, 10 / *BHK*, 81.

<sup>303</sup> *MSA*, 11-12 / *BHK*, 82.

<sup>304</sup> *MSA*, 10 / *BHK*, 81.

<sup>305</sup> *MSA*, 10 / *BHK*, 81-82.

[*kjendte*] us.”<sup>306</sup> Here, Martensen uses the Danish *kjende* for “knowing” highlighting the distinction between knowing *something* [*vide*] and knowing *someone* [*kjende*], yet Martensen merges these knowledge forms, demonstrating that knowledge is intimately relational and connected with the love of God, and that all knowledge is made possible only by God, and the human’s relation to him. In this way the same divine law “which grounds the unity of God and the creature in religious love, also applies to religious cognition, in the speculative view of God.”<sup>307</sup> With this Martensen underlines the intense continuity from philosophical to theological truth.

However, this close identity and unity between the divine and human is precisely possible not in spite of but because of their infinite difference and relation of contradiction. For this unity between God and his creatures to be possible, it requires that their difference is not sublated, for their relation consists precisely in this difference, which is a difference between creator and creature:

The true relation between God and the human consists in this, that human self-consciousness finds its concept of an *other* self-consciousness, namely, the divine, and receives all truth as a revelation from the latter. Herein lies the qualitative difference between God and the human—a difference, which in theology cannot be urged enough. Consequently, this divine truth of revelation, in which the omnipresent God is really present, is the constitutive principle both for the human’s faith and knowledge.<sup>308</sup>

Through this we arrive at the task of speculative theology, which for Martensen is the maintaining of the dialectical relation and sublation of contradiction into the unity between God and human beings. This dialectic enables human knowledge of God, and Martensen states that “*real* unity can only be thought of as the sublation of *real* difference.”<sup>309</sup> For there

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<sup>306</sup> *MSA*, 13 / *BHK*, 83.

<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>308</sup> *MSA*, 24 / *BHK*, 90.

<sup>309</sup> *MSA*, 102 / *BHK*, 142.

to be relational unity between two things, these two must be different, or else it would not be a unity, but simply a merging or homogenizing. Unity is not sameness, for there can be no relation between two of the same. In fact, there cannot really be “two of the same” for to be the same is to be *one* and the same. This model of “unity-in-difference” not only defines the relation between God and humankind, but also the relationship Martensen maintains between philosophy and theology (and religion). For Martensen strongly emphasises that knowledge of God is not only humanly possible, but an essential aspect of a life in faith:

To believe in one who lacks knowledge and insight into the divine is simply contrary to reason...

Christ in whom it [the human] believes must be thought of as the absolutely *knowing*. From this it follows that knowledge belongs essentially to faith, since faith is precisely on the verge of taking up into itself God's or Christ's absolute knowledge. Faith whose content is the truth about God and the human, can therefore also be called an absolute knowledge.<sup>310</sup>

Similarly as the above has shown, philosophy and theology, but philosophy and religion even more so, are at once differentiated and brought together in this differentiation.

### 2.1.2. *Unity-in-Difference*

This understanding of unity being possible only through real difference is a strongly Hegelian idea, building on the Hegelian dialectic and notion of *Aufhebung* or sublation. Hegel points out the inseparableness of unity and difference in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*: “Unity, difference, and relation are categories each of which is nothing in and for itself, but only in relation to its contrary, and they cannot therefore be separated from one another.”<sup>311</sup> As Martin Heidegger would later note “since the era of speculative Idealism, it is no longer possible for thinking to represent the unity of identity as mere sameness, and to disregard the

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<sup>310</sup> MSA, 100-101 / BHK, 141.

<sup>311</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 146.

mediation that prevails in unity”.<sup>312</sup> Although Western thought has always conceived of identity as unity, “unity is by no means the stale emptiness of that which, in itself, without relation, persists in monotony.”<sup>313</sup> As someone who sought to establish the identity or unity of thought and being, Hegel nonetheless does not simply absorb difference into this identity. Later and perhaps more radically, Hegel suggests that identity and difference belong inherently to each other in his *Science of Logic*. Hegel writes that “we...require identity together with the difference and the difference together with the identity.”<sup>314</sup> As Nicholas Adams suggests, people mistakenly read Hegel’s dialectic as “bloody-minded opposition”.<sup>315</sup> However, rather than opposition what Hegel truly sees is difference, which expresses not opposition but relation. Unity should therefore not be understood as the sublation or annulment of the first term into the second—the thesis into the anti-thesis—but as the unity, the relation, of the two. Hegel thereby recasts difference, so that opposition is not “just opposition any more: it is relation. Negation is not just negation any more: it is retentive of what it apparently negates.”<sup>316</sup> Similarly, Martin J. De Nys explains the categories of identity and difference each “is or defines an intelligible whole that includes its other as a moment, and itself as well.”<sup>317</sup> Hegel’s treatment of difference and identity, as De Nys argues, never allows for the annulment of difference into a self-related identity.<sup>318</sup> When Martensen suggests that “the difference between theology and philosophy is a difference between being and thought,”<sup>319</sup> he is at once noting the identity and the difference of these spheres, as

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<sup>312</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 25.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Basic Outline, Part I: Science of Logic*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 182.

<sup>315</sup> Adams, *Eclipse of Grace*, 162.

<sup>316</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>317</sup> Martin J. De Nys, “Identity and Difference, Thought and Being,” in Philip T. Grier (ed.) *Identity and Difference: Studies in Hegel’s Logic, Philosophy of Spirit, and Politics*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 83-99, 87.

<sup>318</sup> De Nys, “Identity and Difference,” 89.

<sup>319</sup> *MSA*, 8 / *BHK*, 80.

established by Hegel, in a way that relates these two without subsuming their differences, so that their unity continues to express a dynamic dialectical relationality.

This understanding of unity-in-difference as the right relationship between theology and philosophy, and between religion and philosophy, is made more explicit in Martensen's next work from 1840 entitled *Meister Eckhart: A Contribution towards Illuminating Medieval Mysticism*.<sup>320</sup> Meister Eckhart is important to Martensen for two reasons: Firstly, Eckhart's mystical thought enables Martensen to provide a genealogy of his own speculative theology and philosophy's connection to religion. Martensen views Eckhart to be the patriarch of German speculative thought as the first manifestation of German philosophy in history and its "first, immediate, yet bold, attempt to sublimate the contrast within reflection between faith and knowledge".<sup>321</sup> Nonetheless, as Peter Šajda remarks, despite its historical topic, the treatise "focuses on themes relevant for the nineteenth century's philosophical-theological discourse, such as the relations between religion and philosophy, Christianity and speculation, theism and pantheism, transcendence and immanence."<sup>322</sup> Secondly, Martensen uses Eckhart's mystical perspective as a negative example against which to formulate his own particular understanding of unity, in which differences are not erased but affirmed.

According to Martensen, the mystic seeks to discover the deepest mystery and the most original moment; the metaphysical ground of God. However, as soon as the mystic reaches some form of revelation, the mystic longs for mystery again like a pendulum that swings back and forth between mystery and revelation. Martensen suggests that the mystic

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<sup>320</sup> This work was originally intended as Martensen's doctoral dissertation. Just like Kierkegaard would do only a year later when writing *Concept of Irony*, Martensen applied for permission to write his dissertation in Danish instead of Latin. Arildsen suggests that Martensen had struggled to express his ideas adequately in Latin in his *De Autonomia* and wished to be liberated from Latin's abstract and homogenising dominance. In his application letter, Martensen notes that as his chosen topic lay within "theology's philosophical disciplines," which demanded a modern treatment, it followed that this study had to be written in a "living language".

<sup>321</sup> *ME*, 2 / *BHK*, 152.

<sup>322</sup> Peter Šajda, "Martensen's Treatise *Meister Eckhart* and the Contemporary Philosophical-Theological Debate on Speculative Mysticism in Germany", in Jon Stewart (ed.), *Hans Lassen Martensen: Theologian, Philosopher and Social Critic*, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2012), 47-72; 52.

separates that which must be viewed as eternally and inextricably united instead of allowing mediation between these as the mystical consciousness is all immediacy rather than mediation.<sup>323</sup> The mystic therefore does not allow difference, but views difference only as negation and limitation of God's fullness. Martensen rejects this maintaining that revelation contains within it "the difference, negation, and contrast which are the conditions for all consciousness and knowledge, but it contains unity just as much."<sup>324</sup> If the divine essence did not include negativity or finitude, Martensen adds, then it would be impossible for creaturely existence, consciousness and will to gain form: "In such a case there would only be a desolate quiet in which no spirit stirred, where there was neither God nor humanity."<sup>325</sup> According to Martensen, the divine essence must separate itself from itself to ensure the multiplicity of creation. In other words, revelation brings with it the differentiation necessary for human religious existence, whereas mystery results in a confused unity and false immediacy. Martensen writes that a mystery without God's revelation is simply "a contradiction [*Modsigelse*], an invisible beauty, an ineffective good, an unknown truth, a light without eyes".<sup>326</sup> Mysticism might hold truth within it, but is unable to reflect this back to the knowing spirit. Instead of maintaining the qualitative difference between humans and God, mysticism annuls this relation "into an absolute indifference."<sup>327</sup>

For Martensen mysticism is characterised by its basis in an immediate unity of philosophy and religion: "Philosophical thought is born out of the depths of the religious disposition, but is not yet cut loose to an independent existence in the world. Speculation is still one with religion. They are twins. The one is, immediately also the other".<sup>328</sup> Mysticism shows how the religious consciousness contains philosophy embryonically by virtue of its

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<sup>323</sup> *ME*, 54 / *BHK*, 186.

<sup>324</sup> *ME*, 52 / *BHK*, 184-5.

<sup>325</sup> *ME*, 53 / *BHK*, 185

<sup>326</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>327</sup> *ME*, 54 / *BHK*, 185.

<sup>328</sup> *ME*, 2 / *BHK*, 153.

innate speculative moment. However, because speculation and religion are simply one for the mystic, religion cannot become the *object* of speculation, nor can speculation become the object for itself. What makes the mystical position problematic is precisely this immediacy, which makes philosophy and theology the same rather than united. In the mystical conception philosophy is not yet an independent moment, and thus its unity with religion is neither free nor true. Mysticism's immediate unity of philosophy and religion is ambiguously both the value and problem of the mystic position. Summarising the above, Martensen writes:

The unity of religion and philosophy is the highest, but their true union comes forth only in and through their separation and division, when speculative thought and religious disposition undergo a *free* reconciliation. The speculative is always present in religion and to that extent one can say that philosophy is always *implicite* present in religious consciousness. ...The speculative element is present here only within religion's powerfully developing drive, which, according to its nature, seeks to *posit* what religion originally *is*, i.e., the reconciliation and identity of life's contrasts; specifically, the identity of God and human beings.<sup>329</sup>

For the religious subject to remove himself or herself from pantheism turning God into an object for thought, it is required that "philosophy and religion actually were separated, that the philosophical *I* split itself off from the religious *I*."<sup>330</sup> However, for mysticism this is impossible, and for this reason mysticism is not only untrue, but also unfree. Martensen not only seeks to establish the unity of philosophy, theology, and religion, but also to establish their unity precisely by clarifying and removing the confusion of these spheres. This is further emphasised in Martensen's final work from this period.

### 2.1.3 From Inner Connection to Dialectical interplay: Ethics, Theology, and Religion

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<sup>329</sup> *ME*, 56 / *BHK*, 187.

<sup>330</sup> *ME*, 57 / *BHK*, 187.

In his 1838-39 “Lectures on Speculative Dogmatics”, Martensen notes that because religion is an existential relationship between God and humanity, religion must be viewed as standing in careful and close connection to ethics [*Sædeligheden*]: “The Idea of Morality is a moment in the religious idea; when it is separated from this, this occurs only by an abstraction. The religious is the eternal, existential, which is realised in the concrete human as the ethical [*sædelige*]”<sup>331</sup> This profound connectedness between ethics, a philosophical discipline, and religion, is strongly emphasised in Martensen’s 1841 *Outline to a System of Moral Philosophy*. Martensen’s system of moral philosophy expresses how the human being’s authentic existence, or what Martensen refers to as personality, is developed. Starting from its origin in God’s creative will, this system describes how spirit must actualise itself in the world through a dialectical process which manifests itself in various antinomies. True existence is reached only when the individual human being (the free human will) is fully and freely united with God (and God’s holy will) in a relation of theonomy.

Written as a textbook for Martensen’s lectures on moral philosophy in the Philosophical Faculty, Martensen underlines that this work is useful for philosophy and theology students alike. Martensen is aware of the general view that Hegel had no ethics, but seeks to overturn the idea that speculative thought is not conducive to ethical thought: “It is so far from the case that the ethical interest in-and-for-itself should be alien to modern speculative science that an actual ethic has only become possible by the sweeping reformation of metaphysics which was effected by ‘the great thinker’ as our age with justice calls him.”<sup>332</sup> Martensen suggests that Hegel’s works still imply “a higher ethical knowledge,”<sup>333</sup> for Hegelian thought is a philosophy of *life*, which implies a natural ethical impulse. Martensen rejects that Hegelian metaphysics, “which posits as its highest task to

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<sup>331</sup> *Pap.* II C 26-27, 9.

<sup>332</sup> *GMS*, v / *BHK*, 247.

<sup>333</sup> *GMS*, vii / *BHK*, 248.

penetrate living actuality and which determines true actuality as the unity of the theoretical and the practical idea,”<sup>334</sup> should be indifferent to ethics. Martensen is really suggesting that he sees it as his own task to formulate this Hegelian ethics and produce the “rational actuality”, that is, the practical complement to the proposition that the actual is the rational. The problem is people have been used to viewing Hegel’s philosophy “as a finished, concluded result”, leading to profound misunderstandings by both “friends and foes”, who consequently “fly into dead, fatalistic ways of construing [*Opfattelsesmaader*]”.<sup>335</sup> Instead, one must realise that “one has only understood the results of philosophy when one in addition has been able to grasp them as living starting points for a new development”.<sup>336</sup> If this is done, then it will become increasingly clear that Hegel’s speculative philosophy has “freedom as its principle” and its expansive ethical perspective, in which personality serves as the gravitational centre for thinking, will become “vividly apparent”.<sup>337</sup> By appropriating speculative philosophy’s results existentially as starting points for a further development these can be understood cognitively. Through this, Martensen suggests that ethics will arrive at its comprehensive meaning as “the presentation of the absolutely practical idea”, or “the science of the personality’s free self-development toward its ideal through the rational necessity of objectivity”.<sup>338</sup>

Martensen claims that a philosophical and theological ethics cannot and should not be separated. He argues that the philosophical types of morality are the *same* types that a moral theology should be developed according to. This claim, Martensen bases on his observation that philosophy and what he calls the positive sciences are becoming increasingly connected, because speculative philosophy has broken down the boundary between thought and

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<sup>334</sup> *GMS*, v / *BHK*, 247.

<sup>335</sup> *GMS*, viii / *BHK*, 248.

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*

actuality: Thus when philosophy is no longer “an empty construction a priori, but a cognition of reality, and when the positive sciences allow themselves to be permeated by the philosophical method, then the old contrast has to offend.”<sup>339</sup> It would make no sense to have a separate philosophical and Christian ethics, for a moral philosophy that ignores Christianity also ignores “actual morality, and thereby only makes itself impractical”.<sup>340</sup> In other words, what is *actual* is the religious relationship between God and human beings, which provides philosophy with its objective content. If there was ever any science that should be rooted in the living, present (religious) actuality, Martensen notes, it would have to be practical philosophy. Any difference between moral theology and moral philosophy, according to Martensen, lies only in the fact that philosophy “sticks to the universal and general”, whereas theology “gives the religious-ethical points their developments”<sup>341</sup> through the specifically theological disciplines, such as the study of Scripture, church history and dogmatics.

This does not mean that theology makes use of a different method than philosophy, but rather that theology concretely individualises the universal and general moments of moral philosophy. Martensen likewise rejects that one should focus only on the theological-religious aspects of ethics, arguing that secular moments like family and state must be included:

Christianity itself has surely not concluded its activity inside the precincts of religion and religious morality, but over the course of time has in addition constituted a secular morality, which certainly has its final ground but precisely therefore not its most immediate ground in religion. That is why ethics just as surely cannot stay within the religious sphere alone.<sup>342</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> *GMS*, xi / *BHK*, 249.

<sup>340</sup> *GMS*, xi / *BHK*, 249-50.

<sup>341</sup> *GMS*, xii / *BHK*, 250.

<sup>342</sup> *Ibid.*

Martensen notes that morality has developed a relative independence from religion, something which is practically expressed in the separation of state and church. The separation of ethics from dogmatics particularly finds full expression in the autonomy afforded to ethics by Kant and Fichte, for whom moral concepts should be “presented in their own pure light, not in the colored light of religion.”<sup>343</sup> Conversely, Martensen argues that to demonstrate the religious foundation of philosophy and morality, the theologian must turn to philosophy itself:

if it is now the theologian’s concern that religion shall be known as the ground and principle of morality, then this central meaning of religion can only be scientifically known when morality’s relative, secular forms are developed with philosophical necessity into that religious morality which is their highest truth, just as inversely it must be shown how this religious morality must seek its full actuality in the finite life of the world. Through this dialectical interaction [*dialektiske Vexelbevægelse*] of morality’s religious moments and its secular moments the system must progress, and to the same degree that the consideration has philosophical universality will it be able to develop its theological individuality.<sup>344</sup>

Thus it is through the dynamic back and forth—the dialectic interplay and interchange between the philosophical and the religious that propels Martensen’s system of ethics. Throughout the book, Martensen draws on this dialectic between the philosophical-secular and religious moments of morality, relating Christian dogmas to the universal philosophical ethics. However, in ethics a dogma can only be known in its effects, that is, ethics cannot show or legitimise the highest metaphysical truth, even though it is an indirect proof for its validity. Martensen for example explains that while ethics “cannot consider Christ in his purely metaphysical meaning but only in *relation* or in such a way that his personality shines

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<sup>343</sup> *GMS*, xiii / *BHK*, 250.

<sup>344</sup> *GMS*, xiii-xiv / *BHK*, 250.

into the practical life of the world.”<sup>345</sup> Practically this ideal becomes the imitation of Christ. However, understood in the philosophical-universal sphere, imitation must be understood as the ethical demand to offer service to society. For “the imitation of Christ,” writes Martensen, “is accomplished only by this: that the individual settles on a particular vocation in God’s kingdom. In this way the religious ideal passes over into the larger context of life-in-the-world.”<sup>346</sup> This dialectic between the religious and moral-philosophical perspective shows that ethical obligation is intrinsically bound to Christianity’s eschatological promises, and ensures the church’s (and the individual’s) continued engagement with society: “the Church sends the faithful back into the life of the world in order to work in the hope of God’s coming kingdom.”<sup>347</sup>

In this four-year period, Martensen is greatly preoccupied with both resolving and clarifying the confusion of the philosophical and religious spheres, but equally seeks to show that these spheres can be harmonised and united in their difference. Whereas Martensen at first establishes this unity between philosophy as epistemology, theology, and religion, in *Outline*, Martensen begins to perceive this relationship as a dialectical reciprocal interplay, which demonstrates continuity between the philosophical perspective and Christian dogmas.

## 2.2 The Religious Crisis of 1842

For a number of reasons, a shift occurs in Martensen’s thought in 1842. In 1840, Martensen found himself attacked for corrupting the students of Copenhagen University with his secular speculative philosophy.<sup>348</sup> A further factor, as discussed in the previous chapter, was the 1842

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<sup>345</sup> *GMS*, 54-55 / *BHK*, 283.

<sup>346</sup> *GMS*, 55 / *BHK*, 284.

<sup>347</sup> *GMS*, 107 / *BHK*, 313.

<sup>348</sup> Martensen was attacked by an anonymous critic in *Kjøbenhavnsposten* (*The Copenhagen Post*) and engaged in an exchange of articles in January and February of 1840: Anonymous, “Nogle Træk til en Charakteristik af den filosofiske Aand, som for Tiden finds hos de Studerende ved Kjøbenhavns Universitet” *Kjøbenhavnsposten*, 14:25 January 26, 1840, 97-99; “Philosophiske Suffisance i Fædrelandet,” *Kjøbenhavnsposten*, 14:32, February 1, 1840, 121-124; “Sidste Indlæg: Sagen contra Lector Martensen som Mandatarius for Hegel & Comp,” *Kjøbenhavnsposten*, 14:41, February 11, 1840, 161-163. In turn Martensen

Brøchner case which signalled the rise of Left-Hegelianism and its undermining of Christianity in a specifically Danish context. Martensen would therefore have been eager to distance himself from Hegelianism, a distance which was encouraged by Bishop Mynster,<sup>349</sup> who is another important factor in Martensen's shift. Martensen describes how their relationship deepened around this time, and Mynster encouraged him to combine his academic activity with a life in the church. Mynster was responsible for Martensen's 1845 appointment as court preacher, which consolidated Martensen's unification of academic and ecclesial duties.<sup>350</sup>

The shift in Martensen's thought is signalled by his 1842 article "The Present Religious Crisis". For Martensen this crisis is once again related to an imbalance or wrong understanding of the relation between the philosophical and religious spheres. Martensen is critical both of the one-sided religious revivals that he finds driven entirely by feeling, and of the overly intellectual critics of religion. Both challenge the Danish State Church, which must be a harmony of religious and worldly consciousness. For Martensen these two approaches are class-related. The first is found among the uneducated classes, specifically the working class and peasants, who have responded to the crisis in religion by turning to unorthodox, unofficial forms of Christianity—to sects—which involves a deepening of piety, religious fervour and revivals across the country at the expense of state religion and a philosophical, worldly consciousness: "They demand that the consciousness of the world give up its

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wrote two articles in response in *Fædrelandet*: Martensen, "Philosophisk Beskedenhed i *Kjøbenhavnsposten*," *Fædrelandet*, 1:50 January 29, 1840, 259-261 and "Erklæring," *Fædrelandet*, 1:56, February 4, 1840, 315-316. This criticism of corrupting the youth would later be explicitly expressed by the Icelandic theologian Magnús Eiríksson, who demanded that Martensen quit his university position in his response to Martensen's *Outline*. See Eiríksson, *Dr. Martensens trykte moralske Paragrafer, eller det saakaldte "Grundrids til Moralphilosophiens System af Dr. Hans Martensen," i dets forvirrede, idealistisk-metaphysiske og phantastisk-speculative, Religion og Christendom undergravende, fatalistiske, pantheistiske og selvforoguderiske Væsen*, (Copenhagen: H.C. Klein 1846).

<sup>349</sup> *AL* 2, 74.

<sup>350</sup> *AL* 2, 75. Martensen describes Mynster as someone in whom there was a "unity of strictness and mildness... a rare harmony of all life moments" (*AL* 2, 76).

independence and be dissolved in religion. They find in the State Church an unbearable mixing together of the sacred and the profane".<sup>351</sup>

The other approach is a direct loss of faith, which Martensen identifies among the educated [*dannede*] classes. These people have accepted the Enlightenment rejection of religion and view philosophy and culture as surrogates for faith. This philosophical rather than religious revival has arisen from a

craving for higher knowledge, a restless search for light and clarity, an aspiration for total perception... Their eyes have been opened to individual truths of philosophy, and they now demand a new earth and a new heaven, although they themselves do not know which. They seek a satisfaction which can only be granted them when they could find a point of rest not merely in their feeling but also for their thought.<sup>352</sup>

The religion preached by the church or taught in university thus fails to satisfy their intellectual needs and desires. Martensen declares that it is the duty of both church and academic theology to guide this philosophical movement and disillusion among the educated classes, but Martensen suggests that this has been neglected as the church has only addressed the religious revivals, not the philosophical one. Martensen thus recognises that both these classes are experiencing a parallel dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the State Church. Martensen even synthesises the responses of these classes, noting their essential similarity, for when the uneducated

complain that they do not find faith's proper inwardness and simplicity in the church, then these simple people say in their way the same thing that many educated people say who have turned away from the church because in the religious preaching they find the real presence of the idea to be lacking, because religion comes forth only as something derived, as something which is possessed second-hand.<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> "NrC," 59 / "PRC," 433.

<sup>352</sup> "NrC," 68 / "PRC," 437.

<sup>353</sup> "NrC," 64 / "PRC," 434.

However, unlike the educated classes, the uneducated have no surrogates for religion. Thus, this crisis is a dual one caused by two opposing views, and the State Church's response must likewise be a dual one. According to Martensen the church must respond to this by focusing inwards and conducting a self-critique in order to recognise whether it is responsible for the accusations levelled at it. According to Martensen the church *is* responsible, as this crisis is caused by the church's inability of bringing together theology and philosophy or believers and knowers. As Martensen states, if "religion may be able to be everything for everyone—then the intelligence of the church must also be able to cope with the philosophy of the age".<sup>354</sup> Martensen describes how preserving the church could have been done by placing it in a "living reciprocal relation [*vexelvirkning*] with philosophy"<sup>355</sup> precisely to make use of philosophy's ability to renew and develop religious knowledge.<sup>356</sup> Unfortunately, philosophical speculation has either been viewed with hostility, by the church, or a reconciliation of religion and speculation has been welcomed, but any effort towards this has been rejected. Martensen seems to be intentionally vague about who precisely is targeted here, as he no doubt wishes to avoid offense. Yet, he makes it clear that the Church itself is as much to blame for this broadening gulf between the life of knowledge and the life of faith as those who make up what Martensen terms "the revolutionary party in scholarship,"<sup>357</sup> which likely refers to the Left-Hegelians. However, by cutting itself off from philosophy, the church gave this party its foothold:

it has for many people become a kind of axiom that whatever is true in religion is false in philosophy and vice versa...Let the believers keep their faith if only we can keep our philosophy, calls the one party: Should the believers lock us out of their church, then we

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<sup>354</sup> "NrC," 69 / "PRC," 437.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

<sup>357</sup> "NrC," 70 / "PRC," 437.

would see it only as a gain! Let the knowers keep their knowledge, if only we keep our faith, say the pious: There is no community between faith and human wisdom!—Already both faithful and apostate are united in requesting the state to dissolve the State Church and to establish a general freedom of cult.<sup>358</sup>

Thereby the religious crisis is due to the separation of theology and philosophy, and the increasing dualism between believers and knowers, which rejects the dynamic interplay between faith and knowledge; philosophy and religion needed to ensure the right and balanced view that enables the ethical development of the individual and of wider society. In the years 1843 to 1849, Martensen wrote and published very little. He was appointed court preacher in 1845, and during this time he turned to writing his *Christian Dogmatics*.

### **2.3 From Inner Connection to Dialectical Transformation: Martensen's 1849 *Christian Dogmatics***

Like his other works, Martensen's *Dogmatics* was lauded both nationally and internationally, and quickly translated into both German and English.<sup>359</sup> Thulstrup suggested that the *Dogmatics* necessarily must be singled out as the work "representative of the main trend of Danish theology in the 19<sup>th</sup> century".<sup>360</sup> A few months before the publication of the *Dogmatics*, the Swedish writer and reformer Frederikke Bremer underlines the great popularity of Martensen's "living words" and "philosophical writings,"<sup>361</sup> and explains that

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<sup>358</sup> "NrC," 70-71 / "PRC," 437-38.

<sup>359</sup> Martensen's *Dogmatics* was reprinted in Denmark up until 1905. This work was translated into German in 1856 as *Die Christliche Dogmatik* (Berlin: Verlag von Gustav SchlawiB, 1856), edited by Martensen himself. From this German translation, the *Dogmatics* was translated into English in 1866 as *Christian Dogmatics: A Compendium of the Doctrines of Christianity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1866) translated by Rev. William Urwick. However, Urwick's translation is not always faithful or accurate. I have therefore provided my own translation and will be referring to Martensen's original 1849 edition, but I have included paragraph numbers so these can easily be found in the English translation.

<sup>360</sup> Niels Thulstrup, "Martensen's *Dogmatics* and its Reception," Jon Stewart (ed) *Kierkegaard and His Contemporaries: The Culture of Golden Age Denmark*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 181-202; 181.

<sup>361</sup> Frederikke Bremer, *Liv i Norden*, (Copenhagen: F. H. Eibes Forlag, 1849), 36.

Martensen's soon to be published *Dogmatics* was highly anticipated as his *magnum opus*, and a work that would not just be for scholars, but for laypeople too, thus finally popularising theology.<sup>362</sup> In his editorial introductory notes to the fifth edition of this work published in 1904, the theologian Alfred Th. Jørgensen suggests that the *Dogmatics* addressed the religious crisis of the mid-nineteenth century by helping the church present its "truth content" in a systematic way, and that Martensen had thereby solved the problem of theology and philosophy and definitively outlined their relationship, by going "boldly through philosophy into theology."<sup>363</sup>

However, Martensen's *Dogmatics* was also subject to much criticism and derision. Contemporary critics particularly protested against the *Dogmatics*' treatment of the relationship between philosophy and dogmatics.<sup>364</sup> Contemporaries, such as Professor of Philosophy Rasmus Nielsen, the Icelandic theologian Magnús Eiríksson, Jens-Paludan Müller, and his previous students Peter Michael Stilling, and, of course, Kierkegaard himself, believed Martensen's *Dogmatics* led not to unity between philosophy and theology, but to an imprudent intermingling of these spheres, inconsistencies, and a break down in any dialectics.

I will argue against some of these critics that one cannot really charge Martensen with inconsistency for developing his view from his dissertation to his *Dogmatics*. The change in Martensen's later position can be explained by his idea that living Christian knowledge must be reflected by a dynamic, living development of thought. However, I will also argue that Martensen's specific treatment of philosophy and theology's relationship in the *Dogmatics* becomes increasingly perplexing and unclear, as the dialectic he aims to establish seems to be at best erratic and at worst to simply break down.

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<sup>362</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>363</sup> Alfred Th. Jørgensen, "Nogle Træk af Martensens Dogmatiks Historie: Et Afsnit af den danske Teologis Historie," Martensen, *Den Christelige Dogmatik* (Copenhagen: Gad, 1904), xiii (my translation).

<sup>364</sup> Martensen would even find it necessary to publish his response *Dogmatiske Oplysninger* in 1850 to insist on the continuity of his thought and that he had in fact not notably changed his position. See, *DO*, 68.

Martensen starts by underlining the continuity from his dissertation to his *Dogmatics*, stating that both build upon the idea that “speculative thought that needs religion, God’s revelation as its principle.”<sup>365</sup> Nevertheless, the autonomy of human self-consciousness that Martensen sought to replace with his theonomy has with “surprising swiftness moved into new shapes of development, and has ended up with the unreserved declaration that dogmatics is impossible because no revelation and no other light than nature’s and self-consciousness’ are given.”<sup>366</sup> This is particularly manifested in the Left-Hegelian *free-thinking*. However, despite the damage this has caused, Martensen also suggests that this free-thinking has benefitted Christian theology by giving it an occasion to engage in a deeper self-examination. Martensen therefore warns those who believe faith simply negates coherent, scientific theological thought and speculation, and view a science of faith as self-contradictory—those who “feel no need to think about their faith,” or “coherent thinking,” but who, “only satisfy themselves by thinking in scattered ideas and aphorisms, impulses and glimmers.”<sup>367</sup> Kierkegaard, with good reason (as we shall see), believed this particular line was aimed at him specifically. Martensen’s rejects this poetic approach and offers his new *Dogmatics* precisely as an attempt at such a coherent science of faith.

With this, Martensen no longer argues that there is only one method shared by philosophy and theology. Instead he distinguishes between dogmatic science, and philosophical secular science. Martensen writes that a dogma is “no subjective, human opinion, no indefinite and hazy representation [*Forestilling*],” nor is it “a pure truth of reason, whose universal validity is made evident with mathematical or logical necessity”.<sup>368</sup> Rather, Martensen declares, it is a truth of faith derived from God’s word and revelation, which makes it a positive truth. Martensen explains that dogmatics is the scientific presentation and

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<sup>365</sup> *CD*, ii.

<sup>366</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>367</sup> *CD*, iii.

<sup>368</sup> *CD* §1, 3.

justification of the “Christian faith teachings in their inner connections.”<sup>369</sup> Therefore dogmatic theology is for Martensen not merely a science of faith, but also a knowledge based on faith and from faith itself. Martensen argues that the Christian truth must be a personal truth for the dogmatician, as it cannot be simply a “philosophical knowledge of Christian truth” acquired outside of faith. Whereas the dogmatic theologian, who stands inside of Christianity, may serve both science [*Videnskab*] and the church, the philosopher serves *only* science.<sup>370</sup> Martensen introduces his *Dogmatics* not with a clear-cut call to unite philosophy and theology, but by distinguishing between the philosopher and theologian, based on their commitment to the church and by distinguishing between dogmatics as a specifically Christian science and the general “worldly” sciences. This is a departure from his dissertation, and one that discards its emphasis on one-truth-one-method. Martensen does not reject that it is possible to philosophise about Christianity, and that these philosophical reflections could be favourable to the church, but rejects that such philosophising can be called dogmatics. Martensen’s *Dogmatics* instead emphasises the existential side of Christianity, and with it that Christian convictions are a living form of knowledge, which must be reflected in the relation between philosophy and theology. Martensen therefore redefines and develops a number of his core concepts from his dissertation, including conscience and speculation.

### *2.3.1 Developing Concepts: Conscience and Speculation*

Just as in his dissertation and lectures, the *Dogmatics* underlines that religion is an existential-religious God relationship, which both contains the relation of contradiction between God and the human being, but is simultaneously the “solution, sublation of this

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<sup>369</sup> Ibid.

<sup>370</sup> *CD* §2, 4.

contradiction into unity”.<sup>371</sup> The religious relation to God is existential because the human’s consciousness of the God relationship is one with personal life and existence in the relation. Thus, Martensen again underlines that: “Religion in its true sense is a life in God”.<sup>372</sup> Echoing his lectures, Martensen underlines that this is what constitutes the difference between art, science, philosophy and religion: For whereas these forms simply have God in the “mirror image of thought and imagination”,<sup>373</sup> the Christian has God in his or her existence. Martensen clarifies that this religious relationship to God is generally expressed through conscience. However, whereas in his dissertation, conscience constituted the religious principle of philosophy, as a clear cognition not an obscure feeling, the *Dogmatics* describe conscience very differently. Martensen still underlines that conscience is an epistemological, rather than an ethical, category. Conscience is still oriented towards God, however, Martensen now suggests that the divine side of conscience is “darkened [*fordunklet*] in most people”.<sup>374</sup> The *Dogmatics* specifically defines conscience as “the human’s original co-knowledge with God about his or her personal existential relationship to him, and immediate, and tactile co-knowledge with God. For as I know myself in my conscience, in this way I live and exist”.<sup>375</sup> Thus Martensen still views conscience as fundamental to knowledge as “all certainty about divine and human things is only a religious certainty when it is a certainty of conscience”.<sup>376</sup> However, Martensen now describes conscience as an immediate and tactile knowledge, which should be understood as “the original, the primitive knowledge, that is the basis of speculation.”<sup>377</sup> Such religious co-knowledge is not in “the form of abstract thought”, but instead the idea of God “must gain

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<sup>371</sup> *CD* §4, 8

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>374</sup> *CD* §5, 9

<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>377</sup> *CD* §8, 13.

shape through a comprehensive intuition [*Anskuelse*] of the world and human life in its relation to God.”<sup>378</sup> Furthermore it is a kind of knowledge that includes both imagination and reason, for “no one can think God living without imagination”.<sup>379</sup> Martensen admits that this may sound strange to most people, but nevertheless notes that experience has shown that religion always brings with it a “comprehensive imaginative intuition [*Phantasieanskuelse*].”<sup>380</sup> Although Martensen does not elaborate on what experience he has in mind, conscience in the *Dogmatics* is then developed, or perhaps reduced, from being a clear cognition to being an immediate imaginative intuition.<sup>381</sup>

We find a similar shift in Martensen’s definition of speculation, as Martensen now distinguishes between two different kinds of speculation: A “theological speculation,” which is an “in-itself coherent theological thinking”<sup>382</sup> that recognises its theonomous principle and ground in faith. Martensen, however, contrasts this theological speculation, with what might be termed as an autonomous speculation in which Christianity’s truth is viewed as problematic and which claims that it alone provides certainty of Christianity’s truth, and which therefore cannot be considered theological. This distinction is to some extent reflected in Martensen’s dissertation, as Martensen here distinguished between an autonomous, presuppositionless philosophy and philosophy that takes faith as its object and seeks to be a thinking about dogmatic knowledge. However, Martensen’s concept of speculation still undergoes a marked change in his *Dogmatics*.

Robert Leslie Horn argues that because of Martensen’s reduction of his concept of conscience to an intuition, speculation must equally suffer such reduction. Horn notes that whereas speculation until 1841 for Martensen could be “understood as metaphysical vision

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<sup>378</sup> Ibid.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid.

<sup>381</sup> Horn has treated this shift in Martensen’s concept of conscience in detail in Chapter 8 of his *Positivity and Dialectic*.

<sup>382</sup> *CD*, ii.

into the eternal contrast between divine essence and human phenomenon,” and forms “the innermost background of every Christian account of the world,”<sup>383</sup> speculation is not only reduced, but volatilised in the *Dogmatics*. Martensen writes:

The healthy [*sunde*] view will therefore acknowledge that the speculative understanding itself is a sorely movable and dialectical concept that does not let itself be brushed off with the claim that it must either completely exist or not exist, for it exists only as *becoming*; every conclusion in the concept will therefore always be merely relative, any solution to the problem will likewise be a new sharpening of the problem; the concluding in knowledge will likewise include the divinatory, which points to a higher solution.<sup>384</sup>

In other words, speculation goes from being the way to certain knowledge of the divine absolute truth, to being a knowledge that is in constant process and which provides only relative knowledge—speculation no longer solves problems, but simply more clearly formulates or sharpens these problem.

Because of these shifts in Martensen’s concepts of conscience and speculation from his dissertation to his dogmatics, Horn concludes that: “Only vagueness, ambiguity and the appeal to an architectonic, which on close examination is seen to be wholly external, makes the *Christian Dogmatics*, as the culmination of Martensen’s theological work, appear to be the system.”<sup>385</sup> Horn argues that Martensen instead of the promised speculative theology leaves us with a “positivistic theology of the regenerate mind, a supernaturalism of the kind he thought antiquated in his writings from 1837-1841, a kind of theology which his disciples thought he had overcome in his dissertation”.<sup>386</sup> Horn then not only argues that Martensen is guilty of inconsistency and ambiguity, but also of thought that devolves rather than develops.

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<sup>383</sup> Horn, *Positivity and Dialectic*, 216.

<sup>384</sup> *CD* §33, 80.

<sup>385</sup> Horn, *Positivity and Dialectic*, 221.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

While Horn is right to point out these shifts from Martensen's earlier works to his *Dogmatics*, one might question whether it is fair to call these shifts a devolvement or even inconsistent. The *Dogmatics* express an increased emphasis on the existential side of Christianity, and Christian knowledge. Martensen underlines the value of a free and living thought for capturing this existential core of Christianity. It seems that these shifts are an expression of Martensen's own intellectual development, and can be viewed as a development from categories of unquestionable epistemological clarity to epistemological categories that better align with Christianity's existential truth. This then does not necessarily have to be viewed as a devolvement. In fact, as Thompson notes, faith's intuition "is far richer than the knowledge that comes by way of the concept,"<sup>387</sup> and perhaps this is why Martensen roots speculation in this more immediate intuition in his *Dogmatics*.

Furthermore, it seems unfair to charge Martensen with inconsistency for changing his concepts over a ten-year period—from his very first publication to a work written at the height of his academic career. When Martensen argues that his view has not changed from his dissertation to his dogmatics, he means that his basic theonomical position has not changed—he does not argue that his expression or presentations of this theonomical position stay the same. As Martensen clarifies in his *Dogmatiske Oplysninger*,

I do not believe that anyone will be able to demonstrate to me a contradiction in principle between my now published *Dogmatics* and my first work on dogmatics, *On the Autonomy of Human Self-Consciousness* (1837); or demonstrate to me that have abandoned the concept of the theonomical and the herein given denial of autonomous speculation, which is expressed in this work."<sup>388</sup>

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<sup>387</sup> Thompson, "Embracing Philosophical Speculation: H. L. Martensen's Speculative Theology and Its Impact," in Jon Stewart (ed.), *Hans Lassen Martensen: Theologian, Philosopher and Social Critic*, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2012), 99-154; 124.

<sup>388</sup> *DO*, 68.

Martensen even notes that it would be regrettable if his thought had not developed in the more than ten years since his dissertation was published, and suggests that it would be peculiar “if I should not have the right to a continued development, a right which some seem to deny me, as they seem to take offense that the *Dogmatics* I have now published is not a stereotypical-imprint of my first lectures.”<sup>389</sup> The issue then is not whether there is absolute continuity from one work to the next. For, I think it is justifiable to take into account Martensen’s idea of existential living thought as well as his honest admission that his thought has developed—which would only be natural in a span of over ten years. What is problematic in the *Dogmatics*, however, is Martensen’s treatment of the relationship between philosophy and theology.

### 2.3.2 *Philosophy and Theology’s Relationship of Dialectical Transformation*

With the change in Martensen’s concepts of conscience and speculation, a shift must also necessarily take place in the relationship between philosophy and theology. Instead of seeking the inner connection of philosophy and theology of his dissertation, we thus see that Martensen further develops the *Outline’s* conception of a dialectical relationship between these spheres, and this section will show that in the *Dogmatics* Martensen specifically posits a relationship of dialectical transformation, which aligns with his concept of a living Christian knowledge.

Martensen asserts that dogmatic knowledge develops through a variety of forms, including speculative forms, which means “a relationship occurs between dogmatics and philosophy”.<sup>390</sup> However, at the same time because for dogmatic theology,

Christianity’s absolute truth, is given before and independent of all speculation. That δὸς ποῦ στῶ, which the searching philosophy so often has pronounced, is originally solved for dogmatics, and

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<sup>389</sup> *DO*, 69.

<sup>390</sup> *CD* §2, 5.

the dogmatician does not make Christianity dependent on his inquiry, but seeks through thinking only a deeper appropriation of the truth that is to him the most certain of all, and at which he has arrived by way of a whole other path than that of speculation.<sup>391</sup>

Martensen's reference here to Archimedes' explanation of the principle of the lever, δὸς ποῦ στῶ, ["give me a place to stand" [and I will move the world]] is also found in Descartes' *Meditations* where it is related to philosophy's pursuit of a presuppositionless foundation for certain knowledge. Descartes writes:

I will stay on this course until I know something certain, or, if nothing else, until I at least know for certain that nothing is certain. Archimedes sought but one firm and immovable point in order to move the entire earth... Just so, great things are also to be hoped for if I succeed in finding just one thing, however slight, that is certain and unshaken.<sup>392</sup>

While Descartes goes on to identify this certain foundation as the *cogito ergo sum*, Martensen's holds that this place of certainty has been evident for the dogmatic theologian all along, as the revealed truth of Christianity in faith is the necessary presupposition for all things. Martensen thus notes that the scientific interest of dogmatics is completely different from the "pure logical enthusiasm," which thinks only for the sake of thinking and is apathetic to the actual results of this thought. Instead, Martensen argues that dogmatics thinks for the sake of truth, and unlike modern philosophy, does not develop itself "from the emptiness of doubt, but from the fullness of faith."<sup>393</sup> Martensen therefore praises Schleiermacher's dogmatics precisely for underlining the independent principle of dogmatic theology, and preventing it from "mortgaging its kingdom to an externally given

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<sup>391</sup> CD §2, 5-6.

<sup>392</sup> René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, in *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1999), 63.

<sup>393</sup> CD §2, 6.

philosophy.”<sup>394</sup> Instead Martensen notes that the sphere of dogmatics is hemmed in on the one side by catechism and on the other a philosophy that takes faith as its object.<sup>395</sup> Thus, dogmatic knowledge is based on faith and revelation alone, but it develops through speculative philosophical forms.

Martensen explains that dogmatic comprehension is an *explicative comprehension* because it is a development or presentation of what has been given in intuition, that is through conscience. However, Martensen explains that this explicative comprehension also contains within it “the impulse towards the speculative comprehension, which does not remain simply at presenting the connection within the given, but also asks about *possibility* and *ground*; does not merely say *Ita* [so], but also *Quare* [why].”<sup>396</sup> Whereas the explicative comprehension can do nothing but present such given antinomies that require conceptual mediation, the speculative “precisely depends on grasping such contradictions in the unity of the idea.”<sup>397</sup> Martensen argues therefore that such a “speculative intuition [*Skuen*]” must always “be presupposed when the presentation is not to lose itself in an external reasoning, or limit itself only to grasping Christian ideas in their practical, merely applicable significance.”<sup>398</sup> Identifying historical-theological support for this view, Martensen claims that this speculative comprehension is evident in the works of both Irenaeus and Luther—despite what they may have said about speculation. Martensen identifies their reference to a contemplative eye that grasps all individual things in the light of one ground-idea as an expression of this speculative comprehension that mediates the unity of contradictions. Martensen therefore argues that it is impossible to separate this dogmatic explicative comprehension and speculative comprehension with a “firm and immovable border.”<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> *CD* §2, 7.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>396</sup> *CD* §33, 79.

<sup>397</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*

Instead, as mentioned above, Martensen suggests that the speculative comprehension is always *becoming* and relative, never finished or stable. Thereby the speculative mediation and unification of contradictions or differences is always a continuous dialectical back-and-forth. Since Martensen has argued for a distinction between a theological speculation and an autonomous speculation, it would make sense to say there is no clear border between a dogmatic explicative comprehension and a theological-speculative comprehension, as these both inherently belong to theology. However, it becomes unclear where the distinction between a philosophical-speculative and theological-dogmatic standpoint lies. It is not entirely unfounded when Professor of Philosophy Rasmus Nielsen remarks that Martensen does not ask about or clarify “the difference between the true and false speculation.”<sup>400</sup> However, for now, at least this seems to still be explained by Martensen’s distinction between a Christian philosophy and an autonomous, non-Christian philosophy.

In the final paragraphs of the introduction, Martensen seems to further support this as he writes: “If we at the end ask, how we should think the relationship between dogmatics and philosophy, it is evident that Dogmatics is completely opposed to the heathen philosophy that by its own means wants to acquire truth”.<sup>401</sup> Martensen reiterates that theology is separated from autonomous heathen, that is a non-Christian, philosophy. Because Christianity’s teaching has a completely different origin than philosophy’s, Christianity also initially and necessarily pointed away from any worldly wisdom. However, because Christianity has “birthed a new knowledge of itself, a theology,”<sup>402</sup> Martensen suggests that there must be room for a Christian *philosophy* next to a Christian *theology*, and asks how these relate. Assuming that a Christian philosophy *is* given, Martensen explains that it must be tied to the same cognitive conditions as theology; i.e., on the principle of *credo ut intelligam*. The

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<sup>400</sup> Rasmus Nielsen, *Mag. S. Kierkegaards ‘Johannes Climacus’ og Dr. H. Martensens ‘Christelige Dogmatik’. En undersøgende Anmeldelse*, (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel, 1849), 6.

<sup>401</sup> *CD* §35, 81.

<sup>402</sup> *Ibid.*

difference between a Christian philosophy and theology is one between universality and specificity. Philosophy has a universal nature; it is a type of universal world wisdom, and starts with the manifold aspects of life and the world to lead these back to God as the all-clarifying centre. This would also apply to a specifically Christian philosophy of religion, which strives to cognise Christianity as the highest power of existence through general observations of the world. In contrast, theology and dogmatics have their basis alone on the centre that philosophy tries to return to, and focus solely on, God and God's kingdom. Dogmatics finds its standpoint in the church, "although," Martensen admits, "it likely has a connection to philosophy of religion".<sup>403</sup> Martensen therefore concludes: "philosophy presents the universal, theology the central in Christian knowledge. Philosophy is at home everywhere, theology has its home in the church".<sup>404</sup> Bruce H. Kirmmse suggests that with these statements, Martensen makes philosophy "the principal gem in the diadem of human culture, and culture [*Dannelse*] thus has a Christian significance as the preparatory stage for religion. This world and its life of philosophy and culture is neither hostile nor indifferent to the world of religion but is its active ally."<sup>405</sup> While Martensen clearly seeks throughout his authorship to establish philosophy's importance, he equally, as Thulstrup noted, seeks to find a way for "theologians to rise above philosophers",<sup>406</sup> precisely by using philosophy and in this way somewhat paradoxically enable a reconciliation. This tension plays out over the next paragraphs of the *Dogmatics*. In the final paragraph of Martensen's methodological introduction the demarcations begin to precariously slip and slide. Martensen so far seems to have been suggesting that a continuous dialectically developing relationship is possible between dogmatics and a specifically Christian philosophy or theological speculation, but that there must be a clear separation of theology and "heathen" philosophy. However,

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<sup>403</sup> *CD* §35, 82.

<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>405</sup> Kirmmse, *Golden-Age Denmark*, 179.

<sup>406</sup> Thulstrup *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel*, 148.

Martensen now states that dogmatics enters into a relation of dialectical interplay [*Vexelforhold*] *not just* with Christian, but *also* with *non-Christian* philosophy. However, this seems to contradict what was developed in the previous paragraph as well as Martensen's distinction between a theological (real) and an autonomous (false) speculation.

Martensen explains that the reason theology must engage with both Christian and non-Christian philosophy is that it is the church's duty to develop itself in relation to the world since it is in the world. Therefore dogmatics "must not merely place itself in a polemical but also in an acknowledging [*anerkjendende*] relationship to philosophy insofar as it must appropriate and process the truth moments any real philosophy offers."<sup>407</sup> This seems firstly to contradict the relative difference Martensen sought to establish between philosophy's home in the world and theology's home in the church. For if the church is still simply in the world, the difference is not just relative, it is no difference at all. Furthermore, it is unclear here what "real" philosophy means; it does not seem to be a reference to Christian philosophy, but equally must be different from autonomous philosophy. By suggesting that theology should "appropriate and process" the truth offered by philosophy, Martensen not only seems to imply that there is a dialectical *interaction* at play between philosophy and dogmatic theology, in which the back-and-forth helps develop a living Christian knowledge, but moreover that a dialectical *transformation* must take place. That is, dogmatic theology must process and is able to appropriate non-Christian philosophical truths and knowledge, transforming and subsuming these for use in the development of a specifically Christian knowledge, and thus essentially abandoning the philosophical standpoint for the higher religious knowledge.

How this transformation occurs is not clarified, and from here Martensen starkly swings to a different position. For after establishing this dialectical transformation, he

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<sup>407</sup> CD §36, 83-84.

suddenly warns his reader that it is precisely when theology places itself in an acknowledging relation to philosophy that the risk of “a confusion... a false Concordat, an unclean mixing of dogmatics and philosophy”<sup>408</sup> arises. The risk of this unclean intermingling is that theology might pawn its riches to philosophy. In a total reversal of his dissertation, Martensen describes how theologians through the ages have repeatedly replaced Christian categories with categories from the day’s popular philosophy. Whereas Martensen began his dissertation with a quote by Clement of Alexandria, whom he viewed favourably for uniting philosophy and theology, Martensen now singles out the Alexandrian theologians for being guilty of this uncritical mixing of dogmatics and philosophy because they made use of Platonic categories instead of Christian ones. This pattern, Martensen explains, was repeated by Medieval theologians who simply replaced Platonic categories with Aristotelian ones, and finally, in modern times, Martensen concludes, the new Aristotle to whom theologians defer is Hegel. In contrast to this false mediation of faith and reason, Martensen impresses upon his reader that

theology must rest in the folly of the Gospels, must not sacrifice its own riches for the illusion of clarity; must not will to conjure clarity, a premature maturity. For by thus wanting to anticipate the true, the inner development out of Christianity’s own principle, theology misses both of the matter itself and of the true clarity, which can only be developed from the obscurity of mystery [*Mysteriets Dunkelhed*].<sup>409</sup>

Martensen no longer speaks of God’s illuminating grace and the clear cognition of our co-knowledge with him, but rather that true theological clarity can *only* be developed through mystery’s darkness. Quoting Luther’s instruction that whoever wants to philosophise about Aristotle, must first become a fool in Christ, Martensen implies that the folly of Christianity

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<sup>408</sup> CD §36, 84.

<sup>409</sup> CD §36, 84-85.

is the way to gain knowledge and reveals intellectual profundity.<sup>410</sup> It seems that Kierkegaard directly identifies this particular passage as “what is in general deceptive about everything of Martensen’s.” Kierkegaard writes that

The Xn must be willing to suffer for the fact that what is the highest thing for him is foolishness to the world. But here comes the evasion. Instead of being willing to suffer for this, one makes the foolishness into the expression of what is deep, of what is profound, so that it rllly becomes a battle between superficiality and profundity. This is dishonest. One must acknowledge that it is foolishness because God wants it thus, and therefore I dare do nothing other than believe it. But if foolishness is merely the expression of what is extraordinarily profound—who wouldn’t want to be profound!<sup>411</sup>

Martensen’s emphasis that the folly of the Gospels points to a cognitive maturity and a “true clarity” seems at odds with his call for theology to *remain* at the gospel’s folly. Martensen suggests that dogmatic theology must therefore firstly relate to philosophy both sceptically and critically. But Martensen swings back again, and qualifies that this sceptical and critical relationship to philosophy must still result in a “real permeation [*Indtrængen*] a real scrutiny [*Ransagelse*]”.<sup>412</sup> In other words, theology must relate sceptically and critically to philosophy, but still allow itself to be permeated by philosophy and draw on philosophy to examine and correct itself—this certainly seems to be a risky undertaking.

Martensen argues that this relationship fundamentally differs from those who strictly separate philosophy and theology as one would separate clean and unclean foods. Martensen rejects those who say of philosophy: “Do not taste! Do not touch!”,<sup>413</sup> for these people have not considered that much in their own theology—a finite human activity just like

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<sup>410</sup> In thesis 29 of his 1518 *Heidelberg Disputation*, Luther wries: “Who would wish to become an Aristotelian philosopher without danger, must first thoroughly become a fool in Christ”.

<sup>411</sup> *SKS* 22, 186-187, NB12:78 / *KJN* 6, 186.

<sup>412</sup> *CD* §36, 85

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid.*

philosophy—is unclean and must therefore be cleansed by philosophy.<sup>414</sup> Again Martensen takes aim at those who “seriously want to complete a separation of philosophy and theology,” and underlines that they with a false sense of security will simply

find rest in a handed-down theological system, and although they so often repeat that Christian knowledge must be living and not dead, nevertheless have a Christian knowledge that is without a living dialectical reciprocity [*Vexelvirkning*] with the natural human life in its highest utterances.<sup>415</sup>

Martensen views philosophy to challenge, sharpen, and renew theology, so that it does not become a dead system. The relationship between philosophy and theology then is one of living dialectical tension mirroring the living Christian faith.

Furthermore, these people wrongly and lazily assume that there is nothing to be learnt from a non-Christian philosophy. Admitting that such philosophy cannot provide *immediate* insight into the kingdom of God, Martensen argues it can provide a mediated insight, “insofar as every real philosophy throws light on the kingdom of nature, which is a precondition for the kingdom of Grace”.<sup>416</sup> However, this seems at odds with Martensen’s view that grace is the precondition for all knowledge. Underlining the importance of philosophy for theology, Martensen notes that philosophy, with its logical and ontological examination, does not just offer a foundation for all science, but philosophy’s examinations are also conditions for the development of theology. Not only does philosophy contribute with such logical and ontological examinations, Martensen also underlines that any “deeper philosophy will also provide a ferment for knowledge in pneumatological matters”.<sup>417</sup> In other words, Martensen suggests that philosophy can bring about knowledge of the spiritual. Martensen therefore

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<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.

<sup>417</sup> *CD* §36, 85-86.

repeats that dogmatic theology “in some way must assimilate and process”<sup>418</sup> this philosophical ferment, although he does not make it clear in which way this can and should take place. However, this opposes Martensen’s continual emphasis on faith and revelation as the source of knowledge. And yet, Martensen warns that when the same propositions appear in dogmatic theology and philosophy this will typically not emphasise the unity-in-difference of their relationship—that “two may say the same thing, and yet it is not the same.”<sup>419</sup>

Drawing support for his view from Scripture, Martensen argues that instead of the absolutist “do not taste!, do not touch!” separation of philosophy and theology, we should consider 1 Cor 3, 22: “We should hold to the apostle’s “all are yours” that be Cephas or the world... the wisdom of apostle’s or the wisdom of the world... Peter or Paul... Plato and Schelling, Aristotle and Hegel”.<sup>420</sup> In the verses prior to this, Paul underlines the vanity of worldly human wisdom: “The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours. And ye are Christ’s and Christ is God’s”. Thus, Martensen seems to suggest that the back and forth from Paul’s denunciation of worldly wisdom to the underlining that all things are ours, parallels the same dialectical interplay between philosophy and theology. This reciprocal interaction is necessary to ensure that Christian knowledge remains a living dynamic knowledge and aligns with the “living Christian conviction.”<sup>421</sup> However, in other ways this verse simply undermines the relation Martensen seeks to establish between philosophy and theology.

Martensen emphasises that theology must not remove itself from the gospel’s folly, but only because clear knowledge arises from the darkness of mystery. Furthermore, although arguing that theology has no ground outside of God’s revelation and grace, philosophy is still a necessary condition for ensuring that this theology does not become stilted or dead, but

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<sup>418</sup> *CD* §36, 86.

<sup>419</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>421</sup> *CD* §31, 75.

continually re-examines and develops itself; thus philosophy is made a continually recurring step, that theology cannot abandon, but must place itself in dialectical relation to again and again. Yet at the same time, philosophy must be transformed by theology, but into something not clearly defined.

### 2.3.3 Martensen's Critics

It is perhaps not surprising that Martensen's perplexing dialectic and seeming break-down in clear distinctions offer "rich materials for an eager critic and a vicious polemicist to work with."<sup>422</sup> A flurry of critical works would appear within a year of the *Dogmatics*' publication, many of which specifically lamented Martensen's treatment of the relation between philosophy and theology. Magnús Eiríksson, a particularly savage critic of Martensen, suggests that by attempting to bring Church dogmatics into a Hegelian philosophical system, Martensen has "confused everything,"<sup>423</sup> through his "random, thoughtless tumbling with the concepts," which in turn meant the *Dogmatics* is "full of all kinds of contradictions."<sup>424</sup> Thus Eiríksson states that the *Dogmatics* is ultimately "a monstrosity, neither one thing or the other, but a mishmash of all sorts of things."<sup>425</sup> Similarly, Nielsen argues that Martensen simply confuses theology and philosophy; faith and speculation, and ends up relativising both in his attempt to establish interaction between them. For Nielsen, Martensen's distinctions between philosophy and theology become inconsistent and collapse upon examination. For, according to Nielsen, if Martensen views faith as the precondition for any speculative, scientific knowledge of Christian truth, speculation is rendered impotent, but by

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<sup>422</sup> Arildsen, *Martensen*, 210.

<sup>423</sup> Magnús Eiríksson, *Spekulativ Rettroenhed, fremstillet efter Dr. Martensens 'Christelige Dogmatik,'* (Copenhagen: Chr Steen & Søn, 1849), 68. See also Gerhard Schreiber, "'Like a Voice in the Wilderness': Magnús Eiríksson's Tenacious Critique of Martensen—and Martensen's 'Lofty Silence,'" in Jon Stewart (ed.), *Hans Lassen Martensen: Theologian, Philosopher and Social Critic*, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2012), 155-191.

<sup>424</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

simultaneously claiming that speculative philosophy can access Christian concepts without faith, faith has been rendered superfluous. Although recognising that Martensen is taking a dialectical approach to articulate this relationship, Nielsen notes that this resort to dialectics has simply worsened matters:

In an immediate thetical form one can still somewhat separate philosophy from the catechism; but, when dialectics then begins to liquify the boundaries; so that it for example is said that... the difference between subjective and objective is fluid, the difference between the explicative and speculative development of concepts is fluid, and the difference between the comprehensible and incomprehensible is likewise fluid; then great astuteness and much carefulness is needed, to avoid that all of this fluidness does not end up flowing into one.<sup>426</sup>

Here Nielsen perceives Martensen to perpetuate rather than resolve the ambiguous, fluid borders between the spheres. More recently, Skat Arildsen, albeit a generally sympathetic reader of Martensen, notes that Martensen does not successfully demonstrate how epistemology is different from theology nor how religious dogmatic presuppositions are able to lead us to scientific results, and even less how these two are meant to co-exist. Arildsen grants that the *Dogmatics*' critics, specifically Eiríksson, rightly protest Martensen's terminology, "which was often indefinite, unclear, and not infrequently self-contradictory," as well as "his thorough-going but all too easily achieved mediations—however dexterous Martensen's dialectical game made itself seem, and however strong an impression his eloquent style made."<sup>427</sup>

Martensen's dialectical approach to the relationship between philosophy and theology is intentional, aimed at highlighting the dynamicity of living Christian knowledge. It could perhaps—at a stretch—even be suggested that Martensen seeks to underline the tension and

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<sup>426</sup> Nielsen, 'Johannes Climacus' og 'Christelige Dogmatik,' 10-11.

<sup>427</sup> Arildsen, *Martensen*, 210.

dialectical give and take by structurally inscribing this dialectic into the different paragraphs on philosophy and theology, alternatively underlining their difference and their unity, to demonstrate the dialectically transformative relationship in its movement. And yet this dialectic does not progress through a reciprocal and free interplay, but it moves erratically and haltingly between a philosophy at times perplexingly defined as “real,” at others as “non-Christian”, and a dogmatic theology which on the one hand has as its source the living Christian faith, but on the other depends on philosophy for healing, cleansing, and life. Perhaps then Martensen’s dialectic is more aptly compared with such pastimes as hopscotch and juggling, as suggested by two further critics. Peter Michael Stilling writes that

throughout this whole dogmatic work, from paragraph §1-288, the dogmatic knowledge plays hopscotch and drags itself forward by alternately [*afvexlende*] supporting itself on the legs of human knowledge and alternately on the legs of faith. That our dogmatician’s dogmatic speculation—which in other words must mean a speculation that is dressed and laced into the straitjacket of the dogmas—is not a free speculation at all, but neither more or less what Martensen himself correctly terms an “unclean mixing” of different spheres, a “rejection” of both: this has avoided our speculative dogmatician’s attention.<sup>428</sup>

Stilling thus points to the fact that Martensen himself is guilty of the ambiguous and unclean mixing of the spheres that he has made his life-task to address. More than a century later, Thulstrup has argued that Martensen’s *Dogmatics* consistently seeks to “discover unity in multiplicity...though sometimes on the basis of unclear concepts or empty rhetoric.” Therefore Martensen develops his *Dogmatics* like “a theological juggler, following the worst of the Germanic patterns.”<sup>429</sup> While it is then possible in some respects to defend Martensen from his critics by emphasising Martensen’s existential principle which forms a corrective to

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<sup>428</sup> Peter Michael Stilling, *Om den indbildte Forsoning af Tro og Viden med særligt Hensyn til Prof. Martensen 'Christelige Dogmatik' . Kritisk-polemisk Afhandling*, (Copenhagen, C.A. Reitzel, 1849), 58.

<sup>429</sup> Thulstrup, “Reception of Martensen’s *Dogmatics*,” 184.

the one-sided and stilted rationalism of current academic theology, it is impossible to deny the problems contained in his dialectic of philosophy and theology.

Nielsen, Eiriksson, and Stilling all drew on Kierkegaard's (or Climacus's) 1846 *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* in criticising Martensen. Contrastively, Kierkegaard did not attack Martensen explicitly in his pseudonymous works, and expresses irritation that others used his writings to do so. When his own brother wants to "say something about Martensen and Søren and R. Nielsen,"<sup>430</sup> Kierkegaard comments: "How sad!...everyone exploits my writings as an opportunity to get something said. Thereby my cause is injured rather than advanced".<sup>431</sup> Nielsen in particular is singled out for exploiting Kierkegaard's ideas to boost his own scholarly standing. Kierkegaard notes, "I am so convinced in the correctness of my ideas that it has never occurred to me in the faintest way to initiate a debate. Prof. N. seems not at all convinced—he wants to debate and convince Prof. Martensen."<sup>432</sup> Martensen shares Kierkegaard's annoyance and even condemns Nielsen's misuse of the Climacus writings to Kierkegaard himself.<sup>433</sup> It could then only have added further insult to injury when the satirical magazine *The Corsair* publicly reported on this disagreement, writing that Professor Nielsen "has accused Professor Martensen of fabricating his dogmatic wig out of the hair he presumably had plucked from the bald Søren Kierkegaard."<sup>434</sup>

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<sup>430</sup> SKS 22, 392, NB14:81 / KJN 6, 396.

<sup>431</sup> SKS 22, 392, NB14:81 / KJN 6, 396-397.

<sup>432</sup> SKS 24, 283, NB23:160 / KJN 8, 283. See also Kierkegaard's interesting reflections on his relationship to and concerns about Nielsen in SKS 21, 58-59, NB6:76 / KJN 5, 57-59; SKS 22, 397-399, NB14:90 / KJN 6, 402-405.

<sup>433</sup> See AL 2, 146. Later, in 1855, during Kierkegaard's attack on the church, Martensen recounts in a letter to Gude, how Nielsen visits unexpectedly and late at night to apologise for Kierkegaard's offenses and ask Martensen to defuse the situation. While Nielsen seemed to want to make concessions and reach a reconciliation, Martensen, unimpressed by this, perceives this as an "illusory approximation and a half-way reconciliation" (*Breve til Gude*, 131) Martensen describes Nielsen's work as proof of his "pitifulness and his literary filth" (*Ibid.*, 140).

<sup>434</sup> *The Corsair*, July 12<sup>th</sup> 1850, 512:14.

Even if Kierkegaard refused to criticise Martensen in public, Martensen's use (or misuse) of dialectics in his *Dogmatics* prompted Kierkegaard to attack Martensen in a series of journal entries for being "no sort of dialectician whatever".<sup>435</sup> Kierkegaard accentuates the lack of scholarly rigour of this work's conceptual confusion:

It is really ridiculous! Now we have had this talk of system and scientific scholarship, etc.—and then finally the system arrives. Great God and Father!—my most popular piece is more rigorous in its conceptual definitions, and my pseudonym Joh Climacus is seven times more rigorous in his conceptual definitions. Martensen's *Dogmatics* is indeed a sort of popular piece that lacks the powerful imagination or something of that sort that could impart value to this sort of thing. The only scholarly feature I have found is that it is divided into §§s.<sup>436</sup>

A few pages later, Kierkegaard underlines Martensen's ability to talk, but not to engage in true dialectics.

In the whole of Martensen's *Dogmatics*, or at any rate in the portion I have read thus far, there is not one single sentence that is an honest Yes or No. It is the old sophistry of being able to talk [*tale*]—but not converse [*samtale*]. Because conversation immediately establishes You and I, and questions that require Yes and No. But the talker expounds: On the one hand—and on the other hand. And in the meanwhile the listener and the reader are distracted, so that they completely fail to notice that they have not really learned anything.<sup>437</sup>

Like Stilling, Kierkegaard emphasises the lack of clear distinctions and any genuine position, but instead a substance-less "both-and" approach. This could easily apply to Martensen's treatment of philosophy and theology; for Kierkegaard diagnoses that Martensen does not

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<sup>435</sup> *SKS* 22, 177, NB12: 62 / *KJN* 6, 176.

<sup>436</sup> *SKS* 22, 154, NB12:16 / *KJN* 6, 152. See also *SKS* 22, 153, NB12:14 / *KJN* 6, 151; *SKS* 22, 163-164, NB12:37 / *KJN* 6, 162-63; *SKS* 22, 177-178, NB12:64 / *KJN* 6, 177.

<sup>437</sup> *SKS* 22, 158, NB12:26 / *KJN* 6, 157.

proceed dialectically—he does not offer a *samtale*, a “talking-together”—a dialogue—he simply talks, but without any edification.

Despite Kierkegaard’s censure of Martensen, it is important to note that he still considered Martensen significant enough to read and respond to. Martensen thought carefully and creatively about how to conceive of the relationship between philosophy and theology. Drawing on both German idealism and the Danish philosophies of Christian life, Martensen offers a new way to engage with this debate, where the existential side of Christian faith is taken into account. Martensen seeks to establish a harmony and unity between these spheres without negating their differences. Yet, there is an underlying irony to Martensen’s conception that the reconciliation of philosophy and theology must be effected by theologians rising above philosophers by means of speculation. The unity comes to resemble a subjugation of philosophy rather than a sublation of philosophy into speculative theology. Martensen does not seem to recognise this irony, and his theological “juggling” of these spheres thus perpetuates rather than clarifies the blurring of the boundaries between these spheres outlined in Chapter 1. In Part II it will be demonstrated how Martensen’s treatment of the concepts existence, sin, and freedom exemplify how his dialectic of unity-in-difference breaks down.

The next chapter will show how Kierkegaard not only develops his own view of the relationship between the philosophical and religious sphere in response to Martensen’s view, but also how Kierkegaard sought to ensure a continuous and meaningful dialogue between these spheres.

## CHAPTER 3

# *SIMILARITY IN DISSIMILARITY: KIERKEGAARD ON PHILOSOPHY, THEOLOGY, AND CHRISTIANITY*

In addressing his time's confusion of the philosophical and theological spheres, Kierkegaard signals his departure from Martensen very early on.<sup>438</sup> In contrast to Martensen's identification of philosophy and theology's unity as the task of the age, Kierkegaard instead seeks to emphasise their separation. Where Martensen seeks to use speculative philosophy to establish clear theological knowledge and through this facilitate a reconciliation between the two, Kierkegaard seeks to underline the value of a different kind of philosophical thinking that is not focused on objective knowledge and clear-cut results, but which takes human existence in all its ambiguity as its starting point. Kierkegaard thus distinguishes objective philosophy from subjective philosophy, and whereas objective philosophy, or speculative philosophy, is deemed to have nothing to do with Christianity, Kierkegaard conceives of a different kind of dialectical relation between subjective philosophy and Christianity. I argue

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<sup>438</sup> Cf. Kierkegaard's 1835 AA:13 entry. *SKS* 17, 30, AA: 13 / *KJN* 1, 25.

that this separation is best understood through Kierkegaard's first thesis in *On the Concept of Irony* that the similarity of Socrates and Christ lies in their dissimilarity.<sup>439</sup> Letting Socrates and Christ stand for subjective philosophy and Christianity more generally, I will suggest that Kierkegaard's separation of subjective philosophy and Christianity can be helpfully understood according to what I term Kierkegaard's model of similarity-in-dissimilarity. In this model any similarity between these spheres ultimately becomes an expression of their dissimilarity, and thus the spheres are continually spaced further apart. However, it is this space or distance that in turn enables a real and living dialogue between the spheres as the integrity and unique characteristics of each sphere is maintained—a dialogue that Martensen fails to establish through his unity-in-difference model as he ultimately seeks to bring the dialectic between the spheres to resolution.

And yet, I believe that in some respects Kierkegaard's separation of philosophy and Christianity is shaped by and dialectically cast against Martensen's position. The first part of this chapter will establish Martensen as a key interlocutor and foil for Kierkegaard in this debate through a reading of Kierkegaard's largely overlooked student paper from 1838 "Telegraph Messages from a Mousvoyant to a Clairvoyant concerning the Relation between Xnty and Philosophy", which I argue can be read as a polemic against Martensen's epistemological optimism and attempt to unify philosophy and theology, while foreshadowing Kierkegaard's mature pseudonymous treatment of this relationship.

As the full title of the "Telegraph Messages" attests to, Kierkegaard reframes the debate from being about the relation of philosophy and *theology* to the relation of philosophy and *Christianity*. This terminological shift reflects Kierkegaard's reconceptualization of the debate from a disinterested objective academic discussion to a passionate subjective-existential matter. It is therefore necessary to spend some time considering how Kierkegaard

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<sup>439</sup> SKS 1, 65 / CI, 6.

defines and uses the terms philosophy, theology, and Christianity before turning to the “Telegraph Messages” and Kierkegaard’s model of “similarity-in-dissimilarity”.

### **Prolegomenon: Defining the Terms**

Jean-Yves Lacoste has argued that there “is no definition in Kierkegaard of what constitutes either theology or philosophy,”<sup>440</sup> and notes that Kierkegaard defines himself as neither a philosopher nor a theologian. Kierkegaard scholarship is marked by discussions of whether Kierkegaard is more precisely categorised as a philosopher, a theologian, both, or neither, and it seems that our continued fascination with Kierkegaard partly relates to his evasion of such clear categorisation and his ability to traverse contemporary disciplinary boundaries.<sup>441</sup> One significant reason for this is Kierkegaard’s use of pseudonyms, as these different characters enable Kierkegaard to inhabit different lifeviews and voices along different disciplinary lines. We encounter Vigilius Haufniensis, the pseudonymous author of *Concept of Anxiety* (1844), who writes from a psychological-philosophical position, and Johannes Climacus, the author of *Philosophical Fragments* (1844) and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), who despite his profound engagement with and reflections on questions of Christianity and faith remains an unbeliever and writes as a philosopher and ironist. In contrast, Anti-Climacus, the pseudonym assigned to the 1849 works *The Sickness unto Death* and *Practice in Christianity*, is described as a “Christian to an extraordinary degree.”<sup>442</sup> In this way, Kierkegaard’s authorship addresses the relationship between philosophy, theology, and Christianity not simply from one perspective, but from different sides of this relationship. However, it is

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<sup>440</sup> Jean-Yves Lacoste, *The Appearing of God*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 7.

<sup>441</sup> See for example Paul Ricoeur, “Two Encounters with Kierkegaard: Kierkegaard and Evil; Doing Philosophy after Kierkegaard,” in Joseph H. Smith (ed.) *Kierkegaard’s Truth: The Disclosure of Self*, edited by Joseph H. Smith, 313-342. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 330; Arnold Come, *Kierkegaard as Theologian: Recovering My Self*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1997); see also the debate of this question between Jamie Turnbull, “Saving Kierkegaard’s Soul: From Philosophical Psychology to Golden Age Soteriology,” in *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2011, 279-302, and Anthony Rudd and Patrick Stokes, “The Soul of a Philosopher: Reply to Turnbull,” *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2013, 475-494.

<sup>442</sup> SKS 22, 136, NB11:222 / KJN 6.

important to remember that while Kierkegaard positions himself outside the institutional philosophy and theology of the time, Kierkegaard was not only trained in, but also wholly immersed and preoccupied with this world and its debates. As Chapter 1 explored, the boundary between philosophy and theology in Golden-Age Denmark was not at all clear. Kierkegaard therefore employs a number of qualifiers when speaking of both philosophy and theology. He refers to Greek philosophy, Socratic philosophy, Hegelian philosophy or speculation, German philosophy, and modern [*nyere*] philosophy, and similarly speaks of specific kinds of theology: scholarly critical theology, speculative theology, modern theology, rational theology, practical theology, historical theology, German theology, and more. Kierkegaard precisely responds to his time's lamentable intermingling of different kinds of philosophy and theology; their spheres and "moods",<sup>443</sup> which leads him to recast the philosophy-theology debate. In particular, there is one overarching distinction which Kierkegaard operates with and introduces as early as 1835, which to a certain degree provides an overview, or at least a very simplified map, of these terms in Kierkegaard's authorship.<sup>444</sup> This distinction is one between the objective sphere and the subjective sphere.

In his *AA Journals*, Kierkegaard laments the wrongful prioritisation of cognition over existence in his time, through which objective results and knowledge have been emphasised over subjectivity. Kierkegaard notes with regret that his time has forgotten that "the genuine philosopher is in the highest degree subjective."<sup>445</sup> He points out that in order to live a complete, human life, it is necessary,

to avoid basing my mind's development on—yes, on something that people call objective—  
something which at any rate isn't my own, and to base it instead on something which is bound up

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<sup>443</sup> As Haufniensis points out, different sciences presuppose different moods, but "an error in the modulation is just as disturbing as an error in the development of thought." (*SKS* 4, 322 / *CA*, 14).

<sup>444</sup> Hans Frei has noted that such maps, or typologies, are "nothing to be particularly proud of", but he concedes that at least they serve a limited purpose in guiding the unsuspecting reader through the author's "secret mountain retreat or underground cave" (Frei, *Types of Christian Theology*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 19).

<sup>445</sup> *SKS* 17, 25, *AA*:12 / *KJN* 1, 20.

with the deepest roots of my existence, through which I have as it were, grown into the divine, clinging fast to it even if the whole world were to fall apart. *This, you see, is what I need, and this is what I strive for.*<sup>446</sup>

Kierkegaard distinguishes between the objective philosopher who treats philosophy as a scientific-rational discipline in pursuit of objective knowledge and what he considers the “genuine” philosopher—the subjective philosopher who treats philosophy as a subjective mode of reflection that relates to actual existence—subjective philosophy is *philosophising*. Similarly, Kierkegaard distinguishes between objective and scholarly theology and his own subjective interest in Christian theology. For example, in 1835 he remarks that studying for his theological degree is “an occupation that does not interest me in the least and which therefore is not going particularly quickly.”<sup>447</sup> However, in the same entry Kierkegaard lists theology, or the study of Christianity, as one of his main interests, a central direction for his abilities, and as a subject which captivates him.<sup>448</sup>

### *Christianity*

It is not just the “Telegraph Messages” that emphasise the relationship of philosophy and *Christianity* rather than philosophy and *theology*. This terminological distinction already appears in a number of journal entries from 1835 and onwards, which help establish and define two ways in which Kierkegaard understands “Christianity” in contrast to philosophy. First of all, Kierkegaard underlines that Christianity is a matter of existence. In 1835, Kierkegaard makes this clear as he expresses his desire is to live a “*completely human life*

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<sup>446</sup> SKS 17, 25-26, AA:12 / KJN 1, 19-21.

<sup>447</sup> SKS 17, 22, AA:12 / KJN 1, 17. Kierkegaard writes he prefers “free, perhaps therefore also rather indefinite, studies to the offerings at private dining clubs where one knows beforehand who the guests will be and what food will be served each day of the week.” (SKS 17, 22, AA:12 / KJN 1, 17).

<sup>448</sup> SKS 17, 21, AA:12 / KJN 1, 16-17.

and not just a life of *knowledge*,”<sup>449</sup> and: “What I really need is to be clear about *what I am to do*, not what I must know, except in the way knowledge must precede all action.”<sup>450</sup> He further qualifies this by emphasising that the Christian life is about the subjective, not objective external facts: “It is this inward action of the human, this God-side of man, that matters, not a mass of information.”<sup>451</sup> For this reason Kierkegaard dismisses both the philosophers’ and theologians’ pursuit of objective, scientific truth or facts as ways to fulfil this desire:

What use would it be in this respect if I were to discover a so-called objective truth, or if I worked my way through the philosopher’s systems and were able to call them all to account on request, point out inconsistencies in every single circle... What use would it be to be able to propound the meaning of Christianity, to explain many separate facts, if it had *no* deeper meaning for *myself* and *my life*?<sup>452</sup>

For Christianity cannot be distilled into a convenient knowledge claim which can be understood intellectually, but it must be appropriated existentially and individually.

In 1837, Kierkegaard again addresses the relationship between philosophy and Christianity, emphasising the importance of “strictly uphold[ing] the relationship betw. Philosophy (the purely human view of the world—the *humanistic* standpoint) and Xnty.”<sup>453</sup> Christianity is something that goes beyond this finite and purely human perspective: it refers to a revealed, divine sphere. In the AA:13 entry both of these understandings are shown to be interconnected and underpin Kierkegaard’s separation of philosophy and Christianity. Kierkegaard states that:

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<sup>449</sup> SKS 17, 25, AA:12 / KJN 1, 20.

<sup>450</sup> SKS 17, 24, AA:12 / KJN 1, 20.

<sup>451</sup> SKS 17, 26, AA:12 / KJN 1, 21.

<sup>452</sup> SKS 17, 24, AA:12 / KJN 1, 19.

<sup>453</sup> SKS 17, 216, DD:5 / KJN 1, 208.

Ultimately it is *here* the yawning chasm lies: Christianity stipulates the defectiveness of human cognition due to sin, which is then rectified in Christianity. The philosopher tries qua man to account for matters of God and the world; The outcome can therefore very well be admitted to be limited inasmuch as man is a limited being, but also as the best possible [outcome] for man qua man. Certainly, the philosopher can acquire the concept of man's sin, but it doesn't follow that he knows that man is in need of redemption, least of all a redemption which...must be passed on to God, rather than a relative redemption.<sup>454</sup>

Whereas philosophy in this entry is defined as an *accounting-within-itself*, a scientific discourse aimed at providing objective knowledge autonomously based on rationality alone, Christianity is defined as something very different, for it “demands, before being examined, a living oneself-into-it”.<sup>455</sup> Philosophy's focus on providing objective accounts based on human reason ignores this existential side to Christianity and the ethical reality of sin, which places limits on human morality and cognition, as redemption “must extend to the whole man. Or am I supposed to consider his moral powers defective but his cognition unimpaired?”<sup>456</sup> However, as Jon Stewart points out, philosophy also ignores the fact that certain aspects of Christianity clearly “fall under rubrics such as mystery, ineffability and transcendence,”<sup>457</sup> as Christianity includes revealed content or categories, such as sin. According to Kierkegaard, Christianity precisely presents us with an unsolvable “riddle of life”, the relationship between God and the world. Any attempt to explain or give an account of this riddle, of Christianity, on a merely human basis is thus not only impossible, but also beside the point. For Christianity cannot be encapsulated in any rational-philosophical account. Attempting to unite philosophy and Christianity will thus either lead to Christianity

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<sup>454</sup> SKS 17, 31, AA:13 / KJN 1, 26.

<sup>455</sup> SKS 17, 31, AA:13 / KJN 1, 25-26.

<sup>456</sup> SKS 17, 30, AA: 13 / KJN 1, 25.

<sup>457</sup>Jon Stewart, “‘Philosophy and Christianity Can Never Be United’: The Role of Sibbern and Martensen in Kierkegaard's Reception of Schleiermacher,” *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2017, 291-312; 311.

becoming distorted, or philosophy having to face its downfall. If philosophy accepts that Christianity is a paradox and a mystery, this would cause philosophy to will its own downfall:

For it would negate philosophy as an accounting-within-itself of the relation between God and the world were it to conclude that it was unable to explain the relation, and then philosophy would at the peak of its perfection be accomplice to its own downfall, that is, as the evidence of its inability to live up to its definition. Yes, philosophy from this point of view would not even serve as a transition to Christianity, for it would necessarily have to abide by this negative conclusion.<sup>458</sup>

Here the separation of philosophy and Christianity relates to objective-rational philosophy's concern with truth as a knowable object to be appropriated through human reason, whereas Christianity constitutes an ineffable mystery, which instead makes ethical-religious demands on the individual in actuality.

As Kierkegaard's thought develops, he offers new ways of framing Christianity as an existential category. For him, Christianity is not a science or a doctrine [*Lære*] but an existence-communication or existential communication [*Existents-Meddelelse*].<sup>459</sup> According to Sylvia Walsh, this means that Christianity does not seek to communicate *knowledge* about Christianity to the individual, although some knowledge may be presupposed, but rather seeks to communicate "an *inward capability* for existing authentically through a relation to God or the eternal in time in the form of an individual human being, Jesus Christ."<sup>460</sup>

Christianity is an existential relationship with Christ who as the human incarnation of God is the Absolute Paradox. This paradoxicality of Christianity in turn characterises the existence-communication. Furthermore, the term "existence-communication" also expresses an internal

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<sup>458</sup> *SKS* 17, 30-31, AA:13 / *KJN* 1, 25.

<sup>459</sup> See *SKS* 21, 41, NB6:56 / *KJN* 5, 39 ; *SKS* 22, 306, NB13:51 / *KJN* 6, 309; *SKS* 22, 320, NB13:77 / *KJN* 6, 323 ; *SKS* 22, 355, NB14:19 / *KJN* 6, 359; *SKS* 23, 184-185, NB17:30-31 / *KJN* 7, 186-187; *SKS* 7, 326-327 / *CUP1*, 379-380.

<sup>460</sup> Sylvia Walsh, *Kierkegaard: Thinking Christianly in an Existential Mode*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 26.

tension, as Christianity and existence cannot be communicated or presented directly as one would a knowledge-claim or a fact. For understanding Christian truth disinterestedly as a knowledge claim completely misunderstands Christianity's existential demand. Christianity cannot be discussed in the same way one might discuss a particular school of philosophy nor something that can be presented as an objective science, where it simply matters that the presenter "(objectively) says the right thing".<sup>461</sup> Instead Christianity can only be presented subjectively in existence—for, as Kierkegaard points out, it matters *who* presents Christianity: "If Xnty...does not reduplicate itself in the person who presents it, then what he is presenting is not Xnty. For Xnty is an existence communication and can only be presented—by existing."<sup>462</sup> For Kierkegaard the problem, then, is not that people doubt the truth or that the wrong doctrines are being taught—the problem is that the truth is not recognised as an existential demand to be appropriated individually. For Kierkegaard, "The battle in Xndom ought to be about giving the doctrines ethical power over one's life, as Xnty requires."<sup>463</sup>

The problem with trying to present Christianity scientifically is precisely that Christianity becomes distorted and misrepresented. Kierkegaard notes in his journals the absurdity of attempting to explain the ethically-existing human being by means of scientific observations:

Why do I need to know about the afferent and efferent nerve impulses, about the circulation of the blood, about the microscopic condition of a hum. being in the uterus? *The ethical has tasks enough for me.* Or do I need to know about the processes of the nervous system—in order to believe in God and love humanity?... wouldn't my becoming an observer of nature weaken the whole of my ethical passion? And, by having all this multifarious knowledge about analogies,

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<sup>461</sup> SKS 21, 41, NB6:56 / KJN 5, 39.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

<sup>463</sup> SKS 20, 311, NB4:54 / KJN 4, 312.

abnormalities, about one thing and another, wouldn't I more and more lose the impression of the ethical: Thou shalt... Isn't this providing me with a great many shady evasions and excuses?<sup>464</sup>

Such scientific descriptions have no real impact on our ethical-existential reality. Describing the physiological functions of our hearts and nervous systems instead of telling someone we love them would be absurdly comical. Similarly, any attempt to present Christianity in an objective-scientific mood ultimately becomes comical.

Christianity belongs to a completely different sphere than *any* objective-scientific discourse or discipline aimed at expressing knowledge-claims from a purely human point of view. This therefore includes not just philosophy, but also *theology*. As Martensen also points out, theology and philosophy are both disciplines devised and carried out by human beings. Christianity and lived Christian faith are to be contrasted and separated from *both* philosophy and academic theology.

### *Objective Philosophy and Theology*

In the *AA Journal* Kierkegaard defines objective philosophy as “the standpoint of reason [*Fornuft-Standpunctet*],”<sup>465</sup> and it becomes clear that in these journal entries the term “philosophy” specifically refers to the rationalism that continued to permeate teaching at the University of Copenhagen in the 1830s. In AA:12, Kierkegaard writes that his attention was drawn to “rationalism, which on the whole makes a rather mediocre showing,”<sup>466</sup> because rationalism attempts to inflate its own importance by attaching itself to Christianity—but only when Christianity's truth suits the rational-philosophical agenda. In AA:17, Kierkegaard notes that the repercussions of uniting Christianity and rationalist philosophy is that

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<sup>464</sup> SKS 20, 60, NB:70 / KJN 4, 59.

<sup>465</sup> SKS 17, 35, AA: 18 / KJN 1, 29.

<sup>466</sup> SKS 17, 22, AA:12 / KJN 1, 17.

Christianity and Christ are accommodated into a “philosophical, reasonable Christianity.”<sup>467</sup> However, as shown in Chapter 1, rationalism in particular characterised the theology faculty at this time. Thus, when Kierkegaard declares that philosophy and Christianity can never be united in AA:13, it seems that he is not only separating Christianity from objective-rational philosophy, but also from his day’s scholarly-rational *theology*.<sup>468</sup>

Compared with philosophy the term “theology” [*Theologie*] and its variants appear surprisingly few times in Kierkegaard’s oeuvre,<sup>469</sup> though Kierkegaard enthusiastically endorses Lutheran doctrine, which he describes as “excellent” and as “the truth.”<sup>470</sup> He has an implicit sense of a good kind of theology and he actively agrees with the objective content of the Christian doctrines.<sup>471</sup> It is our relationship to these doctrines that is wrong. Therefore, as Walsh suggests, a good kind of theology must for Kierkegaard be a subjective mode of reflection, for subjective thinkers, not objective scholars in order to appropriate the excellent truth of Christianity existentially.<sup>472</sup> In Kierkegaard’s writings then specific mentions of the term “theology” usually refer to scholarly [*lærd*] or scientific [*videnskabelig*] theology, i.e., theology in the objective-scientific sense. While still studying for his own theological degree, Kierkegaard notes:

the scholarly world of theology is like Strandveien on a Sunday afternoon in the Deer Park season—they rush past another, yell and shout, laugh and make fools of one another, drive their

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<sup>467</sup> SKS 17, 34, AA:17 / KJN 1, 29.

<sup>468</sup> For a helpful discussion of Kierkegaard’s relationship to scholarly theology see David R. Law, “Kierkegaard as Existentialist Dogmatician: Kierkegaard on Systematic Theology, Doctrine, and Dogmatics,” in Jon Stewart (ed.) *A Companion to Kierkegaard*, (Chichester, Blackwell, 2015), 253-268.

<sup>469</sup> It is quite telling that the 6-tome *Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception, and Resources Volume 15: Kierkegaard’s Concepts*, (eds.) Steven Emmanuel, William McDonald and Jon Stewart, (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2013-2015) does not include an entry on “Theology”.

<sup>470</sup> SKS 13, 52 / FSE, 24.

<sup>471</sup> See for example SKS 20, 311-312, NB4:54 / KJN 4, 312; SKS 22, 94-95, NB11:160 / KJN 6, 90-91, and SKS 26, 416, NB36:10; KJN 10, 426-427. See also Law, *Kierkegaard’s Kenotic Christology*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 15-16.

<sup>472</sup> Walsh, “Theology,” John Lippit and George Pattison (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 293-294.

horses to death, tip over and are run over, and when they finally reach Bakken covered in dust and out of breath—yes, then they look at one another—and go home.<sup>473</sup>

Kierkegaard suggests both the futility and hubris of scholarly theology. Despite the violent competition between its practitioners, which is treated like a matter of life and death, at the end of the race the competitors simply “go home,” and the racing and competing, for all its drama and commotion, has ultimately led nowhere. While it may want to fool people into believing it is about life or death, in reality this is far from the truth. Kierkegaard’s disdain for scholarly theology would only continue to increase, and in a much later, more irreverent, journal entry, Kierkegaard repeats the above critique of scientific theology’s trivial nature, yet self-important attitude: “There’s a great saying that Coun[cillor] H. C. Ørsted told me: If a lark wants to fart like an elephant, it will end up bursting. And in the same way, scholarly theology will also burst because instead of being what it is—a modest triviality—it wants to be the supreme form of wisdom.”<sup>474</sup> Scholarly theology aspires to be the highest form of knowledge; a matter of life and death when in actual fact it is a mere trifle; a race without consequence. Kierkegaard’s insults and attacks on scholarly theology do not mean that Kierkegaard wishes to ban or get rid of this academic enterprise; the problem is rather that due to its overreaching aspirations, scholarly theology has exceeded its proper domain.

The danger of this is touched upon in *CUP*, where Climacus compares the discipline of philology with scholarly theology. While Climacus finds philological scholarship “wholly legitimate” and expresses his deep respect for the philological scholar who through his commendable scholarly expertise, his “intimate knowledge of antiquity” and “indefatigable diligence” is able to “remove difficulties, to prepare the way for the process of thought amid

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<sup>473</sup> SKS 17, 23, AA:12 / KJN 1, 18.

<sup>474</sup> SKS 22, 56, NB11:98 / KJN 6, 52.

a confusion of variant readings”.<sup>475</sup> The philologist remains within the remits of his science. However, Climacus contrasts this legitimate scholarly approach to the approach of critical theological scholarship, which continually oversteps its boundaries. Climacus describes how scholarly theology’s “entire effort suffers from a certain conscious or unconscious duplexity. It always looks as if something for faith, something pertaining to faith, should suddenly result from this criticism. Therein lies the dubiousness”.<sup>476</sup> Scholarly theology makes an invalid leap from its rightful area of research to thinking it can speak of matters of Christian life, such as on what basis one should have faith or build one’s eternal happiness. Climacus describes this as a misrelation between critical research and a “personal, infinite interestedness in one’s own eternal happiness”.<sup>477</sup> However, this misrelation goes unnoticed because of the objective approach. Climacus notes that while the objective treatment of faith is the “wishful hypothesis” and “noble desire” of scientific theology, this is impossible “because even its most consummate fulfilment would still remain an approximation.”<sup>478</sup> Objective-scientific theology’s critical research is a legitimate pursuit as long as it does not presume to provide certainty and answers about the uncertainty and struggle that is Christian faith, or present itself as Christianity itself.

What this scientific-objective theology demonstrates is that it views Christianity not as an existence-communication but as a teaching. Instead of looking to scientific theology for answers about faith, Kierkegaard therefore urges people to “take the N.T.: Close your door, speak with God, pray—and if you then do what the N.T. quite simply and plainly says, if you actualize it by expressing it existentially—that’s Xnty.”<sup>479</sup> As Kierkegaard underlines, Christianity “is related neither to thinking nor to doubt, but to the will and to *obedience*. You

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<sup>475</sup> SKS 7, 32-33 / CUP1, 25-26.

<sup>476</sup> SKS 7, 33 / CUP1, 25.

<sup>477</sup> SKS 7, 31 / CUP1, 24.

<sup>478</sup> SKS 7, 36 / CUP1, 29-30.

<sup>479</sup> SKS 22, 55, NB11:97 / KJN 6, 51.

shall believe. Wanting to take thinking along is disobedience, regardless of whether it says Yes or No.”<sup>480</sup> This is echoed in a later entry:

the whole basic confusion of modern times (which reaches logic, metaphysics, dogmatics, and the age’s whole way of life) rilly consists in this: that the qualitative yawning chasm has been removed from the difference between God and hum. Hence a depth of blasphemy in dogmatics (from logic and metaphysics) that paganism did not know (for it knew what blasphemy is, but it is exactly this that has been forgotten in our time, in the theocentric), and in ethics that brash unconcern or, more accurately: there simply is no ethics... what we have in our age and in modern times, is not rilly doubt but insubordination [*opsætsighed*].<sup>481</sup>

It is this distinction that seems to underpin Kierkegaard’s repeated use of the scholastic phrase, “something can be true in philosophy that is false in theology,” which is one place where Kierkegaard does equate *theology* with *Christianity*. Whereas Martensen unceremoniously rejects this principle as bad scholasticism, Kierkegaard affirms this principle first in 1835’s AA:13 entry where Kierkegaard likens his declaration that “*Philosophy and Christianity can never be united*,” to the principle that “something can be true in philosophy that is false in theology,”<sup>482</sup> and later in *CUP* and *PC*.<sup>483</sup> Referring to the scholastic theory of double truth, which suggests that a proposition that is considered true according to philosophy (or reason) can simultaneously be considered false according to theology (or faith), this controversial principle was condemned as a heresy in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, but gained popularity among later scholastics. So how are we to understand Kierkegaard’s repeated use of this phrase?

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<sup>480</sup> *SKS* 20, 222, NB2:209 / *KJN* 4, 221.

<sup>481</sup> *SKS* 20, 250, NB3:15 / *KJN* 4, 250.

<sup>482</sup> *SKS* 17, 30, AA:13 / *KJN* 1, 25.

<sup>483</sup> See *SKS* 17, 30, AA:13 / *KJN* 1, 25; *SKS* 7, 278, 343 / *CUP*, 305, 377; *SKS* 12, 180 / *PC*, 178; *SKS* 22, 40, NB11: 63 / *KJN* 6, 36; *SKS* 23, 111, NB16:27 / *KJN* 7, 111-112.

This phrase and the theory of double truth which it expresses “is treated as an indicator of the problematic relationship between theology and philosophy.”<sup>484</sup> Kierkegaard uses this phrase to highlight the problematic confusion of philosophy and theology in his time, and to underline the necessity for a radical redefinition of the terms of this debate that highlight the existential significance and ethical demands of Christianity. In Kierkegaard’s usage this phrase underlines the difference between philosophy’s truth as objective knowledge claims versus theology’s religious-ethical truth, which must be obeyed and lived in concrete existence. This is made clear in *CUP*, where Climacus notes:

If it is incorrect that there is something true in theology that is not true in philosophy, then it is entirely correct that there is something true for an existing person that is not true in abstraction, and it is also ethically true that the pure being is fantasy, and an existing person is debarred from wanting to forget that he is an existential person.<sup>485</sup>

Kierkegaard’s use of this phrase is not to affirm a theory that philosophy and theology espouse contradictory truths, but is rather a question of different moods: Whereas it makes sense to speak of truth as objective-factual knowledge claims in the scientific-objective or philosophical sphere, this makes no sense in the ethical-religious theological sphere, in which the individual is required to relate subjectively and existentially to the truth as Christ. This phrase reminds us that the individual cannot and should not try to escape the ethical-existential demand of Christianity.

Turning to *PC* by Anti-Climacus, the extraordinary Christian and pseudonym through whom, Matthew D. Kirkpatrick has noted, “Kierkegaard believed he could inject the full

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<sup>484</sup> Andreas Speer, “The Double Truth Question and The Epistemological Status of Theology in Late 13<sup>th</sup> Century Debates at Paris,” *The Modern Schoolman*, 89:3-4, 2012, 189-207; 190. Speer also notes that the question of what theology is, is by no means trivial for it can be viewed as an “invention” of Greek philosophy (*ibid.*, 189).

<sup>485</sup> *SKS* 7, 278 / *CUP1*, 305-306.

height of Christianity back into Christendom,”<sup>486</sup> we see this phrase is used even more radically to underline the qualitative and fundamental difference between the finite, human world. Anti-Climacus notes that this world,

which the philosophers have always called the best but which nevertheless—yes, it must really be so that something is true in philosophy that is not in theology—crucifies and shouts, “Long live Barabbas.” Indeed, the world has shown this again and again in minor situations, that not only the person who, humanly speaking, wills the good must suffer, but that...there usually is living at the same time the despicable, the contemptible, the dastardly, who in contrast are applauded and cheered.<sup>487</sup>

For Anti-Climacus, the human or philosophical world is a bizarre inversion of the Christian or theological world: what is good theologically is perceived as bad philosophically and vice versa. In 1850, Kierkegaard explicitly calls out Martensen, for beginning his “activity as a docent at the peak of the speculative philosophy that spoke almost scornfully of the old principle that something is true in theology that is not true in philosophy and conversely.”<sup>488</sup> In contrast to Martensen’s firm rejection of this theory of double-truth, Kierkegaard re-appropriates it to underline the incommensurable gap between the philosophical and Christian spheres.

The reason why Kierkegaard predominantly uses *Christianity* instead of *theology* is to avoid a confusion of Christianity as an ethical-religious demand in concrete human existence, but also as a paradoxical sphere that goes beyond the merely human, with theology in the sense of an academic or scientific discipline. As scientific disciplines in pursuit of objective knowledge, both philosophy and theology represent a wholly separate sphere to Christianity.

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<sup>486</sup> Kirkpatrick, *Attacks on Christendom*, 40. See also Kirkpatrick’s important discussion of the way in which Anti-Climacus bridges Kierkegaard’s indirect and direct modes of communication, as Anti-Climacus comes to serve a different function than earlier pseudonyms. Anti-Climacus can be viewed as “a mediator of this tension, remaining within indirectness and yet satisfying something of the demand for directness.” (Ibid.)

<sup>487</sup> SKS 12, 180 / PC, 178.

<sup>488</sup> SKS 23, 111, NB16:27 / KJN 7, 111-112.

Yet this is precisely what Kierkegaard believes his contemporaries have ignored in their practice of scholarly and objective forms of philosophy *and* theology, which found particular heightened expression in Hegelian speculative philosophy. While Kierkegaard thus opposes Hegel and the Danish Hegelians, the trouble with Martensen is that he too distinguishes philosophy from religion or Christianity precisely because religion is an existential relationship to God. But Martensen's pursuit of objective theological knowledge reveals that he has not taken this existential distinction far enough, and thus Martensen becomes an especially important interlocutor and opponent for Kierkegaard in this debate.

### 3.1 Kierkegaard's Polemic against Martensen

The relationship between philosophy and Christianity is well-trodden ground in Kierkegaard scholarship, and detailed research has been done specifically on Kierkegaard's early engagement with this question.<sup>489</sup> However, there is one of Kierkegaard's student texts that explicitly addresses this relationship, which nevertheless has received hardly any attention in English-language scholarship: "Telegraph Messages from a Mousvoyant to a Clairvoyant concerning the Relation between Xnty and Philosophy".<sup>490</sup> Upon a first glance, it would be easy to dismiss this rather curious text as an abandoned draft or experiment. Made up of short

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<sup>489</sup> Jon Stewart has written extensively on Kierkegaard's AA:13 journal entry from 1835 on the relationship between philosophy and Christianity. See Chapter 6 of Stewart's *Cultural Crisis of The Danish Golden-Age*, 145-170, and the previously cited article, "Philosophy and Christianity Can Never Be United". Louis Pojman has also written the article, "Christianity and Philosophy in Kierkegaard's Early Papers," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 44:1, 1983, 131-140, which carefully explores this question in Kierkegaard's loose papers from 1835-1840, and like Stewart concludes that these early papers "reveal some of the first attempts of Kierkegaard to deal with issues which were to occupy him during the rest of his life," (ibid., 140). However, this article does not mention the "Telegraph Messages".

<sup>490</sup> Most likely this text has been overlooked because, until very recently, there existed no full English translation of "Telegraph Messages" (*SKS* 27, 213-216, Papir 259 / *KJN* 11.1, 215-219). The Hongs' *Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, includes only a selection of entries which have been scattered and thematically organised. As a result the "Telegraph Messages" have not appeared as a coherent text in English until Bruce H. Kirmmse's recent translation in *KJN* 11.1. The Danish title is "Telegrapheringer fra en mousvoyant til en clairvoyant om Forholdet mellem Xstd. og Philosophie", but this has been translated as "Telegraph Messages from Someone Who Sees Unclearly to a Clairvoyant concerning the Relation between Xnty and Philosophy". I have chosen to retain the original term "mousvoyant" as it better reflects the oppositional relationship between the mousvoyant and the clairvoyant.

columnised entries dated from October 22<sup>nd</sup> to December 17<sup>th</sup> 1838, and written on four sheets of various dimensions, the “Telegraph Messages” are not only aphoristic and fragmentary in form, but also obscure and esoteric in content. Yet, I suggest that these enigmatic messages bring into view many of the unique characteristics of Kierkegaard’s articulation of philosophy and Christianity’s separation, and help cast Martensen as a key interlocutor for Kierkegaard in this debate.

The “Telegraph Messages” were written towards the end of 1838, a year that crucially shaped Kierkegaard’s development as a thinker.<sup>491</sup> George Pattison points out that Kierkegaard’s journal entries from this year demonstrate his engagement “with serious works on the relationship between contemporary philosophy—pre-eminently Hegelianism—and theology.”<sup>492</sup> Kierkegaard’s growing interest in the relationship between philosophy and theology may have been motivated by Martensen. As the previous chapter has shown, Martensen was fixated on this question, which through his teaching, lectures, and writings significantly shaped the academic agenda in Copenhagen. Of course, as we have seen, Martensen would diametrically and publicly contradict this view in his dissertation and lectures from 1837,<sup>493</sup> emphasising philosophy and theology’s “complete harmony and agreement between form and content.”<sup>494</sup> With the dates of the “Telegraph Messages” coinciding not only with Martensen’s official appointment as lecturer, but also the third instalment of his “Lectures on Speculative Dogmatics” and his new lecture series, “The History of Modern Philosophy from Kant to Hegel in Relation to Theology”, the “Telegraph

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<sup>491</sup> See for example George Pattison, “How Kierkegaard Became ‘Kierkegaard’: The Importance of the Year 1838,” *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia*, 64:2/4, 2008, 741-761.

<sup>492</sup> *Ibid.*, 743.

<sup>493</sup> Kierkegaard owned copies of Martensen’s dissertation both in the 1837 Latin edition *De autonomia conscientiae sui humanae, in theologiam dogmaticam nostri temporis introducta*, (Copenhagen: I. D. Quist, 1837), and in its later Danish translation. *De autonomia* has item number 648 in the auction catalogue of Kierkegaard’s private library. (See Katalin Nun, Gerhard Schreiber, and Jon Stewart (eds.), *The Auction Catalogue of Kierkegaard’s Library*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 38.

<sup>494</sup> *MSE*, 3 / *BHK*, 77. See also Martensen’s introductory lecture from 1837 in which he declares philosophy and theology to finally be united again. *SKS* 19, 126, Not4:3 / *KJN* 3, 125.

Messages” were devised and written during a time when Martensen and his thought were not only lauded and widely admired, but also impossible for any philosophy or theology student in Copenhagen to avoid. In light of this let us consider the recipient of the “Telegraph Messages”: The clairvoyant.

The title of the “Telegraph Messages” reveals that the messages are sent by the “mousvoyant”, literally someone who sees softly, that is unclearly or faintly, whereas the recipient is the opposite, a clairvoyant, or someone who sees clearly. The term “mousvoyant” does not exist in French, but instead seems to be a play on the word “*malvoyant*,” meaning to see badly or have impaired vision. However, this distinction is both intentional and significant for Kierkegaard. For the point is that the mousvoyant does not see *badly*, but purposefully sees *dimly* or *unclearly*. As the next sections will show Kierkegaard precisely believes that this unclarity is not a bad or impaired form of seeing, but rather is the only proper way to view the relation between Christianity and philosophy, which exposes the limits of human cognition. Furthermore, seeing unclearly makes the mousvoyant a more direct opponent of the clairvoyant than a “*malvoyant*” would be. In the preface, Kierkegaard, or the mousvoyant, clearly accentuates this contrast, as he writes:

The difficulty is finding the clairvoyant who can free me from all the difficulties to which I—who see only in a metaphor [*Billeder*] and in obscure language [*mørk Tale*]*—am exposed. I am altogether too cloudy [altfor meget mousvoyant] in my vision to discern whether such a person in fact actually exists or when he will make his appearance.*<sup>495</sup>

The mousvoyant might therefore be considered an early prototype of Kierkegaard’s later pseudonymous authorship, as the mousvoyant, much like Vigilius Haufniensis, Johannes Climacus, and the pseudonymous author of *Fear and Trembling*, Johannes de silentio,

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<sup>495</sup> SKS 27, 213, Papir 259 / *KJN* 11.1, 216.

explicitly calls attention to the limits of his vision or knowledge.<sup>496</sup> This is also reminiscent of Kierkegaard's later denial of having any authority as an author.<sup>497</sup> In contrast, the clairvoyant, despite his name, is a somewhat hazy figure: On one hand, the clairvoyant is someone who has the clear vision needed to solve all difficulties, but on the other hand, whether this clairvoyant actually exists is called into question. I suggest that the clairvoyant figure is most likely a reference to or parody of Martensen, which in turn identifies Martensen as a key interlocutor for Kierkegaard in regard to the question of philosophy and Christianity.

However, identifying Kierkegaard's indirect and obscure references to Martensen remains a challenge,<sup>498</sup> and one that Martensen himself points out. Although Martensen was convinced that Kierkegaard targeted him specifically, in all ways seeking to "reduce me, my abilities and my works, to annihilate and extinguish any activity that came from me,"<sup>499</sup>

Martensen also complains that these attacks, in writing or in person, were never direct:

Certainly, there were in his writings numerous polemical and satirical attacks on speculation, of which I could take my share. But directly in an open battle he did not attack me. I also assume that he was unqualified to take up a scientific argument in theology, as he was only fit for arguing in semi-poetical, humorous contexts... Didactic and dogmatic discourse was not his strong point... his attacks were conducted through his many conversations with endless numbers of people on the street, where he walked about like a Mephistopheles and scattered his hostile seeds. Yet, he never showed himself to me as my enemy, he was always friendly towards me and always sought my conversation on the street. However, in these situations I was constrained and reserved, as I did not like dealing with someone, whom I knew to proceed experimentally, while he himself was withdrawn and obscured his most inner opinion.<sup>500</sup>

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<sup>496</sup> See for example, *SKS* 4, 103 / *FT*, 7; *SKS* 4, 215, 217 / *PF*, 5, 7; *SKS* 4, 313-314 / *CA*, 8.

<sup>497</sup> *SKS* 16, 65-66 / *POV*, 87.

<sup>498</sup> Thompson provides a helpful chronological overview of possible references to Martensen in Kierkegaard's major pseudonymous works. See Thompson, *Cultured Public's Chosen One*, 91-144.

<sup>499</sup> *AL* 2, 140.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*, 140-141.

Martensen perceives Kierkegaard's indirectness as an inability to discourse scientifically, and instead experiences Kierkegaard's contributions as covert personal attacks conducted both in writing and on the streets in duplicitous fashion. Although Martensen had no doubts Kierkegaard attacked him, Kierkegaard's obliqueness and irony still pose a challenge for clearly identifying the targets of his polemics. Jon Stewart too underlines this challenge,<sup>501</sup> but suggests that Kierkegaard utilised certain indirect set phrases and terms to satirise Martensen, recognisable to the Danish readership.<sup>502</sup> These "code-words" include the expression *de omnibus dubitandum est* and with it more general references to "doubting everything";<sup>503</sup> the phrase "go beyond" or "go further" [*gaae videre*], which refers to Martensen's claim that he did not simply draw on or present Hegel's thought, but went through and beyond Hegel;<sup>504</sup> the phrases "new era" or "new epoch,"<sup>505</sup> and importantly through reference to Martensen's position itself, the figure of the private docent and the professor. Similarly, I believe the clairvoyant can be considered such a code-word. It is important to note that the artfulness of these indirect references and codewords is precisely that they could also easily target other Danish Hegelians, such as Heiberg, and of course Hegel himself.<sup>506</sup> However, I identify three distinct aspects in the short preface of the "Telegraph Messages" that connect Martensen specifically to the clairvoyant figure.

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<sup>501</sup> In a number of works, direct mentions of Martensen appear in early drafts but are removed in the final published versions.

<sup>502</sup> See Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel Reconsidered*, 278, 454 and 465f.

<sup>503</sup> Martensen repeats this phrase in a slogan-like manner both in writing and in his lectures in characterising how modern philosophy forms a break with medieval scholastic philosophy. The exact wording of this phrase stems not from Descartes, but Hegel's account of Descartes' philosophy in *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*. According to Martensen, doubting everything to develop and realise a "presuppositionless philosophy" may have begun with Descartes, but finds completion in Hegel.

<sup>504</sup> *AL* 2, 4.

<sup>505</sup> Likely from L. B. Petersen's preface to his Danish translation of Martensen's dissertation in 1841: "It was the first writing that came out in Denmark in the modern speculative direction and heralded the era in theology from which people have now already begun to mark time." (*MSE*, "Foreword" / *BHK*, 74).

<sup>506</sup> In fact, Kierkegaard directly denied the publicly held belief that Martensen was targeted in *Postscript*. Kierkegaard argues that his book "does not mention or name Prof. Martensen with one single word" (*Pap.* VII B 88, 289). See also Niels Thulstrup, *Commentary on Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 130 and Garff, *Søren Kierkegaard*, 426.

The first is the mousvoyant's use of motifs of light, clarity, and vision bear striking resemblance to the language and images employed by Martensen in his dissertation. As covered in the previous chapter, Martensen views epistemology to be a “*light-theory*, a theory about *the light as such*... it can only see the light, then, in the light itself.”<sup>507</sup> This analogy of knowledge and light continues in Martensen's concept of conscience, which he defines as a universal and religious concept which with immediate clarity and certainty determines the human's absolute relations, his place in the entire universe, his position in relation to God, and in this way casts light over his entire mode of being and living. This innermost sanctuary of the soul, far from being a vague [*dunkel*] feeling, is a clear knowledge.<sup>508</sup>

Ultimately for Martensen knowledge is made possible through God's “enlightening grace (*gratia illuminans*)”.<sup>509</sup> While he affirms a qualitative difference between God and human beings, he still argues that there is an intense congruence between the divine and the human, and quotes Meister Eckhart's famous line: “The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God's eye sees me. My eye and God's eye are one eye.”<sup>510</sup> Thus Martensen conceptualises speculative knowledge of God as a type of clairvoyance in the sense that it constitutes clear vision over and against any “*dunkel*”, that is, dark or obscure, feeling. Martensen thereby writes as someone who believes he has clear vision and knowledge; someone who, like the clairvoyant, can free people from all epistemological difficulties.

Secondly, immediately after discussing the mystic idea of shared divine-human vision, Martensen quotes the final part of 1 Corinthians 13:12: “γνώσομαι ὡς ἔγω ἐγνώσθην [I shall know even as also I am known],”<sup>511</sup> as biblical support for his epistemological optimism. The full verse reads: “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to

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<sup>507</sup> MSE, 8 / BHK, 80.

<sup>508</sup> MSE, 9-10 / BHK, 81.

<sup>509</sup> MSE, 12 / BHK, 82.

<sup>510</sup> MSE, 12 / BHK, 83.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid.

face: now I know in part; but then I shall know as also I am known.” In the revised Danish translation of the New Testament from 1819 the full verse reads: “Thi nu see vi ved et Speil [*mirror*], i en mørk Tale [*obscure speech*], men da skulle vi se Ansigt til Ansigt; nu kender jeg i stykkevis, men da skal jeg erkende, ligesom jeg også er kendt.” Martensen thereby also references this verse when he states that: “The human’s knowledge...is a reflection of God’s absolute knowledge which illuminates the human. God and the creature behold in the same eternal light; they see in the same mirror, in the same Idea, and yet their *qualitative* difference is not sublated.”<sup>512</sup> Martensen’s use of this verse suggests that the obscurity and fragmented knowledge that Paul diagnoses as unavoidable in the present has in a sense already been overcome, as the Pauline promise of clear knowledge is fulfilled by speculative theology. In the preface to “Telegraph Messages”, the mousvoyant references this same biblical passage by describing himself as one who sees only “in a metaphor and in obscure language [*mørk Tale*],”<sup>513</sup> a description which would be immediately recognisable as a reference to 1 Corinthians 13:12, and which furthermore is contained in the very term “mousvoyant”. Whereas Martensen disregards the first part of the verse to cement his claim that humans and God see in the same mirror and by the same light, the mousvoyant turns attention back to the first part of the verse, away from the promise of a clear view and knowledge in the future, returning us to the present’s dim reflections and language.

Thirdly, it seems that Martensen’s students at the time viewed him to be a clairvoyant-like figure with clear, almost prophetic vision. Thompson notes how many, at this time, were captivated by the debate about philosophy and theology’s relationship, but due to the confusion that this particular question resulted in: “many—if not Kierkegaard himself—were looking to Martensen as the guiding light and living hope that some theological clarity

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<sup>512</sup> Ibid.

<sup>513</sup> SKS 27, 213, Papir 259 / KJN 11.1, 216.

might be made of it all.”<sup>514</sup> These sentiments are concretely expressed by students, near contemporaries of Kierkegaard, who, in describing the excitement surrounding Martensen as their teacher, draw heavily on light-imagery. For example, one of Martensen’s first students, the pastor Vilhelm Birkedal, recalls that in Martensen’s lessons, unlike most teaching in the Theology Faculty, “radiant light, sunbeams shone on the object, yes the light shone through it...I can truthfully say, that it was with him that I first tasted the joy of studies, the jubilation of being let into a world of thought, a world of spirit, so that I myself could begin to think.”<sup>515</sup> Similarly, Johannes Fibiger, also a pastor, remembers Martensen as a kind of oracle, or clairvoyant who taught with a “future voice” and spoke words that shone like the sun:

Soon we inhaled no other air, the only thing we heard at university, ringing like a future voice, was Martensen’s brilliant speech... This mystical word, which appeared with the chime of the absolute, shone through each one of our master’s powerful theses like the gleam of the sun in a water spring...[It was] the art of bringing the mysteries of Christianity, with an eclectic aggregate of German systems, into the daylight of the concept, as certain as if one had presented an angel *in spiritus* to be analysed.<sup>516</sup>

In his own memoirs, Martensen describes himself as an intellectual guide, leading his students beyond Hegel, and introducing them to a new world of captivating philosophical ideas.<sup>517</sup> In fact, as late as 1849, Frederikke Bremer would use similar language to characterise the difference between Martensen and Kierkegaard. She writes that:

While the erudite [*aandrige*] Martensen from his central standpoint throws light upon the whole circumference of existence, upon all the phenomena of life; *Søren Kierkegaard* stands like a

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<sup>514</sup> Thompson, *Following the Public’s Chosen One*, 102.

<sup>515</sup> Vilhelm Birkedal, *Personlige Oplevelser i et langt Liv: Første Afdeling*, (Copenhagen: Karl Schønbergs Forlag, 1890), 193-194 (my translation).

<sup>516</sup> Johannes Fibiger, *Mit Liv og Levned som Jeg Selv har forstaaet Det*, (Copenhagen: Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag, 1898), 73-74 (my translation).

<sup>517</sup> See *AL* 2, 4-5.

Simeon Stylites on his lonely pillar, staring intently on one point... this point is—the human heart... he speaks of the Sphinx in the human's chest, the quiet, mysterious, all-powerful heart.<sup>518</sup>

Martensen was seen as someone with clear vision and clarity of thought by both his followers and himself. It is therefore plausible that with the figure of the clairvoyant, Kierkegaard constructed an indirect, yet effective and recognisable reference to Martensen. While the mousvoyant thereby draws on this portrayal of Martensen, the mousvoyant simultaneously challenges its accuracy by underlining the difficulty of finding a true clairvoyant, admitting that he himself is unable to discern clearly whether a clairvoyant “in fact actually exists or when he will make his appearance.”<sup>519</sup>

The clairvoyant figure does not appear again in Kierkegaard's writings. However, a comparable figure is the docent or the professor, who similarly boasts of clear knowledge, and is a recurring figure used by Kierkegaard to satirise Martensen as well as Hegel.<sup>520</sup> By 1850, the figure of the professor becomes directly representative of Christianity's crisis to Kierkegaard, as he notes that the professor “is a later Christian invention...because it was invented at about the time that Xnty began its retreat, and the culminating point of “the professor” came precisely in our times—when Xnty has been entirely abolished.”<sup>521</sup> For as Kierkegaard explains in another journal entry, the professor “takes away the ‘paradox’—a great many people, almost the entire multitude, can understand him, and then people think that now the truth has become truer!... Every essential thinker can only view the prof. comically.”<sup>522</sup> Just as the clairvoyant is someone who is able to see everything clearly, the professor removes the difficulty and the mystery of Christianity, so that everything becomes

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<sup>518</sup> Bremer, *Liv i Norden*, 37-38.

<sup>519</sup> *SKS* 27, 213, *Papir* 259 / *KJN* 11.1, 216.

<sup>520</sup> *SKS* 22, 162, NB12:32 / *KJN* 6, 161; *SKS* 22, 179, NB12:67 / *KJN* 6, 178; *SKS* 22, 184, NB12:73 / *KJN* 6, 183; *SKS* 23, 68, NB15:96 / *KJN* 7, 67. See also Vigilius Haufniensis' distinction between Schleiermacher as a thinker and Hegel as a professor *SKS* 4, 327 / *CA*, 20.

<sup>521</sup> *SKS* 23, 201, NB17:59 / *KJN* 7, 201.

<sup>522</sup> *SKS* 22, 162, NB12:32 / *KJN* 6, 161.

accessible and clear. What the professor and the clairvoyant have in common, then, is that they both offer a misguided or illusory “clear vision”, with which they purport to have removed all difficulties. In actual fact they have distorted Christianity. The clairvoyant figure can thus also be seen to refer to speculative philosophers and academics more generally, of which Martensen is but one, albeit a prominent, representative.<sup>523</sup>

### 3.2 The Separation of Speculative Philosophy and Christianity

The title of the “Telegraph Messages” already hints at an early rejection of speculative system-thinking as, anticipating the *Philosophical Fragments*, this text is made up of terse communications, rather than claiming to be a coherent or systematic treatment of the relationship between Christianity and philosophy. After the title follow three mottos: The first motto is a riddle written in a Jutlandic dialect, which asks whether two men carrying two different tools, a rake and a spade, can harm each other: “If a man meets a man going down the road, and one man has a rake and one man has a spade, can a man do a man any harm[?] [*Naar jen Mand møder jen Mand paa jen Vei, og jen Mand har en Riv og jen Mand har en Spa’e, kan jen Mand gjøre jen Mand nogen skade*]”.<sup>524</sup> In fact this same riddle appears a few months earlier on August 1<sup>st</sup> 1838 in Kierkegaard’s *DD Journal* under the title “On the Relation Between Xnty and Philosophy.”<sup>525</sup> So, what does this riddle tell us about the relationship between Christianity and philosophy?

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<sup>523</sup> While Hegel allows that clairvoyance can provide some limited insights, he mainly warns that, “such clairvoyance, because, in its hazy obscurity, the content is not set out in an intelligible interconnection, is *at the mercy* of all its own *contingency* of feeling, of imagining, etc... It is thus impossible to make out whether clairvoyants see correctly more than they get wrong, or vice versa.—But it is absurd to regard this visionary state as an elevation of the mind and as a more genuine state, inherently capable of discovering *universal truths*.” (G.W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 96-97; see also *ibid.*, 101-114 for Hegel’s full discussion of clairvoyance as a phenomenon of immediate awareness.) It seems worth considering the possibility that Kierkegaard could have drawn on Hegel’s ambiguous description of clairvoyance to formulate this parodic figure of the clairvoyant, thus adding insult to injury by using Hegel himself to ridicule the Danish Hegelians.

<sup>524</sup> SKS 27, 213, Papir 259 / *KJN* 11.1, 216.

<sup>525</sup> SKS 17, 257, DD:123 / *KJN* 1, 248.

Gerhard Schreiber has suggested that this motto is meant to express the incommensurability of Christianity and philosophy.<sup>526</sup> However, more than this, it seems to question the possibility of philosophy and Christianity being able to meaningfully interact or confront each other because they belong to fundamentally different spheres—just as it would not be meaningful to arrange a duel in which the duellists are armed with different weapons. In a clash between the two, the question becomes whether any harm can be done, but the answer is unclear. Perhaps nothing will happen, but equally grotesque damage could be done precisely because the weapons are so distinct. This motto also tells us something else about the way in which Kierkegaard engages with this Golden-Age debate about philosophy and Christianity. Rather than presenting a systematic treatise, Kierkegaard, or the *mousvoyant*, presents us with a rhyme reconceptualising philosophy and Christianity as something as provincial and unintellectual as farming tools, subverting the scholarly tones of the debate. Moreover, the use of a Jutlandic dialect could be a comment on the intellectualism of the cultural elite. Antony Aumann has argued that Kierkegaard attacks figures such as Martensen and Heiberg for expressing an objectionable intellectual elitism in which sophisticated philosophical knowledge grants them a place of privilege over the uneducated classes in matters of faith.<sup>527</sup> By contributing to the debate through rural riddles, Kierkegaard distances himself from this elitist outlook.

The second motto, “and they cast lots for his *seamless [heelt vævede]* tunic,”<sup>528</sup> refers to both Matthew 27:35 and John 19:23, in which it is described how the soldiers gamble for the crucified Christ’s tunic made up of one whole, seamless piece of material. This motto

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<sup>526</sup> Gerhard Schreiber, *Apriorische Gewissheit: Das Glaubensverständnis des jungen Kierkegaard und seine philosophisch-theologischen Voraussetzungen*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2014), 260.

<sup>527</sup> Antony Aumann, “Kierkegaard’s Case for the Irrelevance of Philosophy,” *Continental Philosophical Review*, 42, 2009, 221-248, 222. However, Stephen Backhouse has argued that Kierkegaard himself was considered part of this cultural elite by N. F. S Grundtvig. See Backhouse, *Kierkegaard’s Critique of Christian Nationalism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 79.

<sup>528</sup> SKS 27, 213, Papir 259 / KJN 11.1, 216.

possibly refers to the emphasis on totality in Hegelian thought, which is also a central concern for Martensen. Martensen's burning desire to unify not just the intellectual but also the actual world into an overall harmony of life and his belief that this totality could be achieved through the human faculties is vividly expressed already in an essay from 1833.<sup>529</sup> Like the soldiers who crucified Christ, thinkers like Martensen, Heiberg, and Hegel, are then casting lots for the whole of knowledge. However, this obsessive pursuit of a totalising system of knowledge destroys the right position towards Christianity, as it hubristically presumes to have a God's eye view of the world. Eight years later, Climacus emphasises that a "system of existence cannot be given... Existence itself is a system—for God, but it cannot be a system for any existing spirit."<sup>530</sup> Speculative system thinking results in "this distorted figure that is supposed to be Christianity, a perfume-saturated and systematically accommodated and soirée-participating scholarliness, whose whole secret is half measures and then truth to a certain degree."<sup>531</sup> Climacus therefore terms Christianity an existence-communication precisely to "designate very definitely how it is different from speculative thought."<sup>532</sup>

Whereas the second motto can be viewed as a critique of speculative system-building, the third motto listed by the mousvoyant turns to a no less central aspect of speculation; mediation and sublation. The third motto is a Jewish curse, which the mousvoyant renders: "Maledictus qui porcum alit et filium suum docet sapientiam græcam [Cursed is the man who raises a pig and teaches his own son Greek wisdom],"<sup>533</sup> and opposite to this curse is written the paragraph: "Xnty will not negotiate with philosophy even if philosophy is willing to share the booty with it; it does not want the king of Sodom to be able to say: I have made Abraham

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<sup>529</sup> See Martensen, *Forsøg til en Besvarelse af den theologiske Priisopgave*, 81-82. (Unpublished handwritten manuscript dated December 1833, Royal Library of Copenhagen).

<sup>530</sup> *SKS* 7, 114 / *CUPI*, 118.

<sup>531</sup> *SKS* 7, 267-268 / *CUPI*, 294.

<sup>532</sup> *SKS* 7, 345 / *CUPI*, 380.

<sup>533</sup> *SKS* 27, 213, *Papir* 259 / *KJN* 11.1, 216.

rich.”<sup>534</sup> Timothy Dalrymple suggests that these two paragraphs form a threefold parallel between the curse’s two parts, Christianity and philosophy, and Abraham and the king of Sodom. Dalrymple argues that “what they hold in common is a straining of terms in opposite directions,” and that Kierkegaard’s Latin rendering of the curse “suggests that it is the *conjunction* of the terms that is found objectionable, the attempted “negotiation” binding them together.”<sup>535</sup> These passages underline the absolute difference between Christianity and speculative philosophy, but it is also possible to read these as an early rejection of the Hegelian *Aufhebung*, which both Martensen and Heiberg draw on in their attempts to unify philosophy and theology. However, this principle has done irrevocable damage, by suggesting that such sublation of philosophy and Christianity is possible. Instead the *mousvoyant* points out that any form of transaction between the two is undesirable as philosophy may lay claim to Christianity’s glory. Christianity and philosophy cannot negotiate and share profits because of their absolute difference, which means Christianity has no need for a partner or power outside of itself. This warning against “negotiating”, or the Danish *underhandle*, in conceptualising the relationship between speculative philosophy and Christianity, foreshadows Kierkegaard’s later use of sale-metaphors to criticise the speculative unity of the philosophical and religious spheres. As Kirkpatrick points out, Kierkegaard’s use of financial language and imagery “covers a wide range of his work”.<sup>536</sup> *FT* for example begins with the following image: “Not only in the business world but also in the world of ideas our age stages *em wirklicher Ausverkauf* [a real sale]. Everything can be had at such a bargain price that it becomes a question whether there is finally anyone who will make a bid.”<sup>537</sup> According to Johannes de silentio, who denies being a philosopher, but

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<sup>534</sup> Ibid.

<sup>535</sup> Timothy Dalrymple, “Abraham: Framing Fear and Trembling,” Lee C. Barrett and Jon Stewart (eds.) *Kierkegaard and the Bible*, Tome I, *The Old Testament*, (Farnham: Ashgate 2010), 43-88, 49.

<sup>536</sup> Kirkpatrick, *Attacks on Christendom*, 167.

<sup>537</sup> SKS 4, 101 / *FT*, 5.

describes himself as a “*poetice et eleganter* a supplementary clerk who neither writes the system nor gives promises of the system,”<sup>538</sup> the speculative-philosophical thought-world mirrors the financial crisis Denmark faced at the time, as everything is on sale—including Christianity. Later, de silentio describes how no one speaks for the passion of faith as: “Philosophy goes further [*gaaer videre*]. Theology sits all rouged and powdered [*sminket*] in the window and courts [*beiler*] its favour, offers [*faldbyder*] its charms to philosophy.”<sup>539</sup> The Danish *faldbyder* denotes transaction or sale, something not necessarily contained in the English translation “offer”. More specifically *faldbyder* can also mean to sell something at a bargain price. In other words, theology has sold itself cheaply to speculative philosophy, willingly surrendering itself “rouged and powdered” to gain the favour of speculation. However, since the sphere of faith and Christianity is wholly other than speculative philosophy, it is absurd that it should so willingly submit to philosophy. Or in the mousvoyant’s words, why should the King of Sodom be able to say that he had made Abraham rich?

A few years later, in “The Difference between a Genius and an Apostle” the pseudonymous religious author H.H., explicitly describes how pastors, who naively trust in the scientific authority of speculative thought, have prostituted Christianity. H.H. notes how the misleading, “erroneous scholarship [*vildfarende Videnskab*],” that is speculative thought, has “confused Christianity, and...this confusion has in turn sneaked into the religious address, so that one not infrequently hears pastors who in all scholarly naiveté [*Troskyldighed*] *bona fide* prostitute Christianity.”<sup>540</sup> In a journal entry from 1849, Kierkegaard puts this charge of prostitution directly to Martensen, using the exact same phrasing as de silentio. Martensen, Kierkegaard writes,

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<sup>538</sup> SKS 4, / FT, 7

<sup>539</sup> SKS 4, 128 / FT, 32.

<sup>540</sup> SKS 11, 97 / WA, 93.

sleeps with speculation, tarts himself up and courts [*beiler sminket*] the approval of philosophy, makes accommodations, etc.—and he himself praises this as wisdom in contrast to the paradox. But faith cannot be powerfully proclaimed in the absence of paradox, and paradox is precisely that which stretches the world on the rack so that the world can be laid bare, whether with or against its will. This, you see, is what can be called a professor, now, yes, as opposed to a thinker.<sup>541</sup>

De silentio's lament of theology's courting of philosophy, H.H.'s charge of ecclesial prostitution, and Kierkegaard's irreverent depiction of Martensen as speculation's willing courtesan and return to this sale metaphor all echo the mousvoyant's early warning against Christianity selling itself to philosophy. Martensen's speculative prostitution of himself in turn expresses his cheapening of Christianity as his pursuit of clear knowledge and unity of philosophy and theology signals a removal of the paradox necessary for faith. For example, Kierkegaard criticises Martensen for heretically suggesting that the divine can be cognised clearly and directly:

There is a fine bit of nonsense by Martensen; somewhere in the *Dogmatics* he says that even if the apostles' writings were anonymous we would be able to detect their divine character, their qualitative difference from all other writings. Here we have heresy without Martensen's being aware of it: the divine is supposedly straightforwardly recognizable. No, the divine is everywhere paradoxically recognizable...The paradox is always present in the relation to everything divine.<sup>542</sup>

With such emphasis on clear knowledge and the resulting loss of the paradox, theology has lost both its transcendence and its ethical-religious significance. Therefore, Martensen's assurances are empty rhetoric, but also have graver consequences as orthodox theology has suffered an embarrassing defeat at the hands of speculative philosophy. Theology "takes hold of the weapons...as if someone took a cane by the tip and held it out to the attacker—so that

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<sup>541</sup> SKS 22, 184, NB12:73 / KJN 6, 183.

<sup>542</sup> SKS 22, 189, NB12:85 / KJN 6, 189.

he could be attacked with it...the same with theology in our day; its only virtuosity is in suffering defeat.”<sup>543</sup> Instead Kierkegaard declares that: “What is needed is a new theol.[ogical] military science [*Vaabenlære*]—new moves—with help of the double-dialectic.”<sup>544</sup> This takes us to the final section of the “Telegraph Messages” in which the mousvoyant summarises the infuriating paradoxical nature of Christianity with his final words: “exacerbatio cerebri,”<sup>545</sup> the exacerbation or provocation of the brain.

The final section of the “Telegraph Messages” is sketch-like at best, outlining two positions:

1st Position

Pathological play of muscles [*Muskelspild*]

and

physiognomic positions

in costume

NB. The profit (as well as what I myself gain as a reader) comes in the next section. —

The world’s judgment of Xt

Behold the man.

a) “I would rather be in hell with family than in heaven with the Xns.”

b) no salvation apart from Xnty.

c) The virtues of the pagans are glittering vices. —

2nd Position

“exacerbatio cerebri”.<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>543</sup> *SKS* 20, 279, NB3:75 / *KJN* 4, 279.

<sup>544</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>545</sup> *SKS* 27, 216, Papir 259 / *KJN* 11.1, 219.

<sup>546</sup> *SKS* 27, 215-16, Papir 259 / *KJN* 11.1, 218-19.

I suggest that these two positions represent different stances for addressing the subject of the messages, that is, the relationship between Christianity and philosophy. The “1st Position”, the “pathological play of muscles,” links to *pathos*, to affect and passion, while the play of muscles or “*Muskelspil[d]*” refers to the visible movement or flexing of muscles in the human body. The next lines “physiognomic positions in costume”, refer to physiognomy, that is facial features or expressions, which are in costume, or more simply perhaps masked faces. The first position combines the internal, psychological-emotional “movements” with physical motion, which seems to suggest that approaching the question at hand must be done by engaging the full human experience, including emotions and physicality, shrouded in diverse expressions. Emanuel Hirsch has suggested that this first position can be read as a reflection of Kierkegaard’s decision to engage in the debate and respond to his contemporaries not in a thetical or systematic way, but rather by posing problems and questions, and playing up the difficulties and complexities of this issue by shrouding it in various positions or costumes, which Hirsch takes to represent Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms.<sup>547</sup> However, it also shows Kierkegaard’s emphasis on the importance of particular lived existence for reflecting on and attempting to understand the relation between Christianity and philosophy, and more specifically that as human beings, this cannot be experienced or explained in clear-cut or unequivocal terms, but is better expressed indirectly through different positions or masks.

Following this outline, the *mousvoyant* adds a *nota bene*: “The profit (as well as what I myself gain as a reader) comes in the next section.”<sup>548</sup> But the next section, or the “2nd Position”, consists simply of two words: “*exacerbatio cerebri*”—the exacerbation or provocation of the brain or the mind. In a sense, this short phrase forms both the conclusion and consequence of the *mousvoyant*’s examination of the relationship between philosophy

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<sup>547</sup> Emanuel Hirsch, *Kierkegaard-Studien I: Zur inneren Geschichte 1835-1841*, (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1930), 562.

<sup>548</sup> SKS 27, 215, Papir 259 / KJN 11.1, 218.

and Christianity. The *mousvoyant's* underlying point is precisely that Christianity's importance is not tied to the cerebral or the scientific; the significance of Golgotha is not that it is the "place of the skull," and the significance of the crucifixion is not its application in scientific knowledge: Christianity's significance cannot be measured epistemologically because Christianity is radically separate and goes far beyond this sphere. This is what "exacerbatio cerebri" seems to express—that any intellectual or philosophical appraisal of Christianity is forced to conclude that Christianity is an aggravation, a provocation of the mind—an offense. Consequently, this short phrase forms a final rejection of the epistemological optimism exhibited by speculative thinkers in their discussion of philosophy and theology, as it undermines this confidence in the human mind, in science, and in clear knowledge of God being possible. But this phrase is also the consequence of considering this question of Christianity and philosophy's relationship in the "Telegraph Messages", as one is forced to conclude that one's mind has been exacerbated. The obscure, puzzle-like fragments that constitute the "Telegraph Messages" contribute to this sense in the reader, and this is the profit gained from receiving these messages.

The "exacerbatio cerebri" thereby strongly foreshadows the themes of the possibility of offense and paradox developed in both the *Climacus* and *Anti-Climacus* works, to be discussed at greater length below. There is even an explicit link between the "Telegraph Messages" and *PF*. In the process of writing *PF*, Kierkegaard explicitly refers to the "Telegraph Messages" in drafts to what would become the "Appendix: Offense at the Paradox (An Acoustical Illusion)" to Chapter III "The Absolute Paradox".<sup>549</sup> Furthermore, the parenthetical subtitle "Acoustical Illusion" is a replacement of the earlier subtitle "Visible in the Pathological Riposte [*Synlig i det patologiske Modspil*]," a clear reference to the 1st

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<sup>549</sup> *Pap.* V B 6:1 / *PF*, Supplement, 195.

Position in the “Telegraph Messages”, which in Danish reads, “*Pathologiske Muskelspild*”.<sup>550</sup> While these direct and explicit links to “Telegraph Messages” have been removed in the final version of *PF*, the *exacerbatio cerebri* theme is still discernible in this section, as Climacus develops this theme into the concepts of paradox, offense, and the notion of the acoustical illusion, drawing on the mousvoyant’s early separation of Christianity and philosophy.

In this appendix, Climacus continues reflecting on the relationship between the paradox and the understanding noting that if they collide in mutual understanding of their absolute difference, their collision will be a happy one. Like the mousvoyant’s emphasis on the incommensurable difference between Christianity and philosophy, Climacus establishes the importance of clearly distinguishing between the sphere of the paradox and the sphere of the understanding. There is a possibility of a happy encounter between the two as long as the difference is not disregarded or attempted sublated, such as in Martensen’s speculative unification of philosophy and theology; the encounter is precisely happy because their radical difference is made clear and upheld. However, if the paradox and understanding collide without mutual acknowledgment of their differences, their relation will be an unhappy one. Climacus notes that for the understanding this unhappy relation can more particularly be termed “offense” at the paradox,<sup>551</sup> and points out that all offense is essentially suffering; specifically a suffering of the mind [*Sindslidelse*]. While it may therefore seem that offense is the understanding’s indignant reaction to the paradox, Climacus proclaims that offense in fact originates not in the understanding, but in the paradox, which thus causes this suffering of the mind; an *exacerbatio cerebri*. With this claim, Climacus establishes the paradox’s separation and independence from the understanding: Climacus explains that the paradox is like

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<sup>550</sup> *Pap.* V B 11:2 / *PF*, Supplement, 196. The “Telegraph Messages” also provided structural inspiration for the early drafts of *PF* in which the following outline was made: “Propositio / Positio / Historical Costume”. This division is anticipated by the two positions in “Telegraph Messages”. Cf. *Pap.* V B 1: 12, 3:1 / *PF*, Supplement, 185; *Pap.* V B 10, 40:6 / *PF*, Supplement, 186.

<sup>551</sup> *SKS* 4, 253 / *PF*, 49.

Spinoza's conception of truth: "*index and judex sui et falsi* [criterion and judge of itself and of the false]."<sup>552</sup> In other words, only the paradox holds the definition of itself, but also defines that which it is not. This applies to the offense, which "can be regarded as an indirect testing of the correctness of the paradox, for offense is the erroneous accounting, is the conclusion of untruth, with which the paradox thrusts away."<sup>553</sup> With this Climacus underlines that the understanding neither thinks up the paradox nor its own offense at the paradox. This echoes the point made in both AA:13 and the "Telegraph Messages", that the paradox, or Christianity, is not dependent on the understanding. It is not a mental construct, as David Mercer notes, it is an "objective reality."<sup>554</sup>

It is this misunderstanding about the paradox and the understanding's relation to the paradox that constitutes the *acoustical* illusion, for although the offense *sounds* like it comes "from somewhere else—indeed from the opposite corner," from the understanding, actually "it is the paradox that resounds in it."<sup>555</sup> Shai Frogel suggests that what makes the illusion *acoustical*, is the fact that whereas the understanding, or, as Frogel terms it, the philosopher, *hears* the sound of the absurd or illogical, but is deaf to the voice of truth, and thus "cannot hear the truth of faith."<sup>556</sup> Frogel suggests this can be read as a form of self-deception in which the philosopher, in an attempt to preserve the coherence and meaningfulness of the understanding, rejects the paradox.<sup>557</sup> This sense of deception is inherently contained in the Danish for "acoustical illusion", *det akustiske Bedrag*, as "Bedrag" means both illusion and deception. The understanding has thus deceived itself into thinking that the offense is its own invention, when really the offense originates in the paradox.

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<sup>552</sup> SKS 4, 254 / PF, 50.

<sup>553</sup> SKS 4, 255 / PF, 51.

<sup>554</sup> David Mercer, *Kierkegaard's Living Room: Faith and History in the Philosophical Fragments*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 97.

<sup>555</sup> SKS 4, 254 / PF, 51.

<sup>556</sup> Shai Frogel, "Acoustical Illusion as Self-Deception," in Tamar Aylat-Yaguri and Jon Stewart (eds.): *The Authenticity of Faith in Kierkegaard's Philosophy* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 12-17; 15.

<sup>557</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

While the understanding declares the paradox to be absurd, Climacus notes that even here the understanding is unable to independently grasp and describe the paradox, but “merely parrots the paradox, however strange that may seem”.<sup>558</sup> The paradox knows that it is absurd by virtue of being a paradox, “*quia absurdum*,”<sup>559</sup> but the paradox has also “made the understanding the absurd,”<sup>560</sup> because it labours under this acoustical illusion where the understanding pursues truth, but not realising it has denied the real truth. Furthermore, as Joel Rasmussen points out, the illusion is not simply a misunderstanding or accidental self-deception, but a wilful misunderstanding, as the understanding in its offended state is unable to hear the paradox because “it *will not* hear it properly.”<sup>561</sup> The acoustical illusion is also “emblematic of a confused relationship to Christ.”<sup>562</sup>

But by being in a confused relationship to Christ, the understanding not only misunderstands the paradox, but also misunderstands itself, although it “is understood by the paradox.”<sup>563</sup> Climacus explicitly highlights the understanding’s self-deception by elaborating on the many characteristics the understanding owes to the paradox and not itself:

When the understanding flaunts its magnificence in comparison with the paradox, which is most lowly and despised, the understanding has not originated it, but the paradox itself is the originator who hands over all the splendour to understanding, even the glittering vices [*splendide Synder*] (*vitia splendida*). When the understanding wants to have pity upon the paradox and assist it to an explanation, the paradox does not put up with that but considers it appropriate for the understanding to do that, for is that not what philosophers are there for—to make supernatural things ordinary and trivial?<sup>564</sup>

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<sup>558</sup> SKS 4, 256 / PF, 52.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid.

<sup>560</sup> Ibid.

<sup>561</sup> Rasmussen, *Between Irony and Witness*, 93. See also Chapter 3 for a helpful overview and analysis of the acoustical illusion.

<sup>562</sup> Ibid., 86.

<sup>563</sup> SKS 4, 254/ PF, 50.

<sup>564</sup> SKS 4, 256-257 / PF, 52-53.

Rather than being superior to the paradox, the understanding is absolutely dependent on the paradox, which is the originator of the understanding's "magnificence" and "splendour". Two themes from the "Telegraph Messages" can be detected in this paragraph. Firstly, the *mousvoyant* includes the saying "the virtues of the pagans are glittering vices [*glimrende laster*]"<sup>565</sup> towards the end of the text. Like the acoustical illusion, this saying points to a fundamental misconception: What the pagans view to be virtues according to their worldview are in fact the complete opposite within the sphere of Christianity. This can also be applied to *PF*, which accentuates the absurdity of the fact that the understanding is not offended by these glittering vices, but is offended by the absolute paradox of the incarnation. Secondly, Climacus' description of the philosophers as someone who turns the supernatural into the ordinary and trivial, a reference to Shakespeare's *All's Well that Ends Well*, is also hinted at in the "Telegraph Messages". Here the *mousvoyant* attempts to dismantle rationalising-philosophical accounts, which have turned Christianity into something unremarkable, by concluding that the significance of Golgotha is that it means "skull", and that the crucifixion can be viewed as a means to scientific learning. With this reference, Climacus more explicitly ties the understanding to the figure of the philosopher as he notes the misguidedness of the understanding in pitying the paradox and wanting to explain it. The philosophers' attempt to explain, and thus trivialise, the supernatural and the paradox constitutes a complete misunderstanding of the nature of these things. Kierkegaard notes that Climacus is an example of these philosophers: Responding to a review of *PF*, Kierkegaard declares that Climacus's apparent authority on Christianity is really a satirical take on the way philosophy irreverently approaches Christianity.

The review of my Fragments [...] is essentially wrong in making the content appear didactic, expository, instead of being imaginatively constructing [*experimenterende*] by virtue of its polar

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<sup>565</sup> SKS 27, 216, Papir 259 / *KJN* 11.1, 219.

form, which is the very basis of the elasticity of irony. To make Christianity seem to be an invention of Johannes Climacus is a biting satire on philosophy's insolent attitude toward it.<sup>566</sup>

The authority with which Climacus speaks about Christianity is a satirical ploy for entering into conversation with those insolent philosophers and question the consequences of deciphering Christian truth in exclusively intellectual terms in order to challenge the confidence in the power of reason and objective knowledge and to reconsider how one should relate to Christian faith.<sup>567</sup>

Climacus gestures more directly to the debate about theology and philosophy, and Martensen's contribution to it, towards the end of the Appendix. Referencing Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Climacus writes that the paradox is "paradoxical enough to have the effrontery to call the understanding a clod and a dunce who at best can say "yes" and "no" to the same thing, which is not good theology."<sup>568</sup> C. Stephen Evans argues that Climacus uses this reference to affirm the importance of an either/or rather than a mediating both-and which enabled the theology of the time "to have its cake and eat it too on many crucial issues."<sup>569</sup> While Evans names Hegel and Danish theology generally as targets, Martensen's 1839 article "Rationalism, Supernaturalism and the *principium exclusi medii*," has clear links to Kierkegaard's emphasis on an either/or. Martensen declares that any either/or must be sublated, as mediation underlies Christianity's fundamental doctrines: "The central point of Christianity—the doctrine of Incarnation, the doctrine of the God-man—shows precisely that Christian metaphysics cannot remain in an either/or, but that it must find its truth in the

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<sup>566</sup> SKS 18, 259, JJ: 362 / KJN, 238.

<sup>567</sup> See for example Andrew B. Torrance, *The Freedom to Become a Christian: A Kierkegaardian Account of Human Transformation in Relationship with God* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 6.

<sup>568</sup> SKS 4, 256 / PF, 53.

<sup>569</sup> C. Stephen Evans, *Kierkegaard on Faith and Self: Collected Essays*, (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006), 121.

third.”<sup>570</sup> And later he asks “is it not the task of our age to sublimate this disastrous *aut/aut* [either/or]?”<sup>571</sup> By identifying mediation as fundamental to the most central Christian doctrines, Martensen in effect actualises his unification of theology and philosophy by bringing a speculative-philosophical standpoint into the very core of Christianity. However, for Climacus this mediation, this both-and, makes for a poor theology. Climacus implicitly suggests that a good theology is one that embraces the either/or, and does not try to include or encompass all things or make itself compatible with that which does not belong to it.

Climacus suggests that “if in discussing the relation between Christianity and philosophy...we begin with ‘that great thinker and sage Pontius Pilate, executor Novi Testamenti’.” It is important to note Pilate is owed a “great deal of gratitude from Christianity and philosophy, even if he did not invent mediation.”<sup>572</sup> As Rasmussen notes Pilate’s service to Christianity and philosophy specifically consisted in his “acting on the maxim ‘better well-hanged than ill wed’.”<sup>573</sup> Pilate’s execution order did more for philosophy and Christianity than Hegel’s, Heiberg’s, and Martensen’s speculative marriage of philosophy and theology, which has simply confused the two and reduced both.

Kierkegaard’s criticism of Martensen’s epistemological optimism and desire for intellectual clarity is further developed in a longer journal entry from 1850, in which Kierkegaard reflects on what he terms his “peculiar” situation in relation to Martensen:

the tradition that goes from mouth to mouth concerning the difference betw. Prof. M.[artensen] and myself is that he wants to vindicate thinking with respect to faith, wants to think about faith, and that I do not want to do so. Curious! Just look at my work as an author. At the time I started, I had about the same level of scholarly [*videnskabelig*] education as the prof. (perhaps a bit less German erudition, but on the other hand a bit

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<sup>570</sup> “RSop,” 458 / “RSap,” 588.

<sup>571</sup> “RSop,” 467 / “RSap,” 594.

<sup>572</sup> *SKS* 4, 305 / *PF*, 109-110. In the “Telegraph Messages” there is a reference to Pilate in the words “Behold the man.” (*SKS* 27, 215, *Papir* 259 / *KJN* 11.1, 218.)

<sup>573</sup> Rasmussen, *Between Irony and Witness*, 96.

more Greek). An entire pseudonymous literature makes use of many methods and a number of pseudonyms principally in order to illuminate the problem of faith, to discover the proper sphere of faith, to define its heterogeneity from other spheres of the intellect or spirit, etc. etc. And how is all this accomplished? With dialectic, with thinking. I daresay scarcely any other author has concerned himself with thinking about faith on such a scale... I venture to assert that dialectical definitions of individual points have been set forth more precisely in my works than in any previously known. So this is what it is not to want to think about faith. Now, take Prof. M. He has written a dogmatics. Very well... But there is one point he slides over rather lightly, this is the point concerning the relation of faith to thinking. You see, this is what people call thinking about faith—as opposed to my efforts [*Stræben*]. But the fact is: I have worked and accomplished something on this point—this is the sort of stuff no one has the time to read. Martensen has given assurances upon assurances—that is something for everyone to run along with. My detailed books—yes, they frighten people off, they run away from them. Prof. Martensen’s winged assurances—people run along with them, *es gehet vom Munde zu Munde*.<sup>574</sup>

In comparing himself to Martensen, Kierkegaard notes that the difference lies not only in the kind of thinking they employ—Martensen’s erudition is “German” and speculative, whereas Kierkegaard’s is Greek—but also in the effects of their thinking—Martensen’s thought is “assuring” and easy, meaning people readily follow him. Kierkegaard notes that: “As a philosopher, Martensen gives assurance—absolutely not a dialectician, and as a Xn he also merely gives assurances. Everywhere is nothing but rhetorical categories—which are very capable of beguiling people.”<sup>575</sup> With these beguiling assurances, Martensen has removed the difficulty inherent to the paradoxicality of Christianity. Instead, Kierkegaard’s thinking is characterised by dialectical striving, difficulty, and effort, and as a result it scares people. However, for Kierkegaard this demonstrates much deeper and genuine thought, for thinking

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<sup>574</sup> SKS 23, 180, NB17:23 / KJN 7, 182-183.

<sup>575</sup> SKS 22, 155, NB12:18 / KJN 6, 153.

about faith and living as a Christian should emphasise tension and paradox, and is the more intellectually honest position, even if it leaves the human being in an epistemologically and existentially precarious position. Kierkegaard emphasises the singularity and superiority of the scope of his own thinking as he believes the scale surpasses that of nearly “any other author”. That people have not recognised this, but consider Martensen the better thinker, is clearly a point of contention. Kierkegaard makes it clear just how preposterous he believes this judgment to be, listing all the efforts he has made in *thinking* about faith. As Kierkegaard explicitly notes, Martensen does not fully explain the relation between thinking and faith—the relation between philosophy and Christianity—as he claims to, but simply “slides over” it lightly, as speculative mediation does the heavy lifting of seemingly uniting these spheres. In this way we might say that just as Kierkegaard, *Haufniensis*, *de silentio*, *Climacus*, and *Anti-Climacus* are all *mousvoyants*, who admit to seeing unclearly, Martensen too is really a *mousvoyant*, but one who sees double unclearly—for in portraying himself as someone who presents the age with sophisticated and clear vision, he shows just how much of a *mousvoyant* he is: he sees so unclearly that he cannot see how unclearly he truly sees.

Martensen is an important interlocutor for Kierkegaard in the debate about philosophy and theology, because his unification of philosophy and theology, thinking and existing, distorts Christianity and obscures its demanding existential challenge to the individual. *Anti-Climacus* echoes this, noting how the abstract nature of speculative philosophy causes confusion and distance from Christianity as an existence-communication and contradiction:

Modern philosophy, being abstract, is floating in metaphysical indeterminateness. Instead of explaining this about itself and then directing people to the ethical, the religious, the existential, philosophy has given the appearance that people are able to speculate themselves out of their own skin, as they so very prosaically say, into pure appearance [*speculere sig ud af deres gode Skind og ind i det rene Skin*].<sup>576</sup>

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<sup>576</sup> SKS 12, 91 / PC, 81.

In Danish, *at gå ud af sit gode Skind* (literally “to burst out of one’s skin”) means to be beside oneself or at one’s wit’s end, but *rene Skin* means pure delusion. Through this pun Anti-Climacus thus plays on how speculation leads people not only out of their physicality into pure abstraction and away from actual existence, but as a result towards delusion rather than real truth. However, Anti-Climacus hints at an implicit idea of a good philosophy, which acknowledges its own “abstractness” and therefore directs people to the ethical, religious and existential for the truth instead. Climacus more explicitly reveals what such a good philosophy might look like. For, as Climacus notes,

Whereas objective thinking invests everything in the result and assists all humankind to cheat by copying and reeling off the results and answers, subjective thinking invests everything in the process of becoming and omits the result, partly because this belongs to him, since he possesses the way, partly because he as existing is continually in the process of becoming, as is every human being who has not permitted himself to be tricked into becoming objective, into inhumanly [*overmenneskeligt*] becoming speculative thought.<sup>577</sup>

Climacus attacks speculative thought for removing the ambiguity and tension that makes existence and thought difficult, thereby helping human beings cheat their way to an easy result. But speculative knowledge’s promise of clarity and unambivalence leads not to an understanding or system of humanity, but to something entirely inhuman. In contrast to this objective thinking, subjective thinking precisely focuses on the open-ended process of human existence and does not pursue clear results and objective knowledge but acknowledges its own human finitude. Therefore the relationship between subjective philosophy and Christianity requires separate treatment. I will now argue that this relationship, as Kierkegaard envisions it, is best described as one of similarity-in-dissimilarity.

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<sup>577</sup> SKS 7, 73 / CUP, 73.

### 3.3 Similarity in Dissimilarity: The Relationship between Subjective Philosophy and Christianity

Kierkegaard views the subjective thinker to be the “genuine philosopher”,<sup>578</sup> and for Kierkegaard the subjective philosopher *par excellence* is Socrates. In Kierkegaard’s writing this subjective, Socratic form of philosophising finds two distinct expressions: Firstly, as the polemical, confrontational and correcting gadfly and secondly as the upbuilding midwife. There is a dual edge to Kierkegaard’s and his pseudonyms’ subjective philosophising, as they on the one hand serve as gadflies, who vex and pique the established philosophers at the time—as demonstrated in Kierkegaard’s inventive, but slippery indirect attacks Martensen. However, Kierkegaard and his pseudonyms also inhabit the role of an upbuilding midwife who seeks to support the individual to support himself or herself in undertaking the task of existence. In the following we shall consider the relationship between this upbuilding speculative philosophy and Christianity—however, it is not always possible to clearly distinguish between the gadfly and the midwife voice, for at times these are intermingled, as the gadfly’s provocations can also have an upbuilding effect.

Whereas speculative philosophers, like Martensen, have claimed to have “gone beyond” Socrates, Kierkegaard further marks his departure from objective-speculative philosophy, by explicitly naming Socrates the only analogy he has for himself and his task.<sup>579</sup> In contrast to Kierkegaard’s continuous ridicule of the scholar or professor, Kierkegaard rates Socrates as “the only *human being* I admiringly acknowledge as a thinker.”<sup>580</sup> Kierkegaard even indicates a parallel qualitative difference between Christ and Socrates when he notes

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<sup>578</sup> SKS 17, 25, AA:12 / KJN 1, 20

<sup>579</sup> See David D. Possen, “The Exemplarity of Socrates in *The Sickness unto Death*,” *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2010, 377-390, 388.

<sup>580</sup> SKS 13, 405 / M, 341. For a further discussion of Kierkegaard’s identification of this Socratic task see Iben Damgaard, “Through Hermeneutics of Suspicion to a Rediscovery of Faith,” *Studia Theologica—Nordic Journal of Theology*, 72:2, 2018, 198-216.

that he can call Socrates his “teacher”, whereas “I have believed and believe only one, the Lord Jesus Christ”.<sup>581</sup>

In the “Telegraph Messages”, the mousvoyant compares and relates subjective, Socratic philosophy and Christianity, through a brief reflection on the similarities and potential dissimilarity between Christ and Socrates.

It is a real problem: to what extent should Christ be portrayed as an ideal of human beauty—and strangely enough, although many other kinds of similarities have been discerned between Christ and Socrates, no one has thought at all about this aspect, for Socrates was, as is well known, uglier than original sin.<sup>582</sup>

The mousvoyant underlines that many similarities have been identified between Christ and Socrates. However, if people want to insist on their similarity, the mousvoyant suggests there is one glaring problem: for people have forgotten that Socrates was ugly—a potentially glaring dissimilarity if people also want to view Christ as the ideal of human beauty. There is an ambiguity to this passage, as the mousvoyant on one hand seems to be pointing out that Christ and Socrates are not just similar, but dissimilar—but equally Socrates’ ugliness may precisely be a forgotten similarity. For instead of recognising that Christ should really cause us offense as the absolute paradox and provocation of our minds, emphasis is instead placed on his finite human beauty, which is a worldly ideal we can appreciate. I suggest that the mousvoyant’s rumination on this problem seems to find more succinct articulation in Kierkegaard’s dissertation for his philosophy degree, *The Concept of Irony*, where the very first thesis is the paradoxical statement: “The similarity between Christ and Socrates consists essentially in their dissimilarity”.<sup>583</sup> Later, Kierkegaard also rephrases this thesis as there

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<sup>581</sup> SKS 16, 35 / POV, 55.

<sup>582</sup> SKS 27, 213, Papir 259 / KJN 11.1, 216.

<sup>583</sup> SKS 1, 65 / CI, 6.

being “an analogy only because there is a contrast.”<sup>584</sup> I will argue that the relationship between subjective, or Socratic philosophy and Christianity can be characterised by this statement, which in turn requires unpacking.

Similarities are not hard to find. Climacus proclaims in *CUP* that “Socrates’ infinite merit is precisely that of being an *existing* thinker, not a speculative thinker who forgets what it means to exist,”<sup>585</sup> and that: “The great merit of the Socratic was precisely to emphasize that the knower is an existing person and that to exist is the essential.”<sup>586</sup> Unlike speculative philosophy, Socratic thought grasps that existence, rather than theoretical knowing, is what is essential about being a person. Unlike objective-speculative philosophy, Socratic subjective philosophy is not a disinterested pursuit of objective knowledge, but represents a way of life concerned with the task of existence. Kierkegaard repeatedly underlines the similarities of Socratic philosophy and Christianity through descriptions that are not only parallel in content, but also in form. In one journal entry, Kierkegaard describes how both Socratic philosophy and early Christianity were expressions of life, not doctrines or sciences, in identically structured and worded sentences:

In Socrates philosophy was **still only**...it was *still only* a life. In Plato, on the other hand (thus, things are going forward, we are ascending) it becomes (we are ascending) doctrine. Then it becomes science. So it goes with philosophy, onward up to our own times, when we stand on the summit of science and look back upon Socrates as something lower, for in him philosophy was still only a life. With Xt, with the apostles, with the first Xns, Xnty was **still only**..., it was *still only* a life. Then things go forward, we are ascending, Xnty becomes a doctrine, then a science—and now we are standing on the summit of science and look back upon the first Xns, for in the Xnty was still only a life.<sup>587</sup>

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<sup>584</sup> *SKS* 1, 76 / *CI*, 30.

<sup>585</sup> *SKS* 7, 188 / *CUP1*, 205.

<sup>586</sup> *SKS* 7, 189 / *CUP1*, 207.

<sup>587</sup> *SKS* 25, 231, NB28:24 / *KJN* 9, 236 (original emphases).

Kierkegaard also offers similar parallel descriptions of Christ and Socrates as “the existential” in contrast to the scientific:

That ‘science’ is lower than the existential is seen quite simply in the God-Man. Imagine yourself as a contemporary: ‘science’ is impossible here because the God-Man is himself the existential...Imagine yourself contemporary with Socrates. There is no science here; that is precisely what he wants to get rid of; he is ‘a gadfly,’ himself the existential.<sup>588</sup>

This mirroring underlines the similarities between the two as being based on their contrast to the scientific-objective sphere. Kierkegaard also perceives the Socratic as being “of the greatest importance for Christianity” because of its thesis that “virtue cannot be taught—that is, it is not a doctrine, it is an ability, a practice, an existing, an existential reformation.”<sup>589</sup> Socratic philosophy is thus not a doctrine, but a practice—it is not about the teaching, but the relationship between the teacher and the learner. Furthermore, Socratic ignorance is upheld as a philosophical tenet particularly useful for the Christian. In *SUD*, Anti-Climacus applauds Socratic philosophy’s emphasis on its own ignorance and argues that it has an important role to play within Christianity, because Socratic ignorance is analogous to the Christian concept of sin, and like Proverbs 9.10 underlines that “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”<sup>590</sup> It serves to guard and sustain the incommensurable gap between the divine and human in contrast to objective philosophy’s aim to know and explain everything:

This is no doubt what our age, what Christendom needs: a little Socratic ignorance with respect to Christianity... Let us never forget that it was out of veneration for God that he was ignorant that as far as it was possible for a pagan he was on guard duty as a judge on the frontier between God and man, keeping watch...a Socratic, God-fearing ignorance...guards faith against speculation, keeping watch so that the gulf of qualitative difference between God and man may be maintained

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<sup>588</sup> *SKS* 23, 72-73, *NB15*:103 / *KJN* 7, 71.

<sup>589</sup> *SKS* 23, 186, *NB17*:33 / *KJN* 7, 188.

<sup>590</sup> *SKS* 11, 211 / *SUD*, 99.

as it is in the paradox and faith, so that God and man do not, even more dreadfully than ever in paganism, do not merge in some way, philosophice, poetice, etc., into one—in the system.<sup>591</sup>

Whereas Martensen also underlines the importance of maintaining this qualitative difference between the divine and human, he uses speculative mediation to highlight the unity possible in this difference. However, Anti-Climacus underlines that Socratic philosophy's value lies in its ability to maintain and guard this difference. The infinite qualitative distinction between God and human beings constitutes a cornerstone in Kierkegaard's theological thought, and the fact that Anti-Climacus calls upon Socratic-philosophical ignorance as a way to protect this distinction is therefore quite remarkable. However, the reason it is capable of guarding this distinction also underlines its profound dissimilarity to Christianity. Socratic ignorance guards the distinction precisely because it does not attempt to or believe it can explain it—in other words it admits its downfall in being unable to offer philosophical explanation, unlike speculative philosophy, and thereby sustains the difference. However, because Anti-Climacus defines the infinite distinction between God and humans as sin, the fact that Socratic ignorance itself is analogous to sin means that it maintains the difference because it constitutes this very difference—which again underlines its absolute dissimilarity from Christianity.

Kierkegaard establishes an analogous relationship between Socratic subjective philosophy and Christianity and allows that subjective philosophy can point towards the right attitude towards God in light of sin. The relationship between subjective Socratic philosophy and Christianity is relatively different from the relationship between objective philosophy and Christianity. However, subjective philosophy is only able to orient the human being towards the right attitude towards God, because of its own self-annihilation in facing the Christian

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<sup>591</sup> Ibid.

sphere. Therefore, the incommensurable gap between philosophy and Christianity applies as much to subjective philosophy as it does to objective philosophy. Although Socratic philosophy's similarities with Christianity are compelling, evident, and manifold, the question of how this relationship of similarity and analogy can simultaneously consist in dissimilarity between the Socratic-philosophical and Christian sphere remains.

In *CUP*, the analogy between Socratic thought and Christianity is explicitly established when Climacus notes that "Socratic ignorance is an analogue to the category of the absurd," and "Socratic inwardness in existing is an analogue to faith."<sup>592</sup> However, if we continue reading, Climacus qualifies both of these statements, by emphasising that there is an infinite *dissimilarity* and *distance*, between the Socratic and the Christian categories: Socratic ignorance might be analogous to the absurd, but the absurd contains an "infinitely greater resilience."<sup>593</sup> Likewise, Socratic inwardness may be an analogue to faith, but "the inwardness of faith... is infinitely deeper".<sup>594</sup> Complicating the matter further, Climacus later revokes the possibility of analogy entirely writing that "there is no analogy to the sphere of the paradoxically religious, and thus the application, when it is understood, is a revocation."<sup>595</sup> How then are we to understand the seeming contradiction here, as Climacus affirms the Socratic's analogical relationship to Christianity, only to argue that the analogy must be revoked? And what does this tell us about the paradoxical statement that the similarity between the Socratic and the Christian consists in dissimilarity?

Tracing the concept of analogy from Aristotle to Kant, Ettore Rocca has noted that Kierkegaard follows these thinkers in viewing the purpose of analogy to be to show dissimilarity; to create relation between things that cannot be related, for analogy "exists only

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<sup>592</sup> *SKS* 7, 188 / *CUPI*, 205.

<sup>593</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>595</sup> *SKS* 7, 515 / *CUPI*, 567.

between heterogenous things.”<sup>596</sup> This echoes Martensen’s (and Hegel’s) idea that unity can only occur in difference. For if two things are simply the same there is no need to unite or relate them. This then also seems to be what Kierkegaard is saying when he claims that analogy can only exist if there is contrast; that similarity is found in dissimilarity. However, unlike Martensen’s ultimate aim of establishing unity and harmony, for Kierkegaard the analogy or similarity leads not to a unity between two heterogeneous things or spheres, but underlines their continued dissimilarity. For the analogy must ultimately be revoked, so that it does not lose sight of its distance to Christianity and starts trivialising or resolving Christianity’s paradox like objective philosophy has done. The analogy is not stable or definitive. Instead, as Climacus explains, analogy “can serve to make aware, but no more, the understanding of which is therefore a revocation”.<sup>597</sup> As Rocca notes, for Kierkegaard “analogy defines our understanding of the incomprehensible by letting us understand in which sense we cannot understand”.<sup>598</sup> Socratic subjective philosophy can in this way provide a certain awareness of the paradoxicality of Christianity, and of the difficulty Christian existence poses because of sin. However, precisely because of sin Socratic philosophy, like objective philosophy, is always distanced from Christianity and cannot explain it—thus the analogy must be revoked.

In *SUD*, Anti-Climacus discusses the Socratic definition of sin as ignorance. The Socratic cannot explain sin, but it still helps make us aware of the Christian notion of sin and its radicality. Anti-Climacus writes:

By no means shall I dismiss the Socratic definition on the grounds that one cannot stop there, but with Christianity *in mente*, I shall use this Socratic definition to bring out the latter in its radicality—simply because the Socratic definition is so genuinely Greek. And here as always with

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<sup>596</sup> Ettore Rocca, “Analogy and Negativism,” in Claudia Welz and René Rosfort (eds.) *Hermeneutics and Negativism*, (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 161-175, 169. See also Arne Grøn, “Transcendence of Thought: The Project of *Philosophical Fragments*.” *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2004, 80-99.

<sup>597</sup> *SKS* 7, 517 / *CUP1*, 569.

<sup>598</sup> Rocca, “Analogy and Negativism,” 171.

any other definition that in the most rigorous sense is not rigorously Christian...its emptiness becomes apparent.<sup>599</sup>

Anti-Climacus does not dismiss or ignore the Socratic definition—in fact he considers it “extremely urgent that we...come back to this Socratic principle.”<sup>600</sup> But the Socratic-philosophical definition of sin is used to bring out the more radical Christian definition, which goes beyond human understanding. Even though Socratic ignorance is analogous to sin, the Socratic definition of sin is “defective”; and even though this defect is “something the Socratic principle itself realises and remedies,” it does so “only to a certain degree.”<sup>601</sup> However, whereas speculative philosophy un-Socratically deceives us to believe it is Christianity itself,<sup>602</sup> Socratic ignorance at least guards the infinite difference between humans and God because it acknowledges its own limits. But its limit—its sinfulness—is precisely what distances it and revokes its analogy to the Christian sphere. Yet it is precisely its dissimilarity and difference from Christianity that also enables subjective philosophy to point to the immense difficulty of Christianity, and thus in this continual gap or space between subjective philosophy and Christianity we see how the philosophical attempt to approximate the Christian sphere pushes it further back the more it is confronted with the depth of Christianity’s difficulty and paradoxicality. In this way a dialogue is able to take place within this space, but it is a dialogue of inverted dialectic, in which the closer subjective philosophy comes, the further away it finds itself.

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<sup>599</sup> *SKS* 11, 201 / *SUD*, 88.

<sup>600</sup> *SKS* 11, 205 / *SUD*, 92.

<sup>601</sup> *SKS* 11, 205 / *SUD*, 93.

<sup>602</sup> *SKS* 11, 206 / *SUD*, 93.

We see this in Kierkegaard's discussion of the category of reflection, which William McDonald has pointed out can be considered the supreme category of philosophy in Kierkegaard's authorship.<sup>603</sup> A journal entry from 1848:

It has always been thought that reflection must destroy Xnty and that it was its natural enemy. I hope indeed that with God's help it will become apparent that God-fearing reflection can retie once more the knots at which superficial reflection has picked away for so long...But look, reflection comes to perform the opposite service, to reinstall the coiled springs of Christianity so that it can hold its own—against reflection. Christianity, of course, remains the same...But the struggle becomes a different one: until now it has been between reflection and an immediate, simple Christianity; now it will be between reflection and the simplicity that has been armed with reflection. I think this makes sense. The task is not to comprehend Xnty, but to comprehend that one cannot comprehend it. This is faith's holy cause, and therefore reflection is sanctified by being used in this manner.<sup>604</sup>

Kierkegaard makes clear that reflection is not the natural enemy of Christianity, but that a God-fearing reflection will instead serve Christianity by making it so difficult—tying knots so intricate and tightening the springs of Christianity to such a degree—that Christianity is only further guarded against reflection itself. For Kierkegaard, this is tied to the task of understanding that we *cannot* understand Christianity. Thus, reflection is simultaneously involved in a negative and self-annihilating task (making Christianity so difficult that it cannot penetrate it), and a positive task of arming Christianity with reflection, which in turn supports the reflection to reach the understanding that it cannot understand. Understanding is still needed, even if it is to become aware of its limitations. Kierkegaard characterises this task as a “holy cause,” in which reflection becomes sanctified, so reflection resonates not just in a philosophical register, but a theological one too. The idea that human beings must

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<sup>603</sup> See William McDonald, “Philosophy/Philosophers,” in Steven M. Emmanuel, William McDonald, and Jon Stewart (eds.), *Kierkegaard's Concepts, Tome V: Objectivity to Sacrifice*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), 83-94, 85.

<sup>604</sup>SKS 21, 68, NB6:93 / KJN 5, 69-70.

recognise that they are always in the wrong in relation to God—a recurring theme in Kierkegaard’s authorship.<sup>605</sup> In these journal entries, this theme is echoed to underline how human reflection can support this insight if “reflection humbles itself under the hand of God in fear and trembling, referring everything to God (because even in its totality it is, after all, nothing before God).”<sup>606</sup>

In *PC*, Anti-Climacus provides a further perspective on such subjective-philosophical reflection serving an upbuilding purpose in relation to Christianity. Just as Socratic philosophy makes the individual aware of his or her own limits through its emphasis on ignorance, it is this attitude of self-annihilation that subjective reflection can awaken in the individual, which in turn is the proper attitude for facing the transition to Christianity. Anti-Climacus suggests that thinking and understanding form a springboard towards action, and therefore cultivating clarity and precision of thought provides the best foundation for making this leap:

it is very important for a person that his language be precise and true, because that means his thinking is that also...even though understanding and speaking correctly are not everything, since acting correctly is indeed also required, yet understanding in relation to acting is like the springboard from which the diver makes his leap—the clearer, the more precise, the more passionate... the understanding is, the more it rises to action, or the easier it is to rise to action for the one who is to act, just as it is easier for the bird to rise from the swinging branch whose pliancy is most closely related to and forms the easiest transition to flying.<sup>607</sup>

Anti-Climacus suggests that subjective philosophy offers a preparatory foundation, a “springboard”, for taking the leap towards action. This springboard is *not* action, but it primes a leap in that direction. However, this also means that it matters that this foundation is as

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<sup>605</sup> See for example *SKS* 3, 320-332 / *EO2*, 339-354 and *SKS* 5, 291-316 / *EUD*, 297-326.

<sup>606</sup> *SKS* 21, 52, NB6:70 / *KJN* 5, 51.

<sup>607</sup> *SKS* 12, 162 / *PC*, 158.

strong and supportive as it can possibly be, and that there is a value in strengthening our philosophical thinking.

However, ultimately, for Kierkegaard the problem in relation to Christianity is not an epistemological one; that people doubt the truth—but rather an ethical one; that people are insubordinate. Kierkegaard identifies this as the “fundamental confusion in Christianity”, for the New Testament he writes “relates solely to the ethical, and therefore wants you to begin with simply by taking a single point—but then see that you do it,”<sup>608</sup> and therefore the continual question has to be: “What ethics are to be adopted in order that one may dare call oneself a Xn?”<sup>609</sup> Herein then lies the further value or similarity between Socratic, subjective philosophy and Christianity. For just as Christianity is an existence-communication, Socratic or subjective philosophy is also inherently related to the ethical-existential sphere, which is prioritised above the purely epistemological. As Kierkegaard notes, “The Greek concept of a philosopher,” is “a thinker in ethical character” and is therefore “far more suited to the communication of Christianity than this pitiful concept: the orator, the bombastic rhetorician”.<sup>610</sup> Socrates is precisely identified as an ethicist. The “Telegraph Messages” pointed out that when people speak of Christ and Socrates’ similarities, they forget that Socrates was “uglier than original sin.” In *CUP* this particular characteristic is picked up by Climacus who writes that Socrates, a teacher of the ethical, was pleased with what he calls his “advantageous appearance”.<sup>611</sup> However, Climacus notes that Socrates’ understanding of an “advantageous appearance” is an inversion of what is usually connected with the term:

In our day, we say of a clergyman that he has a very advantageous appearance; we are pleased about this and understand that he is a handsome man, that the clerical gown is very becoming to

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<sup>608</sup> *SKS* 23, 336, NB19:12 / *KJN* 7, 342.

<sup>609</sup> *SKS* 24, 492, NB25:73 / *KJN* 8, 500.

<sup>610</sup> *SKS* 22, 51, NB11:87 / *KJN* 6, 48.

<sup>611</sup> *SKS* 7, 225 / *CUP1*, 247.

him, that he has a sonorous voice and a figure that every tailor—but what am I saying—that every listener must be pleased with.<sup>612</sup>

Climacus continues by underlining that the religious teacher’s prinking up in “pagan-aesthetic categories” extends to Christ himself: Whereas the congregation is not moved by the fact that Christ has taken on the world’s sin, they are moved when Christ’s beauty is emphasised and contrasted with sin “because the contrast between guiltlessness and sin is not strong enough”.<sup>613</sup> Climacus calls beauty the “pagan qualification”, which reflects earthly perfection and ideals—but not Christian ideals. It is therefore significant that Socrates “was very ugly, had clumsy feet...and a number of bumps on his forehead and other places, which were bound to convince everyone that he was a depraved character”.<sup>614</sup> Socrates’ ugliness does reflect a similarity with Christ; his ugliness is in contradiction to his character, making him a “paradoxical” figure on a relative worldly level. Furthermore, Climacus emphasises that Socrates’ ugliness is precisely advantageous, because it supports his task as a teacher of the ethical by enabling him to communicate indirectly, and through “the repulsion of opposition”<sup>615</sup> teaches the learner that he or she essentially has himself to deal with. In a similar way that Socrates’ ugliness leads to offense, it is Christ’s paradoxicality that leads to such repulsion of opposition. Yet Anti-Climacus later notes that while he is the founder of ethics, Socrates is not an “essentially religious ethicist, even less a Christian dogmatician”.<sup>616</sup> Therefore, Socrates does not presuppose those things that Christianity begins with; the state where sin presupposes itself. The Socratic definition of sin as ignorance, places sin not in an ethical sphere, but in an epistemological sphere, and Anti-Climacus points out that this means sin does not really exist in the Socratic view. Socrates lacks a central constituent for defining

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<sup>612</sup> *SKS* 7, 225 / *CUPI*, 247-248.

<sup>613</sup> *SKS* 7, 225 / *CUPI*, 248.

<sup>614</sup> *SKS* 7, 225-226 / *CUPI*, 248.

<sup>615</sup> *SKS* 7, 226 / *CUPI*, 249.

<sup>616</sup> *SKS* 11, 202 / *SUD*, 89.

sin: the will. According to Christianity, sin is not a defect of the intellect but of the will. Because of this, “The intellectuality of the Greeks was too happy, too naïve, too esthetic, too ironic, too witty—too sinful—to grasp that anyone could knowingly not do the good, or knowingly, knowing what is right, do wrong”.<sup>617</sup> Yet, as David Possen has argued, Socrates presents the highest possible human understanding of sin, which no human being can go beyond, for Christianity underlines how no human being can understand, explain or know what sin is, but rather makes clear that God must reveal to us what sin is.<sup>618</sup> Jacob Howland suggests that for Kierkegaard the problem with Socratic philosophising is not that “it is too low in comparison with faith... but that it is too high for ordinary human beings.”<sup>619</sup> Anti-Climacus points out that in his own time these insights hold just as true:

In a time like this, which is running wild in its profusion of empty, pompous and fruitless knowledge, to the point where now, just as in Socrates’ time, only even more so, it is necessary for men to be Socratically starved a little... it is tragic-comic to see that all this knowledge and understanding exercises no power at all over men’s lives, that their lives do not express in the remotest way what they have understood but rather the opposite.<sup>620</sup>

An ethical-religious comprehension would lead human beings into decisions and conclusions that their lower nature does not like: Sin is offensiveness toward human beings, but in particular the philosophical understanding of the human being—whether subjective or objective.

It is therefore problematic to suggest that the similarity be emphasised more strongly. We find this in Howland, who not only suggests that Socrates was one of the “only human beings ever to have been *without sin*,”<sup>621</sup> and while it is true he was not a Christian, Socrates

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<sup>617</sup> SKS 11, 203 / SUD, 90.

<sup>618</sup> See Possen, “Exemplarity of Socrates,” 387-388, 389.

<sup>619</sup> Jacob Howland, *Kierkegaard and Socrates: A Study in Philosophy and Faith*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 212.

<sup>620</sup> SKS 11, 203 / SUD, 90.

<sup>621</sup> Howland, *Kierkegaard and Socrates*, 213.

“did not need Christianity,” because he seems “to combine ideality and actuality in a manner reminiscent of Christ.”<sup>622</sup> Reviewing Howland’s book, Pattison suggests that Howland’s argument inverts “the Kierkegaardian thesis, namely, that the dissimilarity between Socrates and Christ lie in the similarity.”<sup>623</sup> Pattison himself suggests that such an inversion of Kierkegaard’s similarity-in-dissimilarity thesis is reflected by Kierkegaard’s own authorship when it comes to the relation of faith and philosophy: that is that “the dissimilarity between faith and philosophy consists precisely in their similarity”.<sup>624</sup> However, I do not think this is Kierkegaard’s point at all, for this inversion rather denies the profound paradoxicality of Kierkegaard’s original thesis. The dissimilarity encompasses and represents precisely that which goes beyond the human sphere—that in which the infinite difference between God and human beings consists. As Possén has persuasively argued, Kierkegaard is ultimately attempting to show that scholarship is unable to address this dissimilarity between the Socratic and the Christian.<sup>625</sup> This point is expressed through the very genre of the “Telegraph Messages”. While the telegraph, a new scientific innovation at this time, enabled simple and direct communication, even from a great distance, the *mousvoyant* subverts this medium as his telegraph messages are neither clear nor simple, but obscure, alienating, and fragmentary.<sup>626</sup> In this way, the *mousvoyant* inscribes an ambiguous tension between the

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<sup>622</sup> Ibid., 214

<sup>623</sup> Pattison, “Jacob Howland, *Kierkegaard and Socrates: A Study in Philosophy and Faith*,” *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 2006.10.08.

<sup>624</sup> See Pattison, *Philosophy of Kierkegaard*, 183.

<sup>625</sup> See Possén, “F.C. Baur: On the Similarity and Dissimilarity between Jesus and Socrates,” in Jon Stewart (ed.), *Kierkegaard and His German Contemporaries, Tome II: Theology*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 23-38; 35-36.

<sup>626</sup> Developed in France using an optical semaphore system, the optical telegraph, which conveyed textual information through visual signals, was used in Europe toward the end of the eighteenth-century. This explains why Kierkegaard would conceptualise the sender and recipient of these optical messages according to their vision. The optical telegraph was later replaced by the electrical telegraph following H.C. Ørsted’s discovery of electromagnetism in 1820. In 1837, Samuel Morse invented the electromagnetic telegraph. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Climacus speaks disparagingly of the “many benefactors of the age who know how to benefit humankind by making life easier and easier, some by railroads, others by omnibuses and steamships, others by telegraphs” just like the systematic thinkers who have sought to make existence easy to think. (*SKS* 7, 171 / *CUPI*, 186). By 1854, Kierkegaard’s opinion of the telegraph seems to have declined even further: “This frightful lie in which each calls himself a Xn, inducing himself and his neighbor to imagine that they both are. How well-deserved, then, is this mockery upon the hum. race—this disgusting, almost daily telegraph-lie: take

genre and content of his text. This tension seems firstly to highlight that the subject of the “Telegraph Messages”— the relation between Christianity and philosophy— is impossible to characterise unequivocally, for the dissimilarity between them goes beyond any mode of human reflection or inquiry whether it be speculative, scientific, Socratic, philosophical or theological—it cannot be explained, but it can be intensified. This returns us to the mousvoyant’s suggestion that addressing this relationship leads to a provocation of the mind and even further back to Kierkegaard’s position in his 1835 journal entry, where philosophy at its highest point must will its own downfall in its encounter with Christianity in accepting the reality of sin. The revocation of Socratic philosophy’s similarity and analogy is reminiscent of this downfall; because of its emphasis on existence and acknowledgement of its own ignorance, Socratic philosophy exists in an analogous relationship with Christianity. However, this analogy is immediately revoked and this philosophy annihilated by this awareness of sin, which in turn guards the dissimilarity and keeps intact the paradoxicality and mystery of Christianity. By understanding that there are things it cannot understand, philosophy reaches its peak, but also causes its own annihilation.

Looking back to those early *AA Journals*, Kierkegaard aptly describes philosophy as “life’s dry nurse [*Goldamme*],” for philosophy “can look after us but not give suck [*die*].”<sup>627</sup> Philosophy is thus able to provide nurture, educate, and protect us, and as such should be given a pivotal role in human life, as the highest human position possible—and yet the person cannot subsist on philosophy; philosophy cannot feed or nourish us—it cannot give life. This early entry thus underlines the way in which Kierkegaard affords an immense value to subjective philosophy, while underlining its limitations in the face of Christianity. However, this should not be perceived as an approximation of Socratic philosophy to Christianity. Any

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pride in your discovery, it is appropriate to the times, designed for lying on the grandest scale. As, with the Romans, a calumniator was branded with the letter C, so is the electrical telegraph a brand upon the hum. race: you liar.” (*SKS* 26, 150, NB32:47 / *KJN* 10, 149.)

<sup>627</sup> *SKS* 17, 51, AA:47 / *KJN* 1, 45.

approximation automatically leads only to a deeper, wider, and greater distance between these spheres. The separation between subjective philosophy and Christianity is even more radical than the separation between objective philosophy and Christianity, for subjective philosophy arms Christianity to make itself even more difficult and set apart.<sup>628</sup> This comes at the expense of philosophy itself, which must simultaneously will its downfall in order to bring about these insights. In this way the similarity between subjective philosophy and Christianity lies in their dissimilarity, just as the similarity between Christ and Socrates lies in their dissimilarity.

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<sup>628</sup> In *Armed Neutrality or My Position as a Christian Author in Christendom*, Kierkegaard concludes by noting how it “cannot be known” whether one is a Christian, but “it must be believed, and in faith there is always fear and trembling”. (SKS 16, 123 / *POV*, 141)

## PART II

Having established the way in which we might conceptualise Martensen's and Kierkegaard's positions in the debate about the relation between philosophy, theology, and Christianity according to the dialectical models of respectively unity-in-difference and similarity-in-dissimilarity, the second part of this thesis will evaluate these models. It will be argued that Kierkegaard's similarity-in-dissimilarity view and the distance it creates between philosophy and Christianity leads to a richer dialogical space within which certain philosophical and theological concepts can be given expression. Although Martensen argues that the philosophical and religious must relate in a living dialectic, his emphasis on unity and epistemological clarity leads to a breakdown in the dialectic he aims to express between these spheres, as the philosophical is sublated into the religious standpoint. In contrast, Kierkegaard's clear-cut separation of the spheres and insistence on the continued distance between them—where there can be no recourse to unity, no alleviation of tension, and no mediation—prevents the reduction of either sphere as their difference and respective integrity remains intact.

The way in which I propose to show this is through a comparative analysis of how their respective views inform and shape their development of three concepts of particular theological and philosophical significance: *Existence*, *Sin*, and *Freedom*. Comparing Martensen and Kierkegaard's conceptualisation of these three categories not only reveals their respective commitments to the unity and separation of the philosophical and religious spheres, but also that Martensen's unity-in-difference and Kierkegaard's similarity-in-dissimilarity models can serve a hermeneutical function for such comparative, conceptual analysis.

## CHAPTER 4

### *EXISTENCE*

As we have seen Martensen and Kierkegaard both underline the existential-ethical significance and nature of Christianity. For Martensen Christianity is repeatedly defined as living, for religion is an existential relationship between God and human beings. Similarly, for Kierkegaard Christianity is an existence-communication. For both therefore, what is ultimately at stake in the debate about philosophy's relationship to the religious sphere is the question of existence—what it means to exist as a human being, and how we are to live. Accordingly Martensen argues that the relationship must be one of dialectical, reciprocal interplay to reflect that Christian faith is living. For Kierkegaard, the existential nature of Christianity too dictates its relationship to philosophy: Whereas objective philosophy has nothing to do with Christianity, subjective philosophy is able to form some level of analogy

or similarity to the Christian sphere—but only by precisely recognising its distance and dissimilarity from this.

Comparing their views and way in which they each conceive of existence can in turn be seen to inform their respective positions regarding philosophy and Christianity's relationship. The difference, however, is that whereas Kierkegaard develops a concept of existence, Martensen does not, but rather assumes existence as a given, observable category, and seeks to combine a scientific and existential perspective. In contrast, Kierkegaard, or Climacus, develops a "spatiating" concept of existence in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, which reflects the gap he identifies between philosophy and Christianity, and shows how distance and dissimilarity precisely enables dialogue. Climacus's philosophical concept of existence subordinates philosophy to the religious sphere, and demonstrates the infinitely greater difficulty that Christianity poses. While this would later prompt Martensen to criticise Kierkegaard for articulating a divisive concept of existence, which opposes thinking, I argue that Kierkegaard shows how this divisiveness saves thought. Comparing their views of existence helps show that Kierkegaard's separation of the philosophical from the existential-Christian sphere, leads not to a reduction of philosophy, but to a richer dialogue between the two based on their distance.

#### **4.1 Martensen's Existential Commitment**

Writing on Martensen as a theologian and the task of modern theology, George Pattison concludes that Martensen ultimately chooses to develop his speculative theology through "the path of 'science' rather than existential pathos".<sup>629</sup> Pattison argues that this forces certain views or decisions on the reader, who will therefore find it easier to simply reject

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<sup>629</sup> George Pattison, "Martensen, Speculation and the Task of Modern Theology," in Jon Stewart (ed.), *Hans Lassen Martensen: Theologian, Philosopher and Social Critic*, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2012), 17-46, 44.

Martensen's views. Borrowing that famous Kierkegaardian critique of Hegel, Pattison suggests that had Martensen presented his theology as a thought-experiment and not as a statement, no one could have anything against it—for it is not *what* Martensen says, that is the problem: The problem is *how* he says it. For Pattison it had been preferable had Martensen presented his dogmatics as a mythical, symbolic exploration of how redemption is experienced imaginatively. But to Pattison's dismay Martensen wants his theology "to be more than poetry, more than apocalyptic comedy," and thus presents a theology informed by an "ontological certainty".<sup>630</sup> While Martensen's emphasis on clarity and certainty are certainly central characteristics of his thought, I want to nuance Pattison's claim that Martensen selects science over "existential pathos" and suggest that Martensen rather seeks to combine these approaches. Martensen's authorship demonstrates a profound concern with, and emphasis on, the existential import of religion, and the question of real human existence underlies Martensen's aim to establish continuity between the philosophical and religious spheres. Moreover, Martensen wants his speculative theology to be more than poetry, comedy, or thought-experiments precisely because he wants it to be useful and instructive to the *existing* and the thinking person. For this reason, then, he insists on his theology's relation to actual existence and life. Martensen's speculative theology is certainly informed and oriented towards intellectual clarity and ontological certainty, but it is also shaped by a deep preoccupation with existence. This need for intellectual and ontological certainty in turn seems to be Martensen's attempt to respond to the challenges of human life. While Chapter 2 has already pointed out that Martensen's thought can be viewed as belonging to a wider existential movement within Golden-Age Danish thought, this section will consider Martensen's treatment of existence in more detail.

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<sup>630</sup> Ibid., 45.

#### 4.1.1 “But Martensen’s own existence what does it express?”

One commentator who acknowledges Martensen’s concern with existence is none other than Kierkegaard, who admits that Martensen, like himself, urges that Christianity must be a life “a really actual life, a wholly real, actual life in us.”<sup>631</sup> When following this statement with the question “But Martensen’s own existence what does it express?” for Kierkegaard the problem is that Martensen’s own life attests to a Christianity that is easy, comfortable, and intelligible, rather than one that is paradoxical, for, he and “the whole slimy group” of Danish Hegelians “have no ethical posture whatever: for them, it is all a matter of shrewdness [*Klogskab*] and happy days and esteem and a cushy living and a high rank.”<sup>632</sup> However, Martensen himself reflects on what his existence expresses in his memoir. As touched upon in Chapter 2, Martensen recounts how during his grand tour he was beset with an overwhelming ennui [*livslede*] due to his one-sided focus on intellectualism over faith and in which “all reality both in the world of things and thought was for me dissolved into mere shadows.”<sup>633</sup> Martensen describes his sense of being a divided self, noting that much of what we feel as humans cannot be explained by our conscious life, but must be explained by the unconscious, the “night-side of our existence,” and the contradictions that “fermented” within him “had to reach a settlement.”<sup>634</sup> In particular Martensen was plagued by a contradiction between theism and pantheism. Martensen admits that much about pantheism attracted him, as he felt a deep aversion to the “lifeless God” of deism: “I required a God, who really is present and active in His world, a God, whose fulness saturates this earthly existence. Again and again I repeated the word of Scripture: In God we live, move and have our being”.<sup>635</sup> Martensen underlines that just as he required the fullness of the divine to saturate human

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<sup>631</sup> *SKS* 22, 154, NB12:18 / *KJN* 6, 153.

<sup>632</sup> *SKS* 20, 189, NB2:121 / *KJN* 4, 186.

<sup>633</sup> *AL* 1, 99.

<sup>634</sup> *AL* 1, 100.

<sup>635</sup> *AL* 1, 101.

existence, divine thought should have to reveal itself *in* human existence. For this reason, he explains, he became so enthused by Hegel's unity of thought and existence, which he continues to maintain as an essential truth. The problem with pantheism, was that its God invited only to an impersonal relationship. Martensen notes: "I had to tell myself: This God does not care about you at all. You are of no significance to Him... In personal matters He is likewise of no significance to me."<sup>636</sup> Yet Martensen describes that the temptation of pantheism was strong as it offered him "this world's kingdoms and their glories,"<sup>637</sup> if he simply gave up on this existential aspect. Martensen would later return to this personal experience and subject his condition to an ethical-scholarly investigation in his 1871 *Christian Ethics*. Here, Martensen provides a general warning against a "one-sided contemplative and inward-looking life direction,"<sup>638</sup> which is precisely what he identifies in himself in his memoirs.<sup>639</sup> Martensen had convinced himself that having knowledge of God was the most important thing, and as a result forgotten that really experiencing God in life is the highest: "our riddle is not...a mere riddle of knowing, but a riddle of life that must be solved in life, in existence, as Christianity teaches us."<sup>640</sup> Without this experiential, existential relationship, our knowledge becomes a "shadow play" of our own concepts and constructions. Thus the ethical task that this spiritual malaise ultimately helped him identify was to "bring faith and knowledge into the right relationship in my own personal life."<sup>641</sup> After identifying this task, Martensen explains he soon experienced that beneficial "natural faith in life, the faith that the creating and supportive powers in existence are stronger than the disturbing [powers]".<sup>642</sup> This faith in life would in turn become the base for his

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<sup>636</sup> *AL* 1, 102-103.

<sup>637</sup> *AL* 1, 103.

<sup>638</sup> *CESI*, 458.

<sup>639</sup> *AL* 1, 104.

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>641</sup> *AL* 1, 105.

<sup>642</sup> *AL* 1, 106.

“optimistic outlook, which thank goodness, had not failed me, that everything would be taken care of, as long as I meant it seriously and sincerely.”<sup>643</sup>

This brief foray into the autobiographical shows that for Martensen balance has to be upheld between the life of reason, the life of faith, and the life of the human being. Philosophising and theologising—any intellectual pursuit—must ultimately be oriented towards real existence. With this account, Martensen furthermore seems to suggest that placing philosophy and religion into the right relationship has significance for real human existence—and certainly for his own existence. Martensen’s concern with existence can be traced from his dissertation to his *Dogmatics* and to his later *Christian Ethics*, which in different ways express this commitment to uniting the intellectual with real life in faith.

#### 4.1.2 Martensen’s Scientific Existentialism

Already in his 1837 dissertation, there are several indications that Martensen by no means ignores existence, but believed the human pursuit of knowledge to be inseparable from existence. For example, Martensen directly applies John Scotus Eriugena’s division of existence to his theory of knowledge because it holistically and comprehensively includes “all spheres of life.”<sup>644</sup> Martensen describes the relationship between God and the human expressed in his concept of conscience or co-knowledge as “the human’s essential *modus existendi*, and thus also *modus cognoscendi*.”<sup>645</sup> That is, the human’s essential mode of existence, that is religious existence, is also the human’s mode of cognition. Furthermore, in this early work Martensen’s discussions of the relationship between philosophy and religion; his articulation of an epistemology based on conscience and faith, and his critique of modern philosophy’s autonomous principle are not simply about knowledge for the sake of

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<sup>643</sup> AL 1, 105-106.

<sup>644</sup> MSA, 14 / BHK, 83.

<sup>645</sup> MSA, 15 / BHK, 85.

knowledge, but are all oriented towards the greater aim of placing the human person into the right relationship with God, which for Martensen is described as an existential relationship of theonomical dependence. Martensen particularly laments the way in which modern philosophy has neglected the real and personal relationship to God that constitutes the human's ground-relation. Where Descartes' pursuit of epistemological certainty led him to the conclusion "that the thinking spirit has existence in itself, that thought itself is the spirit's existence,"<sup>646</sup> modern philosophers, such as Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, now posit equivalence of thought and being—an equivalence which constitutes truth itself. Therefore, Martensen believes that for these philosophers self-consciousness becomes "the source of all truth and certainty",<sup>647</sup> and therefore must be autoarchical and autonomous. Martensen does not "deny that considered in-and-for-itself" the identity between thought and being and that truth lies in this identity "is true and right."<sup>648</sup> However, as noted in Chapter 2, Martensen strongly protests these philosophers' conclusion that self-consciousness must be autonomous because of this, arguing that this is a false conclusion because it overlooks two conditions that define the human. Using Eriugena's divisions of existence, Martensen argues that modern philosophy has obscured "the qualitative difference between God's primitive knowledge and the creature's secondary knowledge, between thinking but not thought nature and the thinking but thought nature."<sup>649</sup> Thus the first condition is that the human is not self-sufficient in acquiring knowledge of the truth. Secondly, this philosophy has overlooked that the human's ground-relation [*Grundforhold*] is not a metaphysical relation, but a personal existential relationship. Instead of viewing the human like the modern philosophers as a "being endowed with reason", Martensen states the true definition of the human is a being that through religion is united with God.

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<sup>646</sup> MSA, 16 / BHK, 85.

<sup>647</sup> MSA, 17 / BHK, 86.

<sup>648</sup> MSA, 18 / BHK, 86.

<sup>649</sup> Ibid.

Martensen still thinks reason forms “the universal form of self-consciousness without which no thinking being would exist as thinking”, and that this is “the eternal formal side of all thought and being,”<sup>650</sup> which makes reason universal and necessary. Yet, Martensen includes a caveat here, for it is *precisely* because of its universality, that reason must be viewed as subordinate to real and personal life.<sup>651</sup> In the study of self-consciousness and its nature, a merely logical approach is therefore not enough, for it must also be *theological* and *anthropological*. Martensen urges that it must not only be asked, “how self-consciousness is related to being and existence, but how it is related to *life* itself.”<sup>652</sup> It is about the relation not just between the finite and infinite, but about the created and uncreated—about the *positive* character of the human spirit, and not just a one-sided metaphysical reflection, which Martensen criticises “the greatest philosophers from Descartes right down to Hegel”<sup>653</sup> for having followed.

In other words, Martensen attempts to articulate a theory of knowledge that is not divorced from the human’s real existence, but reliant on this existence, specifically religious existence. Martensen’s Kant to Hegel lectures emphasise religion’s distinction from art and philosophy precisely on the basis that it takes into account the existential side of the relationship between the divine and human. For religion

is not merely consciousness of and knowledge of that fundamental relation [*Grundforhold*] which exists [*bestaaer*] between God and the human: but it is this fundamental spiritual relation itself as actually [*reelt*] existing. Therefore, because the human in religion stands not merely in an ideal but existential relation to God: religion should be viewed as the essence [*Væsen*] of human nature or as that which makes the human human.<sup>654</sup>

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<sup>650</sup> Ibid.

<sup>651</sup> *MSA*, 18-19 / *BHK*, 86-87.

<sup>652</sup> *MSA*, 19 / *BHK*, 87.

<sup>653</sup> Ibid.

<sup>654</sup> *Pap.*, II C 26-27, 8.

Thus, religion is conceptualised by Martensen as that foundational relation between God and the human, which is not only ideal or metaphysical, but is concretely existential, with actual expression and impact in human life. Regardless of whether religion appears as conscious, “it is however in the human as the bond with God, and is thus the human’s nature, makes the human’s existence [*Tilværelse*] possible.”<sup>655</sup> For this reason, Martensen also argues that the modern philosophical definition of the human being as an “independent rational being” is a “much too ordinary definition”<sup>656</sup> which does not properly convey the human’s essence. Instead, Martensen suggests that religion itself constitutes the human essence. Martensen’s philosophy of religion is then one that not only affirms and emphasises the existential import and implications of the divine relationship, it is directly defined as the bond that connects human existence with God: “Religion is therefore...the bond between the human’s personal existence and the idea of God (Therefore the definition of religion is connectedness [*Forbindtlighed*]).”<sup>657</sup>

This connectedness has great significance for the way in which Martensen defines dogmatics. In these lectures, Martensen outlines his understanding of dogmatics as a science that precisely balances opposing positions: It is neither supranaturalistic or rationalist; neither purely scriptural or symbolic, nor is it “a system of pure truths of reason in their abstraction from the positive,” but it is rather “a living conjunction, union and mediation of all these moments and thus it is their true *Concept* as Dogmatics is a philosophical science it is simultaneously... a positive science.”<sup>658</sup> Although appearing over a decade later, Martensen’s 1849 *Dogmatics* demonstrates this combination of the existential and scientific, as Martensen defines dogmatics as an existentially determined science because it can only be undertaken

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<sup>655</sup> Ibid., 9

<sup>656</sup> Ibid.

<sup>657</sup> Ibid. Jonathan Z. Smith has pointed out that the term religion might stem from the root \**leig*, which means “to bind” (Smith, “Religion, Religions, Religious”, Mark C. Taylor (ed.) *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998), 269-284; 269).

<sup>658</sup> Ibid., 39.

by anyone who is living in the Christian faith. To do dogmatics, Christianity must be an existential truth for the dogmatician. Dogmatics is thus on one hand the intellectual love of Christian truth, and on the other the personal and pathological relationship to the Christian truth—and these two perspectives are inseparable. For this reason, then, Martensen explicitly defines Christian faith as “existential knowledge [*Erkjendelse*]”; a “religious experiential knowledge,” which is yet more than mere knowledge alone, for it is “a life in God”.<sup>659</sup> Furthermore, this religious-existential knowledge of God is not a knowledge that takes the shape of abstract thought, but takes concrete shape through a comprehensive world and life view in the human’s relation to God.<sup>660</sup>

Repeating his earlier lectures, Martensen again underlines in his *Dogmatics* the inherently practical and existential side of the religious sphere, which distinguishes this sphere from philosophy and art:

the speculative and aesthetic relation to God is only one of a secondary order, a relation mediated by ideas, thoughts, and images; whereas the religious relation to God is an existential relation [*Existentialforhold*], a consciousness that the God-relation is one with the personal living and being in this relation—religion in its true sense is a *life* in God. While art and science only have God in the mirror image of thought and imagination, the pious has God in his existence—philosophy constructs a concept of the praying and the one who labours for God’s kingdom, whereas religion is itself to live, pray and work for God’s kingdom.<sup>661</sup>

This emphasis on existence therefore permeates Martensen’s presentation of Christianity’s dogmas. He underlines that the difference between God and the world; between creator and creation, the Holy God and sinful humans is the “deepest existential-contradiction conceivable,” because it is a contradiction in existence it cannot be solved “in picture or

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<sup>659</sup> *DO*, 48.

<sup>660</sup> *CD* §8, 11..

<sup>661</sup> *CD* §4, 8.

myth” or in thought, but “must be solved in existence,” and “in life and actuality,”<sup>662</sup> that is through Christ’s incarnation as a human in the world. Interestingly, Martensen thus conceives of the devil as a personality that is “not an existing...but only a becoming [personality], which as such hovers halfway between existence and non-existence,”<sup>663</sup> in contrast to Christ who is defined as true existence.

Martensen explains that modern philosophical idealism has become an empty formalism because it has sought to make spirit everything in life and religion, without keeping in mind this riddle of life, and by detaching itself from God who is the source of life:

Is spirit detached from its condition it speaks only of itself, and it becomes empty spirit. ‘It shall not speak of itself; but it shall take of my fullness, and shall explain me,’ these words of Christ apply in a way in each of the spheres of life. For everywhere it applies that the spirit must have its source from a spring of life, and everywhere it is confirmed that the philosophical and poetical idealism, which has separated itself from the spring of life, reveals only empty forms of truth and art.<sup>664</sup>

Quoting from John 16:13, Martensen underlines that all things must depend on this living relationship and foundation in God. Furthermore, Martensen suggests that the concept of true righteousness [*Retfærdighed*] “encompasses the human’s total being and becoming [*Væren og Vorden*]. Therefore, Martensen argues that the concept of true righteousness must “contain the unity of the actual life and the true life, the congruence of existence and the essential law of existence, its eternal role model [*Forbilledet*].”<sup>665</sup> Martensen thus presents the life of the blessed as “one of perfection” free from sin and corruption, but also as one where the partial or fragmentary is abolished, referencing Corinthians 13.10, characterised by the abolishment of all division and of a true harmony:

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<sup>662</sup> CD §15, 22.

<sup>663</sup> CD §103, 226.

<sup>664</sup> CD §181, 396-397.

<sup>665</sup> CD §97, 217.

the life of the blessed includes a blending of all real contrasts which seem to be separate in time, or which here are only relatively united. And this imperishable union of the true contrast of life is the glorious liberty of the children of God. The supposition that this terrestrial life which here we live is the only possible to us; that a state of perfect bliss is inconceivable because life is made up only of repeated endeavours towards the goal; this supposition misjudges that in a state of bliss the goal has been reached as well as shall ever anew be reached, that the blessed life is as well as shall be... this blessed life is the centralization of human progress, that is to say: Time is no longer this historical time of separation and fragmentation.<sup>666</sup>

Martensen here acknowledges that in the present life is fragmented and contrast-filled. Nevertheless, Martensen does not want his reader to forget that although our current lives have not yet reached their providential state of blessedness, Christian life inevitably includes at least partial knowledge of the divine:

However inscrutable the ways of providence may be in the life of the individual—already because the human’s earthly life is only a fragment, which finds its final explanation in the pregnant future awaiting man beyond the grave—the believer must nevertheless seek after a partial knowledge of the Divine wisdom and will in this life; and there never was a truly Christian life without some knowledge of the leadings of God’s providence, although true faith is not careful to show this palpably.<sup>667</sup>

This distinction between the providential perfected life and actual life, is described by Martensen as a distinction between dogmatics and ethics. The relation between God and the human being is presented in *Dogmatics* as an existing relationship, whereas ethically it is still a relationship that is to come and be realised through the believer’s free striving. Martensen writes: “Dogmatics therefore presents the Christian God-consciousness in its rest, ethics

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<sup>666</sup> CD §290, 578.

<sup>667</sup> CD §118, 263-264.

presents it in its movement.”<sup>668</sup> This distinction then also seems to apply to Martensen’s differentiation of the philosophical and theological sphere; philosophy is thus in movement, but a movement which can find rest in theology’s eschatological insights. Martensen precisely suggests that this difference is only relative, and underlines the importance of pursuing and developing ethics independently to ensure that both the providential and actual human condition are illuminated—that is, so that we know not only what to believe, but also what to do.<sup>669</sup> Martensen devotes substantial effort and scholarship to developing such an independent system of ethics, and Martensen’s commitment and concern with real human existence is in particular manifested in his preoccupation with ethics.

#### *4.1.3. Ethics and Martensen’s Critique of Kierkegaard*

As we saw in Chapter 2, Martensen identifies religion and ethics [*Sædeligheden*] as intimately connected because both relate to actual human existence. As Curtis L. Thompson has explicated, religion is for Martensen not only a real existential relation which connects the human being to God, but it also “obliges one to take this divine reality seriously in the living out of one’s existence”<sup>670</sup> in actuality. Martensen underlines that religion cannot be replaced by morality (which belongs to philosophy), and yet this profound connectedness between ethics, a philosophical discipline, and religion becomes an increasing matter of interest for Martensen. The importance that Martensen ascribes to ethics is clarified in his *Christian Ethics* where he hopes to solve the task of “bringing forth an ethics, which can take up an equal standing to dogmatics.”<sup>671</sup> So far, Martensen suggests, dogmatics has enjoyed a

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<sup>668</sup> *CD* §26, 63.

<sup>669</sup> See *CD* §26, 63-64.

<sup>670</sup> Thompson, “Introduction to *BHK*,” 24.

<sup>671</sup> *CEa*, v.

“much more favourable position”<sup>672</sup> than ethics. The reason for this is precisely that human existence is much harder to systematise and order than doctrinal knowledge:

For, whatever may deservedly be said of the difficulties of doctrinal knowledge, it can however no less justly be said that the divine things revealed to us are far more simple than the human; that in revelation and faith, considered by and for themselves, order and coherence are much more readily discernible than the wide-branching and entangled, labyrinthine diversity of human life and human action, which ethics must contemplate in its relation to revelation and faith, and which is very difficult [*saare vanskeligt*] to bring under one universally valid schema.<sup>673</sup>

In other words, Martensen suggests that because ethics is about human life in the world, ethics has a far more difficult task than dogmatics—for how does one systematise and bring existence into a “universally valid schema” when it is so multifarious? It is thus important to note that despite Kierkegaard’s objection that Martensen has ignored the difficulty of Christianity and of life, Martensen does in fact recognise and articulate this difficulty very explicitly.

Nevertheless, Martensen also implies that although it requires great difficulty, human life can *eventually* be brought into such a universal system. Martensen’s articulation of ethics as a philosophical science or discipline again underpins his desire to bring together the scientific and existential perspectives, as ethics is simultaneously the ideal, pure universality of thought, and an objective science, but must also necessarily be related to living, personal actuality. The deep connection Martensen identifies between religion and ethics because the religious as the eternal existential must be actualised as the ethical in each individual human signifies the centrality of ethics and thereby of existence in Martensen’s thought. In *Outline*, we saw that Martensen’s system of ethics is a system of how the human being’s authentic

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<sup>672</sup> *CEa*, iv.

<sup>673</sup> *Ibid.*

existence reaches fulfilment only in its unity with God through free theological dependence on the divine. Martensen denies that this unity of God and human is a simply mystical or “abstract-*essential*” union in which the real and concrete differences between God and humans are effaced and the human’s subjective will and natural individuality absorbed, for this, Martensen remarks, would be a form of pantheism. However, it would also be insufficient to have simply an “abstract-*moral*” unity where the human simply enacts God’s will. For God’s will is tied to God’s essence, and God must be “*essentially* in the human soul” if the human is to be able to carry out God’s will; in other words, the human must be in that existential-religious relationship with God. For this reason, Martensen conceives of the true ethical ideal as one that requires “the combination of the mystical and moral union and the latter’s elaboration of this in the human’s nature-determined individuality. In this way the unity becomes *personal*.”<sup>674</sup> That is, the unity becomes existential and actual.

Furthermore, Martensen strongly emphasises that although the demands of ethics are expressed “in the pure universality of thought,” it is simultaneously “at every point *argumentum ad hominem*” as ethics calls the individual human being “to liberate the ideal from its imaginary existence and give it living, personal actuality. Pure thought must be reborn in the pure heart, the idealism of thought must be transformed into the idealism of the will.”<sup>675</sup> More specifically, this ethical development of the individual and the actualisation of true existence or personality, for Martensen, happens only through the individual’s engagement and living through objective historical and social stages of life. Martensen writes:

The ethical life of society is developed through family life and national life with its end in state, art, and science into church life, where it receives the meaning of the community of saints. Each of these forms of objective life can be considered as stages in the individual’s way to its ideal, and

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<sup>674</sup> *GMS*, 52 / *BHK*, 282.

<sup>675</sup> *GMS*, 102 / *BHK*, 310.

as the *means* to the actualisation of the individual's personal perfection. But if...society can be said to exist for the sake of the individual...then...the individual may just as well be seen to exist for the sake of society.<sup>676</sup>

Thus the individual's ethical journey towards its true existence as personality is ultimately conceived of by Martensen as socially oriented. Based on this then Martensen's conception of "person" is rather fluid and encapsulates all collectives of individuals and social groups or organisms, something which Martensen argues is based on Scriptural truth:

If Christ is really to live in the individual, then the church of Christ with its sufferings and victories lead to an actual life in the individual. And the personal ideal of perfection, which keeps in mind genuine Christian character in its striving, is encompassed by the ideal of the congregation, which the apostle describes, when he says: "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ [Ephesians 4.13].<sup>677</sup>

This is further developed in his *Christian Ethics*, where Martensen identifies this social impulse as a particularly Christian perspective. He argues that Christianity has to be the unity of socialism (where society is the highest and final goal of ethical development) and individualism (where the individual is the highest and final goal of ethical development). Christianity is then according to Martensen "the absolutely socialising power, insofar as it annuls all of humanity's individual differences into a great society of love," and yet Christianity is also "the absolutely individualising power insofar as it does not want to destroy the individual differences... but develop and explain them in the unity of love".<sup>678</sup>

Again, drawing on Scripture to emphasise his point, Martensen notes that,

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<sup>676</sup> *GMS*, 80 / *BHK*, 298.

<sup>677</sup> *CD* §234, 475.

<sup>678</sup> *CEa*, §63, 258.

It applies to every societal organism, a people, a family, that unity and totality only comes into actual existence when the individuals...mutually vouch for each other's existence. The body does not exist outside or next to its limbs. And likewise its limbs cannot have any actual existence outside or next to the body.<sup>679</sup>

This unity of socialism and individuality is therefore according to Martensen a truly Christian perspective—this in turn is underpinned by Martensen's view that the objective-subjective; ideal-existential are necessarily unified. Martensen underlines the value of both perspectives but warns against a one-sided emphasis of one or the other. It is for this reason that Martensen takes Kierkegaard's treatment of existence to task. In relation to the discussion of socialism and individualism Martensen offers an early scholarly engagement with and critical assessment of Kierkegaard's thought. Considered in light of Kierkegaard's rivalry with him and attacks on him, the generosity and seriousness with which Martensen treats Kierkegaard's thought is worth pointing out. Martensen attacks Hegelian universalism precisely for subordinating the ethical-religious and personal (existential spheres) in favour of universal pure ideas and philosophical idealism, which aims at a universal impersonal ideal divorced from the concerns of actual human life. Instead Martensen commends Kierkegaard precisely for protesting the speculative "idea-drunkenness" and neglect of the religious-ethical idea "which does not settle for a merely ideal being, a being in thought, in picture, but which demands existence."<sup>680</sup> Furthermore, Martensen notes that one can but marvel at the richness of Kierkegaard's psychological observations and dexterous psychological experimentation "through which he has become cognizant of the secrets of existence [*Existenshemmeligheder*], both actual and possible, whom only few know and even fewer still are capable of expressing".<sup>681</sup> However, while Martensen admits that Kierkegaard's

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<sup>679</sup> *CEa*, §66, 269.

<sup>680</sup> *CEa*, §69, 277.

<sup>681</sup> *CEa*, §69, 287-288.

writings “contain rich food for thought when it comes to profound psychological, ethical and religious problems”,<sup>682</sup> Martensen ultimately argues that Kierkegaard’s own corrective of speculative universalism requires comprehensive correction. For as Martensen writes;

Although the road he [Kierkegaard] has traversed is rich on spiritual curiosities, this whole hermit movement is however a more and more unrestrained deception which results in a distorted image of the truth; because in his fight against universalism, he, with increasing passion, places existence in a negative and repellent relationship to the idea, faith to knowledge, the Christian to the human, the individual to society; because God is for him only the God of the individual not the congregation, Christ only the saviour of the individual not the world; because he, the more he denied the true idea or the true universal, the more he came under the dominion of a false and merely subjective idea, established for the individual an abstract ideal, which the individual must submit to, insofar as he separated what God has joined together, freedom and grace, the law and the gospel, the prototype [*Forbilledet*] and the Saviour.<sup>683</sup>

Martensen here levels against Kierkegaard the very same criticism Kierkegaard charges Martensen with. Martensen admits that Kierkegaard’s passion for existence is evident, but suggests that Kierkegaard’s *own* existence is problematic. Martensen describes Kierkegaard’s existence as eremitic, portraying Kierkegaard as someone who believed he was alone in the world: “alone in decisions, where one could have needed friends, even the whole race to be held by; alone in dialectical tensions, in anxieties unto death etc.”<sup>684</sup> Martensen suggests a hypocrisy or falseness within this image, since Kierkegaard reached the pinnacle of eremitic life “in the midst of a capital city’s worldly throng and through daily external interaction with a multitude of people.”<sup>685</sup> Martensen’s insinuates that this hermit existence not only

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<sup>682</sup> Ibid.

<sup>683</sup> *CEa*, §69, 289.

<sup>684</sup> *CEa*, §69, 288. Cf. The editor of *Either/Or*, Victor Eremita.

<sup>685</sup> *CEa*, §69, 287.

prevented Kierkegaard from presenting a truthful view of existence but also that Kierkegaard did not even live up to his own individualism.<sup>686</sup>

The main issue for Martensen, however, is that Kierkegaard's concept of existence is a divisive one, which separates existence from the world of thought or ideas—the very things Martensen seeks to unite—which makes it anathema to Martensen's own harmonising project. Martensen points to a further contradiction as he underlines that Kierkegaard clearly is richly equipped with “idea”, and yet Kierkegaard demands a dying away from the idea to reach true existence, which on Martensen's reading becomes an existence that acquires its worth by discarding the “glories of the ideal.”<sup>687</sup> Martensen therefore protests Kierkegaard's emphasis on *passion* for existence, which has made him “reckless towards the idea,” as this is detrimental to the concept of existence itself. Martensen argues Kierkegaard's intellectual recklessness will “take revenge on existence itself resulting in existence itself in him must fall short.”<sup>688</sup> The problem is that Kierkegaard's innermost passion is not simply the ethical or the ethical religious—it is the “ethical-religious-paradoxical.”<sup>689</sup> For Martensen this means Kierkegaard wrongfully separates existence, particularly Christian existence, from reason and knowledge. While Martensen allows that Christianity presents a relative paradox in worldly existence, he objects to the absoluteness of Kierkegaard's paradox, which as a result fideistically opposes reason, excludes thinking, ideas, and wisdom, and is wholly inaccessible to the human. Martensen laments that to Kierkegaard,

faith is the highest existential *passion*, which, vibrating [*gennembævet*] with the consciousness of sin and guilt, acquires the paradox in spite of reason, and from which knowledge, all contemplation is excluded, as its nature is purely practical, a mere relation of will. Nonetheless,

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<sup>686</sup> While this has become a popular criticism of Kierkegaard even in contemporary scholarship, Matthew D. Kirkpatrick valuably outlines that Kierkegaard does have a concept of genuine community. See Kirkpatrick, “Sociological Categories and the Journey to Selfhood: From Crowd to Community”, Robert Sirvent and Silas Morgan (eds.) *Kierkegaard and Political Thought* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2018).

<sup>687</sup> *CEa*, §69, 284.

<sup>688</sup> *CEa*, §69, 283-84.

<sup>689</sup> *CEa*, §69, 284.

everything is dialectical to him. But his dialectic is a divisive existential dialectic which develops the individual's relation to the different spheres of existence, develops especially the inner contradictions of the problem of faith, and why it must be believed "by virtue of the absurd".<sup>690</sup>

Martensen suggests that Kierkegaard creates such strong incongruity between speculative-idealistic thought and existence that speculation is distorted. Martensen instead stresses there are those who want to speculate in faith to gain insight into revealed truth. Kierkegaard imperfectly presents existence by suggesting that Christ's incarnation is a paradox that has no connection to revelation's universality. Instead, Kierkegaard's emphasises only "the individual in his personal relation to God; and this existential pathos, which controls the dialectic, is the guiding view-point for his comprehensive authorship."<sup>691</sup> Martensen thus deems Kierkegaard's concept of God "highly lacking" and "non-ethical".<sup>692</sup> But perhaps even more unforgivably, Martensen suggests, as Kierkegaard "Socratically turns against Speculation 'to make difficulties',"<sup>693</sup> Kierkegaard also "indirectly turns against... those directions of the philosophical and theological speculation that seek precisely to work out his own category, though in a far more universal sense than he".<sup>694</sup> Naturally, Martensen is here referring to himself and his own treatment of existence, implying that Kierkegaard's attacks on him were entirely ill-founded.

Thus Martensen not only demonstrates a profound concern and preoccupation with existential matters, but he also seeks to combine this concern with his scientific oeuvre—not, as Pattison suggests, to pick the path of science above existential pathos. Martensen's view of existence is by no means unnuanced, and we find in his writing a deep awareness of the fact

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<sup>690</sup> *CEa*, §69, 285.

<sup>691</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>692</sup> *CEa*, §69, 284n.

<sup>693</sup> *CEa*, §69, 283. Martensen is here quoting Climacus directly who writes in *Postscript*, "I comprehended that it was my task: to make difficulties everywhere." (*SKS* 7, 172 / *CUP1*, 187).

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.*

that discussing the existential is difficult and complex, for the human life is fragmentary, labyrinthine, and intricate. For this reason, he suggests that ethics is more complex than dogmatics, but Martensen's strong optimism in the eventual perfection of humanity means that everything will eventually be harmonised into a totalising system.

Martensen's emphasis on existence in his philosophical and theological writing poses a substantial challenge for Kierkegaard.<sup>695</sup> Martensen's later claim to an approximation or similarity between him and Kierkegaard seems to be precisely what Kierkegaard sought to avoid, although even in Kierkegaard's own lifetime this was proving challenging. There seems to have been a general consensus that both Martensen and Kierkegaard emphasised ethics and existence in their religious thought. Kierkegaard for example writes in his journals that the theologian Carl Emil Scharling, "*too*, thinks that Martensen has emphasized Christianity as an existential relationship and its ethical side just as strongly as I have,"<sup>696</sup> implying that this was a view shared by more people than just Scharling. Thus, for Kierkegaard, distancing himself from Martensen is in many ways a more complex challenge than distancing himself from Hegel—but one way in which Kierkegaard does so is through the concept of existence developed in *CUP*.

#### 4.2 Kierkegaard's Concept of Existence

Stephen Backhouse writes that Martensen's criticism of Kierkegaard in his *Christian Ethics* constitutes a "curious mix of accurate criticism and apparent misapprehension of Kierkegaard's position."<sup>697</sup> Conversely, I suggest that one might also view Martensen's

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<sup>695</sup> This desire to distance himself from Martensen is perhaps also the reason for Kierkegaard's vitriolic *ad hominem* attacks on Martensen in his journals, undermining Martensen's preoccupation with existence by criticising Martensen for being a hypocrite. See for example *SKS* 22, 154-155, NB12:18 / *KJN* 6, 153; *SKS* 22, 165, NB12: 41 / *KJN* 6 164, and *SKS* 22, 184, NB12:73 / *KJN* 6, 183.

<sup>696</sup> *SKS* 23, 265-266, NB 18: 25 / *KJN* 7, 270 (my emphasis).

<sup>697</sup> Backhouse, *Kierkegaard's Critique of Christian Nationalism*, 43. See also Backhouse's helpful overview and discussion of Martensen's ethics and critique of Kierkegaard in *ibid.*, 34-65.

reading in parts as an accurate exposition of Kierkegaard's position, but a misplaced criticism. This section will be framed around Martensen's dual criticism of Kierkegaard's treatment of existence for making existence "thoughtless", and for making existence something divisive and separating instead of unifying. I will show how Climacus preemptively offers responses to both of these charges, respectively rejecting the former by affirming the latter as a central characteristic of his concept of existence. However, while it can be said Climacus develops a philosophical concept of existence, he simultaneously shows that it is impossible to conceptualise existence, much less systematise it, and Climacus' philosophical conceptualisation of existence ultimately is used to subordinate philosophy to the religious task of becoming a Christian. Climacus' philosophical conceptualisation of existence is not only diametrically opposed to Martensen's emphasis on harmony, but it also highlights that Martensen never develops an actual concept of existence. Thereby it is not Kierkegaard, but Martensen who has divorced thinking and existence, and it will be shown that through his concept of existence, Kierkegaard enables a richer, more dynamic dialogue between the philosophical and Christian spheres. In this way the concept of existence both explicates and is explicated by the similarity-in-dissimilarity model I identify to characterise Kierkegaard's separation of philosophy and Christianity.

#### *4.2.1 Climacus' Concept of Existence*

Arne Grøn has pointed out that the task Climacus undertakes in *CUP* is the task of conceptualising human existence. However, Grøn notes that this very operation of "bringing human existence "to concept",<sup>698</sup> is immensely difficult, for, as Climacus points out, existence is like motion and movement, which by their very definition cannot stop moving to

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<sup>698</sup> Arne Grøn, "The Concept of Existence" in Arne Grøn, René Rosfort, and K. Brian Söderquist (eds.) *Kierkegaard's Existential Approach*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 71-90, 72.

be made stable objects of thought.<sup>699</sup> Thus existence too “is a very difficult matter to handle,” for if “I think it, I cancel it, and then I do not think it. It would seem correct to say that there is something that cannot be thought—namely existing. But again there is the difficulty that existence puts it together in this way: The one who is thinking is existing.”<sup>700</sup> Thus to think existence is to think something that cannot be thought; and yet, at the same time, as Grøn notes, “we do not simply exist”.<sup>701</sup> Climacus’ awareness of and emphasis on this difficulty therefore permeates his treatment of existence, and I believe this finds particular expression in his conception of existence as separation or specifically as “spatiation” [*Spatiering*].<sup>702</sup> Although Martensen identifies Kierkegaard’s concept of existence as something divisive to criticise him, it actually forms an insightful reading: Climacus affirms that existence is divisive in contrast to the systematic approach of the speculative thinker, as he writes: “Existence is the spacing that holds apart [*det Spatierende, der falder ud fra hinanden*]; the systematic is the conclusiveness that combines [*afsluttedhed, der slutter sammen*].”<sup>703</sup>

Whereas the system attempts to unify, conclude and bring together, existence is the opposite:

The systematic idea is subject-object, is the unity of thinking and being; existence, on the other hand, is precisely the separation. From this it by no means follows that existence is thoughtless, but existence has spaced and does space [*har spatieret og spatierer*] subject from object, thought from being.<sup>704</sup>

It is important to note that in both these quotes Climacus uses the specific term *spatiere*, from the Latin “spatium” meaning distance or space. “*Spatiering*” or “spatiation” refers to the typographical practice of spacing the letters of a word apart for emphasis. Known as tracking

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<sup>699</sup> See also Clare Carlisle, *Kierkegaard’s Philosophy of Becoming: Movements and Positions* (Albany: State University of New York, 2005) for a thorough exploration of the significance of movement in Kierkegaard’s writing.

<sup>700</sup> *SKS* 7, 281 / *CUPI*, 308-309.

<sup>701</sup> Grøn “Concept of Existence,” 72.

<sup>702</sup> I am indebted to René Rosfort for making me aware of this concept.

<sup>703</sup> *SKS* 7, 114 / *CUPI*, 118.

<sup>704</sup> *SKS* 7, 118 / *CUPI*, 123.

or simply letter-spacing, this was a common practice in the typographical setting of books in the nineteenth century, and it occurs consistently in the first editions of both Martensen's and Kierkegaard's published works. However, Kierkegaard seems to have found this practice particularly appealing not merely for indicating typographical emphasis. Kierkegaard refers to "spatiation" a number of times in his writings. In a letter to Regine from 1840, Kierkegaard directly explains this practice to her, cited below in full:

My Regine!

Our own little Regine

Such a line under a word serves to direct the typesetter to space out [*spatiere*] that particular word. To space out means to pull the words apart from one another. Therefore, when I space out the words above, I intend to pull them *s o f a r a p a r t* that a typesetter presumably would lose his patience for he would very likely never get to set anything else in his life.

Your S. K.<sup>705</sup>

Playing on the practice of spatiation, Kierkegaard turns this visual spacing into its own love letter, using it to express the eternalising of Regine herself, and with it the vastness of his love for her. Joakim Garff has suggested that by turning Regine into a spatiated figure, Kierkegaard ensures that she reaches beyond time and place, writing her into world history.<sup>706</sup>

In *Postscript*, Climacus refers to spatiation as this specific typological practice twice. However, these mentions have been obscured in English as "spatiation" is translated into today's more commonly known forms of typographical emphasis, such as italicisation or boldface. The first time Climacus mentions spatiation is when he speaks of how "Lessing has

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<sup>705</sup> SKS 28, 213, Brev 127 / *Letters*, 61 (translation slightly modified).

<sup>706</sup> Joakim Garff "'Altsaa: at staae ene—ved en Andens hjælp!'"—Kierkegaards pædagogiske paradoks", in *Uddannelseshistorie*, 2011, 50-73; 58. See also Povl Schmidt "En spatieret kærlighedshistorie. Søren Kierkegaards breve til Regine Olsen," in Erik Damberg, Harry Haue and Jørgen Dines Johansen (eds.): *Litterat pa eventyr. Festskrift til Finn Hauberg Mortensen*, (Odense: Syddansk Universitetsforlag, 2006), 73-85.

himself consolidated his issue in the following words, which he has in boldface [*spatieret*].”<sup>707</sup> Later, Climacus laments the fact that, “*Either/Or* ends precisely with the upbuilding truth (yet without so much as italicizing [*spatiere*] the words...)”.<sup>708</sup> While the Hongs have thus translated “spatiation” in ways that would be less alienating to the modern reader, these translations have regrettably concealed the connection between this practice of spatiation, and Climacus’ concept of existence. But what is the significance of existence being the “spatiating”?

As briefly touched upon above, as spatiating existence is the opposite of the system-building of speculation and the result-focus of objective thought. As Climacus notes, objective thinking invests everything in conclusions, solutions and results, but for the existing human being any such finished result is cheating because it opposes the human’s state of existence, which is a process of becoming. Instead, Climacus points out that subjective thinker, who takes his or her existence into account, puts *everything* into “the process of becoming and omits the result, partly because this belongs to him, since he possesses the way, partly because he as existing is continually in the process of becoming.”<sup>709</sup> Whereas a system implies completeness and a compactness in that it brings together and converges diverse aspects into a neat whole, existence holds apart and spaces the existing human being from any end-point as long as he or she is in existence—for in existence conclusiveness is “moved ahead and postponed.”<sup>710</sup> It is therefore absurd to think that any existing human being can establish a system of existence, as “[s]ystem and conclusiveness correspond to each other, but existence is the very opposite.”<sup>711</sup> Although Climacus affirms that existence *is* a system for God, for an existing human being to systematise that which is not yet finished or

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<sup>707</sup> SKS 7, 96 / CUP1, 97.

<sup>708</sup> SKS 7, 232 / CUP1, 256. Here Climacus is referring to the discourse found at the end of *Either-Or* that suggests the upbuilding truth of always being wrong in relation to God. (SKS 3, 320-332 / EO2, 339-354).

<sup>709</sup> SKS 7, 73 / CUP1, 73.

<sup>710</sup> SKS 7, 117 / CUP1, 121.

<sup>711</sup> SKS 7, 114 / CUP1, 118.

that he or she has not seen to the end is impossible. Climacus repeatedly declares that the *existing* person is continually in the process of “becoming [*i Vorden*]”,<sup>712</sup> which means to be continually striving as existence spaces the individual from any end as long as he or she exists.

The difficulty of this continual striving, however, is not lost on Climacus, who notes that the very nature of existence brings about uncertainty and despair, for it goes against a deep-felt human urge for completion and conclusion:

To be continually in the process of becoming in this way is the illusiveness of the infinite in existence. It could bring a sensate person to despair, for one continually feels an urge to have something finished, but this urge is of evil and must be renounced. The perpetual process of becoming is the uncertainty of earthly life, in which everything is uncertain.<sup>713</sup>

Climacus directly views this desire for conclusions as evil, and something that must be renounced because it does not belong to the existing human being. The art is instead to be able to continue living in this dialectic of the infinite and the uncertainty of earthly life even though “it is, of course, the greatest strenuousness”.<sup>714</sup> Climacus reminds the reader that the Greek philosopher was so profoundly aware of the difficulty existence posed to his thinking, as existence “perpetually prevented him [the Greek philosopher] from thinking in continuity because it continually placed him in a process of becoming,”<sup>715</sup> that he resorted to suicide, or dying away from himself, to halt the continual movement of existence and thus be able to think. But Climacus increases the uncertainty, the strenuousness and spation of existence even further: Remarking that just because he has now pointed out that the existing subjective thinker is continually striving, Climacus underlines that this does not mean that the existing

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<sup>712</sup> *SKS* 7, 81, 85, 90, 174, 181, 278, 363, 374, 412 / *CUPI*, 81, 86, 91, 189, 306, 399, 411, 454.

<sup>713</sup> *SKS* 7, 85 / *CUPI*, 86.

<sup>714</sup> *SKS* 7, 85n / *CUPI*, 86n.

<sup>715</sup> *SKS* 7, 281 / *CUPI*, 309.

human being finitely “has a goal toward which he is striving, where he would be finished when he reached it. No, he is striving infinitely, is continually in the process of becoming”.<sup>716</sup> With no goal, this striving is stretched and spaced out infinitely. Just as Kierkegaard infinitises Regine and his love for her by spatiating her name, the spatiation of existence too is infinite and infinitising, bringing about a goalless eternal striving. Climacus confesses the deep ambiguity at play in this, as he writes: “Existence itself, existing, is a striving and is just as pathos-filled as it is comic: pathos-filled because the striving is infinite, that is directed toward the infinite, is a process of infinitizing, which is the highest pathos; comic because the striving is self-contradictory”.<sup>717</sup> Thus, existence is ambiguously both pathetic and comical: Pathos-filled because it constitutes a goalless and therefore endless striving—but this in turn also makes the striving a comical self-contradiction, for if there is nothing to strive towards, why strive? Is it even striving?

The typographical practice of spatiation itself captures and expresses this ambiguity: For by spacing out and distancing the letters that make up a word, spatiation in a sense breaks up and disintegrates that word—and yet spatiation is precisely used to accentuate the word, not destroy it. Likewise, for Climacus, existence at once spaces out and breaks apart the existing human from its completion, but it is this spacing out that it highlights the space in which the dynamic movement and striving that makes up human existence takes place. Ambiguity in a similar way expresses this spacing out and lack of result or conclusion, and is made a central aspect of Climacus’ concept of existence. As Kresten Nordentoft has argued, ambiguity is a foundational concept in Kierkegaard’s conceptualisation of human existence, as it is humanly impossible to experience the world divorced from one’s subjectivity and temporality. Nordentoft notes that philosophy’s attempt to do precisely this is therefore an

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<sup>716</sup> *SKS* 7, 90 / *CUPI*, 91.

<sup>717</sup> *SKS* 7, 90-91 / *CUPI*, 92.

illusion.<sup>718</sup> We see this ambiguity when Climacus poses the question: “But what is existence?” and answers: “It is that child who is begotten by the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the temporal, and is therefore continually striving.”<sup>719</sup> In other words, existing is ambiguous because the existing human is ambiguous: He or she is both infinite and finite; eternal and temporal, and thus always in between and therefore always striving. Climacus therefore describes existence as an intermediateness: “Existing is a somewhat intermediate state like that, something that is suitable for an intermediate being such as a human being is.”<sup>720</sup> Climacus notes how his concept of existence as continual striving is precisely safeguarded by these ambiguities and the ambiguous nature of the human being itself, for by being intermediate there is no rest.

These descriptions strongly echo Vigilius Haufniensis’ discussion and introduction of intermediate terms, terms that fall out of the space between two contrasts, and provide the ambiguity that saves thinking. Just as Climacus in *PF* identifies the paradox as the greatest passion of thought, even though thought cannot think it, Haufniensis argues that thought depends on ambiguity, and therefore invokes the concept of intermediate terms [*Mellembestemmelser*]: “Intermediate terms! Intermediate terms! An intermediate term is provided that has the ambiguity that rescues thought”.<sup>721</sup> Where for Haufniensis anxiety is an intermediate term, for Climacus existence is, and in a similar way it is the spatiation and ambiguity of Climacus’ concept of existence that save rather than abandon or reduce thinking. Although existence spaces thinking from being, this by no means indicates that existence is thoughtless, rather, just as spatiation breaks apart a word to highlight it, we see how Climacus shows existence as that which both spatiates and emphasises thinking. Climacus asks whether by thinking something, for example the good, does that mean the

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<sup>718</sup> See Kresten Nordentoft, *Kierkegaards psykologi*, (Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag, 1972), 191-92.

<sup>719</sup> *SKS* 7, 91 / *CUP1*, 92.

<sup>720</sup> *SKS* 7, 301 / *CUP1*, 329.

<sup>721</sup> *SKS* 4, 379 / *CA*, 76.

thinker simply becomes the good? Or does the individual exist because he or she thinks it? Climacus rejects this and states that the opposite has to be true—that because I exist and am thinking, therefore I think that I exist: “Here existence separates the ideal identity of thinking and being; I must exist in order to be able to think, and I must be able to think (for example the good) in order to exist in it.”<sup>722</sup> Rather than simply sublating thinking and being, the whole point is that they are separated. However, by being separated, thinking is also preserved. For Climacus repeatedly emphasises that the existing individual is also an existing thinker: “the actually existing subjective thinker, thinking, continually reproduces this in his existence and invests all his thinking in becoming.”<sup>723</sup> According to Climacus thinking about existence and existing is therefore an “ambiguous art,”<sup>724</sup> but this ambiguity (ambiguously) frustrates and in this way preserves thinking, as this frustration spurs thinking on rather than letting it find rest. As Climacus notes the subjective thinker is both an existing *and* a thinking person, who in all his thinking must therefore include the specific thought that he is existing. As a result of this ambiguity and spacing apart this existing thinker and thinking exister “will always have enough to think about.”<sup>725</sup> Thus existence may space thinking from being, but it thereby also emphasises thinking, albeit in a very different way than objective speculative systematic philosophy does.

In a further pre-emptive response, Climacus thereby rejects Martensen’s charge that Kierkegaard opposes existence to thought. In fact, Climacus argues that it is really the speculative, objective and abstract thinkers who have made existence thoughtless:

The philosophical thesis of the identity of thinking and being is just the opposite of what it seems to be; it expresses that thinking has completely abandoned existence, that it has emigrated and found a sixth continent where it is absolutely sufficient unto itself in the absolute identity of

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<sup>722</sup> SKS 7, 301 / CUP1, 330.

<sup>723</sup> SKS 7, 85 / CUP1, 86.

<sup>724</sup> SKS 7, 565 / CUP1, 622.

<sup>725</sup> SKS 7, 321 / CUP1, 351.

thinking and being. Abstractly, in a volatilized metaphysical sense, existing eventually becomes evil; abstractly in a humorous sense, it becomes a very *langweilig* [boring] affair, a ludicrous delay. Yet there is still a possibility here for the ethical to exercise a restraining influence, since the ethical accentuates existing and abstraction and humor still have a relation to existing. Pure thinking, however, has nothing, nothing, to do with existence.<sup>726</sup>

Climacus here inverts Martensen's later criticism, turning it back on Martensen himself and noting how it is speculative-abstract thought that has caused thinking to abandon existence, for it demonstrates that it cares only for pure thinking and neglects actual existence by purporting to have unified existence and thinking. Climacus suggests that abstract thinking is highly dubious in relation to existence, as its focus on the universal means it neglects "the concrete, the temporal, the becoming of existence, and the difficult situation of the existing person,"<sup>727</sup> in his or her ambiguity and striving. In this way abstraction removes the difficulty of existence, for it removes the striving existing thinker. Thus when abstract thinking is held up or presumed to be the highest achievement, it also follows that "scientific scholarship and thinkers proudly abandon existence and leave the rest of us to put up with the worst."<sup>728</sup> Abstract thought is bad enough, however, pure or objective thinking is completely divorced from existence, for it "has no relation to the existing subjectivity."<sup>729</sup> While pure thinking refers generally to Hegelian-speculative thought, Climacus also seems to have Martensen in mind as he notes that this pure thinking turns the existing human being into a "pure abstract co-knowledge [*Medviden*] in and knowledge of this pure relation between thinking and being, this pure identity, indeed this tautology."<sup>730</sup> Martensen may think that he is combining scholarly thought and existence, but the consequences of the kind of thinking he promotes is

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<sup>726</sup> *SKS* 7, 302 / *CUPI*, 331.

<sup>727</sup> *SKS* 7, 274 / *CUPI*, 301.

<sup>728</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>729</sup> *SKS* 7, 118 / *CUPI*, 123.

<sup>730</sup> *SKS* 7, 119 / *CUPI*, 123-124.

that existence has been completely forgotten and abandoned, and without the intermediate ambiguity of existence to frustrate thinking, thinking has no impetus. Climacus specifies that his “main thought” has been that “because of the copiousness of knowledge, people in our day have forgotten what it means *to exist*.”<sup>731</sup> In other words, it is not a *lack* of knowledge that has caused people to forget what existence means, but it is rather *too much* knowledge that stands in the way of our recollection and detracts us from asking what existence is, precisely because we assume we already know. Grøn explains this well:

We think we know, and thus we do not pose the question about what it means to exist... The forgetfulness that is dangerous is to believe that we know what it means to be a human being, so that we do not need to pose the question, and, consequently, the question itself loses its meaning.<sup>732</sup>

Martensen can certainly be considered one example of such a forgetful objective thinker. Although Martensen devotes much effort to giving existence a central place in his philosophical and theological writing, he assumes existence as a pre-defined category or observable reality directly accessible for appropriation into his scientific work. As Grøn points out, the attempt to “think” human existence “can easily turn the pathos of existence into a rhetoric about existence. That which is said to be existential thinking, then, fails as *thinking*”.<sup>733</sup> In a sense, this is what we see in Martensen. He emphasises the existential as something central and the importance of balancing one’s lived existence with intellectual thought, but Martensen does not ask *what* existence is or what it means to exist, nor what it means for his own thinking that he himself is existing. In connection with this, Climacus again pre-emptively parries Martensen’s later critique of Kierkegaard’s hermit-existence, as

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<sup>731</sup> SKS 7, 227 / CUP1, 249.

<sup>732</sup> Grøn, *The Concept of Anxiety in Søren Kierkegaard*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2008), 56.

<sup>733</sup> Grøn, “Concept of Existence,” 71.

Climacus notes how the speculative thinkers of his day smile condescendingly about the eremitic life, but really they fail to see that

no hermit ever lived as nonactual a life as is being lived nowadays, because a hermit admittedly abstracted from the whole world, but he did not abstract from himself... the recluse's pathos-filled lack of actuality is far preferable to the comic lack of actuality of the pure thinker, and the recluse's passionate forgetfulness that takes the whole world away is far preferable to the comic distraction of the world-historical thinker who forgets himself.<sup>734</sup>

Since Climacus suggests that his times have forgotten what it means to exist, we might be tempted to believe Climacus has a specific answer to this question. But Climacus does not offer us any answer or solution—and this is precisely the point. Existence is not a problem that can be solved; it is a continual problem that does not go away as long as the human is existing. In contrast to the universalising result-focus of Hegelian system-building and pure objective thinking, in answering what it means to exist, Climacus points to a different kind of philosophy for the further conceptualisation of existence, an “other simpler philosophy, presented by an existing individual for existing individuals.”<sup>735</sup> Just as Greek philosophy saw philosophising as an action, which in turn meant the philosophising person was also an existing person, this simpler philosophy is specifically intent on accentuating and advancing the ethical, as ethics is “the very home of existence”.<sup>736</sup> Thus Climacus' answer to the question of what it means to exist, is to posit a further task—an ethical task to become oneself in existence.<sup>737</sup> Or as Merold Westphal puts it: “‘self’ is a task word and not an achievement word...selfhood is the goal rather than the presupposition of my existence”.<sup>738</sup>

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<sup>734</sup> *SKS* 7, 291 / *CUPI*, 319-20.

<sup>735</sup> *SKS* 7, 116 / *CUPI*, 121.

<sup>736</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>737</sup> See also Grøn, *Concept of Anxiety*, 56.

<sup>738</sup> Merold Westphal *Becoming a Self: A Reading of Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1996), ix.

As Anne-Marie Christensen points out, Kierkegaard, or Climacus, begins to use the concept of ethics to designate thinking about existence, as the subject's very existence poses the question of how he or she should live their life, and this question is "essentially an *ethical* question".<sup>739</sup> Just as for Martensen, proceeding ethically is the only way to address actual existence as Climacus notes, the "only actuality [*Virkelighed*] there is for an existing person is his own ethical actuality."<sup>740</sup> This is the task existence presents the human being with and because it is not a solution or conclusion but the demand for further striving, the ethical has a "restraining influence"<sup>741</sup> on pure thinking's pursuit of finished systems. This is important, because Climacus declares that "the ethical is and remains the highest task assigned to every human being."<sup>742</sup>

However, Climacus points out that ethics in his time too has been simultaneously ignored and misunderstood, and therefore requires a corrective. As Johannes de silentio points out in *FT*, it is necessary to distinguish between two notions of ethics. The first ethics is understood as *Sittlichkeit* [*Sædelighed*], that is, as the universal norms that fit within the bounds of public reason. The second ethics is a paradoxical ethics which de silentio formulates through his reflections on Abraham's divine call to sacrifice Isaac, and this dilemma of how to address duties that are *not* justifiable through customs or social norms. Abraham views God's command as higher than his duty not to murder and his duty to, and even love for, his own son. It is this higher duty that calls for a teleological suspension of the ethical in this first sense. Furthermore, Abraham is incapable of explaining or rationalising

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<sup>739</sup> Anne Marie Christensen, "Depending on Ethics: Kierkegaard's View of Philosophy and Beyond," *Res Cogitans*, 4:1, 2007, 1-19; 9. See also Christine Habbard, who points out that *On the Concept of Irony* forms the impetus for Kierkegaard's shift from metaphysics to ethics as *Prima Philosophia*, something Habbard terms one of Kierkegaard's "most important philosophical moves". (Habbard, "Kierkegaard's Concept of Irony and the Philosophical Issue of the Beginning," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2009, 269-284; 273).

<sup>740</sup> *SKS* 7, 288 / *CUPI*, 316.

<sup>741</sup> *SKS* 7, 302 / *CUPI*, 331.

<sup>742</sup> *SKS* 7, 141 / *CUPI*, 151.

his actions, and the second notion of the ethical is given a paradoxical expression because it cannot be understood, but goes beyond the first notion of ethics.

Likely targeting Martensen, and his system of moral philosophy, Climacus notes how it “is indeed odd enough that the ethical is in such low esteem that instruction in it is preferably left to normal-school graduates and parish clerks.”<sup>743</sup> More clearly, however, Climacus, using language that is strongly reminiscent of the clairvoyant figure from the “Telegraph Messages,” describes how

it takes a prophet, not a judge, no, but a seer, a world-historical brawler, who aided by one deep and one blue eye, aided by familiarity with world history, perhaps aided also by coffee grounds and fortune-telling cards, believes he discovers the ethical, that is, what the times demand... How ludicrous that something like this is supposed to be the ethical! How ludicrous that a seer is supposed to discover it by looking at world history, where it is so difficult to see.<sup>744</sup>

This emphasis on clear sight and observation, however, precisely demonstrates objective thought’s complete misunderstanding of ethics. Climacus notes how the objective trend of becoming an observer has become “the *e t h i c a l* answer to the question of what I am to do ethically. (To be an observer, that is the ethical! That a person ought to be an observer is the *e t h i c a l* answer—otherwise one is compelled to assume that there is no question whatever about the ethical and hence no answer either.)”<sup>745</sup> In the original edition of *CUP* from 1846, “ethical” has been spatiated (italicised in the Hong translation). Climacus by no means spatiates every mention of the ethical in *CUP*, so it seems significant that he does so here. The ethical has been spatiated because it must be emphasised and accentuated, but at the

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<sup>743</sup> *SKS* 7, 134 / *CUPI*, 144.

<sup>744</sup> *SKS* 7, 134-135 / *CUPI*, 144-145.

<sup>745</sup> *SKS* 7, 124-125 / *CUPI*, 133. To see Kierkegaard’s original use of spatiation, see the first edition of *Afsluttende uvidenskabeligt Efterskrift til de filosofiske Smuler. Mimisk-pathetisk-dialektisk Sammenskrift, Existentielt Indlæg*, (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel, 1846), 95.

same time, Climacus develops an ethics on the basis of his spatiating concept of existence which renders ethics itself spatiating, for it is an impossible ethics. But what does this mean?

We saw above that Martensen too argues that the difficulty and striving of actual existence is a matter for ethics, which in turn makes ethics a more demanding science than dogmatics. However, Martensen also suggests that the human being becomes ethical through vocational, social engagement in institutions such as the family, state and church. The ethics that Climacus proposes is by contrast one in which no system or guidelines are given. Martensen's and others' attempt to articulate or extrapolate a system of ethics from Hegel's totalising system has hindered rather than promoted the individual from existing ethically. These attempts at ethics have confused speculative thinking so that it has transgressed into the sphere of actuality and begun to believe it can "clutch at actuality"<sup>746</sup>—that thinking not only can think but also *give* actuality. However, this has disastrously led to existence being increasingly forgotten; the human becoming increasingly less actual and the ethical increasingly abandoned. Climacus explains that "existing ethically is actuality, but instead of that the age has become so predominantly an observer that not only is everyone that but observing has finally become falsified as if it were actuality".<sup>747</sup> This desire to observe the world and human beings ethically is a confusion, for, as Climacus adds, "to observe ethically cannot be done, because there is only one ethical observing—it is self-observation. The ethical immediately embraces the single individual with its requirement that he shall exist ethically."<sup>748</sup> In other words, ethics is an individual and subjective matter; not a matter that can be universally laid out or set up as a universal set of guidelines in a system of moral philosophy. Instead it makes an individual demand on the existing individual. As Climacus notes: "In order to study the ethical, every human being is assigned to himself. In that regard,

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<sup>746</sup> SKS 7, 291 / CUP1, 319.

<sup>747</sup> Ibid.

<sup>748</sup> SKS 7, 291 / CUP1, 320.

he himself is more than enough for himself; indeed, he is the only place where *he* can with certainty study it.”<sup>749</sup> Climacus has here spatiated “*he*”, for the person studying himself ethically must also remember that he is still existing and therefore is spatiated, that is, continually striving and spaced apart from any conclusion. Climacus underlines that continued striving is “the expression of the subject’s ethical life-view,”<sup>750</sup> and that ethically understood, this continued striving “is the consciousness of being an existing individual, and the continued learning the expression of the perpetual actualization, which at no moment is finished as long as the subject is existing.”<sup>751</sup> With this spatiation of the ethical, Climacus emphasises how the ethical task is one that continues infinitely, and as such is impossible to complete. It is a foundational task that is not solved vocationally or socially for it goes even deeper than this. Climacus describes how a scholar or scientist must gain an ethical self-understanding *before* dedicating himself or herself to this particular vocation. But not only this; he or she must continually strive to understand himself or herself ethically in all this labour, because “the ethical is the eternal drawing of breath.”<sup>752</sup>

Thus, Climacus formulates a philosophical concept of existence that demonstrates that it is the systematic, speculative philosophers, not him (or Kierkegaard), who are thoughtless when it comes to existence. But Climacus is not blind to the fact that by philosophically conceiving existence and the ethical in terms of “spatiating”, his philosophical concept of existence cannot be viewed as a solution or result either, but instead is a philosophical concept that undermines philosophical conceptualisation from within.

#### 4.2.2. *The Role of Philosophy and the Value of Difficulty*

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<sup>749</sup> SKS 7, 132 / CUP1, 141-142. (For original spatiation see Kierkegaard, *Efterskrift*, 102).

<sup>750</sup> SKS 7, 117 / CUP1, 121-122.

<sup>751</sup> SKS 7, 117 / CUP1, 122.

<sup>752</sup> SKS 7, 141 / CUP1, 151-152.

With Climacus' conceptualisation of existence as spatiating, as opposed to the conclusiveness of speculative objective philosophy, it must follow that Climacus' concept itself cannot be viewed as a result or answer to the question of what it means to exist. Climacus is quick to admit this, for example noting that he by no means has "exhausted the ethical by my scriblings, because it is infinite."<sup>753</sup> Instead, the ethical asks each individual to "dare to renounce everything... dare to become nothing at all, to become a single individual from whom God ethically requires everything... see that is the venturesome deed [*Vovestykket*]."<sup>754</sup> Taking this demand seriously, Climacus, in the place of a conclusion, renounces his entire work: "what I write contains the notice that everything is to be understood in such a way that it is revoked, that the book has not only an end but has a revocation to boot."<sup>755</sup>

Revoking the book is made necessary by the conceptualisation of existence as spatiation, as this revocation enables Climacus to avoid becoming like the speculative-objective philosophers, falling into the temptation of giving results, answers and solutions, which so deeply opposes existence. Instead, Climacus uses philosophising against these philosophers by showing how even a thorough philosophical investigation of existence can at most lead to this ethical problem or task, not an answer. As Christensen has pointed out, this is a task that must take priority, even over philosophy itself, for a sound philosophy should point beyond itself to show that the human's main duty is to live, and specifically to the task of becoming a Christian. While for Kierkegaard "good" philosophy is this simple subjective philosophy that remembers the ethical and recognises its limits, Christensen suggests that remembering the ethical is to recognise that one's whole life presents a demand that cannot be met by philosophising. Christensen therefore argues that Climacus revokes his work

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<sup>753</sup> *SKS* 7, 143 / *CUPI*, 153.

<sup>754</sup> *SKS* 7, 139 / *CUPI*, 149.

<sup>755</sup> *SKS* 7, 562 / *CUPI*, 619.

because he, and Kierkegaard with him, “realises that even though philosophy can offer us a perspicuous presentation of the structure of human life, it cannot help us in changing that life, for example in becoming Christians”.<sup>756</sup> However, Christensen makes the insightful point that Kierkegaard’s conclusion is not simply that philosophy must be subordinated in favour of life, but more ambitiously, Kierkegaard seeks to “present a *philosophical* argument for this submission of philosophy”.<sup>757</sup> Climacus’ rigorously developed concept of existence, then, does precisely this. And yet, despite Climacus’ subordination of philosophy, philosophy is not reduced or annulled.

On Christensen’s reading, Kierkegaard views philosophy as something that must lead the individual out of and away from philosophy and orient the individual human being towards the task of life, or more specifically, the task of becoming a Christian. Thus even if *Postscript* can be viewed as exemplifying “true philosophical activity,” that is a subjective form of philosophy oriented towards the existential and the ethical, Christensen argues that this is not what Climacus, or Kierkegaard, really need or want, for philosophy must be subordinated to Kierkegaard’s upbuilding religious project.<sup>758</sup> Christensen thus concludes that “sound philosophy” has a special position in Kierkegaard’s thought and writing, insofar that it “is able to state the problem—even if it cannot solve it”.<sup>759</sup> Nevertheless, while Christensen is right that philosophy states the problem, I believe the above shows that philosophy does *more* than this for Climacus. For it is also a philosophy that pursues the problem even when there is no way to solve the problem. As we have seen Climacus does not hide that existence is impossibly difficult for thinking, but underlines again and again that being a subjective existing human being is “so very difficult [*svær*], indeed, the most difficult

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<sup>756</sup> Christensen, “Depending on Ethics,” 12.

<sup>757</sup> Ibid.

<sup>758</sup> See for example George Pattison, *Kierkegaard’s Upbuilding Discourses: Philosophy, Literature and Theology* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>759</sup> Christensen, “Depending on Ethics,” 13.

of all,”<sup>760</sup> and that existing makes understanding the simplest truths “exceedingly difficult [*vanskelig*] and strenuous,”<sup>761</sup> as “existence is the most difficult [*Vanskeligste*] for a thinker.”<sup>762</sup> But difficulty is underlined by Climacus as the true measure of a good kind of thinking. For he admits that in fact the subjective thinker over and against the abstract thinker is not that different: The subjective thinker articulates his or her thinking “just as abstractly”<sup>763</sup> as the abstract thinker: Whereas the abstract thinker speaks of humanity in general, the subjective thinker speaks of “the one human being (*unum noris, omnes*),”<sup>764</sup> which is general too. However, the crucial difference, notes Climacus, is that the subjective thinker speaks of this one human being as an existing individual and thereby “the difficulty is not left out.”<sup>765</sup> In other words, subjective philosophy does not try to erase or solve the difficulty, but finds value in it. This is precisely what makes subjective philosophy valuable to Christianity too, but equally this difficulty is what spaces these spheres apart.

Climacus firstly notes: “To understand oneself in existence was *the Greek principle*.”<sup>766</sup> And in a sentence that parallels this in word and formatting, Climacus also notes: “To understand oneself in existence is also *the Christian principle*.”<sup>767</sup> In spatiating and paralleling “the Greek principle” and “the Christian principle,” Climacus at once indicates a similarity or parallel between these, but also an infinite difference. This difference Climacus notes, is a difference in the degree of difficulty—for to understand oneself in existence *Christianly* is infinitely more difficult than to understand oneself in existence *philosophically*. The Greek principle and Christian

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<sup>760</sup> *SKS* 7, 122 / *CUPI*, 130.

<sup>761</sup> *SKS* 7, 232 / *CUPI*, 255.

<sup>762</sup> *SKS* 7, 321 / *CUPI*, 351.

<sup>763</sup> *SKS* 7, 323 / *CUPI*, 353.

<sup>764</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>765</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>766</sup> *SKS* 7, 322 / *CUPI*, 352 (For original spatiation see Kierkegaard, *Efterskrift*, 268).

<sup>767</sup> *SKS* 7, 323 / *CUPI*, 353 (For original spatiation see Kierkegaard, *Efterskrift*, 269).

principle are parallel in terms of this task, “except”, adds Climacus, that the self within the Christian sphere

has received much richer and much more profound qualifications that are even more difficult to understand together with existing. The believer is a subjective thinker... The difficulty is even greater than for the Greek, because even greater contrasts are placed together, because existence is accentuated paradoxically as sin, and eternity paradoxically as the god in time. The difficulty is to exist in them, not abstractly to think oneself out of them and abstractly to think about, for example, an eternal divine becoming and other such things that appear when one removes the difficulty. Therefore, the existence of the believer is even more passionate than that of the Greek philosopher.... Because existence yields passion, but existence accentuated paradoxically yields the maximum of passion. To abstract from existence is to remove the difficulty, but to remain in existence in such a way that one understands one thing at one moment, something else the next, is not to understand oneself. But to understand extreme opposites together and, existing, to understand oneself in them is very difficult.<sup>768</sup>

Thus the philosophical and Christian spheres are spaced out by the fact that Christianity poses a greater difficulty to the existing self because Christian existence is paradoxically accentuated by sin and the Incarnation. This returns us to Kierkegaard’s first thesis in *CI* that the similarity of Jesus and Socrates consists in their dissimilarity and the similarity-in-dissimilarity model for understanding the relation between subjective philosophy and Christianity.<sup>769</sup> Climacus on the one hand makes it appear as if the dissimilarity between the philosophical and Christian sphere is a matter of degree; however the distance between these spheres is infinite and absolute. Whereas the subjective Greek philosopher found it necessary to die away from himself as the only solution to the problem of thinking existence, this philosophical dying away to gain greater understanding parallels the more radical Christian

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<sup>768</sup> *SKS* 7, 323 / *CUPI*, 353-354.

<sup>769</sup> *SKS* 1, 65 / *CI*, 6-7.

notion of dying away from oneself to become nothing before God. In this way Climacus implies that the Christian difficulty is infinitely greater and unfathomable from the perspective of philosophy. Climacus even divulges that the reason he is not a Christian is because he is “completely preoccupied with how difficult it must be to become one”.<sup>770</sup> And yet Climacus’s conceptualisation of existence as spation is a helpful way to further approach the relationship between subjective philosophy and Christianity. Theirs can be viewed as a relationship of spation in that philosophy is infinitely spaced from Christianity. Nevertheless, it is through the continual experience of being distanced from the Christian sphere that philosophy can express an analogy to the difficulty of Christian existence. The ability of this space or distance to create meaning and some level of understanding can be helpfully conceptualised by considering Paul Ricoeur’s notion of distanciation and its positive and productive function in enabling both interpretation and communication. While Ricoeur develops distanciation as a theory of textual interpretation, it can be extended to non-textual phenomena as well, and here it can help to conceptualise the way in which distance enables subjective philosophy and the religious sphere to have a meaningful encounter. According to Ricoeur, distanciation is both what the understanding must overcome, but also the “condition of the understanding.”<sup>771</sup> He explains that appropriation is not contemporaneousness or compatibility, but is precisely made possible “at and through distance”.<sup>772</sup> Just as Climacus explains in *PF* that if a human being is to truly know something about the unknown, about God, the human must first learn how God is “absolutely different from him”.<sup>773</sup> But this difference lies in what the human itself has done. Similarly, Ricoeur notes that: “As a reader, I find myself only by losing myself.” Understanding implies

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<sup>770</sup> *SKS* 7, 560 / *CUP1*, 617.

<sup>771</sup> Paul Ricoeur, “The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation”, in Paul Ricoeur *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 106.

<sup>772</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>773</sup> *SKS* 4, 251 / *PF*, 46.

“a moment of distanciation in the relation of self to itself; hence understanding is as much disappropriation as appropriation.”<sup>774</sup> Similarly, subjective philosophy is able to express something meaningful about Christianity—its incomprehensibility and its paradoxicality—precisely because of its distance from Christianity. Conversely, Christianity offers philosophy depth as Christianity’s paradoxicality precisely saves thinking in a more radical way than ambiguity. Approaching Christianity moves philosophy further away as philosophy is annihilated by reaching its peak; understanding that it is absolutely different from the Christian sphere. Just as Ricoeur must lose himself to find himself as a reader, it is in this dying away that philosophy finds itself in the right relation to Christianity.

As we saw in Chapter 3, Kierkegaard’s main problem with Martensen is precisely that he has made everything too easy; that he is too assuring not only as a philosopher but as a Christian too.<sup>775</sup> This is particularly expressed by the fact that Martensen has not truly engaged with the question of what it means to exist and the task of becoming a Christian. Instead, Martensen’s own life expresses that everyone is already a Christian.<sup>776</sup> Disastrously, by following Martensen’s lead, people have then villainously concealed

talk of the infinite in a personal existence that is wholly commensurable with finite goals, so that people have an ongoing understanding that this business about infinite striving is just something we say—we all know that there is of course another explanation that is the real explanation.<sup>777</sup>

Kierkegaard’s emphasis that this infinite striving must be expressed existentially is therefore offensive to people because of the way Martensen—“the profound and earnest genius” in whom people declaim a “profound religiosity”<sup>778</sup>—has chosen to live his life. For Martensen’s assurances have permeated all of Danish life:

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<sup>774</sup> Ricoeur, “Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation,” 106.

<sup>775</sup> *SKS* 22, 154, NB12:18 / *KJN* 6, 153.

<sup>776</sup> *SKS* 22, 165, NB12:41, *KJN* 6, 164.

<sup>777</sup> *SKS* 23, 260, NB18:12 / *KJN* 7, 264.

<sup>778</sup> *SKS* 23, 260, NB18:12 / *KJN* 7, 264, 265.

*Berlingske Tidende* provides assurances that this is Martensen's conviction, concerning which Miss Bremer and *Flyveposten* also provides assurances, and many believers who believe Martensen's assurances assure us that one can quite safely believe them. Should not this be certain, seeing as there are so many assurances[?].<sup>779</sup>

But Kierkegaard states that all these assurances, should rather raise our suspicions: "For a life does not need a single assurance."<sup>780</sup> In contrast Martensen speaks disparagingly of Kierkegaard's aim to make difficulties everywhere as his own optimistic approach to existence focuses on the promise that these temporary difficulties of existence will eventually be overcome. This view enables Martensen to maintain a keen and admirable emphasis on social responsibility and societal improvement through a system of ethics that clearly sets out the ideal towards which a person should strive and can reach, as both an individual and part of a greater whole. However, ultimately, existence is treated as something that we can observe and therefore know, and furthermore directly communicate. Existence therefore does not need to be developed or conceptualised philosophically—it is simply *there* to be placed next to thinking. By articulating a philosophical concept of existence, which raises the difficulty for philosophy to such a degree that philosophy is ultimately at a loss, Climacus is able to show how Martensen fails to offer a philosophical or conceptual engagement with existence. Although *what* Martensen says about existence and ethics is not necessarily wrong, *how* he says it reveals a philosophical hollowness in his treatment of existence.

In conceptualising existence as spatiating, Climacus at once undermines the possibility of reaching philosophical conclusions and clarity leading to the renouncement of the *Postscript* through his philosophical argumentation, while at the same time giving philosophy more to think about and greater space in which to do so. In other words,

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<sup>779</sup> SKS 23, 289-293, NB18:58 / KJN 7, 294-295.

<sup>780</sup> SKS 23, 292, 2NB18:58 / KJN 7, 295.

Climacus' concept of existence as spation both saves and annihilates philosophy. There is thus a parallel here to the relationship Kierkegaard articulates between subjective philosophy and Christianity. Their separation is caused by the difference or gap—which is sin—upon which philosophy is annihilated. Yet, as Justin E. H. Smith has pointed out, non-philosophy or anti-philosophy is still a kind of philosophy. For philosophy is a “peculiar discipline to the extent that it is constituted, rather than compromised, by all those who have rejected it or insisted on standing outside of it, mocking, ironizing, deconstructing.”<sup>781</sup> Or as Steven Shapin asserts: “Like philosophy, anti-philosophy is for the philosophers”.<sup>782</sup> Thus in developing a philosophical concept of existence, which in turn undermines a certain kind of result-oriented philosophy, Kierkegaard still demonstrates a keen engagement with philosophy even if this is more accurately described as an non-philosophy. As Ricoeur has noted “philosophy is always related to *nonphilosophy*,”<sup>783</sup> and Kierkegaard shows how Christianity's paradoxicality is a source for philosophy, even if this annihilates philosophy or turns it into a non-philosophy—or better yet, as Ricoeur suggests, “hyperphilosophy”.<sup>784</sup> Joel Rasmussen points out this philosophy seeks to evoke a religious faith that is “not simply *other* than philosophy but also *higher* than philosophy”.<sup>785</sup> In this way the spation of philosophy and Christianity brings depth and life to philosophy, for, as Ricoeur warns, if the “living tie”<sup>786</sup> between philosophy and nonphilosophy is cut, we risk that philosophy becomes an empty word game—something which Martensen both seeks to avoid, but which his treatment of existence ultimately makes him guilty of.

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<sup>781</sup> Justin E. H. Smith, *The Philosopher: A History in Six Types*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 156.

<sup>782</sup> Steven Shapin, “Dear Prudence”. *London Review of Books*, 24:2, 2002.

<sup>783</sup> Ricoeur, “Philosophy after Kierkegaard,” 340.

<sup>784</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>785</sup> Joel Rasmussen, “Ricoeur: Kierkegaard, the Limits of Philosophy, and the Consolation of Hope,” in Jon Stewart (ed.) *Kierkegaard's Influence on Philosophy Tome II: Francophone Philosophy* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 233-255; 248.

<sup>786</sup> Ricoeur, “Philosophy after Kierkegaard,” 340.

While Christensen rightly and incisively underlines that Climacus' philosophy is a philosophy that points beyond itself to a religious project, it is also important to note that philosophy is not simply reduced or disappears in Kierkegaard's thought—it is not sublated into the religious as it is in Martensen's thought, but it is given a deeper shape. Just as Climacus remarks about his renounced work of philosophy, that there is a difference between writing a book and then revoking it and simply never writing the book at all, one might similarly say there is a difference between philosophising to undermine or revoke philosophy and simply never philosophising in the first place. It does not seem that Climacus, or Kierkegaard for that matter, are recommending the latter. However, any kind of thinking or philosophising must also always be spatiated, that is infinitely spaced out, from “existence-issues [*Existents-Problemer*]”, which, most importantly, refer to Christianity itself.<sup>787</sup> But in conceiving the relationship between subjective philosophy and Christianity as one of spatiation, Kierkegaard presents a richness of ideas (to use Martensen's words)—a richness which stems from engaging with this expanding dialogical space between the philosophical and Christian spheres. Thus, for Kierkegaard, Martensen's emphasis on existence did not go far enough as his continued emphasis on epistemological clarity and objective knowledge and attempt to align this with his Christian-existential commitment signals Martensen's misguided understanding not just of human existence, but of Christianity too. Kierkegaard in contrast argues that “Christianity is to be kept moving existentially; becoming a Christian is to be made more and more difficult.”<sup>788</sup> Christianity is not an easy way of life, but one that demands self-denial and self-sacrifice not just intellectually but existentially.<sup>789</sup> Martensen recognises philosophy and theology's provisional difference, but still argues for their ultimate unity and suggests that philosophy culminates in and finds all the answers to the problem it

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<sup>787</sup> *SKS* 7, 277, 322 / *CUP1*, 304, 352.

<sup>788</sup> *SKS* 22, 305, NB13:50 / *KJN* 6, 307.

<sup>789</sup> See for example, *SKS* 22, 94-95, NB11:160 / *KJN* 6, 90-91.

poses in theology. For Kierkegaard, the Christian sphere is presented as a mystery, a paradox, that confronts, confounds, energises and annihilates philosophy, and ultimately leaves one alone with the task of seeking to imitate Christ.

## CHAPTER 5

### *SIN*

Another category that shows the breakdown of Martensen's dialectic between philosophy and theology in his unity-in-difference model and the rich dialogical space enabled between philosophy and Christianity in Kierkegaard's similarity-in-dissimilarity model is the doctrine of sin. A comprehensive comparison of Martensen's and Kierkegaard's views of sin has yet to be carried out. While such a full study is beyond the scope of this project, this chapter will suggest that a comparative analysis of sin in the thought of these thinkers can beneficially be carried out through the lens of their respective commitments to unite and separate the philosophical and Christian spheres, and their respective models of unity-in-difference and similarity-in-dissimilarity. I will explore how Martensen's and Kierkegaard's very different conceptions of sin both find expression and shape the way in which the philosophical and theological voices interact in their writings. It has been suggested that sin, more than any

other concept, brings into light the interaction between philosophy and theology in Kierkegaard's thought.<sup>790</sup> This chapter will show how this especially becomes evident when reading Kierkegaard against Martensen's treatments of sin. By comparing first Martensen's 1841 *Outline to a System of Moral Philosophy* and Kierkegaard's 1844 *The Concept of Anxiety* and then Martensen's *Christian Dogmatics* and Kierkegaard's *Sickness unto Death* both published in 1849, I will show how Martensen's emphasis on uniting the philosophical and religious perspectives leads him to argue that original sin is something philosophically explicable as philosophy is mediated into the theological sphere. By contrast, Kierkegaard's spacing out and separation of these spheres demonstrates the divisive effects of sin. I will argue that Kierkegaard's separation of philosophy and Christianity can be read as an effective corrective to Martensen's belief that sin can be coherently defined. This in turn demonstrates that Martensen's concept of sin remains within the philosophical sphere alone, and thus fails to dialectically engage or unite philosophy with the theological sphere. By contrast Kierkegaard's treatment of sin keeps both spheres in a continuous tension and meaningful dialogue.

## 5.1 The Science of Sin

From his 1835 declaration that philosophy and Christianity can never be united because of the "yawning chasm" of sin, Kierkegaard's emphasis on sin and its divisiveness only intensifies as his thought develops. Through his view of sin Kierkegaard offers his distinct interpretation and view of human existence as the "fundamental relation between God and a human being is that a human being is a sinner and God is the Holy One,"<sup>791</sup> with sin later being characterised by Anti-Climacus as the "gulf of the qualitative difference" and the

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<sup>790</sup> Clare Carlisle *Kierkegaard: A Guide for the Perplexed*, (London: Continuum, 2006), 94-95.

<sup>791</sup> SKS 8, 380 / UDVS, 285.

“chasmic qualitative abyss”<sup>792</sup> between God and humans. The question then becomes why Martensen does not think sin affects the unity he seeks to establish between philosophy and theology? Whereas Kierkegaard underlines the pervasiveness of sin throughout his authorship,<sup>793</sup> Martensen promotes a contingent concept of sin throughout his. This contingent concept rejects that the Fall was preordained or allowed by God as a way to demonstrate his grace and forgiveness. Any difference between God and humanity is based on the original and absolute difference between Creator and creature. He therefore underlines his conviction that: “the eternal truth and its essential types have not undergone any alteration because of sin, so that the *substantial* relation between the Creator and creature remains the same.”<sup>794</sup> This fundamental and original difference between God and humanity is for Martensen more meaningful than a difference brought about by sin after the fact. Furthermore, this gives the Incarnation an absolute significance, as the incarnation is absolutely necessitated as a way to unite God and humankind despite this original difference. Martensen underlines that “Christ’s historical revelation, even if humankind had not sinned, yet would have been necessary in order that God could obtain the unity with the creature, which from the beginning is the goal of the creature.”<sup>795</sup> Martensen notes that were the incarnation to occur only as a response to sin, then the incarnation “receives only a relative, not an absolute validity.”<sup>796</sup> In addition to upholding the absoluteness of difference and of the incarnation, Martensen furthermore believes that this concept of sin in fact reinforces and deepens sin’s ethical severity, as it is caused by the human being alone.

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<sup>792</sup> *SKS* 11, 211, 233 / *SUD* 99, 122.

<sup>793</sup> In *Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard for example observes: “There is a Christian view that places everything under sin, knows no exception, spares nothing” (*SKS* 1, 323 / *CI*, 288). Much later, in *SUD*, Anti-Climacus refers to the “wholly encompassing nature of sin”. (*SKS* 11, 217 / *SUD*, 105).

<sup>794</sup> *MSA*, 39 / *BHK*, 99.

<sup>795</sup> *MSA*, 103 / *BHK*, 143.

<sup>796</sup> *MSA*, 37 / *BHK*, 98.

Additionally, Martensen simply does not seem to be particularly interested in sin; mentions of sin tend to be cursory, at times even dismissive, especially prior to his 1849 *Dogmatics*. In his dissertation, for example, Martensen admits that in spite of the fact that sin stands “in closest connection” with those central Christian dogmas of Creation and Incarnation, he has not made the various systems of autonomy’s “different modes of reflection on sin a subject of a specific investigation”.<sup>797</sup> As a result, Martensen states that: “Consequently, it will not be necessary in a criticism of the general principles of dogmatics to take up the doctrine of sin, since everything in this respect is a straightforward result of what lies in the eternal presuppositions in which the fundamental relation between God and the creation has its ground”.<sup>798</sup> In other words, for Martensen, the infinite difference between God and humanity consists not in sin, but simply in the fundamental difference between creature and creator. This interpretation, however, is one that Climacus is at pains to preclude in *PF*, when he says, “What, then, is this difference? Indeed, what else but sin”.<sup>799</sup>

Although Martensen’s contingent concept of sin is already presented in his dissertation, an explicit definition of what Martensen believes sin *is* does not appear until his 1841 *Outline*. As we saw, Martensen introduces this work by underlining the continuity between moral philosophy and Christianity, stating that “a moral philosophy which ignores Christianity also ignores actual morality [*Sædelighed*], and thereby only makes itself impractical”.<sup>800</sup> For Martensen it makes no sense to distinguish between moral philosophy and a specifically Christian ethics, for moral philosophy’s “religious points” places it in “an inner relation to dogmatics.”<sup>801</sup> Thus since philosophy is no longer an empty a priori construction, but constitutes knowledge of the *actual*, the old contradiction between

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<sup>797</sup> *MSA*, 38 / *BHK*, 99.

<sup>798</sup> *MSA*, 39 / *BHK*, 99.

<sup>799</sup> *SKS* 4, 251 / *PF*, 47 Climacus notes, “what else but sin, since the difference, the absolute difference, must have been caused by the individual himself”.

<sup>800</sup> *GMS*, xi / *BHK*, 249-250. This is likely a criticism of Kant.

<sup>801</sup> *GMS*, xiv / *BHK*, 251.

philosophy and the positive sciences, such as theology, must be annulled, and any attempt to distinguish a philosophical and Christian ethics “belongs to attempts long since abandoned [*for længst har ladet fare*].”<sup>802</sup> The epigram of *CA* can be read as a comment on precisely this statement, as Haufniensis agrees with Martensen that the: “age of making distinctions is past. It has been vanquished by the system. In our day, whoever loves to make distinctions is regarded as an eccentric whose soul clings to something that has long since vanished [*for længst forsvundet*].”<sup>803</sup> Of course, Haufniensis himself is one such eccentric, who takes on this task of distinguishing between what Martensen, and other speculative thinkers, seek to unify.

While Martensen is never mentioned in *CA*, this work teems with thematic, conceptual, and terminological overlap with *Outline*, as both Haufniensis and Martensen address original sin in relation to questions of freedom; the individual versus the human race; the relationship between ethics, psychology, dogmatics, and the ability of these disciplines to treat a theological doctrine like sin. The heartfelt dedication to Poul Martin Møller in *CA* seems like no coincidence, as it simultaneously serves as a tribute to Møller and his philosophical career, but also as a tacit but firm rejection of Møller’s successor, Martensen, and the book he wrote as a textbook for the very lectures he took over from Møller. This section will show how Haufniensis’ treatment of sin can be read as a polemic against Martensen’s unification of the philosophical and religious spheres in *Outline*. However, whereas Martensen’s unification ultimately results in an abandonment of the philosophical standpoint, Haufniensis keeps the psychological-philosophical and dogmatic-theological spheres in continued conversation and tension.

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<sup>802</sup> *GMS*, xi / *BHK*, 249. Translation modified, as Thompson here translates “*ladet fare*” as “tried”, which seems like a mistake as “abandoned” or “renounced” would more closely reflect the meaning of “*ladet fare*”.

<sup>803</sup> *SKS*, 310 / *CA*, 3.

Martensen argues that his whole system of ethics is propelled forward through the dialectical interplay [*dialectiske Vexelbevægelse*] of the “religious moments” and “secular moments” of ethics,<sup>804</sup> and sin is one such moment that Martensen uses to exemplify this dialectical interplay. In *Outline*, Martensen devotes a nine-paragraph section to this particular doctrine entitled “The Will’s Conflict and Reconciliation with the Law,” and subtitled “Sin”. Martensen starts by describing how, from a moral-philosophical perspective, the will’s conflict with the law appears to originate from the will’s free choice. Martensen, however, notes that each individual action cannot be separated from the individual’s character, which in turn is inseparable from its natural ground. Thus, the conflict of the acting will with the law points to an originally existing conflict with the law. This particular contradiction Martensen argues finds its explanation and solution through uniting the moral-philosophical and religious standpoints, as he concludes that “the moral consideration of evil passes over [*gaaer over i*] into the religious teaching on original sinfulness or original sin, which states that the subjective will prior to every free choice or by *nature* is evil”.<sup>805</sup> The Danish phrase “*gaae over i*” (literally “pass over into”) connotes transfer or development from one thing to another, and more specifically is used to refer to the process of Hegelian mediation or sublation.<sup>806</sup> Thus Martensen begins his ethical account of sin by emphasizing the conceptual continuity between philosophical evil and the theological doctrine of original sin.

Contrastively, where Martensen without much preamble simply makes sin a subject for moral philosophy, Haufniensis deliberates carefully on the proper domain in which to treat the concept of sin. He ultimately concludes that sin does not belong to any scientific domain, but “has its specific place, or more correctly, it has no place, and this is its specific

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<sup>804</sup> *GMS*, xiii / *BHK*, 250.

<sup>805</sup> *GMS*, 39 / *BHK*, 275.

<sup>806</sup> See for example A. P. Adler’s *Populaire Foredrag over Hegels objective Logik* (Copenhagen: C.A. Reitzel, 1842) where this phrase is used repeatedly in this sense. See, 143, 146, 155, 156, 167.

nature.”<sup>807</sup> In other words, sin is not a subject for any science, and furthermore Haufniensis warns that if sin is treated in a different place than its own—which is nowhere—sin and its corresponding mood are disturbed and altered, which leads to “the fleeting phantom of false moods.”<sup>808</sup> In other words, sin has no place in scientific discourse at all; it cannot be discussed anywhere without being altered or becoming false. Describing how various philosophical disciplines, such as aesthetics, metaphysics, psychology, each, in their respective ways, alter the concept of sin, Haufniensis eventually comes to the philosophical discipline of ethics. At first Haufniensis expresses understanding that one might, like Martensen, treat sin ethically, as ethics “should be a science in which sin might be expected to find a place.”<sup>809</sup> Yet, Haufniensis warns that this expectation conceals a great difficulty, because it forgets that ethics

is still an ideal science, and not only in the sense that every science is ideal. Ethics proposes to bring ideality into actuality. On the other hand, it is not the nature of its movement to raise actuality up into ideality. Ethics points to ideality as a task and assumes that every man possesses the requisite conditions. Thus ethics develops a contradiction, inasmuch as it makes clear both the difficulty and the impossibility...[ethics] is a disciplinarian that demands, and by its demands only judges but does not bring forth life.<sup>810</sup>

Ethics, by its very nature, is an ideal science in that it normatively demands that the human fulfil the task of ideality as if this can and should be actualised. By definition then ethics does not take into account the reality or effects of sin, which makes its demand for ideality a demand for the impossible, as no human (for all humans are sinful) can actualise ideality. Giving sin a place in his system of ethics is thus imprudent of Martensen as sin precisely undermines ethics. But, Haufniensis ironically notes that ethics must not let itself be

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<sup>807</sup> SKS 4, 321 / CA, 14.

<sup>808</sup> SKS 4, 322 / CA, 14.

<sup>809</sup> SKS 4, 323 / CA, 16.

<sup>810</sup> SKS 4, 323-324 / CA, 16.

distracted by such talk that it demands the impossible, for ethics is so ideal that “even to listen to such talk is unethical and is something for which ethics has neither *time* nor *opportunity*.”<sup>811</sup>

Whereas Martensen uses sin precisely to exemplify the continuity and interplay between moral philosophy and the religious standpoint, Haufniensis presents sin as the dividing line between a first and second ethics. Like the AA:13 entry’s point that philosophy’s acknowledgement of sin would lead to philosophy’s downfall, the first ethics cannot include sin without compromising the ideality that constitutes it:

If ethics is to include sin, its ideality comes to an end. The more ethics remains in its ideality, and never becomes so inhuman as to lose sight of actuality, but corresponds to actuality by presenting itself as the task for every man in such a way that it will make him the true and the whole man, the man κατ' ἐξοχήν [in an eminent sense], the more it increases the tension of the difficulty. In the struggle to actualize the task of ethics, sin shows itself not as something that belongs only accidentally to the accidental individual, but as something that withdraws deeper and deeper as a deeper and deeper presupposition, as a presupposition that goes beyond the individual. Then all is lost for ethics, and ethics has helped bring about the loss of it all. A category that lies entirely beyond its reach has appeared. *Hereditary sin* makes everything still more desperate, that is, it removes the difficulty, yet not with the help of ethics but with the help of *dogmatics*.<sup>812</sup>

In this way the first ethics is “shipwrecked on the sinfulness of the single individual,”<sup>813</sup> but ethics’ situation becomes even more desperate with the expansion of individual sin to original sin, which calls for the assistance from a different sphere. Sin—particularly original sin—has no place in the philosophical sphere. Instead, dogmatics must enter to help ethics. In contrast to ethics, which wants to move ideality into actuality, dogmatics starts with actuality to “raise

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<sup>811</sup> SKS 4, 324 / CA, 17.

<sup>812</sup> SKS 4, 324-326 / CA, 19.

<sup>813</sup> SKS 4, 328 / CA, 20.

it up into ideality,”<sup>814</sup> and does not deny sin, but explains hereditary sin by presupposing it “like that vortex about which Greek speculation concerning nature had so much to say, a moving something that no science can grasp.”<sup>815</sup> Thus a new ethics, a second ethics or philosophy, which presupposes dogmatics, is introduced. Because the first ethics optimistically believes that ideality can be actualised, it is destroyed by the reality of sin, which renders this demand impossible. The second ethics instead presupposes the revealed content of dogmatics and starts with the actual—that is, with the reality of sin. Between this first ethics and the second ethics there is no continuity but simply the chasm of sin, the origin of which cannot be explained by any science, but which dogmatics and the second ethics simply presuppose. However, Haufniensis adds that this does not mean dogmatics is able to explain sinfulness or prove its actuality. Dogmatics must rather be designed in such a way that it simply begins with the presupposition of sin, for “every science must vigorously lay hold of its own beginning and not live in complicated relations with other sciences.”<sup>816</sup> For if dogmatics wants to begin differently, by wanting to explain sin, like the philosophical sciences (misguidedly) do, “no dogmatics will come out of it, but the entire existence of dogmatics will become problematic and vague.”<sup>817</sup> With these comments, Haufniensis might have had Martensen in mind, for Martensen precisely establishes a somewhat complicated continuity between the moral-philosophical and religious spheres as a way to explain original sin.

Addressing the contradictory relationship between free will and original sin, the individual and the race, as represented by the Pelagian and Augustinian perspectives of sin and freedom, Martensen writes:

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<sup>814</sup> *SKS* 4, 326 / *CA*, 19.

<sup>815</sup> *SKS* 4, 327 / *CA*, 20.

<sup>816</sup> *SKS* 4, 363n / *CA*, 58n.

<sup>817</sup> *Ibid.*

Just because Christianity emphasizes free choice so pointedly, it also emphasizes the opposite side or the teaching that both good and evil in the human are independent of its free choice. The first side expresses, namely the moment of *individuality*, the second that of the *race*. In a more restricted sense the one is the moral viewpoint, the other the religious viewpoint. In a moral respect Christianity requires “actions” instead of the old world’s “deeds,” emancipates the individual from its entire environment, and places its fate as it were into its own hands. But through this moral standpoint it leads the individual to the religious standpoint, as it teaches that the human’s most intrinsic worth depends not on what one does but on what one *is*, and that the quality of the fruit depends on the tree’s roots. The individual is hereby enabled to gain an insight into its *nature* and trace this back to its unity with *the race*, to the universality of sin and reconciliation, which are conditioned by the fact that *the individual has become sharply differentiated from the race*. Only the self-subsisting individuality who is entrusted to its personal self-determination will be able in the struggle of temptation to experience sin and grace as *universal* powers which stir in the innermost quarters of the soul, and place it in indissoluble connection with the entire race. The antinomy between Pelagius and Augustine is this contrast between the individual and the race, between the abstract moral consideration and the religious consideration of sin and responsibility. The Pelagian *thesis* states: “Only the free action can be sin, and I allow nothing else to be reckoned to me as guilt than what I myself have resolved and carried out”. Augustine’s *thesis* states: “We have all sinned in Adam and his offense is reckoned to us as guilt.” Consequently, it is not the individual self which sins, but the race, the universal nature, which sins in the individual.—Both propositions are true only in their unity and reciprocal transitions into each other.<sup>818</sup>

Martensen’s account of original sin here expresses his unity-in-difference perspective, as he notes how the contradictory sides of original sin are in fact necessarily contained in Christianity itself: Because Christianity emphasises free choice it must also emphasise its opposite; that good and evil (or sin) are independent of human freedom and choice.

Martensen uses the classic theological debate between Pelagius and Augustine to demonstrate

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<sup>818</sup> *GMS*, 40n / *BHK*, 275n.

the importance of mediation and the necessary unity of these seemingly contradictory positions in order to reach truth. Martensen interprets the Pelagian standpoint of free will as representing the philosophical sphere of “abstract moral considerations”, and the Augustinian universality of sin as the part of the sphere of “religious consideration of sin and responsibility”.<sup>819</sup> Although Martensen acknowledges a contradiction between these philosophical and religious spheres, he underlines that these positions only become true in their unity: it is in the overlapping and reciprocal transition of the abstract moral-philosophical into the religious-theological considerations of sin that a clear view of original sin can appear. In other words, the philosophical-Pelagian position that sin requires free action and that one is guilty only of the sins one has individually committed must be combined with the theological-Augustinian position that we all share the guilt of Adam’s sin and thus as a race, human beings are sinners. When taken together in this unity-in-difference, these positions become true according to Martensen and enable a clearer view of original sin. It is significant then and quite radical that Martensen uses the doctrine of sin, which traditionally is viewed as a key difference between philosophical and theological perspectives, to highlight the continuity between these spheres, and suggest that this continuity enables some level of comprehension of the truth of original sin. As Thompson has noted it should be apparent to the “careful reader” of *CA* that “Kierkegaard had thought long and hard on this passage.”<sup>820</sup> In particular it seems that Kierkegaard thought long and hard about how to counter Martensen’s approach to sin, for as we shall see Martensen continues to make sin philosophically comprehensible.

As underlined previously, Martensen wants to avoid an inappropriate confusion of the moral-philosophical and dogmatic domains, and therefore restricts moral philosophy’s

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<sup>819</sup> *GMS*, 40n / *BHK*, 275n.

<sup>820</sup> Thompson, *Cultured Public’s Chosen One*, 111.

knowledge of dogma to knowledge of the dogma's relation to the practical—in ethics the dogmas cannot be known in their “metaphysical being in” themselves.<sup>821</sup> And yet, Martensen seems to provide precisely such a metaphysical definition of a dogma in his ethics— Martensen writes: “Sin is no material, no ‘thing’, but a movement in the will. Sin exists only insofar as it is willed; outside the will sin is not at all. Consequently, it is *I* and no other who thinks and wills evil. We are all without excuse.”<sup>822</sup> Martensen explains that moral evil must be understood as the willed derailment of humans’ intended development or as a kind of selfishness. The human will becomes evil when it, despite having knowledge of “the law’s universal validity and necessity,” nevertheless refuses to relinquish its “its own direction”.<sup>823</sup> But such defiant self-ruling is false and illusory.

The egoistical self-consciousness reduces the good and true to a mere appearance [*Skin og Maske*]. It becomes dissimulation, hypocrisy, and falsehood. Through this the diabolical standpoint is developed, where the spirit appoints itself as such as its end and opposes the Good on the exclusive grounds that it does not tolerate any higher power over itself, but itself wants to be lord and master. The devilish appears partly as titanic defiance, partly as Mephistophelian irony.<sup>824</sup>

With this definition, sin can be understood purely philosophically and anthropologically, as it exists only in the human will. From this philosophical-ethical definition sin as a movement in the human will, the religious or theological doctrine of *original sin* continuously follows, as Martensen argues original sin originates in the will’s original depravity, which makes each human guilty from the beginning. He writes: “As we reckon our will’s original depravity to ourselves as guilt, it is no more moral accountability [*tilregnelse*] which is talked about. It is

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<sup>821</sup> *GMS*, xiv / *BHK*, 251.

<sup>822</sup> *GMS*, 41 / *BHK*, 276.

<sup>823</sup> *GMS*, 42 / *BHK*, 277.

<sup>824</sup> *GMS*, 42-43 / *BHK*, 277.

the absolute accountability, the religious accountability.”<sup>825</sup> With this, Martensen returns us to the Pelagian-Augustinian antinomy. For on the one hand Martensen argues that the human being’s eternal nature or essence is good and free, being essentially connected to the divine. On the other hand, the will is universally and originally depraved, which implies an absolute—that is religious—accountability for each individual. This particular contradiction would prompt an exasperated outcry from Eiríksson, who charged Martensen for radically subverting the orthodox doctrine of original sin, as Martensen’s

teaching about essence and the essential will is fundamentally the most radical opposition to the church’s teaching about hereditary sin, so radical that, as far as we know, no rationalist has gone anywhere near as far as this arrogant orthodox speculant. There could hardly be a stronger contradiction than the two sentences, that the human is born with sin and wickedness, that is, as a sinful being and: that the human is in its essence one with God and this being’s will is one with God’s will.<sup>826</sup>

However, for Martensen it is precisely the difference of these two standpoints that enables their unity. It is by combining these standpoints that a clear account of original sin appears, and furthermore, Martensen argues, it is an account that even more strongly underlines the ethical sting of sin. He notes that this “original unrighteousness, the inner contradiction in the human’s nature which receives its barb by the fact that it is *willed*, is destroyed through religious suffering and contrition [*sønderknuselse*].”<sup>827</sup> In other words, the original depravity is further deepened by the fact that it is willed, as this makes the individual human being wholly ethically responsible. Martensen herein suggests that original sin is not only more clearly explained through the unity of the philosophical and religious standpoints, but also

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<sup>825</sup> *GMS*, 41 / *BHK*, 276.

<sup>826</sup> Eiríksson, *Tro, Overtro og Vantro, i deres Forhold til Fornuft og Forstand, samt til hinanden indbyrdes*, (Copenhagen: H.C. Klein, 1846), 59 (my translation).

<sup>827</sup> *GMS*, 46 / *BHK*, 279.

intensified and made more ethically serious. However, the relation of unity and dialectical interplay between the philosophical and religious standpoints is slowly altered when Martensen turns from sin to the forgiveness of sin.

Discussing the movement from sin to punishment to repentance and finally to forgiveness, Martensen starts by highlighting the continuity from the human being's philosophical knowledge of sin and self-accountability where "punishment passes over into [*gaae over i*] forgiveness".<sup>828</sup> According to Martensen such subjective moments of punishment can additionally be seen as the moments of conversion and repentance as the dialectical transition from punishment into grace.<sup>829</sup> Thus Martensen suggests that the human will is to some extent involved in its own forgiveness. And yet, the continuous relationship between the philosophical and religious standpoints starts to break down in Martensen's description of repentance. For he seems to imply that the religious knowledge of sin and repentance cannot be understood from the philosophical-ethical standpoint. Instead Martensen emphasises the objective and absolute nature of Christianity over and against the subjective, relative moral-philosophical position: "The religious knowledge of sin and repentance become totally incomprehensible in a standpoint which stops at action and subjective responsibility."<sup>830</sup> This standpoint is the moral-philosophical one which relates to practical action and personal responsibility. Martensen notes that because subjective human knowledge is "variable and changing," human reason must "humbly recognize its limits and dare not presume to decide what is in-and-for-itself true and good."<sup>831</sup> Therefore Martensen suggests that religious repentance can only find peace in Christ as "the objective justification of the human race before God" through which the reconciliation of humans and God takes

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<sup>828</sup> *GMS*, 43 / *BHK*, 277.

<sup>829</sup> *GMS*, 44-45 / *BHK*, 278.

<sup>830</sup> *GMS*, 46 / *BHK* 279.

<sup>831</sup> *GMS* 47 / *BHK* 279.

place. From here the “standpoint of morality is abandoned [*forlades*],”<sup>832</sup> and the relative sinfulness of the moral standpoint is sublated by the religious standpoint, which emphasises Romans 3.23, that “*All* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”.<sup>833</sup> However, Martensen here implies, rather than a continuous relationship or transition from the philosophical to the religious sphere, or even a sublation of the philosophical into the religious, an abrupt abandonment of the moral-philosophical position in favour of the religious absolute standpoint. The original Danish “*forlades*” denotes that the philosophical standpoint is left behind, deserted and relinquished. Thus Martensen’s language about original sin and philosophy and theology’s relationship in these few passages ranges from the necessity of their unity for reaching the truth to the dialectical transition from one sphere to the next, and finally to the total departure from the philosophical to the theological sphere for understanding sin and the forgiveness of sin.

By contrast, what we find in *CA* is precisely a refusal to sublimate and resolve the tension between the philosophical and theological spheres. What has long troubled interpreters of this work is the fact that Haufniensis, like Martensen, seems to uphold two contradictory notions of sin. On the one hand Haufniensis presents sin and the guilt of sin as arising from a free act or decision, in which the individual makes himself or herself responsible for his or her own sin. On the other hand, Haufniensis describes sin as a universal state, into which the individual is born and determined. In fact, Haufniensis does not shy away from this contradiction, but openly admits its presence. In accounting for the relation between Adam’s first sin and hereditary sin, Haufniensis points out that such contradiction is “essential to human existence” as each human being is at every moment “simultaneously himself and the whole race”.<sup>834</sup>

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<sup>832</sup> *GMS*, 48 / *BHK*, 280.

<sup>833</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>834</sup> *SKS* 4, 335 / *CA*, 28.

According to Lee Barrett, the solution to overcoming this contradiction is that one must take into account the dual voices, the psychological and dogmatic moods. More specifically, as Barrett has noted, the “relationship of dogmatics and psychology is the principle subject of *The Concept of Anxiety*.”<sup>835</sup> Psychology, however, was considered part of the philosophical sciences on par with metaphysics, logic, ethics and aesthetics, and thus the psychological and dogmatic perspectives, which Haufniensis inhabits, can be viewed as representing the philosophical and religious spheres respectively. Barrett argues that by confusing the spheres of psychology and dogmatics, Kierkegaard’s treatment of original sin and related concepts “is baffling,”<sup>836</sup> but suggests that “proper attention to the purposes and “moods” of these will help resolve this apparent contradiction.”<sup>837</sup> However, while Barrett is right to promote this strong distinction between Haufniensis’ dual perspectives, the belief that this will *resolve* apparent contradictions is problematic when considered in light of Haufniensis’ polemic against Martensen’s attempt to do precisely this. Similarly, it has been suggested by some that Haufniensis attempts to mediate between the Augustinian and Pelagian positions. Sylvia Walsh for example states that “Haufniensis seeks to carve out a middle course between Augustine and Pelagius, affirming corporate solidarity of the race with Adam without making hereditary sin involuntary and preserving individual responsibility for sin without falling into the isolated individualism of Pelagianism.”<sup>838</sup> Likewise John Milbank has proposed that Kierkegaard occupies the middle course “between Pelagianism and essentialization of ‘the sin of the race’.”<sup>839</sup>

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<sup>835</sup> Lee Barrett, “Kierkegaard’s “Anxiety” and the Augustinian Doctrine of Original Sin” in Robert Perkins (ed.) *International Kierkegaard Commentary. Volume 8: The Concept of Anxiety*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1985), 35-62; 54.

<sup>836</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>837</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>838</sup> Sylvia Walsh, “Søren Kierkegaard,” in Keith L. Johnson and David Lauber (eds.) *T&T Clark Companion to the Doctrine of Sin*, (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 267-284; 268.

<sup>839</sup> John Milbank, “The Sublime in Kierkegaard,” in Philip Blond (ed.) *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between Philosophy and Theology*, (London: Routledge, 1998), 131-156, 156 note 52.

While these commentators are not necessarily wrong, language such as “resolving”, and “middle way” can become problematic as it too closely aligns Haufniensis’ position with Martensen’s speculative aim of resolving contradictions and explaining sin through such mediation. For in contrast to Martensen’s unification of the philosophical and religious standpoints, the seemingly contradictory views Haufniensis puts forward are not meant to be resolved or mediated, but their tension is used to exemplify how sin distances apart the philosophical and theological approaches. Jason A. Mahn has noted that a common tendency in readers of *CA* is to assume that by simply clearly demarcating the domains of psychology and dogmatics any tension between them is in turn alleviated.<sup>840</sup> But this overlooks and disregards the blatant conflict and tension between Haufniensis’ dual perspectives. Like Kierkegaard’s earlier separation of the philosophical and Christian spheres, Haufniensis too elucidates an incommensurable gap between the psychological and dogmatic spheres, which gives rise to a tension that serves to manifest the experience of sin’s divisive effects.

Just as Climacus later explains that existence cannot be made an object of thought because it is constantly moving, psychology, as a philosophical science, can only treat “something in repose that remains in a restless repose, not something restless that always either produces itself or is repressed”.<sup>841</sup> Psychology thus cannot take sin per se as its subject, but only sin’s *possibility*. And yet, psychology has to “abandon itself...to the disappointment that sin is there as an actuality,” and with this disappointment psychology’s impotence and the limits of its ability are revealed. For as psychology becomes absorbed with this subject of sin’s possibility “it is unwittingly in the service of another science that only waits for it to finish so that it can begin and assist [*forhjælpe*] psychology to the explanation”.<sup>842</sup> This science is dogmatics. While it may then seem like the philosophical-psychological voice and

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<sup>840</sup> See Jason A. Mahn, *Fortunate Fallibility: Kierkegaard and the Power of Sin*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 67.

<sup>841</sup> *SKS* 4, 329 / *CA*, 21.

<sup>842</sup> *SKS* 4, 330 / *CA*, 23.

the theological or dogmatic voice collaborate, a deeper look reveals a more antagonistic relationship. For whereas dogmatics can assist and help psychology, there is also an inherent discord between these spheres; psychology may be in the service of dogmatics, but it is so *unwittingly*. Furthermore, dogmatics is just waiting to take over and help psychology with its study. The Danish *forhjælpe* denotes that dogmatics is happy to support psychology, but it also implies that theirs is not an equal relationship. The final sentence of *CA* also reflects this ambiguous relationship: “As soon as psychology has finished with anxiety, it is to be delivered to dogmatics.”<sup>843</sup> On the surface, this statement is reminiscent of Martensen’s continuity between the philosophical and theological sphere, wherein a concept “passes over” from philosophy into the theological or dogmatic sphere, pointing to some level of continuity or compatibility. However, as Mahn has pointed out, the Danish for “deliver” is *afleverer til*, which can mean deliver as in delivering a message, but it can also mean surrender or be forced to hand something over, creating an ambiguity as to how the reader is meant to understand this relationship. Mahn suggests that this plurivocity should really encourage the reader to “re-question whether the relationship between psychology and dogmatics is not more strained and more interesting than many assume”.<sup>844</sup>

In many ways, the dominant voice of this work is the psychological-philosophical one, as the main concept discussed is anxiety. Just as subjective philosophy is able to offer some level of analogy to the Christian sphere, psychology is able to use anxiety as a mood through which to explore sin. However, as an intermediate term, the key characteristic of anxiety is that it is inherently ambiguous. It is precisely when discussing guilt and innocence that Haufniensis calls attention to the need for intermediate terms, and without these, he notes, we cannot have a concept of original sin or individuality. Haufniensis describes how the person

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<sup>843</sup> *SKS* 4, 461 / *CA*, 162.

<sup>844</sup> Mahn, “*Felix Fallibilis*: The Benefit of Sin’s Possibility in Kierkegaard’s *The Concept of Anxiety*,” *Faith and Philosophy*, 23:3, 2006, 254-278, 260.

who becomes guilty through anxiety is both innocent and guilty at the same time as “he who becomes guilty through anxiety is indeed innocent, for it was not he himself but anxiety, a foreign power, that laid hold of him, a power that he did not love but about which he was anxious. And yet he is guilty, for he sank in anxiety, which he nevertheless loved even as he feared it.”<sup>845</sup> Haufniensis remarks that nothing in the world is more ambiguous than this fact, and for this reason “this is the only psychological explanation.”<sup>846</sup> As Niels Jørgen Cappelørn has pointed out, Haufniensis here presents his reader with a highly ambiguous take on original sin, in which the origin of sin is both “explained and yet not explained”.<sup>847</sup> Similarly Vanessa Rumble portrays Haufniensis as “vacillating” between the view that the leap into sin stands outside of ambiguity and the view that the individual, as described by Haufniensis, “who becomes guilty in anxiety becomes as ambiguously guilty as it is possible to become”.<sup>848</sup> Rumble concludes that “Haufniensis’ confusion is but one sign that original sin...returns as an obscurity of the individual’s moral status, a lack of self-knowledge, shared not only by ghostly pseudonyms but by all sons and daughters of Adam.”<sup>849</sup>

By suggesting that sin enters the world and the individual in anxiety, Haufniensis underscores that sin is neither necessary nor a free choice. Instead, Haufniensis simply proffers the conclusion that “to want to give a logical explanation of the coming of sin into the world is a stupidity that can occur only to people who are comically worried about finding an explanation.”<sup>850</sup> Haufniensis therefore warns against positing anxiety too reflectively, which in turn makes it seem easier for anxiety to transition into guilt. Unlike

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<sup>845</sup> SKS 4, 349 / CA, 43.

<sup>846</sup> Ibid.

<sup>847</sup> Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, “The Interpretation of Hereditary Sin in *The Concept of Anxiety* by Kierkegaard’s Pseudonym Vigilius Haufniensis,” *Tijdschrift voor Filosofie*, 72, 2010, 131-146, 145.

<sup>848</sup> SKS 4, 366 / CA, 61.

<sup>849</sup> Vanessa Rumble, “The Oracle’s Ambiguity: Freedom and Original Sin in Kierkegaard’s *The Concept of Anxiety*,” *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 75:4, 1992, 605-625, 607.

<sup>850</sup> SKS 4, 355 / CA, 49-50.

Martensen's neat transitions from the philosophical sphere to the religious, Haufniensis warns that approximations are delusive:

a 'more' cannot bring forth the leap, and no 'easier' can in truth make the explanation easier. If this is not held fast, one runs the risk of suddenly meeting a phenomenon in which everything takes place so easily that the transition becomes a simple transition, or the other risk of never daring to bring one's thought to a conclusion... Therefore, although anxiety becomes more and more reflective, the guilt that breaks forth in anxiety by the qualitative leap retains the same accountability as that of Adam, and the anxiety the same ambiguity.<sup>851</sup>

Thus, while it may be possible to make the explanation "easier" by viewing transition as a simple and straightforward possibility, no approximation will ever lessen each individual's accountability for his or her sin or ease the ambiguity of anxiety—nor will it change or alleviate the ethical and existential difficulty of sin. Haufniensis does not narrow the gap between sin's ambiguous modes of origin nor the gap between the psychological-philosophical and dogmatic spheres. Although these voices are vying for control, the fact of the matter is that neither provides explanations of sin. Psychology's introduction of anxiety is not an explanation, and neither is the presupposition of sin in dogmatics.

Yet the dogmatic voice remains present throughout as a form of policing presence, which continually reminds the reader that anxiety is not an explanation for sin and that psychology falls short in its treatment of sin: "Anxiety no more explains the qualitative leap than it can justify it ethically."<sup>852</sup> Although psychology is the only science that "can help a little," it still "admits that it explains nothing and also that it cannot and will not explain more."<sup>853</sup> The emphasis on the psychological perspective's failings becomes more insistent as it is noted that psychology

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<sup>851</sup> SKS 4, 365 / CA, 60.

<sup>852</sup> SKS 4, 354/ CA, 49.

<sup>853</sup> SKS 4, 356/ CA, 51.

above all must guard against leaving the impression of explaining that which no science can explain and that which ethics explains only by presupposing it by way of dogmatics. If one were to take the psychological explanation and repeat it a number of times and thereby arrive at the opinion that it is not improbable that sin came into the world in this way, everything would be confused.<sup>854</sup>

Original sin in particular highlights the limits of the philosophical-psychological sphere and its strict separation from dogmatics. Haufniensis underlines that the way Adam's first sin corrupted creation and the way freedom was posited by the positing of its misuse, which cast a "trembling of complicity over creation," has absolutely "no place in a psychological deliberation, but belongs in dogmatics...in the explanation by which this science explains the presupposition of sinfulness".<sup>855</sup> What the psychological sphere *is* able to express when it comes to sin is not an explanation of sin that somehow narrows the leap over the gulf between innocence and guilt. Instead, the "psychological explanation must not talk around the point but remain in its elastic ambiguity, from which guilt breaks forth in the qualitative leap."<sup>856</sup> This elastic ambiguity of psychology and of psychology's relation to dogmatics underpins Haufniensis' deeply ambiguous take on sin in which contradictions are not resolved, but drawn up even more deeply. Thus, just as subjective philosophy can help us understand that we cannot understand Christianity, psychology, in its back-and-forth with dogmatics, shows us that sin cannot be explained scientifically or philosophically. Instead, Haufniensis remarks, sin can only be the subject of the theological discourse of the sermon, "in which the single individual speaks as the single individual to the single individual... to preach is really the most difficult of all arts and is essentially the art that Socrates praised, the

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<sup>854</sup> SKS 4, 345 / CA, 39.

<sup>855</sup> SKS 4, 362, 363 / CA, 58.

<sup>856</sup> SKS 4, 347 / CA, 41.

art of being able to converse.”<sup>857</sup> Of course, Kierkegaard argues later that conversing or dialoguing is precisely what Martensen is incapable of.

Through this methodological struggle, Haufniensis (and Kierkegaard) is in turn able to reflect not only the divisive effects of sin, but also play up our inability to explain sin by invoking for the reader the ambiguity, contradictions, and confusion that being a sinner results in. Since sin is the cause of the profound separation between the philosophical and Christian sphere, it makes sense that the discord between psychology and dogmatics as depicted in *CA* can be read as a stylistic manifestation of anxiety and sin’s effect. Read against the backdrop of Martensen’s claims of philosophy and theology’s harmonious continuity, the antagonistic tension Haufniensis highlights between these spheres is particularly striking. The fact that Martensen suggests that sin is somehow explicable only underlines for Haufniensis his misunderstanding of this doctrine. The synthesising of scientific moods with which Martensen proposes to explain sin ethically, furthermore confuses the subject (as well as the methodology), not least because the subject is one that has no place in any science. Moreover, despite arguing that original sin can be explained through a unity of the philosophical and religious standpoints, Martensen ultimately suggests that the philosophical standpoint must be abandoned if we are to understand the forgiveness of sin. Instead Haufniensis uses the conflict between his psychological and dogmatic voices to underline the divisive effects of sin by precisely demonstrating how the attempt to address it brings to light the separation of the philosophical and theological spheres. However, in this way their continued dynamic tension is also maintained. Yet, Martensen’s view can also be identified as exercising a productive negative influence, as Haufniensis in some respects seems to develop his treatment of sin in direct response to Martensen’s *Outline*.

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<sup>857</sup> SKS 4, 323 / *CA*, 16.

## 5.2 The Ethical Seriousness of Sin

Jon Stewart has argued that Anti-Climacus' treatment of sin in *SUD*, much like Haufniensis', can be read as a criticism of speculative thought's misguided attempt to comprehend and explain sin, which deprives sin of its ethical bite. Specifically, Stewart argues that Anti-Climacus' "true target is once again Martensen".<sup>858</sup> But, as pointed out above, Martensen complicates matters further by insisting that his concept of contingent sin precisely sharpens sin's ethical sting and intensifies its ethical seriousness. This is further developed in Martensen's 1849 *Dogmatics*, which contains his most comprehensive and systematic account of sin. Martensen, now establishing his ecclesial career alongside his professorship, may have felt a deepened urgency to prove that, despite charges to the contrary, he did take sin seriously.<sup>859</sup> In his memoirs, Martensen even underlines his preoccupation with sin in the late 1840s. Martensen for example relates how he felt responsible for educating Frederikke Bremer about sin. Despite being of "a religious nature in a Christian direction," Martensen suggests that Bremer was, like "so many of the educated [*dannede*], bound by a one-sided humanism and struggled to appropriate sin and guilt consciousness... We therefore had to have a number of conversations about sin and grace."<sup>860</sup> Nevertheless, the concept of sin that we find in the *Dogmatics* is not much altered from Martensen's dissertation or *Outline*. Martensen still argues for a contingent concept of sin, although he now more explicitly argues that his view of sin is superior to other, even the more orthodox, views precisely because it is more ethically severe.

A month and a half after the publication of Martensen's *Dogmatics*, in July 1849 Kierkegaard published *Sickness unto Death* under the pseudonym Anti-Climacus. The

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<sup>858</sup> Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel Reconsidered*, 560.

<sup>859</sup> This may have been particularly important in the face of criticism and charges of heterodoxy, such as Eiriksson's in 1846. However, conversely, Martensen may simply not have felt it was relevant for him to provide a comprehensive account of sin in his more philosophical works, but was saving this for his *Dogmatics*.

<sup>860</sup> *AL* 3, 135.

writing of this work was done mainly in the spring of 1848, and, as has been noted, the variations between earlier drafts and the final printed manuscript are very few.<sup>861</sup> Thus the extent to which this work can be considered an actual retort to Martensen's *Dogmatics* is highly uncertain. And yet Anti-Climacus seems to offer an almost direct corrective to Martensen's view of sin, and in a prescient way challenges the solidity of Martensen's claims of increasing sin's ethical seriousness.<sup>862</sup> Anti-Climacus shows how Martensen's concept of sin remains at a purely philosophical level, as Martensen merely emphasises the *ethical* seriousness of sin, not the *religious* seriousness.

In his *Dogmatics*, Martensen deals with sin under the main section "The Doctrine of the Father" and the sub-section "Humanity's Fall from God". More or less paraphrasing the account given in *Outline*, Martensen explains how evil was a possibility that was meant to remain a possibility, and that evil's actuality can only be explained as originating from human free will. This Martensen characterises as a "self-darkening", which is incomprehensible to the self as it has precisely fallen away from "the divine reason-necessity".<sup>863</sup> By opening up a contradiction between their individual and universal essence, humans have thereby become evil. However, evil itself, Martensen suggests, is not a necessary or immanent determination of the world. He rejects the idea that evil's necessity lies in the fact that "the world-historical life"<sup>864</sup> develops through contradictions and dialectical struggle. While he agrees that spiritual development does occur through contradictions, evil is a

false contradiction and the false reconciliation of contradictions, the untrue dialectic and the untrue mediation, which therefore obstructs and disturbs the true development... It is the cutting

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<sup>861</sup> See Howard V. Hong, "Historical Introduction" in *SUD*, ix.

<sup>862</sup> It is of course possible that Martensen's dogmatic positions were known before his *Dogmatics* was published, and since Martensen's concept of sin remains so stable, *SUD* might simply express Kierkegaard's familiarity with Martensen's theological views.

<sup>863</sup> *CD* §80, 187.

<sup>864</sup> *CD* §83, 191.

discordance, that disturbs the harmony of creation and therefore cannot be dissolved in the same, but must unconditionally be ejected from it.<sup>865</sup>

Similarly, Martensen denies that evil is in some way inherent to the concept of individuality or the human being. Rather evil depends on the fact that “individuality perverts its concept, separates itself from its inner limits, from its innate singularity; that it does not want to be itself, wants to be something other than what it was set to be by its Creator.”<sup>866</sup> This is further developed in Martensen’s treatment of original sin later in this work. Martensen suggests that Adam’s sin not only entered the world as an example, but as an active beginning “which exercises a disorganising influence upon the whole of development”.<sup>867</sup> However, Martensen denies that this first sin in any way transformed the substance of the human being, and rather argues that it resulted in “a disturbance of humanity’s whole way of life, its *modus existendi*. The original condition of human nature is precisely that of formability; it is not originally perfect and complete, not determined, but determinable.”<sup>868</sup> With this Martensen points out that the human being was created not perfect, but perfectible, which underlines his view that God created the human being with the goal of eventual unity. Martensen concludes that original sin, then, is “neither a substance nor an accident; it is a false existential relation.”<sup>869</sup> Where Martensen defines religion as a true existential relation to God, sin by contrast is a false relation—in other words, sin is not an essence of the human nature, but a distorted mode of human existence and its direction towards unity with God, which as a result has rendered human life “fragmented and divided”.<sup>870</sup> By identifying sin in human *existence* rather than human *nature*, Martensen enables the human being to still have a divine essence. Another

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<sup>865</sup> *CD* §84, 193.

<sup>866</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>867</sup> *CD* §92, 203.

<sup>868</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>869</sup> *CD* §93, 205.

<sup>870</sup> *CD* §98, 218.

reason Martensen underlines, is that if the human was “evil by nature,” this would also have to be true “of the second Adam,”<sup>871</sup> of Christ.

If evil was necessary, Martensen argues that evil would be infinitised and become impossible to get rid of, rendering the Christian eschatological promises a mere fantasy. However, Martensen believes that those who argue that a concept of good without the necessity of evil would lack “life and seriousness” can have only “a dull [*mat*] conception of the Good’s own power...They...overlook its productive, its plastic power”.<sup>872</sup> Instead, Martensen suggests that the Good demonstrates no less power and earnestness whether it defeats evil as a possibility or as reality. Martensen emphasises that with a contingent concept of sin, redemption becomes more profound and meaningful, and a greater declaration of God’s love:

Although sin is not willed by God, it cannot fall outside the sphere of his decrees; although it is not ordained by God, it nevertheless becomes a teleological moment for God’s declaration of love. As the manifestation of Christ is the unconditional purpose of revelation, for which the whole creation must serve as the means, his love’s freest self-debasement manifests itself his making Himself the means of man’s redemption, in his becoming a servant for our sinful as well as imperfect race. As the world-subduing, world-redeeming love of Christ reveals its infinite power in putting an end to the most deep-seated and serious contradiction that can be conceived—the contradiction, that is, between the will of the Creator and that of the creature—the world must be viewed as the fittest sphere in which divine love and wisdom have centred in order to accomplish that victory.<sup>873</sup>

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<sup>871</sup> *CD* §82, 191. Martensen explains that in attempting to avoid the dualism of Christ having to defeat the reality of evil in himself in order to become our saviour, evil is often reduced to being the bad, that without essence, and the accidental—however, Martensen suggests that this not only underestimates evil, but also overestimates its power as it is raised up to becoming an “indispensable collaborator in the Kingdom of Spirit” (*ibid.*).

<sup>872</sup> *CD* §84, 194.

<sup>873</sup> *CD* §91, 202.

This also relates to Martensen's doctrine of "incarnation anyway", as Martensen argues that if the incarnation only happened in order to redeem humankind from sin, the incarnation has only relative and not absolute significance.<sup>874</sup> As Barrett notes, Martensen's incarnational focus results in the fact that he "subtly shifted Lutheranism's center of gravity away from the drama of sin and salvation that finds its resolution in justification by grace, to the triumph of God's reconciling and recreative purposes in the cosmos as a whole."<sup>875</sup>

It is important to note that Martensen does not deny that the Fall and sin *do* characterise current reality. He does, however, want to emphasise that sinfulness was not a necessary or preordained state, and that it is possible to conceive of a different, sin-free reality. He states that people who claim that only the current conditions of the world are metaphysically and ethically possible are "bound [*hildede*]"<sup>876</sup> Instead Martensen suggests that conceiving of what he considers the real possibility of a sin-free history and world is helpful for orienting ourselves ethically in the actual world. According to Martensen a supralapsarian necessary concept of sin and the fall, in which sin is preordained and planned by God as a condition for redemption and grace, as a *felix culpa*, rids sin of "its ethical sting [*Braad*]" and redemption of its "ethical seriousness [*Alvor*]"<sup>877</sup> For with a necessary concept of sin, Martensen argues: "The ethical relation is volatilised into a merely metaphysical relation."<sup>878</sup> While Martensen underlines that a unity of the ethical and metaphysical must be sought after, he notes that it cannot be characterised as unity if one side is annihilated by the other. If sin were necessary, it would be only metaphysically, not ethically, significant, for it

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<sup>874</sup> As Oliver D. Crisp has pointed out the doctrine of "incarnation anyway" should not be viewed as "idle or useless speculation, but is rather a crucial theological question that relates to important issues such as God's image and God's ultimate purpose of creation. (Crisp "Incarnation without the Fall," *Journal of Reformed Theology*, 10, 2016, 215-233).

<sup>875</sup> Barrett, "Martensen as Systematic Theologian: The Architectonics of Incarnation", Jon Stewart (ed.), *Hans Lassen Martensen: Theologian, Philosopher and Social Critic*, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2012), 73-98; 73.

<sup>876</sup> *CD* §84, 196.

<sup>877</sup> *CD* §86, 197.

<sup>878</sup> *Ibid.*

would simply exist without humans having any active influence on its existence.

Summarising, Martensen states:

That doctrine that declares sin a necessary means for God's completed revelation, can only do so by sacrificing the ethical interest for the sake of the speculative, that is, it can only congratulate the human race on the fall by declaring that the sin is not sin and redemption not redemption. It can only solve the religious problem by annihilating it.<sup>879</sup>

Instead, just as in *Outline*, Martensen argues that a clear view of sin requires the dialectical interplay and unity of antinomous positions. However, instead of the Pelagian and Augustinian positions, which respectively represented the moral-philosophical and religious standpoints, Martensen in his *Dogmatics* now seeks to provide a clear view of sin through the unity of the supralapsarian and infralapsarian positions. Martensen writes that the “fundamental view, upon the supposition of which alone the seriousness of sin and redemption can be maintained, is that which recognizes the Divine Decree as both unconditioned and conditioned, and thus embraces the truth both of the supra-lapsarian and of the infra-lapsarian theories”.<sup>880</sup> What Martensen means here is that the divine decree is both determined eternally but also *determinable* by the creature's freedom—in other words, it is not a perfected decree completed for all time, “but one continually coming into existence and being realised—‘becoming’—determining itself according to an historical movement of life”.<sup>881</sup> For this reason, Martensen points out that it is not simply a logical-rational decree, but “an ethical decree,”<sup>882</sup> precisely because human freedom matters and plays a role. By emphasising that the human will functions in this living reciprocal relation with the divine

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<sup>879</sup> *CD* §86, 198.

<sup>880</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>881</sup> *CD* §87, 198.

<sup>882</sup> *Ibid.*

will, Martensen thus seeks to show that the right understanding of sin must relate to ethics, not just to metaphysics or logic.

Thus Martensen underlines that it is precisely by denying sin as a necessary concept that sin's ethical seriousness becomes clear: sin is the ethical reality the human will has actualised and thus is solely responsible for and guilty of. Not only does this make the ethical sting of sin deeper in Martensen's view, but it also makes redemption and the forgiveness of sins more profound and meaningful and more expressive of God's unconditional and eternal love. However, as we turn to Anti-Climacus's *SUD*, we shall see that the dialectic established between the philosophical and Christian sphere rejects Martensen's view that a necessary concept of sin is less ethically serious.

That is not to say that there is not a certain ingenuity to Martensen's position. By introducing a contingent concept of sin, Martensen makes the unity between the philosophical sphere and dogmatic sphere a logical possibility—unlike for Kierkegaard, these spheres are not absolutely separated by sin. And yet, Martensen's treatment of sin ends up not reflecting unity or even the living dialectic between the philosophical and religious spheres, which he otherwise so strongly emphasises in the *Dogmatics*. Martensen's discussion of sin in this work almost seems like it could be more rightly described as an interplay between different kinds of philosophy (ethics, metaphysics, logic). Martensen's account of and explanations of sin result in a more anthropological than theological concept, echoing Martensen's own criticism of Kant's, Schleiermacher's and Hegel's autonomous "theologies". A more genuine dialectic between the philosophical and religious sphere can instead be found in *SUD*, which I shall turn to next. I will show that Anti-Climacus' development of this dialectic demonstrates the way in which Martensen's concept of sin remains at a purely philosophical level rather than engaging the religious sphere, as Martensen merely emphasises the *ethical* seriousness of sin, not the *religious* seriousness.

As James L. Marsh has argued, *SUD* can be read as a dialectic between despair and sin, a dialectic which more generally can be construed as a dialectic between the philosophical and Christian sphere as despair correlates with philosophy, and sin with Christianity or faith.<sup>883</sup> However, Marsh's conception of Anti-Climacus' dialectic between philosophy and religion curiously becomes expressed in a way that aligns it much more with Martensen's view of unity-in-difference than Kierkegaard's model of similarity-in-dissimilarity. Marsh argues that Anti-Climacus's dialectic between the philosophical and religious is a "movement from multiplicity to unity, difference to identity, but the identity is an identity in difference in which the philosophical and religious remain as distinct but related aspects of one whole."<sup>884</sup> By reconceptualising Marsh's dialectic between the philosophical and religious in *SUD* in light of philosophy and Christianity's relationship of distance—of similarity-in-dissimilarity—I will show how this model better shows how Anti-Climacus corrects Martensen's concept of sin and demonstrates how the spacing out of philosophy and Christianity enables a dialogue that can give expression to the radicality of religious concepts like sin.

For Marsh the dialectic between the philosophical and religious includes parallelism, inversion, and complementarity. As Marsh observes, the first, external relationship between philosophy and religion is similarity or parallelism. Much like we have already seen, philosophy is able to form some extent of analogy or parallel to the Christian sphere. Just as Climacus underlines a parallel between the Greek thinker and the Christian, Anti-Climacus' definition of self moves from describing its merely human-philosophical dimensions to its theological dimensions. Similarly, what can be termed the philosophical definition of despair as either taking the weak form of not wanting to be oneself, or the defiant form of wanting to

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<sup>883</sup> James L. Marsh, "Kierkegaard's Double Dialectic of Despair and Sin," Robert Perkins (ed) *International Kierkegaard Commentary: Volume 19. Sickness unto Death*, (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1987), 67-84; 67.

<sup>884</sup> *Ibid.*

be oneself, rather than resting in the Power that has established the self, points to the later religious definition of sin as “before God... in despair not to will to be one’s self or in despair to will to be oneself.”<sup>885</sup> Anti-Climacus, like Climacus’s parallel of the the Greek thinker and the Christian, describes despair as an intensification of sin: “Thus sin is intensified weakness or intensified defiance; sin the intensification of despair... it is the conception of God that makes sin dialectically, ethically, and religiously what lawyers call aggravated despair.”<sup>886</sup> Thus the philosophical is able offer an analogy, however, this analogy must ultimately be revoked because the degree of intensification from the philosophical to the religious category is absolute. As Marsh notes, the actual movement from despair, the philosophical, to sin, the religious, “is a movement from the ethical infidelity of the self to itself to infidelity to God”.<sup>887</sup> The qualification of being “before God,” results in a complete inversion of the philosophical categories, as Marsh also points out. Kierkegaard describes this inversion of movement as the “inverse dialectic” [*Omvendt Dialektik*] or dialectic of inversion [*Omvendthedens Dialektik*],<sup>888</sup> which is explained as how in “the religious sphere, the positive is distinguished by the negative.”<sup>889</sup> In later journal entries, Kierkegaard ties this explicitly to Christianity, as he notes “Xnty that always is situated in inverse dialectic,”<sup>890</sup> and that the Apostle “always speaks on the basis of this dialectic of reversal [*Omvendthedens Dialektik*].”<sup>891</sup> The inverse dialectic can be viewed as an expression of the relation of similarity-in-dissimilarity between philosophy and Christianity. Whereas philosophical categories, as we have seen, bear certain resemblance or analogy to the religious sphere, in the Christian sphere these are intensified to such a degree that they become dissimilar.

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<sup>885</sup> SKS 11, 191 / SUD, 77.

<sup>886</sup> Ibid.

<sup>887</sup> Marsh, “Kierkegaard’s Double Dialectic,” 73.

<sup>888</sup> See SKS 20, 116, NB194 / KJN 4, 116; SKS 20, 292, NB4:11 / KJN 4, 292-293. See also Sylvia Walsh, “Kierkegaard’s Inverse Dialectic,” *Kierkegaardiana*, 11, 1980, 34-54.

<sup>889</sup> SKS 7, 484 / CUP1, 532.

<sup>890</sup> SKS 23, 130, NB16:50 / KJN 7, 151.

<sup>891</sup> SKS 24, 458, NB25:32 / KJN 8, 464.

Attempting to approximate the Christian sphere moves the philosophical sphere further away, whereas when philosophy annihilates and distances itself from Christianity, it also comes the closest. However, while Marsh underlines this inversion as an important aspect of the dialectic between the philosophical and religious, he also suggests that this dialectic expresses a complementarity as the philosophical dialectic “grounds the religious dialectic by defining the problem, despair, and the key terms... then the religious dialectic completes the philosophical dialectic”.<sup>892</sup> The interaction of the two then comes down to the fact that the philosophical dialectic poses the problem, and the religious dialectic provides a solution or answer.<sup>893</sup> However, I think it is important here to point out that for the philosophical sphere, the religious answer is not a satisfactory one. As we saw in *CA*, psychology, as a philosophical science, is disappointed by the fact that sin is simply an actuality. This is the religious explanation, so in a sense Marsh is right that the religious provides an answer to the philosophical; but it is an answer that distances the philosophical from the religious rather than leading to a form of unity with or completion of the philosophical.

Following on from this, Marsh argues that there is an *Aufhebung* of the philosophical dialectic into the religious dialectic, as the religious dialectic subsumes the philosophical dialectic’s concepts and terms, by relating these to Christianity’s reality of God, Christ, offense, and sin, “the religious dialectic becomes the whole of which the philosophical dialectic is a part,” and because the religious dialectic includes the philosophical as a moment in itself, it is “richer and more complex than the philosophical dialectic”.<sup>894</sup> However, sublation overlooks the importance of maintaining the tension and distance between the philosophical and Christian sphere, which in particular proves crucial for speaking about sin. This is exemplified through Anti-Climacus’ discussion of how on the one hand Socrates’

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<sup>892</sup> Marsh, “Kierkegaard’s Double Dialectic,” 75-76.

<sup>893</sup> *Ibid.*, 78.

<sup>894</sup> *Ibid.*

definition of sin as ignorance reflects a similarity, but at the same time a dissimilarity as Socrates' definition of sin as ignorance demonstrates that Socrates fails to arrive at the true religious category of sin. Nevertheless, Anti-Climacus states that he does not dismiss the Socratic definition, but precisely because he has Christianity in mind, he "shall use this Socratic definition to bring out [Christianity] in its radicality [*Skarphed*]... as always with any other definition that in the most rigorous sense is not rigorously Christian...its emptiness shall become apparent".<sup>895</sup> In other words, as shown in Chapter 3, it is precisely the nothingness, the dissimilarity, of the Socratic-philosophical definition that helps bring out the Christian concept of sin in its sharp and unfathomable radicality. Regardless of any analogy or parallel, the Christian concept of sin is intensified to such a degree that it does not complete the philosophical approximation of sin—for this would imply continuity—but rather makes the philosophical sphere's emptiness apparent.

This is further demonstrated when considering Anti-Climacus's treatment of sin compared to Martensen's. In stark contrast to the Martensenian view that sin is an expression of the individual's misuse of his or her will, which distorts the individual's mode of existence, but not his or her actual substance, Anti-Climacus underlines that sin explains who and what the human is, but simultaneously prevents the human from understanding who and what it is—emphasising the distance between the philosophical and the Christian spheres. For, sin is a predicate of the human being, as Anti-Climacus points out that the doctrine of sin and sin's seriousness lies in the simple fact that "you and I are sinners."<sup>896</sup> Sin is thus a doctrine that "confirms the qualitative difference between God and man more radically than ever before."<sup>897</sup> This can be viewed as a corrective to Martensen's conception of this difference not being due to sin. Underlining this point, Anti-Climacus notes that "in no way is

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<sup>895</sup> *SKS* 11, 201 / *SUD*, 88.

<sup>896</sup> *SKS* 11, 230 / *SUD*, 119.

<sup>897</sup> *SKS* 11, 233 / *SUD*, 121.

a man so different from God as in this, that he, and that means every man, is a sinner, and is that ‘before God’.”<sup>898</sup> Thus being a sinner defines every human being, and this fact in turn radically defines the human being as qualitatively different from God, as “sin is the one and only predication about a human being that in no way...can be stated of God”.<sup>899</sup>

One way this is exemplified is by the fact that human knowledge is easily corrupted by a lower nature. An individual may know what is right, but still ends up acting in opposition to this knowledge—strong proof of the emptiness of the philosophical sphere. Anti-Climacus proceeds to analyse how it is possible to know what is right, but act in opposition to this knowledge as sin takes over, eventually eclipsing and diverting any ethical-religious comprehension or knowledge that human might have had.

And when knowing has become duly obscured, knowing and willing can better understand each other; eventually they agree completely, for now knowing has come over to the side of willing and admits that what it wants is absolutely right. And this is how perhaps the great majority of men live: they work gradually at eclipsing their ethical and ethical-religious comprehension, which would lead them out into decisions and conclusions that their lower nature does not much care for.<sup>900</sup>

With this, Anti-Climacus destabilises trust in human will but also human knowledge, as he shows how the will is led astray by the lower nature to work against what is known to be right. Anti-Climacus here points to Socrates, who would say that if a person does what is wrong, he or she clearly has not understood what is right. Anti-Climacus notes that Socrates is “absolutely right”, and that “no human being can come further than that...sin is not a matter of a person’s not having understood what is right but of his being unwilling to understand it, of his not willing what is right.”<sup>901</sup> However, the fact that the human being is

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<sup>898</sup> Ibid.

<sup>899</sup> *SKS* 11, 233 / *SUD*, 122.

<sup>900</sup> *SKS* 11, 207 / *SUD*, 93-94.

<sup>901</sup> *SKS* 11, 207 / *SUD*, 95.

so defined by sin equally prevents the human from understanding just how deeply this predicate of sin defines him or her. As Anti-Climacus notes, the sinner “is so much in the power of sin that he has no idea of its wholly encompassing nature, that he is lost and on the way to destruction.”<sup>902</sup> Precisely because sin has become the human’s second nature, no human recognises the depth of their sin and simply lives day to day believing everything “to be entirely in order”.<sup>903</sup> But this expresses a state of lostness, for without being aware of it the human is “blind to the fact that his life has the continuity of sin instead of the essential continuity of the eternal through being before God in faith.”<sup>904</sup> Anti-Climacus thus repeatedly emphasises the human impossibility of comprehending or explaining what sin is, noting that “no man of himself and by himself can declare what sin is, precisely because he is in sin: all his talk about sin is basically a glossing over of sin, an excuse, a sinful watering down.”<sup>905</sup> Just as Climacus argues that we cannot systematise existence because we are in existence, we cannot explain sin because we are in sin. For this reason, Anti-Climacus suggests, Christianity has to begin somewhere else: with the fact that human beings must learn what sin is and how deep-rooted and ineradicable it is through God’s revelation.<sup>906</sup> However, herein also lies a high possibility of offense, for Christianity’s doctrine of sin is deeply insulting of humankind. As Anti-Climacus points out, the doctrine of sin is “nothing but offensiveness toward man, charge upon charge, it is the suit that the divine as the prosecutor ventures to bring against man.”<sup>907</sup> The possibility of offense thus lies in the fact that not only is the human charged with being sinful in the first place, but that he or she, whether pagan or Christian, cannot even comprehend the charge—that is, what sin is. What a human being

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<sup>902</sup> *SKS* 11, 217 / *SUD*, 105.

<sup>903</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>904</sup> *SKS* 11, 217-218 / *SUD*, 105.

<sup>905</sup> *SKS* 11, 207 / *SUD*, 95.

<sup>906</sup> *SKS* 11, 208 / *SUD*, 96.

<sup>907</sup> *SKS* 11, 208 / *SUD*, 95.

knows least of all is “how far from perfect you are and what sin is.”<sup>908</sup> Christianity instead teaches and establishes sin as a position in a manner so firm that human understanding can never appropriate it. Instead sin is like “a paradox that must be believed.”<sup>909</sup> Anti-Climacus suggest that speculative thinkers precisely try to trim the ends off the paradox of sin to move through it more easily. However, whereas Martensen attempts to make sin more explicable—and thereby easier to get rid of—Anti-Climacus states that Christianity establishes sin so firmly and so securely that it actually seems to work against and impede itself, because sin seems to be “utterly impossible to eliminate again.”<sup>910</sup> And yet, at the same time, Anti-Climacus underlines that Christianity still asserts that it wants to “eliminate sin as completely as if it were drowned in the sea.”<sup>911</sup> Thus Christianity has made sin as paradoxical as at all possible—something which both enlivens, but ultimately annihilates philosophy.

Although Marsh emphasises that the dialectic between the religious and philosophical as methods or ways of being is a dialectic of paradox, Marsh’s language of completion and *Aufhebung* is troublesome for explicating the relation between the philosophical and religious. Instead, Paul Ricoeur’s suggestion that Kierkegaard presents a “cut-off” and “unresolved two-term dialectic”<sup>912</sup> without mediation is a more helpful way to conceive of the dialectic between the religious and philosophical. For philosophy and Christianity are not mediated in order to explain Christianity. Subjective Socratic philosophy is rather able to bring out Christianity and its concept of sin in its radicality precisely because of philosophy’s own emptiness and continued distance from the Christian sphere—because this emptiness is able to point towards the right position to take before God, which is also where sin is: before God. The problem with Martensen’s concept of sin, then, is that it is not a concept of sin at

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<sup>908</sup> SKS 11, 208 / SUD 96.

<sup>909</sup> SKS 11, 210 / SUD, 98.

<sup>910</sup> SKS 11, 212 / SUD, 100.

<sup>911</sup> Ibid.

<sup>912</sup> Ricoeur, “Two Encounters,” 320.

all—it has no true religious significance for it relates purely to the philosophical sphere, not the religious sphere. Anti-Climacus puts the following rhetorical question to his reader: “By thinking sin does a person himself become sin—*cogito ergo sum*?”<sup>913</sup> Of course Anti-Climacus rejects the suggestion that sin can be brought about by being thought. Instead sin falls “outside the concept ‘sin’.”<sup>914</sup> Similarly, Martensen’s concept of sin does not encompass sin, or falls outside sin, for sin cannot be thought. If sin can be thought it precisely loses its seriousness. As Anti-Climacus accentuates, the underlying concept of sin is each individual human being, who cannot be thought. In other words the category of sin is the category of individuality, and this “is precisely why there is no earnestness [*Alvor*] about sin if it is only to be thought, for earnestness [*Alvor*] is simply this: That you and I are sinners. Earnestness [*Alvor*] is not sin in general.”<sup>915</sup> With this, Anti-Climacus articulates an important corrective to Martensen’s view. For it is very well that Martensen seeks to emphasise the ethical seriousness of sin. But ethics [*Sædelighed*] is general, whereas sin is a “qualification of the single individual”.<sup>916</sup> In other words, sin is not an *ethical* concept or “an ethical infidelity”,<sup>917</sup> as Marsh puts it. It is a religious reality which expresses an infidelity to God, before God. In contrast to Martensen’s systematic and general treatment of sin as a definable, explicable concept, Anti-Climacus states it is “new sin to pretend as if it were nothing to be an individual sinner—when one himself is this individual sinner”.<sup>918</sup> In other words Martensen has forgotten that he himself is such an individual sinner, who is both defined by sin, but equally because he is a sinner, is prevented from comprehending his sin.

And yet, Martensen’s concern with making sin something of ethical-existential gravity to the individual human being in order to highlight the depth of divine love is in many

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<sup>913</sup> *SKS* 11, 231 / *SUD*, 119.

<sup>914</sup> *SKS* 11, 231 / *SUD*, 120.

<sup>915</sup> *SKS* 11, 230 / *SUD*, 119.

<sup>916</sup> *SKS* 11, 231 / *SUD*, 120.

<sup>917</sup> Marsh, “Kierkegaard’s Double Dialectic,” 73.

<sup>918</sup> *Ibid.*

ways a concern shared by Kierkegaard. In discussing how to view Kierkegaard's later frenzied attack on the church Matthew D. Kirkpatrick offers an insightful point about the peculiar nature of correctives which might in some respects offer a helpful perspective on Kierkegaard's responses to Martensen. Kirkpatrick suggests that to correct a position one must sometimes offer an "equally extreme alternative that emphasizes the element that has been missed out,"<sup>919</sup> for the point of a corrective is not "to destroy something, but to rebalance it".<sup>920</sup> Similarly, it is not that we cannot find similarities and shared concerns in Martensen's and Kierkegaard's thinking about sin, but where Martensen has overemphasised the ethical-philosophical side, Kierkegaard reorients us towards the theological space that is before God.

Reconceptualising Marsh's account of the dialectic of sin and despair helps show that Anti-Climacus' prescient retort and corrective of Martensen's treatment of sin is tied to the understanding of philosophy and Christianity's relation of similarity-in-dissimilarity, which keeps both spheres in a continuous tension. Anti-Climacus's treatment of sin demonstrates how philosophy's similarity with Christianity lies in its dissimilarity, and inversely this dialectic of similarity-in-dissimilarity offers a lens through which to consider Anti-Climacus' treatment of sin. By contrast, Martensen's contingent concept of sin as developed in his *Dogmatics* remains squarely in the philosophical sphere, as it can be said to be an ethical-anthropological category rather than a theological one. Anti-Climacus's discussions of sin thus help show Martensen's failure to establish the dialectical interplay he promises between philosophy and dogmatic theology in articulating Christianity's living knowledge and doctrines.

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<sup>919</sup> Kirkpatrick, "Kierkegaard on the Church," 82.

<sup>920</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

## CHAPTER 6

### *FREEDOM*

Despite their fundamental disagreement about sin, both Martensen and Kierkegaard affirm sin as a reality to which humanity is in bondage. As a result, both grapple with the question of how freedom is possible after the Fall. Freedom has been identified as a main point of commonality in their thought, as a concept that lies at the very “heart of their projects.”<sup>921</sup> In contrast to their time’s prevailing philosophical ideals of freedom as autonomy, both Martensen and Kierkegaard put forward a concept of true freedom as a form of dependence. This definition of freedom underlies Martensen’s theological standpoint, which holds that human freedom actualises itself by freely submitting to God, who is eternal freedom. This theological concept of freedom is explicitly stated and carefully maintained throughout Martensen’s authorship: First in his dissertation, where Martensen notes that “the human

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<sup>921</sup>Thompson, *Cultured Public’s Chosen One*, 145.

must *freely submit* itself to God”<sup>922</sup>; then in his *Outline*, where Martensen states that humans are dependent on God as the source of their freedom, but that “this dependence must be seen as freedom itself”.<sup>923</sup> In his *Dogmatics*, Martensen writes that it is the very purpose of human beings to “explain his freedom in dependence on God,”<sup>924</sup> and that this “religious feeling of dependence is not a depressing feeling, but a feeling of freedom.”<sup>925</sup> Several decades later, in his 1871 *Christian Ethics*, Martensen continues to affirm this view stating that “human freedom cannot be enough in itself, but needs to rest in the right relation of dependence.”<sup>926</sup>

In Kierkegaard’s writings, we also find suggestions that true freedom consists in submitting to God. For example, in a longer journal entry from 1850 on the question of free choice, Kierkegaard writes that: “Freedom actually *is* only when—at the same instant, the same second that it is (freedom of choice)—it goes with infinite speed to bind itself unconditionally through the choice of submission, the choice whose truth is that there cannot be talk of any choice.”<sup>927</sup> Towards the end of this entry, Kierkegaard adds: “The enormous thing granted a hum. being is choice, freedom. If you want to save it and preserve it, there is only one way to do so: At that very second unconditionally and in utter submission to give it back to God, and yourself along with it.”<sup>928</sup>

However, by considering their treatment of freedom with their different models of philosophy and religion’s relationship in mind, a fundamental difference in their understanding of this freedom as dependence, and with it the relation between freedom and grace, is exposed. Investigating Martensen’s concept of freedom as dependence in light of his unity-in-difference model shows that for Martensen this concept of freedom must be viewed

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<sup>922</sup> *MSA*, 15 / *BHK*, 84.

<sup>923</sup> *GMS*, 12 / *BHK*, 260.

<sup>924</sup> *CD* §73, 163.

<sup>925</sup> *CD* §8, 12.

<sup>926</sup> *CEa* §71, 305.

<sup>927</sup> *SKS* 23, 65, NB15:93 / *KJN* 7, 63.

<sup>928</sup> *SKS* 23, 66, NB15:93 / *KJN* 7, 64.

above all as an expression of divine and human unity. Martensen uses Christ to articulate that freedom is developed in a mediating dialectic between human and divine freedom, and thus grants the human being at least a relative freedom and participation in their own freedom and salvation from sin. However, I argue that Kierkegaard's spacing out of the philosophical and Christian spheres through his similarity-in-dissimilarity model is able to express a deeper human dependence on God, and thus, if true freedom is dependence, a deeper dependence might also be considered a freer freedom. For Kierkegaard freedom as dependence ultimately entails the annihilation of the self, for it means becoming nothing before that on which one depends; that is, God. This chapter aims to show that Kierkegaard's concept of freedom demonstrates how his similarity-in-dissimilarity model and its spacing out of the spheres better expresses a sense of theological transcendence and difference between God and humanity. Although Martensen argues that real unity is only possible in real difference, his approach to freedom seems to downplay the real difference. Whereas for Martensen this concept of freedom as dependence expresses the essential unity of creator and creature, for Kierkegaard it expresses Christianity's paradoxicality and its undermining of philosophical explanation. Just as philosophy reaches its peak at its point of annihilation when recognising its limits in its encounter with Christianity, but thereby is able to express the radicality of Christianity through its own emptiness or nothingness, for Kierkegaard, freedom lies in willingly losing oneself and becoming nothing before God.

### **6.1 The Task of Freedom and the Problem of the Self**

Martensen's and Kierkegaard's different views of sin reflect two very different views of the human itself. We saw that for Martensen sin is a false existential relation that does not reflect true human nature, whereas for Kierkegaard the matter of addressing and confronting the

“ambiguities of our temporal being,” of our existence in the world, comes “to focus in sin.”<sup>929</sup>

Yet, Martensen and Kierkegaard both agree that the self must be defined as freedom, but a freedom that must be actualised; becoming a self—becoming freedom—is presented by both as an ethical-normative task to be undertaken by each individual.

In *Outline*, Martensen maps his system of ethics onto the idea that God’s original freedom must journey through the human self’s free will towards the actualisation of its essential freedom and reunion with its divine essence. Therefore, Martensen defines freedom as:

the principle of absolute independence from all alien causality, as unconditioned self-subsistence, infinite self-determination and self-activity. Freedom is not immediate being or becoming. It is distinguished both from “things,” the world of dead objects, and from the life of nature, since it determines its own being [*Væren*] and its own becoming [*Vorden*]... The concept of freedom is one with the concept of spirit, self-consciousness, *I*. Every utterance of the spirit is an utterance of freedom, every act of self-consciousness an act of freedom.<sup>930</sup>

This description equates freedom with God—something which Martensen affirms as he notes that: “Everything that is freedom’s is God’s, and everything that is God’s is freedom’s.”<sup>931</sup>

However, this definition also equates freedom with the human spirit or *I*. Being created in God’s image, Martensen argues this freedom is the very essence of the human, drawn from humans’ divine source and original unity with God.<sup>932</sup> Thus, in its “purely metaphysical quality,”<sup>933</sup> the human is essentially freedom.

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<sup>929</sup> William Schweiker, *Mimetic Reflections: A Study in Hermeneutics, Theology and Ethics*, (New York: Fordham, 1990), 213.

<sup>930</sup> *GMS*, 8 / *BHK*, 258 (translation modified).

<sup>931</sup> *GMS*, 78 / *BHK*, 296.

<sup>932</sup> According to Martensen this divine source or substance, which he terms the “Godhead,” is the essence or ground of all things, nature, human beings, and human freedom, similar to Schelling’s *Urgrund* in his *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 27-28.

<sup>933</sup> *GMS*, 10 / *BHK*, 259.

However, Martensen draws a fundamental distinction between freedom as essence and existence. Although the human is freedom in *essence*, this does not mean the human is freedom in *actuality*: “As essential, freedom is at the same time still not determined as actual.”<sup>934</sup> Yet because of the human’s essential freedom, freedom is a “*real* possibility for the human...which with inner necessity brings along with it its actuality.”<sup>935</sup> It is an inner metaphysical and moral necessity because of the human being’s essential freedom, and as a result of this freedom becomes normative as the human “*must* realize its essential freedom.”<sup>936</sup> To actualise this essential freedom, the will must be engaged, and free will is introduced when spirit or self-consciousness “makes its own self-activity its purpose” and initiates implementing “its thought in the world.”<sup>937</sup> The free will objectifies itself in actions by beginning to strive towards actualising its freedom. It is at this point that the spirit or the “I” becomes a self. The will is central for this actualisation of freedom, for according to Martensen, the human’s essential freedom can *only* become actual “when it passes over into the human’s *subjective* will, when the human’s universal will becomes one with its *individual* will”.<sup>938</sup> And when the free will is “developed in its fullness of essence” and “coincides with the divine will” it is the good:

Nothing is good except God—but the divine will is only revealed by communicating its essence to the human—the Good must be determined more precisely as the human will’s unity with the divine. It is thereby both the essential presupposition of the human’s objective will and the infinite end of its striving.<sup>939</sup>

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<sup>934</sup> *GMS*, 9 / *BHK*, 258.

<sup>935</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>936</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>937</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>938</sup> Martensen draws substantially on Karl Phillip Fischer’s thinking about freedom, and this is particularly clear with this distinction between the essential freedom and actual freedom. See Fischer, *Die Wissenschaft der Metaphysik im Grundrisse* (Stuttgart: Schweizerbart’s Verlagshandlung, 1834), 180.

<sup>939</sup> *GMS*, 23 / *BHK*, 266.

Martensen therefore claims that God, as the highest Good, must be actualised by human freedom, and “requires a *God-human* of every individual.”<sup>940</sup> Martensen suggests that this demand would simply be meaningless if it were not for the “originally existing unity of the divine and human nature.”<sup>941</sup> Just as with sin, then, freedom underlines the profound continuity between its philosophical-ethical expression and its religious expression.

However, for the human’s essential freedom to be truly actualised, this actualisation cannot simply be inevitable or automatic. Instead Martensen points out there must be the possibility that the subjective human will rather than actualising its essence of freedom, negates it. For, according to Martensen, the subjective will is capable of separating itself from the essential will and fall away from its essence of freedom. Martensen here identifies an antinomy between the will on the one side only being able to determine itself in its striving towards freedom, but on the other side by its ability to negate freedom. However, Martensen suggests that this antinomy is ultimately annulled by recognising the fact that the latter proposition—that the will can negate the idea of freedom—contains the negative condition for the former proposition’s actualisation. It is only by overcoming its negative possibility, the possibility of negating its essence of freedom, that freedom can substantiate itself. Said differently, this means the possibility of *not* choosing freedom must be a *real* possibility, which has to be overcome for freedom to be actualised. Martensen suggests that there are therefore a number of internal and external natural barriers that hinder freedom. Freedom is able to defeat these barriers through successive historical progression only. In other words, while the human is in essence freedom, the human is also a being in time; the human self is thus a composite being, both eternal and temporal; both free (in essence) and unfree (in actuality). According to Martensen however, the temporality and unfreedom of the human

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<sup>940</sup> *GMS*, 51 / *BHK*, 282.

<sup>941</sup> *Ibid.*

does not express an internal limit in the human, but rather an external one—the self is dependent on the power which posited it in the first place. Martensen formulates this as a new antinomy between the dependence of human freedom on God, and human freedom’s own unconditional self-determination. But Martensen argues that this antinomy is resolved by the fact that dependence must be seen as true freedom, and the human will must recognise its precondition and dependence on God’s will “since it herein is determined as its own self-determining, it is determined as the absolutely free. As the human does God’s will, the human in addition carries out its own essential will.”<sup>942</sup> Because the human shares its essential free core with God, it therefore also essentially shares God’s will, and it achieves true freedom when it is reunited with its essential divine core. Accordingly, there is a clear continuity between the moral-philosophical task for the self to actualise its freedom and the religious solution of gaining freedom through dependence, which in turn is an expression of the unity of the human freedom with its original divine essence. Although Martensen inserts a moment of antinomy between the possibility and actualisation of freedom, this antinomy is ultimately resolved.

Haufniensis, like Martensen, describes the human being or self as a composite being; specifically as a “synthesis of psyche [*Sjæl*] and body”, and also “a *synthesis of the temporal and the eternal*.”<sup>943</sup> Haufniensis reveals that he is aware that his is thus by no means a new or original definition of the self, as he quips: “That this has often been stated, I do not object to at all, for it is not my wish to discover something new, but rather it is my joy and dearest occupation [*forelskte Sysse*] to ponder over [*tænke over*] that which is quite simple [*hvad der synes ganske simpelt*].”<sup>944</sup> In the original Danish, Haufniensis states that he loves to think about that which *seems* [*synes*]—literally *is seen* to be—perfectly simple, implying that the

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<sup>942</sup> *GMS*, 12 / *BHK*, 260.

<sup>943</sup> *SKS* 4, 388 / *CA*, 85.

<sup>944</sup> *Ibid.*

question of what a human being is, is far from being so. Where science suggests that a simple and universal definition of the self can be given, and German philosophers understand the self purely abstractly as self-consciousness, Haufniensis believes the self

signifies precisely the contradiction of positing the universal as the particular... although there have lived countless millions of such “selves,” no science can say what the self is without again stating it quite generally. And this is the wonder of life, that each man who is mindful of himself knows what no science knows, since he knows who he himself is, and this is the profundity of the Greek saying γνῶθι σεαυτον [*know yourself*], which too long has been understood in the German way as pure self-consciousness, the airiness of idealism...the real “self” is posited only by the qualitative leap.<sup>945</sup>

In this way Haufniensis underlines the complexity of the human self, which cannot just be thought or defined clearly or unequivocally. As we have seen, Haufniensis instead argues that the ambiguous intermediate terms [*Mellembestemmelser*] are needed to save thought from such simplicity and universalising which can never truly reflect the human self: “If one does not have the intermediate terms promptly and clearly at hand, the concepts of hereditary sin, of sin, of race, and of the individual are lost”.<sup>946</sup> In other words, the ambiguity of intermediate terms is needed to approach what it means to be human. One such intermediate term is anxiety, Haufniensis’ core concept for describing human psychology.<sup>947</sup> Anxiety is fundamentally ambiguous, as it is both an “*antipathetic sympathy*”—something alluring that causes anxiety—and a “*sympathetic antipathy*”—an anxiety that is simultaneously alluring.<sup>948</sup> Anxiety is attractive because through it our freedom appears; but it is also forbidding because being responsible for ourselves opens up the possibility of failing and losing ourselves and our freedom. As René Rosfort puts it, “anxiety is an emotional

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<sup>945</sup> SKS 4, 381-382 / CA, 78-79.

<sup>946</sup> SKS 4, 379 / CA, 76.

<sup>947</sup> SKS 4, 354 / CA, 49.

<sup>948</sup> SKS 4, 348 / CA, 42.

manifestation of the complexity of human nature”,<sup>949</sup> for anxiety’s psychological ambiguity reveals that the human being is a synthesis of opposing categories, such as soul-body; eternity-temporality; freedom-necessity. But, notes Rosfort, “this phenomenological ambiguity cannot be appeased or disposed of by striving to exist as either a bodiless angel or a thoughtless beast,”<sup>950</sup> for then the human would cease to be a synthesis.

In contrast to Martensen’s comprehensive system of freedom which envisions human beings’ universal core of essential freedom as a possibility actualised by the human’s free will, Haufniensis notes that while “it is easy enough [*nemt nok*] to say that possibility passes over into actuality”<sup>951</sup> in a logical system, this is not as easy in actuality or real existence. In other words, Martensen’s discussion of how freedom transitions from possibility to actualisation reveals that Martensen’s concept of freedom is a purely abstract concept that has neither ethical concreteness nor religious significance. Haufniensis instead posits that between the possible and the actual, the intermediate term of anxiety must be posited. However, anxiety cannot explain or justify ethically the leap from possibility to actuality, for it is not a category of either necessity or freedom. Rather anxiety is an “entangled [*hildet*] freedom, where freedom is not free in itself but entangled, not by necessity, but in itself.”<sup>952</sup> The Hong translation renders *hildet* as “entangled”, and many commentators have seized upon this word to suggest that Kierkegaard is presenting an ambiguous form of freedom.<sup>953</sup> However, *hildet*, as Ettore Rocca has pointed out, specifically refers to the hobbling of livestock, in which the front legs would be bound to prevent the animals from roaming

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<sup>949</sup> René Rosfort, “Kierkegaard’s Conception of Psychology: How to Understand It and Why It Still Matters,” in Jon Stewart (ed.) *A Companion to Kierkegaard*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2015), 451-467, 461.

<sup>950</sup> Ibid.

<sup>951</sup> *SKS* 4, 354 / *CA*, 49 (translation modified).

<sup>952</sup> Ibid.

<sup>953</sup> See for example, John J. Davenport, “‘Entangled Freedom’: Ethical Authority, Original Sin, and Choice in Kierkegaard’s *Concept of Anxiety*,” *Kierkegaardiana*, 21, 131-151; Laura Liva “The Abyss of Demonic Boredom: An Analysis of the Dialectic of Freedom and Facticity in Kierkegaard’s Early Works,” *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2013, 143-155; 144-146.

free.<sup>954</sup> Hobbled or constrained freedom is not just ambiguous; for if freedom is bound it is not free at all, but unfree, making it a contradiction. Furthermore, this contradiction goes even deeper as this freedom is not bound or made unfree by an external force or by necessity, but by freedom itself.

To explain this, Haufniensis distinguishes between freedom as the self and freedom as anxiety. As Haufniensis defines the self as a synthesis of the contradictory pairs, psyche and body and temporality and eternity, in order for this synthesis to be thinkable it must be united in a third: spirit. This is further developed and explicated in *SUD*, as Anti-Climacus writes: “The self is composed of infinitude and finitude. However, this synthesis is a relation, and a relation that, even though it is derived, relates itself to itself, which is freedom. The self is freedom. But freedom is the dialectical aspect of the categories of possibility and necessity”.<sup>955</sup> Thus this self-relating is freedom, but this freedom is also an inescapable freedom which is simply an inevitable aspect of being a human being. As Merold Westphal has pointed out, this freedom is not absolute, but involves normative constraints, for “the self is given to itself as a task and eventually as a ‘prodigious responsibility’...the self is given to itself as self-conscious, responsible freedom.”<sup>956</sup> Thus the self is freedom, but freedom is also a task for the self—and furthermore, it is a task which the self can fail. In two parallel passages, Haufniensis discusses and problematizes the spirit’s attempt to posit the synthesis that constitutes the self, and underlines how freedom (the self) succumbs when freedom’s possibility (anxiety) manifests itself to freedom (the self):

anxiety is the dizziness of freedom, which emerges when the spirit wants to posit the synthesis and freedom looks down into its own possibility, laying hold of finiteness to support itself.

Freedom succumbs [*segner*] in this dizziness. Further than this, psychology can and will not go.

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<sup>954</sup> See Ettore Rocca *Kierkegaard*, (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 2015), 154.

<sup>955</sup> *SKS* 11, 145 / *SUD*, 29.

<sup>956</sup> Westphal, “Divine Givenness and Self-Givenness in Kierkegaard”, in Jeffrey Hanson (ed.), *Kierkegaard as Phenomenologist: An Experiment*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2010), 39-56; 47.

In that very moment everything is changed, and freedom, when it again rises sees that it is guilty. Between these two moments lies the leap, which no science has explained and which no science can explain.<sup>957</sup>

the spirit, when it is about to be posited in the synthesis, or, more correctly, when it is about to posit the synthesis as the spirit's (freedom's) possibility in the individuality, expresses itself as anxiety, so here the future in turn is the eternal's (freedom's) possibility in the individuality expressed as anxiety. As freedom's possibility manifests itself for freedom, freedom succumbs [*segner*], and temporality emerges in the same way as sensuousness in its significance as sinfulness.<sup>958</sup>

In these passages there is thus both a possibility of freedom (anxiety), but there is also a freedom that has already been placed, to which the possibility of freedom manifests itself. This existing freedom is anthropomorphised. It “acts,” “looks,” “grasps,” “succumbs,” “rises,” and “becomes guilty”, referring to the human subject or self. Haufniensis describes how the self, or freedom, in trying to become itself and actualise its synthesis, or its self-relating, and thus its freedom, faints from the dizziness of freedom's endless possibilities. In order to steady itself, it ends up grasping only one side of itself; its finitude. With this, the self-relation becomes a misrelation because the synthesis breaks down and freedom is lost—but it is lost through freedom. When the self returns from its fainting spell, it sees that it is guilty and, as Haufniensis states, “the opposite of freedom is guilt, and it is the greatness of freedom that it always has to do only with itself, that in its possibility it projects guilt and accordingly posits it by itself. And if guilt is posited actually, freedom posits it by itself.”<sup>959</sup> In other words, the self as and through freedom, posits its guilt—its unfreedom—and in this way the self becomes an expression of anxiety, of hobbled freedom, which is a freedom

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<sup>957</sup> SKS 4, 365-366 / CA, 61.

<sup>958</sup> SKS 4, 394 / CA, 91.

<sup>959</sup> SKS 4, 410 / CA, 108.

bound by itself. For Martensen the possibility of negating one's freedom is a possibility that must be passed through to actualise real freedom, but for Haufniensis the negation of freedom becomes a sudden stumbling block upon which the psychological-philosophical sphere is annihilated:

The sense in which creation sank into corruption through Adam's sin, how freedom was posited by the fact that its misuse was posited and thus cast a reflection of possibility and a trembling of complicity over creation, the sense in which this had to take place because man is a synthesis whose most extreme opposites were posited and whose one opposite, precisely on account of man's sin, became a far more extreme opposite than it was before—all this has no place in a psychological deliberation but belongs in dogmatics.<sup>960</sup>

Returning to Martensen's treatment of freedom we find a number of interesting overlaps in language. Since true freedom is oriented towards the good, Martensen defines virtue as the free will's orientation towards the ideal, and or what Martensen terms "striving freedom".<sup>961</sup> But precisely because it is striving, and because there is thus still a contrast between the ideal and the actual, "it cannot be avoided that virtue collides with the world around it in conflict and freedom is entangled [*indvikles*] in the antinomy between τα ἐφ' ἡμῖν and τα ἐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν [those things which are within our power and those things which are not within our power]".<sup>962</sup> It is noteworthy that Martensen here, like Haufniensis, uses the language of a bound or entangled freedom, although he uses the term "*indviklet*" rather than "*hildet*". The immediate way that the human subject might try to get out of this antinomy that entangles freedom is to "soothe itself with the thought that the will is capable of *something*,"<sup>963</sup> and that it cannot be required to do something that exceeds its ability. In other words the human will looks to its own capability and freedom. However, Martensen denies this position as he

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<sup>960</sup> *SKS* 4, 362-363 / *CA*, 58.

<sup>961</sup> *GMS*, 75 / *BHK*, 295. See also, *GMS*, 49 / *BHK*, 281.

<sup>962</sup> *GMS*, 73 / *BHK*, 293 (translation modified. Thompson translates "*indvikles*" with "bound").

<sup>963</sup> *GMS*, 76 / *BHK*, 295.

argues it would mitigate the absolute demand of ideality, and virtue would have to be compromised because of the human being's natural frailty. Rather Martensen claims this antinomy is solved in the "standpoint of the ideal", which is where grace breaks through as freedom, and where striving comes to consist in "the successive sublation of freedom's 'something' by grace's 'everything'."<sup>964</sup>

However, because virtue is then on one hand an expression of the "will's most free self-determination," (because it is freedom striving towards the good, or absolute freedom), but on the other hand, an expression of the will's dependence on the original core gifted to the individual by divine grace, the antinomy between what is within and outside of our power is thus reformulated into virtue's own concept. This means virtue is no longer something which overcomes an external necessity through its own internal freedom—virtue is rather a "striving freedom, which relates itself to itself as to that which does not exist in its own power."<sup>965</sup> In other words, the self striving freely towards its ideal, becomes aware of that which is outside of its power and cannot get around this fact by appeals to its own freedom. Instead this must bring about an awareness of a greater power upon which freedom depends. Thus, Martensen shows that the ethical task of freedom points not just to what we can and should do, but also what we are unable to do, and thus to our dependence on an external power. However, Martensen is quick to offer a resolution to this antinomy between freedom and dependence, or the things that are in our power and the things that are outside our power, and it is a resolution he finds in Scripture, as Martensen quotes: "Παντα ὑμῶν ἐξί [All things within our power are permitted], says the Apostle to the Christians, and thereby sublates the dualism between τα ἐφ' ἡμῶν and τα ἐκ ἐφ' ἡμῶν [those things which are within our power and those things which are not within our power]. *All things* work for good for those who love

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<sup>964</sup> *GMS*, 78 / *BHK*, 297.

<sup>965</sup> *GMS*, 75 / *BHK*, 295.

God.”<sup>966</sup> Thus while freedom and dependence may show themselves to the human beings as an antinomy, it is an antinomy that through Christ and the Christian lifeview has been or will be resolved, and through Christ and the Christian lifeview dependence becomes true freedom.

Contrary to this, Haufniensis underlines that entangled [*hildet*] freedom is a freedom bound by *freedom* itself, not by something external to it, and thus there is no immediate way to resolve this boundness, or freedom’s unfreedom. Arne Grøn points out that a problem arises between the actualisation of freedom and the human self who must actualise it, and the problem is the *self* because it is in sin. This means that the task of becoming oneself is made even more difficult because the problem that stands between oneself and completing the task of becoming oneself, is *oneself*.<sup>967</sup> Thus, to become free from one’s own unfreedom requires becoming free from oneself—that is, the self must lose itself to become itself. In this way, Haufniensis suggests that freedom manifests itself in its negative determinant, unfreedom, as “unfreedom is a phenomenon of freedom.”<sup>968</sup> This particular structure is again an expression of Kierkegaard’s inverse dialectic, where in the religious sphere the positive becomes knowable through the negative. Whereas Martensen claims that the self must overcome the possibility of negating its essence of freedom and thereby sublimate this negative of unfreedom to substantiate freedom, Kierkegaard’s inverse dialectic underlines the importance of the dialectic remaining unsublated, for if the positive is knowable and distinguished by the negative, the negative should not simply be subsumed.<sup>969</sup> For the loss of self enables gaining the self.<sup>970</sup>

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<sup>966</sup> *GMS*, 74 / *BHK*, 294; Rom. 8:28.

<sup>967</sup> Grøn, *Concept of Anxiety*, 111.

<sup>968</sup> *SKS* 4, 436n / *CA*, 135n.

<sup>969</sup> Climacus, using the concept of guilt-consciousness as an example, notes that while it is a negative: “Guilt-consciousness is the decisive expression for the existential pathos in relation to an eternal happiness.” (*SKS* 7, 484 / *CUPI*, 533) Because of this, guilt appears ambiguously to the existing human self as something which simultaneously alleviates and festers. It festers as it is guilt, but it “alleviates because it is an expression of freedom, as this can be in the ethical-religious sphere, where the positive is distinguished by the negative, freedom by guilt, and not distinguished esthetically directly: freedom distinguished by freedom.” (*SKS* 7, 485 / *CUPI*, 534).

<sup>970</sup> Cf. Mt 10:39; Mt 16:25; Mk 8:35; Lk 9:24; Jn 12:25.

Anti-Climacus underlines this in *SUD* when observing that despair, that is, sin, is expressed in both a weak and defiant form: “*before God... in despair not to will to be oneself, or in despair to will to be oneself.*”<sup>971</sup> These two forms of conscious despair, or sin, are both forms of being unfree, but the problem expressed in both these forms is that they do not accept that they must lose themselves to become themselves. Within the weak form of despair, of not willing to be oneself, Anti-Climacus identifies a form in which the self cannot bear his own weakness, and Anti-Climacus imagines what might be said to this person:

This is a curious entanglement, a curious kind of knot, for the whole trouble is really the way your thinking twists around; otherwise it is even normal, in fact, this is precisely the course you have to take: you must go through despair of the self to the self... the self must be broken in order to become itself, but quit despairing over that.<sup>972</sup>

In other words, the self can never be perfect, but rather than despair and refuse to be oneself because of this, the self should instead expect to have to be broken before it can become itself. Conversely, the second form of despair is an expression of the self defiantly willing to be itself. Rather than despair over its limits, this defiant self refuses to lose itself or be broken: “it is unwilling to begin with losing itself but wills to be itself.”<sup>973</sup> However, here Anti-Climacus further complicates this task. For it is revealed that even to lose itself, the self requires assistance from the eternal, for it is “through the aid of the eternal the self has the courage to lose itself in order to win itself.”<sup>974</sup> For this reason, Anti-Climacus’ formula for the self free from despair is the following: “in relating itself to itself and in willing to be itself, the self rests [*grunder*] transparently in the power that established it”.<sup>975</sup> With this formulation, Anti-Climacus points to freedom being enabled through a power that established

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<sup>971</sup> *SKS* 11, 191 / *SUD*, 77.

<sup>972</sup> *SKS* 11, 179 / *SUD*, 65.

<sup>973</sup> *SKS* 11, 181 / *SUD*, 67.

<sup>974</sup> *SKS* 11, 181 / *SUD*, 67.

<sup>975</sup> *SKS* 11, 242 / *SUD*, 131. See also *SKS* 11, 196 / *SUD*, 82.

the self, and upon which the self is therefore dependent. Like Martensen, then, Anti-Climacus identifies the self as free in its grounding in God. In fact, as Thompson has astutely pointed out, Anti-Climacus's formula of self and faith in the original Danish ("*I at forholde sig til sig selv, og I at ville være sig selv grunder Selvet gjennemsigtigt I den Magt, som satte det,*") bears a striking resemblance to Martensen's definition of virtue or striving freedom ("It is virtue, the striving freedom, which relates itself to itself as to that which does not exist in its own power [*Det er Dyden, den stræbende Frihed, der forholder sig til sig selv som til et, der ikke står i dens egen Magt*]").<sup>976</sup>) Just as Martensen argues that the self's essential freedom originates in the Godhead, Anti-Climacus' self must ground itself in the power which posited it to be free; and just as for Martensen, so too for Anti-Climacus dependence on God becomes true freedom.

In *PF* this observation is made more explicitly, as Climacus describes how the learner is in untruth, which is unfreedom, through his or her "own fault".<sup>977</sup> Now this learner may on one hand "seem to be free, for to be on one's own certainly is freedom"—however, on the other hand, the learner is "unfree and bound and excluded, because to be free from the truth is indeed to be excluded, and to be excluded by oneself is indeed to be bound."<sup>978</sup> In other words, Climacus notes that an arbitrary freedom is not true freedom; being free from the truth is not true freedom. Furthermore, having bound oneself makes it impossible to free oneself, for the learner "uses the power of freedom in the service of unfreedom, since he is indeed freely in it, and in this way the combined power of unfreedom grows and makes him the slave of sin."<sup>979</sup> Therefore, Climacus introduces the need for a saviour:

Let us call him a *saviour*, for he does indeed save the learner from unfreedom, saves him from himself. Let us call him a *deliverer*, for he does indeed deliver the person who had imprisoned

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<sup>976</sup> *GMS*, 75 / *BHK*, 295. See Thompson's discussion of the similarity of these statements, in his "Introduction" to *BHK*, 68.

<sup>977</sup> *SKS* 4, 224 / *PF*, 15.

<sup>978</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>979</sup> *SKS* 4, 225-226 / *PF*, 17.

himself, and no one is so dreadfully imprisoned, and no captivity is so impossible to break out of as that in which the individual holds himself captive! And yet, even this does not say enough, for by his unfreedom he had indeed become guilty of something, and if the teacher gives him the condition and the truth, then he is, of course, a *reconciler* who takes away the wrath that lay over the incurred guilt.<sup>980</sup>

Similarly, Martensen writes in his *Dogmatics* that the universal phenomenon of sin must be explained by “a human act of freedom,”<sup>981</sup> which has not only alienated the human from God, “but also from its own, from the ideal of freedom.”<sup>982</sup> This contradiction between God and humankind then can only be resolved through a sacrifice brought by the human race, but which the human race are simultaneously incapable of making.<sup>983</sup> Climacus’ saviour and Martensen’s sacrifice are of course both references to Christ. For both Martensen and Kierkegaard Christ *is* freedom for it is his sacrifice and forgiveness of sins that enables freedom after unfreedom through dependence. However, while for Martensen this is ultimately an expression of unity, for Kierkegaard it is an absolute paradox.

## 6.2 Christ as Freedom

In *Christian Ethics* Martensen diagnoses the current age as suffering from a malady caused by its devotion to a “too” free freedom; a purely human freedom divorced from divine dependency. Humanity has been declared free because it has obtained a whole host of so-called freedoms, such as freedom of thought; freedom of religion; and civil or political freedom. The consequence of this perceived, yet inadequate emancipation, Martensen argues,

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<sup>980</sup> *SKS* 4, 226 / *PF*, 17.

<sup>981</sup> *CD* §93, 210.

<sup>982</sup> *CD* §94, 211.

<sup>983</sup> *CD* §158, 363. Cf. Anselm’s *Cur Deus Homo?*

is a loss of individuality and true freedom, which Martensen holds to be proof that human freedom is not enough in itself, but must be dependent on God through Christ:

a great multitude of individuals, in the midst of the world of freedom... under restless labour in the service of emancipation, lose their individuality, drowned in society, in the social and political whirlpools which pantheistically overwhelm them, wash away and obliterate their originality. 'Born as originals, they die as copies'. The effaced and obliterated being of a large proportion of individuals, the flightiness of others, the restless toil and anxiety at work, joined to disquietude and haste in enjoyment, the never-ceasing criticism—these particularities, which our age exhibits...are evidences that human freedom cannot suffice to itself, but requires to find rest in the right relation of dependence. Only one power in society can free the individual, namely, the Gospel.<sup>984</sup>

Martensen terms the condition that follows from this untrue form of freedom “the unhappiness of emancipation”,<sup>985</sup> which manifests itself in the human beings as a pain, which, if it could speak, would utter its desire for a “liberation from freedom, the desire for an authority [*Myndighed*], to which it wholly and unconditionally could subordinate itself, a love, to which it unconditionally could surrender itself.”<sup>986</sup> Instead of saying with Paul to the Galatians: “I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God,” Martensen muses that this unhappy freedom wants to say: “I through freedom am dead to freedom that I might live in obedience’s and love’s dependence unto God.”<sup>987</sup> Martensen believes this secular freedom is condemned to permanent restlessness and conflict as the human being, despite all its knowledge, creativity, and critical ability “carries a monstrous vacuum within itself, which can only be filled by the faith in God in Christ”.<sup>988</sup>

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<sup>984</sup> *CEa* §71, 304-305.

<sup>985</sup> *CEa* §71, 304.

<sup>986</sup> *CEa* §71, 303-304.

<sup>987</sup> *CEa* §71, 304.

<sup>988</sup> *CEa*, §71, 303.

For Martensen, Christ is absolute freedom not because he is a contradiction, but because he constitutes unity. Already in his dissertation, Martensen defines Christ as the absolute mediator or unifier of God and humankind:

If the true idea of God is the Idea of the absolute personality, then there appears also that historical individual with whom the Idea has entered into a perfect union... as he reveals the Idea he reveals himself, so that his person is a revelation of the divine mystery itself. But in this way the entire human race, in order to be personalized, must be subordinated to him, for as a God-human he is not one among the many but is the absolute individual, the central monad. Since the absolute freedom which stands not only over all universal and abstract determinations, but also over all finite monads, constitutes his essence, he not only reveals the principle of the human race but is this very principle.<sup>989</sup>

In other words, Christ, who constituted by absolute freedom, is not just in perfect union with God, but is also “the central monad” and principle of the whole human race. In *Outline* it is similarly argued that Christ is the absolute mediator between God and humankind, who alone is capable of redeeming the human will from its natural depravity, for he is the unity of the eternal and historical; divine and human, and is absolute freedom.<sup>990</sup> In his *Dogmatics*, Martensen explains that the contradiction between God and the world could be resolved if the human race were able to sacrifice sinfulness itself and “die away from its sinful I-ness [*Jeghed*] and in unconditional obedience again turn itself to God.”<sup>991</sup> However, the human race is not capable of bringing this sacrifice because its freedom has been divorced from its divine source and is thus unable to submit to God. Instead Martensen points out that a mediator is needed who can mediate and explain the transfiguration from “the created relation of dependence into the infinite relation of freedom.”<sup>992</sup> For this mediation and

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<sup>989</sup>MSA, 60 / BHK, 113.

<sup>990</sup> See GMS, 53-54 / BHK, 283.

<sup>991</sup>CD §158, 363.

<sup>992</sup> CD §15, 22.

transfiguration to be possible, a perfect sacrifice is required capable of satisfying a double demand, but which the sinful race cannot fulfil as it requires that the

human itself must precisely, through the deepest act of freedom, take back its sinful development and begin a new development in love, obedience and justice; and this human act of freedom must equally be the deepest act of grace, God's own act in the sinful history. This demand is nowhere solved apart from in the gospel: 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself' (2 Cor 5:19).<sup>993</sup>

Thereby Christ is the way in which to enable this perfect sacrifice because he represents both this human act of freedom and the act of grace, as the Incarnation is God's own act of grace and love. Martensen underlines the humanity of Christ in order to underline how Christ enables the perfect unity of God and humans. However, Martensen's descriptions at times highlight the human side so strongly, often simply referring to *human* freedom and *human* nature instead of to Christ specifically, that it gives the impression that Martensen is trying to show that the human in some way participates in his or her own salvation. For example, Martensen suggests that salvation is just as much "in the deepest sense humankind's own act, for it is God in in the human nature, it is the second Adam, who satisfies the holy demand of righteousness for the human race."<sup>994</sup> Moreover, Martensen suggests that Christ's pronouncement that "I and the Father are One" is an "energetic statement of the unity of God and the human, through which Jesus, as a Palestinian Socrates, guides the human into their own interiority [*Indre*]."<sup>995</sup> Unlike Kierkegaard's first thesis from *Concept of Irony* that Socrates' and Christ's similarities lie in their dissimilarities, Martensen remarkably here makes Christ conform to the normative example of Socrates, a human philosopher. More generally too, Martensen seems to conflate Christ's activity with human activity in a number

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<sup>993</sup> CD §158, 363-364.

<sup>994</sup> CD, §159, 364.

<sup>995</sup> CD §128, 299; Jn 10:30.

of passages. Martensen for example writes: “As true as the act of sacrifice is the act of the new Adam, just as true it is that this act is an act of human nature, the human freedom’s own, most inner act, but it is only the act of human freedom insofar as it is God’s act of merciful grace.”<sup>996</sup> And in the next paragraph, Martensen suggests that Golgotha, the place of the Cross, broke with the powers of fate “because the human nature here through a holy act of freedom sacrificed the earthly ideals, willingly relinquished this world’s glory for a kingdom which is not of this world.”<sup>997</sup> Yet Martensen avoids explicitly articulating the human effect on salvation by underlining repeatedly that human sacrificing freedom is only possible because of divine grace.<sup>998</sup>

As Jon Stewart has noted, Anti-Climacus’ emphasis that Christianity is concerned with the individual therefore seems to be truly targeted at Martensen and his view that Christ is a unifying representative of the collective human race as the principle of absolute freedom. Martensen thus understands Christ the Incarnation conceptually as an idea, whereas for Anti-Climacus Christ “is a paradox and a mystery, which cannot be understood.”<sup>999</sup> In the third section of *PC*, Anti-Climacus discusses what it means that the Incarnation is a paradox for the freedom offered through Christ. Reflecting on John 12:32: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all to myself,” Anti-Climacus considers the meaning of “drawing to oneself” [*at drage til sig*] as opposed to deceiving [*bedrage*], and underlines that there is a deep significance and upbuilding truth to this wordplay. For Christ to truly be able to draw to himself, he must first of all be a something in himself or a something that is in himself, as something that is not in itself would not be able to draw to itself. This is the case with the sensuous, the worldly, the momentary, which in themselves are empty, or nothing. What can truly be said to draw to itself must be “something higher, more noble, which draws the lower

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<sup>996</sup> *CD* §167, 371.

<sup>997</sup> *CD* §168, 372.

<sup>998</sup> *CD* §168, 372-373.

<sup>999</sup> Stewart, *Kierkegaard’s Relation to Hegel Reconsidered*, 568.

to itself—that is, truly to draw to itself is to draw upward, not draw downward. When the lower draws the higher to itself, it does not draw, it draws downward, it deceives [bedrager].”<sup>1000</sup> Anti-Climacus then asks *what* is to be drawn—for if it is a self, it cannot be drawn or subsumed into that which drew it in a way where the drawn self loses its own existence, for this would again be a deception [bedragen]. Instead, Anti-Climacus’ point is that when *what* is drawn is a self too, Christ’s drawing to himself must mean “first to help it [the self that is drawn] to become itself in order to draw it to itself [to Christ].”<sup>1001</sup> Or, as Anti-Climacus elaborates, “it means in and through drawing it to itself to help it become itself.”<sup>1002</sup> Therefore, Anti-Climacus concludes that when Christ speaks of drawing to himself it has a double meaning: Christ must first establish or make the self, that is to be drawn, to then be able to draw it to himself. To be a self at all means to be this redoubling, which is why drawing to itself is drawing a doubleness to itself: “a self is a redoubling, is freedom; therefore in this relation truly to draw to itself means to posit a choice.”<sup>1003</sup> Whereas a magnet that draws iron to itself does not include a choice, Anti-Climacus argues that a self can only truly draw another self to itself through a choice—through freedom. Because the human being is a self, and thus is freedom, Christ primarily wishes to

help every human being to become a self, requires this of him first and foremost, requires that he, by repenting, become a self, in order to draw him to himself. He wants to draw the human being to himself, but in order truly to draw him to himself he wants to draw him only as a free being to himself, that is, through a choice. Therefore he, who abased himself, therefore he, the abased, will from on high draw the human being to himself. Yet he is lowliness and in loftiness one and the same.<sup>1004</sup>

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<sup>1000</sup> SKS 12, 163 / PC, 159.

<sup>1001</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1002</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1003</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1004</sup> SKS 12, 164 / PC, 160.

Anti-Climacus underlines that although Christ is lowliness and loftiness at the same time, the choice that is to be made is not a choice between Christ as either low or lofty, “for Christ is not divided, he is one and the same.”<sup>1005</sup> But Christ is also a composite, and therefore a contradiction—a paradox. This in turn “specifically prevents choosing one of the two parts, while both parts...make it impossible to be drawn to him without a choice.”<sup>1006</sup> Thus it is precisely the fact that Christ is a contradiction, the Absolute Paradox, that enables the self’s freedom. If Christ were one or the other, he would draw the self to himself without allowing the self a choice. But since Christ wants to aid the human in becoming a self, and thus becoming freedom, this cannot be the case. Further explicating this necessity of the paradox for freedom, Anti-Climacus writes:

To draw to oneself means to draw to oneself through a contrast [*Modsætning*], through a choice—therefore not immediately but mediately. Then the choice...does not consist in choosing either one side of the contrast or the other but in choosing a unity of both sides, which cannot be done in immediacy. Thus he cannot be said to *draw* to himself only from on high if he were only the highly uplifted one and had never been anything else. But who is the speaker? Is it the uplifted one who is the speaker? By no means... the *I* speaking is not the uplifted one. I, that is, I, the abased one, when I am lifted up will draw all to myself. The uplifted one will do it, but the abased one is the one who said that he will do it. If the abased one had not lived, we would indeed not have known anything about the uplifted one.<sup>1007</sup>

I take Anti-Climacus to express that there is a tension at play here—Christ on one hand draws us and helps us become selves and free, but he draws us through the contradiction of his contrasting lowliness and loftiness, which requires the self to choose the unity of his dual, contradictory divine and human natures, for “the contradiction confronts [the person] with a

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<sup>1005</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1006</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1007</sup> SKS 12, 164-165 / PC, 161.

choice and as he is choosing, together with what he chooses, he himself is disclosed.”<sup>1008</sup>

Thereby Anti-Climacus makes Christ as the paradox a condition for the self’s self-determination and freedom, underlining the paradoxicality of the fact that dependence on Christ brings freedom.

However, the freedom that Christ brings about does not free the human being from having to continually strive towards the task of becoming a self, and becoming a Christian. Pattison underlines that Christ’s forgiveness of our sins is “not a matter of just being cleared of all charges in a forensic sense, but of finding the freedom to become who we are”.<sup>1009</sup> Therefore Christianity is the radical communication not of the self’s freedom “but rather the self’s dependence on Christ as a condition of being able to become what...it potentially is.”<sup>1010</sup> Similarly, Gregory Beabout points out even after Christ frees the individual from sin, the human is still able to misuse freedom. However, Christian revelation shows that after the Fall

self-actualization will only be possible with the divine aid of redemptive grace. This grace makes self-actualization possible, for it is Christ’s atonement that puts one in right relation with oneself, with others and with God. It is not the abolition of selfhood, nor does it eliminate free choice.<sup>1011</sup>

In this way Christ does not take the task away, but depending on him is the condition for us to take up this task, although grace is required to do so.

In responding to the question of how freedom is possible after unfreedom, or simply sin, both Martensen and Kierkegaard thereby point to dependence on Christ as true freedom. However, whereas freedom as dependence through Christ is for Martensen an expression of the human’s original unity with God and eventual reunification, it continues to have

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<sup>1008</sup> SKS 12, 131 / PC, 127.

<sup>1009</sup> Pattison, *The Philosophy of Kierkegaard*, (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 160.

<sup>1010</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>1011</sup> Gregory Beabout, *Freedom and Its Misuses: Kierkegaard on Anxiety and Despair*, (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1996), 157-158.

paradoxical resonance in Kierkegaard's view. Turning to the relationship between freedom and grace in the final section, we shall see that while Martensen emphasises the human being's divine and free essence or core, Kierkegaard instead posits the human's becoming nothing before God as being the right relation and response to the gift of grace.

### 6.3 Freedom and Grace

Martensen's presentation of the relationship between grace and freedom further clarifies how for Martensen true freedom as dependence is an expression of unity, not paradox, as he argues that human freedom is a composite of autonomous self-determination and free choice, and total grace-dependence.<sup>1012</sup> Martensen argues that while Christianity has solved the opposition between freedom and grace, it still appears to the human being as the deepest antinomy of life, which must be resolved by each individual human being in their actual lived existence. Martensen therefore champions a mediation of these two sides of freedom:

It was a serious misconception on the part of the old Pelagianism that looked upon the freedom of choice as the whole of freedom and that made the essence of freedom to consist in the power of deciding otherwise at any moment of time regarding any act. But it was no less a misconception on the part of Augustinianism which denied the reality of freedom of choice in toto, instead of realising it as a necessary point of transition from grace to actual freedom.<sup>1013</sup>

Instead, for Martensen, freedom is not truly complete unless it mediates free choice and grace, a mediation made possible through Christ, as Christ's own god-human development is the example par excellence of freedom and grace's unity. That is not to say that Martensen regards this mediation as straightforward or free from conflict. Rather this union of freedom and grace only becomes true when it is developed through "the profound difference, through

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<sup>1012</sup> *GMS*, 16 / *BHK*, 262.

<sup>1013</sup> *CD* §204, 429.

an inner crisis, and reciprocal conflict [*Vexelkamp*] between the two factors”.<sup>1014</sup> This can be considered a restatement of Martensen’s unity-in-difference model, which becomes particularly evident in the moment of conversion, where, Martensen argues, grace is not simply an irresistible force or omnipotence, “but respects human freedom and leaves it with a moment of choice, of decision, an either—or.”<sup>1015</sup> At the same time, Martensen reaffirms that it is “the immanent grace of the fallen human nature,” which seems to be the theological reformulation of the *Outline*’s essential freedom or divine essence of the human, that enables human freedom to surrender itself to grace “to open itself to it like the flower that opens itself to the beams of the sun.”<sup>1016</sup> While the acceptance of grace requires the assistance of this immanent grace, Martensen firmly underlines that human freedom, or the subjective human will, is real because it can deny grace. Human freedom however *only* has the power to reject grace, not to surrender to it, for here the human must be met by or guided by God:

For when [the human will] submits itself, it does so by means of the inner divine spark, which is inseparable from freedom’s essence of the divine image and must be defined as grace in nature. When it however opposes grace, then it is only an expression of the merely human will as such, which separates itself from its own essence of its divine image.<sup>1017</sup>

By positing the human’s immanent grace and “inner divine spark”, both of which are a reflection of the human essential divine freedom, Martensen is able to affirm the activity of both divine sovereignty, providence and grace, as well as human freedom. Martensen envisions the reciprocal relationship between grace and freedom and their unity as a continual task for the Christian life. According to him, it is not until the human life is wholly a life in God that a true unity of grace and freedom occurs. Instead, Martensen suggests that as the

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<sup>1014</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1015</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1016</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1017</sup> *CD* §204, 430.

human being develops in his or her Christian character, the dynamic reciprocity and interplay between divine grace and human freedom will continually be expressed, where not only grace seeks freedom, but where freedom reaches for grace and works towards its encounter with grace. While Martensen admits that the total unity is still more promissory than actual, he allows that the unity of freedom and grace reveals itself in the glimpses we can have of what he terms the “most complete moments of Christian life.”<sup>1018</sup> These moments Martensen describes as the moments when the human being is equally determined and self-determining; when God’s actions in the human being are as much the actions of the human being in God.

In his later *Christian Ethics*, Martensen continues to negotiate this relation between human freedom and divine grace. Martensen repeats that the unification with God is the end-goal for human striving; however, this union could never occur unless God takes the initiative and meets the human being:

Where no revelation is acknowledged, and thus also no living interplay [*Vexelforhold*] between God and man, neither can there be any question of union with God, because man then only stands in relation to the divine but *impersonal law*, but not to the *personal God* Himself... But if the initiative to personal union proceeds from the personal God Himself, then the first relation of man to God is the religious... The religious relation is the relation of man’s dependence [*Afhængighedsforhold*] on God; the ethical relation is the relation of freedom [*Frihedsforholdet*], which, though from at first entangled [*indslynget*] in the relation of dependence develops itself to relative self-dependence.<sup>1019</sup>

He therefore also argues that in order for this relation of dependence to be a free relation, and for theonomy to be free theonomy, the human must be granted a relative autonomy through which ethics, reason, and society can be developed relatively.<sup>1020</sup> Thus while Martensen

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<sup>1018</sup> *CD* §205, 431.

<sup>1019</sup> *CEa* §5, 18-19.

<sup>1020</sup> *CEa* §6, 22.

distinguishes between the religious relation of dependence and the ethical relation of freedom, ultimately these are brought together through his theonomical concept of freedom, in which God and the human being are united through the reciprocal-dialectical mediation of their differences. Reflecting his dialectic of unity-in-difference, Martensen thus seeks to articulate a mediation of freedom and grace to grant the human being at least a relative freedom and participation in bringing about not just their relation to God, but even their own salvation.

As underlined above, the process and task of becoming a self is for Kierkegaard inherently linked with the loss of one's self, because as an unfree freedom, or simply because of sin, the self stands in the way of its task of becoming freedom—becoming a self. As Stephen Backhouse has noted, the Kierkegaardian must therefore face freedom in annihilation: “To have the possibility of the God-relationship is to be free and to be free is to understand oneself as a sinner—as nothing”<sup>1021</sup> before God. Whereas Martensen uses freedom as dependence not only to establish the human's inseparable *imago dei* and inner unity with God, but also to grant the human relative participation in their own salvation, for Kierkegaard freedom as dependence ultimately entails the annihilation of the human self, for it means becoming nothing before that on which one depends; that is, God. In *PF*, Climacus describes how freedom paradoxically affirms not one's autonomy, but rather one's servanthood: “But freedom, that is the wonderful lamp...And look, the spirit of the lamp is a servant...but the person who rubs the wonderful lamp of freedom becomes a servant—the spirit is the Lord.”<sup>1022</sup> In *EUD*, Kierkegaard directly states that the human “is capable of nothing... this is the annihilation of a person, and the annihilation is his truth.”<sup>1023</sup> The reason this annihilation is also the truth of the human is that it reveals the right position before God.

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<sup>1021</sup> Backhouse, *Kierkegaard's Critique of Christian Nationalism*, 97.

<sup>1022</sup> *SKS* 7, 129 / *CUPI*, 138.

<sup>1023</sup> *SKS* 5, 301-302 / *EUD*, 309.

Pattison points out that only in the recognition of our nothingness, that we learn that God alone is capable of all things,<sup>1024</sup> and it is through becoming nothing that the human “is restored to its right relation both to creation and to the creator.”<sup>1025</sup> Realising that one causes one’s own unfreedom and is unable to free oneself from this unfreedom, from sin, points to God’s unconditional ability to do everything, and ultimately means that becoming nothing before God and freely submitting to him is to be placed in the right relationship with him. Much like philosophy’s peak is also its downfall, the human’s annihilation is his or her restoring truth, as human freedom is capable of nothing, but God’s grace everything.

However, not all Kierkegaard commentators would agree with such a reading, and a number have instead suggested that Kierkegaard’s concept of freedom can be interpreted as being more similar to that of Martensen. Acknowledging a dialectic between divine grace and human freedom, Louis Pojman for example argues that for Kierkegaard human freedom has “a role to play in salvation which, although quantitatively may seem miniscule in comparison to God’s part, is still decisive in the final analysis”.<sup>1026</sup> Similarly a few years later, M. Jamie Ferreira reads Kierkegaard as viewing the task of becoming a Christian to be essentially down to the human’s “active imaginative reconceptualization and reorientation”.<sup>1027</sup> It is a task where human activity plays an autonomous and genuine role, for Ferreira argues that for Kierkegaard the dichotomy between God’s grace and human activity is a “false and unnecessary dichotomy”<sup>1028</sup> that is both illegitimate and deficient.<sup>1029</sup> Ferreira’s solution to the debate of human freedom and grace in the transition to faith is to develop a form of

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<sup>1024</sup> George Pattison, *Kierkegaard and the Crisis of Faith: An Introduction to His Thought* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997), 104.

<sup>1025</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>1026</sup> Louis Pojman “Kierkegaard on Freedom and the Scala Paradisi,” *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 18:3, 1985, 141-148; 147.

<sup>1027</sup> M. Jamie Ferreira, *Transforming Vision: Imagination and Will in Kierkegaardian Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 149.

<sup>1028</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1029</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

imaginative, non-volitional willing or imaginative activity.<sup>1030</sup> Although she acknowledges that Kierkegaard repeatedly reminds us that human beings can do nothing, Ferreira also suggests that we should view this reminder as something that undermines “any useful contrast between human activity and God’s graceful gift.”<sup>1031</sup>

Michelle Kosch objects to reading Kierkegaard as espousing a concept of human freedom that cannot of its “own power” extract itself from its unfreedom, but “expects to be lifted out of this state by divine grace—lifted out of a condition in which he cannot even though he ought”.<sup>1032</sup> With such a concept of freedom, ethical action depends on divine assistance or grace, and religious conversion “is motivated by the recognition of one’s own ethical impotence”.<sup>1033</sup> According to Kosch, this view “has very little to do with anything Kierkegaard has to say about what the Christian life involves.”<sup>1034</sup> She does not deny that forgiveness and grace “figure ineliminably” in Kierkegaard’s religious view, but suggests they do so “in the wrong sort of way,”<sup>1035</sup> since Kierkegaard’s concept of grace does not get rid of the ethical demands. On the contrary, Kierkegaard’s concept of grace makes the ethical demand much harder. As a result of this reading of Kierkegaard’s freedom, Kosch argues that Kierkegaard puts forward a non-necessary concept of sin and she writes that he argues in *CA* “that it is a pernicious mistake to treat sin as necessary...because it amounts to exempting people from blame for it.”<sup>1036</sup> Intriguingly, Kosch’s reading leaves us with a Kierkegaard who looks much more like Martensen. In fact, this could be said for Pojman’s and Ferreira’s interpretations too. By seeking a philosophical explanation of Kierkegaard’s thought, they, like Martensen, seek to emphasise the participation of human freedom or activity in faith.

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<sup>1030</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>1031</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

<sup>1032</sup> Michelle Kosch, *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 163.

<sup>1033</sup> *Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>1034</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>1035</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1036</sup> *Ibid.*, 168-169.

These readings thus fail to take into account the way in which Kierkegaard's concept of freedom reflects the gap of the philosophical and the religious-Christian perspective, holding these spheres in dialogical tension.

By contrast, Kierkegaard's concept of freedom is modulated by the theological doctrine of divine grace. Kierkegaard underlines that the self, which makes itself unfree, must lose itself in order to gain itself. Just as philosophy reaches its peak when it recognises its limits, it is when the self recognises its nothingness before God that it becomes oriented to its true and right relation of dependence on divine freeing grace. But where does this emphasis on divine grace and our nothingness leave us?

Anti-Climacus importantly describes how spiritual life does not involve passivity or tasklessness: "In the life of the spirit there is no standing still [*Stilstand*] (really no state [*Tilstand*], either; everything is actuation)."<sup>1037</sup> The point is that human existence can never be static and being a Christian is *becoming* a Christian. As we have seen, it is a constant striving. William C. Davis points out that although Anti-Climacus in *SUD* defines faith as "resting", the original Danish text speaks not of rest as peace or inactivity, but as "*Grund*" or ground: "*Grund* does not refer to the absence of activity, it refers to the underlying basis. To rest in the sense intended by Anti-Climacus is actively to make God the foundation for edification."<sup>1038</sup> Westphal offers a helpful nuance to Davis' point, suggesting that the point is to "locate that striving in a place of rest, namely grace."<sup>1039</sup> Westphal comments that it is precisely the dialectics of striving and rest—sin and grace that make it impossible to reduce Christianity to a "showpiece of gentle comfort."<sup>1040</sup> In his editor's preface to *PC*, Kierkegaard states that the requirement for being a Christian must be heard in order to "learn not only to

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<sup>1037</sup> *SKS*, 11, 206 / *SUD*, 94.

<sup>1038</sup> William C. Davis, "Kierkegaard on the Transformation of the Individual in Conversion," *Religious Studies* 28:2, 1992, 145-163; 156.

<sup>1039</sup> Westphal, *Kierkegaard's Concept of Faith*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2014), 254.

<sup>1040</sup> *Ibid.*

resort [*henflye*] to *grace* but to resort to it in relation to the use of *grace*.”<sup>1041</sup> Calling people to resort to grace to use grace seems like a rather roundabout, even paradoxical, way of emphasising human action. However, this appeal is encircled by Christ’s invitation in Mt 11:28: “Come here, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest,”<sup>1042</sup> as the title of the first part of *PC*, and also the subheading for the section “The Invitation” are both based on this verse. This verse is deeply juxtaposed to any demand of striving, and its bracketed position around Kierkegaard’s appeal seems to convey that any human activity must similarly be encircled by divine grace. In other words, the task or requirement of becoming a Christian self ultimately points to its impossibility and the need for human beings to resort to grace. With this Kierkegaard seeks to “jack up”<sup>1043</sup> the price of grace precisely by underlining the difficulty of the task. The purpose then of task is not to exalt human freedom and activity. Rather it is to make the individual Christian realise and experience the true meaning of grace: that grace is not cheap, but that it came at a terrifying price, and is yet made a free gift.

#### **6.4 A Dialogue about Freedom: Some Perspectives and Trajectories**

Martensen’s and Kierkegaard’s shared view that freedom is dependence thus in actual fact means very different things within the thought of each thinker. Martensen is committed to demonstrating why the identity of true freedom and divine dependence is not a dissonant or contradictory statement, but can be explained through his speculative-theological approach as an expression of unity. This interplay Martensen underlines between human and divine freedom reflects the dialectical interplay he seeks to establish between philosophy and dogmatics, as dogmatics must be seen as the condition for philosophy, just as grace is made

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<sup>1041</sup> *SKS* 12, 15 / *PC*, 7.

<sup>1042</sup> *SKS* 12, 13 / *PC*, 5. *SKS* 12, 21 / *PC*, 11.

<sup>1043</sup> *SKS* 22, 241, NB12:162 / *KJN* 6, 243.

the condition of freedom. However, just as his dialectic between philosophy and dogmatics seems to break down, so does this strict distinction between freedom and grace, as Martensen seeks to endow human freedom with a relative level of participation in its own salvation.

Contrastively, Kierkegaard's maintaining of the paradoxicality of freedom being dependence highlights philosophy and Christianity's incommensurability. While, as Haufniensis shows, philosophical-psychological analysis can get us far in terms of understanding the self's task of freedom, it cannot explain how the human being makes itself unfree with its freedom. Philosophical inquiry runs aground on sin, which stands as the inexplicable gap between the human's bound freedom and freedom through dependence on God. As Kierkegaard remarks in a journal entry on freedom,

Strange as it seems, one must thus say that only fear and trembling, only constraint, can help a pers. into freedom... But how is scientific scholarship supposed to help? In no way, no way. It releases all the tension in calm, objective observation—and then freedom becomes some inexplicable something... Here it is just as with believing and speculating, and as Joh. Climacus has said, just like sawing wood: It is one thing to make oneself objectively light and something else to make oneself subjectively heavy: and then people want to do both at once.<sup>1044</sup>

In contrast to scientific objective-philosophical approach and its “calming of tensions”, Kierkegaard makes these tensions his focus through his similarity-in-dissimilarity model, bringing out the ambiguous intermediate terms. This is not to dismiss thought, but to save thought through insisting on the complexity that arises from considering concepts as these are experienced in lived existence, and thereby opening up spaces that go beyond objective-scientific inquiry. Because of Martensen's emphasis on the continuity between philosophy and theology, he acknowledges, but does not remain in the antinomies, fragmentation, and

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<sup>1044</sup> SKS 23, 65, NB 15:93 / KJN 7, 63.

conflict of human life, but explains them as moments in the process towards absolute freedom, which have been, and will be resolved by grace.

Nevertheless, the broad similarities found in the theme, language, and motifs of Kierkegaard and Martensen's concepts of freedom are not just testament to Kierkegaard's deep engagement with Martensen's thought, but also to the fact that Kierkegaard takes Martensen's view serious enough to require response or indeed correction. In many ways, their concepts of freedom are so similar that it seems unlikely that Kierkegaard was not aware of this fact. And yet, it has also been shown that Kierkegaard's concept of freedom forms an important departure from Martensen's, as he radicalises the concept in a way that widens and deepens the gap between philosophy and Christianity; between God and human beings, in a way that does not simply underline the human's nothingness for the sake of it, but for the upbuilding emphasis on the costliness of grace.

What Kierkegaard's similarity-in-dissimilarity model attests to is that for dialogue to take place each participant of the dialogue and their views must be given space and respect. In a similar way then, by respectfully giving space to Martensen's view, we can learn from Martensen's and Kierkegaard's conversation, regardless of whom we might ultimately agree with. In fact, stepping back and considering the wider debate about the relation between the philosophical and religious spheres, we see that both Martensen and Kierkegaard ultimately seek to enable a constructive conversation between these spheres from which we can draw. Although this thesis has shown how Kierkegaard's separation of the spheres ensures a meaningful and rich relationship between them, this is not to say that there is not still something appealing and directly tempting about Martensen's desire for the unity and harmony of these spheres. As has been insightfully suggested by Peter Gordon and Clare Carlisle, perhaps we do not have to pick sides or make any final judgements about who is right and who is wrong when reading two thinkers together. Gordon notes that he is

“disinclined to believe that philosophical arguments are ever settled once and for all. If they were...the history of ideas would have come to an end a long time ago.”<sup>1045</sup> The question of freedom is not solved with Martensen and Kierkegaard, just as the wider debate about philosophy and theology’s relationship does not end with them. Similarly, Carlisle questions whether we should have to make a choice between two thinkers, and asks whether it should be considered “incoherent to find truth in two philosophies that make different metaphysical claims, or to admire a philosophy that conflicts with one’s own opinions?”<sup>1046</sup>

In fact, Martensen’s concerns continue to resonate today, and as C.I. Scharling noted in 1928, as a thinker and observer of human existence, Martensen “belongs to the present and has something to say to it”.<sup>1047</sup> The French philosopher Emmanuel Falque has recently argued, in curiously Martensenian terms, that “today’s task is *to liberate theology by means of philosophy* in order to give dogma its double consistence, human according to the existential dimension of philosophy and transformed by God according to the theological dimension of the Resurrection”.<sup>1048</sup> Moreover, Falque’s view also seems to echo Kierkegaard’s insistence on the integrity and distinction of either sphere to ensure a meaningful dialogue, as Falque suggests that “one enters the other’s field in order to respect the boundaries,” and that “only a well-conducted battle can lead sometimes to true peace...An adversary is not vanquished by crushing him... Instead we study the adversary and, by dint of combat, come to know him.”<sup>1049</sup> Thus Falque presents a possible way of holding together Martensen’s and Kierkegaard’s approaches to this debate, suggesting that despite their differences, or indeed because of their differences, a balance or a dialogue

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<sup>1045</sup> Peter Gordon, *The Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), xiii.

<sup>1046</sup> Carlisle, *Philosophy of Becoming*, 132.

<sup>1047</sup> Scharling, *H. L. Martensen*, 147f.

<sup>1048</sup> Emmanuel Falque, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Borderlands of Philosophy and Theology*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 133.

<sup>1049</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

between their views is still achievable. Falque ultimately argues for what he calls a *principle of proportionality*, which holds that “the more we theologize, the better we philosophize”.<sup>1050</sup> But this exploration of Martensen and Kierkegaard also demonstrates the opposite, that the more we philosophise, the better we theologise. That is not to say that philosophy validates theology, or theology in some way completes philosophy. For Kierkegaard it is Martensen’s poor dialectical ability as a philosopher that reduces his theological doctrines. By contrast, Kierkegaard’s subjective philosophising continually confronts and exposes that which philosophy is blind to, leaves unthought, or even cannot think—however, the depth of the philosophising human’s limits inversely places the theologising human in the right dependent relation to God, in which true freedom is found.

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<sup>1050</sup> Ibid., 147-149.

## CONCLUSION

I have argued that in addressing the ambiguity between the philosophical and theological spheres prevalent in the nineteenth century, Martensen and Kierkegaard each develop their own dialectical models of the relationship between the spheres, which I have termed models of unity-in-difference and similarity-in-dissimilarity. Although Martensen and Kierkegaard respectively seek to establish the unity and separation of the philosophical and the religious, both are ultimately committed to establishing a dialogue between these spheres. However, I have argued that Kierkegaard more successfully enables a productive dialogue by ensuring that both philosophy and Christianity are clearly distinguished, whereas Martensen ultimately wants to go beyond the philosophical standpoint, abandoning it for the clarity of Christian revelation and speculative theology as the culmination of all knowledge. In this way, Martensen's dialectic breaks down whereas Kierkegaard's dialectic ensures that the dialogue between the spheres carries on and that philosophy's importance is not invalidated or dismissed. For it is the spatiation or distanciation that occurs within the separation of the

spheres that in turn enables a real and living dialogue between them as in this way the integrity and unique characteristics of each sphere are maintained.

I have shown how Martensen's and Kierkegaard's different conceptualisations of the relationship between the philosophical and religious spheres both inform and come to expression in their treatment of the concepts of existence, sin, and freedom. These conceptual analyses ultimately show how Kierkegaard's dialectic of similarity-in-dissimilarity prevents the reduction of either sphere. Philosophy and Christianity's difference and respective integrity remains intact because there can be no recourse to unity, no alleviation of tension, and no mediation: theirs is a cut-off dialectic. However, what these concepts also show, is that for Martensen and Kierkegaard what is ultimately at stake in the debate is the question of what it means to be an existing human being. Each of their positions reflect a sense of fragility, fragmentation, and ambiguity in human existence. However, while Martensen acknowledges this, Kierkegaard develops a whole concept of existence around this very aspect to encompass the ambiguity and difficulty we experience as existing humans.

Conversely, we might say that the dissimilarity between Kierkegaard and Martensen is based on their similarities. While they might not have admitted as much, their careful engagement with each others' thought seems to imply that they each considered the other to be not only a worthy rival, but an important dialogue partner. Their differences and disagreements are what make Martensen such a productive and engaging foil for Kierkegaard. Because Martensen and Kierkegaard were both considered to account for Christianity and faith through an existential perspective, Kierkegaard faced a greater challenge in distancing himself from Martensen than from Hegel, in turn propelling Kierkegaard to come up with creative and innovative responses. Kierkegaard thus articulates his position in the debate both under the influence of and as a corrective to Martensen's speculative approach, as Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works aim at bringing to life and

clarifying the theological categories Kierkegaard believes Martensen has confused as a result of his speculative unification of philosophy and theology. Yet at the same time, Kierkegaard's thought is inextricably linked to the framework of inquiry established by Martensen. However, it is important to keep in mind that Martensen also seemed to have found a stimulating interlocutor in Kierkegaard. It is telling that even after Kierkegaard's death, Martensen would return to and engage with Kierkegaard's writings.

It is also important to note the foresight signalled by Kierkegaard's separation of philosophy and the religious sphere in contrast to Martensen's deeply Romantic notion of harmony and unity. Kierkegaard's more decisive separation of the spheres is more prescient of what the university has come to look like today, with disciplines becoming increasingly specialised and demarcated. However, in contrast to what has been described as today's intellectualist bias and "quest for scientific and pragmatic answers to what it means to be human,"<sup>1051</sup> which has put increased pressure on the reflective disciplines of philosophy and theology to deliver similarly instrumental and unequivocal answers to society's problems, both Martensen and Kierkegaard prove helpful conversation partners through their emphasis on the difficulty and complexity of real human existence. The difference is that Martensen still seeks and hopes for clear, unambiguous knowledge, even if it only occurs in occasional glimpses. Kierkegaard instead offers us no such comfort, but through his separation of philosophy and Christianity reminds us that in any endeavour we cannot and should not forget that we ourselves are existing and finite. The wide space between philosophy and Christianity serves to underline the profound ambiguity that Kierkegaard wishes to emphasise as inherent to and completely unavoidable in human existence. The difficulty this brings forth serves a valuable purpose in sustaining our thinking.

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<sup>1051</sup> Arne Grøn, René Rosfort (eds.), *Kierkegaard's Existential Approach*, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 1

What seems to inform not just Martensen's and Kierkegaard's treatment of freedom, but also of existence and sin, is an underlying difference in their view of humanity; their *menneskesyn*. Kierkegaard seeks both philosophically and theologically to underline the limits and finitude of the human being. Martensen's view is different and expresses a hopeful optimism about human nature and abilities seeking to highlight humanity's essential unity with the divine, which grants humanity an inextinguishable nobility in thought and deed. Martensen admits that Scripture underlines both perspectives as Psalm 51 tells us we are shaped in iniquity and conceived in sin. Yet it is clear that Martensen prefers the Psalmist's other emphasis that "I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works,"<sup>1052</sup> and he holds out hope that glimpses of our eschatological perfection will be visible to us on earth through human theologising. It is also for this reason that Martensen emphasises the latter half of 1Cor 13:12 that we *will* know and see clearly. Kierkegaard does not disagree with the Psalmist's image of humanity nor with the Apostle's prediction—but he insists that we remain mousvoyants who cannot see clearly yet, and it is cheating to try to see the end-result while we are still existing in the finite world. It is these different emphases that underpin their respective views of humanity and in turn their opposing views concerning the relationship between philosophy and the religious-Christian sphere.

Martensen's and Kierkegaard's real difference is thus, as Kierkegaard is meant to have said to Martensen during their conversation at the Athenæum club, a difference in Christianity—in particular it is a difference in the Christian view of humanity. But whether this signals an approximation or an even deeper divergence remains ambiguous.

Although I have argued that Kierkegaard's dialectic of similarity-in-dissimilarity enables a more balanced, richer dialogue between philosophy and Christianity, Kierkegaard's separation of the spheres is precisely an attempt to ensure a meaningful relationship between

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<sup>1052</sup> *CD* §74, 168-169; Ps. 139:14

them. Martensen's efforts to unite and harmonise philosophy and theology share the similar aim of ensuring that these spheres remain in a productive conversation. Martensen's desire for unification is in many ways a profoundly alluring view. Although I have shown how Martensen's proposed execution of enabling this dialectic unity between the spheres is left wanting for a number of reasons, perhaps it is not for us to say whether Martensen or Kierkegaard are right in respectively arguing for the unity and separation of philosophy and theology. The debate about philosophy and theology's relationship neither ends nor is solved with Martensen and Kierkegaard, but the differences between them enable a meaningful dialogue concerning philosophy, theology, and Christianity, and it is a dialogue from which we can learn.

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