

IGOR AHMEDOV

Kierkegaardian Theology of Education





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‘Without being hampered by anything or any hasty connection with the demands of the times, solely following my inner promptings, I continue, as it were, to knead my thoughts until, to my notion, the dough is good.’

Johannes Climacus, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p.12

‘What, then, is education? I believe it is the course the individual goes through in order to catch up with himself, and the person who will not go through this course is not much helped by being born in the most enlightened age.’

Johannes de Silentio, *Fear and Trembling*, p.46.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	11
SIGLA .....	13
Kierkegaard’s Works .....	13
Kierkegaard’s Journals and Papers .....	14
INTRODUCTION.....	15
Beginning.....	15
Overview.....	17
1. PROLEGOMENA TO THEOLOGICAL METHOD/OLOGY.....	20
1.1. Positioning research.....	21
1.2. Issues in Kierkegaard Research .....	27
1.2.1. Kierkegaard’s Critique of Research.....	27
1.2.2. Reading Kierkegaard: an issue of communication .....	29
1.2.3. <i>Gjentagelse</i> .....	30
1.3. Towards theological study of education .....	32
1.3.1. Analogies, Metaphors, and the task of Theology .....	32
1.3.2. Is there a method in theological study? .....	34
1.3.3. Experiential methodology in theological study .....	41
1.4. Theology of Education.....	44
2. THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION .....	49
2.1. From Know <i>Thyself</i> to <i>Bildung</i> .....	52
2.1.1. Between Paideia and <i>Know Thyself</i> .....	52
2.1.2. Immanuel Kant .....	55
2.1.3. Wilhelm von Humboldt.....	57
2.1.4. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel .....	61
2.1.5. Danish Hegelians.....	65
2.1.6. Kierkegaard’s use of Education.....	67
2.2. Modern Metaphysics.....	69
2.2.1. Western Philosophy as Education .....	69
2.2.2. From Ancient to Modern Metaphysics.....	73
2.2.3. Logics of Western Philosophy.....	79
2.2.4. God, the first principle, as Education .....	81
2.3. Education and its modern Logic .....	83
3. THEOLOGY IN KIERKEGAARD.....	87
3.1. Lutheran background .....	89
3.2. Stages of Existence .....	92
3.2.1. Aesthetic .....	94
3.2.2. Ethical.....	97
3.2.3. Religious/ness.....	99
3.2.3.1. Religiousness A .....	101
3.2.3.2. Religiousness B.....	102

3.3. Faith .....	103
3.3.1. Faith and Knowing .....	104
3.3.2. The Leap .....	106
3.4. God.....	109
3.4.1. Ultimately Qualitatively Different.....	110
3.4.2. Suffering God – Suffering Love .....	115
3.5. The Religious Symbolism in <i>Philosophical Fragments</i> and beyond..	118
4. KIERKEGAARDIAN THEOLOGY OF EDUCATION.....	121
4.1. Dialectical Relationships.....	124
4.2. <i>Philosophical Fragments</i> .....	127
4.2.1. Kierkegaard’s “Socratic” reading of the learning paradox .....	130
4.2.2. Kierkegaard’s Climacian reading of the learning paradox .....	135
4.2.3. Teacher .....	139
4.2.4. Student.....	141
4.2.5. Nigel Tubbs’ reading of the learning paradox .....	142
4.2.5.1. Immediacy and Mediation & Reality and Ideality .....	143
4.2.5.2. Paradox as-and-of-is education.....	146
4.3. God as Teacher and Saviour .....	146
4.3.1. Why Socrates is not Christ?.....	147
4.3.2. A relationship of love vs love.....	152
4.3.3. Teacher – Student: An Ascent .....	154
4.3.4. God – Human: A Descent.....	155
4.3.5. <i>The Moment</i> of understanding .....	159
4.3.6. God plays by the rules: some critiques of contemporary education.....	161
4.4. <i>Johannes Climacus</i> , or an Example of Kierkegaardian Education .....	163
4.4.1. The student .....	163
4.4.2. Beginnings of education .....	165
4.4.3. The Student’s Experience .....	166
4.4.4. Know [for] Thyself.....	169
4.5. The figure of the Teacher in <i>Practice in Christianity</i> .....	170
4.6. Demands of the Times .....	174
5. EDUCATION OF THEOLOGY.....	176
5.1. System [of Education].....	177
5.1.1. System in Hegel and Kierkegaard: The case of open and closed .....	177
5.1.1.1. The issue in Kierkegaard .....	177
5.1.1.2. The question of method .....	179
5.1.1.3. Christological problem.....	181
5.1.2. An interlude: Upbuilding Education.....	187
5.2. “Theological” System [of Education]: <i>The Point of View</i> .....	193
5.2.1.1. Begin where They are: the Teacher as Helper .....	196
5.2.1.2. Teaching to Compel to Become Aware .....	197

5.2.1.3. Educational Deception .....	198
5.2.1.4. The Single Individual:.....	200
5.3. Theology of Education.....	202
CONCLUDING THE THESIS: AN ACCOUNTING .....	205
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	207
EESTIKEELNE KOKKUVÕTE .....	218
CURRICULUM VITAE .....	220
ELULOOKIRJELDUS.....	221



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<sup>1</sup> (UVDS:5; emphasis original).

hated professors of theology. For this, I am truly grateful; I would not have discovered the wonderful world of Kierkegaard otherwise. Thanks to Neil Messer, who supervised my BA thesis on that subject, and Alexis Gibbs, who supervised my master thesis.

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There are countless others who cheered me on along the way, though you are unnamed, please receive my sincere thanks!

Not really a philosopher, far from being a theologian, but always a learner...  
Igor Ahmedov.

*In Tartu  
On the Feast of the Annunciation, 2025.*

## SIGLA

### Kierkegaard's Works<sup>2</sup>

Unless otherwise stated, throughout the thesis, all references to Kierkegaard's Works are taken to be translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong and published by Princeton University Press.

BA	<i>The Book on Adler</i> (1998a)
CA	<i>The Concept of Anxiety</i> , edited by Reidar Thomte in collaboration with Albert B. Anderson (1980a)
CD	<i>Christian Discourses</i> and <i>The Crisis and a Crisis in the Life of an Actress</i> (1997)
CI	<i>The Concept of Irony</i> together with <i>Notes on Schelling's Berlin Lectures</i> (1989)
CUP1 and CUP2	<i>Concluding Unscientific Postscript to "Philosophical Fragments"</i> volume 1 (1992a) and 2 (1992b)
EO1 and EO2	<i>Either/Or</i> part 1 (1987a) and 2 (1987b)
EPW	<i>Early Polemical Writings</i> (1990a)
EUD	<i>Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses</i> (1990b)
FSE	<i>For Self-Examination</i> and <i>Judge for Yourself!</i> (1990c)
FT/R	<i>Fear and Trembling</i> and <i>Repetition</i> (1983)
M	<i>"The Moment" and Late Writings</i> (1998b)
PC	<i>Practice in Christianity</i> (1991)
PF	<i>Philosophical Fragments</i> and <i>Johannes Climacus</i> (1985)
PV	<i>The Point of View for My Work as an Author</i> , <i>The Single Individual</i> , <i>On My Work as an Author</i> and <i>Armed Neutrality</i> (1998c)
SLW	<i>Stages on Life's Way</i> (1988)
SUD	<i>The Sickness Unto Death</i> (1980b)
TDIO	<i>Three Discourses on Imagined Occasion</i> (1993a)
UDVS	<i>Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits</i> (1993b)
WL	<i>Works of Love</i> (1995)

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<sup>2</sup> Abbreviations based on John Lippitt's and George Pattison's (2013:xix) abbreviations in *The Oxford Handbook of Kierkegaard*.

## Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers

Unless otherwise stated, throughout this thesis, all references to Kierkegaard Journals and Notebooks are taken from Bruce Kirmmse, general editor (2007–2020) *Kierkegaard's Journals and Notebooks*, volumes 1-11.2. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.

### Notation explained

#: [entry] – refers to a notebook or a journal entry, where # stands for a number or a letter (or both) of the journal as notated by Kierkegaard himself. [Entry] stands for a numerical value of the entry rather than a page number, as used in the Kirmmse edition. The notation allows for a direct cross-reference with the definitive Danish *Søren Kierkegaard Skrifter*, which uses the same notation.

# INTRODUCTION

## Beginning

Timothy Hall argues that early treatments of the theme of Søren Kierkegaard<sup>3</sup> and education only used Kierkegaard to provide a critique of education, which ‘is hardly needed ... there are a variety of criticisms in circulation that detail the same general malaise ... These types of projects spend a great deal of time identifying the problems of education. But do little to provide workable solutions’ (2015:492). Furthermore, in Hall’s opinion, ‘the depth in the reading of Kierkegaard’s texts is overshadowed by [the] lack of curricular justification for their use in education ... there is no curricular framework within which to begin a pedagogical dialogue’ (2015:493). Thus, already from the start, this thesis is presented with some criticism that needs to be addressed in order to make any claim for theology and education.

The reader of this thesis may be perplexed as to what exactly is being addressed by the thesis and for which purpose. Is it a historical study, a contemporary critique, or an eschatological suggestion? The answer to these questions will become apparent in the methodology. Yet, the reader is invited not to separate the three – past, present, and future – into concrete categories: ‘every age interprets the past from its own standpoint. But it is also the other way round: the past makes its demand on the present by questioning our educational grounds and actions’ (Løvlie and Standish, 2003:23).

This thesis develops Kierkegaardian theology of education rooted in the (re-)reading of the God-human and teacher-student relationship in Søren Kierkegaard, with particular emphasis on *Philosophical Fragments*. The project is approached through the perspective of modern metaphysics of Nigel Tubbs that claims God is education. This idea is then problematised, in the reading of Kierkegaard, through the distinctly incarnational perspective of Christian theology. I will argue that the notion that ‘God is education’ is not merely an abstract concept but operates with and within incarnated God, following Kierkegaard’s “paradoxical logic.” The thesis holds that the Kierkegaardian theology of education, which is presented within this study, should be understood in Kierkegaard’s terms to be Christianity as existence-communication.

To address the above, this thesis:

- argues that the concept of “theology” has to be re-thought in order to be an adequate tool for Kierkegaard research and that the concept of “theology of education” is better suited for analysing Kierkegaard’s project (chapter 1);
- re-defines the concept of education following Nigel Tubbs’ (2017) project of modern metaphysics (chapter 2);

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<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, Hall refers to Kierkegaard as to a philosopher in this work.

- produces Kierkegaardian paradoxical logic as a tool for understanding the God-human relationship (chapters 3 and 4);
- provides four re-readings of the learning paradox in *Philosophical Fragments* to examine the relationship between both the teacher and student, and God and human (chapter 4);
- presents the experience of the Kierkegaardian teacher and, in turn, of the Kierkegaardian student, and finds in this experience an experience of the theology of education (chapter 4); and
- presents a pedagogy of teaching for existence-communication (chapter 5).

After becoming acquainted with the claims of the thesis, the reader might rightly ask whether this thesis and the kind of education it is proposing is relevant outside of Christian theological circles to an agnostic or atheist educational professional. George Pattison argues that Kierkegaard is able to speak to those of all faiths and none, provided that they are ‘concerned about the meaning of their life in the world’ (Pattison quoted in Wivestad, 2013:518). At the end of the thesis, I hope the reader will appreciate how such ideas as “God” and “education,” but also more subtly “faith” and “Christianity”, have been opened up to embrace the experiences of teachers and students of various backgrounds. Thus, the claim is that, although the thesis rests on Christian presuppositions, it is nonetheless broad enough to be an educational experience for those who reject those presuppositions. This question would be specifically addressed in the section of modern metaphysics (section 2.2) that seeks to address precisely ‘the modern self-reflective mind so often offended by the idea of the religious’ (Tubbs, 2017:xi).

This thesis contributes to existing scholarship in the following ways:

- It challenges existing interpretations of Kierkegaard’s educational project in *Philosophical Fragments* that separate a “merely human” theory of education from a theory of divine education when “God takes the job of a teacher.” The thesis argues for an approach that unites human and divine education using as a hermeneutical key Kierkegaard’s own comments on his authorship from the posthumous works.
- The thesis contributes to the scholarship that seeks to understand Kierkegaard as a Hegelian by presenting how the systems of Hegel (interpreted through the work of Gillian Rose) and Kierkegaard are similar yet acknowledging their difference in the incarnational and existential aspects of Jesus Christ. It is maintained that Kierkegaard’s attack on Hegel’s system is rather an attack on the Danish Hegelians and that the relationship of Hegel and Kierkegaard by itself can be brought into a fruitful conversation in a theology of education.
- It scrutinises the interpretation of Kierkegaard found in the project of “modern metaphysics” and thus acts as a critical evaluation of the project through a Kierkegaardian perspective.

- The thesis argues against theories of the theology of education that separate *doing* and *studying* theology into two distinct spheres that are irreconcilable in the context of a secular university and reclaims the educational voice present in theology in-itself.
- Lastly, the thesis contributes to debates in Kierkegaardian scholarship and philosophy of education by providing a corrective to the understanding of the “upbuilding” theory of education found in Kierkegaard.

Through the above, the thesis addresses the scholarship found in theology and philosophy [of education], as well as in education studies. Furthermore, the author hopes that the thesis will appeal to the practitioners of education and students undergoing teacher training, as the entire theoretical discussion presented above addresses “directly-indirectly”<sup>4</sup> the experience of a teacher struggling with their own identity as a teacher.

A final note is about the language used. While the author of this thesis prefers to use a third-person plural pronoun to refer to the person to avoid specifying gender and excluding a large portion of people, at times it is necessary to use first-person personal pronouns to emphasise the attitude of the writer at that time being intrinsically male. Furthermore, to be faithful to the argument laid down in this thesis, apart from this introductory section, the author has used the first-person singular pronoun to acknowledge his own subjectivity, ownership, and the experience of education and research *in* the writing of the thesis.

## Overview

Chapter one provides a general idea of the project and where it is heading. It is further concerned with the method and justification for uniting secular and divine enterprises. Drawing on the work of Orthodox theologians Andreas Andreopoulos (2013) and John Behr (2008), and Anglican theologian Rowan Williams (2000a), this thesis develops a method of being able to engage in an authentic theological enterprise that is not just an intellectual enterprise but can faithfully and meaningfully communicate something about God. Following Williams, this thesis argues that it is proper and required of theological discourse to constantly check itself to avoid systematising and totalising perspective as if talking from God’s point of view. This is a criticism of Kierkegaard against the system of Hegel – to try to conclude everything, although this view will be challenged in chapter 5. Theology needs to recognise its limits, as well as engage in conversation with other disciplines. Theology ‘needs to know when it has said what it can say and when it is time to shut up’ (Williams, 2000a:15). The multifaceted nature of this research is true to Kierkegaard’s thinking operating across the disciplines. This thesis, then, is positioned on the border of philosophy, theology,

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<sup>4</sup> A Kierkegaardian term which meaning will be explicated in the thesis.

and education studies. This enables the development of a holistic Kierkegaardian theology of education. The chapter concludes with a theoretical discussion of the field of “theology of education” and shows how it fails to do justice to theology by separating the domains of experience into *studying* and *doing* theology.

Chapter two deals with the concept of education. The thesis examines the Greek tradition of *know thyself* and how this idea of self-knowledge has developed down to Kierkegaard’s own age. Also, an examination of German idealism thinking on education is presented, going from Kant to the development of *Bildung*, with a particular reference to education in Hegel and the reception of *Bildung* by Danish Hegelians. The discussion is then brought together in looking at the term *Dannelse* that frames Kierkegaard’s thinking about education. The dialectic of freedom and discipline is revealed in those understandings of education. This tension of freedom and discipline hidden in education underlies the whole project – the freedom and equality of the teacher and student versus the already unequal nature of their relationship. From there, the chapter turns to the work of Hegelian philosopher of education Nigel Tubbs (2014) in order to re-read the history of education as *know thyself* as a history of western philosophy as education. Tubbs differentiates between ancient metaphysics (history of philosophy from Aristotle to Kant) and modern metaphysics hidden and suppressed within the history of philosophy but can be seen especially in Plato, Hegel, and Kierkegaard. In modern metaphysics, God becomes education. This section makes use of the concept of “educational logic” that arises from the concept of modern metaphysics as a challenge to the logic of mastery of ancient metaphysics, which rested in the notion of the One, the first-cause, to which everything had to be reduced in order to be explained. The educational logic, contrary, is open to the aporias of the reason’s own thinking (Tubbs, 2017:1). The second half of this chapter is key for presenting the theoretical foundation that examines the experience of relations between teacher and student, and beyond as the experience of education itself.

Chapter three looks at theology in Kierkegaard. First, it explains the difficulty of talking about Kierkegaard in relation to theology and explores reasons for talking of theology *in* rather than *of* Kierkegaard. After a general overview of Kierkegaard’s Lutheran background, the thesis focuses on Kierkegaard’s “theory” of stages of existence. The stages are argued to serve as a hermeneutical key to understanding not only the kind of existence Kierkegaard wants to teach his readers but also the concepts of God, faith, and other within this existence. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the concept of faith and God. Faith is argued to be not only the thing to be learned but also to be the condition of learning itself in the first place. Kierkegaard’s famous idea of the leap is employed to explain this. The concept of God is analysed and presented in Kierkegaard’s terms of being ultimately qualitatively different to a human being. The chapter demonstrates the logic of contradiction that is required to comprehend oneself (as a single individual) being in a relationship with God. The chapter concludes by asking how, in light of Kierkegaard’s stages, as well as of the ideas of God and faith, it is permissible to combine the educational and religious language in Kierkegaard’s

project of the theology of education. The first three chapters thus constitute the background of a theoretical framework that enables me to engage with my own reading and interpretation of Kierkegaard in conversation with secondary scholarship in light of the above framework.

Chapter four picks up the themes of chapter two – the idea of modern metaphysics and the idea of God as education. This chapter examines Tubbs' statement that God is education from the perspective of Kierkegaard. The chapter discusses education as presented in the works of Kierkegaard, especially as laid out in *Philosophical Fragments*. Then it examines Kierkegaard's use of the concepts of the teacher and student, both in their secular and religious context. The chapter further focuses on the relation of the teacher-student and the God-human relationship and argues that Kierkegaard is ambiguous in his treatment of human versus divine education. This ambiguity is picked up, and it is argued that merely human education is found in the treatment of divine education and that the divine is always already present in the merely human education. Kierkegaard's notion of the "absolute paradox" is then used to argue how one can learn from the paradox without resolving it, that is, without overcoming it in and by mastery. This provides an opening for the treatment of human and divine education as united in understanding without annulling their difference. The main aim of chapter four is to provide an experience of the above education from the paradox as the experience of the theology of education that encompasses both the *doing* and the *studying*.

Chapter five returns from the experience of the theology of education to the science of that theology and, using Kierkegaard's posthumous works, answers how to teach for such an education where God is found both as the content and the educational relation itself. It addresses and takes seriously Kierkegaard's own division of speculative philosophy, theology, and Christianity as existence-communication. The chapter demonstrates how it is Kierkegaard's understanding of the incarnation *contra* Hegelian readings of it (specifically through Gillian Rose) that allows for a unity of divine and human education. It is precisely the incarnation that enables the thesis to understand the theology of education to be precisely the existence-communication mentioned earlier. The chapter further addresses a theory of "upbuilding" education theorised out of Kierkegaard's work, and although the author is in general agreement with the scholarly discussion, the thesis nonetheless seeks to provide an incarnational corrective to this philosophical theory. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Kierkegaard's practical advice to the teacher who is now faced with an *aporia* of one's own identity in relation to God, who is education.

# 1. PROLEGOMENA TO THEOLOGICAL METHOD/OLOGY

In his introduction to *History of Western Philosophy*, Tubbs claims that the ‘fundamental relations of truth and error, independence and dependence, God and man, self and other, and master and slave ... are manifestations of an absolute relation, that of life and death’ (2009:4). In turn, the relation of ‘[l]ife and death ... are the pedagogy of the mind of God making itself known to the intellect’ (Tubbs, 2009:4). Rebekah Howes argues this means ‘[w]ithout a concept of philosophy as education, we are unable to know freedom, the other, humanity and God and are thus left powerless to effect any real change in the world’ (2013:8). I agree with Howes, but my thesis will demonstrate that she has got her disciplines wrong – it is theology of-and-as education that is needed.<sup>5</sup> This is actually rehearsed by Tubbs (2017) in relation to Kierkegaard in a different work. Kierkegaard, according to Tubbs, poses God as the absolute paradox (2017:147). This absolute paradox is its own education for the person, as ‘[e]verything it has learned about the paradox it has learned from the paradox’ (Tubbs, 2017:151; see also PF:53). Thus, Tubbs’ argument following Kierkegaard is that ‘the dreadful teacher who is not religious is also the dreadful teacher who is religious in being offended by religion’ (2017:152), or in other words, to say anything about God (or against God in an atheistic rejection) is to presuppose God and thus become religious in rejection of religion. However, if life and death find their beginning in God, whatever this “God” may be, it is then the task of theology to address the issues arising from the dialectic of life and death – the middle – the relation, rather than, to be a philosophical-speculative engagement with an abstract category for God such as “transcendence” (Biesta, 2013). Theology, therefore, has an obligation (and it is a proper theological task) to inform all areas of existence that are implicated in the relation of life and death, including education.

Gillian Rose has shown how, in ‘our [] preoccupation with difference in method, metaphysics and historicism’ (1992:173), we miss the view of “methodology” as to do with the anxiety of beginning. However, the thesis has already begun and, in the words of Paul Tillich, ‘[w]hether or not a method is adequate cannot be decided a priori; it is continually being decided in the cognitive process itself. Method and system determine each other’ (1951:60). This thesis will return to the question of method at the end of the thesis, but then it will be understood as a “system” of Kierkegaard’s theology of education. It is *necessarily* put at the end, after the reader has learned, has experienced, of and from the Kierkegaardian education presented in this thesis.

The purpose of this chapter is first to provide an overview of the field of research into Kierkegaard and education, in other words to identify the gap that this thesis aims to fill. Secondly, it acknowledges and presents presuppositions

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<sup>5</sup> God of philosophy is dead and remains dead; one cannot enter into a relationship with him, and he cannot save anybody. If education is to be transformative (salvific), theology has to offer its service.

and considerations that are relevant in the research area of Kierkegaard studies, and especially the way those peculiarities of Kierkegaard scholarship affect this thesis. From there, the chapter presents what this thesis initially understands under the concept of “theology” and how this opens up to a “method” for an interdisciplinary theological study. The chapter concludes with a sketch of scholarly understanding of the field of “theology of education” that this thesis aims to redraw through a Kierkegaardian perspective.

## 1.1. Positioning research

Recent years have seen a rise in anglophone engagement with the themes connecting Kierkegaard and education broadly construed. Kierkegaard’s epistemology did receive a lot of attention, C. Stephen Evans’ (1998) *Faith Beyond Reason* or Marilyn Piety’s (2010) *Ways of Knowing* more recently.<sup>6</sup> Although the present study relates to the questions in the area of Kierkegaard’s epistemology, a study of Kierkegaard’s epistemology proper is outside the scope of the present research. The thesis, however, could be said to be placed in an epistemological differentiation done by Douglas Farrow (2000:406) of a choice between the epistemology of St Paul or Plato. St Paul’s approach is characterised by *koinonia*, that is, fellowship with God, being required for the knowledge of truth (Farrow, 2000:406). This is precisely why Farrow concludes ‘theological education is *not* possible simply as a didactic or catechetical enterprise’ (2000:410) even if it is employing the Socratic method; rather, this Kierkegaardian education must be grounded in contemporaneity with Christ. This ambiguity and avoidance of traditional epistemological labelling (especially rationalism and fideism) is what leads Robert L. Perkins to describe Kierkegaard as ‘a kind of epistemologist’ (1990).

This thesis carries this ambiguity further, and although the tension between fideism and rationalism is not dealt with explicitly, the relationship between faith and reason very much forms the kind of education this thesis is describing. Discussion within this thesis, however, goes much further, as there is not simply tension between competing epistemologies, but rather the tension between epistemology and ontology – of *knowing* and *being* in truth,<sup>7</sup> characterised later in this chapter by the distinction of *studying* and *doing*. Kierkegaard concerns himself and wants the reader to consider the question of ‘how is the person related to what the person considers to be the truth?’ (Perkins, 1990:14) regardless of whether it is “actually” truth or not.

Of particular interest to the present work is a chapter in a monograph *Philosophy of the Teacher* by Nigel Tubbs (2005) that sparked this author’s own interest in the theme of Kierkegaard and education. The chapter provides a Kierke-

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<sup>6</sup> Though, as Piety (1996) acknowledged earlier, debates about the nature of knowledge in Kierkegaard had been happening for a while.

<sup>7</sup> I am grateful to my reviewer, Solveig Magnus Reindal, for alerting my attention to this distinction by narrating it so succinctly.

gaardian philosophy of the teacher. Tubbs positions this chapter on Kierkegaard's last in his book; whether Tubbs intended it or not, I argue this is a hint at *theosis* of the philosophy of the teacher. Furthermore, Tubbs explores Kierkegaardian paradoxes as education in a chapter of his 2004 *Philosophy's Higher Education*. A fuller exposition of Tubbs' philosophy of education will take place in chapter 2 and in particular in relation to Kierkegaard in chapter 4.

David Willow's (2001) study *Divine Knowledge* engages in an investigation of *Philosophical Fragments* and what it can offer to the Christian education. Willow's book consists of three parts. The first part takes the issue of the "learning paradox" (that this study addresses in chapter 4) and shows how the paradox was addressed by Socrates, Augustine, Luther, Locke, Kant, and Hegel, and how for all of them, after Socrates, the core of the paradox was a distinction between reason and revelation. The second part is a theoretical background for his pedagogy of divine knowledge resting in his treatment and interpretation of Kierkegaard's project in *Philosophical Fragments*, as well as the critique that Kierkegaard mounted against the theology of his day. The third part of Willow's book, in light of the theoretical discussion of the first and second part, reclaims and re-establishes a distinctly Christian model of education based on the epistemology of the divine knowledge and, through this, defends theology in the secular academy. Willow's project, however, is different from mine, as his concern is in reconciling a very specific Christian "Truth" of revelation, what he calls divine education, with traditional epistemology while still maintaining the two as separate from each other.<sup>8</sup> Willow is concerned with what happens when "God is the teacher," as is evident throughout his use of capital T in Truth. I, however, as was stated in the introduction, want to transgress this boundary.

A recent paper by Stuart Dalton (2019) proposes a philosophy of the teacher removed from theological implications of *Philosophical Fragments* (1985) and based upon the "crumbly" nature of the work it argues against systematising. Dalton's (2019:241–242) argument against the system relies on taking the words of Johannes Climacus in the introduction to *Fragments* for granted as honest and accurate, without a hint of irony, already negating the honesty of a claim for "not having a system." Dalton is well aware that Johannes Climacus also allows for an opposite (if not contradictory) reading of *Fragments* where a "systematic" or, in Dalton's terms, authoritative reading can be given. Dalton (2019:243) warns against the temptation to regard only one of these approaches as correct. It is not an either/or, rather both readings are legitimate. There is a similarity to Hegel's system that can be read as illusory and, through that, open 'because there is systemic misrecognition in natural consciousness of its relation to itself in experience. [Where i]llusion is both the presupposition and the work of that relation' (Tubbs, 2005:171). In a similar manner, Kierkegaard's critique of the

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<sup>8</sup> Only once, and in discussion of the thought of James Loder, does Willow allow for both: 'Christ the Teacher is therefore not merely illustrative of truths already known to reason but is the one who breaks in upon our mundane reality and transfigures all knowledge in the light of his redeeming presence, bringing all things into Christocentric focus' (2001:134).

system in Hegel is precisely in demonstrating the openness of this system, and therefore not concluded, in turn meaning unfinished and thus not a system (CUP1:107; Tubbs, 2005:213–214).<sup>9</sup> Climacus exclaims in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* that ‘a fragment of a system is a nonsense’ (CUP1:108) and writes in *Philosophical Fragments*, merely – fragments – but, as this thesis will demonstrate, it nonetheless has a system, albeit an ironic and open system, a paradoxical system, no system at all, and yet a system.

Dalton’s two theories of education are ‘[o]ne that focuses on education when all of the parties involved (both teachers and students) are merely human (all too human)’ (2019:244) known as the “crumbly” one, and ‘a separate theory of education that considers how everything changes when God gets involved’ (2019:244), or the “systematic” one. However, as my thesis demonstrates in chapter 4, Dalton has missed the dialectical relation between the two approaches, that they are both already “crumbly” in their relation opposing the either/or. For Dalton, the “systematic” approach ‘explore[s] all of the consequences for education when God takes the job as teacher’ (2019:244) and fails to recognise the opposite when the teacher takes the job as God.<sup>10</sup>

Of interest is also an existential pedagogy proposed by Ada S. Jaarsma, Kyle Kinashuk, and Lin Xing that invites ‘existentialist texts to teach us how to teach’ (2016:446) borrowing from Kierkegaard the idea of despair and applying it as pedagogy. They argue following Gert Biesta (2013) that the contemporary university classroom is too focused on *learning* and hence uses the teacher simply as a one resource among many, as opposed to *teaching* – an existentially transformative category (Jaarsma *et al.*, 2016:447). Biesta summarises various constructivist approaches to education as ‘being based on the assumption that students have to construct their own insights, understandings and knowledge, and

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<sup>9</sup> On Tubbs’ account ‘[t]hroughout the *Postscript* when Kierkegaard says that Hegel has failed to achieve the movement of the existing subjectivity of the system, it is precisely this recognition of failure that recognises the movement in the system’ (2005:215).

<sup>10</sup> Dalton argues that

If we imagine that the truth can be taught and/or learned in a non-Socratic way, it follows that merely human education becomes indistinguishable from religion. This is quite funny, and therefore obviously false, because – as anyone who has spent 10 minutes inside any school knows with perfect certainty – there is nothing less like the sublime and transcendent mysteries of religion than the messy and inefficient realities of a classroom. Nothing is less worthy of worship than the human, all too human, comedy of one mere mortal trying to teach another mere mortal; nothing else on earth would make a more ridiculous religion (2019:250).

I am not convinced that “obviously false” and “perfect certainty” are, in fact, as obvious and certain as Dalton paints them to be. I would argue precisely the opposite, that “nothing is more worthy of worship than the human trying to teach another human.” Tubbs attributes to Martin Luther words that ‘a diligent, devoted schoolteacher ... who faithfully trains and teaches boys, can never receive an adequate reward ... nowhere on earth could you find a higher virtue than is displayed by the stranger who takes your children and gives them faithful training’ (2005:61; Tubbs is himself referring to a secondary source, I was unable to locate the source in Luther’s own works.)

that teachers cannot do this for them' (2013:450). Thus, he aims at the heart of Johannes Climacus' discussion in *Philosophical Fragments* of the Socratic question as to whether the truth can be learned. Although Jaarsma *et al.* argue that such understanding is consistent with Kierkegaard based on the insistence of his pseudonyms to need to go beyond Socrates, I will argue in chapter 4 how this trying to divide teaching and learning into an either/or is at odds with Kierkegaardian understanding of teacher and student relationship. Kierkegaard, in the unfinished and unpublished *Johannes Climacus*, argues that the student must kill the teacher by the sword that the teacher themselves has passed on to the student (PF:155). Biesta, in fact, follows a completely opposite argument – that the teacher is the one who kills (2013:453). Biesta argues, 'if we give up on the idea that teachers have something to teach and make them into facilitators of learning, we do, in a sense, give up on the very idea of education' (2013:451). Jaarsma *et al.* and Biesta enter into dangerous waters, as Johannes Climacus in *Philosophical Fragments* stops talking about Socratic-midwife-teacher and starts talking about God-teacher. Still, Biesta is helpful in problematising the language of education, his point being 'that to learn from someone is a radically different experience from the experience of being taught by someone' (2013:457; emphasis removed). Yet, Biesta fails to consider the dialectical character of the teacher-student relationship and whether there is a reversal of roles in the educational process that would have complicated his discussion on the notion of authority.

Alison Assiter (2013) explores Hannah Arendt's thought on education, extended by engagement with Kierkegaard, by whom Arendt is influenced. Assiter examines the emphasis of a neo-liberal university on employability rather than learning for its own sake. She emphasises the Kierkegaardian insistence that education should not (only) be about practical application of the learner, but rather about forming one as a human being (Assiter, 2013:258). For Assiter '[t]eaching ought to be engaged and passionate; it ought to enable us to commit ourselves, with passion, to an outlook or a worldview' (2013:260). This is much in line with my own reading of Kierkegaardian education in this thesis. The insistence on passion in-and-for-the-subject is transformative for the student's whole being, which Assiter sees as an extension of Arendt's education as imparting a love for the subject (2013:261). Assiter, through emphasis on passion, builds an image of Kierkegaard who 'recognized that we are all differently embodied, differently classed, raced, and gendered people. Underlying the passionate engagement with the process of learning is a deep commitment to justice and equality and to promoting a philosophy of love' (2013:261). I have my reservations on whether such a portrayal of Kierkegaard is justified and does not merely constitute a white-washing of him as an author writing in his day and age. However, elaboration of that falls outside the scope of the present research.

Morten Korsgaard and Mathias Aldinger's (2018) study of "The Seducer's Diary" from *Either/Or* looks at education, Johannes the seducer as an educator, and the consequences of education as seduction, while similarly to Assiter above, also engaging in conversation with Hannah Arendt. Korsgaard and Aldinger argue that '[e]rotic seduction should play no part in education' (2018:514) and

re-interpret Johannes the seducer as Johannes the *(mis)educator*. While I do agree that *erotic* seduction is not a part of education, seduction does take place in education (especially in performative teaching classrooms). Furthermore, erotic seduction needs to be further examined in terms of Kierkegaard's idea of erotic love as *elskov*, that does not necessarily have the same sexual connotations as does our contemporary understanding of the erotic. Nonetheless, this *(mis)education* echoes the argument of Biesta above, in that Johannes the seducer tries to seduce (educate) Cordelia, but the outcome is not the desired one for him, as 'the educator cannot control what the student takes from the encounter' (Korsgaard and Aldinger, 2018:516). However, in the example of how (broadly put) "progressivist"<sup>11</sup> education functions in the contemporary classroom (Korsgaard and Aldinger, 2018:516), it seems to me that the authors merge the meanings of seduction and deceit<sup>12</sup> not making a distinction between the two terms. Chapter 5 of this thesis will address this issue of educational deception in Kierkegaard. Nonetheless, Korsgaard and Aldinger emphasise well the dialectical relationship that exists between the teacher and the student, or Johannes the seducer and Cordelia in this case. The authors argue for the ambiguity in the text of who is being seduced; initially it is Johannes and later on Cordelia (Korsgaard and Aldinger, 2018:523). More importantly, they develop Kierkegaardian educational dialectic "to stand alone – by another's aid"<sup>13</sup> and how the initial contradiction within this sentence is navigated with the help of Kierkegaard and Arendt (Korsgaard and Aldinger, 2018:525–527).

The dangers of pragmatism, seduction, and emphasis of learning over teaching, are addressed by Herner Sæverot in revitalising a concept of *Bildsamkeit*, without proper application of which 'educators are thus in danger of either exerting power over their students or carelessly leav[ing] them to educate themselves' (2016:2). The concept of *Bildsamkeit* aims to navigate the two extremes 'partly because it implies that one should neither overestimate the possibilities of education through focusing on efficiency improvement and socialisation, nor underestimate the possibilities of education by letting the individuals grow up on their own' (Sæverot, 2016:2). Sæverot (2011) in another paper anticipates both works of Jaarma *et al.*

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<sup>11</sup> Korsgaard and Aldinger argue that Arendt is not specifically arguing about progressive education of Rousseau *et al.*, but rather against the reform movements in the United States education at the time. For their exposition of what Arendt understands as progressivism see Korsgaard and Aldinger 2018:520–521.

<sup>12</sup> Kierkegaard states that 'from the total point of view of my whole work as an author, the esthetic writing is a deception' (PV:53); *Either/Or* and Johannes the Seducer are precisely that.

Furthermore, Marius Felderhof (2007) points out that Kierkegaard, in producing a religious education, was a deceiver, through being a spectator of Christianity rather than a religious author is his esthetic works. The deceit lies in the fact that he still nonetheless had a religious purpose for himself in the esthetic work.

<sup>13</sup> Developed by Kierkegaard in the *Works of Love* (1995). A recent paper by Gary and Chambers (2021) also examine this Kierkegaard's statement with reference to education and cultivation of moral epiphanies.

and of Korsgaard and Aldinger. Sæverot looks at seduction and existential education in Kierkegaard, arguing that Kierkegaard's view of his age was that 'the Christians in his lifetime were seduced and therefore had persuaded themselves that they were Christians, when in reality they were not' (Sæverot, 2011:558). Importantly, Sæverot argues, that one way Kierkegaard envisaged the possibility of "conversion" of those Christians to true Christianity was also by means of seduction (2011:558). It is based on this that Sæverot proceeds to think about existential education and seduction. Sæverot argues that 'seduction at its most destructive is when the teacher manipulates the pupils into his own world ... As soon as there isn't space for other points of view than the teacher's, he is about to indoctrinate the pupils' (2011:563). Sæverot's answer of how seduction nonetheless can be "healthy" and useful is the same as of Korsgaard and Aldinger: to enable a student to stand on their own – with the teacher's help (Korsgaard and Aldinger, 2018:525–527; Sæverot, 2011:563–564). I will return to the Kierkegaardian idea of seducing into truth in chapter 5.

Of interest is also Ruth Wills' (2023) recent article where she argues for the re-evaluations of Christian ministry to children in light of the Covid-19 pandemic interruption. Wills imaginatively develops pedagogy out of reading the leap of faith and teleological suspension of the ethical in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*. Will's argument rests on a claim that just as Abraham's experience of God and the task of sacrificing Isaac goes beyond the established norms of "faith", so the '[l]earning individuals as such come into an experience of God that is not defined externally but is authentic to who they are in their Being' (2023:194). Teleological suspension of the ethical is thus re-read as 'willing[ness] to sacrifice the claim to agreed meanings ... This might mean suspending the lesson plans or curriculum objectives when necessary to open the space for exploration and a new experience of God' (Wills, 2023:194). And though, as "of God" suggests, and the whole article maintains, Wills is concerned primarily with pedagogy for Christian religious education, the claim can actually be made wider for all learning. This is something that this thesis especially addresses. Furthermore, Wills re-reads the leap of faith through using the concept of the "paradox" (to be addressed by me later, but especially in chapter 4). Wills argues that 'teachers should acknowledge the leap away from expected outcomes' (2023:195) and, in the words of the argument presented in this thesis, open themselves up to the vulnerability of encounter, that is, relation/ship, with the student. My advance on Wills developed in this thesis is to argue that this not only 'allow[s] learners to experience God the infinite in a real and personal way' (2023:195), but that the whole process of encounter between the teacher and the student is an encounter of human and God, in which one finds God to be education. Wills (2023:196) does refer to the "middle ground" and "relationship", but it is in the context of the learning subject (student) and the object of study (God), or in the context of the in-between of experience and tradition, failing to note God in the relation of teacher and student. The experiences of the teacher and the student are treated separately, without relating the experience of their experience of each-other. On Wills' (2023:197) account, it is the Spirit (though through the action of the

teacher) who brings the condition of understanding the truth to the learner, and this will be challenged and problematised further in chapter 4.

## 1.2. Issues in Kierkegaard Research

### 1.2.1. Kierkegaard's Critique of Research

Kierkegaard has written into his authorship a critique of the attempts that try to study him. Michael Weston (1994) at the end of his analysis of Kierkegaard's relation to "postmetaphysical"<sup>14</sup> philosophy after him, asks whether his own 'work fall[s] foul of this condemnation' (1994:175). The condemnation in question is presented in Kierkegaard's journal that teaching his thought is impossible, 'what I have to say must not be lectured [Danish: *doceres*]. As a lecture, it would become something completely different' (NB4:72). Danish word *docere* translated as lecture, has a specific university level teaching implication. The reason for Kierkegaard's statement is presented throughout Weston's book and works as a critique of philosophy. Philosophy for Kierkegaard, Weston argues, has forgotten that the individual is alone living the life from the first person perspective (1994:139). This "'relation to God" can only be *lived*' (Weston, 1994:169; emphasis original) it cannot be thought. Weston argues for Kierkegaard 'I am the one who acts, decides, commits myself, am, therefore, *passionately* involved' (1994:167; emphasis original).

As mentioned above, Kierkegaard is critical of the enterprise of the professors of theology (NB17:59). In this journal entry, Kierkegaard's criticism is directed at 'a prof. of theology, a Knight of the Dannebrog, honored and esteemed' (NB17:59) who writes many a book on the New Testament, and books and journal articles on those books in turn. The criticism stems from the failure of professors of theology to imitate Christ's life – to live 'a truly Christian existence' (NB17:59), where for a start, they needed to read the New Testament straightforwardly and present themselves before God. The passage is from 1850, but such criticism of treating Christianity objectively rather than experiencing it subjectively is seen earlier in Kierkegaard. The emphasis on the simple reading of the New Testament should be taken literally here, as Kierkegaard's goal is to show the incompatibility of professors of theology with the offices established in the early Church – there are bishops, priests and deacons among others, but not professors. However, in *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard's statement that '[i]t is supposed to be difficult to understand Hegel, but to understand Abraham is a small matter. To go beyond Hegel is a miraculous achievement, but to go beyond Abraham is the easiest of all' (FT/R:32-33) is ironic, revealing the difficulty of properly comprehending what the Biblical text teaches the reader about Abraham.

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<sup>14</sup> I put it in inverted comas, as Weston argues that even though the thinkers claim to proceed beyond metaphysics, they do not escape the paradigms that the metaphysical thought operates in.

Kierkegaard makes the irony evident in the beginning of *Fear and Trembling*, where '[f]aith was then a task for a whole lifetime, because it was assumed that proficiency in believing is not acquired either in days or in weeks' (FT/R:7). This is precisely the criticism of professors of theology, they claimed to become experts in the matters of faith through completion of their academic studies.

Ryan Kemp's analysis of contemporary academia through the prism of Kierkegaard states '[f]resh off his graduate studies and on the hunt for long-term academic employment, the Assistant Professor seems to embody all that Kierkegaard hates' (2020:31). The issue is the same: the Christian life becomes substituted for the academic life. Kemp shows how in a passage of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (CUP1:220–21) Kierkegaard mocks Assistant Professors who take the paradox of Christianity (that should not and could not be explained according to Kierkegaard) and explain it away (Kemp, 2020:35). Elizabeth Li argues, 'Kierkegaard distinguishes between a) objective forms of philosophy and theology, i.e., sciences or academic disciplines in pursuit of objective knowledge; b) subjective forms of philosophy and theology, and finally c) Christianity as an existence-communication' (Li, 2019:137–138). The a) and b) are divided between Hegelian (objective) and Socratic (subjective) approaches, and

while Socratic philosophy's relationship to Christianity to some degree involves profound analogical and constructive dynamic interplay, these two spheres are ultimately kept in a dynamic tension of similarity and dissimilarity, which reflects the difficulty of existence (Li, 2019:137).

This will become especially prominent below in chapter 4. The objective and subjective distinction itself will become more complex throughout the investigation.

This thesis navigates Kierkegaard's criticism of academia in several ways. First, as will become apparent in the final two chapters, the thesis diminishes the distinction between the Christian life and the academic life. This is done not only in terms of where "for a Christian academic their academic life is also (an extension) of their Christian life, that is they take Christianity to work with them." Rather, the academic life understood as the life of education follows what this thesis argues to be a theology of education. As will become clear by chapter 5, this thesis will have moved from viewing theology as a purely objective theological discipline to seeing it in terms of Christianity as existence-communication. In other words, the theology of education presented in this thesis is of education as an existence-communication. This is a new understanding of the theology of education as opposed to what is at present seen in the literature (see section 1.5.).

Lastly, Kierkegaard's critique is directed at the theology of objective and disinterested kind of research (Li, 2019:139), rather than a 'personal, infinite interestedness in one's own eternal happiness' (CUP1:24). This is acknowledged by me, the author of this thesis; furthermore it is embraced through the use of the first-person pronoun *I*. I am not a disinterested, impassionate researcher who treats "the object" of study from a distance. I am always already implicated in the

research, related to it, and this relation is what enables me to undergo this education of theology. This relationship will be explained in more detail in chapter 4, especially section 4.1. However, it suffices to state that this is my justification for using the first-person singular pronoun “I” quite liberally throughout the thesis.

### 1.2.2. Reading Kierkegaard: an issue of communication

C. Stephen Evans (1998:78–79) draws the reader’s attention to the error often made in the textbooks with regard to attributing to Kierkegaard the thought of his pseudonyms. Evans states that Kierkegaard’s ‘pseudonyms should be taken seriously, since they are for Kierkegaard like characters in a novel, who may therefore have views that are not shared by their author’ (1998:78–79). Kierkegaard himself claims at the end of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* that ‘in the pseudonymous books there is not a single word by me. I have no opinion about them except as a third party, no knowledge of their meaning except as a reader’ (CUP1:626).

The relationship between the pseudonym and the author, however, is rather more problematic in Kierkegaard than Evans suggests. Kierkegaard cannot be trusted in the above quotation, as using a pseudonym for *Postscript* was not pre-planned but a last minute decision on his part (Roberts, 2023:378). Joakim Garff (2013:267–268) also shows that Kierkegaard intended to publish *The Concept of Anxiety* under his own name. In a journal entry cited in Garff, Kierkegaard states, ‘I always stand in an altogether poetic relation to my works; therefore I am pseudonymous’ (Garff, 2013:268; JJ:227). Thus, even when Kierkegaard is writing under the name of Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, it is possible to read this as just another pseudonym, a different character that presents another point of view. For example, this is a strategy adopted by Johannes Sløk (1994:8). Similar suggestions that Søren Kierkegaard should be read as another pseudonymous work is made also by Stuart Dalton (2019), who argues that we have elevated education to the realm of religion, while the purpose of Johannes Climacus in *Fragments* is to demonstrate the irony of such thinking. Dalton summarises the crumbly pedagogy of merely human education that

requires teachers who are wise enough to know that they have no authority, who have practiced and perfected the art of disappearing, and who have the insight to understand that the moment of teaching and learning is also accidental and vanishing and that the student learns only insofar as she creates her own truth (2019:254).

This emphasis on the student creating their own truth comes to be the key for understanding Kierkegaard’s authorship, as one is led ‘to read all of his work as pseudonymous and indirectly communicated regardless of who signed the text, because that is the only way merely human teaching and/or learning is possible’ (Dalton, 2019:256). For Dalton, indirect communication is a consequence of Kierkegaard’s theory of education; only through indirect communication is the

student able to grasp the truth for themselves. Considering orthonymous work as more authoritative or directly communicating what Kierkegaard meant elevates Kierkegaard to a status of a god according to his own theory of education. For Dalton (2019:256) “Søren Kierkegaard” is yet another pseudonym, and the most interesting and difficult one. It is, therefore, *both* interesting *and* ironic that the editors of *Kierkegaard’s Pseudonyms* (Nun and Stewart, 2015), though mentioning the difficulty posited by “Søren Kierkegaard”, do not engage with it any further.

Another issue, pointed out by Joakim Garff (2013:xx) in his biography of Kierkegaard, is an attempt to separate Kierkegaard (the private person) from his work. While Garff acknowledges the concerns that may arise in interpreting Kierkegaard purely biographically, he nonetheless finds it paradoxical to avoid his biographism, as Kierkegaard was ‘an author who not only thought – and wrote – himself into his works, but also fully satisfied that his “existence” was the “most interesting existence of any author in Denmark,” and that *this was why* he would be “read and studied in the future”’ (2013:xx; emphasis original).

### 1.2.3. *Gjentagelse*

The reader of this thesis will soon notice how certain ideas are repeated throughout the thesis, but each time the emphasis, meaning, or conclusion are changed. This should not be treated as a weakness on behalf of the author, as if unable to consistently use the same terms and ideas without having their meanings changed. Rather, it follows Kierkegaard’s own thinking and logic, that the person is changed in the process. Although I will refer to and elaborate on repetition thought this thesis, some preliminary remarks are in order.

Kierkegaard, as Constantin Constantius’s report in *Repetition* [*Gjentagelsen*], gives not an easy nor straightforward definition of repetition as ‘repetition is the interest [*Interesse*] of metaphysics, and also the interest upon which metaphysics comes to grief; repetition is the watchword [*Løsnet*] in every ethical view; repetition is *conditio sine qua non* [the indispensable condition] for every issue of dogmatics’ (FT/R:149). Ryan Kemp alerts the readers of Kierkegaard to the issues in translation present in the Hongs’ edition of Kierkegaard’s work. Kemp follows Walter Lawrie in translating *Løsnet* as “solution” to emphasise ‘repetition resolves the “binding power” (*bindende Magt*) of all (non-religious) life-views’ (2016:225; footnote 4). Kemp refers here to the comments Kierkegaard (himself), as Vigilius Haufniensis of the *Concept of Anxiety*, makes on this passage in *Repetition*. To quote at length:

If repetition is not posited, ethics becomes a binding power. No doubt it is for this reason that the author states that repetition is the watchword in every ethical view. If repetition is not posited, dogmatics cannot exist at all, for repetition begins in faith, and faith is the organ for issues of dogma. In the realm of nature, repetition is present in its immovable necessity. In the realm of the spirit, the task is not to wrest a change from repetition or to find oneself moderately comfortable during

the repetition, as if spirit stood only in an external relation to the repetition of spirit (according to which good and evil would alternate like summer and winter), but to transform repetition into something inward, into freedom's own task, into its highest interest, so that while everything else changes, it can actually realize repetition. At this point the finite spirit despairs (CA:18; footnote).

The last two sentences are of special importance to this thesis, as the thesis claims the task of education is “to transform repetition into something inward” and despair not, something only possible if education is to embrace the incarnational paradox of Christ, the logic of contradiction, the embrace of the uncertainty of the leap of faith (more on this section 3.3. and 4.3.). For Kierkegaard, an individual is incapable of the ability to ‘self-transcend’ (Kemp, 2016:226; emphasis removed) and needs the teacher. As ‘[u]nless the individual trusts that he can enter into a relationship with the truth, he lapses into despair’ (Kemp, 2016:229) and it is precisely this entering into a relationship with [the bringer of] truth that is examined in chapter 4.

Later on in the report, Constantin Constantius (FT/R:170) argues that the only repetition is the impossibility of repetition. I interpret this to mean that even though a person goes through the same action again, as Kierkegaard did with a trip to Berlin (whether his own, or the one in the fictional narrative of the story), the same action is nonetheless a new action and something new is to be learned. Although repetition might appear as a circle, it is only so if viewed in two dimensions; repetition is a spiral which, when seen from above, appears as a circle. It is important to note that Tubbs (2005:34) is critical of using spirals in the movement of education, as the spiral is denied the experience of mis-recognition. In other words, the spiral denies *Aufhebung* of experience, thus the spiral remains as an illusion. But this is precisely Kierkegaard’s point, that repetition is indeed only an illusion, and yet education does take place within this illusion. This would become especially important in the understanding of the concept of the stages of existence in chapter 3, and in particular in the religiousness B stage. There, repetition takes an educational dimension, for Kierkegaard is opposing repetition to Socratic and Hegelian<sup>15</sup> recollection (for a detailed account see section 4.2.1.). On Kierkegaard’s account a religious “truth” cannot be recollected through some prior knowledge, but the stage (and thus the truth) has to be reached over and over again anew. Heidi Liehu (1990:103) goes as far as to argue that repetition is only possible in the religious sphere. Only in the religious is this striving not merely perpetual without ever reaching the goal (Söderquist, 2016:xix), but in the repetitions of the religious sphere one comes to know themselves as an individual before God. This is the paradoxical logic explicated in the repetitions of chapter 4.

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<sup>15</sup> According to Lars Løvlie (2003:151; footnote 1), Kierkegaard wrote *Repetition* as a critique of Hegel’s *Bildung*.

## 1.3. Towards theological study of education

### 1.3.1. Analogies, Metaphors, and the task of Theology

This section aims to tease out some general approaches towards God-talk, especially from the perspective of analogical and metaphorical language. The discussions in the following sections will further show how this thesis navigates the issues raised by the language about God. However, the discussion in this section is no way exhaustive study of analogical and metaphorical language, but rather serves as a background that informs the attitude towards language about God taken in this thesis. Especially as this thesis defends thinking of God and education as *God is education*, ultimately acknowledging with Kierkegaard that ‘from analogy and induction one can reach a conclusion only by a leap’ (JJ:266).

The sameness of the words *God* and *education* is therefore not claimed at the level of concepts, but at the level of relation. Sameness here should be understood in Kantian terms, where ‘analogy “does not signify (as is commonly understood) an imperfect similarity of two things, but a perfect similarity of relations between two quite dissimilar things” (P §58)’ (Caygill, 1995:66).<sup>16</sup> The thesis’ concern is with demonstrating how this relation works.

Writing in the middle of the last century, John Macquarrie (1967:213) argued that talking of God in terms of negations (*via negationis*), that is, through what God is not, should be (and always was) supplemented by some other way of talking about God, as, without such supplementation, the speaker would sooner or later slip into atheism. Macquarrie saw in the attempts of Bultmannian demythologizing or conscious symbolism an inability to exhaust ‘an ontological core of meaning’ (1967:214) and explicate a relationship of symbol to what it symbolises. Macquarrie’s problem with Rudolf Bultmann was ‘not his existential interpretation of myth ... but the problem began when he invoked analogy so that he could talk about an “act of God”, an “address of God”, and the like’ (1967:215). The issue with Karl Barth was ‘an arbitrary leap’ (Macquarrie, 1967:215) of the grace of God establishing an analogy between the human and the divine. Macquarrie finds in analogy the only way of speaking about God ‘that has the most positive content ... a way that seems to give us assurance that our talk is not just empty, and that it does somehow impinge upon God and give us some insight into the mystery of Being’ (1967:214). Yet, analogical language has to be meaningful and not just remain as an exercise in speculative discussion.

This is the general struggle of language that knows its own limits. This struggle is seen in Macquarrie’s discussion of the use of words such as “openness”, “likeness”, “similarity”, “participation”, and “affinity” (1967:218–220). Macquarrie demonstrates how one word cannot describe the relationship between the two that are to be analogous, and yet the words are necessary for us to make any

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<sup>16</sup> See Kant’s (2004) *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics*. Kant states that ‘we determine the concept only with respect to the world and hence with respect to us, and we have no need of more’ (2004:109 [§58]), not an absolute determination of the Absolute.

meaning possible whatsoever. In a sense, Macquarrie's problem is very similar to mine. He is adamant to maintain that God is Being (following Paul Tillich), and not just a being. While admitting that others 'have solved the problem of analogy and of God-talk generally by abolishing it' (1967:221), that is, by abolishing God as Being, Macquarrie wants to maintain "God as Being" and thus open for a being (that is us) a possibility to somehow establish a "likeness" between the Being and a being. However, prior to establishing an analogy between the Being and a being, Macquarrie has already made an analogical jump between God and Being, and he is well aware of it (1967:221–222).

In his treatment of Martin Heidegger's idea 'that Being is strictly "incomparable" and that it is "wholly other" to any particular being' (Macquarrie, 1967:222) Macquarrie emphasises the dual nature of Heidegger's idea 'that there is no Being apart from the beings, and that Being can be known only in and through the beings' (1967:222). Because pure Being without change would be indistinguishable from nothing (Macquarrie, 1967:225) no Being is possible without some kind of relation to the other. Macquarrie further emphasises that for Aquinas, the likeness between God and a man made in His image did not amount to equality and that the 'doctrine of analogy does not demand an identity between God and the creatures or Being and the beings' (1967:222).

However, Macquarrie emphasises that there exists a being 'with respect to whom it is proper to talk of analogies rather than of symbols ... it is man who bears the image and likeness of God' (1967:226). Though initially Macquarrie (1967:226) considers this being to be human more generally, he moves to a particular being revealed to us in the incarnation (1967:227). The incarnation is then '[t]he coming together of Being with a being' (Macquarrie, 1967:227). Thus, 'Christ is the living centre that gives reality to our analogies and assures us that they are not merely fanciful' (Macquarrie, 1967:227). A stronger emphasis on the incarnation is put by James K.A. Smith (2002), who, in his *Speech and Theology*, argues that the incarnation is the condition of possibility not just of theological language – the God-talk, but the condition of possibility of the language in general. Macquarrie comes close to Kierkegaard, stating that 'analogical language – and all symbolic language – has a paradoxical character' (1967:228). Without this paradoxical aspect and the possibility for constant correction and re-examination theology is in danger of falling into idolatry. Li, referring to Kierkegaard in *Concept of Irony*, summarises this point well, arguing that '[f]or Kierkegaard every analogy must ultimately be revoked, for otherwise it will, like objective philosophy has done, trivialise and remove Christianity's paradox' (2019:143). The dialectical tension ought to remain as a self-corrective of theology also in this thesis, thus reminding the author and the reader of the possibility of error at every step.

It needs to be mentioned in conclusion that thus far the discussion has concerned the relation<sup>17</sup> of immanent and transcendent, the creator and created,

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<sup>17</sup> I invite the reader to be patient and wait a little further for the discussion of the logic of relation examined in chapters 2 and 4.

wholly other and self. The explication of analogy and the possibility of talking about God in this manner are of general concern to us humans, this concern being made possible by the incarnation of God, as, without the incarnation, we could indeed fall into atheism, as Macquarrie suggested above. The statement *God is education*, in this sense, is not problematic, as all it says is “transcendent is transcendent” and hence says nothing [new] at all. The issue of analogy becomes an issue for this thesis when education is incarnated, and in the day-to-day discussions on education, it is always incarnated. Just as people talk about God through the actions of Jesus Christ, so people talk about education through schooling, learning, institutions, and the like.

### 1.3.2. Is there a method in theological study?

To ask for a method in theology is to ask a question that usually arises from German/continental European regions of theological schools. Theologians from the British Isles (myself being initially trained in the UK) ‘are a good deal more inclined to begin haphazardly and let the methodology look after itself’ (Williams, 2000a:xii; emphasis original). Rowan Williams ‘assume[s] that the theologian *is* always beginning in the middle of things’ (2000a:xii; emphasis original), already within the presuppositions, languages, and the life of society that determines how we interact with the world.<sup>18</sup> Thus although Smith can argue that ‘the theoretical disciplines – philosophy and theology included – are faced with the methodological question of how to speak, or how not to speak’ (2002:6), we are nevertheless already speaking in the positing of these questions.

Dan R. Stiver has argued that ‘[t]he purpose of methodology in a postmodern context, therefore, is to be not so much a blueprint to be slavishly followed as a map to be consulted only periodically’ (2003:171). However, as this thesis argues that the boundaries of the field of “theology of education” are expanded, there is not as yet a “map” of the territory to be discovered. Therefore, the considerations of method given here are only preliminary. This is why the thesis returns to the question of method in the final chapter, to look back at the journey taken.

The guiding principles of this thesis are questions of “what do we mean by theological *study*” and “what does it mean to *do* theology”. *Study* and *doing* imply not only a strong relation to the topic of education, as Williams puts it, but also theologians ought to be in the process of ‘learning about doing’ (2000a:132; emphasis removed). The difference between *study* and *doing* furthermore is a distinction embraced by the authors on the theology of education (see section 1.4.) and will itself be challenged by this thesis.

The first consideration, as Andreas Andreopoulos argues, is that there is no one Christianity – ‘there are as many ways as there are humans to approach him. The spiritual trajectory of each person towards Christ is unique and unrepeatable’

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<sup>18</sup> This remark of beginning in the middle of things, in a sense, also constitutes the whole point of Kierkegaardian education, as we cannot begin in the beginning. More on this in chapter 4.

(2013:11). I would like to further extend this thought to all theological study; each work, each thesis, is unique and individual. Andreopoulos reminds the reader that even '[f]aith is not a requirement for a BA or a PhD in Theology' (2013:17).<sup>19</sup> As will be argued below, this is indeed consistent with the view from the theology of education that the *studying* of theology does not mean one is *doing* it. However, Andreopoulos refers to Evagrius of Pontos,<sup>20</sup> who stated that '[i]f you are a theologian, you will pray truly; and if you pray truly, you will be a theologian' (2003:199 [§60]). Andreopoulos understands *truly* of the Evagrian text as *correctly* (2013:16). John Behr makes a similar reference to Evagrius, stating that theologians today tend to misunderstand Evagrius, taking truly to mean to be 'duly reverential in our theological discourse' (2008:67). Behr's discussion of the Early Church Fathers maintains that '[r]ather than speaking about God, "theology" was, more specifically, the affirmation of the divinity of the crucified and exalted Lord, Jesus Christ' (2008:70). It is therefore required to have a 'recognition that author, reader and subject-of-study are mutually implicated ... there is no "outside" the data' (Frank, 1992:471). Of further interest is Vladimir Lossky's (1978:13) understanding of Evagrius' statement's *truly* as purity in prayer. For Lossky, purity in prayer also implies silence – are we then able to say anything at all to or about God? This is what Smith (2002) described as "the problem of theology" – trying to employ a finite language and concepts to speak about the infinite God. Smith sees 'the theologian [a]s faced with either violating God's transcendence and the reduction of God to immanence/finitude, or one must not speak of God, remaining silent' (2002:153).

Kierkegaard, as Johannes de Silentio, presents the idea of the inability to speak about God in his work *Fear and Trembling* through the figure of Abraham on his way to Mount Moriah to sacrifice Isaac. In drafts and journals related to this work, Kierkegaard especially emphasises the gravity of the contradiction Abraham is faced with. 'The terrifying thing in the collision is this – that it is not a collision between God's command and man's command but between God's command and God's command' (FT/R:248), meaning the collision of command to obey God, and God's command to love your child. This contradiction is further intensified by the uncertainty Abraham is facing; '[h]e destroys his happiness in the world in order to have his happiness with God – and now if he has misunderstood God – where shall he turn?' (FT/R:248). Johannes de Silentio says 'Abraham cannot be mediated; in other words, he cannot speak. As soon as I speak, I express the universal, and if I do not do so, no one can understand me' (FT/R:60). This

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<sup>19</sup> Kierkegaard takes this under examination in *The Book on Adler* with his portrayal of a theological graduate (Adler) who becomes a Hegelian philosopher, and a pastor, but not necessarily a Christian (see BA:93 onwards). Furthermore, in a rather Evagrian way, Kierkegaard in *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits* writes 'because purity of heart is precisely the wisdom that is gained by praying; a man of prayer does not pore over scholarly books but is the wise man' (UDVS:26).

<sup>20</sup> For a more detailed account of relation between prayer and theology in the thought of Evagrius see Augustine Casiday (2013) chapter 6.

Kierkegaard's position is brought under critique by Smith (2002:139), who argues that the very possibility of *Fear and Trembling* being written by Kierkegaard indicated that it is nonetheless possible to speak of Abraham's predicament. Smith asks '[s]omebody must have said *something*, otherwise how would Kierkegaard know that Abraham's command issued from God?' (2002:139; emphasis original). I, however, do not think that this necessarily undermines Kierkegaard's (or, rather, Abraham's) position. The disclosure has happened between us and the text, not between Abraham and somebody else within the text. I argue that Johannes de Silentio has foreseen the charge brought about by the critics such as Smith, and has thus later insisted that if someone would try and imitate Abraham, he would do everything to stop them (FT/R:32). Smith himself acknowledges it: 'this third [the reader/or narrator/or someone else] does not seem to undo the singularity of Abraham's position: that the command was given only to him, that it was beyond the universal, that it was not commensurate with ethics' (2002:139).

Lossky allows for the possibility of speech and knowledge of God, but maintains that it is limited, being founded on and grounded in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.<sup>21</sup> In agreement with Lossky, Smith (2002:154) names the incarnation as the condition of the possibility of speech about God. Or as put by Williams 'we speak because God has given us (literally) a Word: God has invited us into the life that is his self-expression' (2018:234). Lossky argues that '[s]ince the Word has incarnated Himself, the word can be thought and taught ... But the Incarnation of the Word has no other goal than to lead us to the Father, in the Spirit' (Lossky, 1978:13). Thus, in a way, it is Jesus Christ who is doing the speech<sup>22</sup> through the incarnation that reveals to us some knowledge about God, rather than our own thinking. Our theological teaching can only seek 'to speak the silence, humbly, by a new use of thought and word' (Lossky, 1978:14), or, as suggested by Behr above, our speech is only directed at the exaltation of Jesus Christ, who imparts knowledge to us. Lossky extends this thought in relation to the understanding of the Trinity, that '[o]nly poetry can evoke it, precisely because it celebrates and does not pretend to explain ... Outside of praise and adoration, outside of personal relationship of faith, our language, when speaking

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<sup>21</sup> The similar argument is at play in the defence of iconography of the Orthodox Church. Paul Evdokimov argues with reference to St Paul that the Christological foundation of an icon is the incarnation of Jesus as making visible the invisible God (2007:196).

<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, Smith sees in the incarnation precisely the opposite – 'God's refusal to avoid speaking' (2002:154). However, Smith remains dialectical in his answer, 'Incarnation functions as a paradigm for the operation of theological language which both "does justice" to God's transcendence and infinity, but at the same time makes it possible to "speak"' (2002:154). Furthermore, he sees the typical division between kataphaticism and apophaticism, as the former 'reduces God's transcendence to immanence, while an apophatics in fact "reduces" God to mere transcendence ... we are left with either Arianism (kataphatics) or Docetism (apophatics). Only the Incarnation provides a *language* for the unsayable' (Smith, 2002:154; emphasis original). Smith himself is grounded in phenomenology.

of the Trinity, is always false' (1978:46).<sup>23</sup> This emphasis on relation/ship will become important for the whole project and will be examined in detail later in chapter 4.

Lossky's view is further supported by Paul Evdokimov's understanding of Evagrius. Evdokimov (2007:14) understands prayerful theology as a liturgical composition. He states that 'Singing "Holy God" during the Liturgy is *teologia*, theology, which is singing, done by the Holy Spirit' (Evdokimov, 2007:21; emphasis original).<sup>24</sup> Augustine also in *De doctrina Christiana* identifies this contradiction between the impossibility of speech about God and the "need" to praise God: '[t]his contradiction is to be passed over in silence ... For God, although nothing worthy may be spoken of Him, has accepted the tribute of the human voice and wished us to take joy in praising Him with our words' (1958:11 [1.6.6]). Interestingly, the view of Evdokimov finds support in Kierkegaard's *Christian Discourses*: '[n]either does a human being come closer and closer to God by lifting up his head higher and higher, but inversely by casting himself down ever more deeply in worship' (CD:292). This is not a substitution of theology by doxology; rather, doxology becomes a way of expressing the language of the mystery of theology.<sup>25</sup> As Smith put it in terms of his study

what we are looking for is a "third way," a mode of speaking which is non-conceptual, non-objectifying, and non-predicative – and therefore, non-reductive and non-violent. It will be what we might describe as "praise" (Augustine, Marion) or "de-nomination" (Marion), "prayer" (Derrida), or Augustine's strategy of "confession" (2002:44).

It is also what will be discussed below in terms of a celebratory theological study. Mike Higton (2012) in developing an Anglican theology of learning takes as the basis of his work the celebration of the eucharist in his community, where communion with God and with other people becomes learning. After all, Kierkegaard as Climacus does say 'one also demonstrates the existence of God by worship – not by demonstrations' (CUP1:546). There is, of course, irony present in the fact that demonstrations do not demonstrate God, and yet one demonstrates God by demonstration – by worship. But this is, as will become apparent in the later chapters, what is precisely at the heart of Kierkegaard's theological pedagogy – paradoxes. Either way, what Climacus seems to have in mind here is a subjective rather than objective experience of God. One can experience God as a reality rather than understand him as such.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Maybe this is one of the reasons why Kierkegaard refers to himself as a poet (NB13:37; for more on Kierkegaard as the poet see Sylvia Walsh (1998)).

<sup>24</sup> My translation.

<sup>25</sup> David Willows has imaginatively proposed thinking of Christian education as doxology, his 'conviction [is] that Christian education cannot be understood except as an overflowing response of joy and gratitude for what God has already achieved for us in Christ' (2001:157).

<sup>26</sup> Orthodox theology makes a distinction between the essence and energies of God where 'we shall never know his essence or inner being, either in this life or in the Age to come'

Williams (2000a:xiii) suggests a threefold division in the styles of theological study – *celebratory*, *communicative* and *critical*. The *celebratory* style is ‘an attempt to draw out and display connections of thought and image so as to exhibit the fullest possible range of significance in the language used’ (Williams, 2000a:xiii) as found in hymns, icons, and preaching of the Church. The embrace of Greek philosophy by the early Church is an action of the *communicative* style of theology that

seeks also to persuade or commend, to witness to the gospel’s capacity for being at home in more than one cultural environment, and to display enough confidence to believe that this gospel can be rediscovered at the end of a long and exotic detour through strange idioms and structures of thought (Williams, 2000a:xiv).

The point is one must have confidence in one’s belief and that the belief will survive an immersion into a different environment. This thesis, operating at the periphery of theology, philosophy, and education studies, aims to do just that. The theology presented here is rigorous and survives the meeting of other sciences. This is not to say that the theology presented is an unmoved dogma as ‘[t]he assumption is that this or that intellectual idiom not only offers a way into fruitful conversations with the current environment but also that the unfamiliar idiom may uncover aspects of the deposit of belief hitherto unexamined’ (Williams, 2000a:xiv). The final style of enquiry is *critical* theology. It is the ‘nagging at fundamental meanings’ (Williams, 2000a:xv) asking the question ‘[i]s there a stable conceptual area in the discourse of belief that will always remain unaffected by mediation in other idioms?’ (Williams, 2000a:xv). *Critical* theology can be conservative as well as revisionist and usually moves in two directions of agnosticism and even nihilism, or towards rediscovery of the

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(Ware, 1993:27) as that would mean we know God the way he knows himself. Yet ‘while God’s inner essence is for ever beyond our comprehension, his energies, grace, life and power fill the whole universe, and are directly accessible to us’ (Ware, 1993:27). The boundary between divine *essence* and *energy* is not fixed or clearly cut and definable (Schneider, 2013:10). Furthermore, as Gregory Palamas (who is most associated with the essence-energies theology in the Orthodox Christianity) states ‘God is entirely present in each of the divine energies, we name Him from each of them, although it is clear He transcends all of them’ (1983:94–95 [III, 2, 7]). Thus, while it is impossible to know God as he knows *himself* (and thus have a totality of an absolute), it is nonetheless still possible to know him. John Romanides argues, ‘God never revealed his essence, neither through the Son in the New Testament nor through the Prophets and the other holy men in the Old Testament’ (2008:58). John Meyendorff argues that for Palamas, it is not just a part of God that is revealed through his energy, but rather he is manifested completely, ‘each divine power and each energy is God himself’ (1964:214). Furthermore, ‘the three divine hypostases in fact possess *one sole energy*, and every divine act is of necessity the act of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, because of their consubstantiality’ (Meyendorff, 1964:215; emphasis original). Kallistos Ware emphasises that Christians are to know God as a person rather than as abstract principle and ‘[t]o know a person is essentially to love him or her’ (Ware, 1993:20). Ware further maintains that the way to enter ‘into the mystery of God is through personal love’ (Ware, 1993:20) of him for us, and us for him.

celebratory and mysterious in it (Williams, 2000a:xv). It has to be said that this division is not a straightforward one; ‘to try and arrange these in some kind of hierarchy, to regard one as the true paradigm or the goal to which the others aspire, is a serious misunderstanding of the way in which theology works’ (Williams, 2000a:xvi). Williams concludes his discussion of styles with ‘a reminder of the inescapable place of repentance in all theological speech worth the name’ (Williams, 2000a:xvi), which is a clear echo of Kierkegaard’s ‘[i]n relation to God we are always in the wrong – this puts an end to doubt and calms the cares; it animates and inspires to action’ (EO2:353). This point, that Kierkegaard attributes to a friend of Judge William in the sermon at the end of *Either/Or*, of being wrong in relation to God, ‘is not a truth you must acknowledge, not a consolation that alleviates your pain, not a compensation for something better, but it is a joy in which you win a victory over yourself and over the world’ (EO2:351). Furthermore, this is an upbuilding thought, meaning there is education within this paradoxical position of being in the wrong.<sup>27</sup>

The threefold division, like that of Williams above, is presented in Behr’s work around the ability of theologians to talk about God. Behr follows George Lindbeck’s (1984/2009) division of the language of theology into *informative statements about things*, *experiential-expressive* and *cultural-linguistic* (Behr, 2008:68; emphasis original). Behr is especially interested in the last approach as it ‘seem[s] to account for the way in which doctrinal statements functioned in the early centuries of Christianity’ (2008:69).<sup>28</sup> Behr argues that there is a *naiveté* in thinking ‘that theological statements are “informative prepositions” about God “out there” – as if he were subject to our investigation and scrutiny’ (2008:69). It is impossible to speak about God in words presupposing any objectivity or finality. As mentioned above, theologising is speaking of Christ as God. This speaking of Christ as God ‘is speaking to God and opening our speech to God’s; and it is speaking *of* those who have spoken to God’ (Williams, 2000a:7; emphasis original). What it means is demonstrated below.

Williams argues against a normative *style* of how theology ought to be done (as opposed to normative content for theological utterances) (2000a:9). Williams sees in it a version of a discourse about power; it is ‘essential to theology that theologians become aware of how theology worked and continues to work in the interests of this or that system of power’ (2000a:8). The power discourse, for Williams, is related to the concept of integrity in theological-speak, where ‘a lack of integrity in speech is manifestly a *political* matter’ (2000a:4; emphasis original) and *political* always contains a power relationship. A totalising system of theology has to be resisted, as systematising in an attempt to gain a total perspective is an attempt to ‘take God’s point of view’ (Williams, 2000a:6; emphasis

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<sup>27</sup> The paradoxical education is the subject matter of chapter 4.

<sup>28</sup> Behr especially refers to the Cappadocian analysis of theological language developed in response to Eunomius (See: Behr, 2004:267–290).

removed) on the matter.<sup>29</sup> Williams (2017a:205–206) would argue elsewhere that the inability to take a divine perspective is actually liberating at least in two ways: it opens up my own self to constant renewal, and it provides a horizon that is never possessed through which others' views might be tested without undermining their legitimacy per se. Lossky concurs that 'theology that constitutes itself into a system is always dangerous' (1978:15). The danger of such systematising is demonstrated by Williams' discussion of the Church's relation to Israel, where the history of anti-semitism is the urge of the Church to finalise, to conclude a system (to borrow a Hegelian term) of its own history (2000a:102) – 'the Church's claim to finality – a finality which, though claimed on behalf of Jesus, is in fact a statement about the Church's own aspirations' (2000a:101). Williams argues (2000a:105) that Jesus does not manifest himself as a totality of meaning, and against this totality, one should state with St Paul '[f]or I ... know nothing ... except Jesus Christ, and him crucified' (1 Corinthians 2:2).<sup>30</sup> (Although one ought to acknowledge that this Pauline phrase is ironic and contradictory in the Kierkegaardian fashion. I know nothing except Jesus – who is everything. Thus, I know everything.) Furthermore, Lossky argues, 'Christ ... breaks the closed systems in which the philosophers imprison and denature the reflection of the living God in human thought' (1978:20). To have integrity in the theological discourse and avoid imposition of power is to speak in a way that 'permits response and continuation ... invites collaboration by showing that it does not claim to be, in and of itself, final. It does not seek to prescribe the tone, the direction, or even the vocabulary of a response' (Williams, 2000a:5), it is to show 'what is involved in bringing the complexity of its human world to judgement before God' (Williams, 2000a:6). As already mentioned above with reference to Kierkegaard, it is to find oneself always in the wrong before God. Furthermore, it is a 'recognition of an "unfinished" quality' (Williams, 2000a:4) of a response staying with the particular. This "being alone," for Williams, is a fundamental experience of being a human being (Howes, 2013:34), of not rushing, taking the time to ponder the difficulty (Howes, 2013:24–25).

This, however, does not mean that this thesis is to remain vague and uncritical to the theology being presented, accepting the *celebratory* liturgical understanding as a given. Rather, the task of the author is to 'affirm theologically the propriety of different styles, and to maintain exchange and mutual critique between them' (Williams, 2000a:9). Furthermore, the engagement of this thesis with philosophy and education studies acts accordingly by bringing different (even opposing) concepts in conversation, or in the language that is employed in this

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<sup>29</sup> Later on in the same volume Williams writes 'a way of talking about God that simply projects onto him what we cannot achieve – a systematic vision of the world' (2000a:155). Thus, there are two dangers in systematics – one is of trying to take God's point of view and the other of projecting onto God our own view as that of his. The second type of God is called an idol by Williams (2000a:156).

<sup>30</sup> From here onwards, unless otherwise stated, all English biblical quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

thesis – bringing them into the relation.<sup>31</sup> This is not to say that theology is without rigour; it is not a “scientific” one where for ‘empirically based science, the only interruptions that matter are those of new phenomenon not catered for in previous schemata’ (Williams, 2000a:13), rather it is ‘the rigour of keeping on the watch for our constant tendency to claim the “total perspective”’ (Williams, 2000a:13) as if we can arrive at the sum of all knowledge. I argue this is also what Kierkegaard is doing in his critique of the completion of the system by Hegel,<sup>32</sup> in the words of Williams

Theology can remind the world of religious discourse that it offers not a total meaning but the possibility of a perception simplified and unified in and through the contingencies of human biography: not the conquest but the transformation of *mortal* vision. God is there not to supply what is lacking in mortal knowledge or mortal power, but simply as the source, sustainer and end of our mortality (2000a:13–14; emphasis original).

The Kierkegaardian critique of Hegel<sup>33</sup> will be outlined in chapter 5. It will be demonstrated how Kierkegaard is actually much closer to Hegel than he claims to be, where both have an open system rather than a concluded totality.

### 1.3.3. Experiential methodology in theological study

It is interesting to note that Andreopoulos (2013) leaves his own methodological considerations until the last chapter of his work. Andreopoulos seeks to avoid exactly the kind of criticism described above. Andreopoulos argues for his engagement with theology through icons as an experiential methodology. The subjugation of theology under “systematics” can imply the fragmentation of knowledge, which can be studied separately, with the consequences being that the Eucharist, as an example, is treated as the same and equal “thing” among many (Andreopoulos, 2013:138). Andreopoulos draws attention to the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea, where the Bishops ‘did not intend to produce new theology, but to describe the theological experience as they had known it in their diocese’

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<sup>31</sup> This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2 with reference to liberal education and the plurality of meaning of the term *education* itself.

<sup>32</sup> In the words of Merold Westphal ‘*Concluding Unscientific Postscript* is a sustained satire against the idea that philosophy can be systematic science ... Johannes Climacus, the pseudonymous author, finds this claim to be comical’ (1998:102).

<sup>33</sup> I am aware, as put in the words of Carl Henrik Koch, that ‘[i]t was Danish Hegelianism with its theological consequences, and not German Hegelianism or Hegel himself, that was the target of attack for the part of Kierkegaard’s authorship called the pseudonymous authorship’ (2015:66). Nonetheless, as my discussion of the influence of Hegel on Kierkegaard will demonstrate, Kierkegaard nevertheless maintains a level of animosity and critique towards Hegel. More on Kierkegaard and Danish Hegelianism in chapter 2.

(2013:140). However, Williams demonstrates that un/like<sup>34</sup> the Ecumenical Councils, it is not always possible to arrive at a conclusion suitable for everyone, but this does not mean that the opposition has to pronounce the other heretics. Rather, Williams states

if there is not one answer to the question which can be established to everyone's satisfaction, if the debate cannot be arrested, that matters far less than the fact of a shared acknowledgement of the worthwhileness of the question and of the mode – which might be called “trustful interrogation” – in which it is explored (2000a:144).

To illustrate this, Williams (2000a:144) gives an example of two views on baptism in the congregation: indiscriminate versus selective. Both have arguments for and against, but Williams invites us, instead of dogmatising one against the other, to accept both as true, and ponder what it means to live one's life as a Christian and as a Christian community within those opposing views. This, I argue, is education. Williams takes this to be the revelation of God ‘keep[ing] the Church engaged in the exploration of what its foundational events signify’ (2000a:144) rather than an absolute and systematised knowledge of God through revelation. Williams sees the need for a ‘conscious and articulate effort to sustain the critical and dialectical aspect of this participation’ (2000a:146). This dialectic that Williams envisions is taken by me to be a methodological tool for approaching Kierkegaard. Williams argues

The integrity of theological utterance, then, does not lie in its correspondence to given structures of thought, its falling into line with an authoritative communication, but in the reality of its rootedness, its belonging, in the new world constituted in the revelatory event or process (2000a:147).

Thus, following Williams' argument, it is quite appropriate for a theologian (like me)<sup>35</sup> to look at the way Kierkegaard, by being put in conversation with thinkers from other theological strands, understands the issue of knowing God. Tubbs (2005:3) has argued for a similar standpoint in relation to the enterprise of the philosophy of education, inviting (broadly put) analytic and other camps of philosophy to take the risk and learn about themselves from the relations that arise in the process. Even within the “Lutheran” theology, examination of Kierkegaard's relation to Luther<sup>36</sup> shows the ambiguity of the kind of author Kierkegaard was. Furthermore, Kierkegaard influenced theology across all denominations enough as not to stick to purely Lutheran engagements with him. Instead of defending one camp against the other, the thesis and I, as an author, engage in the dialectic

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<sup>34</sup> I think it would be fair to Williams for me to argue that he wants to demonstrate the dialectical relationship in his argument, and a slash does precisely that.

<sup>35</sup> See Higton (2012:143–145) for an importance of being grounded (and humbled) theologically within a particular community, and that different Christian communities would approach a theology of education differently.

<sup>36</sup> For more on Kierkegaard and Luther see section 3.1.

of trying to learn from both. This is what I argue should be understood to mean by Williams' *revelation of God* being made evident in the community. The thesis will make this relational learning more apparent as it develops.

Thus, this thesis proposes an engagement with theology through education as an experiential methodology (to borrow a term from Andreopoulos) to reveal a theological experience otherwise hidden. This hiddenness is evident in the event of Jesus' risen encounter with disciples '[t]hen their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight' (Luke 24:31). Behr states that Jesus 'disappears from sight once he is recognized, so that he does not remain as an external object for our scrutiny' (2008:74) which is a clear educational implication. However, Behr further elaborates, 'neither seeing Christ on the cross, nor the report about the empty tomb, nor even the encounter with the risen Christ prompted the disciples, finally, to know the Lord ... Rather, the disciples come to recognize the Lord as the one whose passion is spoken of by the Scriptures ... and who is encountered in the breaking of the bread' (2008:74). Jesus' own reminder in the Gospels is consistent with Behr's argument 'for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink ... Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me' (Matthew 25:43–45). The implication of this thinking is evident in Marcella Althaus-Reid's statement that '[o]ur task and our joy is to find or simply recognise God sitting amongst us, at any time, in any gay bar or in the home of a camp friend who decorates her living room as a chapel and doesn't leave her rosary at home when going to a salsa bar' (2003:4). In the examples above, God appears as an *educational* relation. It is these educational relations that this thesis is concerned with and seeks to recognise and describe with the help of Kierkegaard.

'Theology needs to make connection, to search out and display unities or analogies' (Williams, 2000a:14) with and from the other disciplines. I argue that it is, therefore, a proper theological task to engage with philosophy and education studies within this thesis. This is also a challenge to philosophy and education studies – to be open to the conversation with theology and to allow one's discipline to be illuminated through this. A secular reader, a researcher, or a practitioner in education might protest as to the "usefulness" of such methodology based on the inherently Christian theological foundation it is built on. This issue is well described by Tubbs (2004, 2017), who argues that education is denied to learn something about itself if the *religious* is denied a voice. However, the thesis invites the reader to suspend their disbelief. There is a deeper issue revealed by Andreopoulos above – that of the fragmentation of knowledge – that is directly relevant to the "secular" disciplines of education studies and philosophy (of education). This is the issue of the fragmentation of knowledge that is picked up by Tubbs and developed into an educational pedagogy found within his notion of the modern liberal arts.<sup>37</sup> Tubbs focuses his degree design around the idea of the

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<sup>37</sup> For a summary of what the modern liberal arts are see Kontowski (2020:182–191) and Howes (2013). For the philosophical foundations of the modern liberal arts programme see Tubbs (2014).

first principles of ‘truth, freedom, and nature’ (Kontowski, 2020:182). These first principles do not belong to any discipline in particular; ‘[f]rom the perspective of the existing academic disciplines, questions concerning first principles are too far-ranging, unanswerable by specialised methods of inquiry, and therefore ultimately uninteresting’ (Kontowski, 2020:183). It is important to note that Tubbs does not think of modern liberal arts as offering a general education<sup>38</sup> – trying to cover everything via the student’s pick-and-choosing subjects they want – but rather as an education that invites the student to raise questions of giving meaning to their own life (Kontowski, 2020:184). This thesis aims to incorporate elements of the liberal arts as a methodological tool for looking at theology through education. The questions of “education” and “God” are *life meaning* questions, thus they need to be approached as such – as a whole, instead of isolating a particular method from a particular discipline, applying it to those questions and claiming to have arrived at a universal truth (at least for that discipline in particular). This thesis refuses to claim a truth for-or-from the discipline, but rather a truth for-and-from the researcher, arrived at through the process of writing this thesis and having experienced the difficulty and suffering this thesis is speaking of.

## 1.4. Theology of Education

Recently, Richard Smith (2013) argued that psychology has failed as a discipline of providing the meaning making and resources to education; rather, a kind of negative theology of learning is necessary that, contrary to psychology, does not prescribe the stages of a child’s development. This opens up what could be seen as a “secular” and “religious value-free” inquiry to the contribution of theological thinking<sup>39</sup> (if not to replace psychology, then certainly) to enhance the educational inquiry. Smith recalls Simone Weil’s idea that the ‘[s]chool study can thus have powerful spiritual effects ... quite apart from any particular religious belief’ (Smith, 2013:154). Furthermore, although Smith, by his own acknowledgement, remains inconclusive, he does open up the field of educational research into precisely what this thesis contributes to – a view of education that is impossible to conclude (just like a system for Kierkegaard); ‘[e]ducation is bound to fall short, because it is the nature of education, no less than of Christianity, that it is always to come. That is why our stance towards it can only and rightly be one of *faith*’ (2013:156; emphasis original).

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<sup>38</sup> John Henry Newman, for example, argues that university is a place of teaching universal knowledge (1996:3; 25) and producing an educated gentleman. However he is not arguing that students should become “Jacks of all trades – masters of none”, and would rather prefer a thorough education in one subject than a superficial in many (Ker, 1999:23).

<sup>39</sup> Though Smith’s view of theology can also be read as a secularised theology.

It is important to clarify at the start that although the theology engaged within this thesis is Christian, the same is not claimed about education. Neither is claimed by Smith above, as his concern is with the “everyday” education as he knows it in the British educational system. The vision of education thus is not of “Christian education” understood to be as education done by some Christian communities. Neither is this thesis concerned with the religious schools in society. Rather there is a Christian (more specifically incarnational) claim made by this thesis to education more generally. While this thesis proposes its own distinct formulation of what is to be understood by (specifically Kierkegaardian) theology of education, a view of the field as it is now is needed.

The field of theology of education, as a specific way of academic inquiry, appeared in the middle of the last century, although Augustine’s<sup>40</sup> *On the Trinity* can also be classified as a work in the theology of education (Hull, 1990:4), as well as John Henry Newman’s (1852/1996) classic *The Idea of a University*. The field is rather sparse; an initial search of SCOPUS database of the term “theology of education” in title, abstracts, and keywords, though definitely not exhaustive, produces an outcome of merely thirteen journal articles published between 1953 and 2022. Furthermore, worthy of notice is an edited volume by Leslie Francis and Adrian Thatcher (1990) *Christian Perspectives for Education: a reader in theology of education*, which is the first (and, to my knowledge, the only) anthology on the subject.<sup>41</sup> Additionally<sup>42</sup> (although once again not exhaustively), the field has been shaped by monographs from Rupert E. Davies (1974), Mary E.M. Moore (1998), Peter C. Hodgson (1999), and more recently, specifically with reference to higher education, Mike Higton (2012). There were also reflections on theology *and* education more generally, most notably by Gavin D’Costa’s (2005) seminal work *Theology in the Public Square: Church, Academy and Nation*, and various “questions and interventions” (Howes, 2013:13), to use Rebekah Howes’ phrase of Rowan Williams. Especially worth mentioning is his first chapter of *Lost Icons*, which treats childhood (Williams, 2000b).

John M. Hull, in his discussion on the “nature” of a theology of education, correctly observes that the theorist version of the ‘theology of education rests upon an interpretation of the nature of theology’ (1990:2). Hence why this chapter has addressed above the issue of what is to be understood by theology and its

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<sup>40</sup> Ryan N.S. Topping (2012) has produced a monograph on the topic *Happiness and Wisdom: Augustine’s Early Theology of Education*.

<sup>41</sup> I want to emphasise *theology of education*. There are, of course, other works, but they more or less concern themselves with Christian education or theological education, which is being rooted for education into a specific tradition rather than seeking to sketch a general theory of education from a theological point of view. A good example of the former is a volume edited by Jeff Astley *et al.* (1996) *Theological Perspectives on Christian Formation: a reader on theology and Christian education*.

<sup>42</sup> It is worth mentioning that much of the discussion in the theology of education in the 70s, 80s and 90s of last century was a response to the critique of “Christian education” by Paul Hirst. For an overview of Hirst’s challenge to theology, see Francis (1983).

task. Hull (1990:3) argues that the positioning of the theology of education<sup>43</sup> depends on the judgment of what counts as being “theologically significant.” He shows that theological significance does not only depend on the previous theological statements, rather it is appropriate to draw insight from other fields including natural and social sciences. Furthermore, Hull argues ‘that theology is a form of thinking’ (1990:4) and thus the subject matter of theology has to do with a specific religious consciousness. However, Hull wants to differentiate between *doing* theology and *studying* theology. He takes *doing* theology to be the formation of *only* one’s own religious consciousness whether alone or as a member of community; all other engagements (historic-critical-systematic) are *studying* theology. (Hull, 1990:5). For him, this distinction further enables justification of theology as a discipline within the secular university (Hull, 1990:6). Otherwise, if theology is to be *done*, then a religious test of admittance is to be required of students (Hull, 1990:5). He further states ‘[t]he reason for this discrimination between doing and studying theology is that it is necessary to emphasise the nature of theology as an existential activity which demands commitment’ (Hull, 1990:5).

I would like to challenge Hull on this distinction between *doing* and *studying* in two ways. First, this thesis argues that while theology is indeed an existential activity, furthermore all education is an existential activity which demands commitment. I assume that Hull would not object to this point. This *studying* and *doing* distinction in theology is also picked up by Perry G. Downs (2011:107) where he agrees with the way Hull differentiates the two practitioners. However, he also extends it further to the educational setting: ‘[a]s with theology, while the *study* of education is the domain of professional educators, the role of *teaching* is common to virtually everyone’ (Downs, 2011:107; emphasis original) – something that was not possible for Hull. Second, however, I argue that Hull fails to properly acknowledge that theology (and, in fact, all education) is *doing* something to the person who is studying it. And furthermore, he fails to address the question posed by Peter C. Hodgson (albeit nine years after Hull’s chapter): ‘[m]ight teaching be conceived as a religious vocation whatever its subject – mathematics, science, art, business, humanities?’ (1999:2) Hull does consider

those who teach students to study theology hope quite properly that the study will be of some personal significance to the student, whether this can ever be described as doing theology or whether it results in a more meaningful coherence of the student’s secular consciousness (1990:5).

However, the agency lies solely with the learner, and the subject of study itself is denied any agency whatsoever. The present thesis will thus make a different

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<sup>43</sup> Another pioneer of the theology of education, Leslie Francis (1990:349), views it as a branch of practical or applied theology. This thesis, however, proposes the view of the theology of education as a “branch” of its own at best or as a part of systematic theology at worst. The general view maintained by the thesis is that division into branches is not helpful, as it reproduces the fragmentation of knowledge.

assumption, and, following Hodgson (1999), maintain that there is a religious dimension to (even secular) teaching.

Overall, for Hull, theology of education is seen as an area that deals with problems arising in theology, specifically ‘when theological concepts are applied *beyond* the community of faith’ (1990:7; emphasis original). In this sense, Hull views theology of education as ‘a frontier discipline in that it seeks to extend the theological system’ (1990:10). For him, ‘successful applicability [of theological concepts beyond] is a major form of theological truth testing’ (Hull, 1990:7). In a similar vein, Downs (2011:102–103), though reflecting on distinctly Christian institutions of higher education, has argued that the matter of educational practice itself has to be examined theologically, rather than purely looking at how to better deliver theological knowledge. For Downs (2011:103), the theological framework<sup>44</sup> should influence more than the content. After all, Downs (2011:110–111) muses with the idea of the sacramental nature of education – as a means of grace for God’s redemptive work. Theology of education thus needs to be understood in terms of *how*, and not *what*, one teaches.

Hull does acknowledge, that it can also work the other way, where “theologies of” can reshape theological concepts in light of the “*of subject*” matter they pertain to. However, with regards to “education” he argues it ‘does not constitute a distinct and unique form or domain of knowledge’ (Hull, 1990:8). This, however, is a crucial point of diversion between Hull and I, and this thesis will defend in chapter 2 the claim that education should (be allowed to) reclaim its own truth.

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This chapter concludes that the separation of the theological enterprise into *doing* and *studying* is ill suited as an approach to research Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard’s challenge to his readers in resisting the “systematising” of his thought by denying the reader the solid ground of objectiveness to stand upon, demands an acknowledgement of being always already in the wrong before God, and by extension before the subject of study. Rather, the reader has to experience Kierkegaard’s writing for themselves, that is undergo the education of one’s own self that the text inevitably leads to. It is claimed that the experience of the paradox of “God” instead of making an academic inquiry useless is rather enriched, if we go away from the monolithic notion of what should count as a theological inquiry. Therefore, following theological scholarship of Williams, Behr, and Andreopoulos among others, a redefined notion of theology that does not claim to objectify, that

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<sup>44</sup> Of interest is a position that Ian T. Ramsey has taken back in 1976. He begins his article on theology of education by stating in the fourth sentence that a theology of education ‘is not a theological framework to which teaching practice must conform’ (Ramsey, 1976:137), though he does seem to have in mind under “framework” something of eternal truths that are being communicated. Nevertheless, rather than thinking in terms of a theological framework, he proposes ‘search[ing] for matching and links between theological reflections on the one hand and educational theory and practice on the other’ (Ramsey, 1976:137), which could, of course, already be considered as a framework.

is to claim a final perspective, and thus to dominate the subject was presented. However, this was nothing else but a notion of theology that is willing to learn from itself about itself, a theology *to come* (to echo discussion of Smith (2013) above), an existence-communication. The rest of this thesis is an investigation of this theology.

The next chapter engages more deeply with the concept of education itself, demonstrating how the paradoxical nature of education is as resistant to the separation of *studying* and *doing* that was explored in terms of theology in this chapter. A new logic is therefore necessary to approach the study of theology and the study of education as a theology of education. It will become apparent throughout the thesis that theology is thoroughly educational, and education is thoroughly theological. Theology has to allow not only for theology of education, as described in the section above, but also for the education of theology, where theology can learn something about itself. But the claim is made also the other way, that education, in engaging with theology, learns about itself. Theology of education pursued in this thesis, in seeking to answer Tubbs' question (to be put in the next chapter) of whether God is education, finds itself learning about itself in the relation of theology to education and of education to theology

## 2. THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

As the previous chapter suggests, this thesis is going beyond a common sense meaning of the term education. Paul Standish (2010) demonstrates that “what is” questions are easily answered by a dictionary search, yet definitions are not necessarily useful in approaching topics such as education. The word *education* can be used in a variety of ways in everyday language not covered by a dictionary definition. In fact, the English word itself has two different roots in Latin ‘[t]hey are *educare*, which means to train or to mold, and *educere*, meaning to lead out’ (Bass and Good, 2004:162).<sup>45</sup> Further complications lie in translation; in Estonian, education can be translated both as *haridus* and *kasvatus*, depending on the meaning implied.<sup>46</sup> The ambiguity of the English term is useful in avoiding a narrow perspective of the topic. Sten Wivestad (2021:227) has alerted the scholarship to the fact that in different languages, everyday useage of the term “education” already has a desirable direction implied.

Therefore, this thesis proposes, as a pedagogical exercise, for the reader to hold the various meanings of *education* in mind throughout this work and see whether the tension that arises enlightens the reader’s understanding in a way not possible with a narrow definition. This also tries to avoid a prescription of a desirable direction. Secondly, the author does realise that it is indeed necessary to provide a common ground between the reader and the author, for the reader to understand the author. Thus, albeit cautiously, an exploration of what is meant by education, a central term for the thesis, needs to be given, as various terms of education already form one’s understanding, agreement, and, at times, resistance to one conception of education over the other. Towards the end of the chapter, a different understanding of education arising from a different understanding of

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<sup>45</sup> The authors of the article I quote from maintain that ‘the tension between the advocates of the two sides maintains a balance that results in appropriate levels of *educare* and *educere* ... however, this constant struggle results in an ineffective system that consumes many available resources’ (Bass and Good, 2004:162). This emphasis on tension as holding a balance will be discussed below in treatment of Tubbs as a meaning of education. Yet the authors provide a necessary warning that the discussion, however exciting it might not be, must, in the end, serve the practical purpose of educating children (or adults).

<sup>46</sup> In German *haridus* is translated as *Bildung*, and *kasvatus* as *Erziehung* which provides some background for the further discussion of *Bildung* in this chapter. Furthermore, the definition given for *haridus* is a purposeful process of developing the mental, physical, moral, aesthetic, social, and emotional preconditions of a person and the result thereof. *Haridus* is acquired in interaction with the surrounding environment and culture’ (Autio *et al.*, 2013:69; translation my own). While *kasvatus* is ‘a conscious, purposeful relationship and action to guide and support another person’s development. In a broader sense, *kasvatus* is a socio-cultural practice that deals with the preparation of offspring for life in a particular society and culture’ (Kuurme, 2013:125; translation my own). The key distinction between the two is that *haridus* interacts with the environment and culture to educate a person, while *kasvatus* is educating a person to enter an “environment” and culture. Furthermore, both words can also have an agricultural application.

metaphysics that this thesis employs will become apparent, and thus a direction still prescribed.

Nigel Tubbs, in his treatment of education in Hegel, poses a question to philosophy (or rather more correctly to the practice of doing philosophy – philosophizing): ‘What sort of education is being presupposed in any philosophizing that bids us to read it and to learn from it?’ (2008:1). Tubbs’ challenge here is that the books/theses/articles should not just be about (philosophy/theology/practice of) education, but rather, they should be education/al in-themselves. For Tubbs, ‘[i]f no answer is forthcoming here, then the practice is empty of significance. If the answer involves presupposing the kind of thinking which it claims to be proving, then the practice is blind to its own contingency in positing’ (2008:1). He argues ‘what makes Hegel’s philosophy so profoundly difficult and rewarding is that it works in the full awareness of having education as its own essence, that is as the very substance of what it is and does’ (Tubbs, 2008:2). In other words, when one is reading *Phenomenology of Spirit* one is being educated; it is a *Bildungsroman* (Bykova, 2020:432; Hodgson, 1999:43; Saeverot, 2024) of sorts.<sup>47</sup> This is the kind of meaning the term education carries in this thesis.

I will return to Tubbs later in this chapter to present his idea of education as modern metaphysics (2014) before proceeding with my analysis of Kierkegaardian education in light of that in a later chapter. I argue that Tubbs, with his treatment of Hegel, has sublated the so-called ancient metaphysics present in Greek educational culture, medieval scholasticism, Romanticism, and *Bildung* of the Enlightenment era; he has presented philosophy’s education. I will sublimate Tubbs with my treatment of Kierkegaard in chapter 4 to present theology’s education. With this in mind, this thesis also is not just about education, but rather is an educational (and theological and philosophical) experience in itself – a theology of education and an education of theology.<sup>48</sup>

The first part of the chapter examines education as self-knowledge through the concepts that inspired Kierkegaard, especially focusing on the German *Bildung* and Greek *know thyself*,<sup>49</sup> that are concerned with a dialectic of freedom and discipline that will be rehearsed in the second part of the chapter as the movement of ancient metaphysics in Tubbs. Since the thesis rests upon the theoretical framework of modern metaphysics, it is for that matter that I elaborate on this

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<sup>47</sup> This is also Alexandre Kojève’s (1969:35) understanding of the task of *Phenomenology*, to prepare a person for knowing the sum of all possible knowledge as revealed in Hegel’s *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*.

Furthermore, Heidi Liehu, in her doctoral thesis, when discussing the relationship between Hegel and Kierkegaard, writes that both write *Bildungsromanen* albeit in different narrative strands – ‘Hegel’s method is *theoria*, whereas Kierkegaard counts on *poiesis*’ (1990:33).

<sup>48</sup> I am grateful to Nigel Tubbs, who formulated this sentence during a private conversation.

<sup>49</sup> *Know Thyself* is very much important for the entire enterprise of this thesis if we take the writings of Clement of Alexandria seriously. Clement begins his Book III of *Paedagogus* [The Instructor] with the following statement: ‘[i]t is then, as appears, the greatest of all lessons to know one’s self. For if one knows himself, he will know God; and knowing God, he will be made like God’ (2001:271 [Book III, chap.1]).

“history of ideas” to provide a stepping stone to the discussion of modern metaphysics later, and to demonstrate the logic of repetition elaborated in chapter 1.

This section looks at education as understood by Socrates and an injunction of the Delphic oracle to *know thyself*. This is also an idea that Kierkegaard embraces as his own task – that of educating the single individual inwardly. The section then looks at German influence on philosophy, starting with Immanuel Kant and the influence he had on the thought of German idealism, with its development of education as *Bildung* philosophy. Particular attention is also given to the relationship between the ideas of *Bildung* and *Wissenschaft* in the thought of William von Humboldt. The idea of *Bildung* is further examined through its development by Hegel, who becomes a primary influence, or a dialectical opposite of, or more properly becomes sublated in Kierkegaard. Of special interest is Hegel’s concept of *Aufhebung* as an education/al philosophy. However, to pay justice to Hegel and to Kierkegaard’s reading and understanding of him, this chapter provides an overview of *Bildung* as understood by Kierkegaard’s contemporaries – Danish Hegelians – especially Johan Ludvig Heiberg. Throughout the discussion, the relations within those “systems” are brought to the fore. The first part of the chapter thus ends with a discussion of Kierkegaard’s own use of the term *Dannelse* for “education,” and shows the already implicit call for *know thyself*, as well as of *Bildung* of an individual within it.

The second part of the chapter is a response to an invitation Tubbs makes in the dedication of his 2014 work, stating ‘[a]bove all, I trust and dedicate this book, its work, and its love, to my reader, the re-writer of my circle...’ (2014:xi).<sup>50</sup> This part of the chapter, in a true Kierkegaardian sense of repetition, rehearses the education from Greeks and Germans again to build up a background for Tubbs’ idea of a split between ancient and modern metaphysics. The history of Western philosophy up to Hegel is looked upon as the history of the development of liberal arts education, which is ancient metaphysics, the ancient metaphysics with its own (Aristotelian) logic of non-contradiction, its own idea of God. Tubbs sees in Hegel a throwback to Plato, and provides a new re-reading of metaphysics as modern, with a new kind of educational logic. The chapter thus concludes by presenting a project of Tubbs’ modern metaphysics and an examination of the role the concept of God plays in this new metaphysics, a re-evaluation of what education is.

The chapter therefore does not want to give a definition of education, as such definition is in danger of enacting a totality constituting dogma of education (Tubbs, 2004:21). The definition of education is not then a “something” to be learned but to be experienced in the struggle of this thesis to enact education against itself. I, therefore, resist as much as possible the urge to define what is meant by education within this thesis until the very end, to allow the idea of education to emerge from my experience as an author of this thesis and from the reader’s experience of reading this thesis. Although the reader has already seen education to be defined as God in the previous chapter, what does that mean? The

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<sup>50</sup> This is reminiscent of Johannes Climacus in *Postscript* discussing how he is only a reader of the pseudonymous works (CUP1:251–252).

answer will become apparent in the end, that the answer was present from the beginning as presuppositions all along. The task of the second part of this chapter is to present the reasoning behind Tubbs' statement "God is education", which then will be scrutinised theologically through the reading of Kierkegaard in chapter 4. The need for a theological engagement with Tubbs was brought about by critique in Rebekah Howes' thesis, where she points out that the distinction between religious and philosophical 'domains of experience in Tubbs means that there is a dimension of his theory of education yet to risk itself' (2013:201). Engagement with Tubbs here and in chapter 4 is this risking. Yet it is not just a risk taken on behalf of this author, it is also a risk taken by Tubbs.

## 2.1. From Know *Thyself* to *Bildung*

### 2.1.1. Between Paideia and *Know Thyself*

Kierkegaard would begin the thought project of the pseudonymous *Philosophical Fragments* with what he calls the Socratic question of whether truth can be learned (PF:9). Though, as discussion in chapter 4 illustrates, the question is much more than Socratic; it is a challenge to idealism, it questions presuppositions of modernity, and gives a window into the postmodern. Before beginning with that, one needs to begin a little bit earlier and ask about the injunction of Delphic oracle *gnothi seauton* – know thyself popularised by Socrates, as this injunction will come to preoccupy the entire history of western philosophy.

Jörg Ruhloff (2018:349) demonstrates that *paideia*, understood as education and *Bildung* (in the sense of cultivation) entered the Greek language around the same time as the word "philosophy" acquired terminological significance in Plato. For Plato, philosophy and education<sup>51</sup> went hand in hand. Ruhloff (2018:351) names the connection between philosophy and education in Plato that was especially prominent in his earlier writings of Socratic dialogues as performative. It is noteworthy that both *paideia* and *know thyself* are active; the person involved in them is not passive. In *paideia*, the movement is outside towards uncovering the mystery; in *know thyself*, inside towards uncovering the mystery of one-self, making it 'the oldest and most terrifying maxim of the Western philosophical tradition' (Tubbs, 2008:18). I do not wish to state that education is therefore an action, rather in action one is being involved in education.

Werner Jaeger writes that the Greeks 'were the first to recognize that education means deliberately moulding human character in accordance with an ideal' (1946:xxii). In an introduction to her edited volume that deals with the history<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ruhloff uses words *paideia* and *Bildung*.

<sup>52</sup> This tradition of know thyself is also sketched by Tubbs (2017) as a history of aporia present between (and within) the relationship of *know thyself* and *thought thinking itself*. Tubbs examines this by going from pre-Socratics to Hegel via Greek philosophers, as well as Christian, Jewish, and Islamic thinkers, to narrate what he calls an ancient metaphysics of *know thyself*. This will be explored later in this chapter.

of *know thyself* from the ancient to contemporary philosophy, Ursula Renz argues that *know thyself*, literally a knowledge of self – self-knowledge – can be understood as to be ‘knowledge itself and be about knowledge’ (2017:4). This duality has come from Plato and Socrates, and gives rise to contesting opinion of what the self-knowledge is (Renz, 2017:5). Rachana Kamtekar (2017) argues that this duality arises between the texts of the *Apology* and *Phaedrus*.<sup>53</sup> In the words of Christopher Rowe, these two texts ‘may be considered as fundamental for the understanding of the Socratic notion of self-examination’ (2011:201). In *Phaedrus*, Socrates lacks self-knowledge, while in *Apology*, he has it. For Kamtekar this means that there are two types of self-knowledge – one self-knowledge Socrates has, and the other he lacks, knowledge about one’s state and knowledge about one’s capacities (2017:27). Yet, Plato does not ‘reduce the self that is known to the knowing self’ (Kamtekar, 2017:28).

Tubbs argues that for Plato ‘[t]o know something is to be changed in the knowing. Thus [know thyself] can never know the in-itself’ (2017:15). As the question about knowledge is posited, the knowledge itself is changed, and the cycle repeats itself. Because the question about knowledge is always posited anew, one can never achieve complete knowledge of a self. In the way Tubbs puts it ‘[t]his is to know and not-know at the same time, and the philosopher becomes “like a child, begging for ‘both’” [referencing Plato] the unchangeable and the changeable’ (2017:15). Nonetheless, even if no knowledge of self is achieved, education still takes place. Ruhloff states ‘Plato’s Socratic dialogues end in an *aporia*, that is, in a dead-end’ (2018:351), however, this *aporia* has the potential to produce a transformation within the one being examined way of thinking, which, according to Ruhloff, should be taken as *Bildung*.

Renz argues that the Delphic injunction was interpreted differently by various philosophers throughout history (2017:18). Kierkegaard provides his own reading with reference to *Phaedrus*

Just as the lover is changed by this paradox of love so that he almost does not recognize himself any more ... so also that intimated paradox of the understanding reacts upon a person and upon his self-knowledge in such a way that he who believed he knew himself now no longer is sure whether he perhaps is a more curiously complex animal than Typhon (PF:39).

In other words, the more I know, the more I realise that there is more to know. Jacob Howland (2005:25) argues that Kierkegaard is transformed, he learns socratically from Socrates. Howland means by it that ‘Kierkegaard’s Socrates flows from the pen of Socrates’ Kierkegaard; the rejuvenated author and his literary creation are from the outset united in the circle of an essential relationship’ (2005:25). Furthermore, Howland argues that Kierkegaard was in search of

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<sup>53</sup> It is from *Phaedrus* that Socrates’ famous comparison to a Typhon arises ‘I am not yet able, as the Delphic inscription has it, to know myself ... to know whether I am a monster more complicated and more furious than Typhon or a gentler and simpler creature’ (Plato, 2005:421–423 [229e–230a]).

Socrates in his own time; having not found one, he became him (2005:31–32). This idea of education as know thyself is at the heart of Kierkegaard’s project, according to Ronald J. Manheimer. He argues that Kierkegaard’s division of life development into stages/spheres/life-views is an opposition to speculative philosophy and [Danish] Hegelianism that ‘deals with a concept of “mankind,” which is its pure idea’ (Manheimer, 1977:154). Kierkegaard’s employment of stages, at least as Johannes Climacus in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*,

concerns neither mankind as a whole nor the relative difference between men. For whom then are these stages meant? we ask. For “thyself,” is echoed back. But who is thyself? ... It is the question that Socrates carried from Delphi to the agora and one that Kierkegaard revived in his own market town (Manheimer, 1977:154).

This character of Socrates is played out by Kierkegaard as Johannes Climacus also in *Philosophical Fragments*, where he presents Socrates as a very similar character to Abraham in *Fear and Trembling*:

To read the *Apology* from the perspective of *Fragments* is to see that the ultimate warrant for Socrates’ philosophizing is a divine authority that he accepts on faith and without argument. Socrates would not have bothered to inquire into the meaning of the oracle had he not presupposed that the Delphic god knew what he was talking about (Howland, 2005:32–33).

Just as Abraham does not question God’s command to sacrifice Isaac, so does not Socrates question God’s command to know thyself.

Socrates states in the *Apology* that the unexamined life is not worth living (Plato, 2005:133 [§38a]), but the question arises ‘[d]oes examination itself make a life worth living, or is examination necessary for recognizing one’s own ignorance’ (Kamtekar, 2017:26). Furthermore, Kamtekar argues that in *Alcibiades I* Socrates argues that in order to know ourselves we ought to know our souls (2017:41) and ‘we come to know ourselves by knowing that part of our soul by which we know, for that is where wisdom, which makes a soul good, comes about’ (2017:41).

John Lippitt, in his essay on self-knowledge in Kierkegaard, points to Kierkegaard’s understanding of Socratic “know thyself” as separation from the other, and Lippitt connects it ‘with Kierkegaard’s ... claim that the self did not exist prior to Socrates’ (2017:208). Lippitt refers here to Kierkegaard’s claim in *The Concept of Irony* where he writes

Now it is certainly true that the phrase [know thyself] can designate subjectivity in its fullness, inwardness in its utterly infinite wealth, but for Socrates this self-knowledge was not so copious; it actually contained nothing more than the separating, the singling out, of what later became the object of knowledge. The phrase “know yourself” means: separate yourself from the other. Precisely because this self did not exist prior to Socrates (CI:177).

Lippitt argues that Kierkegaard sees in this precisely the reason for condemnation of Socrates, as know thyself becomes a separation from the demands of the surrounding ethic of Greek culture (2017:208). Furthermore, this separation is active in Socratic questioning, where ‘each individual becomes alienated from others and the wider society, and simply left to find the truth within himself’ (Lippitt, 2017:209).

Thus we have come back to the question of *Fragments* posed at the beginning of this section – whether such truth can be learned. A Kierkegaardian answer will be given in chapter 4, yet this section has brought to the front relations that existed in Greek education *as* education, being the relation of myself to the other, out of which arises my relation to myself. In other words, in my search of self I am separated from (and thus related to) the other. The *aporia* of whether I can truly *know myself* remains, as was demonstrated in the relation between *Phaedrus* and *Apology*, but, as is repeated throughout the thesis, the contradiction need not be “satisfactorily” solved.

### 2.1.2. Immanuel Kant

Immanuel Kant<sup>54</sup> draws the idea of self-knowledge<sup>55</sup> into his moral system relating the *know thyself* with the idea of moral duty:

This command is “*know* (scrutinize, fathom) *yourself*,” not in terms of your natural perfection ... but rather in terms of your moral perfection in relation to your duty. That is, know your heart – whether it is good or evil, whether the source of your actions is pure or impure (1991:236 [441]; emphasis original).

Dina Emundts (2017:184) draws from these three aspects of Kant’s understanding of the Greek maxim: a) relation of self-knowledge to moral self-knowledge; b) striving for practical self-knowledge as duty; and c) *know thyself* as actively and systematically looking for something. Emundts argues that ‘concerning knowledge about ourselves as individual creatures, Kant restricts the

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<sup>54</sup> The relationship between Kierkegaard and Immanuel Kant ‘is at once obscure and enormous ... [with] only 17 explicit references to Kant in the works published by Kierkegaard during his lifetime’ (Green, 2016:179; citation modified). Ronald M. Green (2016:179–180) names Kant’s *The Conflict of the Faculties* as the most important work for understanding Kant’s influence on Kierkegaard. Kant is dealing with the issue that will become important for Kierkegaard’s *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* ‘of whether human beings can complete the task of their moral salvation on their own through the use of rational concepts, or whether they must transcend these concepts in a leap of faith to admit the possibility of God’s historically bestowed grace’ (Green, 2016:182) where Kant is an epitome of the Socratic viewpoint that Kierkegaard goes beyond in *Philosophical Fragments*.

<sup>55</sup> I do not wish to delve deeper but would like to acknowledge that for Kant, self-knowledge does not equal self-consciousness, e.g. the following remark in *Critique of Pure Reason*: ‘[a]ccordingly I have no *knowledge* of myself as I am but merely as I appear to myself. The consciousness of self is thus very far from being a knowledge of self’ (1929:169 [B158]). For more on this difference, see Schulting (2017).

ideal of self-knowledge to morally relevant self-knowledge' (2017:186). Thus, the exercise of self-knowledge becomes an exercise in the study of our own moral character and the role of the categorical imperative for us, not the knowledge of the categorical imperative *per se* (Emundts, 2017:187–188). Furthermore, according to Emundts, Kantian 'self-knowledge is also itself of moral value, because this insight can strengthen our intention to follow the categorical imperative ... Self-knowledge can lead us to acknowledge that we are indeed rational and can thereby motivate us to act according to categorical imperative' (2017:188–189). Self-knowledge is necessary in order for a person not to be self-deceived, something that Kant in *The Metaphysics of Morals* (1991:225 [429]) calls an internal lie.<sup>56</sup> Here, self-knowledge becomes an active duty, as it enables one to avoid the possibility of self-deception (Emundts, 2017:197) with a goal in mind of acting according to the categorical imperative.

Dennis Schulting (2017), in their study of self-consciousness and self-knowledge in Kant, draws a very strict distinction between the two. This relates to a distinction Kant himself makes above in the quotation at the beginning of this section from *The Metaphysics of Morals* between natural and moral perfection of oneself. More precisely, Kant rejects self-knowledge's relation to natural perfection, a kind of knowledge of oneself as a subject. Schulting states '[f]or Kant, self-knowledge does not consist in, nor does it presuppose, intuitive knowledge of a strict identity of subject and object ... Rather, it... yields a cognition of myself as an appearance only, not as a thing in itself, that is, not *essentially*' (2017:159; emphasis original). Kant problematises here Cartesian "I think", as while "the I" exists, it is impossible for me to make "the I" an object of my thought. In the words of Kant 'I am conscious of myself, not as I appear to myself, nor as I am in myself, but only that I am' (1929:168 [B157]).

There is a connection to be made in Kant's thought between Emundts' argument above for self-knowledge, to moral perfection and education itself. In *Lectures on Ethics* he writes '[t]he final destiny of human race is moral perfection, so far as it is accomplished through human freedom ... How, then, are we to seek this perfection, and from whence is it to be hoped for? From nowhere else but education' (Kant, 1997:220–221 [27:470–471]). Kant has a larger influence on the later thinkers and the idea of education more generally relevant for my discussion here. G. Felicitas Munzel (2003:114) argues that with the Western advancement from the Greeks through the Renaissance and up to the Enlightenment, knowledge has become more and more systematised and encyclopaedic. With the Enlightenment project, however, Kant was able to react and state that 'the chief role and importance of education ... [is] not theoretical learning (*Schulwissenschaft*), but the *Bildung* of human being with regard to both their talents

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<sup>56</sup> Tubbs (2017:94–96) picks up on this issue of self-deception in relation to self-knowledge in Kant's *The Metaphysics of Morals* and goes as far in the use of Kant's terminology to talk about being in hell of know thyself.

and their character' (Kant quoted in Munzel, 2003:119).<sup>57</sup> This is a direct reaction against encyclopaedic knowledge, a call for the cultivation of the human mind, yet at the same time with an emphasis on it needing to be done "scientifically" with its own discipline in the university (Munzel, 2003:120). The goal of the rising pedagogical science 'was the perfection of humanity'<sup>58</sup> (Munzel, 2003:120). Education was thought to consist not in mere training or instruction, but in the enlightenment of the human being. Munzel (2003:113) distinguishes a move in Kantian thought of re-evaluating education as *Kunst* (art) to *Wissenschaft* (science). Munzel (2003:114) demonstrates that pedagogy can be considered both as a science in its own right (an art of teaching) as well as a discipline incorporating various social sciences, moral philosophy and others. Munzel writes that pedagogy is 'both an art and a science, a praxis and a theory or doctrine ... the pedagogical activity encompasses the full range of all that counts as rearing, upbringing, and educating' (2003:114).

It is important to note that '*Bildung* is not a static notion, nor have educational practices associated with it been without development' (Løvlie and Standish, 2003:18). Kant, therefore, also picks up this thread of self-knowledge in terms of education as relation not just to one's own self, but through that to another, through the formation of one's moral character.

### 2.1.3. Wilhelm von Humboldt

The German word *Bildung* itself, as Sven Erik Nordenbo reminds, 'is related to the verb *bilden* and to the verbal noun *Bild*, that is, image' (2003:25). The idea of an image is important to Christian theology in terms of creation in *imago Dei* – humans made in the image of God, but also more nuancedly put in Orthodox theology as creation in the image of an image of God,<sup>59</sup> where *imago Dei* is Jesus Christ being '[t]he true image and likeness of God' (Ware, 1993:93). The meaning of the German word seems to support such interpretation as the 'word does not, therefore, refer primarily to somebody or something that does something to somebody or something, but to an image – a model – of which somebody or something is to become an image or model' (Nordenbo, 2003:25; emphasis original). The similarity with Christian understanding is uncanny. Michael Uljens (2003:46),

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<sup>57</sup> Munzel refers to Kant's 1778 letter to Christian Heinrich Wolke, however I was unable to locate the letter in the Cambridge edition of Kant's (1999) *Correspondence*, hence a quotation from Munzel is given here.

<sup>58</sup> For more on the goal of human nature in education as being orientated toward the development of humanity, see Loudon (2017).

<sup>59</sup> To say that all Orthodox theology agrees on this matter is incorrect. Neither is it correct to state that such ideas did not circulate in the church in the West. Andrew Louth, in his work *The Origins of Christian Mystical Tradition*, states that '[a]ccording to Greek theology – and Ambrose and the early Augustine – it is the Son, the Word of God, who is the image of God; man is only created according to the image of God: he is therefore a copy of the Word, the true image of God, an image of the Image' (2007:142).

writing about the pedagogy of the Enlightenment, sees it as a secularised theology. The attitude of the Enlightenment thinkers for him is that ‘just as man is made in the image of God, the aim of education must be to assist the individual’s development towards the realisation of this image within’ (Uljens, 2003:46). This was considered as a *Bildung* of an individual, yet the Enlightenment authors did not think of themselves as doing theology of education as such. Continuing with the semantic meaning of *Bildung*, Nordenbo argues, ‘we are dealing *either* with an act, a process or an occurrence, by which somebody or something becomes an image, *or* with the image that emerges at the end of, or as the result of, an act, a process or an occurrence’ (2003:25; emphasis original). The double meaning is also present in Wilhelm von Humboldt’s understanding of *Bildung*. However, as I argue below, it is not necessary to draw such a rigid *either/or* distinction but to embrace both.

Humboldt in his essay *Theory of Bildung* (2000) puts a great emphasis on the relationship between *Bildung* and the “Nature”. Although Humboldt (2000:59) does not elaborate in detail what he means by Nature in this essay, he seems to understand under it the world external to the individual, objects external to the mind of the enquirer. Humboldt almost dialectically opposes man and the world, writing ‘his [human’s] thought and his action are not possible except by means actually characterized by being nonman, that is, world, he seeks to grasp as much world as possible and bind it as tightly as he can to himself’ (2000:58). The human being sublates the world. *Bildung* is therefore used to grasp Nature, but it is both the instrument that initiates the inquiry into the outside world and the fruit of the inquiry. As an instrument ‘[w]ithin him [a human being] are several faculties to represent one and the same object to himself in various guises: now as concept of reason, now as an image of the imagination, now as an intuition of the senses’ (Humboldt, 2000:59) and the fruit is the inner desire of ‘his nature [that] drives him to reach beyond himself to the external objects ... [and to] reflect back into his inner being the clarifying light and the comforting warmth of everything that he undertakes outside himself’ (Humboldt, 2000:59). The second quotation demonstrates the difficulty in trying to clearly separate the fruit and the instrument. To *Bildung* is to ‘try to grasp Nature, not so much in order to become acquainted with it from all sides, but rather through this diversity of views strengthen his own innate power’ (Humboldt, 2000:59). This citation demonstrates the difference between *Bildung* and science [*Wissenschaft*] that is trying to observe and objectify the objects of the external world for their sake. Although, to the contrary, Mike Higton (2012:50) argues that *Bildung* and *Wissenschaft* were almost identical for Humboldt. *Bildung* is not interested in the object for its own sake but only as it affects the education of a human being. For Humboldt, it is the university that becomes a place for the *Bildung* of man<sup>60</sup> and curiously ‘the professors are not there for the sake of the students; the students are there for the professors’ (Nordenbo, 2003:32). This is something that Kierkegaard would be reacting against later: the

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<sup>60</sup> Literally – male.

elevated position of the professors. In a way then, *Wissenschaft* becomes an instrument to *Bildung*.

Tubbs, in his treatment of Humboldt, draws out political connotations of *Bildung* in the relationship of the culture, the individual, and the state. The specifics of the political need not concern us here; rather, in the political is found the relation of one and the many, in which educational logic<sup>61</sup> is operating. Tubbs, following editors of Humboldt's works, takes *Bildung* to mean 'the fullest, richest, and most harmonic development of the potentialities of the individual, the community or the human race' (2014:51). The individual is not subordinated to the citizen (Tubbs, 2014:51), but has the power to transform the state via his own transformation (Tubbs, 2014:52). Interestingly here, Tubbs' argument seems to be at odds with that of Nordenbo above. Nordenbo's Humboldt institutionalises *Bildung* in universities, whereas Tubbs' Humboldt states '[t]he state ... [to be] transformed by the self-educating individual, to which the state must fit itself, rather than fitting the person to the state' (Tubbs, 2014:53). The university is an instrument of the state. To understand this contradiction in Nordenbo's and Tubbs' Humboldt, a biographical note is in order. As argued by David Sorkin (1983), Humboldt went from being a theoretician to also being a practitioner of education, which resulted in this contradiction. It is this treatment of theoretician Humboldt's early work by Tubbs and practitioner Humboldt's later work by Nordenbo that produces this distinction.

Sorkin argues that the later Humboldt's ideas on *Bildung* 'legitimized the alliance of the intelligentsia and the state through the university' (1983:56) which is a result of a larger political processes and/of 'capitulation of the liberal intelligentsia to the Prussian state' (1983:56).<sup>62</sup> Sorkin asks a very important question: 'Was that capitulation the inevitable result of the concept of *Bildung*?' (1983:56); in other words, did the self-development / *Bildung* bring about its own change of what *Bildung* is? The work of Humboldt that Tubbs is drawing on above, the *Limits of State Action* (1791), was published after only a year of Humboldt's engagement and dissatisfaction with state service, and subsequent retirement from public life. Sorkin states the two essential conditions for *Bildung* of an individual in the *Limits of State Action* to be freedom and social intercourse. With regard to the latter, Humboldt writes that '[t]he isolated man is no more able to develop than the one who is fettered' (1969:98), hence '[s]elf-formation [*Bildung*], in other words, requires social bonds' (Sorkin, 1983:59). Here, the contradiction of Tubbs and Nordenbo is met (but not necessarily resolved) as the university becomes a place for the acquisition of the required social bonds. But rather than sociality, it is freedom as the condition for self-development that Humboldt is especially concerned with. Sorkin (1983:59) argues that freedom for Humboldt was especially related to limiting the power of the absolutist Frederician state.

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<sup>61</sup> This concept of educational logic is the subject matter of section 2.2., see especially section 2.2.4.

<sup>62</sup> Interestingly, Bykova (2020:428) does not put Humboldt on the political spectrum of *Bildung*.

Humboldt (1969:98) advocated for an equality of the direct connection of all citizens with the head of state. Later, Humboldt (1809–1810) is directly concerned with the contradiction presented between Tubbs and Nordenbo; he tries to maintain the freedom of an individual and the social bonds, and locates this relationship within the state. Humboldt argued, according to Sorkin (1983:62), for the “positive” acting of the people and the “negative” acting of the state. The idea behind it being that the state, by taking the burden of financing schools, would have enabled the citizens to educate themselves rather than directly educating the citizens (Sorkin, 1983:62). The creation of a university was aimed at preserving the two conditions of *Bildung* – freedom and sociality.

The main function of the university was to congregate students in a community devoted to learning (*Wissenschaft*), and to vouchsafe their total freedom to interact with their peers (Sorkin, 1983:63).

Thus, *Wissenschaft* itself was at the service of *Bildung* of an individual.<sup>63</sup>

For Humboldt, *Bildung* was always conceived as an end in-itself, he ‘adopted Kant’s view of moral action for *Bildung*; a moral act must be performed categorically without any concern for its results’ (Sorkin, 1983:68). Humboldt clearly stated *Bildung* to be the highest end of man: ‘[t]he highest ideal, therefore, of the co-existence of human beings, seems to me to consist in a union in which each strives to develop himself from his own inmost nature, and for his own sake’ (1969:19). Yet the social dimension of *Bildung* was lost, partially in a reaction to the nationalist tendencies, and especially *contra* Johann Gottlieb Fichte who ‘transformed *Bildung* into mere pedagogy with a pre-determined patriotic content’ (Sorkin, 1983:70). Education was transformed to adapt to the needs of German self-understanding after the loss to Napoleon.

The relation in the contradiction between Nordenbo’s institutionalisation of *Bildung* and *Bildung* as self-directed to which the state must fit played out the educational relation stated at the beginning of the section – that of a man [sic] and the world.

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<sup>63</sup> Mike Higon summarises the purpose of the University of Berlin for Humboldt as follows: it is ‘to be devoted to the “moral culture [*moralische Kultur*]” of the nation, its “spiritual and moral formation [*geistigen und sittlichen Bildung*]”. But it was to be so, precisely as an institution devoted to *Wissenschaft* “in the deepest and widest sense of the word”’ (2012:50).

### 2.1.4. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel

Since Hegel,<sup>64</sup> or, to be more precise, Danish Hegelians influenced Kierkegaard, a wider discussion of Hegelian influence<sup>65</sup> is now given before contextualising the discussion with a particular example of Danish Hegelianism. According to Tubbs ‘[t]here are three notions of education in Hegel which, together, constitute the process of the history of philosophy. These are *Bildung*, *Entwicklung* and *Aufhebung*’ (2008:43).<sup>66</sup> For Hegel, it was not *Bildung*, but *Aufhebung* that was the most important notion of education (Tubbs, 2008:48). *Bildung* and *Entwicklung* both have their truth in *Aufhebung* (Howes, 2013:107). Hegel gives a simple definition of *aufheben* in §96 of his *Shorter Logic* as follows:

At this point we should remember the double meaning of the German expression “*aufheben*”. On the one hand, we understand it to mean “clear away” or “cancel”, and in that sense we say that a law or regulation is cancelled (*aufgehoben*). But the word also means “to preserve”, and we say in this sense that something is well taken care of (*wohl aufgehoben*). This ambiguity in linguistic usage, through which the same word has a negative and a positive meaning, cannot be regarded as an accident nor yet as a reason to reproach language as if it were a source of confusion. We ought rather to recognise here the speculative spirit of our language, which transcends the “either-or” of mere understanding (1991:154 [§96]).

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<sup>64</sup> Hegel’s influence on Kierkegaard cannot be understated. While it was common to argue that Kierkegaard has rejected Hegel (Thulstrup, 1980), contemporary scholarship shows a more nuanced relationship. Jon Stewart (2015:51–52) argues that early Kierkegaard, especially in *From the Papers of One Still Living* (1990a) was positively disposed to Hegel, being influenced by his dialectical method but also by the content of his thought. The most thorough engagement of Kierkegaard with Hegel is in his master’s thesis *The Concept of Irony*, where not only is there Kierkegaard’s most detailed and comprehensive engagement with Hegel, Kierkegaard, unlike in his other works, quotes extensively from various treatises of Hegel. (Hühn and Schwab, 2013:65).

Furthermore, Kierkegaard is interested in ‘Hegel’s understanding of Socrates as the inventor of subjective freedom’ (Stewart, 2015:52) that is because ‘Hegel sees Socrates as a revolutionary figure in ancient Greek society, as the first to begin to call into question the right and the authority of custom and tradition’ (Stewart, 2015b:52). From 1843 onwards, even though Kierkegaard makes mention of Hegelians, he does not engage with Hegel’s primary text. Within this time falls the publication of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Stewart, 2015b:55).

There are two other German philosophers who usurp influence on Kierkegaard’s understanding of Hegel. These are Karl Werder, whose lectures Kierkegaard attended in Berlin, and Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg, whose works he studied (Liehu, 1990:45).

<sup>65</sup> It is important to note that Hegel, as referred to in works by Kierkegaard, is not necessarily a historical Hegel but, more often, a literary construction, just like the pseudonyms are. Hegel in Kierkegaard can represent the thought of Hegel, but also more widely the thought of Danish Hegelians.

<sup>66</sup> Tubbs (2014:53) also sees a threefold *Bildung* in Johann Gottfried von Herder: a type of natural education, moral *Bildung*, and political *Bildung*. Taken up together, in Herder, arises ‘a specific form of *Bildung* as inner development’ (Tubbs, 2014:53–54).

In other words, *aufheben* carries already within itself a dialectic of both cancelling and preserving, hence also the difficulty of translating the term into the English language. Furthermore, it is precisely *Aufhebung* as a philosophical education underlying *Bildung* and *Entwicklung* in Hegel, and their relation to each other (Tubbs, 2008:50), that constitutes ‘the education of consciousness about itself’ (Howes, 2013:95; emphasis original), not necessarily as a higher stage in the development of consciousness but rather as the speculative experience, the experience of contradiction, that consciousness has about itself (Rose, 2009:110).

Nonetheless, *Bildung* remains an important concept in its own right for Hegel. Michael Inwood (1992:68–70), as a compiler of *A Hegel[’s] Dictionary*, when presenting the reader with the idea of *Bildung* in Hegel, discusses it as a part of joint “culture and education.” Discussing the two German terms *Bildung* and *Erziehung*, Inwood notes that only *Bildung* has a meaning of culture. Also, Marina Bykova states, ‘*Bildung* is one of the key concepts of Hegel’s philosophy that, in contrast to Kant’s, attempts to completely grasp reality in all its complexity and dynamic development’ (2020:425).<sup>67</sup> Bykova (2020:426) reminds the reader that Hegel is known for being meticulous in his use of terminology and, in addition to the consistent use of *Bildung*, uses *Ausbildung* and *Kultur*.<sup>68</sup> Bykova identifies three uses of the term *Bildung* by Hegel to mean ‘(1) educational, (2) social, and (3) historical-cultural aspects of *Bildung*’ (2020:427). Bykova insists that three meanings should always be looked at together in order to give a just reading of Hegel’s *Bildung*.

While for Kant *Bildung* was a moral education in kind, Hegel viewed pedagogy as a way of ‘transforming their [human] first nature into a second spiritual one’ (Munzel, 2003:126).<sup>69</sup> As stated by Bykova ‘[t]his is the process, by which the abstract “I” develops into a concrete subjectivity’ (2020:431). This transformation into a spiritual nature as *Bildung* was not just a type of moral education for Hegel. Hegel, in his *Philosophy of Right*, equates education as *Bildung* with culture (1996:190–191 [§187]),<sup>70</sup> hence the purpose of education for Hegel becomes a “culturification” of an individual, understood as progress from individuality to universality.<sup>71</sup> Through being educated ‘we pass upwards from the

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<sup>67</sup> Kojève (1969:52–53), commenting on Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit*, argues that *Bildung* for Hegel should be understood as Work (with a capital W). Work as *Bildung* carries the meaning of ‘on the one hand, it transforms the World, humanizes it by making it more adapted to Man; on the other, it transforms, forms, educates man, it humanizes him by bringing him into greater conformity with the *idea* that he has of himself’ (Kojève, 1969:52) which is a necessary step for the Slave to overcome the dialectic relationship to the Master.

<sup>68</sup> Bykova differentiates between culture as *Kultur* and readings of *Bildung* as culture, where *Kultur* ‘generally points to whatever is *in* one’s social environment, whereas *Bildung* as acculturation designates what one masters *from* and *within* that environment’ (2020:431; emphasis original).

<sup>69</sup> Though *Bildung* is still related to Hegel’s idea of the ethical life (Howes, 2013:148).

<sup>70</sup> Noteworthy is the fact that references to public education are almost absent from this work.

<sup>71</sup> Klaus P. Mortensen: ‘To Hegel, *Bildung* is man’s counteractive response to the break with the natural, a new self-made nature that grows out of man’s consciousness of himself and the

direct and natural existence to what is spiritual and has the form of the universal' (Hegel, 1996:191 [§187]). But following Bykova's (2020) analysis of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, although Hegel equates education and culture, it would be erroneous to draw a simple equality sign between *Bildung* and the word "culture". Bykova argues that *Bildung* is necessary for the development of the world spirit as '[t]his self-development occurs through the own self-directed activity of a spiritual being, which is simultaneously the activity of self-discovery and of self-realization' (2020:426). Bykova (2020:426) further maintains that *Bildung* also implies a constant dialectic between the individual and his self-development, as described above, and the wider social interactions of various individuals forming a social world.<sup>72</sup> Bykova sees Hegel's path of *Bildung* to be dialectical and a 'complex process of the *formation* of the universal subjects of thought, will, and action historically and socially developed within the cultural forms of the manifest (world) spirit' (Bykova, 2020:426; emphasis original). This is a connection of *Bildung* and *know thyself*<sup>73</sup> in Hegel, to know thyself as a social self, an individual as a part of the universal "cultivation of the self" in and through the social realm that all of us share and participate in' (Bykova, 2020:430) or as a matter of 'fact, a cultivation into humanity' (Bykova, 2020:431). Bykova makes further connections to *know thyself* as an enterprise of self-knowledge, writing that *Bildung* 'is a completely *self-driven* and *self-directed*, internally motivated activity. What is involved here is an individual's self-development toward his full autonomy and self-awareness ... mediated through this individual's relations with other people' (2020:431; emphasis original). I am tempted to summarise this idea

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natural world. *Bildung* thus signifies that man is not just what nature has made him. Rather than consuming things, man forms them, and, says Hegel, thereby raises himself above the immediacy of existence to universality. By forming things, man forms himself' (2003:124). This passage from individuality to universality is further alluded to in *Phenomenology* where 'in the child's progress through school, we shall recognize the history of the cultural development of the world traced' (Hegel, 1977:16 [§28]).

<sup>72</sup> Put another way by Bykova with this type of *Bildung* implications for Spirit '[w]hat makes the historical world real for Hegel is the individual and his action. Thus, the achievements of humanity are the results of the interactive work of individual human beings. This is the idea Hegel captures by his notion of "spirit" in its universal dimension' (2020:434).

<sup>73</sup> Hegel (2010a:3) begins his *Philosophy of Mind* with the question of *know thyself*, which he states to be an absolute command. Of further interest is his treatment of the injunction towards self-knowledge. Hegel writes:

Consequently, the summons to self-knowledge, issued to the Greeks by the Delphic Apollo, does not have the sense of a command externally addressed to the human mind by an alien power; on the contrary, the god who impels to self-knowledge is none other than the mind's own absolute law. All activity of the mind is, therefore, only an apprehension of itself, and the aim of all genuine science is just this, that mind shall recognize itself in everything in heaven and on earth. There is simply no out- and-out Other for the mind (2010a:3).

This is precisely what Kierkegaard as Johannes Climacus critiques in *Philosophical Fragments* as Socratic recollection, the idea that truth or God can be recollected, where self-knowledge becomes God's knowledge (PF:11). For more on this, see chapter 4 of this thesis.

of Hegel's *Bildung* as *know thyself* through another. As Bykova puts it in the discussion of the relation of otherness to *Bildung* '[i]t is only through encounters with others who inevitably have different beliefs and desires that the individual begins scrutinizing his own beliefs and opens his mind to universal viewpoints' (2020:436). Of further interest is Bykova's analysis of *Bildung* as a complex process of dialectical recognition, where she takes the reader right to probably the most famous part of Hegel's *Phenomenology* that discusses the lordship and bondage (Hegel, 1977:111 [§178] onwards). This problematises the knowledge of self through the other, as in the master-slave dialectic, where the other is not viewed as another *other* rather 'the other is initially viewed not as *another* self – i.e. not as B opposed to A, where A is oneself – but as just *not being oneself*, that is, as not A' (Bykova, 2020:437–438; emphasis original).

Hegel understands the absolute 'not just [as] truth that results *from* learning, but also to the truth of itself *as* learning, that is that the absolute understands the significance for it of negative experiences and comprehends this education to be what truth *is*' (Tubbs, 2008:3; emphasis original). *Bildung*, for Hegel, becomes not just another system of education among many, *Bildung* is education – both a process and a substance. With regards to the tendency to systematise, Asger Sørensen (2015) states that Hegel was motivated largely by rather practical means. It was as a rector of the gymnasium in Nürnberg, with a requirement from Bavarian regulation, that a pedagogical tool of the philosophical encyclopedia was required to be produced in order to teach students of the gymnasium (Sørensen, 2015:75–76). At the same time, Bykova argues, Hegel resists systematising on this topic 'addressing pedagogical issues mostly in his non-systematic writings, and does not produce any method or theory of pedagogical practice' (2020:430). Hence underlying Sørensen's idea that some kind of a "system" as a rector of a gymnasium was just that, a mere necessity of pedagogical practice.<sup>74</sup>

The criticism of philosophers by Kierkegaard, was mentioned at the beginning of this thesis and need not be repeated here. For Kierkegaard, 'an individual human being, this specific human being, [is] alone before God' (SUD: 5). Thus, an education that can be found in Kierkegaard is of an individual before (and towards) God, rather than an individual to the universal (contra to what was discussed above on Hegel's conception of *Bildung*). Heidi Liehu (1990) demonstrates an important difference between Kierkegaard and Hegel, that has a direct educational implication. Where for Hegel *Bildung* was important in attaining world spirit as '*Geist* needs men to achieve this self-consciousness. Kierkegaard holds precisely the opposite view: God and man differ from each other absolutely, and God does not need human beings to achieve self-consciousness – although, however, a man needs God to achieve the highest level of human existence' (Liehu, 1990:8). While in Hegel there is a dialectical dependence between the two, in Kierkegaard only the human is absolutely dependent; God does not need

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<sup>74</sup> Although such clear view of Hegel is not without a challenge. For example, see Tubbs' (1997:217) *Contradictions of Enlightenment* for an already inherent contradiction of Hegel's self-identity in being a teacher.

the human being. Liehu (1990:40) argues that it is the emphasis and meaning of absolute knowledge in Hegel that is at the heart of Kierkegaard's difference from him. According to Liehu, Hegel seeks to place us at the level of "absolute knowledge" 'where we must ultimately stand in order to achieve a complete, undisturbed clarity of the self-consciousness of the cosmic *Geist*' (1990:29), which is ultimately achieved by the means of speculation. The result is the 'subject and object become one and the absolute becomes self-consciousness through particular consciousness' (Liehu, 1990:29), or in other words the Absolute (God, or in Hegel's terminology *Geist*) and the particular (a human being) become one. Liehu argues 'the views of Kierkegaard and Hegel differ here crucially since according to Kierkegaard, man and God are absolutely unlike: there is no kind of Hegelian level of "absolute knowledge" in terms of which man and world spirit could be seen as one' (1990:37).<sup>75</sup> Thus on Liehu's (1990:48) reading, Hegel gets rid of the contradiction by mediation, whereas Kierkegaard sticks to it.<sup>76</sup> This Kierkegaardian conception of education through contradiction, with an occasional reference to Hegel, will be described in chapter 4 below. I will further examine this difference in education in Hegel and Kierkegaard in chapter 5 as a difference and similarity of the system from the way the two thinkers view Christ.

### 2.1.5. Danish Hegelians

I now turn to "Hegel", a literary figure whom Kierkegaard is often attacking in his works, represented not by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich himself, but by Kierkegaard's countrymen. The term "Danish Hegelians", to whom Kierkegaard is thought to be reacting in his writing, is not a term that describes a homogenous group. Just like in Germany, so in Denmark there were various schools of interpretation of Hegel. Stewart states, 'the Danish Hegelians can best be characterized not by their unanimous agreement on some specific issue but by the internal disagreement about various aspects of Hegel's thought' (2003a:107). The most influential Danish Hegelian whom Kierkegaard came to oppose the most throughout his work is Johan Ludvig Heiberg.<sup>77</sup> Heiberg claimed to have published the first work on Hegel's philosophy in the Danish language (Stewart, 2003a:108).

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<sup>75</sup> An interesting theme here, which, however, falls outside the scope of this study, is whether the doctrine of universal salvation could be narrated from Hegel.

<sup>76</sup> In this claim by Liehu is a challenge to Tubbs' conception of God as education. According to Tubbsian logic described later in chapter 2 and rehearsed once more in chapter 4, education lies in the relation. For Tubbs to relate something is to mediate it, but to say that something is in contradiction is also to relate it. Yet, Liehu's suggestion seems to be that in mediating something, the difficulty of the opposites is overcome, while Kierkegaard's contradiction preserves the difficulty. Mediation is in danger of producing a new kind of mastery, while the contradiction always works to undermine it.

<sup>77</sup> Although Stewart provides reservations as to how much Heiberg is a Hegelian. Shortly after meeting Hegel in Berlin, Heiberg rejects being a follower of Hegel and is critical of those who identify themselves as Hegelians, while at the same time having an almost spiritual revelation of Hegel's system to him (Stewart, 2003a:113–114).

Nonetheless, Stewart names the theologian Hans Lassen Martensen ‘as one of the most important sources about Hegel’s philosophy for his fellow countrymen’ (2003a:116). Elizabeth Li argues that in the 1830s the Faculty of Theology at Copenhagen (that is, the time that Kierkegaard attended it) was in crisis, unable to shake off Wolffian rationalism, with ‘the theology practiced being perceived as increasingly disconnected from the church and spiritual life’ (2019:136). It was the Faculty of Philosophy that attracted many students, including Kierkegaard, ‘where it was felt that a truly Christian spirit was cultivated’ (Li, 2019:136). During this time, according to Li, Heiberg and Martensen ‘came to believe that theology had to be renewed through philosophy, and in particular through the incorporation of Hegel’s speculative philosophy’ (2019:136).

Martensen directly engaged with Hegel’s logic in lectures that Kierkegaard attended (Liehu, 1990:32). However, Martensen modified his Hegelianism as time went on, from an impersonal God of a logical idea to the living God of revelation, where cognition was subordinated to faith (Kirmmse, 1990:169–170). In other words, if Heiberg believed the speculative philosophy to be the culmination of the unity of theology and philosophy, for Martensen, it was the speculative theology as the end (Li, 2019:137).

Furthermore, Liehu (1990:31–32) names Kierkegaard’s university teacher, Poul Møller, to have provided an explicit reference and emphasised the significance of Hegel’s *Phenomenology*<sup>78</sup> to the study of development of human consciousness. Although Møller, while at the start being fascinated with Hegelianism, later rejected it (Kirmmse, 1990:171).

Bruce H. Kirmmse (1990:136) puts Martensen and Heiberg on the pedestal of the leaders of the second generation of the Danish golden age, Heiberg in the literary and Martensen in the religious spheres. Liehu (1990:32) explicitly argues that the critique of Hegel and Hegelianism by Kierkegaard should be seen as the critique of Hegelianism of Heiberg and Martensen rather than Hegel himself. It was, for example, Heiberg’s understanding of truth that Kierkegaard came to view as Socratic recollection, a view that was similar to Bishop Mynster’s (then the primate of Denmark) psychological Christianity of simply remembering in Christ the Father (Kirmmse, 1990:145).

Heiberg, however, had a direct influence of advancing the ideas of *Bildung* in Denmark (Garff, 2013:70–71). According to Stewart, Heiberg ‘launched a Hegelian campaign in Denmark after attending Hegel’s lectures in Berlin in 1824’ (2015:51). Joakim Garff argues that Heiberg’s understanding of *Bildung* and a call for its necessity arises directly from his understanding of Hegelian philosophy

the necessity of *Bildung* was first and foremost a programmatic declaration of a philosophy of which the ultimate guarantor was the spirit of the age itself ... *Bildung* was thus not merely etiquette, proper form, good manners ... though these things did constitute nine points of the law (2013:71).

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<sup>78</sup> On the heritage of Hegel’s *Phenomenology* in Kierkegaard, see Claudia Welz (2013:441–444).

Interestingly, when Heiberg proposed to teach his Hegelian philosophy to the Danes, he stated that he wanted to make his philosophy comprehensible to all people of culture, including “cultured ladies” (Kirmmse, 1990:140). In a way, the superiority of the Hegelian system of Heiberg was in its claimed comprehensibility. Heiberg argued, the point ‘was that *Bildung* can and must be learned by rote ... could only be accomplished by applying oneself to the study of cultivated behaviour. In fact, this sort of practice was cultivating *in itself*, and consequently it endowed the individual with moral qualities’ (Garff, 2013:71; emphasis original). Heiberg stated ‘morality and *Bildung* are inseparable, and the one increases in direct proportion to the other’ (Heiberg *Prosaiske Skrifter* vol.8 p.444 quoted in Garff, 2013:71). The issue of morality, or rather to be more precise of the reward for moral behaviour is picked up in Kirmmse’s (1990:152–155) examination of Heiberg’s social views as expressed in his poems. Kirmmse concludes ‘[t]he conditions for admission into anything other than Hell, then, include not only proper education, good taste, and seemly social comportment, but, as an integral part of these, a participation in the intellectual vision of speculative idealism’ (1990:155). Overall, for Kirmmse, the society of the Danish Golden Age was characterised not by the manor farm or the marketplace, ‘but rather [by] the school, which hovers in the realm of the “Spirit[.]”’ (1990:159). But even the kind of moral behaviour that Heiberg set out to cultivate, according to Garff, was Hegelian in spirit ‘[h]e seemed to be making a calculated attempt to cultivate the art of restraint that obeyed the Hegelian prescription by mediating between opposites, tempering the passions’ (2013:71). This, however, shows that Heiberg’s Hegelian *Bildung*, though drawing on Hegel, was not the kind of *Bildung* that Hegel himself envisioned as was described above.

Kirmmse (1990:141–142) demonstrates that the idea of *Bildung*, or “being cultured”, was a very elitist project of Heiberg. The cultured were above the theological disputes and engaged in the life of politics, while the uncultured masses were attracted to the movement of Christian awakening brought about by Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig.<sup>79</sup> Even the engagement with politics was seen negatively by Heiberg, and he hoped his philosophy would be able to attract the cultured middle classes to a “higher viewpoint” (Kirmmse, 1990:142). This cultured-uncultured division and accompanying division of engagement with political life versus “the myths” of religion (as theological disputes) is also seen in the history of liberal arts education where to be free was to be educated, and thus to be able to engage in the life of the *polis*. More on this in section 2.2.

### 2.1.6. Kierkegaard’s use of Education

At the beginning of this thesis there are two quotations of Kierkegaard given. One of them, from *Fear and Trembling*, reads

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<sup>79</sup> Grundtvig however also held idea that ‘it was the job of the school to ensure the growth of faith’ (Lausten, 2002:223). Kierkegaard is therefore reacting not only to “Hegel” but also to Grundtvig in critiquing whether such instruction is possible.

What, then, is education? I believe it is the course the individual goes through in order to catch up with himself, and the person who will not go through this course is not much helped by being born in the most enlightened age (FT/R:45).

However, the readers of Kierkegaard in Danish are aware that the Danish term being translated here as education is *Dannelse*, which is more akin to *Bildung* and better translated as formation. Danish *uddannelse* corresponds much better to the English education (if narrowly defined as education in a formal setting such as school or university). In the contemporary Danish discussion (Fink, 2022), the word *Dannelse* is further taken as to be something that is gained as a result of *uddannelse*, that is as a result of education.

In the Danish Golden Age, the concept of *Dannelse* (culture) was heavily influenced by the classical German understandings of *Bildung* and *Erziehung*. *Dannelse*, furthermore, has its archetype in the Greek notion of *paideia* discussed earlier (Rossatti, 2016:116). Gabriel Guedes Rossatti commenting on this concept in Kierkegaard's works states that it 'refers to a general knowledge of specific cultural domains such as art, language, literature, music, and history, connected either with an advanced development of the mind or with a cultivated way of life' (2016:115). This is, of course, a reflection on the earlier discussion of the influence of *Bildung* on Danish Hegelians. I draw here also on the commentary of Katalin Nun (2003) on Kierkegaard's relation to a famous novel of the time by Thomasine Gyllembourg,<sup>80</sup> *Two Ages*, of which Kierkegaard wrote his own review. Nun (2003:285) discusses Gyllembourg's use of *Dannelse* to denote the aesthetic and the ethical life. Nun argues '[t]his means specifically that a person who is educated both aesthetically and ethically is able to arrange the external aspects of everyday life with taste and to bear the burdens of life in both good and bad fortune' (2003:285). But if this meaning is pertained only to the external aspect of the person's life, a technical training, one would miss the internal formation of character. Kierkegaard is not just interested in *Dannelse* as the means of becoming a good housewife or an educated gentleman, but rather the citation above is more to do with a person's becoming, precisely this learning to *know thyself* described earlier in the chapter.

I argue, it would be a mistake on the part of the critic to assume that the English word *education* is ill-suited to carry an ambiguity of the Danish or German terms, or to exclude, for example, the term formation. In a sense, the English *education* is much more useful than *Bildung* or *Dannelse*<sup>81</sup> precisely because it embraces, rather than narrows down the multiplicity of meanings. This move in Kierkegaard scholarship is not new; Anna Strelis Söderquist (2016:xi), in the introduction to her book *Kierkegaard on Dialogical Education*, uses the word education and then in brackets places *Dannelse*, and in the sentence that follows proceeds to use the

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<sup>80</sup> It is worth mentioning that Heiberg discussed above is Gyllembourg's son.

<sup>81</sup> Claudia Welz gives the meaning of *Dannelse* to be 'education, breeding, and character formation' (2017:369).

word formation. As becomes apparent, Söderquist prefers to use the term ‘formative education’ (2016:xix) to describe the Kierkegaardian educational project.

The discussion above has demonstrated how the meaning of education is already broadened beyond the institutional instrumentalised confinement. This part of the chapter has further shown that education has already got something to do with a human being *becoming* human. *Know thyself* was a divine command, and in *Bildung* the idea of being made in an image of God was implied, which begs the question whether such “theologically” loaded notions are still relevant today.

Contemporary uses of *Bildung* have resurfaced in recent years. Solveig M. Reindal (2013:537), discussing the concept of *Bildung* today, emphasises the responsibility of a human being toward one’s own self. The emphasis is contra contemporary education (within the context of Norwegian universities and market driven educational policy making), and since *Bildung* possesses transformational qualities, it cannot be just an objective knowledge but rather must include subjective appropriation. Following Kierkegaard, Reindal argues that ‘[t]o take responsibility in relation to what one knows is about entering the realm of *how* rather than *what*’ (2013:539; emphasis original). But this is not just *how* to do things, it is rather *how* it affects one’s very existence and alters a relationship to what is being learned. Michael Uljens (2003) questions the idea of universal education. His critique is especially relevant to the (so-called) liberal, understood as *liberalis*, education; ‘the paradox of teaching concerns the following dilemma: in order for education to be *possible* the individual must *be free*, while at the same time, in order for the individual to *become free* education is *necessary*’ (Uljens, 2003:46; emphasis original). For Uljens, it remains unclear, ‘why *should* an individual be educated towards increasing self-reflection, towards individual responsibility, towards independence at all?’ (2003:47; emphasis original). This notion of freedom in Uljens deserves further attention. The second half of the chapter will scrutinise the possibility of this freedom and seek to elaborate on the challenge Uljens presents to the *liberal* education. However, the reader must wait until chapter 4 to see an explicitly Kierkegaardian answer, not by removing the paradox of freedom from Uljens question, but by showing how the paradox is necessary for the possibility of any freedom whatsoever. As, for Kierkegaard, ‘to fully understand freedom, we must grasp the possibility of the loss of freedom within it’ (Söderquist, 2016:xxiv).

## 2.2. Modern Metaphysics

### 2.2.1. Western Philosophy as Education

Tubbs’ response to Uljens is to show that, indeed, Western thought is dependent on the ideas (of self-development) that lead to *Bildung*. But rather than answering Uljens’ critique and solving the educational freedom paradox, by rehearsing Tubbs’ philosophy of education one can see education itself inherently present in Uljens’ statement as the difficulty of the question. In his 2014 work *Philosophy*

*and Modern Liberal Arts Education: Freedom is to Learn*, Tubbs presents two different conceptions of metaphysics: ancient and modern. Ancient metaphysics is found through antiquity's occupation with the necessity of a first principle (Tubbs, 2014, chapter 1), through the history of (seven) liberal arts (chapter 2), in the humanism of the Renaissance, and up to the *Bildung* of the Enlightenment (chapters 3 and 4 respectively).

Tubbs (2014:68) claims that even the announced death of metaphysics does not really escape metaphysics; the *post*-debates still rely on the same metaphysical grounding of ancient metaphysics. Furthermore, as argued by Rebekah Howes (2013:44), the history of Western philosophy always-already presupposes the logic of first principles as the condition of the possibility of Western thought and, even more so, the conditions by which it investigates itself. The logic by which post-metaphysics attacks metaphysics uses the same logic that was at work in the metaphysical grounding of Western philosophy and thus ends in aporia. Howes (2013:45) argues that Tubbs instead uses this "aporetic logic" (another way to name educational logic) to redefine the search for the first principles as a journey of learning as recollection. This historical development, for Tubbs, brings with itself three Western ideas of freedom '[t]he in-itself is *freedom is to think*; the in-itself that is for-itself is *freedom is to think for itself*; and the in-of-and-for-itself in relation to otherness is *freedom is to learn*' (2014:5; emphasis original). For Tubbs (2014:6), metaphysics of the first principles above are always already grounded in the ancient logic of the master.

Tubbs argues:

In antiquity a first principle rests on both the logic of its own necessity and the necessity of its own logic ... Aristotle's Prime Mover is its own necessity because it has no condition of its own possibility beyond or outside itself. This necessity is the logic of its existence as a first principle ... The ancients define this logic of necessity as harmony and proportion. In metaphysics this is truth ... the ancients make a virtue out of necessity. Harmony describes that which is at peace with itself because all the parts find their perfect place within the perfect whole (2014:11).

The origin of liberal arts education was in discovering those first principles and their relation to the world (Tubbs, 2014:11). The history of such (liberal arts) education was characterised by the tension between freedom and discipline.

Greek liberal education, leading life to the highest virtue (*areté*), was aiming to arrive 'harmony [with] the universe, and therefore to [make one] be at one with its first principles' (Tubbs, 2014:12). This kind of education towards harmony as the first principle was expressed in the injunction to know thyself (*gnōthi seauton*). Tubbs follows this preoccupation with harmony in Pythagoras and the mathematical universe (2014:12–13), in Sophists and being in harmony with the *polis* (2014:13–16), in Plato's harmony of dialectic between the individual soul and the city (2014:16–17), in Isocrates' rhetoric, as cultural education harmony was seen in speech and epitomised in *logos* (2014:17–21), and finally in Aristotle '[h]armony is to be found in the moral development of virtuous character which is grounded in the first principle of *phronesis*' (2014:22; see also pp. 21–24).

However, the above thinkers, in the development of their thought, went into two [generally] different directions as to how the goal of education is to be achieved, freedom and discipline – rhetoric and philosophy.<sup>82</sup>

The issue faced by thinkers of the time (still being relevant today) came to be of the individual versus the universal. Latin thinkers had developed the notion of *humanitas* ‘as universality or first principle of the virtue of each political citizen’ (Tubbs, 2014:27). The ‘universal fellowship of the whole human race [required that o]ne should always contribute to the common benefit, and at times this would involve being cruel’ (Tubbs, 2014:28). *Humanitas*, as well as the humanism of the Renaissance and *Bildung* of the Enlightenment, ‘as a first principle contains the tension between the necessity and discipline of the universal and the freedom of the individual’ (Tubbs, 2014:28).<sup>83</sup>

Between the Latins and the Renaissance humanists is the age probably most associated with the idea of “classic” liberal arts – of trivium and quadrivium. There arose a tension between the curriculum of seven liberal arts (freedom) and theology and philosophy (discipline). For Tubbs ‘[t]hese tensions are nowhere better illustrated than in Augustine. He finds discipline and freedom to be an educative tension between divine knowledge and human faith’ (2014:32). The harmony of Aristotelian metaphysics was found ‘in the absolute identity of the one God with Himself, leaving the unrest and the imperfection of the composite and the contingent to the sinful city of man’ (Tubbs, 2014:32–33). Tubbs sees in the biography of Augustine nonetheless an attempt to retain the tension between freedom and discipline, between God and secular knowledge, and between faith and reason.

In the Renaissance the opposition of discipline and freedom was in ‘the closed fist of (theological and Aristotelian) orthodoxy and the open palm of (classical rhetorical) humanism’ (Tubbs, 2014:37). Scholastics were concerned with systematising and categorising subject matter ‘mak[ing] distinctions and exceptions *ad infinitum* leaving the actual experience of the world a long way behind’ (Tubbs, 2014:37). New translations of Aristotle brought to the fore the question of infinite regression. The knowledge of truth via logic became opposed to the knowledge of truth via revelation. Education was left ‘dominated by argument, by Scholastic dialectic, and the new Aristotelianism’ (Tubbs, 2014:39). The occurring specialism started to bring about separation within the medieval universities with different chairs and faculties. This is something we live with to the present day. Yet, the time of the Renaissance is also the time when humanism came about in opposition to scholasticism. Tubbs (2014:41), with reference to

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<sup>82</sup> The tension between them, and the product of this tension, is, in fact, the most fruitful. The tension is where education happens. Furthermore, Tubbs argues ‘[I]atin antiquity preserves the tensions in first principles between discipline and freedom in the relation between philosophy and rhetoric’ (2014:26). See section 4.1. for my examination of the dialectical relations as education.

<sup>83</sup> I have already rehearsed in this chapter the Hegelian concept of *Bildung* in terms of the individual and the universal.

Augusto Campana (1946), argues that the term “humanist” is intrinsically to do with education and carries the relationship of master and slave of the ancient metaphysics in the teacher and student relationship. Further, Tubbs (2014:41–42) sees in Dante a continuation of the Aristotelian logic of harmony in the first principle, where this first principle is a monarch – a monarch under whom the population could only ever be truly free. In other words, this becomes a secularised notion of divine authority. The discipline and freedom was rehearsed in ‘[a]uthority over mankind is, at one and the same time, servant of humanity’ (Tubbs, 2014:42). In the Renaissance occurred a move towards a development of self-awareness of the individual, a self-knowledge (Tubbs, 2014:44). An individual was born in the Renaissance. However, the individual was only able to be born in relation to the universal. Tubbs, with reference to Ridder-Symoens (1992), sees in the Renaissance humanist view of their place in history ‘a sense of universalism, perfection, necessity and harmony’ (Tubbs, 2014:46) – in other words, an Aristotelian metaphysics of harmony and logic of the prime mover. But moreover, the development of the Renaissance also introduced dialectical thinking or ‘distinctions between ancient and modern, past and present, being assigned to different historical epochs’ (Tubbs, 2014:46). However, in terms of Aristotelianism itself, through the time of the Renaissance, it became ‘displaced by modern science and modern philosophy’ (Tubbs, 2014:44). As Tubbs concludes:

Renaissance (rhetorical) humanism sets itself against the dialectical scholasticism of speculative and universalist Aristotelian philosophy and method and accepts instead rigorous rational interpretation grounded in observation and experience delineated into separate subject disciplines. But the logic on which validity or truth are based does not change. The sovereignty of an ineffable first cause is not challenged, nor is the ancient logic of non-contradiction or of harmony as self-sufficient necessity. The methods of achieving harmony change, but the goals do not (2014:49).

The dualism of the concepts of discipline and freedom came to its zenith in the era of *Bildung*. The liberal arts themselves carried the dualism, with *liberal* as freedom and *arts* as discipline. In this dualism ‘discipline refers to the traditional authority of universal and eternal truths ... Freedom now refers to the emancipation of the critical individual mind from accepted truths and dogmas’ (Tubbs, 2014:50). Tubbs argues that ‘*Bildung*, in particular, carries the difficulty of the dualism, especially in trying to reconcile the protection of the inner person with the harmony of virtuous social relations’ (2014:50). Tubbs argues that as the Enlightenment reason developed, the characteristics associated with the stages of the history of liberal arts education, and discipline and freedom were faced with the challenge that was the result of its own development, ‘[p]aideia, *humanitas*, virtue, eloquence and nation-building had all been associated with an elite, educated according to a distinctive and protected curriculum, and certain of the virtue of their leadership’ (2014:60). The result of the process of development and the challenge became ‘[t]he new spirit of equality demands that all should be masters’ (Tubbs, 2014:60). This resulted also in the redefinition of the liberal arts

education into simply liberal education (Tubbs, 2014:61). The discipline of the arts was lost. The end of the metaphysics and the critique produced by post-modernity produced a response within the liberal (arts) education tradition of ‘embracing relativism and pluralism reject[ing] the search for first principles, seeing it as a merely Western prejudice, and a particular type of Western prejudice – metaphysical, humanist, white, male – at that’ (Tubbs, 2014:64). Tubbs looks to Franz Fanon, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Emmanuel Levinas, who diagnose contemporary society’s search for freedom as follows: ‘whatever good the West may wish to claim for its concepts of humanism and humanity, it has always been prepared to use violence and oppression both military and economic, in the name of humanism and humanity’ (2014:66). The question is asked of the liberal arts education whether it has not ended in failure. Tubbs is unconvinced by the post-metaphysical arguments and he writes:

In *Theaetetus*, Socrates dissolved the subject two and a half thousand years ago, arguing that we get rid of the verb “to be” because nothing is ever solid or stable. The metaphysical relation both acknowledges and works with this instability, as do the natural and social relations. Post-metaphysical work does not do justice to the integrity of these relations, and what it misses, fundamentally, is that the post-metaphysical viewpoint is just another shape that the metaphysical relation takes (2014:68).

Tubbs (2014:96) argues that it is possible to reclaim metaphysics, a modern metaphysics, where God, the prime mover, the first principle, the condition of the possibility, is education.

### 2.2.2. From Ancient to Modern Metaphysics

Tubbs’ philosophical project is an educational project, and his educational project is a philosophical project; he looks back to ‘[t]he ancient world [that] did not draw a distinction between this educational life and the work of self-critical and political thought’ (2022a:ix). It was during the history of Western philosophy rehearsed above as education, that separation between philosophy and education occurred and ‘[e]ducation has gradually been denied its own voice’ (Tubbs, 2022a:xi). The result being ‘[o]n the one hand, in the modern Academy there is examination without life, and on the other hand, in the city, there is life without examination’ (Tubbs, 2022a:xii), both failing to live up to Socrates’ challenge to humanity that ‘the unexamined life is not worth living’ (Plato, 2005:133 [38a]).

Tubbs seeks to return this Socratic philosophical examination back as education through his idea of the modern metaphysics, as an inquiry of the truth of knowledge that might have been in error about itself over the last two and a half thousand years evident in the gap between the metaphysical truth and the way it is experienced in the world (Howes, 2013:47). Just like the ancient metaphysics with Aristotle had a god as a prime mover, so the modern metaphysics has a God as education in Tubbs.

I will now explain how Tubbs arrives at his modern metaphysics of God as education. The Tubbsian project is nothing less than a miracle, according to his response to R.M. Hutchins (Tubbs, 2014:72); it is a fruitful endeavour of self-education. My worry is, is Tubbs being theological enough? Tubbs' reading of Kierkegaard and the theological critique of him will be addressed in chapter 4.

Tubbs is against the claim that it is possible to go beyond dualisms; he argues that modern first principles 'are still in the dualism, but deeper within them' (2014:69), as dualisms are already more *and* less than they appear to be. The contemporary (or maybe even not so contemporary) person will be dissatisfied if they 'seek some kind of ethical certainty or moral imperative for action in the world' (Tubbs, 2014:70). Tubbs argues (2014:70) that the challenge of education as self-knowledge, to know thyself, is directed at humanity. In this learning about one's self, Tubbs sees the freedom of humanity. The "post-"society with

the profound difficulties – difficulties that human freedom creates regarding the relation of freedom and discipline, or of the I and the We, or of the self and other – do not mean that one should resign oneself to the impossibility of human freedom; nor, even to the comfortable position of just criticising the mastery that always inheres in Western freedom, that is, its imperialist, colonialist, racist and sexist prejudices. Education invites us to continue to learn of human freedom from within all of these difficulties (Tubbs, 2014:70).

Tubbs defines truth as 'learning that calls itself education' (Tubbs, 2014:73). For Tubbs, there is a difference between dualisms in terms of relations in which learning happens:

the logic of dualism, which knows difficulty only as opposition, from the logic of relation which knows oppositions as our difficult education. It is this educational logic, and this logic of education – this work of education – that constitutes modern first principles and modern metaphysics (2014:73).

Tubbs argues that the metaphysical, natural, and social education share an illusion:

Metaphysics registers the separation between truth and experience. Science registers the separation between mind and matter. Social theory registers the separation between master and slave. But to "register" these separations or relations is also to relate to them. Each philosophy – speculative, natural and social – is therefore in relation to the relations. The register of difference is a relation of relation ... the relation of relation is the modern logic of the thought of thought (metaphysics), the movement of movement (nature) and the freedom of freedom (social relations), each of which are actual as education ... vulnerability to infinite regression is its own self-determining truth. This vulnerability and its self-determination of its truth is the relation of the relation: namely, learning (2014:74).

In other words, to separate something is to always already bring them into a relation/ship of separation. It is in working through the difficulty of this separation that Tubbs sees an educational experience – to acknowledge that what is

separated is connected. This is the meaning of Tubbs' 'in philosophy's higher education, self and other are not the same or different, they are both. But "both", here, means the truth that I am already other and the other is not me, or, somewhat bluntly, I am that which I am not' (2004:xxv).<sup>84</sup> In other words, I only know myself in opposition to the other – in my separation from the other – but the other themselves are not me. I am already other, to myself, and to the other, and so what I am is and is not 'other', hence the emphasis that simple dualisms are already more and less. For example, if I separate freedom and discipline, I can only know freedom by it being constructed in opposition to discipline, but freedom is not discipline. This constitutes education for Tubbs.<sup>85</sup>

The illusion of the ancient liberal arts education was to find virtue in-itself. This is why philosophies resisting infinite regression (e.g. Aristotle) were produced. However, the modern world is characterised by the relativity of movement brought about by advances in mathematics and physics; this relativity brings the return of infinite regression that was thought to be solved by the Aristotelian Prime Mover. In order to have a ground on which to stand, as opposed to this relativity of movement that brings about an infinite regression, two responses are given: the religious and the sceptical. Both, however, ultimately fail. The religious thinking posits

The Prime Mover [as] a positive logical and religious necessity, countering the purely negative logic of infinite regression ... alternatively, the logic of infinite regression really is negative and resists positing a first principle just to solve the problem. Here is the scepticism in which absolute truth is impossible (Tubbs, 2014:75).

Tubbs argues that both<sup>86</sup> use the same logic in their responses, '[b]oth judge mediation to be error' (2014:75), one of such mediations being earthly time. Now that in modernity everyone has become the master, with no slave at hand, argues Tubbs (2014:77), a belief in the personal God has come to save the master from infinite regression. To illustrate Tubbs' point, Howes (2013:21–22), in her doctoral thesis on the Hegelian educational philosophy [via Gillian Rose] of Rowan Williams and Nigel Tubbs, argues precisely for the kind of lament on the part of Williams with regards to the religion of a "personal God." The personal God, while creating an illusion of free choice driven by the free-market orientated ideology, in fact, removes the *educational* difficulty of choice. Freedom

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<sup>84</sup> Tubbs is here restating Hegel's 'I am a being for itself which is for-itself only through another' (Hegel's *Propaedeutic* quoted in Berenson, 1982:86; I was unable to identify the exact quote in Hegel), which is the whole point of *Phenomenology*.

<sup>85</sup> Howes investigates this statement of Tubbs with relation to the self-consciousness of the master and explains it in terms of the '[s]elf and other are able to share the same negative truth. And the implications of this are that the self as master can only know the other or the slave, when he comes to know the slave within himself' (2013:130).

<sup>86</sup> Tubbs: 'God and (mediation) the death of God share the same logic of necessity – that experience is error compared to truth' (2014:75).

generated by the personal God is ‘freedom in vacuum, a freedom from otherness, from negotiation and from loss’ (Howes, 2013:22). But choice is always already implicated in our relations to the other, ‘we have to learn how to choose’ (Williams, 2000b:38), a person needs to be made aware that freedom is a negotiation, one cannot gain everything, one must also lose something.<sup>87</sup> Thus, coming back to Tubbs’ modern metaphysics, any kind of attempt to ground the truth of something collapses. In the quotation above on the separations between truth and experience in metaphysics, mind and matter in science, and master and slave in social theory (Tubbs, 2014:74), to choose one over the other is to posit a first principle, an unmoved mover. Tubbs’ task is to show how the choice of one over the other makes the unmoved mover collapse under its own contradiction inherent in the relationship and brings about an infinite regression. This is Tubbs’ main attack on the ancient metaphysics, that freedom, whether in its “Greek” or Enlightenment form, is always characterised by a position of such freedom as mastery. Tubbs’ modern metaphysics is in freedom, not in *either* one / *or* the other, his freedom is in the dash “/”, ‘[f]reedom is to learn is the subjectivity that knows of itself as relation. It knows itself as the education regarding its composition as relation, and it knows the truth of this relation to lie in education’ (2014:82). In other words, the modern metaphysics is ‘not imposed from without, or presupposed from within, but [is] according to the relation between them’ (Tubbs, 2014:82).

The above discussion presents the pursuit of truth in-between, in the middle, in the relation, in the dialectic. Tubbs employs the Hegelian concept of *Aufheben* to problematise this relation as education, and as modern metaphysics. But the ancient metaphysics is characterised for Tubbs by Aristotle. Tubbs rehearses the relationship between the thought of Plato and Aristotle, ‘Aristotle creates a logic of first principles in which the dialectics registers as error against the truth of the unchangeable. Where in Plato, the dialectic could hold truth ... in the difficulty of the dialectic as education’ (2014:86). Tubbs argues that ‘[t]he question that separates Plato and Aristotle is, “Does mediation/negation/dialectic corrupt or create truth?”’ (2014:86). The history of Western philosophy up to Kant chose to assume Aristotelian metaphysics<sup>88</sup> and the view of corruption of truth. Tubbs’ modern metaphysics, however, looks to Plato.<sup>89</sup> Tubbs rehearses the corruption of truth in detail as cultures of error in part II of his (2009) *History of Western*

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<sup>87</sup> This is also my reading of Kierkegaardian *Either/Or*, “you will regret both” (EO1:38), which implies that once the choice is made, the other side of the choice is lost. The person will never know what they have lost, and maybe, if they had made a different choice, they would have benefited much more, but then they would face exactly the same dilemma. The challenge in *Either/Or* is not between choosing either this *or* that, but choosing in itself.

<sup>88</sup> If something is mediated, it is moved and thus imperfect. It is the argument made by Aristotle with regard to the Prime Mover, who moves but is not itself moved, see *Metaphysics A* 1072b (2019:31). Furthermore, as far as it is good and unmoved, the Prime Mover is also said to exist as necessity.

<sup>89</sup> Elsewhere, Tubbs rehearses the above difference in Aristotle and Plato as a ‘difference[] between a logic of mastery and a logic of the aporia of mastery’ (2017:3).

*Philosophy*. Tubbs uses the phrase cultures of error to ‘describe[] the experience of the broken relation between truth and thought ... the culture of error speaks of the education carried in the error of culture. Both coexist in the unhappy philosophical consciousness, for they constitute the relation of life and death. The error of culture marks the supremacy of life over death as what is not, or only negative. The culture of error is the persistence of death and negation in all of life’s standpoints’ (2009:25). Yet the attempts in the period of philosophy before the “modern” philosophy of Descartes and others always ended in aporias, with God or truth, being the other and outside of the individual. Thus, thought was always in error in relation to that truth (Tubbs, 2009:94), with ‘[t]he new rationalist cultures of error now find truth in rational thought and error in its ambivalence’ (Tubbs, 2009:94). As a result, argues Tubbs, ‘[r]eason extends itself here into everything except itself. In the search for the clear, the distinct, and the unambiguous, reason withdraws from its own conditions of possibility’ (2009:94). Howes summarises it as follows:

There are three relations to the true that Tubbs explores in *History of Western Philosophy*. These are the natural relation, the social relation and the metaphysical relation. Each relation presupposes that truth is in-itself and that thought is error in relation to truth. It is the latter relation that Tubbs takes up in the book ... for it is the educational logic of first principles on which, for Tubbs, the history of western reason rests and recollects itself (Howes, 2013:45).

It is in Kant that the ancient metaphysics, based on the logic of Aristotle, comes to its height. Tubbs writes

Kant’s synthetic a priori expresses a necessity between experience and objects of experience which mark his Copernican revolution in metaphysics. This necessity establishes two contradictory necessary truths: that all understanding of objects in the world are necessarily in conformity with their being experienced; and that, in line with truth as self-determining necessity, free from heteronomy and enjoying its own identity and autonomy, truth must be exempt from just that necessity (2014:89).

Tubbs agrees that Kant is not strictly Aristotelian in his logic as ‘Kant establishes the synthetic a priori as a metaphysical difficulty in its own right’ (2014:89), but it is precisely this difficulty that opens the door for Hegel’s critique of Kant and ancient metaphysics.

According to Tubbs, Hegel sees in Kant’s ‘I have therefore found it necessary to deny *knowledge*, in order to make room for *faith*’ (Kant, 1929:29 [B xxx]; emphasis original) the last line of defence for ancient metaphysics. In order to have a stable ground on which to stand, ancient metaphysics ‘presupposed that the true stood on one side, and the thought of truth on the other’ (Tubbs, 2014:89). Tubbs looks to Plato, as well as to Hegel, for whom ‘the real necessity of the true is not found in complete and unchangeable identity and stability. Instead, the real necessity is in the instability and lack of identity that always accompanies the

idea of truth' (2014:89). This is the idea behind Hegel's question in the "Preface" to his *Phenomenology* 'as to whether this fear of error is not just the error itself?' (1977:47 [§74]). This leads Tubbs to question the entire tradition of Western philosophy '[p]erhaps the true has never been perfect or stable or unchangeable ... what had been labelled error for 2,500 years was really the true, and the true, in turn, was really only the error' (2014:90). If God is education, and education is relation, and relation is mediation, then God is indeed mediated and yet true.

In everything that was said above about ancient and modern metaphysics, Tubbs sees clear educational implications, especially to the dialectical relationship of the teacher and the student. In the Aristotelian logic, rehearsed as master and slave, one has to become a God of the other. In education, it is most often played out as a mastery of the teacher. But as was shown above, the mastery of the teacher collapses into infinite regression. In modern metaphysics, God [who is education], the condition of the possibility, is in-between. In the *relation* of the teacher to the student and the student to the teacher, God is the *relation*. This, however, does not necessarily provide a solid ground to stand on. It is a great difficulty, not even to comprehend, but simply to imagine, that the entire tradition of Western philosophy is in error.<sup>90</sup> Yet, it is precisely in this difficulty, the error of error as truth, or of the truth of error, that Tubbs seems to find the first principle. For him 'this is what education as its own first principle looks like; it is the truth understood as the difficulty of the learning of truth. If we take this difficulty seriously, it changes how we are to think about truth and about education because it finds education to be truth and truth to be education' (Tubbs, 2014:90). He further adds '[t]o understand truth as education is to know the truth of understanding as a difficulty, and not as the resolution of difficulty' (Tubbs, 2014:90). This is the heart of modern metaphysics where education is the first principle:<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> In a way, Tubbs concludes what Kierkegaard's Johannes Climacus is doing in his unfinished and unpublished *Johannes Climacus* – he doubts everything. Doubt is the very basis on which Western philosophy came up with the dictum that "everything must be doubted." It is at the end of such inquiry, for Kierkegaard, where a new logic – paradoxical logic – arises. More on this in chapter 4.

<sup>91</sup> Tubbs rehearses this idea in his rereading of Socrates in *Socrates on Trial*, where he asks the question that Socrates asked in *Phaedrus*, that Kierkegaard asked in *Philosophical Fragments*: of how to begin to learn something that one does not know. Tubbs' answer is a following dialogue between the new-Socrates and a Jury, where Jury is questioning the idea of learning from recollection:

J1: But how do we know enough about what we don't know to know that we want to learn about it?

S: By learning about what about what this desire presupposes?

J1: How?

S: Perhaps in the love that drives our desire to learn. Perhaps the love of the unknown preserves what is unknown.

J1: How?

S: Because the love that presupposes its unknown object is already moved by that object. Perhaps this is the true beauty of what learning is.

J1: Then perhaps our daemon, our necessity, is just such love.

Education can overcome everything that opposes it, everything, that is, except itself. With regard to itself, education can only become its own difficulty. When education is doing itself, when it has itself as its subject and its object, or its thinking and its doing, then education is its own re-defined necessity, its own re-defined harmony and its own re-defined virtue. This is a modern logic of necessity as education. This is therefore modern metaphysics (Tubbs, 2014:90).

Where ancient metaphysics searched for truth in the resolution of the oppositions and tried to protect itself from the collapse into an infinite regression, modern metaphysics finds truth in the oppositions. Tubbs does not state it, but I wonder if the collapse into an infinite regression could be viewed as a first principle, where the collapse is this education as the first principle that Tubbs talks about.<sup>92</sup>

### 2.2.3. Logics of Western Philosophy

In order ‘[t]o explain the logic of educational structure of a modern first principle’ (2014:91), Tubbs employs four terms that are fundamental to the history and logic of Western philosophy: *in-itself*, *for-another*, *of-itself*, and *for-itself*. The ancient metaphysics of Aristotle established the truth upon the *in-itself*, where self-reliance of the unmoved mover, the first principle, was dependent only upon what is true *in-itself*, as all the rest was thought to be corrupt, as it was affected by the external. The *in-itself* is characterised by the mastery, as what is ‘in-itself can be totally distinguished from its opposite, that which is not in-itself and is ... only for-another’ (Tubbs, 2014:91). Socratic logic, however, problematised it and placed ‘everything that is deemed to be truth in-itself [to be] relativised in the recognition that everything that is known is not only in-itself but also in-itself for-another’ (Tubbs, 2014:91). The Enlightenment reason has attempted to overcome this contradiction, of nonetheless being in-itself for-another. In the Enlightenment, everything that is true is so because it has passed the test of being rational, and thus, everything that is rational is *for-reason*. For Tubbs ‘[t]his is to defeat the contradiction that something can be in-itself and for-another, because now the “other” (thought) is also the truth of all “otherness” (rational thought), that is, it is rational that everything is for-reason. This totality defines the universality of rationality’ (2014:92). What has happened is that Aristotelian

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S: And when the object of love is the thinking or questioning mind, or when this love seeks to understand itself, then in the enquiry this love presupposes itself.

J1: Are you suggesting that this love is its own beginning?

S: I am suggesting that this love is already begun.

J1: How?

S: As its own presupposition (2022a:97–98).

<sup>92</sup> Paradoxically, I do not believe that according to Tubbs’ logic, one can actually misread him. What I mean by it is one can read Tubbs not in the way Tubbs intended or argued, but the logic of education present within his work implies that while coming to a conclusion, even if it is “wrong”, one nonetheless has been educated. Maybe in the next reading, one will learn something more, and so on and so on.

metaphysics has established itself as the universal first principle, '[t]he Enlightenment makes all laws rational, consistent and non-self-contradictory. Further, it defines each human mind as having rational capacity and as such being potentially free' (Tubbs, 2014:92). But for Tubbs (2014:92–93), what the Enlightenment has done is actually mediated everything through reason. The slave has become the master, and Tubbs sees here the task of the modern metaphysics to resist the new master 'by convicting it of non-identity with itself and to resist reason's own resistance to self-mediation' (2014:93). Speaking philosophically, the problem is 'in the Enlightenment the in-itself that is for-another becomes the sovereignty of rational experience. But this sovereignty avoids its own implication of being for-another and takes for itself only the idea of reason in-itself' (Tubbs, 2014:93). But Tubbs draws on Hegel, contra Kant, who shows that 'the sovereignty of enlightenment individuality in-itself is illusory, for it too is mediated, and mediated by the experience of itself' (Tubbs, 2014:93). This lets Tubbs declare that 'the first principle of modern metaphysics as education is that modern reason learns that reason in-itself is undermined by being for-another, and that this other is itself, but now changed in the experience of-itself which is also for-itself' (2014:93). Or in other words, as Tubbs rehearses continually in *Socrates on Trial*, that all philosophies and cultures arising from them 'have rejected mediation as error, whether defending truth in-itself or showing how it exceeds itself' (2022a:208); that is, immediacy was taken as truth and mediation was denied its own truth. For example, in his critique of critical thinking as the mastery of reason in the Enlightenment and beyond, Tubbs states – reason 'still adheres to the old logic and believes that mediation, although universal as rational or critical thinking, cannot be true in-itself and should not be practiced on itself' (2022a:178). Here, Tubbs is also close to the Kierkegaardian idea of "truth is subjectivity" (cf. CUP1:371), critiquing the '[o]bjective because it still sees subjective mediation as a corruption of truth in-itself' (2022a:178). Kierkegaardian immediacy and mediation will be discussed in a later chapter. From this arises a different formulation of logic, against (Aristotelian) logic of non-contradiction that dominated the history of Western philosophy (as rehearsed by me above). The logic of negation and preservation is introduced 'where what is lost is also preserved as learning and not just remastered' (Tubbs, 2022a:187). This Tubbs' version of Hegelian *Aufheben*<sup>93</sup> sees learning to have its own truth as education in that the activity is also the same as what is being learned about – learning mediating itself, learning as its own truth, that nevertheless is for-another.

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<sup>93</sup> More on Tubbs' version of Hegel's *Aufheben* is in Tubbs (2022b) "The myth of *Aufheben*: A comment on Matthieu Renault's Hegelian myth of counter-violence." *Radical Philosophy*, 212, 115–118.

## 2.2.4. God, the first principle, as Education

Everything that was said above leads me to a concept of significance to Tubbs, but more importantly to me in this thesis, for Kierkegaard, and for theology in general. This is a concept of God. Tubbs and, I argue, any serious contemporary theology rejects the ‘idea of God, or truth, as a man in the sky with a beard making decisions and intervening in the fate of His creation’ (2014:95).<sup>94</sup> In the collapse of picture-thinking, in the collapse of the stable ground of ancient metaphysics described above, the question remains – whether there is still some kind of truth in this collapse. Tubbs maintains that the modern metaphysics asks a rather different question. For Tubbs

It matters not whether the conclusion is that absolute truth exists but cannot be known (religion), or cannot exist per se (scepticism), for the presupposition of the nature of truth – abstracted from its being known – is the same in both cases. The truth of modern metaphysics is different altogether. It includes within it both the ineffability of absolute truth and the impossibility of its existing at all. It includes them as part of the educational relations that are comprehending themselves as true within ineffability and impossibility, within religion and scepticism (2014:95).

For Tubbs, what matters is the relation between these two opposite views, where one finds modern metaphysics. Tubbs sees in both ancient and modern metaphysics the presence of God in relation to (the lack of) freedom. Tubbs argues that ‘[i]f humanity were absolutely free (within the ancient logic), then God would no longer be either the resolution or the repetition of finite error’ (2014:96). Furthermore, ‘[m]odern metaphysics understands the nature of the need for God, [as] the need to name the lack of freedom in human social life’ (Tubbs, 2014:96). Tubbs names in this difficulty of learning, in the first principle, in the logic, God as ‘the *logos*[ ] of this education’ (2014:96).

Before concluding my discussion on the concept of education and how Tubbs makes it a theological issue, I would like to comment on the relationship of Kierkegaard to the above. Surprisingly, Kierkegaard’s influence is missed in Howes’ (2013) study of education in Tubbs, as she sees his project in mainly Hegel’s (and Kant’s) terms, albeit mediated through Gillian Rose.<sup>95</sup> Tubbs draws on Kierkegaard’s writings in the journals<sup>96</sup> and argues that ‘Kierkegaard comprehends the individual relation to God “Socratically” ... as the difficulty of

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<sup>94</sup> A potential point for further discussion is Tubbs’ statement that ‘[p]icture-thinking of this kind does not experience deeply enough its own contradictions’ (2014:95). Yet, it is this kind of picture thinking that enables feminist and queer theologies, to speak of liberation, God as a woman, a fat God, a disabled God.

<sup>95</sup> This is not to say that Howes is unaware of this influence, especially from Tubbs’ later work, published after Howes’ thesis. Furthermore, Howes (2013:41) does state that Kierkegaard is being taught in the degree designed by Tubbs.

<sup>96</sup> Tubbs does not specify which journal entry it is but rather refers to an edition of selected journal entries *The Soul of Kierkegaard* (2003) edited by Alexander Drew, Mineola NY: Dover Publications Inc.

knowing that one does not know' (Tubbs, 2017:xi–xii). Nonetheless, both Tubbs and Kierkegaard go beyond the Socratic and develop the difficulty further 'by holding revelation and reason, simplicity and reflection, and immediacy and mediation, together *in the difficulty of their difference*' (Tubbs, 2017:xii; emphasis original). The ancient metaphysics would seek to resolve the difficulty, to overcome difference, and thus to arrive at truth. The modern metaphysics 'finds here an *educational logic*' (Tubbs, 2017:xii; emphasis original)<sup>97</sup> in learning from the difficulty of the difference without a resolution of the dualism. Thus, when Kierkegaard is faced with a paradox, and the ultimate paradox – God – at that, Tubbs would say this is education. The paradox is education, not the overcoming. Overcoming simply reproduces the logic of mastery. In Kierkegaard's indirect communication, Tubbs sees an attempt to be able to communicate 'the difficulty of *communicating* difficulty' (2017:xiii; emphasis original). But Kierkegaard goes beyond<sup>98</sup> a simply Socratic attempt at communicating difficulty from simply being a midwife. Kierkegaard's critique is that the Socratic method 'creates difficulty but is unable to preserve this difficulty as its own truth ... the communication of religion's difficulties requires that its communicators bear witness to such difficulty' (Tubbs, 2017:xiii). Tubbs sees a further educational implication here, especially relevant to the teachers, not just how to communicate the difficulty but how to begin with it (Tubbs, 2017:xiii). It is a rehearsal of Kierkegaard's preoccupation in *Johannes Climacus* and the thesis of *de omnibus dubitandum est*, with the beginning with doubt, that already presupposes doubt.<sup>99</sup> As Tubbs puts it 'difficulty already begins with difficulty, or with itself ... difficulty so comes into the world that by the fact it is, it is already presupposed. The presupposition of difficulty *is* difficulty' (2017:xiii; emphasis original). The difficulty hidden in the difficulty of dealing with difficulty is the basis of the educational logic of modern metaphysics – the first principle – God. Although Tubbs' philosophy of education is Hegelian, his project in *God, Education, and*

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<sup>97</sup> Tubbs has used the term "educational logic" as far back as his 1997 *Contradictions of Enlightenment*, where the concept appears once. The concept received attention in his 2009 *History of Western Philosophy* where, in the introduction, Tubbs names educational logic to be learning and states that '[t]his concept of learning is the truth that Neoplatonic logic ruled out as contrary to the truth of what is' (2009:6). The concept was then properly theorised in 2014 *Philosophy and Modern Liberal Arts Education* and received further examination in 2017 *God, Education, and Modern Metaphysics*. Tubbs has helpfully summarised educational logic as follows:

It is the same logic experienced in exploring truth or first principles in a world of relativism and pluralism, or experienced when faith is unsettled by doubt, or experienced in the controversy of liberal arts as elitist, or in the defence of *sophia* against *techne* (2014:ix).

<sup>98</sup> Kierkegaard would not be impressed with the terminology of "going beyond" and "overcoming" (see CUP1:361 onwards). To say to go beyond is also to be in danger of being subjected to Tubbs' critique that this overcoming is merely a new form of mastery.

<sup>99</sup> For more on this, see chapter 4 of Tubbs's (2004) *Philosophy's Higher Education*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

*Modern Metaphysics* (2017) is thoroughly Kierkegaardian. In fact, I argue that whenever Tubbs is talking of God, the spirit of Kierkegaard is in the background. However, I will return in chapter 4 to the question of whether Tubbs stops too early for Kierkegaard. The relationship to God that Tubbs is describing: is it a Religiousness A or a Religiousness B?<sup>100</sup> Although it is necessary to keep in mind that Religiousness A is a necessary presupposition of Religiousness B (Deuser, 1998:379). More on forms of religiousness, and the spheres of existence in general, in the next chapter.

In *Philosophy and Modern Liberal Arts Education*, Tubbs leaves the reader with the usual set of questions ‘Does God exist? Is there life after death? Is there heaven and hell? If there is a God, why does He allow suffering?’ (2014:97). But these questions take on a completely different meaning when one takes into consideration that according to ancient metaphysics, there is already a relationship of master and slave between the question and answer. Tubbs invites the reader to look within the relationship between the kind of questions and answers that are asked and answered about God, and to find education as a first principle, as the new conception of God. In *God, Education, and Modern Metaphysics*, Tubbs asks further theological questions ‘Is God known, and known absolutely, in and as the difficulty and the love of learning?’ (2017:xiv). This introduction of love is also an introduction of Jesus Christ, God incarnate, to a discussion of the abstract God thus far. And it is Jesus Christ that forms the core of my critique and re-reading of Tubbs via Kierkegaard later.

### 2.3. Education and its modern Logic

Thus, although initially this chapter resisted defining education, nonetheless, education presented in this thesis has its own logic – a logic of relation. It is a relation of the thesis to the author, the thesis to the reader, the teacher to the student. Throughout this thesis, a certain experience of the teacher and a certain experience of the student is presupposed. Furthermore, an experience of the relation of the teacher (with a certain experience) to the student (also with a certain experience) is presupposed. This is to raise the experience to experience in the second power, to what Kierkegaard (FT/R:229) describes in terms of repetition where consciousness is raised to the second power, in other words, subjectivity. This experience, however, is not a generalised experience in any way, neither in terms of presupposing some universal teacher or student (as relation is not overcoming (Tubbs, 2005:37)), or doing an empirical study that would demonstrate a generalised experience of the teacher and student in a school or university (in Estonia, for example)<sup>101</sup> and on top of that, the experience of their relation.

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<sup>100</sup> See Kierkegaard’s as Johannes Climacus’ own footnote in CUP1:573.

<sup>101</sup> Although such a study can be interesting in its own right.

Kierkegaard critiques such generalising in scholarly discourse (BA:146), as one cannot get involved *in concreto* with the subject of study – with an individual. The experience of the teacher and student, and of their relation, presupposed in this thesis is, therefore, the author’s experience. This has to be at all times kept in mind by the reader of the thesis. In other words, this is an experience of education of this thesis, as the experience of the teacher and student and their relation presupposed by the reader of the thesis is, in turn, the experience of the reader (and not of the author or in general). Thus the experience and hence the conclusions of the author and the reader will differ, but this is education in itself. In this, one discovers a further educational relation – that of the experience between the relation of the author and the reader. In the words of Tubbs ‘[e]ducation is always a specific and actual relation; it is always the same, yet always different. If it were not, then it would not be *our* experience and indeed would not be an *experience* at all’ (2005:59; emphasis original). Tubbs, a little later, takes it a step further ‘[i]t is not enough to say that we learn from experience. We also have to learn about learning from experience’ (2005:142). The logic of education is the relation of relation, and learning is the experience of such relation raised to the second power.

Furthermore, this logic of relation can be traced within the word *education* itself as *educere* and *educare*, but also in its expressions as *know thyself* and *Bildung*, and for Danes in *Dannelse*. The educational relation is made evident through the way “self-knowledge” becomes present in those expressions. Self-knowledge is a relation of myself to myself, where education is present as that relation, as my knowledge of myself. Hence, in the relation of self-knowledge, I am already removed from myself, in order to become [to come to know] myself anew. In Socratic *know thyself*, the self, furthermore, becomes related to the other. This relation to the other is rehearsed within the instances of *Bildung* looked at, as a relation between the individual and the universal and in Kant in the relation of moral duty. In Humboldt, it is in relation of the man [sic] and the world. In Hegel, it is seen in the treatment of *Bildung* itself, where the relation is found in *Bildung* being both the process and the substance of education – an othering within itself – but also in the dialectic of world spirit in the relations of various individuals. In Danish Hegelianism, it is in the relation of the cultural elite and the masses, asking who ought to be educated *for Bildung* (in the sense of culture). Finally, it is also traced in the history of Western philosophy as a dialectic of discipline and freedom where, in relation to it, education occurred. Although this logic will be theologically scrutinised in chapter 4, it is already presupposed.

Tubbs (2017:2) counterposes the logic of *know thyself* (our logic of education) to the concept of *noesis noeseos* – *thought thinking itself* that he sees in Aristotle. He argues that the Aristotelian idea of the One presupposes the sameness of mastery and freedom in this logic, ‘[t]he logic of mastery presupposes mastery as independence, independence as truth, truth as the One, and the One as the first principle. The prime mover is all of these’ (Tubbs, 2017:2). For Tubbs, the first principle of *noesis noeseos* is that ‘[t]hought and desire, thinking and desiring, are the *good*, for it is moved by and for itself. It retains its independence and

mastery because thought, desiring of its own truth, thinks itself as its own object' (2017:2; emphasis original) while '[know thyself] registers that the individual is unable to do this ... because individual thinking and desiring are moved by their objects and changed in being so moved' (2017:2). Tubbs demonstrates how it is being played out in schools as

On the one hand, the teacher's presupposition of being the beginning of education is opposed by the students, who demand to be their own beginning, or free individuals ... On the other hand, the progressive teacher's presupposition of not being the beginning of education, and instead, of beginning with freedom, is a mere dissemblance of freedom. The teacher has made his freedom here surrogate for the freedom of the students (2017:4).

Tubbs continues and argues that this master-slave dialectic has also been played out in the academic disciplines, becoming more and more separated as masters of themselves. Furthermore, the concept of *education* itself has been affected by this logic of mastery, where it has come to be more and more shaped by 'reason and rationality as mastery and [it] does so by defining in its own image what counts as an "explanation" of something and an "understanding" of something' (2017:4).

The question and the answer also exist in a dialectical relationship of master and slave, where the question is the slave of the answer. Tubbs argues that 'the logic of mastery defines the accomplishment of education as *overcoming*, specifically, the overcoming of the question by the answer' (2017:5; emphasis original). In other words, to ask a question is to demand an answer. This could play out in at least two ways. First, the answer is already implied by the one who is asking the question. In other words, the teacher asking the student a question expects a certain answer – there is a "right" answer. Second, although there might be no "right" answer, the questioner is not satisfied with the *aporia* of the respondent; even "I don't know" is not neutral but a reaction to the violence of the demand for an answer. Tubbs further problematises this kind of *what* question with relation to education '[o]vercoming is served by explanation, understanding and rationality which are the tools of its mastery. In the logic of mastery, overcoming is the very definition of what counts as something being learned. It is how one knows one has been educated' (2017:5), but not what education is in itself.

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This chapter has demonstrated that when trying to define education, the contradiction is always already present. Education as *educere* and *educare*, as *haridus* and *kasvatus*, the duality of *know thyself* as self-knowledge seen in Renz (2017), various definitions of *Bildung*, the problems in translating Danish *Dannelse*, and the history of Western philosophy as education in Tubbs (2014) point that if one definition is to be adopted, it will contradict itself somewhere at a later stage. Or, alternatively, the thesis would have to focus on a very narrow matter of

linguistics. When the thesis has named education God at the end of the chapter, the idea of God also needs to be questioned. As was demonstrated, it is not simply an Aristotelian unmoved mover, an answer to the question of the beginning that relies on the logic of mastery of the ancient metaphysics. This thesis uses the understanding of God presented by the modern metaphysics of Tubbs. As would be discussed in a later chapter, the idea of God used does justice to the contradiction of the definition of education, as the idea of God itself is a contradiction – in St Paul’s words ‘a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles’ (1 Corinthians 1:23), or in Kierkegaard’s as Johannes Climacus discussion in *Philosophical Fragments* it is the contradiction of God incarnate. It is to Kierkegaard and his theology that the thesis now turns, before returning to modern metaphysics again, now as theological modern metaphysics – to a new understanding of God is education, where this God has become incarnate.

### 3. THEOLOGY IN KIERKEGAARD

Whereas the previous chapter has defined God in educational terms, the purpose of the present chapter is to define God and educational life in theological terms. This chapter first offers a general introduction to the Lutheran background of Kierkegaard's thought. It is in this context of Danish Lutheranism that Kierkegaard develops his thought and his arguments in response to the Lutheran Christendom he sees around himself. Some of these philosophical themes were already picked up in section 2.2.5. on Danish Hegelians. Then, the chapter provides an overview of one of the most important hermeneutical keys to Kierkegaard – the stages of existence. The stages work alongside direct and indirect modes of communication for Kierkegaard to differentiate between the ways a human being can relate (or indeed misrelate, which is a negative relation in-itself) to God. The division of life into stages would become important in the argument of the next chapter, where the life before God, the life in God, and the life of God would be presented as the life of education. This chapter serves as a foundation for the marriage of education and Christianity in Kierkegaard, the marriage that takes place in *Philosophical Fragments*, where Kierkegaard brings together educational and religious terminology. Of importance here especially become Kierkegaard's ideas on *faith* and *God*, and *the leap of faith* and *the paradox* that arise from them respectively. It is through the terminology presented here and their relation in the next chapter that the Kierkegaardian examination of God as education can take place.

Kierkegaard, of course, was not a theologian by his own standards (or even today's standards (Walsh, 2013:292)), and definitely not a systematician. Yet, he spent ten years studying theology at the University of Copenhagen, producing a considerable body of lecture notes. Furthermore, Kierkegaard was engaging in the theological study even in his "literary" period, thus '[t]o ignore this background ... would be foolishly self-denying' (Pattison, 2012:3). Yet, one is left wondering to what extent the theology presented here would represent Kierkegaard's own point of view. Theology in Kierkegaard, as expressed in this chapter, is merely my own interpretation, though grounded in secondary sources. Kierkegaard does not want us to understand him but to interpret, even to misunderstand him, as it is in this that the reader of Kierkegaard makes his own existential move. As argued by John Caputo

What matters is the dance, the dialectical play of ideal possibilities into which the reader is to be personally drawn. The books are but occasions for readers to be induced, even seduced, into making a decision for themselves (2008:6).

Hence, the chapter is called "theology *in* Kierkegaard" and not "*Kierkegaard's* theology."<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Of course, I depart from Kierkegaard in a way that he would protest against by naming this thesis "*Kierkegaardian* theology of education."

Ironically, if this research is to stay true to Kierkegaard and respect his own wishes, a chapter on theology could be omitted altogether.<sup>103</sup> At best, what this chapter will come up with is a philosophical speculation, and at worst, a historical narrative not really fit for the history books. Stanley Hauerwas emphasises that for Kierkegaard, knowing *about* Christ did not equal believing *in* him (2020:448). Kierkegaard as Johannes Climacus writes that ‘Christianity is not a doctrine, but it expresses an existence-contradiction and is existence-communication’ (CUP1: 379–380). He continues that, ‘[p]recisely because Christianity is not a doctrine, it holds true, as developed previously, that there is an enormous difference between knowing what Christianity is and being a Christian’ (CUP1:380). Kierkegaard as Climacus would not be interested in someone explaining his theology or what he believed; contrary, he develops his “theology,” the idea of stages and indirect methods of communication, precisely not to convey some objective truth but to make the reader think of-and-for themselves as an existing individual and relate in this way to Christianity. Furthermore, ‘[a]lthough it may be beautiful and well intentioned ... to want to help people to become Christians by making it easy’ (CUP1:381), Climacus protests at wanting to make it easy. In fact, he claims to make it ‘as difficult as possible, yet without making it more difficult than it is’ (CUP1:381). Climacus’ reasoning behind it is ‘if it is the highest good, then it is better that I definitely know that I do not possess it, so that I can aspire to it with all my might, than to be entranced in illusion and to imagine that I possess it and consequently do not even consider aspiring’ (CUP1:381). Climacus and presumably Kierkegaard also, Sylvia Walsh (2013:293) argues, nonetheless leaves a backdoor open for a theological discussion: ‘the question about what Christianity is must not be confused with the objective question about the truth of Christianity’ (CUP1:371). The first question can be answered objectively by a philosophical speculation or a history book,<sup>104</sup> the second question cannot be answered objectively, but must be subjectively experienced in existence by an individual. In the same manner, it is possible to ask what Kierkegaard’s theology is, and philosophically or historically explain it, but not of the truth of Kierkegaard’s theology. The truth can never be established no matter how much scholarship is done. The search for truth must be achieved by each reader (of this thesis) and scholar of Kierkegaard individually.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Thus, although this chapter provides what are “objective facts” and “established scholarly opinion” in the area of Kierkegaard studies, this is my revocation of this chapter. I say what I say because I have to “explain” my presupposition on theological terminology to be used in chapter 4.

<sup>104</sup> Johannes Sløk warns the reader even of perceived unproblematicity of history, ‘when [Kierkegaard] calls one of the writings “A straightforward communication, report for history” you can be pretty sure that he is pulling off a falsification of history’ (1994:8).

<sup>105</sup> This is in line with the Tubbsian idea of education described previously. Truth is not a thing out there to be chosen, truth (as God is education) is in a relation. In this case, a relation of myself to Kierkegaard and his writings.

### 3.1. Lutheran background

The relationship between Kierkegaard and Luther/anism is ambiguous. Walsh argues that Kierkegaard (at least) as Anti-Climacus in *Practice in Christianity* is ‘in line with Luther’s theology of the cross ... maintain[ing] that it is only [when] Christ [is] in his state of lowliness, not in his loftiness or glory, that one comes to know him’ (2013:299). At the same time, Kierkegaard is highly critical of the concept of original sin in the Augustinian-Lutheran tradition (Walsh, 2013:301; Welz, 2016:chapter 4). Kierkegaard ‘does away with the distinction between Adam’s first sin and that of later generations’ (Walsh, 2013:301). As David Yoon-Jung Kim and Joel Rasmussen (2016:174) show, while on the one hand, Kierkegaard wanted to be like Martin Luther and uphold *sola scriptura*,<sup>106</sup> on the other hand, Kierkegaard saw in the Lutheran Reformation a marriage of national politics and religion that led to Christendom that he so much resented. Luther’s ‘Reformation turned religion into politics’ (Rose, 1992:175; emphasis removed) for Kierkegaard. At the same time, according to Kim and Rasmussen (2016:174), Kierkegaard viewed himself as Luther’s true successor. They are referring to a line in a notebook where Kierkegaard states ‘*Luther’s true successor* would come to precisely the opposite result of Luther, because L. came after fantastical exaggerations in the direction of asceticism, whereas he would come after the frightful deception to which Lutheranism gave birth’ (NB18:101; emphasis added). This deception to which Lutheranism gave birth is what Kierkegaard termed Christendom, understood as institutionalised Christianity in the Christian Danish state of the nineteenth century. Kierkegaard ‘understands his response to Luther in terms of a corrective to Luther’s own corrective’ (Kim and Rasmussen, 2016:197). In a way, an attack on the Danish Church is envisioned by Kierkegaard as Denmark’s own second reformation.<sup>107</sup>

Still, Kierkegaard had a high regard for Luther and what Luther had experienced as a single individual. Luther faced in fear and trembling his condition before God and was able to exclaim *sola gratia* (Kim and Rasmussen, 2016:201). The issue for Kierkegaard was in Luther making it a universal experience to and of everyone; an individual, having not faced the anxiety Luther faced, too easily

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<sup>106</sup> Although this issue also becomes problematic, with controversy over the epistle of James in Luther, Kierkegaard writes that Luther upholds *sola scriptura* against the Pope and yet departs from his own point of departure (Scripture) when it comes to James:

He himself best disproves his conception of the Bible, he who throws out the epistle of James. Why? Because it does not belong to the canon? No, this he does not deny. But on dogmatic grounds. Therefore he himself has a point of departure superior to the Bible, which probably was his idea, too, since he posited Scripture just before the conflict with the Pope, in order to have a firm basis, conceding a willingness to be convinced if they could convince him by the Scriptures. And this was all right, for what he wanted eliminated was the balderdash of tradition, which they no doubt would not find in the Bible (NB14:70).

<sup>107</sup> I have examined Kierkegaard’s attack upon Christendom as a political activity in more detail elsewhere (see Ahmedov (2023)).

relied on grace while themselves having not become the single individual before God (Kim and Rasmussen, 2016:201–202). One should not just take Luther’s teaching but also look at his life. In Kierkegaard’s words ‘I have wanted to prevent people in “Christendom” from existentially taking in vain Luther and the significance of Luther’s life – I have wished, if possible, to contribute to preventing this’ (PV:17). Kierkegaard elaborates in depth on his polemic with Luther and *sola gratia* in *For Self Examination* (1851) at the later stage of his authorship, around the time of his attack on Christendom. The error of the medieval times and monasticism was that ‘[e]verything had become works’ (FSE:15), although Kierkegaard is cautious and urges “the present age” not to go to the opposite extreme, which he sees as already happened with Luther. ‘The error was precisely there and not so much in the works. Let us not go too far; let us not make a previous age’s error an excuse for new error’ (FSE:15). From everything is works, to no works – to *sola gratia*. Although contemporary (Lutheran) theologians may protest against such reading of *sola gratia*, this is how Kierkegaard saw it within his own age. Gillian Rose, in her analysis of Luther and Kierkegaard, sees in Kierkegaard’s critique implications for the political theology of the day:

Although the principle of Protestantism and its consequences are distinguished from the development of Luther’s own spirituality and what he preached, their source is implicit in Luther’s emphasis—lack of dialectic and lack of paradox in what he proclaimed and in the way in which he proclaimed it. As a reformer, he fought to throw off burdens’, but, as it were, he threw off too many burdens, or rather, burdens of too many kinds: “Consequently the proper Christian mark of double danger is missing here.” To throw off the burden of papal authority without retaining the anguish and authority of the paradox merely leads from one human to another human authority, to political and social compromise with “the established order,” which takes Luther in vain and nullifies his contribution (1992:158).

This was also at the heart of his attack against the Danish Church, where everyone was a Christian by virtue of being Danish,<sup>108</sup> without the “Work of Love.” Kierkegaard imagines Christians in Christendom saying

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<sup>108</sup> Johannes Climacus gives the following example in the *Postscript*:

He is just like F. F., who does not want to wear a hat, as the rest of us do, but has to be eccentric.” If he were married, his wife would tell him, “Hubby, darling, where did you ever pick up such a notion? How can you not be a Christian? You are Danish, aren’t you? Doesn’t the geography book say that the predominant religion in Denmark is Lutheran-Christian? You aren’t a Jew, are you, or a Mohammedan? What else would you be, then? It is a thousand years since paganism was superseded; so I know you aren’t a pagan. Don’t you tend to your work in the office as a good civil servant; aren’t you a good subject in a Christian nation, in a Lutheran-Christian state? So of course you are a Christian.” (CUP1:50–51).

Excellent! This is something for us. Luther says: It depends on faith alone. He himself does not say that his life expresses works, and since he is now dead it is no longer an actuality. So we take his words, his doctrine – and we are free from all works – long live Luther! (FSE:16).

As would be explored below, in the stages of existence, Christianity is not something one has. Paradoxical-religiousness B – Christianity – is a way of living<sup>109</sup> in the world. For Kierkegaard, it was a matter of *doing* Christianity. This was considered above in chapter 1, in the distinction between *doing* and *studying* theology.

In terms of Kierkegaard's authorship, '[h]e was less interested in a historically accurate and precisely nuanced retrieval of Luther, and more interested in the way that the reformer could serve as a factor in his pursuit of his own projects' (Barrett, 2015:181). It was also with age that Kierkegaard took against Luther personally and not just with the ecclesial establishment (Barrett, 2015:183). Lee C. Barrett proposes a fourfold classical distinction of interaction between Kierkegaard and Lutheranism, being:

first is Kierkegaard's attitude to the classic Lutheran emphases of *sola gratia* ... and *sola fide* ... The second is his presentation of a positive use of God's law in the Christian life (the notorious "third" use of the law). A third issue has been the nature of Kierkegaard's appropriation of certain motifs within traditional Lutheran Christology ... The fourth topic has been his understanding of the relation of church, state, and civil society (2015:180).

In terms of the works of Luther, apart from those that are well-known and generally influenced the course of reformation, '*Kirchenpostille*<sup>110</sup> [] a collection of model sermons or sermon aids for preachers who wanted to incorporate Lutheran reform into their parish life' (Kim and Rasmussen, 2016:176) directly influenced Kierkegaard's reception of Luther. Nonetheless, Kierkegaard was not well-read

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<sup>109</sup> I resist saying "being in the world" although I am aware that Ian McPherson (2001) in his treatment of Kierkegaard uses the phrase "ways of being" to describe the stages of existence. McPherson (2001:168 onwards) furthermore proposes that for Kierkegaard, education belongs to the aesthetic stage of existence. However, I cannot agree with McPherson, who states

Education, training and research belong to Kierkegaard's aesthetic stage, insofar as this is the sphere most dominated by differentiation in capacities between individuals, and insofar as education, training and research are dominated by interest in differentiation according to inherited capacities and/or arbitrary, contingent factors, whether these are environmental or attributable to nature and nurture (2001:168).

But as the previous chapter has demonstrated, we have already gone beyond such understanding of education. The kind of education this thesis is concerned with belongs to the religious sphere of existence (section 3.2.3.). For, I argue, education makes the person free, but freedom is only possible in the paradoxical-religious, as freedom itself is paradoxical. I will deal with this in more detail in the following chapters, but educational aspects of the stages would be elaborated below.

<sup>110</sup> Important to note, according to his journals and notebooks, Kierkegaard only began reading this work as late as 1847 (Kim and Rasmussen, 2016:188).

in Luther<sup>111</sup> though, at the same time, remaining profoundly Lutheran “in spirit,” according to David Yoon-Jung Kim and Joel D.S. Rasmussen (2016:184–185). Furthermore, since Kierkegaard’s engagement with Luther was limited to *Kirchenpostille* dated 1521, Kierkegaard does not have a serious engagement with the later Luther and the battles he was going through (Kim and Rasmussen, 2016:205). This is, however, in line with the general currents in Danish theology of the time, where Luther’s works were not intensively studied (Barrett, 2015:181).

### 3.2. Stages of Existence

The concept of the stages of existence is one of the hermeneutical keys (alongside pseudonymous and orthonymous works) to understand Kierkegaardian authorship. I argue the stages are necessary to understand Kierkegaard’s thinking in relation to theology and education. Kierkegaard applies the stages ‘at the historical, anthropological, and Christological levels’ (Amir, 2016:90).<sup>112</sup> Kierkegaard started thinking in terms of life being divided into stages as early as 1835, and the first formulations of his own theory appeared in journals from 1837 (Amir, 2016:89). Kierkegaard divided stages into aesthetic, ethical and religious (with the latter being subdivided into two in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*). Important to understanding Kierkegaard’s stages is to consider them not as proceeding consequently one after the other but rather as spheres<sup>113</sup> or ‘paradigms of existence’ (Amir, 2016:90). Søren H. Klausen (2018:12–13) argues that it is in the “doctrine” of stages that one can find resemblances to some contemporary theories of learning, as well as implications for *Bildung*.

Klausen further emphasises that although the spheres are fundamentally different, the people in two different spheres can appear outwardly similar, ‘[t]he aesthetic person can be concerned with duties and obligations, with moral and even religious matters. The ethical person can be engaged in artistic pursuits or love and passionate lovemaking’ (2018:13). The person in the religious sphere can also be understood as a person in the aesthetic and the ethical sphere, but not vice versa. The person who is only in the aesthetic sphere of existence is not in the ethical or the religious. Yet ‘none of the stages can be omitted on the path to Religiousness B’ (Amir, 2016:95). On this reading, the religious sphere is not an *Aufhebung* of the aesthetic and ethical, although it ‘is supposed to recuperate both

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<sup>111</sup> Kierkegaard’s own comment in a notebook made in 1847 ‘I have never *really* read anything by Luther’ (NB3:61; emphasis added). Though, as Kim and Rasmussen argue (2016:186), Kierkegaard has read the exact same sermon he is referring to in the notebook entry before, as it is used in the *Works of Love*. Thus, Kierkegaard was re-reading Luther. Hence the emphasis on *really* to demonstrate Kierkegaard’s poor engagement with Luther rather than complete absence of acquaintance. Furthermore, the *Work of Love* acts as a milestone from where Kierkegaard begins a rather active appropriation of Luther.

<sup>112</sup> An in-depth philosophical study of Kierkegaard’s stages with relation to Hegel was done in a PhD thesis by Heidi Liehu (1990), on whom I draw throughout this chapter.

<sup>113</sup> I, therefore, use the terms spheres and stages interchangeably.

aesthetic and ethical elements in higher unity' (McDonald, 2016a:26). Liehu argues that Kierkegaard opposes his concept of repetition [*Gjentagelsen*] to Hegelian dialectics. Following Gregor Malantschuk (1974:135), she argues in Hegel, 'a "thesis" turns into an "antithesis", into its opposite (in Kierkegaard's interpretation of Hegel), the new, opposing element completely wiping out the preceding one' (Liehu, 1990:103). It is, however, important to stress that this is Liehu's own reading of Kierkegaard's understanding of Hegel. In Hegel's dialectic, the thesis is *aufheben* [sublated, preserved, abolished] in the antithesis. However, in Kierkegaard and Hegel, the mechanism of how the progress of the dialectic happens is different. According to Liehu, for Kierkegaard, the '[a]esthetic existence however, does not turn into the ethical solely through the power of contradiction – this is how Hegel's dialectics progress, pushed by necessary conceptual contradictions – but only by the power of choice' (Liehu, 1990:169). What moves the dialectics in Kierkegaard is the power of the paradox of existence. The paradoxes are not *Aufheben* but remain, and Kierkegaard invites the person to embrace this impossibility of either/or.

William McDonald (2016a:27) sees the *telos* of progression through the stages to be an attainment of freedom. Human beings possess freedom through the possession of consciousness, which, unlike the lilies of the field and the birds of the air (see UDVS:155–212 for the discourse) who are totally dependent on God, enables humans 'to relate to the future and to the possibility of the eternal in freedom' (Walsh, 2013:296). According to Walsh, each human being has this gift of freedom from God that 'however, brings with it both a requirement and responsibility, namely to choose between God and the world, since "no one can have two masters" (Matt. 6:24), and then, having chosen God in unconditional obedience to his will, to let him rule' (2013:296). The stages are thus a necessary puzzle piece in understanding human's relation to God, as a reflection on the eternal is not possible across all stages equally. But also, the stages enable understanding of human relations with other human beings. Understanding of the stages of existence comes down to Kierkegaardian conception of the human being as 'a dynamic relation between the finite and the infinite,<sup>114</sup> which is set in motion by a decisive choice' (Sánchez, 2016:21). This movement is also captured in Caputo's comment on the stages to be 'the movement of the self beyond a life of pleasure seeking (the aesthetic) to a principled and ethical existence (the ethical) [and t]he still higher movement beyond ethics to the life of faith (the religious)' (2008:23). The question is, whether this movement could be compared to the movement in Hegel's dialectic 'a movement that involves first, immediacy, second, mediation, and third, the unity of the two in a "mediated immediacy"' (Stewart, 2003b:97). Though comparisons can be made, there is certainly a homage to Hegel as, according to Caputo, 'Kierkegaard is playing on the central

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<sup>114</sup> Liehu (1990), in her thesis, refers to it as to man as synthesis of the finite and the infinite, referring to Kierkegaard's as Vigilius Haufniensis statement in *The Concept of Anxiety* '[m]an, then, is a synthesis of psyche and body, but he is also a *synthesis of the temporal and the eternal*' (CA:85; emphasis original).

Hegelian tenet that the principle of movement in the “System” is the power of the negative embodied in the principle of contradiction’ (2008:24–25) at least in relation to the aesthetic. Although Caputo (2008:25) places the aesthete prior to the dialectical sphere where no contradiction applies, and therefore, if the movement takes place, it is not the Hegelian type of movement.

Johannes Sløk emphasises the pedagogical necessity of stages for Kierkegaard, where in order to ‘take someone somewhere you must pick him up where he is’ (1994:9). This would be examined in more detail in chapter 5 (especially section 5.2.1.1.). Communication of religiousness B would not be comprehensible by Kierkegaard’s reader if the reader is not already in religiousness B ‘[t]herefore Kierkegaard had – or so he claims – to appear as a literary esthete, because that was the stage his audience was at. Only then could he slowly, through many stages, convey it to the theme he had been aiming at from the beginning’ (Sløk, 1994:9). Furthermore, as the truth of what is being communicated is the matter of “eternal happiness,” having the figure of an author hovering in the background would only distract from the matter at hand (Sløk, 1994:9).

### 3.2.1. Aesthetic

The aesthetic stage<sup>115</sup> constitutes the first stage of existence; it is the first stage in which everyone exists and should pass through. The aesthetic stage requires no effort nor difficulty (Sløk, 1994:45).<sup>116</sup> The person in the aesthetic stage exists in the now without reflection on the eternal. When reflection does appear, the aesthete despairs. The aesthetic stage of existence is conceived in desire (McDonald, 2016a:27). McDonald thinks of stages in terms of relationships, or as he puts it, *continuity*, where ‘[t]he aesthetic is discontinuous, as opposed to the continuity of the ethical with others in the community, and of religious with one’s neighbor. The religious also aspires to be continuous with God through faith in the God-Man’ (2016a:27). Furthermore, the motivator in existence within the aesthetic sphere comes from within – one’s own boredom (McDonald, 2016a:27). There is no stability as the existing individual is “liquid” being moved by their mood. There is no outward movement in the aesthete, ‘he is immediately what he is, while [in] the ethical ... he becomes what he becomes’ (McDonald, 2016a:28) or in other words ‘[h]e does not think about either past or future and does not seek eternal happiness but only happiness or enjoyment in the present moment’ (Liu, 2016:219). This happiness and enjoyment are selfish with no respect due to what cost they have for others (Caputo, 2008:24).

The concept that is applied to the aesthete is *immediacy*. This is a pre-reflexive immediacy. Kierkegaard also distinguishes a second immediacy that follows

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<sup>115</sup> Søren Klausen (2018:22) observes that for Kierkegaard, becoming oneself and being oneself is rather different. Where the first one is a task for the whole lifetime, the second, being oneself is an aesthetic mode of existence.

<sup>116</sup> If it is kept in mind that difficulty is an educational term, according to Tubbs, then the aesthetic sphere has no “higher” education.

reflection, a religious immediacy (Liu, 2016:217). Furthermore, Kierkegaard has a special term for an immediate aesthete – a philistine, whom Sløk (1994:32) seems to put at the bottom of the aesthetic sphere before the aesthete proper. There is no Hegelian mediation, that is, no movement towards [self/]consciousness [of the self].<sup>117</sup> Immediacy ‘describes the direct feelings, in the aesthetic stage, of a person’s psyche, which encompass ordinary human instincts, emotions, and desires ... immediacy is initial, accidental, emotional, spontaneous’ (Liu, 2016:219) or in the words of Kierkegaard as Anti-Climacus ‘[t]he self is bound up in immediacy with the other in desiring, craving, enjoying, etc.’ (SUD, 51). In *Either/Or* vol.1, Don Giovanni seduces a woman and moves on, whereas Johannes the Seducer gets Cordelia and immediately loses interest. The aesthete is motivated purely by what he finds “interesting,” though the gradation of *interesting* can be different, as already shown by the difference of Don Giovanni and Johannes the Seducer. The former’s interest is only in getting a girl, the latter is interested in going through the art of seduction and finding here the more difficult option, the more interesting.

However, the aesthetic life is despair,<sup>118</sup> and the person needs the ethical (and even more so religious) life to gain escape from despair (Kosch, 2006:142). Despair is sin (SUD:75) that is especially characterised by a person’s misrelation to God, where the sickness is described as jumping into the abyss while being ‘convinced that he is plunging toward eternal life’ (Liehu, 1990:128). Kierkegaard as Judge William argues that ‘every esthetic view of life is despair, and that everyone who lives esthetically is in despair, whether he knows it or not. But when one knows this, and you certainly do know it, then a higher form of existence is an imperative requirement’ (EO2:192). The transition ‘from the aesthetic to the ethical stage of life requires *pathos*’ (McDonald, 2016a:25) to orient oneself from oneself to the other. What now remains to be explained is how this “knowing” of despair or pathos arises in the aesthete that enables them to orient themselves towards the ethical stage of life. Kierkegaard does not offer an easy answer or a term<sup>119</sup> that would explain this “movement.” The answer

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<sup>117</sup> Although, one could read in Caputo that Kierkegaard ‘used Hegelian means in order to produce un-Hegelian results’ (2008:31), hence for Caputo, Kierkegaard’s “phenomenology” is different to Hegel’s as in ‘an exhibition of the various forms or ascending stages of life, not of “consciousness” (Hegel) but of “existence”’ (2008:31). Although, as already mentioned in the main body of discussion with reference to Lydia Amir (2016), it is wrong to think as Caputo does of stages in terms of ascent.

<sup>118</sup> It is despair, as the aesthete knows he really has no choice in life, it is an illusion. As Sløk puts it, aesthetes ‘have seen through all of the illusions. At bottom and ultimately life is nothing at all; it is empty, and everything is infinitely trivial, the one thing no better than the other’ (1994:46). This is the meaning, for Sløk (1994:48), of regretting both getting married and not in *Either/Or* (EO1:38–40).

<sup>119</sup> This ought not to be confused with the *leap*, the term that Kierkegaard indeed uses, but not in order to gain knowledge of one’s despair, but rather to get healed from despair and jump to another stage of existence. In other words, the leap is an escape from despair and not the knowledge of despair.

offered by Caputo is that '[l]ike Hegel, Kierkegaard thinks in terms of a kind of education of the spirit by way of a gradual ascent to higher or richer forms of life as lower forms collapse from internal contradictions' (2008:30). In other words, the fact of existing, itself, moves us forward where the contradictions are not logical but existential. It is not thinking that will lead us to despair, but rather simply going about our daily life as an aesthete.

Caputo, in discussing the relationship of Johannes the Seducer to Cordelia in *Either/Or's* "Diary", suggests that Kierkegaard helps us towards despairing and moving forward in stages by narrating the story of Johannes as '[i]t is not Johannes, of course, but rather we, the readers of this "Diary", who experience this need to move on' (2008:30) through being disgusted by the aesthete. Thus, we might go about our daily lives as aesthetes and accidentally stumble upon *The Seducer's Diary*, after which everything is changed. Hence, the *Diary* is a *Bildungsroman*.<sup>120</sup> *The Seducer's Diary* ends with an entry on 25<sup>th</sup> September, where allusion is made to Johannes having sex with Cordelia. Johannes asks '[w]hy cannot such a night last longer?' (EO1:445). According to Caputo, immediately after sex, Johannes loses interest, 'now it is finished, and I never want to see her again ... I do not want to be reminded of my relationship with her ... I did not love her, but from now on she can no longer occupy my soul' (EO1:445). Although Johannes is not changed and remains the aesthete, change occurs in Cordelia. Although Kierkegaard (as Victor Eremita or some other pseudonym) does not discuss Cordelia's stage of existence, assuming she was like Johannes, an aesthete, after having sex with Johannes, she despairs. An inkling of what she might feel is given in the discussion by Donna Elvira earlier in *Either/Or*:

Forget him, that is what I want; rip his picture out of my soul; I want to ransack myself like a consuming fire, and every thought that belongs to him must be burned up; only then can I be saved; it is in self-defense ... I will hate him; only in that way can I tear myself away from him and show myself that I do not need him. But am I not indebted to him at all when I hate him? Am I not living off him? For what is it that nourishes my hatred except my love for him? (EO1:202).

This kind of hate, which forms a relationship with another individual, brings the discussion into the ethical sphere. No relationships are possible in the aesthetic sphere, although the aesthetes form a fraternity in *Stages on Life's Way*. However, a 'fraternity must not be confused with a society. An aesthete despises any form of collectivity. He is in a very extreme sense an individualist' (Sløk, 1994:50).

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<sup>120</sup> I am taking a cue for thinking of *The Seducer's Diary* as *Bildungsroman* from Joakim Garff's (2018) chapter "Kierkegaard's Christian *Bildungsroman*." Also, see the discussion in chapter 2 on Hegel and *Phenomenology as Bildungsroman*.

### 3.2.2. Ethical

The ethical stage is not the antithesis of the aesthetic stage (Liehu, 1990:187). Rather, the choice is always between the aesthetic and the religious stage with the ethical acting as transitory. Furthermore, '[a]lthough the ethical stage of life is nearly opposite to aesthetical existence, this opposition is, however, only apparent from the ethical perspective. In reality, the ethical existence includes all the positive features of aesthetic existence, as "elevated" and full of content' (Liehu, 1990:172). Liehu (1990:187) argues that Kierkegaard views man as a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal – this synthesis is achieved only through Christ, where man's own efforts in the ethical sphere (Judge William's efforts in the marriage as an example) are never enough for an authentic synthesis. Judge William is making the movements of swimming, to use Kierkegaard's own imagery in *Fear and Trembling*, but he is not actually swimming in the water.<sup>121</sup> And although '[i]n choosing himself the Judge believes to choose himself as despairing, repentant and guilty before God: in reality, the Judge does not repent or feel guilty, these sentiments emerg[e] expressly and only when the finite and incomplete self is related to something eternal and infinite' (Liehu, 1990:184). Unlike the aesthete, '[t]he Judge, thus, has as a matter of fact never had real causes for repentance and guilt ... the Judge repents and feels guilty for nothing' (Liehu, 1990:181).

In the ethical stage, the 'emphasis is on the single individual, as ethics is subjectivity with thought turned inward, rather than on the universal laws' (Amir, 2016:93). However, it is important to emphasise that the person does not yet become "the single individual" in the ethical sphere. Being "the single individual" is only possible in Religiousness B, where the individual is alone in the abyss before God.<sup>122</sup> Merold Westphal emphasises that 'Kierkegaard, following Hegel, repeatedly tells us that the ethical is the universal' (2020:499). Hence, unlike Kantian emphasis on laws mentioned in Lydia Amir above, the individual is the universal. The citizens of nineteenth-century Denmark would have liked to see themselves occupying the ethical stage of existence and would have regarded it as the most common sphere. However, as Rob Compaijen (2018:97) argues, the fact Kierkegaard puts ethical as the second stage of existence shows that there is nothing natural about the ethical existence, and thus it cannot be taken as a given. Nonetheless, the ethical requirements are easy to comprehend, an individual 'can discover no discrepancy between his ethical duties and religious pursuit inasmuch as his relation to God is primarily indicated by the ethical duties themselves' (Amir, 2016:93). The ethical individual is the one who, according to Judge William,

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<sup>121</sup> Johannes de Silentio writes: 'I presumably can describe the movements of faith, but I cannot make them. In learning to go through the motions of swimming, one can be suspended from the ceiling in a harness and then presumably describe the movements, but one is not swimming' (FT/R:37–38).

<sup>122</sup> The education for and of the single individual is described in chapter 5.

become[s] conscious [of oneself] in one's eternal validity i[n] a moment that is more significant than everything else in the world ... It is an earnest and significant moment when a person links himself to an eternal power for an eternity ... when in an eternal and unerring sense he becomes conscious of himself as the person he is (EO2:206).

This moment is the moment when one becomes the ethical individual. As opposed to the aesthete, the individual reflects on the eternal but is not yet religious and hence not a true self, as a) the eternal is not named (as God), and b) the ethical individual is looking at the eternal through looking at themself, rather than looking at the eternal as ultimately qualitatively different. Though both ethical and religious existence emphasise life to be a task, '[t]he difference is that [in the religious] this task is no longer conceived primarily as the enactment of duties rooted in social roles and interpersonal relationships' (Barrett, 2016:218), as in religious existence 'the task is to appropriate an eternal happiness that transcends all such societal factors' (Barrett, 2016:218).

The ethical sphere of existence is also related to the discussion of knowledge in Kierkegaard. In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Johannes Climacus is critiquing the "objective" knowledge that is separated from existence and the existing individual. Climacus argues

the knowledge is related to the knower, who is essentially an existing person [*Existerende*], and that all essential knowing is therefore essentially related to existence and to existing. Therefore, only ethical and ethical-religious knowing is essential knowing. But all ethical and all ethical-religious knowing is essentially a relating to the existing of the knower (CUP1:197–198).

This is opposed to the aesthete above, who is objective and therefore not involved existentially with the object of knowledge. Think here of Don Giovanni, who treats women like just another number. Kierkegaard as "A" in *Either/Or I*, in the discussion of what 'sometimes [is] an altogether indifferent matter, the number in the list in *Don Giovanni*' (EO1:93), points out that 'the number 1,003 – namely, that it is uneven and accidental, which is by no means unimportant; it gives the impression that the list is not at all final, but rather that Don Giovanni is on the move' (EO1:93). Once Don Giovanni has studied his object objectively (that is, seduced a woman), he moves on to the next object of his scientific "objective" study – another woman.

The ethical stage is a transitional stage of repentance (SLW:476), yet on its own it is 'not enough to be a foundation for existence – when one steps upon the ethical, one must soon be ready to choose either the leap to religiousness or the (perhaps unconscious) fall down to the level of the aesthetic' (Liehu, 1990:191). In order to make a leap to the religious stage, one has to understand the 'the existential relation between the aesthetical and the ethical' (Liehu, 1990:191), that is, to understand that the ethical sphere is not sufficient for existence and that the person does not become one's true self in it. Kierkegaard as Frater Taciturnus states that 'the ethical [is] the sphere of requirement (and this requirement is so

infinite that the individual always goes bankrupt)’ (SLW:476) and hence there is the possibility of the collapse back into the aesthetic if the leap is not made – if repentance is not present. Liehu (1990:190) argues that the sermon at the end of *Either/Or 2* (EO2:339 onwards) is a judgment pronounced upon Judge William, even though he believes that in the sermon his pastor friend is echoing William’s own ideas. The person must throw himself completely as wrong before God, yet Judge William is doing quite the opposite. He is self-assured of being right and furthermore ventures to lecture the aesthete on how to be in the right before God. Liehu (1990:191) goes as far as to suggest that it is possible that Judge William, in fact, exists in the aesthetic sphere.

### 3.2.3. Religious/ness

Kierkegaard is not very systemic in his use of the term religious/ness, although predominantly the term was employed ‘as a phenomenological description of the essential form of what he took to be the religious life’ (Barrett, 2016:213). Apart from that

Sometimes religiousness seems to be a broad set of attitudes, dispositions, and values that overlap with ethical categories. Often the concept “the religious” is so expansive that it includes Christianity as a subset. At other times religiousness suggests a more specific way of life, governed by particular passions and values that are distinguishable from both the ethical life and Christianity. Furthermore, in some of the pseudonymous writings the religious life seems to be a developmental stage through which every individual should progress in moving from ethical existence to Christianity (Barrett, 2016:213).

It is religiousness in this latter sense that is of interest at present. However,

In general, Kierkegaard was not trying to provide the reader with a conceptually intriguing, empirically plausible, and intellectually satisfying theory of religion. Rather, he was attempting to awaken in the reader the ability to feel the possible delights, satisfactions, anxieties, and despairs that are resident in particular strategies for pursuing happiness that could be expanded into comprehensive ways of life (Barrett, 2016:220).

Just like with the aesthetic and the ethical stages above, the religious sphere is not free of uncertainties, anxiety, and despair; these are still present even if kept in check (Klausen, 2018:10). Suffering is ‘the “essential” expression of the religious life’ (Barnett, 2016:218). This suffering can be characterised as the suffering for the witness to the truth (with reference to the polemic against Mynster and Martensen) (M:5–6) or the suffering of the difficulty of the paradox (CUP1:564). However, Kierkegaard does not consider suffering in the monastic life or practice of self-flagellation to be an authentic expression of religious life, but rather a form of aestheticism – true religious life is a relationship with God played out in the mundane everyday activities (Liehu, 1990:223).

As was mentioned in the discussion of the aesthetic and the ethical above, in order to gain the possibility to transcend the spheres, one had to despair (see discussion in section 3.3. on how the leap of faith arises and saves one from despair). Thus, despair is conceived as suffering, and in the religious sphere, one is removed from the suffering of despair. Yet, in the religious sphere, the person is still faced with a demand to ‘work out your own salvation with fear and trembling’ (Philippians 2:12), thus there is nothing easy about it. Hence why Johannes de Silentio in *Fear and Trembling* distinguishes between the ethical and the religious stage from an observer’s perspective; ‘[t]he ethical expression for what Abraham did is that he meant to murder Isaac; the religious expression is that he meant to sacrifice Isaac – but precisely in this contradiction is the anxiety that can make a person sleepless, and yet without this anxiety Abraham is not who he is’ (FT/R:30). It is the same argument as Caputo made above with regards to *Seducer’s Diary* being a *Bildungsroman*. *Fear and Trembling* with the story of Abraham is also just that, where the anxiety is not only Abraham’s but also the reader’s, who reads properly and slowly without jumping to the resolution on Mount Moriah. Abraham overcomes the suffering of anxiety through faith:

But what did Abraham do? He arrived neither too early nor too late. He mounted the ass, he rode slowly down the road. During all this time he had faith, he had faith that God would not demand Isaac of him, and yet he was willing to sacrifice him if it was demanded. He had faith by virtue of the absurd, for human calculation was out of the question (FT/R:35).

An important point in this *Bildungsroman* is that ‘[i]t is only by faith that one achieves any resemblance to Abraham, not by murder’ (FT/R:35). In other words, not in the willingness to do the sacrifice, but in having faith in God. I will return to the topic of faith below.

The stages of existence are divided into the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious. While other stages also have sub-categories like the humourist or the ironist, Kierkegaard’s division of the religious stage into Religiousness A and B is of special importance for my project and requires separate consideration.<sup>123</sup> Herman Deuser (1998:385–391), in his study of the religious dialectics in Kierkegaard, argues that Kierkegaard had to differentiate between the two precisely because the religious is a dialectic and thus can be approached from two points of view. On the one hand, Religiousness A looks only on the human side of the dialectic while ‘[i]n Religiousness B, by contrast, the divine side is itself exposed to the contingency of the human side’ (Deuser, 1998:387). Although after *Post-script* ‘Kierkegaard did not mention the distinction between “Religiousness A” and “Religiousness B” again’ (Barrett, 2016:217) the two types of Religiousness now need to be examined in more detail. The division between Religiousness A and B further complicates the discussion of Abraham above, as Religiousness B

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<sup>123</sup> I would once again refer the reader to Liehu’s (1990) thesis where she does a thorough investigation of all the stages and their sub-categories.

has its own specific paradox – incarnate God Jesus Christ, something that was unavailable to Abraham. Abraham is thus in Religiousness A, but as the discussion below of the two types of Religiousness demonstrates – it is problematic to leave Abraham of *Fear and Trembling* simply in Religiousness A. Religiousness A permits to doubt whether God is love (Deuser, 1998:388), but such doubt would be unacceptable to the knight of faith. Thus, I argue the subdivision between Religiousness A and B is important for Climacus’ project in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, a project that deals with ‘[t]he objective issue ... the truth of Christianity. The subjective issue ... the individual’s relation to Christianity. Simply stated: How can I, Johannes Climacus, share in the happiness that Christianity promises?’ (CUP1:17). It is not just Deuser’s dialectic of human versus divine, rather it is between the human appropriation of Christianity objectively versus subjectively. Hence, although religiousness A and B are divided, in the division they are already brought into a relation (see chapter 2), and it is this relation of division that helps to make sense of the whole.

### 3.2.3.1. Religiousness A<sup>124</sup>

According to Lee C. Barrett Kierkegaard as ‘Climacus introduces “Religiousness A” as a concept that simply indicates the pathos-filled aspect of Christianity, as distinguishable from its dialectical, paradoxical, and doctrinal dimensions’ (Barrett, 2016:217). Further, “Religiousness A” is accessible to all individuals, whether it is ‘[t]he one [who] prays in truth to God although he is worshipping an idol’ (CUP1:201) or Socrates.<sup>125</sup> Climacus writes

A person existing religiously can express his relation to an eternal happiness (immortality, eternal life) outside Christianity, and it certainly has been done, since it must be said of Religiousness A that even if it had not been present in paganism it could have been, because it has only universal human nature as its presupposition (CUP1:559).

Religiousness A is a necessary stepping stone to Religiousness B, it ‘must first be present in the individual before there can be any consideration of becoming

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<sup>124</sup> Although this falls outside of the present study, a further examination of Religiousness A and its relation to B would provide an interesting insight into Kierkegaard’s theology of religions. This paradoxical nature of Kierkegaard’s attitude to other religions, with emphasis on the universal and the particular, is addressed in the study by George B. Connell (2016) *Kierkegaard and the Paradox of Religious Diversity*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub.Co.

<sup>125</sup> Socrates, according to Kierkegaard, ‘emphasize[d] that the knower is an existing person and that to exist is the essential’ (CUP1:207). This becomes crucial to Kierkegaard’s critique of Christendom and theology professors, that people exist as Christians not speculatively on paper but as actual human beings. Kierkegaard as Johannes Climacus states ‘[t]he difficulty is not to understand what Christianity is but to become and to be a Christian’ (CUP1:560).

aware of the dialectical *B*' (CUP1:556). At the same time, Religiousness A includes many characteristics of the ethical stage (Liehu, 1990:206).

What distinguishes between Religiousness A and B is the difference between sin and guilt consciousnesses. A person in Religiousness A is guilt-conscious before God, while in B, sin-conscious. Liehu argues that '[g]uilt ... differs totally and "qualitatively" from sin-consciousness – a pathetic man [Religiousness A person] is not sin-conscious regardless of his extreme guilt-consciousness' (1990:228). What a guilt-conscious person does nonetheless have is an anxiety over sin, the concept of anxiety Liehu sees as central to Religiousness A (1990:228).<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, Kierkegaard protects himself from any kind of objective study or speculation over guilt and sin, thus mentioning them as pre-supposed, but never exploring their coming into being (Liehu, 1990:229).

### 3.2.3.2. Religiousness B

As was mentioned above, the distinguishing aspect of B is sin-consciousness. The person is no longer in anxiety over guilt and sin but is faced with the 'consciousness of the absolute difference between man and God, and it is precisely sin-consciousness that a man cannot attain by himself' (Liehu, 1990:246). While the guilt-consciousness was a change of the subject happening within the subject himself, and thus the subject's self-identity was preserved, in sin-consciousness, it is the subject itself that is changed (CUP1:584). For Kierkegaard as Climacus this 'shows that outside the individual there must be the power that makes clear to him that he has become a person other than he was by coming into existence, that he has become a sinner' (CUP1:584). This means there is a power outside of the subject doing the change of the subject – '[t]his power is god in time' (CUP1:584) – God-incarnate in Jesus Christ. This would be discussed later in terms of an individual being alone before God. But here is the main difference between Religiousness A and B, 'the pathetically religious man tries to relate in time to the eternal, while the paradox-Christian relates in time to the eternal-in-time' (Liehu, 1990:274). That is, in Religiousness A, there is an attempt to relate to an abstract philosophical conception of God; in Religiousness B, God is present in the form of Jesus on earth. This issue of Jesus' incarnation for Kierkegaard and Hegel and the way it relates to the type of religiousness will become important in chapter 5, in the discussion of the types of systems the two of them have. It is Religiousness B that is incompatible with and becomes a critique of Hegel (James, 2007:103).

Kierkegaard's concept of repetition becomes important for Religiousness B. As was mentioned in the discussion above, there is always a danger of a person despairing and slipping down to a lower stage 'even after one has once reached the truth' (Liehu, 1990:102). Kierkegaard viewed Hegel to be advancing Socratic recollection, that the truth was within to be recollected, yet repetition provides a

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<sup>126</sup> Although the concept of anxiety appears in all stages, it is similar to despair, which is key to the aesthetic stage but is present across all the stages.

different approach. The mere recollection that one was in the truth at some point does not guarantee achieving it once more. What is needed is a ‘constant striving toward the ideal, constant realization of the choice’ (Liehu, 1990:103). However, as will be elaborated further in the next chapter, the conditions for religiousness B have to be given (Ferreira, 1998:231) – given by God. This shows the educational significance of repetition, of one needing to be educated into truth, where both the conditions for understanding the truth and the truth itself need to be given again and again. To bring in a discussion from the previous chapter, the issue lies in whether Tubbsian “God is education” is present in Religiousness A or B. In a sense, this repetition is education. But is it a work of God or the human, or both? After all, faith is not something we choose, it is something we learn, and yet it cannot be taught to us by another human being (CUP1:49; see Tubbs, 2004:88). Is there room in education for the ultimate paradox, that God became a human being? To this question this thesis will return in the next chapters.

Now, however, two more concepts of importance for Kierkegaard ought to be examined, before turning to the way Kierkegaard employs theological concepts in educational talk and educational concepts in his theological talk. The two concepts to be examined here are faith and God. With both of them, a discussion will proceed further in two directions. Faith will be examined as a) a “mode of knowing,” and b) as an instrument to move across stages – “the leap of” faith. Though it must be said, that the two are not necessarily all that different and far apart from each other. The discussion of God addresses a) a person in front of the ultimately qualitatively different, and b) the ultimate paradox who is Jesus Christ.

### 3.3. Faith

William McDonald differentiates between five ways in which Kierkegaard talks about faith:

(1) between epistemological belief and knowledge; (2) between faith in another human being and faith in God; (3) between epistemological belief “in the ordinary sense” and religious faith “in the eminent sense”; (4) between immediate religious faith, which is unreflective and undialectical, and religious faith as a higher immediacy or “spontaneity after reflection”; and (5) between immanent religious faith and Christian paradoxical faith (McDonald, 2016b:67).

With the first two Kierkegaard deals especially in *Philosophical Fragments* (according to McDonald, see PF:81-2 and 87-8), and with the latter three in his notebooks (see NB4:159 and NB26:82).<sup>127</sup> For this study, especially the use in

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<sup>127</sup> Though the use of the term itself is found outside of these books, according to McDonald ‘[t]he single book with the most uses of the term *Tro* is *Fear and Trembling*. However, the pseudonym which most uses the term is Johannes Climacus. These frequencies of usage are both eclipsed by Kierkegaard as author of the various edifying discourses, and even more so by Kierkegaard as author of the journals and papers’ (2016b:67–68).

*Philosophical Fragments* is important, but the other uses need to be kept in mind.<sup>128</sup> At play here is an argument made at the beginning of this thesis, that of fragmentation of knowledge. Although concepts have all these various meanings, when Kierkegaard was thinking of them he still had one word, *Tro* (faith), in mind. Thus, inevitably, all the meanings of *Tro* would have had an influence on the particular meaning Kierkegaard was employing at the time. It is interesting that in all the above meanings, faith always stands in dialectical relations. From these dialectics also arises the notion of faith as the paradox that would have a bearing on the discussion of Christology below.

### 3.3.1. Faith and Knowing

Faith is a crucial term for the theology of education generally and for knowledge in particular. For Kierkegaard, as already hinted above and again defended in the following chapters, the life of faith is the life of education. In *Philosophical Fragments*, faith is a requirement for the (historical) knowledge of an object or an event.

[B]elief [*Tro*] believes what it does not see; it does not believe that the star exists, for that it sees, but it believes that the star has come into existence. The same is true of an event. The occurrence can be known immediately but not that it has occurred, not even that it is in the process of occurring, even though it is taking place, as they say, right in front of one's nose (PF:81-82).

Unless something is immediate, I need to have faith in it, '[I]ike David Hume, Climacus takes the continuity between cause and effect to be a matter of belief rather than perception of a necessary connection' (McDonald, 2016b:68). Furthermore, immediate knowledge, just as immediate existence discussed above, is an aestheticism and not a fulfilled and repeated existence (in the religious sphere). As argued by Zizhen Liu 'Kierkegaard distinguishes faith from both naïve immediacy and from objective reflection' (2016:219). Climacus insists '[f]aith, therefore, cannot be some temporary function. Someone who within a higher knowledge wants to understand his faith ... ceased to believe' (CUP1:611) as '[f]aith is the objective uncertainty' (CUP1:611) and only concerns 'the one who has faith, no one else ... solely and only the one who has faith, who relates himself to the absolute paradox' (CUP1:611). In the words of McDonald '[w]hereas ancient skepticism was a willful suspension of belief, faith is a willing suspension of disbelief – or the willed tension of upholding contradictory beliefs' (2016b:70). However, Kierkegaard is not a straightforward fideist, nor is he simply a rationalist, rather, these two extremes are held in a dialectical tension within his writing (more on this in chapter 4).

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<sup>128</sup> Some examples: in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* Climacus (CUP1:324, 326) sees faith as passion and infinite interestedness. Ferreira (1998:220), with reference to Climacus, states that without risk there is no faith.

Christian faith is absurd, an absurd with which the reader is faced in Abraham of *Fear and Trembling* and more. The “and more” of Christian faith is a personal relation to Jesus Christ. Relation, as was already stated above, is not immediate, as Climacus’ analysis in *Philosophical Fragments* precisely examines. A follower at second hand vs a contemporary of Jesus (PF:§IV and §V) are both in the same relation to him.

Faith is also paradoxical because it is “everything.” Johannes de Silentio writes that he is only able to speak about Abraham because he is not scaling him down: ‘[a]s a matter of fact, if one makes faith everything – that is, makes it what it is – then I certainly believe that I dare to speak of it’ (FT/R:31). McDonald furthermore emphasises that for Kierkegaard ‘[f]aith is also defined as “contemporaneity with Christ, as the only antidote of despair, and as that which is necessary to attain selfhood’ (McDonald, 2016b:71). Of interest is that McDonald does not refer to the discussion in *Fragments* as I do, but rather takes a cue from *Practice in Christianity* where Anti-Climacus writes of contemporaneousness with Christ both as a condition of faith and defined as faith. Anti-Climacus writes:

But as long as there is a believer, this person, in order to have become that, must have been and as a believer must be just as contemporary with Christ’s presence as his contemporaries were. This contemporaneity is the condition of faith, and, more sharply defined, it is faith (PC:9).

Walter Lowrie, in his translation of Kierkegaard’s *Indøvelse i Christendom* [translated as: *Training in Christianity*] in the footnote to the above quotation, stresses that for Kierkegaard ‘[c]ontemporaneousness with Christ is from this time forth an empathic and persistent theme’ (Kierkegaard, 1944:9; see footnote 1); though Lowrie does also mention earlier discussion in the *Fragments*. However, it is the second part of McDonald’s citation above that is directly related to the earlier discussion of the spheres of existence. McDonald draws attention to the passage in *The Sickness unto Death* (SUD:38–39) where Anti-Climacus states another paradox ‘that with God *everything* is possible’ (SUD:38; emphasis added) and Kierkegaard really means *everything*. Anti-Climacus insists that ‘to believe is indeed to lose the understanding in order to gain God’ (SUD:38). If one does not lose the understanding ‘his collapse is altogether certain ... despair’ (SUD:38). When a person despairs, they are before the possibility to leap between the spheres or to sink even further in despair. The person who has faith, for whom faith is everything, makes the leap, whereas the one who does not is still in despair. Having faith and making the leap, however, is not easy; the person with faith is also in despair and ‘[a]t this point, then, salvation is, humanly speaking, utterly impossible; but for God everything is possible!’ (SUD:38). However, faith and leap come hand in hand and even are equated according to Liu ‘[f]aith is, ontologically speaking, a leap or qualitative change in a person’ (Liu, 2016:219).

Kierkegaard does not cease to operate in dialectics. As in *Practice in Christianity* contemporaneousness with Christ is both the condition of faith and faith itself, so here, faith is both the condition of salvation and salvation itself, as one

has to believe the impossibility against the understanding that for God, everything is possible. Anti-Climacus is well aware of the contradiction present and calls it ‘the dialectic of believing’ (SUD:39). ‘[H]umanly speaking, his collapse is altogether certain’ (SUD:39) – the collapse of despair of realisation that one is an aesthete or an ethicist and hence already in despair.

The *believer* sees and understands his downfall, humanly speaking ... For this reason he does not collapse. He leaves it entirely to God how he is to be helped, but he believes that for God everything is possible (SUD:39; emphasis original).

In the words of Liehu ‘[t]he passion of understanding can ultimately lead to its own collapse – to faith’ (1990:251). Hence, salvation can take the form of despair itself – ‘[s]o God helps him also – perhaps by allowing him to avoid the horror, perhaps through the horror itself’ (SUD:39). The person both collapses and does not. They jump, the collapse is certain, and yet, for God, everything is possible. As McDonald argues, for Kierkegaard, ‘Christian faith requires the suspension of the pursuit of epistemic certainty, partly because it is a passion of the spirit rather than an intellectual cognition, partly because its object is the God who came into being in time’ (2016b:71). The next chapter explores in detail the relationship between the collapse of understanding before the paradox and knowing the truth in faith.

### 3.3.2. The Leap

It is appropriate to conclude the discussion on faith with the concept of “the leap of faith” and thus to return and conclude the discussion of stages and how one proceeds from one stage to another. Though, as M. Jamie Ferreira notes, ‘Kierkegaard never uses any Danish equivalent of the English phrase “leap of faith”’ (1998:207) and invites the reader rather to think of the leap *to* faith. Gerhard Schreiber (2016:72) sees in Kierkegaard’s “theory” of the leap an explanation of how a *qualitative* change occurs [in a human being]. A new quality does not occur through a quantitative amassing of necessary “conditions”, it is not the necessity or inevitability of a gradual continuity. In other words, it is not a Hegelian movement of Spirit to the realisation of self-consciousness via the development of history.<sup>129</sup> As Schreiber puts it, ‘[a]n essential moment of every leap ... is its suddenness’ (2016:72). The leap is not a synthesis but a radical break where the emerging quality is not derivative from constituent elements (Schreiber, 2016:73). Ferreira clarifies this issue of the leap versus the Hegelian system and argues that Kierkegaard’s ‘rejection of the Hegelian “System” is not a rejection of structured transitions as such, but rather of transitions that were necessary and premised on abstractions’ (1998:222). Schreiber (2016:73), furthermore, argues that the previous state is not important for the leap itself, as it is only presupposed as existent. The leap does not proceed from the previous state, rather, the leap is a break

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<sup>129</sup> More on system in Hegel and Kierkegaard in chapter 5.

between the states – the space in-between. Yet, at the same time, Schreiber maintains that the leap ‘takes place when *I myself* leap by my own power and at my own initiative, in a movement all my own. This gives the act of leaping its active, decisive character’ (2016:73; emphasis original). This is due to Kierkegaard’s view of existence as a movement (CUP1:308–309) that is always becoming, not being.

Ferreira (1998:214) warns against thinking of the leap in Schreiber’s terms of simply reducing the leap to a category of decision-making. Ferreira sees in it a misreading of what Climacus means by stating that ‘the leap is the category of decision’ (CUP1:99). Ferreira (1998:214) sees in Climacus’ example of ‘one closes one’s eyes, grabs oneself by the neck *à la* Münchhausen, and then – then one stands on the other side’ (CUP1:99) an irony of an attempt to reduce the leap to mere willpower; the leap is always a miracle that requires faith. I suggest that Ferreira sees in the leap-as-willpower a possibility to train oneself to exercise the leap, training that could allude to Hegelian mediation. Or, as was already mentioned earlier, just because one is making the movements of swimming, one is not swimming. As Climacus says ‘to have been very close to making the leap is nothing whatever’ (CUP1:99). Furthermore, the emphasis on willpower presupposes presuppositions (something to make conclusions from) from which the leap is made, but also as Schreiber (2016:73) himself alludes to earlier, Ferreira notes ‘conclusions that do not follow as a matter of course are seen by Kierkegaard as leaps’ (1998:216). Nonetheless, Ferreira maintains that the leap is not an either/or between willpower and divine gift (see: EUD:41–56), rather ‘[a]lthough the transition to faith is clearly a gift, it is also something *we* do – we let go, we embrace the Absolute Paradox, we leap’ (1998:225; emphasis original). God’s gift is the condition and the possibility of our willpower. Ferreira emphasises the discussion in *Philosophical Fragments* where ‘faith is not a knowledge ... [and] faith is not an act of will’ (PF:62). Of the importance in the same discussion for Kierkegaard as Climacus is also a qualitative change within the faith itself where ‘the object of faith becomes not the *teaching* but the *teacher*’ (PF:62; emphasis original), that is God is education and education is God. More on this in the next chapter.

Liehu (1990:243) argues that Kierkegaard’s treatment of the leap in *Philosophical Fragments* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* is an engagement with Gotthold Ephraim Lessing;<sup>130</sup> furthermore, according to Liehu, Kierkegaard adopts the concept of the leap from Lessing. The discussion in Liehu (1990:243) is in agreement with the discussion of Schreiber above, that Kierkegaard uses the leap to oppose Hegel’s idea of mediation. Furthermore, in Liehu’s reading ‘for Hegel, the heart of Christianity lies not in an incarnation that took place almost 2000 years before him, for in his view not until Protestant Christianity do we find absolute and authentic religiousness’ (1990:266). Contrary to this, Kierkegaard as Climacus holds that becoming a Christian in the Protestant Christianity of

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<sup>130</sup> It is especially evident in *Postscript*, where Kierkegaard devotes in part two, section one ~60 pages to Lessing.

nineteenth century Denmark, when everyone is a Christian, is much more difficult than it was before. Climacus writes:

But everyone knows that, even in the external world, to jump<sup>131</sup> from the spot where one is standing and to come down again on the same spot is the most difficult of all jumps, and the jump becomes easier if there is a space between the spot where the jumper is standing and the spot where the jump is to be made. Similarly, the most difficult decision is the one in which the person deciding is not distanced from the decision (as is the non-Christian who is going to decide whether he wants to be a Christian), but the decision seems to have been made already ... But if the decision seems to have been made already, if I am already a Christian (that is, am baptized, which is still only a possibility), then there is nothing to help me become properly aware of the decision ... In short: *it is easier to become a Christian if I am not a Christian than to become a Christian if I am one* (CUP1:365–366; emphasis original).

Thus, there is a leap from being a Christian in Christendom (where everyone is a Christian) to being a Christian in (New Testament) Christianity. This would also become a basis for Kierkegaard's critique of the Danish Church later on in his authorship. However, '[b]ecoming a Christian is not accomplished through one decisive leap, for a man is always in danger of sliding back to a lower stage' (Liehu, 1990:270), the person is in a continual movement of repetition.

Kierkegaard holds that 'movement is not possible in logic, but only in the realm of freedom, within human existence' (Liehu, 1990:264). This freedom within human existence is not abstract but always interested and contextualised (Ferreira, 1998:219). Liehu holds the leap to be 'the basis of anxiety, despair, and guilt- and sin-consciousness ... either as horror mingled with fear over the possibility of the leap as in the case of anxiety and despair, or as emerging precisely through faith, such as guilt- and sin-consciousness' (1990:264). Although Kierkegaard differentiates between various types of the leap (see Loose Paper 283 (Kierkegaard, 2019); Schreiber, 2016), I nonetheless wonder whether the leap across the stages is always already the leap of faith. Tubbs, in his discussion of *Philosophical Fragments*, argues that '[t]he leap of faith, therefore, that Johannes de Silentio could not take, Johannes Climacus cannot take either' (2004:88) due to Johannes Climacus being unable to name the relationship to God (PF:85). This is in agreement with the above discussion on the difference between Religiousness A and B, where the person in Religiousness A although related to the absolute does not name the absolute to be God (incarnate). However, in order to reach this stage of Religiousness A, a leap already had to be made. One way to think of the leaps across the stages is as of the leap of despair (from the aesthetical to the ethical), the leap of anxiety (from the ethical to Religiousness A), and the leap of faith (from Religiousness A to B). But Tubbs does something interesting and argues that for Johannes Climacus 'faith is the condition of understanding, and is learning'

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<sup>131</sup> The English translation is misleading here as, in Danish, *Spring* is used, which also means leap.

(2004:88). If the movement from one stage of existence to another is a movement of education – that is the person is on a journey towards a true self-consciousness in Religiousness B as ultimately qualitatively different before God – faith is always lurking in the background as this condition of understanding – the need to leap – whether I am in despair or in anxiety. Thus, the person in despair makes the leap not out of desperation but rather out of faith that the leap will act as a medicine to the sickness unto death. This speculation is in line with Ferreira’s study of faith and the leap in Kierkegaard, which claims that for Kierkegaard ‘the leap ... lies at the heart of all life’ (1998:207). The leap, which is also a leap from nonbeing to being (Ferreira, 1998:216), is characterised by a happy passion of faith (Ferreira, 1998:224), where the passion is the substance of the leap already (Ferreira, 1998:226).

### 3.4. God

I now turn to the condition of human realisation of one’s self-consciousness contained in an ultimately qualitatively different God, who becomes absolutely the same as the person who is inquiring about the incarnation of Jesus Christ. The ultimate paradox, upon which all understanding collapses, is that the ultimately qualitatively different is, in fact, the same.<sup>132</sup> Kierkegaard as Climacus warns against the false reading of the ultimately qualitatively different and the same as being mediated and thus becoming *both-and* (CUP1:401). Rather, they must remain an either/or, a paradox, that one is different and at the same time the same, and yet not the same. With regard to the discussion of the leap above, this paradox of Christ’s incarnation is also a leap that we have to make in order to comprehend it in believing. But there is also another leap present in this paradox, a leap made by God in becoming human (Ferreira, 1998:218).

Throughout his authorship, in the vast majority of cases when Kierkegaard refers to God or god, although he is aware of Norse, Greek, and Roman deities, he has in mind God as understood by the Christian tradition (Martens and Marrs, 2016:99). Furthermore, though he is aware of the use of “God” by Hegel, and German Romantics and Idealists, it is precisely Kierkegaard’s task to reintroduce the Christian God into “God.”<sup>133</sup> Paul Martens and Daniel Marrs argue that although Kierkegaard uses abstract categories for naming God even in Christian tradition – such as omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient and eternal – he views ‘such abstract nomenclature ... [as] deeply inadequate’ (2016:100). The point is that God is God, and thus about him-in-himself, nothing could be said. The best attempt at saying anything is apophatic theology. However, God stands in a relationship to a human being, thus Kierkegaard writes ‘[i]f God were only the Omnipotent One, then there would be no reciprocal relationship, because for the Omnipotent One the creature is nothing. But for love it is something’ (CD:127). Kierkegaard adds ‘love also requires something of human beings. Omnipotence

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<sup>132</sup> More on difference and sameness in the next chapter.

<sup>133</sup> Just as he was concerned with reintroducing Christianity into Christendom.

does not require anything' (CD:128). There is no relationship in the pure abstractness of omnipotence, yet the relationship is possible with the God who is love. Thus, although in Kierkegaard's thought, the human being is alone before a God who is infinitely qualitatively different (PC:140), God is love that comes down from heaven (WL:173), and this God's love is a foundation of love between human beings. God [who] is love makes all love possible. The last chapter of this thesis will demonstrate how God is the middle term [*Mellembestemmelsen*] of all human relations.

Walsh argues that from the very beginning as a theology student until the very end – his last published discourse – Kierkegaard maintained 'that the only substantive qualification of God is love, which constitutes the very essence of the divine' (2013:296). However, for Kierkegaard, neither the existence nor the claim that God is love could be proved, only believed in (Walsh, 2013:269; see also CD:191). Kierkegaard, at the beginning of the *Works of Love*, repeats several times the call to 'believe in love' (WL:16). Johannes de Silentio is faced with this problem in *Fear and Trembling*, of lacking love and faith and thus not being able to

make the movement of faith, I cannot shut my eyes and plunge confidently into the absurd; it is for me an impossibility, but I do not praise myself for that. I am convinced that God is love; for me this thought has a primal lyrical validity. When it is present to me, I am unspeakably happy; when it is absent, I long for it more vehemently than the lover for the object of his love. But I do not have faith; this courage I lack (FT/R:34).

### 3.4.1. Ultimately Qualitatively Different

The central tenet of Kierkegaard's thinking is that between God and human beings is an impassable abyss. This section presents the abyss, while the subject of the next chapter is to show that reconciliation (not resolution) is possible in Kierkegaard's thought, between us and the absolutely different God. In *Practice in Christianity* Anti-Climacus writes '[t]he possibility of offense, as we have tried to show, is present at every moment, confirming at every moment the chasmic abyss between the single individual and the God-man over which faith and faith alone reaches' (PC:139).<sup>134</sup> Elizabeth X. Li argues that '[t]he infinite qualitative distinction between God and human beings in many respects constitutes a cornerstone in Kierkegaard's theological thought' (2019:142). God is defined as the absolutely different, but the definition does not help as 'understanding cannot

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<sup>134</sup> I furthermore refer the reader to Simon Podmore's (2011) *Kierkegaard and the Self Before God: Anatomy of the Abyss* for an in-depth study of the God-human relationship in Kierkegaard in light of the abyss. Although Podmore (2011:2) emphasises that there is no unified theory of the abyss in Kierkegaard.

even think the absolutely different; it cannot absolutely negate itself' (PF:45).<sup>135</sup> The problem in talking about God is that 'if the god is absolutely different from a human being, then a human being is absolutely different from the god ... Just to come to know that the god is different, man needs the god and then comes to know that the god is absolutely different from him' (PF:46). Or in other words '[i]n order for man to see his own absolute difference from God, God himself must reveal to man his absolute unlikeness' (Liehu, 1990:247).<sup>136</sup> Arne Grøn has interpreted these passages from *Fragments* in terms of human self-knowledge, '[w]e only understand that the god is absolutely different from us if we understand ourselves as different in the radical sense that we do not know ourselves' (2004:94). However, I will argue in chapter 4 that even this self-knowledge can only arise in us through the descent of God as a teacher.

Walsh argues '[i]t is precisely the failure "to let God rule" in the recognition of an infinite qualitative difference between God and human beings that fuels Kierkegaard's quarrel with the speculative theology and philosophy of his time' (2013:297) as they tended to reduce God to 'nature and/or world-historical process' (2013:297). However, at the same time, in *Christian Discourses*, Kierkegaard argues, returning to the idea of God as love discussed above, that although there is an abyss, God is actually closer to his creation than a human being to whatever he creates.

A human being cannot bear to have his "creations" be something in relation to himself; they are supposed to be nothing, and therefore he calls them, and with disdain, "creations." But God, who creates from nothing, omnipotently takes from nothing and says, "Become"; he lovingly adds, "Become something even in relation to me" (CD:127).

This underscores that although a human being is ultimately qualitatively different, the human being is nonetheless not nothing, not a negation of God.

Kierkegaard, a master dialectician, turns around this ultimately qualitatively different abyss in his idea of the incarnation. Climacus writes:

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<sup>135</sup> This difference can take various forms. An example in *The Sickness Unto Death* is

As sinner, man is separated from God by the most chasmic qualitative abyss. In turn, of course, God is separated from man by the same chasmic qualitative abyss when he forgives sins ... there is one way in which man could never in all eternity come to be like God: in forgiving sins (SUD:122).

<sup>136</sup> Liehu sees in this an educational implication. With regard to what was said to religiousness B and sin-consciousness above, she argues:

A man obtains sin-consciousness, if God himself engages to be his teacher; in order for man to understand God's teaching, this teaching must occur in time and the Teacher must come to the world as an entity understandable to man, as a man. Precisely this makes the paradox an absolute paradox: God approaches man by revealing to him the absolute difference between God and man; on the other hand, this revealing takes place within the cancelling of this absolute difference in that God descends into the world as a human being (1990:248).

Thus the paradox becomes even more terrible, or the same paradox has the duplicity by which it manifests itself as the absolute – negatively, by bringing into prominence the absolute difference of sin and, positively, by wanting to annul this absolute difference in the absolute equality (PF:47).

That is, God annuls the absolute difference between himself and the human being, in the absolute equality of God-Jesus Christ, who becomes the human being (Walsh, 2013:297). However, this annulment remains paradoxical. McDonald's formulation is helpful here that '[t]his is "paradoxical" also in the sense that its "contradictions" are primarily urges to wonder, rather than logical contradictions' (2016b:72). Those urges to wonder are the calls to "philosophical" education, to remember Socrates' dictum in *Theaetetus* that 'wonder is the only beginning of philosophy' (Plato, 1921:55 [155d]).

However, Kierkegaard is ambiguous throughout his authorship about this relation of absolute equality to God, which also complicates the discussion of the relationship between the teacher and the student in the next chapter. Walsh argues that in *The Sickness unto Death*, Anti-Climacus' defines the human being as spirit 'a self that relates itself to itself' (2013:302) and it is sin as despair that arises 'as a misrelation to oneself and to God that results from a person's unwillingness to become a self, which can be achieved only by a relation to God, who established the self' (2013:302). Thus, the human being needs to reach for God and understand themselves to be alone before God, before the abyss,<sup>137</sup> but in doing so, to understand that they cannot understand, as 'becoming an individual before God is a strenuous task' (Barrett, 2016:215). God gives both the conditions and the possibility of understanding 'because the highest is this: that a person is fully convinced that he himself is capable of nothing, nothing at all' (EUD:307). The leap across the absolute difference between man and God must be done in fear and trembling; '[a] Kierkegaardian leaper thus never touches the surface of the earth on the other side of the "qualitative abyss", and yet he must believe that there is one' (Liehu, 1990:270). In other words, there is no solid ground to stand on. The leap is impossible, as there is no certainty that when one jumps across the abyss – reaches towards the incarnate Christ – there will be anything to hold on to, and yet, as Kierkegaard repeats, with God everything is possible. The lack of ground on the other side of the abyss of the unknown God becomes the solid ground of the incarnate Jesus Christ.<sup>138</sup>

This loneliness before God is, however, deceiving. The human being is alone before God, but as pointed out by Herner Sæverot (2011:563–564) in Kierkegaard's *Works of Love* the person is standing alone [yet] through another's help (WL:274–275), and in this are hidden pedagogical ethics. Kierkegaard presents two possibilities: a 'person is standing by himself through my help' (WL:274)

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<sup>137</sup> As Kierkegaard puts it in "Note 2" of *The Single Individual* 'he is alone, alone in the whole world, alone – face-to-face before God' (PV:123).

<sup>138</sup> Liehu (1990:252) here argues that for Kierkegaard, the person becomes paradoxically self-conscious through the other – Jesus Christ.

and a ‘person is standing by himself – through my help’ (WL:275).<sup>139</sup> In the first instance, the person is completely dependent on another’s help, in the second instance the other ‘has done for this person the highest that one human being can do for another, has made him free ... by hiding his help has helped him to stand by himself’ (WL:275). Simon Podmore (2011:181) also emphasises that it would be a misinterpretation (e.g. Martin Buber) of Kierkegaard to consider an individual as a lonely hero “alone” before God, with no consideration of an “other.” Podmore (2011:182) argues that existence before God reminds the individual that ‘the relationships among human beings ought and may never be such that the one worships and the other is the one worshiped’ (WL:125). Kierkegaard warns against the pride of existing ‘*before God* ... since this is the source and origin of all distinctiveness’ (WL:271; emphasis original). To have this distinctiveness (or what Podmore translates as individuality) is to recognise the distinctiveness of the other. In the words of Kierkegaard ‘[t]o have distinctiveness is to believe in the distinctiveness of everyone else, because distinctiveness is not mine but is God’s gift by which he gives being to me, and he indeed gives to all, gives being to all’ (WL:271).

The paradoxical thinking in Kierkegaard, to use an English saying, is a gift that keeps on giving, but Kierkegaard reminds us *that every good and every perfect gift is from above*. So is the paradox. Walsh summarises the *educational* (I will return to this at the end of this chapter, and this is a subject of study of the next chapter) exposition of Christ in *Philosophical Fragments* as follows:

As the unnamed teacher (the god) who enters into time at a decisive moment (the fullness of time), Christ brings both the truth (the eternal) and the condition for learning it (faith) to the learner (humankind), who has entirely lost it by his own free act (sin) and therefore must be transformed (reborn), which only the god can do (2013:298).

This in itself is already a contradiction because this God-teacher-man ‘is an individual human being, just like others, a lowly, unimpressive human being, but now comes the contradiction – that *he* is God’ (PC:126; emphasis original). The transformative action, education, is being done by a lowly and unimpressive human being.

Walsh then proceeds to examine an analogy of a king who loved a girl (PF:31–32), arguing that the result of this analogy is ‘[i]n order to become the equal of every human being, even the lowliest of persons, the god must appear in the form of a servant’ (2013:298) where the ‘form of a servant is not something put on ... but it is his [God’s] true form’ (PF:31–32). Walsh argues that Climacus (and hence Kierkegaard) is clearly not a docetist, but she also rejects a labelling of Kierkegaard ‘as espousing a kenotic (“self-emptying”) Christology’ (2013:298). She bases it on accepting the reading of Johannes Climacus as accepting Christ to be

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<sup>139</sup> See also Morten T, Korsgaard and Mathias M. Aldinger (2018:519–521) on the pedagogical significance of the dash within these sentences.

‘the absolute paradox [as it] presents itself to the human understanding ... which is clearly impossible or absurd from a merely human point of view’ (Walsh, 2013:298), though with a reservation ‘that Climacus views the incarnation from the standpoint of how it appears to a person outside of faith, whereas for the believer it is not impossible or absurd, since all things are possible for God’ (Walsh, 2013:298); the believer believes by the virtue of the absurd.

Kierkegaard is extremely useful, according to Deuser (1998:385), in approaching Christological problems in the post-Aristotelian-Thomistic ontology age. The questions of one person, two natures, or historical scholarly critique of miracle stories (as well as the authority of biblical texts in general) are solved by Kierkegaard ‘by undermining its legitimation: there is no “objective” means of access, in the same sense of modern historical “objectivity,” to an adequate understanding of Jesus Christ, not even of his crucifixion’ (Deuser, 1998:386). The notion of the paradox becomes crucial in arguing for such a position. In a way, Kierkegaard does not invent anything new. To go back to the story of Nicodemus and Jesus, ‘Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?”’ (John 3:4). Jesus provides somewhat of a gibberish answer, to which Nicodemus once more asks ‘[h]ow can these things be?’ (John 3:9). Once again, Jesus’ reply is highly patronising ‘[a]re you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?’ (John 3:10). Although church ministers and theologians who dealt with scriptures for the past two thousand years provide answers and we take them to be the answers that Jesus meant, Jesus himself does not do that.<sup>140</sup> Nicodemus

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<sup>140</sup> Two Kierkegaardian ideas are at play here. One is Kierkegaard’s as Johannes de Silentio statement in *Fear and Trembling* with reference to what Abraham said to Isaac ‘if I cannot make myself understood when I speak, then I am not speaking’ (FT/R:113). Jesus is indirectly communicating something to Nicodemus, that Nicodemus understands directly and therefore misunderstands. Another idea is that for us, the readers of the text, it is so easy to jump ahead as we know the words of Scripture, and they are so easy to us. Yet Kierkegaard as Johannes Climacus explores at length the humour of this situation in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*

Last Sunday, the pastor said, “You must not put your trust in the world, and not in people, and not in yourself, but only in God, because a human being is himself capable of nothing.” And we all understood it, myself included, because the ethical and the ethical-religious are so very easy to understand but on the other hand so very difficult. A child can understand it; the simplest person can understand, just as it is stated, that we are capable of nothing at all, that we should give up everything, renounce everything. On Sundays it is understood terribly easily (yes, terribly, because this easiness often enough goes the same way as good intentions) *in abstracto*, and on Mondays it is so very difficult to understand that it is this little and specific thing within the relative and concrete existence in which the individual has his daily life, in which the powerful one is tempted to forget humility and the lowly one to mistake relative modesty toward people of status for humility before God, and yet a little bit is indeed something very specific, a mere trifle in comparison with everything. Yes, even when the pastor complains that no one acts according to his admonition, this is terribly easy to understand, but the next day it is very difficult to understand that by means of this simple thing, this little trifle, one makes one’s contribution, merits one’s share of the blame (CUP1:467).

is right to be confused because he is faced with the paradox of being born again. This type of Christian paradox, according to Deuser (1998:387), serves as the limit of the concept – be that concept being born again, sin, or any other, they all end in a paradox.

For Kierkegaard, there is a specific type of paradox – the ultimate paradox, believed by the virtue of the absurd, that God was made flesh and came into existence. In a way, it is through this paradox, that all other paradoxes arise (or dialectically – end). However, Kierkegaard as Anti-Climacus in *Practice in Christianity* argues that Christ as a sign of contradiction (PC:124) is not a speculative (that is logical) contradiction, but rather is a *qualitative* contradiction (PC:125). That is, Christ is not a contradiction ‘which applies only in the realm of thought, [but] Christ combines qualitative opposites in existence’ (Walsh, 2013:298). The qualitative opposites of being God and, at the same time ‘an individual human being, just like others, a lowly, unimpressive human being’ (PC:126). Walsh argues

there is no way of directly knowing or demonstrating that Christ is God. As the absolute paradox, Christ is the object of faith and can be seen as divine only by faith. Nothing can be known about him from history, or more precisely, what can be known about the historical Jesus does not tell us anything about whether he was God but only that he was (2013:299).

Although these are Anti-Climacus’ ideas developed in *Practice in Christianity*, Kierkegaard was thinking about it already as Johannes Climacus in *Philosophical Fragments* and in *Postscript*.

### 3.4.2. Suffering God – Suffering Love

The example of the king and the poor girl mentioned by Walsh above deserves further examination.<sup>141</sup> Kierkegaard as Climacus touches upon some of the most important issues in *prolegomena* to traditional theology – the doctrine of God – namely, the idea of a suffering God; a paradox in-itself streaming forth from the ultimate paradox – the God incarnate, Jesus Christ. As was mentioned above, for Climacus, ‘the form of the servant was not something put on’ (PF:32), in fact, this is the second time Climacus uses this phrase. This time, he continues in a different way: ‘[t]herefore the god must suffer all things, endure all things, be tried in all things, hunger in the desert, thirst in his agonies, be forsaken in death, absolutely the equal of the lowliest of human beings-look, behold the man!’ (PF:32–33). Climacus does not differentiate here between God and love, hence emphasising the point made above that God is love. He adds ‘and it is love that suffers, love that gives all and is itself destitute’ (PF:33). Kierkegaard as Climacus maintains ‘[f]or love, any other revelation would be a deception ... [f]or the god’s love, any other revelation would be a deception’ (PF:33), but God does

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<sup>141</sup> I will return to it once more in the following chapter.

not deceive. For God to truly love, to be true love, he has to suffer. God is revealed as a suffering God, and any other revelation is a deception because then the relationship between God and the human being is not that of equals.

There are two issues in the text that I am, at present, remaining silent about, but that need to be mentioned. The first one is theological, the second one is pedagogical. The theological issue is Climacus' comment that '[t]he suffering of death is not his suffering' (PF:33), which is made just before his comment that God's whole life is a story of suffering. The comment is curious, as it seems to imply that Kierkegaard holds the view that God does not die upon the cross. It appears that Kierkegaard upholds the distinction within the Trinity – Jesus dies, not God. I argue that in light of Kierkegaard's view of God as love, it is a logical necessity to protect God (as Trinity) from death. If such a God would die, then also love would die, but Jesus' death on the cross, for Kierkegaard, is the moment when Love is precisely at its highest and most alive. Kierkegaard as Climacus, however, understands the danger of separating Jesus from out of the God too much, thus he backtracks and adds for another time 'the form of the servant was not something put on, and therefore he must expire in death and in turn leave the earth' (PF:33–34). Kierkegaard should be read here in light of his paradoxical logic that love is most alive when it expires in death. The paradox of what happens within the Trinity at the moment of Jesus' death remains unresolved and is also an offence to the understanding from which we are encouraged to learn.<sup>142</sup>

Kierkegaard's *theologia crucis* is directly inspired by Luther (Kim and Rasmussen, 2016:204). But as Alister McGrath (2011:202) argues, the contemporary discussion of the suffering God that I also seem to presuppose in my treatment of this chapter is something that arises post-World War 2, and *theologia crucis* itself was ignored for generations after Luther. McGrath argues that based on Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518) thesis 19 and 20, '[f]or Luther, the sole authentic

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<sup>142</sup> Rowan Williams (2000a:157–162) drew attention to precisely this problem of trying to talk of the relation between God and Jesus, especially in Jesus' passion. Williams argues that '[t]he otherness, the final unmasterable otherness of the world present to all of us as our approaching death, is for Jesus inseparable from the otherness to him of God' (2000a:158) – but this only creates further paradoxes, which Williams invites us not to try and solve. Williams warns against trying to produce a narrative of the relationship of God to himself as 'we cannot say what God is in himself; all we have is the narrative of God with us' (2000a:159). '[T]he unity of God and his Son in this story is not, in the actual detail, moment by moment ... It emerges at last, when Christ goes to his Father risen and glorified' (Williams, 2000a:159). Williams finds fault in Hegel and Jürgen Moltmann precisely in this desire for detail, a

desire to take history seriously, to bridge the gap between a remote eternity and the concrete temporal world; but they end in evasions of the temporal – Hegel by generalizing Good Friday into a necessary moment in the universal dialectic, Moltmann by weakening the force of the recognition that Jesus' suffering is humanly inflicted, through his concentration on the cross as the Father's giving-up of the Son, a transaction in a mythical rather than historical sense (2000a:161).

What matters for us, then, is that in our relationship with God, through Jesus Christ – God Jesus Christ does indeed die.

locus of human knowledge of God is the cross of Christ, in which God is to be found revealed, and yet paradoxically hidden in that very same revelation' (2011:203). Thus, if we are to understand *theologia crucis* as God's suffering more generally, Kierkegaard as Climacus is quite in line with Luther. That the knowledge of God is possible only in the incarnation, as only an incarnate God is demonstrated to have suffered. The suffering takes a specific shape of taking a form of a servant and dying upon the cross.

The second pedagogical issue [which is also the theological issue] is concerned with the way God is being revealed. Climacus writes

For love, any other revelation would be a deception, because either it would first have had to accomplish a change in the learner (love, however, does not change the beloved but changes itself) and conceal from him that this was needed, or in superficiality it would have had to remain ignorant that the whole understanding between them was a delusion (this is the untruth of paganism) (PF:33).

There is, however, a problem here in that

the learner – has he no share or part in this story of suffering, even though his lot is not that of the teacher? Yet it has to be this way, and it is love that gives rise to all this suffering, precisely because the god is not zealous for himself but in love wants to be the equal of the most lowly of the lowly (PF:34)

The problem is posed not to God, not to the theologian, but to an everyday teacher. It is not the learner who is changing himself and takes the form of a teacher, but rather it is the teacher. The story of suffering is the story of suffering of the teacher and not of the learner. This, however, goes against a general perception of what education is like today. The teacher is not a master but rather a servant. This, however, should not be understood in terms of a neoliberal economy of education – where the teacher is the servant of a paying customer (directly or through state taxation) – a student. Rather, the teacher is the servant of the student in terms of being the servant of knowledge rather than a master of knowledge. The teacher cannot be the master of knowledge because, according to Kierkegaard, *every good and every perfect gift is from above* (EUD:31–48).<sup>143</sup> Furthermore, according to Kierkegaard's unpublished and unfinished *Johannes Climacus*, the suffering is so extreme – the teacher is sacrificed to teaching – the student must slay the teacher with a sword (PF:155).

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<sup>143</sup> For the discussion of every good and every perfect gift as education see Tubbs' (2004) *Philosophy's Higher Education*, chapter 4; also the next chapter of this thesis.

### 3.5. The Religious Symbolism in *Philosophical Fragments* and beyond

Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments* is the first text in his authorship that joins openly and straightforwardly together, through the words of the narrator of the book, educational and religious language. This is also the work where I first had an encounter with Kierkegaard and his educational theology/philosophy. Climacus presents us with the following concepts: sin (PF:15), saviour (PF:17), deliverer (PF:17), reconciler (PF:17), judge (PF:18), the fulness of time (PF:18), follower (PF:18), the *new* person (PF:18), conversion (PF:18), repentance (PF:19), rebirth (PF:19), the moment (PF:19), and lastly the throughout use of god (with a small g). I furthermore follow Victoria S. Harrison's (1997) study on the *Fragments* to draw out some further parallels and concepts. Harrison (1997) lists: the condition,<sup>144</sup> error,<sup>145</sup> sin, the Truth, the truth, the Moment [*Øjeblikket*],<sup>146</sup> the learner, the Paradox, the Incarnation, the Teacher, the God, the Fullness of Time, disciple, conversion, contradiction, Faith, and belief. Harrison (1997:456) also specifically brings out relationships present in *Philosophical Fragments*, which are God/man, infinite/finite, eternal/historical.

Yet, it would be wrong to simply equate the religious talk with the educational (or philosophical) talk by stating that where Kierkegaard employs religious language, one can disregard the religious significance and only read what the reader wants – the secularised, educational and philosophical terminology that only act as hyperbole and allegory. Michael Weston (1999:37–38) in his treatment of humour as deception in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* draws attention to the idea that Climacus is stating (see CUP1:272) that humour is speculative thought that uses Christian categories but is non-religious (and therefore deception and leads nowhere in terms of becoming a Christian).<sup>147</sup> Thus, when dealing with categories as stated above, or when Tubbs is talking about “God,” if no proper Christian theological consideration is given, the talk is an empty deception of speculative philosophy. This speculation is knowing in a disinterested manner instead of making the subject matter to be the ultimate concern of the individual (in CUP1:16 this is presented by Johannes Climacus as the question of becoming a Christian). This ultimate concern can and should properly be for the person's

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<sup>144</sup> Harrison discusses whether it is faith or the teacher (p.463 onwards).

<sup>145</sup> To be in error is to be in sin (p.462); also error as departing from truth (p.467).

<sup>146</sup> There are various versions of the moment : the moment with or without decisive significance (p.456), the moment as the beginning of eternity (p.461), the moment as a moment of incarnation, or a moment of conversion (p.471).

<sup>147</sup> Climacus dialectically complicates the matter towards the end of *Postscript* where, if an observer would go and look for a religious person, they would look for precisely the humourist – because they use the Christian categories. However, the observer would be mistaken, as ‘the religious person is not a humorist, but in his outer appearance he is a humorist’ (CUP1:501). Climacus differentiates between the inner and the outer.

eternal soul and the relationship to God as the paradox, but also one's education as *know thyself*.

This is stressed in the work of Saitya Brata Das (2020:64) who argues that one cannot think of Kierkegaardian indirect communication (which a pseudonymous work like *Fragments* is) as simply analogical. Das writes 'paradox is the religious communication par excellence, analogy is the expression of the form of life in its aesthetic-immanent sphere' (2020:64). Using Kierkegaard, Das is attacking Carl Schmitt's take on *analogia entis* idea in *Political Theology* (2006) that all modern political concepts are secularised theological concepts, and therefore, it is possible to talk of an analogy between God and the earthly Sovereign. Das (2020:101) sees in Kierkegaard a distinctly Lutheran response of *destructio* (the two kingdoms (2020:14)) to the Schmittian Catholic *analogia entis*. *Destructio* of and by the paradox.

Examination of the concepts via spheres of existence is done by Ronald J. Manheimer (1977) in his *Kierkegaard as Educator*. Manheimer argues that in *Fragments*, the aesthetic sphere of existence shows there to be "simply" the teacher and the student, with truth being relative to one having it and then the other. The pupil overcomes the master and acquires the truth. Manheimer skips the ethical sphere in his discussion and proceeds to religious and paradoxical-religious perspectives. (Manheimer, 1977:155). (As earlier, Manheimer does differentiate between four(!) stages: 'the aesthetic, ethical, religiousness A, and the paradoxical religiousness' (1977:154). I take it to mean that paradoxical religiousness is what I discussed as religiousness B.) In the discussion of religious perspective (religiousness A) for Manheimer 'there is neither teacher nor pupil, except insofar as the teacher is an "occasion" for the pupil's discovery of himself and the limitlessness of self-knowledge' (1977:155). This is a Socratic teacher, an occasion for recollection. In the paradoxical-religiousness 'the Deity is the teacher ... and creates not only a new self-knowledge but gives as well the condition for a new creature, a rebirth' (Manheimer, 1977:155). Thus, a reader of *Fragments* has to make clear in what sphere of existence one assumes Kierkegaard or themselves operating, as from that would stem an interpretation of the religious and educational terminology employed.

However, Kierkegaard as Johannes Climacus invites the reader to 'continually bear in mind the absolute difference that there is no analogy to the sphere of the paradoxically religious, and thus the application, when it is understood, is a revocation' (CUP1:567). Hence, it is not just an application of theological concepts to education and vice versa, rather, theological concepts are in their full weight educational concepts. God is not just like the teacher, God is the teacher, and the teacher is God. But once again, Kierkegaard as Climacus emphasises that this kind of talk is only possible in a particular sphere of existence '[f]aith belongs essentially in the sphere of the paradoxical-religious, as has been continually emphasized ... All other faith is only an analogy that is no [analogy], an analogy that can serve to make aware, but no more, the understanding of which is therefore a revocation' (CUP1:569f; brackets belong to the editors).

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It is to this relation between the educational and the religious, between God and human, between Christianity and pedagogy, that this thesis now will turn. This chapter has presented the reader with the terminology that will be presupposed and referred to in the next chapter, thus grounding my interpretation of Kierkegaard of the next chapter in the scholarly framework of the current chapter. The next chapter will examine the theology of *faith* and *God* presented above through the logic of education that was introduced by Tubbs in chapter 2 as re-read integral to Kierkegaard's own authorship. If this chapter concerned itself with theology, then the next chapter concerns itself with presenting the experience of this theology, and finally chapter 5 will present the theory of the experience of this theology.

## 4. KIERKEGAARDIAN THEOLOGY OF EDUCATION

Kierkegaard was adamant in maintaining that his thought couldn't be understood simply by reading his work.<sup>148</sup> If Kierkegaard's remarks on education are to be read at face value, like his criticism of education that makes his contemporaries "absentminded" in *The Book on Adler*,<sup>149</sup> one would miss the education that is happening *as* and *through* his work. Each reader is invited not to simply recollect the content of the books, but to repeat it for themselves, to appropriate the content inwardly as one's own. Hence each reading is a re-reading, a new repetition through which the person is qualitatively changed. Each re-reading is beginning anew. Each re-reading provides a new substance of learning. The person, the existing individual, is continuously in the process of becoming (CUP1:86).

To understand Kierkegaard is to misunderstand him, and in this misunderstanding each person is invited to *know themselves* in their reading of Kierkegaard (CUP1:146–147). Reading as learning is important as the process, and not as some "object" of knowledge that is learned from Kierkegaard (Tubbs, 2004:76–77). After all, as argued by Hugh Pyper (2011:53), the task of the teacher in *Philosophical Fragments* is to teach the student to exist, and not to acquire a body of knowledge. Kierkegaard, in the draft of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, quite succinctly puts it:

If only there were among our philosophers a teacher who would attend to me, not a teacher of classical learning, because we do have such a person, and I am by no means worthy of being his pupil, not a teacher of historical philosophy, because I may not have the necessary prerequisites, but a teacher in thinking about existence and existing – then I dare to guarantee that something will come of it (CUP2:107–108).

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<sup>148</sup> For example, in a dedication to "The Single Individual" that Kierkegaard intended to accompany *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, he states:

If it were feasible that reading what I write came to be common worldly practice or at least pretending to have read it in hopes thereby of getting ahead in the world, this would not be the opportune time, because then on the contrary misunderstanding would have triumphed, and it would also have beguiled me if I had not striven to prevent anything like that from happening (PV:105).

<sup>149</sup> Kierkegaard writes that 'The more that culture, education, and understanding get the upper hand, the more that people begin to live by way of comparison – the more common becomes a certain proficiency in treating spiritual qualifications in lawyer fashion ... Culture and education and sensibleness and social life work toward making people, in the religious sense, absentminded, spiritually abstracted' (BA:109). At the same time, Kierkegaard emphasises the need for strict Christian schooling (BA:115) or due diligence in the ethical education of character (BA:133).

This chapter will provide three re-readings<sup>150</sup> of Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments*. It is a book that Daphne Hampson named (and I agree) 'the most important text published in theology since the Enlightenment' (2013:60) precisely due to the fact that the text opens itself up to be translated into a wider field beyond theology. The first one is a "classical" reading of *Fragments* informed by secondary sources, as well as references to Kierkegaard's own work. The second one is Nigel Tubbs' (2004) reading of Kierkegaard in *Philosophy's Higher Education*. The third re-reading is my reading of Tubbs. The re-readings concentrate on the approaches to the learning paradox of Socrates provided by Kierkegaard from the Socratic perspective and by Kierkegaard from the paradoxical-religious perspective, as well as Tubbs' analysis of Kierkegaardian response.

It becomes apparent in examining the learning paradox that the figures of God-teacher and student become important. This chapter follows up with a (fourth) close reading and analysis of the relation between the God-teacher and student, especially through the examination of Kierkegaard's own example of the king and the lowly maiden. The question that the chapter answers in the investigation of relation is: are the God-teacher (an absolutely different) and the student (a lowly human being) able to have an understanding between each other?<sup>151</sup> In other words, is theological education possible? Through answering this question, the chapter moves through the logic of education (as relation of relation) that was already introduced in chapter 2. Doing justice to Kierkegaard and his style, logic is not something to be learned objectively, but rather is something always evading

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<sup>150</sup> Tubbs (2004:94–95) has called such (re)readings as repetition to be a modern form of an upbuilding education already found in Plato, that is, "know thyself" in, by, and through the repetition. Repetition here acts as a relation of myself to myself.

<sup>151</sup> I will, at times in this chapter, refer to *mutual* understanding, as this is the concept Kierkegaard himself is invoking (PF:47–49) with regards to the lovers, but also with respect to the offence at the paradox and the happy/unhappy love. I am aware of Tubbs' extended critique of the concept of mutuality in *Contradiction of Enlightenment* (1997:70–72) for whom mutuality is seeking to represent the universal and thus reproduces the domination of the person, and the danger lies in 'present[ing] the resolution of the contradiction in terms which do not acknowledge the return of the teacher' (1997:71). However, in his discussion of mutual recognition in Hegel, Tubbs (1997:152–153) posits mutuality as possible, or rather, the collapse of mutuality. Tubbs defines mutual recognition as an 'event whereby a free and genuine social relation is realised between individuals who do not have the relation as an object for them but as themselves' (1997:152). Tubbs, in rehearsing the Hegelian dialectic of master and slave, argues that this genuine social relation is where self-consciousness 'A knows itself because it recognises itself as B, and B likewise knows itself in his return from the recognition of A' (1997:152). From here Tubbs produces a statement that also underpins his project of modern metaphysics (see chapter 2), that '[t]he truth of both is the relation wherein each knows itself' (1997:152). Tubbs argues, and this is of key importance, that for Hegel this experience of self-consciousness is not individual, but universal. He states that '[t]he truth of each self-consciousness is therefore the relation itself' (1997:153), it is the universal that brings this relation about. Its consequence being that '[t]here is no distinction between the two [self-consciousness]', for in mutual recognition all difference has collapsed into the unity of the social relation' (Tubbs, 1997:153). Rebekah Howes has further studied the concept of mutual recognition in Tubbs in her *Difficult Education* (2013:88–90).

the full stop. This logic is not, then, presented as an answer to “what is”,<sup>152</sup> but rather once more recognised in the movements of the teacher and the student dialectic in Kierkegaard’s authorship. This logic of relation is a paradoxical logic one cannot learn of, but only learn from, because to learn *of* is to possess it as a master.

There is another relation made by the readers of Kierkegaard. Editors of Kierkegaard’s works in English (Hong’s) have related *Fragments* with unpublished and unfinished *Johannes Climacus* by publishing the two works in one volume. By doing this, editors have conditioned the education of generations of Kierkegaard readers that, having read *Fragments*, go on to learn a little bit about the author of *Fragments*, Johannes Climacus, as presented by Kierkegaard in his unfinished manuscript. As this has conditioned my own education, I will present the reader with the view of Kierkegaardian education as seen in *Fragments* as an experience of the teacher, before presenting the experience of the student in *Johannes Climacus*. Kierkegaard’s study in *Johannes Climacus* follows what was studied in *Philosophical Fragments*, the object he investigates is the same. The difference being, if in the latter Kierkegaard asks ‘Can the truth be learned?’ (PF:9), in the former he asks ‘How does the question of truth arise?’ (PF:167). I argue they ask about the same issue, but the figure who asks is different – in the first case, the teacher, in the second, the student. The chapter ends with an excursion to Anti-Climacus in *Practice in Christianity*, who, just as his counterpart in *Fragments*, provides the readers with the figure of the Teacher, but this time a very specific teacher – the God-man – Jesus Christ.

The chapter begins with a return to the philosophy of education of chapter 2 and explores the notion of “relation” that “is” plays between *God* and *Education* in the statement “God is Education.” The first section poses a fundamental question to “God is Education” – what to make of an ultimate paradox presented by Kierkegaard – the incarnation of God as Jesus Christ. How does the incarnate God stand in relation to (philosophy’s higher) education? The answer will inform the educational movements of the chapter. For Tubbs, this *higher* education is Kierkegaard’s idea of repetition, an idea to which I already alluded throughout this work. It is this education of repetition that brings me into the relation of myself to myself. It is this education of repetition in which I am changed in relation to myself in the learning. The attentive reader will recognise a number of those repetitions in the structure (the system) of the chapter that do not conclude but rather open up the theological education offered.

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<sup>152</sup> Climacus writes in the *Postscript* ‘Objectively the emphasis is on **what** is said; subjectively the emphasis is on **how** it is said. This distinction applies even esthetically and is specifically expressed when we say that in the mouth of this or that person something that is truth can become untruth’ (CUP1:202; emphasis original).

## 4.1. Dialectical Relationships

In chapter 2 of this work, I presented a new kind of metaphysics, that is, a modern metaphysics of Tubbs. It was argued that the modern metaphysics finds its truth in the relation of teacher and student, God and human, and master and slave. In ancient metaphysics, the truth was seen as the mastery, the mastery that necessitated a question being answered. The logic was that of a non-contradiction that demanded an either/or resolution. The modern metaphysics took the dash that related an *either* to an *or* to be its own truth. In chapter 3 Kierkegaardian language was introduced to provide a language and a framework for a new kind of logic – the logic of a paradox. Kierkegaard sees in the incarnation – an ultimate paradox, the contradiction of existence – that God is both absolutely different and, at the same time, the same as the human being.

The incarnation breaks open the closed system of “God out there.” The incarnation makes relation possible in the sense of providing meaning to the relation. Tubbs (1997) has argued extensively in *Contradiction of Enlightenment* to demonstrate that there is a relation even before one starts because to start (to begin) is to be related. Likewise for Christian theology, there was a relation of God to humanity before the incarnation, but the incarnation of Christ provides meaning to this relation. The incarnation is the condition of possibility of modern metaphysics. *God is education* is a statement without meaning, unless this God has become incarnate, that is, has related to humanity. Rowan Williams in the discussion on the incarnation states ‘[t]he story of Jesus is not one of a miraculous suspension and interruption of the human world ... it involves us in a self-declaration and a self-discovery’ (2000a:91). He further states that ‘[t]o be judged by the proclamation of Jesus in his ministry, death and resurrection is to find oneself in a particular human relation’ (Williams, 2000a:91). This relation is not that of an other and I. In Williams there is the same logic of education as a relation of relation present. The incarnate Christ ‘expresses the fact that I am separated from the “I” that I should be ... boundary lies between me and myself. I am judged in my encounter with this boundary’ (Williams quoting Dietrich Bonhoeffer, 2000a:91). The incarnation that introduces this story of Jesus to the world invites the person to self-discovery, to *know thyself*. Rebekah Howes (2013:34) has theorised this point in Williams as a fundamental experience of being human – that is in the experience of being alone.

Elsewhere, Williams emphasises St Augustine’s insistence ‘that true knowledge of self is inseparable from true knowledge of God’ (2017a:201).<sup>153</sup> Williams’ comments further reveal Kierkegaard to be Augustinian in that both of them emphasise the need to acknowledge themselves as ultimately qualitatively different from God, because (commenting on Augustine) ‘[i]t is the utter and irreducible difference between God and the human mind that frees the mind to recognise

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<sup>153</sup> From this Augustinian insistence also grew out the idea of the unity of truth (in God) that lay at the basis of a medieval university, where ‘[u]niversities were to be places where all learning was to be united in its common origin as God’s truth’ (Downs, 2011:106).

itself and to be itself' (2017a:202). Embarking on this education, the person is faced with the boundary, with my relation to the relation between myself and I, but also my relation to myself in my relation to God. Interestingly, Williams argues '[i]t is the nature of this encounter ... that prompts Christology to forswear the solutions both of "gnostic" supernaturalism and of the teacher-pupil, hero-emulator scheme' (2000a:91).

The work of that relation is a work of love. The incarnation is a demonstration of God's love for humanity. For Plotinus self-knowledge (and hence self-relation) was impossible for God (the One) as that would make God imperfect. It is the emanation of the Intellect from the One, that 'attains all that can be thought; hence, all that can be thought "about" the One' (Gerson, 2018). Self-knowledge that is self-relation is possible for the Christian God. The Trinity is a relation that relates itself to itself. Said differently, the communion of the persons of the Trinity is the communion of love between-within the Trinity. The church has spoken of the Holy 'Spirit as *nexus amoris* in the Trinity' (Williams, 2000a:120). Williams, in his discussion on the Holy Spirit, makes an important point in terms of this thesis' project, 'if the Spirit interprets anything, it is neither Father nor Word, but ... the relation of Father and Son' (2000a:120). A further implication of that is that Spirit 'interprets [the relation] by re-creating, *translating* it, in the medium of human existence' (Williams, 2000a:120; emphasis original). This communion of love, the work of love, is the self-relation that makes self-knowledge possible. God knows himself in the Trinity, God makes himself known in the incarnation. This is God's own education, which is love. '[R]elation of slave to master is no longer the appropriate mode for the human apprehension of God,' says Williams, as 'the Spirit .... Enacts in us the union of Jesus with the Father' (2000a:120).

This brings the thesis to the logic of education that was named at the beginning of this chapter. In *God is education* "God" is already a relation within the Trinity, "education" is a relation of God to humanity, and "is" is a relation of that relation connecting God *and* education. To ask how God and education are thus related, is a wrong question, as it is an ontological question. Neither is it a mere analogy. The truth of *God is education* is the relation. The truth of that relation is that the relation could be made in the first place. My experience of the puzzlement over that statement, that is my experience of the question, is the structure of education. This is my experience of the philosophy of the teacher, my experience as a philosophical teacher – the experience of contradiction (Tubbs, 2005:12). In the words of Tubbs '[t]hat with which thought collides is ... god' (2004:87). I am always already necessarily placed in the context of learning.

Tubbs (2004:170) argues that "and"<sup>154</sup> is the bearer of philosophy's higher education. Taking a cue from Hegel, Tubbs argues:

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<sup>154</sup> For Tubbs' reading of "and" contra Gilles Deleuze see *Philosophy of the Teacher* 2005:187, 197–199 onwards.

that world spirit is the absolute contingency of the philosophy of history, a living, learning relation of self to self and to other. It is the Idea present in and as learning ... it is the Idea that is present but suppressed in all dualisms, and that it is the conjunction “and” in which this presence and suppression are to be found (2004:146).

“And” plays the role of separation and, at the same time, unity – it is a positive and negative relation at the same time. “And” is taken to be ‘the condition of the possibility of the relation’ (2004:171), as no relation is possible between the two without a grammatical “and”. Thus ‘[t]he and appears to be relation, but really is the illusory being of relation, or is relation as the Idea that otherness has been overcome and is now only its object’ (Tubbs, 2004:171). With postulating “and” ‘we speak of knowing the separation’ (Tubbs, 2004:170), God *and* education are indeed related, but in this relation, God becomes the opposite of education, and education becomes the opposite of God. The two can be related, but there is no unity. In the relation of “is” there is also a relation and separation as a negation of that relation present.<sup>155</sup> In stating God *is* education, God and education are brought into relation, which shows that the two are separated, otherwise, unity would not be required. Tubbs (2004:45) speaks of “is” as a judgment that is asserting an objective fact about the subject. He further argues that ‘[j]udgement appears to make a simple connection between two things, to affirm an identity between them’ (Tubbs, 2004:46). But there is also a fear of an error and an illusion, just like with “and.” The error lies in asserting identity without acknowledging that “is” presupposes a separation. However, one does not need to fear the illusion, as postulated by Tubbs ‘[r]emarkably, it is not illusion that has to be overcome, it is illusion that has to be understood as formative and self-determinative within this higher education’ (2004:177). Thus, instead of speaking of a metaphor, an analogy, or an ontological claim about the nature of God and education, acknowledging the relation in God *is* education as its own truth is required (Tubbs, 2004:14). Furthermore, paradoxically, in this relation to God already lies also its untruth (Tubbs, 2004:83). In this acknowledgement lies its own education.

The next part of the chapter demonstrates how Kierkegaard as Climacus, in *Philosophical Fragments*, explores relation as its own truth, in the relation of God and the human being, God and teacher, and teacher and student. In some cases,

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<sup>155</sup> Gillian Rose (2009:51–52) has done the same analysis with regard to religion and the state in Hegel. She argues that the confusion lies in the readings that ‘divide the sentence into a grammatical subject and predicate joined by the copula “is”. The grammatical subject is considered a fixed bearer of variable accidents, the grammatical predicates, which yield the content of the proposition’ (Rose, 2009:51). Misunderstanding arises when the thought is taken as a series of ordinary propositions, something Hegel was very much aware of, and hence proposed a speculative approach where “is” affirmed identity and equally the lack of identity between subject and predicate (Rose, 2009:51–52). Hegel discusses this in *Phenomenology*, especially § 60–64. However, Rose argues that in the Hegelian speculative proposition, the identity cannot be pre-judged, rather it ‘must be understood as a result to be achieved’ (2009:52). Although Rose does not investigate education *per se*, her argument can be re-read in my terms as the work of education, in the relation of “subjects” to each other.

“and” can be replaced by “is” to affirm identity, in others, separation of “and” as relation needs to be demonstrated, and in some cases “–” plays the role of a signifier of equality and relation of unity. I understand that this statement of the relation between God *and* education is controversial. For example, this was exactly the subject of James K.A. Smith’s (2002:176) critique of Catherine Pickstock’s reading of Kierkegaard in her *After Writing* (1998). Smith argues that ‘there is a fundamental discontinuity between these human teachers – who can only be “occasions” – and the Teacher who is also the god, who provides both the object of learning and the condition for its reception’ (2002:176; see footnote 91). But I will argue below that this is not the case, for God operates also as a (“Socratic”) teacher, and the teacher operates as a God of the student.

To echo the end of the previous section, we do not just learn about the paradox as an object out there; everything we learn about the paradox we learn from our relation to the paradox, from being in it, and from being in the necessary presupposition of being in it.

## 4.2. *Philosophical Fragments*

Kierkegaard as Johannes Climacus, following Socrates,<sup>156</sup> begins<sup>157</sup> his thought project of *Philosophical Fragments* with the question of ‘[c]an the truth be learned?’ (PF:9).<sup>158</sup> Climacus is not interested in proving the positions of his arguments, only in showing them (Westphal, 1994:13). This question undermines the presuppositions of modernity by maintaining that faith and revelation have their own grounding, and declaring ‘knowledge which is derived from human self-

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<sup>156</sup> Just as Kierkegaard did not differentiate between Socrates and Plato, and Socrates as a character in Plato, my discussion takes Socrates to mean both of those things. I will, however, differentiate at times between Socrates and “Socrates”, with the latter signifying the educational system (of modernity) as opposed to the historical subject. I will explain the reasoning in the main text of the chapter.

<sup>157</sup> This question of the beginning, whether it is learning truth or any other enquiry, is also the question of Hegel in *Science of Logic* (1816/2010) where the beginning of book one is subtitled “With what must the beginning of science be made?”. In *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807/1977) for example, Hegel answers the question by writing a “Preface.” That is, Hegel begins in the middle of things, finishes his inquiry, and then writes the beginning. The reader, of course, begins in the beginning of *Phenomenology* with the preface and introduction, with an illusion of the beginning. The reader begins in the end. Tubbs (2004:165), exploring this issue of beginnings for Hegel, argues that although all beginnings are abstract, for Hegel, they nonetheless can be known. The claim of presuppositionlessness philosophy is itself always already a presupposition.

<sup>158</sup> Daphne Hampson calls attention to the fact that Socrates did not actually state this question, ‘[i]n Plato’s *Meno* Socrates asks how it is that – in fact *arête*, virtue (but Kierkegaard renders this “truth”) – can be learnt’ (2013:64). Furthermore, it is necessary to highlight the dialectic present in the Danish word *laere* that means both to teach and to learn. Stuart Dalton, for example, chooses to state the sentence as ‘Can the truth be learned and/or taught’ (2019:245).

knowledge (idealism) a falsehood' (Hampson, 2013:62). This question, furthermore, begins an examination and exposition of '[t]he logic why human beings needed God to become God-man' (Martens and Marrs, 2016:102). A purely theological reading of *Fragments* sets the book's goal to be an exploration between Socratic and Christian knowledge of God (eg. Marten and Marrs, 2016:102). However, as Kierkegaard equates knowledge of God with the knowledge of truth (that is, the possibility of all truth), the educational and philosophical reading is wider, making a claim for the possibility of a specific kind of (that is, Christian) claim upon education. This is also the reading of *Fragments* by Hampson (2013) above, with regard to the attack on modernity. The claim is made that all things, in the end, are learned through faith.<sup>159</sup> In Climacus' own words, '[t]he absolute fact is a historical fact and as such the object of faith' (PF:100). Hampson (2013:78, 80) reads this through relation to an *event*, an event I take to be the event of learning, in particular the event of learning of truth. This also forms the basis of Hampson's critique of Murray Rae who argues that knowledge is acquired in the moment of faith. On Hampson's and my reading of "through faith", faith is the condition for gaining knowledge in the first place, that is, faith has already existed as a presupposition for the knowledge to come about. I, therefore, disagree with Rae (2010:37) that Kierkegaard as Climacus only has a specific truth – "the truth of Jesus Christ" – in mind. Such reasoning would provide for a very narrow reading of *Fragments*. Of course it is about the truth revealed in Jesus, but it is also so much more than just the truth revealed in Jesus. Rae (2010:43) seems to acknowledge this at least in part with his sharp differentiation between Climacus and Kierkegaard. Rae (2010:39) chooses Climacus' appeal to eternal happiness as evidence that the truth must concern God. Hampson (2013:65) *contra* Rae reads Kierkegaard's appeal to the "eternal" as a reference to the Platonic idea of a previous existence. Rae, however, correctly points out that Kierkegaard as Climacus provides us with two competing epistemologies: 'the first epistemology proposes that the truth be accommodated to the learner; the second proposes that the learner be accommodated to the truth' (2010:42). This competition is seen in the "Socratic," and Climacian approaches to the learning paradox, but also in the ascent of the student or the descent of the teacher to be examined in sections 4.3.3. and 4.3.4.

In engagement with the learning paradox, Kierkegaard seems to be going to the heart of Kant's statement in *The Critique of Pure Reason* that<sup>160</sup> 'the conditions of the possibility of experience in general are likewise conditions of the

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<sup>159</sup> This is not a fideist position, as neither Kierkegaard nor I are denying the necessity of rational inquiry, nor the need for objective knowledge. Faith, however, is required to make it one's own. As was mentioned previously in this thesis, Kierkegaard operated within the dialectic of fideism and rationalism, which need to be kept in mind. It would be argued below that it is faith that enables one to learn from the paradox, when the understanding collapses in happy passion.

<sup>160</sup> Hampson (2013:63) argues that Kierkegaard agrees with Kant that Christian faith is incompatible with the claims of reason.

possibility of the objects of experience' (1929:194 [A158/B197]). In other words, 'how could anything in itself be known that was not already mediated by the for us of experience' (Tubbs, 2004:27), the experience of Socratic recollection, or the experience of the Christian God. Kierkegaard, of course, would not agree with a later Hegelian re-reading that would advance Jesus Christ as simply being the mediating factor within the system. For Kierkegaard, Christ (as was already advanced in the previous chapter and will be further examined below) is the paradox. The "other" of Hegelianism is always mediated, and so is not a "true" other. In the paradox of Christ, Kierkegaard maintains both the "true" other of the ultimately qualitatively different God, and the so-very-human and near God-man Jesus Christ. Here Kierkegaard opens up a possibility to read him as avoiding another error of modernity that has equated knowing of something or someone with comprehension of that (Smith, 2002:28). I can know God, a paradox, (if indeed this is possible), have a personal relationship with him, and yet comprehend nothing of his essence (see section 1.3.).<sup>161</sup>

A reader of Kierkegaard is forced to return to the questions posed by Kant and Hegel. Is then our experience of the paradox this mediating experience? Is it still reasonable to talk of mediation? How does Christ mediate? Or is this our experience of learning, our experience of God, that is an experience of the ultimate paradox – Jesus Christ? After all, for Kierkegaard 'the teacher is the truth, the teaching' (Martens and Marrs, 2016:102; see also PF:55). Is God then Education – as our learning of our experience of anything – as conditions of possibility of anything in the first place?

Now, Kierkegaard proceeds to demonstrate how for Socrates the question of learning the truth was difficult, as

a person cannot possibly seek what he knows, and, just as impossibly, he cannot seek what he does not know, for what he knows he cannot seek, since he knows it, and what he does not know he cannot seek, because, after all, he does not even know what he is supposed to seek (PF:9).<sup>162</sup>

For Kierkegaard, there are a few fundamental questions at stake here: how can one know, and more importantly, what it is to know?<sup>163</sup> The injunction inscribed

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<sup>161</sup> Smith elaborates on this, indicating that at least for Levinasian reading to know is to give meaning (2002:28) and in this lies precisely the error, of reducing a relationship to knowledge, '[t]he God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must show himself as the God of the philosophers, or fail to show up' (2002:29).

<sup>162</sup> Orthodox theologian Vladimir Lossky (1978:17) deals with a similar issue. For him, the answer is – Christians are anointed by the Holy Spirit, and through this anointing become possessors of the truth, as '[n]obody can teach us the truth if this presence, which opens to us all knowledge, is not already within us' (Lossky, 1978:17).

<sup>163</sup> In the upbuilding discourses, Kierkegaard writes under his own name that the question 'asks you first and foremost, before anything else, whether you are living at all in such a way that you could truthfully answer the question, that the question truly exists for you' (UDVS:126). This is the existential attitude that Kierkegaard demands of his reader.

at the Delphic oracle to “know thyself” seems to direct the person to the only thing one can have an inkling of – the self. Yet, as Kierkegaard would argue elsewhere to know one’s soul is not necessarily to gain it, as ‘a person certainly must know his soul in order to gain it, but this knowing is not the gaining’ (EUD:173). Because even the devil believes and trembles – and Kierkegaard views self-knowledge as this belief – and the more self-knowledge there is ‘the more he will tremble, precisely because he does not will to gain himself’ (EUD:174). As will be shown below, self-knowledge of the student is not necessarily a good thing for Climacus and Kierkegaard. The re-readings of *Fragments* offered here allow for *know thyself* to be experienced as a relation of the self to the knowledge of the self not willing to gain itself – put simply, to recognise one’s error and the need for *metanoia*.

#### 4.2.1. Kierkegaard’s “Socratic” reading of the learning paradox

The Socratic answer to the question of truth was recollection. The truth was already in the person, and the person was simply in need to be reminded that the truth was in them all along, in other words, to ‘become what you are’ (Tubbs, 2004:94). Socrates in Plato’s *Phaedrus* discussing with Cebes maintains that the soul is eternal and that life comes from death (2005:251–253 [72d]), to which Cebes replies that if what Socrates is saying is true, this once more points at the fact that learning is recollection and what is recollected was learned in a previous life (2005:253 [72e]). In Plato’s *Meno* where Socrates states the learning paradox (1952:301 [80e]), the idea of death, rebirth, and recollection is also raised. There, Socrates argues that by simply remembering one single thing, the person is able to further recollect everything else (Plato, 1952:303 [81c]). Thus, Climacus answers for Plato: nothing new is ever learned, the soul is self-sufficient (Smith, 2002:161).

Kierkegaard as Climacus, in his note to the discussion of Socratic recollection, asserts that this idea was picked up in both ancient and modern speculation (PF:10; see note 1). Instead, Kierkegaard posits the concept of repetition against Socratic and Hegelian recollection. Hegel discusses becoming and self-consciousness in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* in terms of recollection. He writes

In the immediacy of this new existence the Spirit has to start afresh to bring itself to maturity as if, for it, all that preceded were lost and it had learned nothing from the experience of the earlier Spirits. But recollection, the *inwardizing*, or that experience, has preserved it and is the inner being, and in fact the higher form of the substance. So although this Spirit starts afresh and apparently from its own resources to bring itself to maturity, it is none the less on a higher level than it starts (Hegel, 1977:492 [§808]; emphasis original).

Kierkegaard, according to Heidi Liehu (1990:102), would take issue with the last sentence, maintaining that there is no higher level from where one begins, but one rather has to start all over again as the truth is given by God from the outside.

Liehu, however, relies on a particular reading of Hegelian dialectics (via Gregor Malatschuk) where “the antithesis” ‘the new, opposing element [is] completely wiping out the preceding one’ (1990:103). I am not convinced, however, that this is a correct understanding of Hegel’s *aufheben*. Yet, Kierkegaard is different from Hegel. As was argued in chapter 3, there is nothing natural in a person’s progression from the aesthetic to the ethical and then to the religious sphere. One can always slip back into the aesthetic, and the fact that they were once in the religious does not make it any easier to reach the religious sphere once more. Hegelian dialectic and *aufheben* do not work with the spheres. Furthermore, Liehu (1990:103) rightly argues that there is no aesthetic repetition, with repetition being possible only in the religious sphere. The best the aesthete can do (because the aesthete cannot make a choice) is to despair; the leap of faith is required, but the leap is already brought about from someone outside myself. Kierkegaard further brings out, specifically, the term “eternal” as representing recollection from before – from eternity – and addresses specific theological issues of ‘an eternal creating, an eternal emanating from the Father ... a past resurrection’ (PF:10; note 1). Climacus in *Fragments* will specifically attack this idea of the “past” in his discussion of contemporaneity with Christ, where such events as the resurrection cannot be known as recollection but have to be experienced by the particular single individual.

Nonetheless, as far as the philosophy of the teacher goes, that Climacus is presenting in this section of *Fragments*, he agrees with Socrates. Socrates, who has no inkling of a paradoxical-religious (as religiousness B; see section 3.2.3.2. above) and incarnate God, was right to view recollection as the answer for the knowledge of truth and his midwifery as the only adequate pedagogy. Climacus states that Socrates ‘is indeed forever right, for even if a divine point of departure is ever given, this remains the true relation between one human being and another’ (PF:10). On the initial reading of Kierkegaard as Climacus here, it would seem that he would not support the arguments advanced in this thesis with relation to reading relationships between God and human, and teacher and student as equal.<sup>164</sup> However, as will be argued below, this is not the case for Kierkegaard himself, and an alternative interpretation can be given where the Socratic teacher-student relation is indeed one type of relation within an educational context, but a further theological teacher-student relation can also be posited.

Climacus argues, that ‘any point of departure in time is *eo ipso* something accidental, a vanishing point, an occasion’ (PF:11). Here Kierkegaard as Climacus alludes to Hegel, for whom a historical point of departure ‘is merely the outworking of rational truths discernible by ahistorical means’ (Rae, 2010:38), in other words, nothing special – unlike the moment of decisive significance that

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<sup>164</sup> The departure point for this equality is Climacus’ words in *Fragments* that ‘[t]he love, then, must be for the learner, and the goal must be to win him, for only in love is the different made equal, and only in equality or in unity is there understanding’ (PF:25). Thus for learning to happen, for there to be understanding between the teacher and student, for them to learn from their relation, equality in love is needed. More on this later.

he will present later. Rae (2010:39) goes as far as to suggest that the “Socratic” answer was not Socratic but rather Hegelian, and Climacus names it as Socratic to avoid identification of the New Testament truth with Hegelian learning. Pyper (2011:55) also advances the view that Kierkegaard is deliberate in his use of Hegelian philosophical terminology<sup>165</sup> and in avoiding Christian terminology in order not to taint it with being incorporated into the Hegelian system. Tony Kim (2012:5–7) agrees with the above that the Hegelianism Kierkegaard tackles in *Fragments* is that of Hans Lassen Martensen and that the “Socratic” represents the whole of speculative philosophy. Rae summarises Hegelian reading of the learning paradox as follows:

Hegelian response to the question, “Can the truth be learned”, is that it may be learned by virtue of the fact that it already lies within the human mind or soul. Knowledge of all truth is latent within the soul and requires only to be brought to birth. Hegel offers himself as mid-wife but the truth itself, and the condition for attaining it – human reason, is native to every human spirit’ (2010:38).

This is achieved through reason that is an instrument of recollection, and hence

The incarnation of the Logos in Jesus of Nazareth, accordingly, is simply the historical unfolding of a logic discerned by rational means. That logic is the logic of humanity’s identity with the divine, or, to use Hegel’s own terms, it is the synthesis through human consciousness of the absolute Spirit and the finite spirit (Rae, 2010:38).

The critique of the above according to Liehu is that ‘Hegel’s view of Christianity saves its phenomena – that is, the dogmas – but abandons its essence ... a Hegelian Christian neither can pray nor thank his God, for he is himself part of this divinity’ (1990:280).<sup>166</sup> Hampson (2013:62) does agree that in naming the book *Philosophical Fragments* (also translated as *Crumbs [Smulere]*) Kierkegaard has Hegel in mind, as there is no system, only crumbs and fragments. This does not mean that they are unconnected musings, but rather that the system (if such existed) was broken to pieces. However, with the specific “Socratic” approach to the learning paradox, Hampson opens it much wider, as ‘we may of course “read” not simply the Socratic world view but also the Enlightenment, particularly Kant, or indeed any humanist or religious position not predicated on revelation’ (2013:65). Hampson nevertheless admits that Hegel’s system is also a form of this approach, though the parallel between Climacian Socrates and

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<sup>165</sup> As Kierkegaard remarks in *The Book on Adler*, ‘[u]nder various names and right up to the latest speculative thought, the effort has been to make Christianity probable, comprehensible, to take it out of the God-language of the paradox and get it translated into the Low-German of speculative thought or the Enlightenment’ (BA:40).

<sup>166</sup> This, in turn, begs the question of if God is education, can one pray to this God? It was shown in the discussion of Trinitarian relations in section 4.1. that one indeed can (and even more so, should) pray to this God. I will return to the issue of incarnation in Hegel and Kierkegaard in chapter 5.

Hegel is not so forcefully emphasised in Hampson as it is in Rae. A similar view is advanced by Robert L. Perkins in his introduction to *International Kierkegaard Commentary on Fragments*, stating that Climacus is using the figure of Socrates ‘as an ideal type or metaphor for the hybrid of modern thought that after Hegel must be called philosophical theology’ (1994:1). However, to my knowledge, Hegel nowhere explicitly deals with the learning paradox in his writings.<sup>167</sup> Thus, be it Kierkegaard, Rae, or anyone else, it is merely an interpretation of Hegel, or, more properly, Hegelianism.

Kierkegaard as Climacus sees a problem for teaching in the kind of disinterested approach to the “moment” of learning, as then the teacher ‘is not even the other’s [student’s] friend, much less his teacher’ (PF:11). Kierkegaard already explored Socrates as this kind of teacher in his Masters thesis on *The Concept of Irony* where relationship between the teacher Socrates and the students is described in terms of love. The students ‘felt the deep pain of unhappy love, then they felt that they were deceived, that it was not Socrates who loved them but they who loved Socrates’ (CI:188). This is a false type of love<sup>168</sup> between the two, but it is also a pedagogical necessity on the part of Socrates not to love the students in order for the “moment” of learning to be a mere occasion of recollection. But, as is seen in *The Concept of Irony*, Socrates has failed as a teacher of the positive as

He had turned his pupils’ gazes inward, and therefore in gratitude the gifted ones were bound to feel that they owed it to him; they were bound to feel all the more grateful the more they saw that they had themselves to thank for their rich resources and not Socrates (CI:188).

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<sup>167</sup> I was alerted by Nigel Tubbs to Hegel’s letter to Niethammer from 24<sup>th</sup> March 1812, where Hegel is struggling with the learning paradox. Nonetheless, Hegel does not deal with the learning paradox as a part of his Science, rather, the learning paradox is his Science. In the letter, Hegel writes, ‘I have no more idea how to write something of a preparatory or introductory nature than I would have a concept of how to introduce geometry *without actually teaching it myself*’ (1984a:263; emphasis added). This demonstrates the difficulty of teaching something without already presupposing the teaching. There is the authority of the teacher present, who has to impart knowledge to the student. Hegel, being instructed by the authorities not to teach the system as a whole but only some exercises in speculative thinking, is struggling to teach the students the teaching that ought to liberate them from the need for such teaching, and thus he is faced with a paradox that undermines his own teaching. Elsewhere, Tubbs (1997) would name this experience of *aporia* as a return of a despairing teacher. Furthermore, Hegel reveals quite a straightforward didactic approach in the same letter, ‘[o]ne learns how to think by receiving thoughts into one’s head, to conceive by acquiring concepts. Thoughts and concepts must be *learned*’ (1984a:264; emphasis original). Tubbs (2005:162–163) argues that Hegel is faced here with an *aporia*, trying to produce an experience of new *philosophical* education and being faced with the demand of didactic teaching. Hegel became his own master and slave. Howes writes that Hegel indeed demanded obedience from students, but at the same time took the ‘responsibility for an education about the illusions of the abstractions his pupils did not yet understand’ (2013:189).

<sup>168</sup> I will further explore Kierkegaard’s permission of educational deception in the next chapter.

The Socratic method itself is scrutinised by Kierkegaard in *Irony*, where a teacher who ‘ask[s] without any interest in the answer except to suck out the apparent content by means of the question and thereby to leave an emptiness behind’ (CI:36), is perhaps even worse than a didactic teacher. The didactic teacher at least has some “positive” content to offer, while the Socratic teacher is a teacher of negativity ‘leav[ing] them looking down and staring into an abyss that threatens nihilism’ (Tubbs, 2005:219). In *Fragments* Climacus seems to be more generous to Socrates than in *Irony* and acknowledges that ‘Socrates ... had the courage and self-collectedness to be merely an occasion<sup>169</sup> even for the most stupid person’ (PF:11). A good teacher continues to love their students, but the effect on students is the opposite. Kierkegaard, under his own name, urges the teachers ‘if you have any truth to offer mankind, reduce the impact of yourself, nullify yourself, sacrifice yourself when offering your gift’ (EUD:151).

It is here, in the discussion of the Socratic teacher, that Climacus states what was alluded to at the end of the previous section: every human being is their own midpoint ‘because [their] self-knowledge is God-knowledge’ (PF:11).<sup>170</sup> Thus, the injunction of the Delphic oracle to *know thyself* meant not only one’s individual self but all knowledge,<sup>171</sup> all truth (as God) for Climacus. Yet, that truth still remained “out there” as an object to be grabbed / reached towards and thus enabled to be objectively studied. Who taught, or rather enabled the student to recollect the truth did not matter. For Climacus, whoever was his teacher, be it Socrates or Prodicus, ‘can concern [him] only historically or ... poetically’ (PF:12), and this *poetically* brings us into the aesthetic sphere. The truth was in the person already and thus the fact that it was taught by Socrates or whoever is a mere historical curiosity (PF:12). Furthermore, this historical curiosity has no significance, as ‘in the same moment I discover that I have known the truth from eternity without knowing it, in the same instant that moment is hidden in the eternal’ (PF:13). The teacher is negated, done away with, there is no relationship between the teacher and the student, and thus no education either. The teacher is not even the teacher of negation anymore. The student does not undergo any learning either, not only because there is no teacher, but ‘because there is no Here and no There, but only ... everywhere and nowhere’ (PF:13).

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<sup>169</sup> Kierkegaard manages here to show his unimpressedness with Christianity of his day and adds ‘[w]hat rare magnanimity – rare in our day, when the pastor is little more than the deacon’ (PF:11).

<sup>170</sup> I have already referred to Clement of Alexandria in a footnote at the beginning of chapter 2, but it is worthy to be reminded of his quotation in *Paedagogus*, ‘[i]t is then, as appears, the greatest of all lessons to know one’s self. For if one knows himself, he will know God; and knowing God, he will be made like God’ (2001:271 [Book III, chap. 1]).

<sup>171</sup> Here Climacus is close to Hegel who, in his introduction to *Philosophy of Mind* does attest it to refer not only to particular capacities of an individual, ‘[t]he knowledge it [know thyself] commands is knowledge of man’s genuine reality, as well as of genuine reality in and for itself-of the very *essence* as mind’ (2010a:3 [§377]).

#### 4.2.2. Kierkegaard's Climacian reading of the learning paradox

If for Socrates (or modernity, or Hegelianism, if we are to follow Hampson) the truth was always within the learner, then for Kierkegaard for it to be “true” learning, the truth must have been outside the learner (Tubbs, 2004:86) or rather the learner must have been outside the truth (PF:13). Noteworthy, Climacus, in presenting a contrary answer to the Socratic question begins with ‘examin[ing] the *relations* involved in the question: Can the truth be learned?’ (PF:13; emphasis added) foreshadowing the discussion in Tubbs (2004, 2014, 2017).

However, Kierkegaard as Climacus goes a step further, and describes the learner in a position not just outside of truth but as untruth (PF:13). This position arises directly from the Socratic understanding, as Arne Grøn has argued, that for Climacus ‘[t]he very idea that the truth is within us and can be reached through ourselves, becomes the core of being in untruth’ (2004:83). Kim (2012:29) reads Climacus here as: the learner is not outside, but merely polemical against the truth. Furthermore Kim (2012:34) claims their thesis to be that, in fact, the untruth is not outside the truth at all. While this provides for a synthesis of Kierkegaard’s polemic between truth and untruth, such reading however denies the difficulty present within the relationship of truth and untruth. Contra Kim, as I will argue extensively below, untruth has its own truth, but it is not the same as saying that untruth is not outside the truth.

Following from above discussion, it is important to observe that in chapter 2 a negative relation was still a relation (see section 2.4.2.), as Tubbs put it ‘[t]he register of difference is a relation of relation’ (2014:74) or, in my words, to separate something is to connect it in separation – where this connection is a third factor – the relation of relation. Here however, ‘if the moment is to acquire decisive significance, then the seeker up until that moment must not have possessed the truth, not even in the form of ignorance’ (PF:13). It is precisely this relationship of ignorance that was described as a negative relation of chapter 2. Yet here untruth seems to constitute not just a break from all relations on the learner’s part, for this would imply that some kind of relationship has existed in the first place, but *summa nihil* – no relations at all. Here is an important critique of Tubbs’ Hegelian statement ‘I am already other and the other is not me’ (2004:xxv) as there is no other, or rather the other is me and the “I am” is God, but God does not need me to self-define as he already does that within the Trinity. The critique is, of course, in danger of opposing itself in claiming here that it is already the relation of the relation – and it is doing exactly that. God learns of God from God. There is another relation of the relation present here, that is me as the author, speaking on behalf of the Trinity of what it does or does not need. However, I may say whatever I want to say, it does not mean that God is obliged to act upon what I (or two thousand years of Christian theology) have said. In other words, God is not dependent on my statements about God. Rather, it is me who is dependent on my statements about God. Nonetheless, in this talking about God, I am already learning about myself, in my relation of talking about God – which is doing theology. However, the issue here is of direct and indirect

communication. In my *learning* in talking about God, God is this *learning* as my experience of the difficulty of communication. This is why Kierkegaard needs to employ indirect communication, to be able to make this learning accessible also to those beyond himself, as direct communication of this learning is possible only for God and the single individual (more on this in chapter 5), but the single individual cannot express this relationship, just as Abraham of *Fear and Trembling* is unable. God needs to be *learned* as learning itself, that is, I learn *of* God from learning to know my relation to God. I can only indirectly make the other aware of this learning and present them with the difficulty, but I cannot be educated for another person.

In the above, I come close to the problem in Hegel, who, according to Pyper, uses the doctrine of the Trinity in order to argue that ‘God is the process of postulating another and reconciling it to oneself through love’ (2011:57). Where Kierkegaard and I differ from Hegel, is that although we can allow for this othering within the Trinity, Hegel goes further and postulates this othering between God and humanity as a condition of God’s self-knowledge as spirit.<sup>172</sup> In his 1831 *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* Hegel argues:

Thus God knows himself in humanity, and human beings, to the extent that they know themselves as spirit and in their truth, know themselves in God. This is the concept of religion, that God knows himself in spirit and spirit knows itself in God (1984b:465).

He further states ‘[t]his is also the meaning of the expression that God is love, i.e., knowing himself in an other of himself. In the loneliness of his being-for-self he feels himself needy and negated, and this deficiency is first overcome when he knows himself in the other’ (Hegel, 1984b:465). Once again, there is nothing controversial in the love in-between the persons of the Trinity and the othering it causes. The problem arises in claiming that God needs a human being to know himself. Pyper argues that for Hegel’s Christ-as-teacher ‘[t]he success of the communication requires that “a human being appears to consciousness as God, and God appears to it as a human being.”’ (2011:57). Furthermore, according to Pyper, for Hegel ‘humanity in the universal sense is implicitly to be defined as the unity of God and humanity’ (2011:57). The trinitarian doctrine has to be narrated carefully here, though once again, Kierkegaard would not so much be worried about the wording, but rather about what this doctrine does to a single individual. God indeed needs Christ, the God-man, to know oneself as God. Furthermore, perhaps, God needs humanity to be known. Although it could be claimed that he can be known in creation more generally. But these are precisely

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<sup>172</sup> Tubbs (2005:10) reads spirit in Hegel both as recognition *and* misrecognition of the other, and thus not a totality, but an opening. Tubbs also reads spirit in Kierkegaard as ‘the relation of the relation’ (2005:221), where spirit is the *work* of education. And this work ‘is our *own* thinking, and that the work is how we come to know ourselves’ (Tubbs, 2005:221; emphasis original). Spirit in Kierkegaard for Tubbs is thus what I have described to be the logic of education earlier in this thesis.

the murky waters of what Smith (2002) described at the beginning of this chapter: that the God of philosophers has to make himself *known*. To address this, we might be content with relation *without* possession that an emphasis on *know* can imply. In the end, here is a Kierkegaardian paradox present; in order not to say something about the essence of the “himself” of God, I have already presupposed the “himself” by drawing borders of what can and cannot be said in relation to God. I will return to the issue of Christology in Hegel and Kierkegaard in the next chapter.

The above contradiction is the untruth of me discovering the truth of my untruth. To restate once more, *untruth* is not a negation of truth, for that would imply that one was in truth; untruth is a total absence of truth in the first place. Climacus emphasises one in untruth ‘must not even be a seeker’ (PF:13) of truth. Furthermore, Climacus does not describe the learner to be *in* untruth [*i Usandhed*] but as *the* untruth [*han er Usandheden*],<sup>173</sup> hence once again emphasising the being of a person only as untruth.

Although, there seems to be a problem (let us call this “problem” a contradiction) in Climacus’ own argument in terms of relations. Climacus states that there would be no ‘use of reminding him of what he has not known and consequently cannot call to mind’ (PF:14) and yet in his illustration of what it means to be outside of truth the seeker is said to be ‘not coming toward it [the truth] like a proselyte, but going away from it’ (PF:13). To go away from something implies that one has a relationship to the point one departed from. However, that would be to conclude the reading too early, as for Climacus, it is indeed possible to have a relation in untruth, but this relation is not a relation toward truth but to untruth itself. The teacher, indeed a Socratic teacher, ‘cannot assist him to recollect that he actually does know the truth ... [but] can become the occasion of his recollecting is that he is untruth’ (PF:14). Furthermore, Climacus argues, even God as the teacher plays by these rules, and in terms of relation to untruth can only be a midwife, an occasion for recollection ‘because I can discover my own untruth only by myself, because only when *I* discover it is it discovered’ (PF:14; emphasis original). But does not untruth then become its own truth? A relation of relation? And if this is so, does not then Socratic reading described above is correct as in recollecting one thing the learner can recollect everything else? Does not then discovery of the truth of untruth discover all truth?

One way to resolve this question is to answer yes. Another is to claim that there is a God-truth and a human-truth. The third is not to resolve it but to learn from it. In the discovery of the truth of untruth, one discovers the process of education itself. I take this to be the meaning of Grøn’s ‘[i]f we cannot understand the paradox, then we will have to understand that we cannot understand. What is required is that we understand ourselves in this non-understanding’ (2004:84). The first approach then, in the discovery of untruth as its own truth, the learner discovers all human-truth. The self-knowledge then does indeed become God-

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<sup>173</sup> For a non-Danish speaker: the word for untruth *Usandhed* has a definite article *en* as the ending of the word.

knowledge (PF:11), where God is just another name for the totality of human knowledge as human-truth. The other way is to argue that Climacus is wrong in maintaining that Socratic relation is highest among the human beings. In fact, I argue, that it is the second type of relation – God relation – that is always already the only and the highest. In terms of every educational relation of a teacher, the teacher is always already *a* God for the student (the difficulty of this statement will be elaborated in section 4.3.) – be it reminding them of their untruth or imparting truth; and in terms of any relation to an *other*, God is present as the relation. In *Fragments*, Climacus is rehearsing it as “God as unknown,” and the relation to that unknown lies in stating the unknown. Climacus argues for the passion of the understanding, faced with the paradox that ‘the understanding cannot stop reaching it and being engaged with it, because wanting to express its relation to it by saying that this unknown does not exist will not do, since just saying that involves a relation’ (PF:44). This is at stake in the above discussion of knowing the “himself” of God. Thus even the approach of apophatic theology to God is not consistent, as in stating what God is not, they nonetheless relate to God in drawing a border around the unspoken emptiness that is God. The only logically consistent account would be not speaking at all.

Furthermore, as mentioned in the discussion of chapter 3, my position before the ultimately qualitatively different, and the recognition of my otherness is the basis of recognising the otherness of an other. To reiterate, in Kierkegaard’s words from *Works of Love*, ‘[t]o have distinctiveness is to believe in the distinctiveness of everyone else, because distinctiveness is not mine but is God’s gift by which he gives being to me, and he indeed gives to all, gives being to all’ (WL:271).

However, Climacus seems to anticipate the discussion above. Climacus is not interested with starting in the beginning,<sup>174</sup> refusing to ask how the learner and the teacher (the human and God) come to be related in the first place. Tubbs maintains that for Climacus ‘[t]he relation to God is already, now, that untruth’ (2004:83). Climacus starts in the middle – in existence – ‘inasmuch as the learner exists [*er til*], he is indeed created, and, accordingly, God must have given him the condition for understanding the truth’ (PF:15). Or in rather Kantian language, Climacus states, ‘the condition and the question contain the conditioned and the answer’ (PF:14). The difference that Climacus opens up to the Socratic answer above could be stated as follows: to discover the truth of one’s untruth is indeed

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<sup>174</sup> Climacus mocks philosophers and theologians who want to start in the beginning and demonstrate the existence of God. He argues:

If, at the moment he is supposed to begin demonstration, it is not totally undecided whether the god exists or not, then, of course, he does not demonstrate it, and if that is the situation in the beginning, then he never does make a beginning – partly for fear that he will not succeed because the god may not exist, and partly because he has nothing with which to begin (PF:43–44).

And if the existence of God was assumed, then the beginning has already taken place and the scholar comes too late.

possible, but *contra* Socrates this does not lead one to pursue the discovery of all truth. Rather, it is to be ‘polemical against the truth, which is expressed by saying that he himself has forfeited and is forfeiting the condition’ (PF:15). The learner is thus ‘untruth and [is] that through one’s own fault’ (PF:15). This is what Climacus calls “sin.” The human being was given the truth “in the beginning,” but since humans are not living in truth, they must have lost it somewhere. God did not take it away, nor was it an accident (for why would they do that?), hence it ‘must therefore have been due to himself’ (PF:15). I was therefore correct in pointing out that moving away from truth constitutes a relation to a point of departure.

The profoundly Christian answer then is that one cannot turn around and go back to the truth; neither does one want to, as Climacus reminds us that the person is polemical against the truth. Hence, God has to bring it back once again. God does precisely that in Jesus Christ, but furthermore, in doing so, the human being is born *again*, just “like” he was born the first time and received the truth. In education, then also the God-teacher acts on the students like Jesus Christ to give them truth, and the students are born. Kierkegaard is mindful of the idea that *know thyself* in a person arises from their relationship to God. Elsewhere he writes, ‘all deeper and more inward self-knowledge is under divine guidance and continually sees the finger of God that points to him. To miss one letter confuses the whole word’ (EUD:276). Kierkegaard writes ‘self-knowledge is a difficult matter; although it is easy to understand the rest of the world, the understanding suddenly changes very substantially when it pertains to oneself’ (EUD:275), because, to restate what was said above, in the understanding of oneself, one is related to God.

#### 4.2.3. Teacher

Climacus argues that the human being is essentially free, and in this freedom in-turn lies a danger for the human being. Climacus positions the person between the choice of truth and untruth, and once the free choice of untruth is made, the freedom which that human being once possessed becomes worthless. One is unable to purchase, that is exchange untruth for truth, though both cost the same – free choice (PF:16–17). The person imprisons themselves (PF:17), ‘because to be free from the truth is indeed to be excluded, and to be excluded by oneself is indeed to be bound’ (PF:15).<sup>175</sup> The teacher is then needed who can give both ‘the condition again and along with it the truth’ (PF:17), as well as to deliver the person from imprisonment (PF:17) – that teacher is both a *saviour* and a *deliverer* (PF:17). But for Climacus, the teacher is also a *reconciler* (PF:17) as in un-freedom the person becomes guilty. The teacher and student relationship reaches its peak in that the ‘teacher such as that [which was described], the learner will never be able to forget’ (PF:17) because the moment of their encounter changes

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<sup>175</sup> Hampson (2013:67) reads Climacus here as being very Lutheran. For her exposition of Luther’s idea on the bondage of the will see p.104 of her book.

everything (more on the moment in section 4.3.5.). The moment of their encounter ‘is unique ... it is short and temporal ... and yet it is decisive, and yet it is filled with the eternal’ (PF:18). It is important that Climacus emphasises temporality here, as a temporal encounter is an encounter in history; ‘[t]he object of faith, then, is not an ahistorical teaching but rather a historical teacher; as such, the teacher cannot be discarded as in the Socratic’ (Smith, 2002:88). Furthermore, with clear implications for education, Climacus argues that the Socratic ‘teacher certainly can evaluate the learner with respect to whether or not he is making progress’ (PF:18) but cannot judge the student, because this kind of teacher has not given the student the essential (the conditions and the truth). But our God-teacher, who gives both the truth and the conditions for understanding the truth, can – and thus is a *judge*.

It is important to note that, although this Teacher-Student relationship reaches its peak now, Kierkegaard will later, in *Upbuilding Discourses* especially, bring that relationship back down to the bottom of the humility and lowliness of the teacher and of the student.<sup>176</sup> Interestingly, in 1843, Kierkegaard published *Two*, *Three*, and then *Four Upbuilding Discourses*, and out of those nine, in total, three are concerned with *Every Good and Every Perfect Gift [that] Is from Above*. While there the humility of the teacher is emphasised, in the very first discourse, *The Expectancy of Faith*, Kierkegaard brings to the fore the humility of a student. Regarding faith, Kierkegaard writes that ‘[o]ne person can do much for another, but he cannot give him faith’ (EUD:12). If, in the previous chapter of this thesis, faith was necessary as a condition for knowledge, then here the faith itself must be taught, in light of the discussion of *Fragments* above, where the teacher needs to give both the truth and the conditions for understanding it. Kierkegaard continues:

We hear all kinds of talk in this world. One person says, “I am self-educated; I do not owe anything to anyone” – and he thinks he dares to pride himself on that. Another says, “That distinguished master was my teacher, and I count it an honor to dare to call myself his pupil” – and he thinks he can take pride in that (EUD:12).

One can recognise the Socratic teacher in there, as well as a God-teacher at the peak of the relationship of dependence of student upon the teacher (be the student one’s own teacher or having God-teacher teach them). However, Kierkegaard chooses not to pass judgement on ‘how legitimate this kind of talk is’ (EUD:12),

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<sup>176</sup> A parallel can be drawn to the description of Jesus in Philippians 2:5–8:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.

Climacus would explore the themes of the incarnation and the form of a slave/servant later, as well as what it means to “take on a form.” For further discussion, see section 4.3. of this thesis.

thus with irony implying it is not legitimate, and presents a different type of student:

But we, devout listeners, we who were too insignificant to become pupils, what should we say if a man said, “When people disdained me, I went to God; he became my teacher, and this is my salvation, my joy, my pride” (EUD:12).

Later in the *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses* Kierkegaard calls on the teachers to be ‘*even more insignificant than the gift*’ (EUD:147; emphasis original) of learning the truth they are to give, or to be mindful that in giving the gift they also deprive the student of the gift ‘since by giving him the highest, I would be depriving him of the highest, because the highest was that he could give it to himself’ (EUD:15). While here, in the beginning, the same is demanded of students to be ‘too insignificant to become pupils’ (EUD:12). The teacher ought to be in humility before the student and before the gift they are to give, and the student ought to be in humility before the teacher and the gift they are to receive. And yet, in this humility they are to find their joy and pride.

#### 4.2.4. Student

Danish word *Discipel*<sup>177</sup> is an interesting one for this discussion. According to the editors of *Philosophical Fragments*, it can mean pupil, learner, apprentice, follower, and disciple (PF:281; note 38). The word, in the context of the teacher-student relationship, is also translated as the student.

Stanley Hauerwas (2020), in his discussion of truth in Kierkegaard, emphasises that the truth understood as Jesus Christ has a transformative effect on the person. The truth was ‘not a collection of sentences, nor a definition of concepts, but rather truth in its essence is the reduplication in us that his [Jesus’] life is the very being of truth’ (Hauerwas, 2020:448). Hauerwas elaborates that this transformation was the condition of one becoming Christ’s disciple, and here is the interesting part – ‘[a] disciple may appear to be a student, but a student may learn without being transformed’ (2020:448). It is therefore important to consider the dialectical play that the Danish word Kierkegaard was using already had within itself between the student and the disciple. Hauerwas (2020:448) argues that Kierkegaard was well aware that his contemporaries would find such an idea of truth extreme. I would add that it is still the case today that such a conception of truth, but also of the relationship demanded of the teacher and student-as-disciple, can be seen as extreme.<sup>178</sup> It puts an enormous demand on professional

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<sup>177</sup> There exists a similar dialectical play in the Danish word for the teacher. Danish *Lærer* ‘refers primarily to a person who proclaims something, especially in the religious sense of one who preaches, but can refer more generally to one who spreads information. The word also refers to a person who instructs or educates, typically in a school setting’ (Brake, 2015:135). Danish parallels Estonian then, where *õpetaja* [teacher] is also a title used by Lutheran clergy.

<sup>178</sup> See Hampson’s (2013:82–100) critique of *Philosophical Fragments* as an example.

ethics between the teacher and the student. But, as Climacus does not tire of reminding the reader:

We shall not be in a hurry with the answer, for someone who because of prolonged pondering never comes up with an answer is not the only one who fails to answer – so too the one who admittedly manifests a marvelous quickness in answering but not the desirable slowness in considering the *difficulty* before explaining it (PF:20; emphasis added).

Kierkegaard as Climacus is well aware that what he is proposing is difficult, but in this difficulty lies the education of this thesis, of the author, and of the reader, but also of any learning worthy of the name (Higton, 2012).

The experience of the student will be explored separately later in this chapter. I now turn to Tubbs' reading of the learning paradox before coming back to re-reading of *Fragments* and examining Climacus' poetical venture of God being the teacher and saviour, and the teacher-student relationships as presented in the text. It is there where Climacus does not necessarily solve the paradox, but where his and our learning from the paradox happens.

#### 4.2.5. Nigel Tubbs' reading of the learning paradox

Tubbs is addressing Climacus' question 'Can the truth be learned?' (PF:9) directly in his *Philosophy's Higher Education* (2004:86 onwards). Tubbs places the Socratic answer to the paradox provided by Climacus into the aesthetic sphere of immediate existence (or temporality) through recollection acting as 'assimilation of the teacher's work into eternity' (2004:86). For this not to be the case, Tubbs (2004:86) reads the "moment of decisive significance" to be the mediation of eternity, and poses the paradox of learning anew as the relation between this aesthetic immediacy of temporality and the mediation of eternity. Hence, we are faced back with the Climacian '[i]t appears that if the truth is learned (in the moment) then it is never learned as (eternal) truth and if the truth not learned (in the moment) it is never learned at all' (Tubbs, 2004:86). Along with Climacus, Tubbs maintains that the learner does not possess the truth, the consequences of that being that '[r]ecollection and moment, like eternity and the temporal, and immediacy and mediation, cannot co-exist' (2004:86).<sup>179</sup> In other words, Tubbs has re-read Climacus' paradox of learning (of truth) as a paradox of relations shown above, where the truth and untruth mirror those relations. This

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<sup>179</sup> Howes (2013:116) has suggested that the idea of education theorised by Tubbs is that God is recollection (in a Hegelian sense) in this new philosophical learning, and this idea of God is the possible point of divergence between Tubbs (philosophy) and Williams (theology). It is possible to view my thesis as an examination of this divergence between philosophy and theology from a theological perspective, contra Howes' philosophical one. Though, to be true to my reading of Kierkegaard and the *education* presented in this thesis, such confrontation is unnecessary and is better addressed by allowing two voices of theology and philosophy to speak the truth of their relationship as education.

is not to say that, for example, immediacy is truth and mediation is untruth, but rather that the same difficulty of seeking, knowing, and establishing which position is truth or untruth is present in those relations. There is a truth in those relations, as well as untruth which is once again its own truth. Those relations, by virtue of being relations, always already carry their own paradox. Earlier in his study of Kierkegaard, Tubbs has also argued that paradoxically, they do co-exist in marriage, doubt, faith, and sin (2004:87), and thus one is faced with the paradox throughout. I will briefly elaborate on how the paradoxes of relations arise for Tubbs in these four cases.

#### 4.2.5.1. Immediacy and Mediation & Reality and Ideality

The paradox in marriage is explored by Tubbs through Kierkegaard as Hilarius Bookbinder's *Stages on Life's Way*, where falling in love is seen as immediate and spontaneous, but marriage requires a decision, a reflection, to spontaneously love every day in marriage (2004:76; see also SLW:123). Marriage, mediating the experience of the spontaneity of love, was therefore in danger of destroying love, and yet, at the same time, it was supposed to be the *telos* of love.

The paradox in doubt is evident in *Johannes Climacus*, where Johannes resolved to doubt everything and comes to the same "learning paradox" that 'if one doubts, then it must be because doubt has already existed' (Tubbs, 2004:77; see also PF:139) and hence one does not begin with doubt, *contra* what Kierkegaard sees as Cartesian dictum that 'philosophy begins with doubt' (PF:144; compare PF:133). Tubbs (2004:77) argues that what Johannes experiences here is what Hegel stated in *Science of Logic*, 'that there is nothing in heaven or nature or spirit or anywhere else that does not contain just as much [both] immediacy as mediation' (Hegel, 2010b:46 [21.54]; emphasis removed, translation modified see footnote).<sup>180</sup> Tubbs argues that Johannes concluded that these paradoxes truly presented – and one had to honestly conclude – an impossibility (PF:143), and 'Kierkegaard learns of these impossibilities as philosophy's higher education' (2004:78). (I would also refer the reader to the previous chapter of this thesis where the Kierkegaardian idea of impossibility was explored, maintaining that things are impossible and yet for God everything is possible).

The paradoxes<sup>181</sup> of marriage and doubt are further re-emphasised by Tubbs not only as the contradiction of immediacy and mediation but also as a

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<sup>180</sup> Tubbs is using a different edition that reads: '[t]here is nothing, nothing in heaven or in nature or mind or anywhere else which does not equally contain both immediacy and mediation' (2004:77). I have therefore modified the translation to include "both" because it better reflects Tubbs' argument and works as an opposite to the Kierkegaardian project of contradictions and dialectics either/or – both/and.

<sup>181</sup> Elsewhere, Tubbs would argue that for Kierkegaard (as is for Hegel), those are not just paradoxes, but furthermore 'the absolute [is] known in the torn halves of relations of process and product, direct and indirect communication, immediacy and mediation, and ... religiousness A and B' (2005:218).

contradiction of reality and ideality, where, in fact, immediacy is reality and mediation ideality (as an expression of reality) (2004:81–82). Tubbs here follows Kierkegaard in *Johannes Climacus*, where Kierkegaard states ‘[w]hat, then, is immediacy? It is reality itself ... The moment I make a statement about reality, contradiction is present, for what I say is ideality’ (PF:167–168) as one has mediated reality in language ‘immediacy is reality; language is ideality’ (PF:168). For Tubbs, Kierkegaard ‘is covering the well trodden path of how the object in itself can be known as an object for us, or how the dialectic of immediacy and mediation plays itself out as our higher education’ (2004:82). This constitutes the definition of Kierkegaardian project according to Tubbs.

Tubbs further explores two paradoxes mentioned above – sin and faith – as the nature of the dialectic of immediacy and mediation (2004:82). Tubbs, referring to *Fear and Trembling*, reads Abraham’s story as both dialectical and non-dialectical:

the non-dialectical, understanding the story of Abraham on Mount Moriah, ready and willing to sacrifice – no, to kill – his own son is a story of madness and murder ... the dialectical understanding Abraham represents the truth of the contradiction that has to be lived between immediacy and mediation. It is only when the anxiety of this paradox is included in the story that Abraham appears as he really is (2004:82).

Thus, Tubbs equates non-dialectical with existence in the aesthetic sphere and the dialectic with the paradoxical religious, as ‘the ethical – cannot express the eternal’ (2004:83), and hence the need for the Kierkegaardian famous teleological suspension of the ethical. In other words, Tubbs views our (and Johannes de Silentio’s) relation to Abraham through the prism of the stages of existence (see this thesis section 3.2.) and examines the truth of those relations through each of these spheres. Each of the relations has its own truth, be it Abraham as a murderer or Abraham as the knight of faith, but the truth of these relations does not necessarily become our truth. Each reader of *Fear and Trembling*, although in relation to the book does possess a truth, is not necessarily moved by the paradox to learn from the paradox. One can understand Abraham’s actions, and one can understand the problematics that Kierkegaard is laying out, but one does not understand the paradox of faith nor Abraham. The paradox of faith: Abraham who ‘absurdly and by faith alone, believes that by sacrificing his son he will *not* lose him’ (2004:83; emphasis original). But there is another paradox of faith present here – this time for the author-narrator of the book Johannes de Silentio – who cannot understand Abraham and make the movement of faith (Tubbs, 2004:84). This time, we, the readers, are Johannes. Thus, Tubbs reads the *teleological* suspension of the ethical:

to hold apart in contradiction that which is a “unity” in contradiction ... not a choice of something particular ... rather, to choose the universality of the paradox, or to choose the conditions of the possibility of choosing. It is to choose the self that must choose that it has already chosen (2004:97).

Therefore, there is in the teleological suspension of the ethical, the kind of Kierkegaardian education this thesis is pursuing, a relation of relation – the choosing of the self already chosen – the self as its own presupposition.

The paradox of sin is the subject of Kierkegaard's as Vigilius Haufniensis work *The Concept of Anxiety*. If sin is just like faith immediate, then they both 'lose[] by being regarded as the immediate, since it has been deprived of what lawfully belongs to it, namely, its historical presupposition' (CA:10). Tubbs (2004:84) names this "historical presupposition" as the relation between reality and ideality. Following Haufniensis, Tubbs argues

If Adam sins as a consequence of original sin, that is, immediately, then every man, every generation after him, sins as a condition of that immediacy [however] ... As marriage cannot be the immediacy of love, so our sin cannot be the "same" as Adam's (2004:85).

What is to be understood as a mediated sin of Adam? What is the relation of Adam's sin to our sin? Before exploring the question Haufniensis poses the same problem of relation for Adam himself – how does the original sin relate to all other of Adam's sins (CA:28)? Haufniensis leaves it open as a problem and proceeds to argue that any explanation of Adam's sin has to refer to the explanation of original sin and vice versa. In doing so, Haufniensis introduces another paradox, 'that man is *individuum* and as such simultaneously himself and the whole race, and in such a way that the whole race participates in the individual and the individual in the whole race ... At every moment, the individual is both himself and the race' (CA:28). This leads him to pick up a traditional understanding (according to Haufniensis) of original sin and the relation between Adam's and our sin – 'Adam's sin conditions sinfulness as a consequence, the other first sin presupposes sinfulness as a state' (CA:30). But Haufniensis immediately opposes it, as it would go against what he just stated about the relation of individual and the race – '[w]ere this so, Adam would actually stand outside the race, and the race would not have begun with him but would have had a beginning outside itself' (CA:30). Hence Tubbs (2004:84) argues that the unity of our sin to Adam's is not the "more" of Adam's sin.

Hence, Adam's sin – the original sin – is not immediate in us but mediated. As Haufniensis puts it, 'sin came into the world as sin' (CA:22), which means that sin presupposes itself. Thus, the paradox is in that for sin to come into the world, there had to be sin. Haufniensis states that '[t]he Genesis story presents the only dialectically consistent view ... *Sin came into the world by a sin*' (CA:32; emphasis original). Tubbs argues that, although it is the only dialectically consistent view, the dialectical

"logic" does not understand the contradiction either. In logic what is immediate is annulled by the mediacy that is reflection. This is why logic cannot synthesize its opposites. As seen above, the synthesis requires the leap of faith that logic cannot make (2004:85).

The reader is invited by Kierkegaard (and Tubbs) to learn from the paradox *of* the paradox, of the kind of reality (that is sin) it talks of, but this learning is a leap of faith. Just as the teleological suspension of the ethical became educational, so does sin, as its own presupposition plays out this logic of education.

#### 4.2.5.2. Paradox as-and-of-is education

Returning to the Socratic learning paradox above, to re-state, the paradox of “whether truth can be learned” is within the logic of the paradox of the impossibility of immediacy and mediation (Tubbs, 2004:86). In general, Tubbs is in agreement with Climacus’ reading of Socratic recollection and pays little attention (in this work) to the God-teacher, who is also subjected to Kierkegaard’s paradoxical logic and the Hegelian paradigm of immediacy and mediation. Where Tubbs does pick up on God, it is in Kierkegaard’s discussion of “God as Teacher and Saviour” that this thesis will examine below. For now, it is important to emphasise Tubbs’ insistence on the educational nature of the paradox. Tubbs reminds the reader of the words of Climacus ‘[e]verything it says about the paradox it has learned from the paradox’ (PF:53). The negative, the paradox of untruth having its own truth as argued by me above, is precisely this learning.

### 4.3. God as Teacher and Saviour

So far, this chapter has provided a Climacian Socratic, Climacian own, and Climacian Tubbsian answer to the learning paradox. Furthermore, the relationship between the teacher and the student has come into the spotlight. Smith, in his examination of phenomenology and the ability to talk about the transcendent, asks a further question with regard to the learning paradox: ‘[h]ow will God, who is unknown, wholly other, “appear” in a way that will make a relation with the learner possible?’ (2002:162). The answer that Kierkegaard as Climacus provided is through equality and unity that, however, does not result in sameness (PF:25).<sup>182</sup> Thus, Smith asks further ‘How, then, would it be possible to establish “equality” between the teacher and learner *without*, however, *destroying the difference*?’ (2002:162; emphasis original). An important clarification is in order: it is permissible to speak of “sameness” when talking about incarnate God, albeit cautiously, that is Jesus Christ is God and is human. In his humanity he is the same as a human being, and yet different because he is also God, or of God-teacher as God *is* the teacher, the same as the teacher. In a sense, although it is possible to talk about sameness in general, it is impossible in particular. Each individual is a single individual (or a special individual to borrow a phrase from *The Book on Adler*). However, the difference between Christ and the rest of humanity is a qualitative difference and a paradoxical difference. Christ, the

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<sup>182</sup> Elsewhere Kierkegaard imaginatively differentiates between equality in the political sphere (impossibility) and the religious (possible) (PV:103–104).

same – a man, but also qualitatively different – God. Hampson (2013:84–85), in her critique of *Fragments*, especially emphasises the difference between “traditional” Chalcedonian (e.g. St Gregory of Nyssa) Christology and of Enlightenment Christology. Kierkegaard is trying to resuscitate what he thinks is the Christological orthodoxy, especially *contra* Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher who

is already abandoning the classical Christian categories of “substance” and “nature”, attempting to express Christ’s uniqueness in other ways. Thus he speaks in terms of Christ’s self-awareness as a person, one of ourselves, however, in Christ’s case having a “unique” because unclouded consciousness of God (Hampson, 2013:85).

This section now picks up where the discussion of the Climacian teacher left off, with Christ being that specific teacher, who, while being God, also became a lowly and insignificant human being. Climacus is clear that the unknown cannot be known by the human, that is, this process of education I am describing is enacted and achieved by the teacher; it would never come to mind to a human-student to begin to go looking. God is the Truth that he is to teach, he is also ‘[d]efined as the absolutely different’ (PF:45). However, the person cannot think the absolutely different (PF:45). Climacus argues that the human being cannot recognise God even if God would be right under one’s nose as one does not know God or the difference (PF:45–46). Hence, although it was stated above that there is a possibility for the relation of a human being to untruth, the human has absolutely no idea what they are related to or that they even are related as ‘in defining the unknown as the different the understanding ultimately goes astray and confuses the difference with likeness’ (PF:46). The understanding of both truth and untruth is brought about by God, because our understanding is incapable to grasp the difference.

#### 4.3.1. Why Socrates is not Christ?

Climacus begins his exploration of the equality between the teacher and student with Socrates. Contrary to earlier discussion in *Fragments*, where Socrates was a title for a representation of an epistemological position (as mentioned above of Hegelianism, Modernism), here Climacus treats Socrates as an “actual” example of a teacher.

Here, Climacus maintains that the relationship Socrates has to the students is the highest that one human being can have to another (PF:24), thus situating Socrates within the confines of the “Socratic” relation already described. Kierkegaard as Climacus in *Fragments* is being more generous to Socrates than Kierkegaard in *The Concept of Irony*. This begs the question, where is Kierkegaard being ironic, in *Fragments*, in *Irony*, or in both?

In *The Concept of Irony* Kierkegaard argues that ‘[t]hus in and by itself his refusal to accept money for his instruction can certainly not be regarded as anything so extraordinarily superior, nor can it automatically be regarded as an absolute sign of the absolute worth of his instruction’ (CI:186). Kierkegaard

admits that Socrates demonstrates the irony in not accepting payment: since he knew nothing, there was nothing to pay for (CI:187). The other irony present from which everything stems is stated earlier in *Irony* that Socrates, who claimed to be no one's teacher, had students around him, but it is they who had a relationship with him, and not vice versa (CI:146).

In *Fragments*, however, Climacus praises Socrates' attitude towards teaching. First of all, Climacus strongly maintains that Socrates is a teacher:

Himself influenced by circumstances, he in turn exerted an influence upon them. In accomplishing his task, he satisfied the claims within himself just as much as he satisfied the claims other people might have on him. Understood in this way – and this was indeed the Socratic understanding – the teacher stands in a reciprocal relation, inasmuch as life and its situations are the occasion for him to become a teacher and he in turn the occasion for others to learn something (PF:23).

Note how it is different to *Irony* where, at least from Socrates' perspective, Socrates the teacher did not form a relationship with the students, here the "reciprocal relation" between them is named as "indeed the Socratic understanding." With regards to not taking payment for instruction, Climacus also seems to have had a change of heart '[h]is relation, therefore, is at all times marked by ... sympathy ... and therefore he refused to accept honor or honorific appointments or money for his teaching' (PF:23). Furthermore, if in *Irony* it was nothing extraordinary, then here '[w]hat rare contentment – how rare today, when no amount of money can be large enough and no laurels splendid enough to be sufficient reward for the gloriousness of teaching' (PF:23).

However, it is in this that the equality of a Socratic teacher and students is found. They are in a reciprocal relation – they need each other in order to be who they are – the student is the truth of the teacher, and the teacher is the truth of the student. Climacus' claim is that Socrates understands this and this is hence why he is unable to take payment for his teaching, as his teaching is as much the student's as his own.

This is not the case however for the God-teacher 'as the god needs no pupil in order to understand himself' (PF:24). God-teacher is not in a reciprocal relation of mutual dependence with the student, there is no equality by virtue of them just being who they are, equality has to be achieved by some other means. What moves God, what makes God form a relationship with a human (or student) is love. 'The love, then, must be for the learner and the goal must be to win him' (PF:25), declares Climacus, and adds 'for only in love is the different made equal, and only in equality or in unity is there understanding' (PF:25). What differentiates a teacher and God-teacher, according to Climacus, is perfect mutual understanding between God-teacher and a human (PF:25).

As stated above, the teacher is the truth of the student, and the student is the truth of the teacher, but if the teacher can have awareness that he is only the

teacher because they have the student,<sup>183</sup> the student cannot have such awareness on their own unless the teacher is to become the truth of the student. As for the student to gain such awareness, the teacher ought to bring the truth to them – in the case of Socrates through recollection – but through this, the teacher is no longer the teacher – the relationship is annulled – as the student is one’s own possessor of truth and one’s own teacher. Therefore, Hegelian self-consciousness of the slave (as the student), who only requires recollection (Pyper, 2011:60), does not work with God. The God-teacher is needed to bring the truth and the condition for understanding of truth (and of untruth) to the student. And this is to go beyond Tubbs’ reading of Kierkegaard, who, although going beyond the Socratic through the teacher of repetition, still maintains that ‘the teacher knows that the truth of a student’s own development is not the teacher’s to give’ (2005:222).

To reiterate Climacus, God(-teacher) moves out of love and not out of necessity to discover the truth of God in the student as a condition of God’s self-understanding. I read here Climacus’ discussion of *need* to be *necessity*. ‘But if he moves himself, then there of course is no need that moves him, as if he himself could not endure silence but was compelled to burst into speech’ (PF:24). This is rather different to Hegel for whom ‘God must reveal himself to humanity. That he will do so is, for Hegel, inevitable. It is a necessary consequence of God’s being’ (Pyper, 2011:57). Hampson in her comparison of Hegel and Kierkegaard also sees a problem:

Hegel believes that the necessary must actualize itself, come into being; consequently, no distinction is to be made between that which exists and the real. Kierkegaard profoundly disagrees, thinking such a proposition to undermine freedom. The incarnation is an act of God freely undertaken on account of his love for humankind (2013:77).

Both Hegel and Kierkegaard play with the possibility, actuality and necessity, albeit differently. For Hegel, interaction of actuality and possibility constitutes necessity which is the essence of freedom (Pyper, 2011:62). Kierkegaard takes the opposite view and sees necessity as a negation of freedom, where actuality is the unity of possibility and necessity (Pyper, 2011:62, see also SUD:55). Kierkegaard does not view possibility as the sum of necessary conditions preceding actuality, but rather as infinite (Pyper, 2011:62). Thus, Pyper argues, ‘Hegel’s God is free because he can manifest his necessity; Kierkegaard’s is free because

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<sup>183</sup> However, teachers often fail even at that. Tubbs demonstrates this irony in part I of his *Contradiction of Enlightenment* (1997) where even progressive teachers of critique (broadly defined from Rousseau to Marx to Neil to Freire to Giroux) fail to see how in critiquing the mastery of the teaching, they are enacting a new form of mastery as their critique. However, if such teachers would realise this irony and experience the despair of inevitability, then this experience can become their *philosophy of the teacher*, and they themselves a philosophical teacher (for more see Tubbs, 2005).

he has infinite possibility' (2011:62). In the words of Anti-Climacus 'since everything is possible for God, then God is this – that everything is possible' (SUD, 40).

Climacus is very aware of the ethical problems this elevation of the God-teacher, once again, poses as 'this love is basically unhappy, for they are very unequal' (PF:25). The teacher and the student, God and human, may have love, but in lacking equality<sup>184</sup> lack understanding. This is an unhappy love and '[t]he unhappiness is the result not of the lovers' being unable to have each other but of their being unable to understand each other' (PF:25). Here Tubbs' treatment of Kierkegaard catches up with this thesis, as he posits with regards to this quotation of *Fragments*, that '[t]his equality in inequality is the vocation of Kierkegaard's philosophical teacher' (2005:224). The challenge for God then is to 'be able to make himself understood – [and it] is not so easy if he is not to destroy that which is different' (PF:25). This is why Socrates is not Christ, or in this case God-teacher, because Socrates understood the student as one's own truth, and the student understood Socrates as their own truth. '[H]e owed me just as much as I owed him' (PF:24), but there is no such reciprocal ownership for God. Socrates being described now is beyond the "Socratic," but this reading of Socrates is precisely Tubbs' reading in the above paragraph. God, however, loves unconditionally, and not as conditioned by the need to understand oneself through the human being, or any other necessity, but love. God, however, wills to be understood by humans and, in this, chooses to be revealed as a human being through the human being. Love is God's *freedom* to be known. Here is an opposition of Kierkegaard's paradoxical logic to Hegel's necessity and Kant's necessity (Inwood, 1992:197–198), dependent on how much Kierkegaard (and his commentators) (mis)understands Hegel's concept of "necessity" as shown in the discussion above. Love is a necessity within the Trinity, but when love goes beyond the Trinity, it becomes a radical freedom, a breaking in formal logic.

The discussion of the Virgin Mary's position in the incarnation of Jesus is an interesting point of critique, as it raises the question – did God then need a human being in order for Jesus to become incarnate God-human? In other words, was a human being (in this case Mary) necessary for God to understand himself (to become) as Jesus Christ? Kierkegaard does comment on Mary in various parts of

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<sup>184</sup> Kierkegaard, in the Preface to his *The Single Individual* (published posthumously), discusses the idea of equality in the political sphere and the religious sphere. Kierkegaard names the sphere where politics operate to be 'the medium of *world-likeness* [*Verds-Lighed*]' (PV:103). After some play with words, Kierkegaard argues, that '[i]f perfect equality, likeness, should be achieved, then *worldliness* [*Verdslighed*] would have to be completely eradicated' (PV:104; emphasis original). Since worldliness has to be completely eradicated, politics is of no use. He proceeds to argue that

Ultimately only the essentially religious can with the help of eternity effect human equality [*Menneske-Lighed*], the godly, the essential, the not-worldly, the true, the only possible human equality; and this is also why – be it said to its glorification – the essentially religious is the true humanity [*Menneskelighed*] (PV:104).

The equality pursued here then is also not political equality, but rather equality in a religious sphere of existence.

his authorship. In *The Book on Adler* he specifically raises the point of Mary needing nine months to carry Jesus (BA:167, see footnote). There, however, Kierkegaard does not provide us with an answer, rather in what is usual by now – invites to learn from the paradox.

[T]he whole thing was certainly a miracle – why, then, should this child take nine months like other children? Oh, what a test for faith and humility, that even that which is divine uses the slowness of time! See, this was the cross. But Mary was the humble believer; through faith and humility she came to herself, although everything was miraculous. She remained the same quiet, humble woman. She did not ask which day we would write down, what time it would be – she believed! (BA:168, footnote).

Mary's faith is emphasised, she believes the miracle, and carries the child for nine months – she makes a leap of faith by virtue of the paradox. The paradoxical nature of her childbearing is emphasised in *Fear and Trembling* '[t]o be sure, Mary bore the child wondrously, but she nevertheless did it "after the manner of women," and such a time is one of anxiety, distress, and paradox' (FT/R:65). This is why Kierkegaard as Johannes de Silentio brings her and Abraham as examples of the knight of faith. Mary, just like Abraham, is unable to communicate her condition to anyone '[t]he angel went only to Mary, and no one could understand her' (FT/R:65). We know from the Gospel story that the angel communicated also to Joseph what has happened to Mary, but just as de Silentio emphasised with relation to Abraham's comment to Isaac – if Isaac cannot understand him, Abraham is not really communicating although he may be saying things (FT/R:118-119), so it is with the angel and Joseph – does Joseph really understand the paradox the angel is communicating to him? Thus, at least here, it could be claimed that God does indeed need a human being to become God-human, that is, to know oneself as a human. What's more, the specific human being – Mary, chooses to make this God known (Allen, 2009:54). But, although in the instance of incarnation God does appear to need a human being, to know himself as incarnate God, God still does not need a human being to know himself within the Trinity. Rather, as is argued in this chapter, God is being moved out of love to become incarnate.<sup>185</sup> Paradoxically, however, it has to be admitted, that God could have chosen to become incarnate without the need of a woman. But even the relationship between God and a human being as we have now is '[t]he paradoxical-religious relation (which, quite rightly, cannot be thought but only be believed)' (BA:181; emphasis removed).

With this, the thesis has made a full circle (a revolution) and come back to the discussion at the beginning of section 4.2.2. on the learning paradox and claiming to speak on behalf of "himself" of God. The paradox has manifested itself once

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<sup>185</sup> The issue is whether this "being moved" is a necessity. However, on Kierkegaard's account, as God chose in freedom to become incarnate, God could have also chosen not to, and therefore in this sense love as "being moved" is not a necessity. Yet the love itself is its own necessity, and God, in choosing love, also chooses the necessity of love.

more, and thus, it has to be asked what is to be learned from it in this repetition. What is learned in the second reading in the difference between Socrates and Christ, is the difference between necessity and freedom. The Socratic teacher learns from the paradox one's truth as necessity and, importantly, the student learns from the paradox one's truth as necessity. The God-teacher learns from the paradox one's truth as freedom, while the student still learns from the paradox one's truth as necessity. This is the unhappiness of lovers, that they are unable to understand each other in freedom.

### 4.3.2. A relationship of love vs love

The examination now proceeds to explore whether this mutual understanding in freedom is indeed possible. The understanding in mind here is what was described in section 4.2.2. that the student is untruth as the teacher is the truth of them, and the teacher is untruth as the student is untruth of them. The frustration of this examination, however, only reinforces this freedom and necessity relation. Climacus, and hence this study also, always approach the student (or the beloved) from the position of God/the teacher/lover. This precisely reinforces *freedom* of the latter and *necessity* of the former. The inquiry is never from the student's point of view, because the student can only (necessity) begin to know himself in relation to the teacher. Now, having said that, let's proceed to see if there is more to be learned from the paradox even about this.

Climacus provides a fairy tale (PF:26–27), an example, of love between a king and a lowly maiden. The king loves her. The king has a lot of power, and everyone fears him and does not dare to speak out against the king's decision to marry a nobody, a lowly maiden – though, there seems to be a possibility that they were not so amused at the marriage and simply obeyed out of fear; 'no cringing courtier ... dared to hurt his feelings lest his own head be crushed' (PF:26–27). Climacus celebrates the erotic love within this relationship that is 'jubilant when it unites equal and equal and is triumphant when it makes equal in erotic love that which was unequal' (PF:27).

However, a concern awakens in the king's soul, one that he could not relay to anyone else in order to consult with. The king in this story very much mirrors Abraham in *Fear and Trembling* as both of them are unable to share their concerns with anyone. The concern of the king was 'whether the girl would be made happy by this, whether she would acquire a bold confidence never to remember what the king only wished to forget – that he was the king and she had been a lowly maiden' (PF:27). The king is concerned, that an occasional spontaneous recollection by the girl of who she was – a lowly maiden – would awaken in her a 'secret sorrow ... [that] walked past her soul as death walks across the grave' (PF:27). Climacus concludes, that in this case she would have been happier if she remained in her lowly position, but loved by someone who is her equal which would make her 'boldly confident in her love [*Kjærlighed*]' (PF:27). Climacus makes an important distinction here between two types of love. The erotic love

as *Elskov*, and love as *Kjærlighed*.<sup>186</sup> Both loves have the possibility to unite equal and equal, and the unequal with each other, and yet paradoxically although Climacus just stated the triumph of erotic love uniting the unequal, it is precisely in uniting unequal where *Elskov* fails – they are in love, they are united, but they are still unequal. Contrary *Kjærlighed* does not just unite the parties but transforms unequal into equal.

The relationship between the king and the girl becomes rather complicated for ‘even if the girl were satisfied to become nothing, that could not satisfy the king’ (PF:27). Interestingly, Climacus seems to suggest, that in “becoming nothing” there is no love at least on the girl’s part. The king is said to be in distress ‘because he loved her and because it would be far harder for him to be her benefactor than to lose her’ (PF:27). The relationship of “nothing” is thus one of unequal to such an extent that one is not a lover but a benefactor of an other. Climacus, then, brings to the fore an issue that was paramount also to the discussion of God-teacher and human above – ‘what if she could not even understand him’ (PF:27). Climacus argues, that although *Elskov* – the erotic love – is able to unite the unequal, the result (and hence the failure of the erotic love) is that it is in the end always unhappy love (PF:28).

Climacus turns the discussion back to the God-teacher and student, and argues, that ‘the learner is in untruth, indeed, is there through his own fault – and yet he is the object of the god’s love [*Kjærlighed*]’ (PF:28). Note here, that God’s love – *Kjærlighed* – is the same love with which the lowly maiden could love someone her equal – be it a peasant boy or another lowly maiden. Climacus continues that ‘god wants to be his teacher, and the god’s concern is to bring about equality. If this cannot be brought about, the love [*Kjærligheden*] becomes unhappy and the instruction meaningless, for they are unable to understand each other’ (PF:28). Climacus states, that God keeps sorrow to himself, and does not project it upon the student – does not make the student sorrowful (PF:28). Just as the king with the lowly maiden, does not reveal his sorrow to anyone. The fact that God does not need the student is reiterated

because he knows that he can push the learner away, can do without him, that the learner has incurred utter loss through his own fault, that he can let him sink, and he knows how nearly impossible it is to maintain the learner’s bold confidence, without which understanding and equality disappear and the love is unhappy (PF:28).

In the second part of the citation above, an interesting paradigm is revealed of the God-teacher maintaining the student’s confidence. Climacus will elaborate on this pedagogy with two examples: an ascent of the student and a descent of the teacher. It is important to observe that in the first case, it is a deception, in the second case – love.

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<sup>186</sup> The most common differentiation is between *Elskov* as romantic/erotic love and *Kjærlighed* as neighbourly love or love for God (i.e. Krishek (2009:1)). But this “curious” observation in *Fragments*, that the lowly maiden would love her equal “romantically” as *Kjærlighed*, works against Sharon Krishek’s reading. I, therefore, cannot simply gloss over the matter.

### 4.3.3. Teacher – Student: An Ascent

It has to be qualified that although the first option of unity between the teacher and student is brought about by an ascent, it is still the God-teacher who is doing the work of ‘draw[ing] the learner up toward himself, exalt[ing] him’ (PF:29). The student will be overwhelmed with joy and happiness of suddenly being elevated, ‘to score a great success’ (PF:29) and yet that would be a deception. Climacus calls it the most terrible deception ‘when one does not even suspect it’ (PF:29) or in the qualification of the Anti-Climacus not even being conscious of being in despair (having a self) because the self was established by another (SUD:13; see also SUD:42 onwards).

With the ascent of the lowly maiden or the student, the God-teacher or the king do not hide who they are, they come in all their glory that would ‘let her forget herself in adoring admiration’ (PF:29). God and the king are therefore not deceivers in the sense that they go out to trick the student or the girl into thinking that they are someone who they are not. Nonetheless, Climacus maintains that the student and the girl would be “essentially” deceived. A deception happens within the student or the girl, they would be satisfied by the splendour (and the desire for riches – be they material or educational), ‘but it could not satisfy the king, for he did not want his own glorification but the girl’s’ (PF:29). This aspect is missed in Kim’s (2012:107) reading of the ascent, who argues that a human being is capable of gaining eternal happiness in the world, albeit through acceptance of the incarnational claim.

In the classroom, the teacher can come and mesmerise the students with the teacher’s brilliance, knowledge, and rhetoric. This would be true of the teacher because it is the teacher’s knowledge and skill, but the student (just like the girl in the story) would still not understand the teacher – only admire. The teacher, because they are a good teacher, and the king, because he loves the girl, have to take a different approach. Otherwise ‘perhaps the learner’s and the maiden’s love would seem to be happy, but not the teacher’s and the king’s’ (PF:29). The teacher can *show* the student the truth, but the student will remain untruth until the teacher gives or *teaches* the student the truth. This could be read as a critique of didactic education, of learning by rote. The student can see what is in front of them and repeat, but this does not mean that the student made it their own – that the truth of the learning has been internalised.

Here lies also the deeper critique of the uncovering of one’s untruth (as truth) by the learner. In the ascent of the student, it is the teacher who takes the responsibility upon themselves to *force* education upon the student, even though still being moved out of love. Precisely in this movement, the teacher recognises themselves as the truth of the student’s experience of oneself as untruth and becomes the necessity that brings about this education. The teacher here borders on the category of a seducer, as, though the teacher moves out of love, the experience of the student is an illusion of attaining freedom.

#### 4.3.4. God – Human: A Descent

Before expanding on how equality as mutual understanding is achieved through the descent<sup>187</sup> of the God-teacher, Climacus interjects with a discussion of the Socratic-teacher (PF:30) and *the moment* (I examine the category of the moment in the section below). Climacus reminds us that in the Socratic relation to have unity in equality between the teacher and the student was the same as to have the truth by both (PF:30). Unity was enabled by mutual understanding – that the student had always already had the truth within. For the God-truth such unity in equality is impossible as ‘the learner owes the teacher everything’ (PF:30). ‘[T]he learner owes him [the teacher] everything’ (PF:30), hence why they are unequal. The challenge is then to become aware that one is nothing ‘and yet is not annihilated; that he [the student] owes him [the teacher] everything and yet becomes boldly confident’ (PF:31). In other words, education has to take place, the student has to go through the understanding of being untruth to truth, to be reborn – to become a disciple. But as was argued above, this is only possible if the God-teacher brings both the truth and the condition of understanding it. As only God can understand the misunderstanding of the student (Grøn, 2004:86–87). Hence, the student has to understand that they are unequal, to be nothing before God.

The point Climacus is making is that equality (and even the realisation of one’s inequality) is never achieved by the student.<sup>188</sup> It can only be possible if done by the God-teacher, but if in the option of ascent, the student would still be deceived, then it has to be attempted by a descent. In his argument for the descent, Climacus is being (or could be read as) radical for his time: ‘if even Socrates did not keep company solely with brilliant minds, how then could god make distinctions!’ (PF:31). The education that the God-teacher is offering is for all! Even more so, I argue, the ascent-descent division and Climacus’ insistence on the descent is at the core of the philosophy of *comprehensive* education (Tubbs, 1996), summarised as a demand for the ‘teachers [to] have no choice but to accept and to begin with where their pupils are, not where they wish they were or where they think they ought to be’ (Tubbs, 1996:13). The teacher, in Climacus view, is not to draw the student to one’s own level through the pompous showcase of

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<sup>187</sup> Smith emphasises that it is not a human being who has to take a leap, but ‘if God, as the absolutely different, cannot be thought, then *God* must make a leap’ (2002:163; emphasis original).

<sup>188</sup> Rae (2010:44) seems to suggest that there are two types of inquirers (learners) here, an objective and subjective. The objective learner is dispassionate, while the subjective is concerned with their relation to the truth. I argue that Rae misses the dialectical play in Climacus’ argument, although there is a differentiation between the objective and subjective inquirer in *Postscript*. In *Fragments*, the inquirer exists in either of those conditions (the subjective or objective) because of the teacher. Just as the inquirer’s objectivity or subjectivity will determine whether their relation to the teacher is Socratic or God-like, so also whether the teacher is “Socrates” or God would determine whether the learner would be the objective or subjective inquirer.

one's glory, but to descend to the level of the student – begin where they are.<sup>189</sup> Climacus argues that the God-teacher 'will appear, therefore, as the equal of the lowliest of persons' (PF:31). However, he goes even further, the lowliest of persons is not just an umbrella term for humankind in general, [b]ut the lowliest of all is one who must serve others – consequently, the god will appear in the form of a *servant*' (PF:31; emphasis original).

If above (see section 4.1.2.1.) the teacher was elevated to the status of a god – saviour, deliverer, reconciler and judge – then here Climacus reveals a radically different qualification of the God-teacher, that of a servant. Furthermore, 'this form of a servant is not something put on like the king's plebian cloak' (PF:31–32). The teacher is not invited simply to pretend in the classroom to be equal to students, and not just to students in general, but to be identified with the lowliest of students. The form of a servant is the God-teacher's 'true form' (PF:32). Only through this is love as the basis for their equality possible and deceit is avoided:

For this is the boundlessness of love, that in earnestness and truth and not in jest it wills to be the equal of the beloved, and it is the omnipotence of resolving love to be capable of that of which neither the king nor Socrates was capable, which is why their assumed characters were still a kind of deceit (PF:32).

Here is an impossible demand put on a teacher, but as I have argued elsewhere with regard to love and politics (Ahmedov, 2023) and also in this thesis with regard to faith (see especially section 3.3.1.), Kierkegaard is very well aware of this impossible demand – and yet, with God, everything is possible. It is in this realisation, faced before a paradox to one's identity, that an education of the teacher happens.

Climacus argues that apart from becoming 'absolutely equal of the lowliest of human beings' (PF:32–33), any other demonstration of God's love would be a deception. For either the student has to be changed, and here Climacus insists 'love, however, does not change the beloved but changes itself' (PF:33) (which is a rather profound statement for our society – to love the other just as they are and not expect them to change in who you want them to be) or love would be superficial, as it would ignore the fact that they have no understanding between each other (PF:33). All pleading, tears, and humbleness on our part before God would not change God's resolution to manifest himself as Christ – the humble servant, the lowliest of human beings (PF:33).

However, as Hampson demonstrates, in all these movements exists the same dilemma, 'for the god must convey that he is the god, and to do this become human; but that which he must convey is that he is not merely human but God' (2013:69). The question then is to ask, in the descent, in the incarnation of Christ, is it evident that he is not merely human but also God? Although Hampson states that the dilemma is solved by God becoming a servant '[h]ow terrifying to sit

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<sup>189</sup> I will examine this pedagogy of beginning where the student is more closely in the following chapter.

with the god as his equal “and yet the god’s concern is precisely to have it so” (2013:70; see also PF:35), this does not provide an answer to whether God is evident in the incarnate Christ. Another question is whether Hampson’s dilemma is Climacus’ dilemma, and even if it is not – whether it is relevant at all? Hampson does refer to the idea that to see God is to die (PF:30), but as she herself, perhaps unaware, indicates – the dilemma is somewhere else for Climacus – “[n]ot to disclose itself is the death of love; to disclose itself the death of the beloved” (2013:69–70). The beloved here is meant as a singular person – the student. But there is really no dilemma here for Climacus, as he has addressed it earlier, the student indeed has to die to be born again.

The question Climacus would then ask, which is the only important question: do they have mutual understanding? Hampson (2013:74) herself would answer yes, as it is achieved when God gives the person the condition of understanding that they are in sin. As Climacus argues, what was lacking for the mutual understanding was “[t]he consciousness of sin<sup>190</sup>, which he [the student] could no more teach to any other person than any other person could teach to him” (PF:47). He proceeds to argue, that thus only God could teach it if he wanted to, and he indeed wanted to (PF:47). But this only makes the paradox

even more terrible ... the same paradox has the duplexity by which it manifests itself as the absolute – negatively, by bringing into prominence the absolute difference of sin and, positively, by wanting to annul this absolute difference in the absolute equality (PF:47).<sup>191</sup>

Climacus does something very interesting here; he maintains that the God-teacher and the student have mutual understanding and affirms that they have absolute equality, but at the same time, the absolute difference is not abolished. The God-teacher, although equal does not become the student, and vice versa. How is it achieved? ‘The presence of the god in human form – indeed, in the lowly form of a servant – is precisely the teaching’ (PF:55). Once more, Climacus reiterates that God is both the truth and the condition of understanding the truth. Here, in stating that God’s presence is precisely the teaching, Kierkegaard comes closest to God is education.

Perhaps the most interesting is Climacus’ conclusion. How is mutual understanding possible? By virtue of the downfall of understanding. Climacus argues that before this absolute paradox, understanding (of the student) becomes aware of its limit, that it is unable to go further, ‘the understanding has strong objections to it’ (PF:47). At the same time (because we are still talking about love here) ‘in

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<sup>190</sup> As Kierkegaard would state elsewhere, ‘[o]f all burdens, which is the heaviest? Certainly the consciousness of sin; that is beyond dispute. But *the one who takes away the consciousness of sin and gives the consciousness of forgiveness instead* – he indeed takes away the heavy burden and gives the light one in its place’ (UDVS:246; emphasis original). This is, in fact, why Christ came into the world, according to Kierkegaard, ‘to lay the light burden upon the believer’ (UDVS:246–247).

<sup>191</sup> See more in section 3.4. of this thesis.

its paradoxical passion the understanding does indeed will its own downfall' (PF:47). The same happens from the side of the God-teacher who, as 'the paradox, too wills this downfall of the understanding, and thus the two have a mutual understanding' (PF:47). Climacus, however, goes to add an important qualification, that this understanding in the downfall of understanding is only present and possible 'in the moment of passion' (PF:47).

So, the mutual understanding is actually no-understanding as the downfall of understanding has taken place, and in this is found the mutuality between the God-teacher and learner. To say the contrary is to have an offence against the paradox.<sup>192</sup> Yet, as Tubbs imaginatively puts it, '[t]o take offence is to say that *this* understanding is *not* understanding, which is precisely the posited mutuality referred to above. Says the paradox to this offence, "it is just as you say, and the amazing thing is that you think it is an objection"' (2004:89; emphasis original, see also PF:52). In his quotation, Tubbs showcases the irony that one arguing against the downfall of understanding being a mutual understanding is actually proving exactly that downfall, albeit unhappily. However, although in an unhappy offence one invertedly proves the downfall of understanding, it does not result in understanding, 'for offense ... is the conclusion of untruth' (PF:51). Thus, Climacus opens two possibilities: '[i]f the paradox and the understanding meet in the mutual understanding of their difference, then the encounter is a happy one ... if the encounter is not in mutual understanding, then the relation is unhappy' (PF:49).

As stated above (see the opening of section 4.2.), one cannot know the unknown because one cannot even know the difference. However, in the downfall of understanding (misunderstanding which is understanding) Climacus argues that difference becomes apparent 'precisely [in] this – that the understanding surrendered itself and the paradox gave itself' (PF:54). It is the argument of Tubbs the thesis presented in chapter 2 that, in contemporary modern metaphysics, when the error of two thousand years of western philosophy has been recognised – there is no solid ground to stand on. Climacus is arguing for the same, to recognise the difference (to be educated) not in a "solid" claim, but in the downfall of understanding – in the paradox – where nothing is certain. It is important to add that the learner is not even 'supposed to understand the paradox but is only to understand that this is the paradox' (PF:59).

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<sup>192</sup> Hampson (2013:74) correctly reminds the reader that the offence arises not from the paradox, but from the understanding, and then bounces back from the paradox towards understanding. Just like the waves in music, hence why Kierkegaard called this section 'Offense at the Paradox (An *Acoustical* Illusion)' (PF:49; emphasis added).

### 4.3.5. *The Moment of understanding*

Climacus argues that mutual understanding between the God-teacher and student has to occur in *the moment* [Øjeblikket] of decisive significance or, as was stated above, of passion.<sup>193</sup> It is ‘the moment, around which everything indeed revolves’ (PF:51): understanding, misunderstanding, downfall, paradox. Climacus names the condition for understanding the truth to be ‘the consequence of *the moment*, and ... that the moment is the paradox and that without this we come no further but go back to Socrates’ (PF:58; emphasis original). This going forward that is mentioned can be thought of as to understand the truth given by the God-teacher, but it is also going forward in a sense of when in and ‘[t]hrough the moment, the learner becomes untruth; the person who knew himself becomes confused about himself and instead of self-knowledge he acquires the consciousness of sin’ (PF:51).

The discussion above has already been presupposing the moment in the discussion of Socratic versus God-teacher’s relation to the student, where for the Socratic the moment was merely of occasional, and for the God-teacher, of decisive significance (PF:28). If the moment is not of decisive significance, it is always only Socratic (Hampson, 2013:68); furthermore, this Socratic ‘moment of occasion’ (PF:52) is not real, it is a jest. Climacus himself talks about *the moment* in both senses. He argues that it is in *the moment* where the mutual understanding happens, yet never defining what the moment (of decisive significance) is. It is so because such moment is the paradox (PF:51), consisting of its own dialectical play. Climacus warns that the moment is not something grand and important, it is not something that one can wait for and expect to happen (PF:52).

Victoria Harrison (1997:456) states that scholarship took Climacus’ category of the moment to construct two possible readings: the moment of appropriation of Truth and the moment of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Harrison correctly perceives the dialectical play present in *Fragments*:

The concept of “the *Moment*” concerns the triad of antithetical relations prominent in the *Fragments*: the God/man; infinite/finite; eternal/historical. In “the *Moment*” these elements come together. This is “the Paradox”. “The God” becomes man, the infinite and the finite coincide. In other words, the *Moment* is “the historical made eternal, and the Eternal made historical (1997:456).

Harrison (1997:456), with her reading of the moment, seeks to combine the two approaches present in Kierkegaardian scholarship. She identifies several dualities present in the moment. The first one is the duality of an incarnated God: the duality of God and man – the God-man (Harrison, 1997:457). The second duality

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<sup>193</sup> In this sense, we are dealing with the student in a religious sphere of existence. William McDonald helpfully differentiates the ways in which the moment occurs to individuals in different spheres of existence: ‘for the aesthete it is an undifferentiated point in a boring temporal succession, or an occasion for cultivating a diverting mood; for the ethicist it offers the decisive possibility for ethical action; and for the religious person its significance resides in the resolute task of grasping the eternal in time’ (2016c:173).

arises by virtue of the first one, between the God-man and human beings. Harrison's argument is that human beings are only able to perceive the God-man, because God was brought into a duality with the human being.

Though Harrison uses the term duality, I would prefer to use the word relation. The two aspects of duality are separate, but they are also brought together in separation, that is related. To think in terms of relation would be in agreement with Harrison's own argument, writing that 'what the Moment actually consists in is the sublation of this dual duality' (1997:457). For Harrison these relations of *the moment* seem to have an order. First is the Paradox – the Truth – God becoming man in the incarnation. It is this that makes the second aspect, the acceptance of Truth – the conversion – by the human-student possible (1997:457). Harrison argues that for Climacus, 'the Moment must have this dual structure if faith is to be possible' (1997:457). However, as this is a dialectical relation, the second aspect has to also precede the first aspect because without this paradoxical faith, the incarnation is absurd and makes no sense. The moment then, containing within itself those dualities sublates these divisions. In the moment, both the incarnation and faith, and the faith and incarnation, become a reality. The historical fact of the incarnation becomes a present actuality, thus not relegating it to a historical event of the contemporaries of Jesus time but making it a present event for every person wherever they are in history. It is in *the moment* that the person, as was already discussed above, is born again. This is what is lacking in Tubbs' reading of the moment in *Philosophy of the Teacher* – the aspect of the incarnation. Tubbs describes 'the philosophy of the teacher in Kierkegaard: the moment of decisive significance, but not the significance itself' (2005:224), yet this is to miss Christ – the God-man – and in our case also the God-teacher. A way in which the incarnational aspect can be rescued in Tubbs is to read it into the transcended: '[t]he transcended is present but unnoticed in the moment of educational decisiveness between the teacher and student' (2005:229). But in this case, if transcended is missed, no salvation is really possible, for the teacher becomes more significant than the gift.

The ambiguity of "the moment" presents the reader with the ambiguity in relation to the understanding between the teacher and student. Harrison (1997:460) reiterates that the moment of decisive significance occurs when the student receives the Truth and the condition for understanding the Truth, further adding that the Truth is the Teacher. But, as was already demonstrated above, the God-teacher is nonetheless still concerned with whether or not they will have mutual understanding. This arises because 'to be in a position to give an individual the condition, the Teacher must be the God; while for the learner to encounter the Teacher, the Teacher must be human. "This contradiction is again the object of Faith, and is the Paradox, the Moment"' (Harrison, 1997:460). Harrison (1997:460) proceeds to argue that there is no consistent account to be given of how both can be true at the same time, which is consistent with the argument at the end of the previous section, that understanding happens in the downfall of understanding. It is impossible for both to be true at the same time, and yet the paradox is, that for God, everything is possible.

#### 4.3.6. God plays by the rules: some critiques of contemporary education

I have stated earlier that God plays by the rules Kierkegaard has set out for the human teacher. Climacus especially emphasises this in his discussion of the contemporary follower in *Fragments*. In there he once again repeats that the form of a servant is ‘not a parasitic but an actual body’ (PF:55) of Christ. Climacus proceeds that God, by this omnipotent resolution in love for a student-human being, ‘has himself become captive ... and is now obliged to continue ... whether he wants to or not’ (PF:55). Unlike the king, who was able to throw off his cloak and demonstrate his true identity as a king and by this to confuse the girl, God is unable to do that because to be a servant is God’s true identity in Jesus Christ. Climacus argues that when the king throws off his cloak, he demonstrates that ‘he actually is incapable of becoming what he wanted to become’ (PF:55), while God has completed it – he actually became the servant, the human being.

Although the God-teacher has become equal to the student, the God-teacher has not come to *live* as the student. Climacus explores this “equal difference,” he states: though ‘[h]e humbled himself and took the form of a servant, but he certainly did not come to live as a servant’ (PF:56). The relationship and status of the God-teacher that Climacus is describing is quite complex. He argues that although the God-teacher became the servant (student), nonetheless, God was completely unconcerned with the everyday aspects of human life. The only aspect God was preoccupied with was to see the follower’s love (PF:56). Climacus is aware of a critique here; ‘[d]oes he not thereby elevate himself above what is ordinarily the condition of human being? Is it right for a human being to be as carefree’ (PF:56–57)? In order to answer this critique, Climacus inverts the question and ponders ‘[m]ay a human being express the same thing? – for otherwise the god has not realized the essentially human. Yes, if he is capable of it, he may also do it’ (PF:57). Climacus argues here, that the student is capable of the God-teacher’s action, that is, just as the God-teacher is able to live a carefree existence ultimately concerned only with the love of the student, so is the student capable to live this existence.

The situation then is that:

we now have the god walking around in the city ... to proclaim his teaching is for him the one and only necessity of his life, is for him his food and drink. To teach people is his work, and to be concerned about the learners is for him relaxation from his work (PF:57).

Here Climacus presents a challenge<sup>194</sup> that can be read as the critique of contemporary (especially higher) education, in which the teachers are striking for

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<sup>194</sup> Kierkegaard as Climacus, or any other pseudonym for that matter, is very good at presenting challenges; the question is, does he provide an answer to his challenge? But as this thesis demonstrates, Kierkegaard himself is taking upon the role of a teacher; he does not need

bigger pay, better working conditions, and a life that does not include spending evenings and weekends, as well as annual leave, on marking, preparing study materials and research. But also on the other side, as Climacus claimed above, the student is capable of the same existence as the God-teacher. In which case, the critique is that the student should also be able to walk around the city only concerned with their learning from the teacher and not with food and drink, that is, not worrying about paying tuition fees or having to be in full-time or part-time employment in order to be able to afford to pay rent or food and drink.

The question, therefore, truly is “is the human being capable of doing the same”? It would appear that the answer is no. Climacus (or rather Kierkegaard) is speaking from the position of inherited wealth; he was able to spend his inheritance on sitting at home and writing, with regular visits to the theatre and the restaurants. This is not a reality for the teachers and students today (although some may still enjoy such a life). Furthermore, Climacus paints the God-teacher in exactly the same carefree manner, but, as scholarship (see for example: Levine, 2020:66–67) does not fail to remind us, Jesus relied on the generosity of others, including those of his wealthy patrons. However, if Jesus is read here as a character of historical fiction, just like “Socrates” is employed by Climacus, then the historical issues of *how* Jesus actually was are not important. For Kierkegaard as Climacus, it is the theologically educative construction of Jesus and not the historical Jesus that is important. Furthermore, Climacus does not seem to downplay the hardships, he seems to be very much aware of what is demanded (although once again Kierkegaard does not live in this physical hardship):

if he is sure that the lack will not divert him, that the hardship will not disorder his body and make him regret that he did not first of all understand the lessons of childhood before wanting to understand more – yes, then he truly may do it’ (PF:57).

Thus, first, there is a real danger for the human (be they teacher or student) that things will be tough, and they need to be very sure that they can commit. Second, the same is with regard to the educational needs – one needs to understand the childhood lessons first. So, in a sense, it could be read that Climacus is proposing that there is a need for some sort of social security of the person, however this seems not to be the case. The teacher ‘has no friends and no relatives, but to him the learner is brother and sister’ (PF:57).

There is a further critique present in the section of *Fragments* currently under examination. Climacus states that wherever the teacher appears, there are crowds flocking to listen (crowds that followed Jesus) or the city’s professional teachers (Nicodemus) coming secretly to debate. But Climacus maintains that they are not the learners. Although ‘[t]he appearance of the god is now the news of the day in the market square, in homes, in council meetings, in the ruler’s palace; it is the occasion for much loose and empty talk’ (PF:58). Although the reader aware of

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to provide the answers, as the answers would depend on my experience of the study of Kierkegaard – that is learning.

the Gospel narratives would not miss the allusion to the scripture, I wonder whether Kierkegaard is also taking a dig at the Hegelians of the day, with the popularity of Hegelianism in the intellectual and cultural circles going as far as the Royal Palace in Copenhagen.<sup>195</sup> But the contemporary critique is not only of the celebrity academics or performance orientated lectures, but of overcrowded school classrooms, or especially, the university lecture halls where though relations between the teacher and the student are established, they are of no decisive significance. The students are not transformed in these encounters to be reborn, and the teachers are not transformed to take the form of a servant.

Furthermore, just as the student had to die and be born again,<sup>196</sup> so the incarnate God-teacher had to die and be resurrected. I will stop the re-reading of *Fragments* here; the issue of paradox and faith that Climacus explores in the rest of the book was dealt with by me in chapter 3 already. I will turn to *Johannes Climacus*, where Kierkegaard picks up on the theme of the death of teacher (and student) once more. It is there, in the example of Johannes Climacus, that the relation of truth as freedom (and not of necessity as postulated in section 4.2.1.) of the student is to be found (see 4.3.3.).

## 4.4. *Johannes Climacus*, or an Example of Kierkegaardian Education

### 4.4.1. The student

Kierkegaard begins his *Johannes Climacus* by introducing us to a young twenty-one-year-old student of the same name as the title of the book.<sup>197</sup> From the very beginning, Kierkegaard states the condition of Johannes<sup>198</sup> as in love not simply with thought, but with thinking itself (PF:118).<sup>199</sup> Or the same stated more

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<sup>195</sup> Not only Kierkegaard on several occasions was requested to come to the Royal Palace to an audience with King Christian VIII and was able to present him with a copy of some of his work (Garff, 2013:479), Bishop Mynster and later Bishop Martensen are named as the King's favourite preachers (Garff, 2013:481).

<sup>196</sup> Pyper (2011:53–54) connects *Fragments* with the writings of St Paul to Romans and Galatians, where, according to Pyper, Paul writes from the experience of a person who was once dead.

<sup>197</sup> How much Johannes has changed from a twenty-one-year-old to a thirty-year-old author of *Fragments* and *Postscript*, although a pastime of thinking (alongside loathing) remained a favourite activity. For a profile of Johannes Climacus as a pseudonym, see the chapter by Paul Muench (2010).

<sup>198</sup> I will refer to Johannes Climacus of *Johannes Climacus* simply as Johannes to avoid confusion between the hero and the title of the book.

<sup>199</sup> Immanuel Kant makes a similar statement in his *Nachricht von der Einrichtung seiner Vorlesungen in dem Winterhalbjahre von 1765–1766* [News of the arrangement of his lectures in the winter half-year of 1765–1766], where he writes 'Kurz, er soll nicht *Gedanken*, sondern *denken* lernen: man soll ihn nicht *tragen*, sondern *leiten*, wenn man will, daß er in

forcefully ‘his whole life was thinking’ (PF:123). Johannes was preoccupied with the movements of coherent thinking, that is, with the up and down movements of logic (PF:119). The upbringing of Johannes as a child was strict, he was mostly denied to go outside for walks by his father (I wonder if this is specific opposition to Rousseau’s character Emile),<sup>200</sup> though his father would take him on imaginary walks (PF:120). Although the father was ‘a very strict man, seemingly dry and prosaic’ (PF:120), Kierkegaard nonetheless curiously compares him to ‘our Lord’ (PF:120) in the sense of our Lord the Father of Jesus Christ.<sup>201</sup> Johannes’ education begins with love, his love towards thinking. It was argued above that love is precisely the beginning of the God-teacher’s education, God brings the truth (himself) and the condition for understanding it by being moved out of love.

In addition to the home-schooling of imagination, Johannes received classical education at school, including of Latin and Greek grammar (PF:121). Furthermore, he listened in on his father debating people, imploring Socratic dialectics, which Johannes found to be a delightful drama where ‘in a twinkling everything was changed’ (PF:122), his father would turn the arguments of his opponents upside down. The actual content of the arguments was not important for Johannes; ‘[h]e forgot what was said by both his father and the opponent, but he never forgot this thrill in his soul’ (PF:122) – of everything being changed.

When Johannes was at university, becoming a philosopher did not occur to him, and Kierkegaard states that ‘only the process interested him’ (PF:123). Johannes seems to have been aware of Immanuel Kant’s statement in his *Critique of Pure Reason* that ‘philosophy can never be learned, save only in historical fashion; as regards what concerns reason, we can at most learn to *philosophise*’ (1929:657 [A837/B865]; emphasis original). Education then, for Kierkegaard, is not seen as a product; education is the process – learning. Johannes would not shy away from difficulty; he would lock himself in the room and, through the volition of his will, resolve to solve the difficulty (PF:124). Difficulty is another piece of the process of education for Kierkegaard, and Johannes was inspired ‘to press through the windings of the difficulty’ (PF:124).

But the crucial part of Johannes’ biography is that he ‘became entangled in a contradiction ... it dawned on him that his father contradicted himself’ (PF:125) in his dialectical method. Johannes’ father is described in the same colours as Socrates (if not even worse as a Sophist – arguing for the sake of an argument)

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Zukunft von sich selbst zu *gehen* geschickt sein soll [In short, he should learn not thoughts, but to think: one should not carry him, but guide him, if one wants him to be able to walk by himself in the future]’ (my translation). Available at: <https://www.projekt-gutenberg.org/kant/einricht/chap001.html>. [Accessed 13<sup>th</sup> August 2023.]

<sup>200</sup> According to *The Auction Catalogue of Kierkegaard’s Library* he did own a copy of *Emile* (Nun *et al.*, 2016:53).

<sup>201</sup> The observation is just that, a curiosity, as I do not want to stretch the comparison of naming the father “Lord” who also is Johannes’ teacher to be the God-teacher figure of *Fragments*. Another curious observation about the father of Johannes is a question that needs to be raised: whether his father is Socrates or maybe Hegel?

of *The Concept of Irony*. The father ‘was not a man who knew how to propound his knowledge as valuable, but instead one who knew how to render it as unimportant and valueless as possible’ (PF:125).

Johannes himself was not fond of academic scholarship,<sup>202</sup> and Kierkegaard’s critique is valid today as well:

The investigation [within the book he would read] would be interrupted in order to correct one or another singular opinion advanced by some author totally unknown to him. For him to understand this digression properly would require a prior reading of that man’s [*sic*] book. That in turn would presuppose others (PF:130).

This, of course, is also a critique of the problem of beginning in philosophy. Kierkegaard is being ironic on purpose here. Johannes is said to hear in his ponderings from other people an important thesis that came up again and again (PF:131). Johannes is said to have become enthusiastic, for ‘the connection [was] usually made between this thesis and becoming a philosopher’ (PF:131), the thesis being: ‘(1) philosophy begins with doubt; (2) in order to philosophize, one must have doubted; (3) modern philosophy begins with doubt’ (PF:132; emphasis removed).

#### 4.4.2. Beginnings of education

The “Pars Prima” section of *Johannes Climacus* is where Johannes really begins his higher education. This is where the break with the Socratic dialectic of his father, or the Hegelian systems of philosophers around him, is to occur. Johannes would doubt their method out of existence. All three theses that Johannes is to examine have to do with the concept of beginning, and Johannes wants to go to the beginning of the beginning. Johannes deals with a third thesis first; for him,

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<sup>202</sup> Kierkegaard ridicules academic philosophy on purpose, Hegel/ians being especially under attack, as demonstrated by constant references to the system and its failures. In the “Please Note” section, Kierkegaard notes

Someone who supposes that philosophy has never in all the world been so close as it is now to fulfilling its task of explaining all mysteries may certainly think it strange, affected and scandalous that I choose the narrative form and do not in my small way hand up a stone to culminate the system (PF:117).

Kierkegaard “mediates” education by way of a narrative, while Hegel by developing a “scientific” approach to philosophy. The reader of this thesis may have observed also the narrative form employed in this chapter (call it Kierkegaardian methodology of theological and philosophical research, if you will).

Tubbs statement that ‘Johannes Climacus ... like Kant and Hegel, works out the structure, the logic or the ‘system’ that expresses itself in and through the contradiction’ (2004:90) has to be read with a pinch of salt. In this statement, Tubbs has in mind Johannes as the hero of *Johannes Climacus*. As the discussion in section 4.2. demonstrated, there is indeed a logic of contradiction for Climacus, but one cannot speak of a system, as the primary feature of the logic of contradiction is a downfall of understanding in order to have understanding. The system is a negation of a system. More on this in the next chapter.

this thesis demonstrates that there was a philosophy before the modern philosophy that began with something other than doubt (PF:133) because otherwise there would not be a modern philosophy, just a continuity of philosophy. Therefore, if this is true, thesis three makes thesis one invalid, which claims all philosophy to begin with doubt, including the older philosophy. The alternative would be to say that there was no philosophy at all before modern philosophy, but then one has to ask why use *modern* at all if it is, in a way, the first philosophy.

There is another issue with the beginning of modern philosophy. Johannes demonstrates that there are two things at stake in the word “modern”: a) ‘[m]odern philosophy must be assumed to be even yet in the process of becoming; otherwise there already would be something more modern, in relation to which it would be older’ (PF:135), and b) as a consequence, the beginning of modern philosophy cannot be decided until the modern philosophy has concluded in its entirety. So modern philosophy is still beginning, and we can never know whether it really began, because to know that would be to assume that the “word” modern is used incorrectly in the first place, and there is no modern philosophy. Therefore, if modern philosophy is only just beginning, we do not know what it begins with, because to state that it has begun with doubt would be to make it invalid.

A further problem with the beginning is:

After all, the beginning might turn out to be no beginning at all but a misunderstanding, therefore least of all the beginning of a philosophy. The beginning philosopher could never be justified in saying: With me begins modern philosophy (PF:138).

Therefore, one was justified in saying that Descartes, as an example, began his philosophy with doubt, but not modern philosophy as a whole. So, Johannes was disturbed that the first and third theses ‘encouraged people to think something different, although what was thought was the same’ (PF:138–139).

Johannes proceeds to more closely examine the first thesis. The statement that philosophy begins with doubt implies that doubt precedes the beginning of philosophy (PF:144), Tubbs calls this insight to be ‘central to understanding Kierkegaardian thinking and education’ (2004:77). Johannes argues that unlike modern philosophizers ‘the Greeks taught that philosophy begins with wonder’ (PF:145). When a philosopher says he is wondering, the continuity with philosophers before him is not broken. The wonder does not make the experience of a philosopher before him negated, ‘[b]ut every time a later philosopher repeats or says these words: Philosophy begins with doubt – the continuity is broken, for doubt is precisely a polemic against what went before’ (PF:145).

#### 4.4.3. The Student’s Experience

Now, this polemic against a previous philosopher implied in this thesis begs Johannes to ask how a single individual relates to a person who told them the thesis. Well, they have to doubt the truth of what they have been told. So what is happening is that the teacher, by virtue of teaching the student (anything really,

but also that thesis more specifically), hands the student a sword with which they must kill the teacher otherwise they have not learned anything (PF:155). The consequence of this for the teacher (and for a student wanting to become the teacher), is that as soon as they take up the sword, they also have to be prepared to be slain in the future. This beginning is a beginning with death, so is it the beginning at all? Either way, Johannes understood that a transformation has to take place, but that it has to be so violent<sup>203</sup> made the beauty of the thesis disappear for him (PF:156). However, this is precisely what was argued above in the examination of *Fragments* that the beginning of learning is indeed made in death. It is in the death of the Teacher – for Jesus had to die – but also in the death of the student, as the student had to be born *again*. And again, this implies that the student was alive and then had to die.

Yet, this negation of the teacher can be conceived in terms of focusing one's love not upon the teacher, but upon oneself. In *The Concept of Irony* Kierkegaard advances in the context of Socrates a view that '[t]he phrase "know yourself" means: separate yourself from the other' (CI:177). In the second volume of *Either/Or* Kierkegaard is developing a notion of *Kjærlighed*, love evident in a marital relationship. Surprisingly, however, *Kjærlighed* is most evident not in the choice between the two individuals as in a marital relationship, for example, but when one is choosing oneself. Kierkegaard differentiates between to *know thyself* and to *choose thyself*. A character called B states 'I maintain that a person does not truly love until he knows what he loves' (EO2:109). Now, in a relation such as marriage one does not love themselves, but rather one loves the other '[a]nd how is one to show this except by being only for the other; but how is one to be only for another except by not being for oneself' (EO2:109). Is it then possible to *know oneself* in the other? Character B anticipates character A's objection '[b]ut one loses by disclosing oneself this way' (EO2:110), losing one's privacy or some other material things. More importantly though one is losing oneself as '[t]he person who loves, however, has lost himself in another, but in losing and forgetting himself in another he is remembered in the other' (EO2:110). Kierkegaard references Matthew 10:39 that 'only the person who has lost everything has gained everything' (EO2:111).

The discussion on the second thesis by Kierkegaard is rather short and unfinished. But he continues the discussion of the teacher and student relationship regarding doubt. For Johannes, 'to obtain something without difficulty was a paradox to his adventuresome soul, which preferred to seek out hardship' (PF:157). In an educational context, this means that if a teacher would simply tell a student an answer, the (good) student like Johannes would not be satisfied. Only through the difficulty of education can the student achieve their freedom.

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<sup>203</sup> Kierkegaard acknowledges that relation to God is characterised by the violence of a wound. In a notebook entry from 1850, he writes '[t]o involve oneself with God, to be genuinely religious without bearing the mark that one has been wounded: well, I do not understand how such a thing should be possible ... it is indeed impossible to involve oneself with God in any way other than one in which one will be wounded' (NB17:70).

When the master positively orders the follower to do something, it certainly is easier for the follower, because then the teacher assumes the responsibility. The follower, however, thereby becomes a less perfect being, one who has his life in another person. But by imposing something negative, the teacher emancipates the follower from himself, makes him just as important as himself. The relation of teacher and follower is indeed canceled (PF:158–159).

A similar sentiment is maintained in *Two Upbuilding Discourses* (1843):

“If by my wishing or by my gift I could bestow upon him the highest good,” he said, “then I could also take it from him, even if he would not have to be afraid of that. Worse yet, if I could do that, then the very moment I gave it to him I would be taking it from him, since by giving him the highest, I would be depriving him of the highest, because the highest was that he could give it to himself [“] (EUD:15).

Though the statement in the discourse seems to be even more profound, it implies that not only should the teacher make the truth difficult for the student, but the teacher should not convey the truth at all.

Thus for Johannes the freedom of the student arises in the negation of the teacher, ‘I am left to myself; I have to do everything on my own responsibility’ (PF:159). Johannes proceeds to protest ‘though I could have wished to remain a minor yet a while longer ... that there would be someone to give me orders’ (PF:159), at some point, the student ‘elevates himself above the person from whom he learns’ (PF:158). At the very end of the section “One Must Have Doubted” a move happens in Johannes’ relation to doubt. He moves from being related to doubt to being related to his relation to doubt. He writes ‘[t]he prospects I once conjured up about the relation of this thesis to philosophy have been blocked. I do not know a thing about the relation of this thesis to anything else. I can only follow its path’ (PF:159). I interpret the first two sentences as Johannes exhausting his relation to doubt, he comes to the paradox, that in order to doubt he must have doubted. Now all that remains for him is to follow the path of the paradox, to learn from the paradox, and this learning from the paradox is learning of a second order – a relation of relation.

It was stated above (section 4.3.1.) that the teacher has come to *know themselves* in a mutual understanding as freedom with the student, where the teacher has recognised themselves as teacher and student. Here, however, we have arrived at the education of the student. Although in the above the student still remained related to the teacher as *necessity*, it is precisely in realising that the teacher is the student’s *necessity* where the student comes to know themselves in a mutual understanding as freedom with the teacher. The student becomes free when the teacher as *necessity* is negated, and what remains is the “following of the path” by the student of their relation to that relation.

#### 4.4.4. Know [for] Thyself

The “Pars Secunda” part of *Johannes Climacus* now begins. The above problem, “the teacher should not convey the truth at all,” is not a contradiction, and there is a way around it. Kierkegaard states here ‘[h]ow does the question of truth arise? By way of untruth, because the moment I ask about truth, I have already asked about untruth’ (PF:167). This sentence works both ways, by asking about the untruth, one is asking about the truth. The reader recognises that we have come back to the earlier discussion in section 4.2. Another repetition – another relation to relation – more education. Having gone through the experience of the student described above, Johannes ‘tries to think ... on his own behalf’ (PF:161).

The form this thinking, this education, takes is in the form of love:

he allowed himself to be moved variously by the many thoughts about the difficulty of the task, about the complicated inveiglements, about the fruitless attempts, about the moments of triumph ... in short, he enjoyed the sweet joys and sorrows of a first love affair (PF:163).

The contemporary teacher could argue that their experience of their students is not like that, that such love is rather rare. But in stating this the teacher forgets two issues. First is the type of education Johannes received as a child, that has formed him to be the way he is now. Second, the teacher shows their own selfishness in desiring to see a certain type of reaction in their student – a fruit of their labour – while, as was stated above, a) the teacher was negated, and b) ought to begin where the students are and not where one wishes they were. In fact, here lies the most frustrating point: teachers usually never see this kind of result of education that Johannes experiences, yet it does not mean it is not happening. Kierkegaard does acknowledge that, in stating ‘even though one relies entirely on oneself in this manner, still nothing is more natural than to heed the reports of those who attempted the same thing’ (PF:163).

The student follows the teacher, freely, though the teacher has already disappeared from view. The chapter above has at length described the experiences of the teacher, especially the experience of being left before the paradox, that is, realising oneself as ultimately qualitatively different before God. For Johannes, and the student more generally, ‘it bec[omes] clear to him that in the philosophizers’ discussions there was scarcely a word about all the fates and adventures in which one must be tried when going forth to doubt everything’ (PF:164). Johannes assumes it would be the most favourite thing of teachers to talk about ‘[b]ut it was inexplicable that everyone remained silent’ (PF:164). It does not mean that Johannes has not heard people talk about it at all, rather what he has heard amounted for nothing, ‘for what followed said nothing, although it gave the appearance of saying something’ (PF:165). Just as one had to doubt for themselves, so one had to be educated for themselves. Johannes did earlier remark with irony that ‘[p]erhaps a particular philosopher had doubted for all just as Christ suffered for all’ (PF:154). Kierkegaard has explored earlier in *Fragments* that *for all* of Christ only makes sense when appropriated by the single individual.

Likewise then, education that the teacher gives in the classroom *for all* only makes sense when learned by the single individual. Just as Christ had to die for the human to be reborn and truly live, so the teacher has to die for the student to come to know thyself and know *for* thyself.

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*Johannes Climacus* comes to an unfinished end. As was stated in the introduction to this chapter, the editors of a particular English edition of Kierkegaard's *Philosophical Fragments* and *Johannes Climacus*, by putting them in the same volume of Kierkegaard's works, have created an educational experience of certain types of Kierkegaard's readers. In *Fragments*, the reader is faced with the experience of the teacher, in *Johannes Climacus*, with the experience of the student. This thesis, by re-reading the works, has produced a relation to those experiences. In searching for Kierkegaardian theology of education, one was already doing it. So is the reader of this thesis involved in this education, through their relation to the relation arising from the experience of this thesis. But before "concluding", this thesis turns back to the figure of the Teacher – repetition, after having experienced the teacher in *Fragments* and the student Johannes – to a paradoxical teacher who is more important than the teaching, to once again face and learn from the paradox.

#### **4.5. The figure of the Teacher in *Practice in Christianity***

A much later and more polemical Kierkegaard as Anti-Climacus would write in *Practice in Christianity* that 'we take Christ's teaching – and abolish Christ' (PC:123–124). But in this, he sees the abolishing of all Christianity, and his reasoning brings the reader back to the paradigms of *Fragments*. Anti-Climacus, just like his counterpart Johannes Climacus, argues 'for Christ is a person and is the teacher who is more important than the teaching ... Christ's life ... is vastly more important the results of his life' (PC:124). Or in Climacus' words 'presence of god in human form ... is precisely the teaching' (PF:55). Anti-Climacus in *Practice in Christianity*, however, is more reserved than Johannes Climacus, arguing that '[i]t is true only of a human being that his teaching is more important than he himself; to apply this to Christ is a blasphemy, inasmuch as it makes him into only a human being' (PC:124). '[T]he teacher is more important than the teaching' (PC:123) because the teaching cannot be communicated directly. Anti-Climacus sees the error 'in our day [when] everything is made abstract and everything personal is abolished' (PC:123).

I would not go as far as to claim Anti-Climacus an antithesis of Johannes Climacus, but it is expected that the two would diverge in their argument. Hence contradictory views are to be expected, but this does not mean that this therefore hinders or disproves my argument, rather, as was addressed in section 4.2. the

task is to learn from the paradox, the inconsistencies between Anti-Climacus and Climacus that are arising.

Anti-Climacus explores the meaning of a *sign* and argues that for something to be a sign, it has to deny immediacy in the sense that immediately a sign is something, but it is not immediately something that it is supposed to signify (PC:124). A sign is not directly communicated but is an indirect communication (PC:125). In other words, the meaning lies beyond an immediately apparent thing. It is in this sense that Anti-Climacus conceives of the God-man (Jesus Christ) as a sign of contradiction, '[t]o be a sign of contradiction is to be a something else that stands in contrast to what one immediately is' (PC:125–126). Thus, he famously states, '[i]mmediately, he is an individual human being, but now comes the contradiction – that *he* is God' (PC:126; emphasis original). Furthermore, Anti-Climacus maintains that Christ willed to be incognito, unrecognisable, and directly noncommunicatable (PC:128–129). This remains within the confines of the pedagogy of the teacher described in the study of *Fragments*, especially Anti-Climacus' insistence that the God-man 'is anything but an assistant professor who teaches directly to parroters or dictates paragraphs for shorthand writers – he does exactly the opposite, he discloses the thoughts of hearts' (PC:126). Throughout this chapter Climacus' insistence on learning from the paradox was emphasised. Anti-Climacus puts a demand on such learning as 'he who is the sign of contradiction looks straight into one's heart while one is staring into the contradiction' (PC:127). Here is a pinnacle of *know thyself*, '[t]he contradiction confronts him with a choice, and as he is choosing, together with what he chooses, he himself is disclosed' (PC:127). Thus, even in relation to something else, one is being related (as a relation to something else) to oneself.

Anti-Climacus' further discussion is helpful in shedding some light on the sections above, especially to the claim that "God plays by the rules." Anti-Climacus stresses that God chose to become an individual human being by his free decision (PC:131), pointing out that the way God decided to become a human being was through being born as one, and that by doing so, 'by allowing himself to be born he has in a certain sense bound himself once and for all' (PC:131). God has become bound 'in the power of his own incognito, in which lies the literal *actuality* of his purely human suffering ... this is not merely appearance' (PC:132; emphasis original). However, one is reminded that in *Fragments* this is precisely what differentiated the king and the God-teacher. The king merely took the appearance of being a lowly person in his advances towards a lowly maiden, and hence their love was unhappy; the God-teacher's form of a servant, however, was not merely something put on. Anti-Climacus makes a further important Christological claim, which is at the same time an important commentary on the condition of the God-teacher, that the God-man also 'suffers through the utmost suffering of feeling himself abandoned by God' (PC:132). Anti-Climacus grounds in this 'earnestness in his becoming an actual human being' (PC:132), that God as Jesus 'is not, therefore, at any moment beyond suffering but is actually in suffering ... this purely human experience' (PC:132). Anti-Climacus further states that the God-man

‘suffers under the consequence of his loving and free decision to become an individual human being’ (PC:132).

So, just like the God-teacher in *Fragments*, so is the God-man in *Practice in Christianity* moved by love (PC:137). But this love is further qualified by Anti-Climacus: ‘by the step he takes out of love he at the same time plunges that person, mankind, into the most horrible decision’ (PC:138). The human being must pay the price, ‘must face the offense of the contradiction, and the thoughts of your heart are disclosed as you choose whether you will believe it or not’ (PC:136). This is reminiscent of the discussion in section 4.1. where Williams used Bonhoeffer’s language of facing the boundary and being judged. A similar action in *Fragments* occurred with regards to bringing the consciousness of sin, revealing the student being in untruth.

Anti-Climacus, to turn back to the king and the maiden, and the teacher and student in section 4.3.2., demonstrates the inwardness of the experience of the Teacher. This experience is painful, argues Anti-Climacus, as ‘[f]irst there is the painfulness of one’s own suffering, for if it is blissful to belong to another person in *the mutual understanding* of love, of friendship, then it is painful to have to keep this inwardness to oneself’ (PC:137; emphasis added). This is what arose in the king’s soul when he understood the predicament of his situation, this is what arises in the teacher when they have to hide behind indirect communication, because the truth cannot be directly communicated. Anti-Climacus states that this suffering love of the teacher for the student ‘has a likeness to the most extreme kind of cruelty – alas, and yet it is love’ (PC:137). Anti-Climacus is aware of the responsibility being put upon the teacher, and the burden and suffering this will place upon them, yet ‘it is out of love to annihilate, immediately and directly, one’s own love, yet preserving it’ (PC:137). Facing the paradox, and being offended by it, has a double effect on a person. Anti-Climacus, using the example of Christianity, argues that it ‘has become something easy, a superficial something that neither wounds nor heals deeply enough ... that forgets the infinite qualitative difference between God and man’ (PC:140). Each paradox, and especially the theologically educational paradox, has an opportunity to deeply wound or to deeply heal. In a world where everything is explained away, and paradoxes are done away with, the healing upbuilding potential of education is not realised.

Anti-Climacus argues that a human being must choose to become a believer (PC:140). This is not, however, to deny the argument of *Fragments*; the condition for choice arises not as a result of direct communication, but through faith which is a dialectical qualification (PC:141). Faith is not immediate, although Anti-Climacus holds that ‘the whole of modern philosophy has done everything to delude us into thinking that faith is an immediate qualification’ (PC:141). Immediate kind of faith is described as an opinion on a certain type of teaching (what Christianity has become – merely teaching) that can be comprehended, and one decides whether they want to believe it or not (PC:141). Anti-Climacus, concluding his description of Christ’s suffering, makes an important observation about the reasons for his knowledge. He states ‘not exactly on account of my virtues but rather on account of my sins, I have ... become aware of the secrets

of existence ... I do not pride myself on this ... But I make an honest effort to use this knowledge' (PC:139). For Anti-Climacus, this knowledge arises as and from the consciousness of sin (see section 4.3.4. and 4.3.5, ref. PF:47, 51). Anti-Climacus further laments that 'Christianity is made into teaching' (PC:141), which is then taught to a person as direct communication and made comprehensible through modern philosophy that reduces faith to having an opinion (PC:141). This was many times emphasised in this chapter (and this thesis) before, that Christianity (but also all knowledge) should not just be made comprehensible and spoon-fed to a student but rather has to be existentially appropriated as a *work* of education. Otherwise occurs what Johannes Climacus describes in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, '[s]o this is how Christianity is rewarded. One learns something from Christianity, misunderstands it, and in new misunderstanding uses it against Christianity' (CUP1:215).

As it was claimed at the beginning of the chapter, that a leap of faith is required for the *truth is subjectivity*, for knowledge (not just religious knowledge) to become my own, to be existentially appropriated, 'and in order to require faith [one] must deny direct communication' (PC:142). The God-man, however, 'must require faith and require that he become the *object of faith*' (PC:143; emphasis original). This reiterates the argument in section 3.3. of this thesis that faith is a thing in-itself, but is also the condition for having faith in the first place. It further reiterates what was argued with regard to *Philosophical Fragments*, that the teacher brings both the truth and the conditions of understanding the truth.

Therefore, as the discussion of *Philosophical Fragments* has united God (as Christ the divine teacher) and the human teacher in the God-teacher, the argument can be made that it is just doing "bad theology" and misreading Kierkegaard as one wishes. Rather, I argue, the discussion has created a contradiction, an offence to professionally trained theologians and Kierkegaard scholars. For Climacus as is for Anti-Climacus it is the category of offense that the paradox is creating that is missing in the (academic) world. Climacus writes '[w]hen Christianity entered into the world, there were no professors or assistant professors whatever – then it was a paradox for all' (CUP1:220), yet in Kierkegaard's time '[i]t can be assumed that in the present generation every tenth person is an assistant professor; consequently it is a paradox for only nine out of ten' (CUP1:220–221). Climacus is also being prophetic about our times 'when the fullness of time finally comes, that matchless future, when a generation of assistant professors, male and female, will live on the earth – then Christianity will have ceased to be a paradox' (CUP1:221). As was argued above, this contradiction should not just be dismissed, but the person needs to come to face the paradox with the paradox staring back at them, as a *know thyself* of one's pedagogical (but also theological) practice.

## 4.6. Demands of the Times

This chapter does not have a conclusion, because to have a conclusion is to have something to be concluded – to have a system. The chapter has indicated well that if one is to go looking for a system in Kierkegaard, in the sense of a pedagogy, a new method of teaching, that would somehow enable one to be a better practitioner – one is searching in vain. In *The Concept of Irony* Kierkegaard famously wrote:

Philosophy walked around like a man who is wearing his glasses and nevertheless is looking for his glasses – that is, he is looking for something right in front of his nose, but he does not look right in front of his nose and therefore never finds it (CI:272).

The academic, the practitioner, and the examiner are in danger of doing the same. What Tubbs (2005:170) said of the philosophy of the teacher in Hegel is also true for Kierkegaard: what changes is not the practice but the teacher. Yet to stay true to education and its contradictions, recalling Howes' words that '[t]he contradictions are not given enough weight in educational theorising, which is strange considering it is the fundamental experience of the teacher' (2013:126), not finding a system in Kierkegaard is itself a contradiction. A system, as the next chapter demonstrates, does exist in Kierkegaard, but the point being in the present chapter that one has to experience it first instead of looking for it "professionally", that is, theologico-philosophically or speculatively. Only when the experience of the teacher and of the student in the theology of education is undergone can one begin to reflect in turn on that experience.

Nonetheless, what Kierkegaard would call the "demand of the times" (CUP1:6) in my case demands of the thesis some outcomes. To conclude would be to 'flirt[] with the demands of the times and adapt[] itself to assistant professors' (CUP1:202) and then let oneself be examined. The so much hated by Kierkegaard assistant professor (see Kemp, 2020) would ask for the results of the study '[a]nd in our day if one has a result, well, then everything is fine' (BA:49). And if there are no *positive* results, '[s]omething that is *non liquet* [not clear] can be the fruit of a year's labor, of great scholarship, of profound effort' (BA:49) and yet, in the case of a PhD thesis in theology, not even 'be obtained for four shillings in every grocery store' (BA:49) as it is perceived to be purely useless.

In *The Book on Adler* Kierkegaard writes that a 'world-view, a life-view, is the only true conclusion to every production; every poet-conclusion is an illusion' (BA:8). This section then can only summarise the above discussion in the chapter. In the chapter, the complexity of the Kierkegaardian treatment of teacher and student was presented. The reader of this thesis, if they be a teacher, will recognise themselves in all the descriptions above. A criticism could be made about a very complex figure of "the God-teacher" that at times represents Jesus Christ and at other times a human teacher in the struggle with the demands that education puts on them. This is done on purpose to demonstrate the struggle of the

teacher with one's identity. One could argue this is a cheap cop-out. So be it. But to demand a clear differentiation in the figure of the teacher is to miss the point of *imitatio Christi* that Kierkegaard in *Philosophical Fragments* is educating us towards. Not just how to have a relation to God (or rather how God has a relation to us), but to be transformed in that knowledge – in this case, transformed both in the knowledge of the teacher as God to the student and in the knowledge of the kind of demand for mutual understanding as and in the freedom that is put into this educational relationship.

However, considering what was said above about the logic of education, in stating that the teacher is the God of the student, one has not yet arrived at God *is* education. God is education when one is related to the relation of the teacher as the God of the student. Only in this relation of relation, be they the teacher or student who are doing the relating, do I come to *know myself* as a teacher or as a student or, in the case of this author, as both teacher *and* student. This is the fourth repetition within this chapter as the chapter, in the end, returns to the beginning. Now as the teacher and student, it is possible to make sense of Climacus' 'only when *I* discover it is it discovered, not before, even though the whole world knew it' (PF:14), as an answer to "can the truth be learned" (PF:9). Climacus in his *propositio* to this question states '[t]he question is asked by one who in his ignorance does not even know what provided the occasion for his questioning in this way' (PF:9). Now at the end, but not at the conclusion, one is maybe a little less ignorant of what provided the occasion for the question.

We have seen the education of the teacher. The education of the student also happened in *Johannes Climacus* where doubt was rehearsed as education, as a relation of freedom, in which the teacher was negated. But in this negation, the teacher was also preserved as a presupposition that acts as the occasion of decisive significance for the student. The teacher is slayed and yet returns as education of the student about oneself, just as Christ was killed on the cross and returned as the salvation of humankind through his death. In this relation of relation as education, the student then also becomes one's own teacher, and comes to *know themselves* as the teacher and student. The truth, and the occasion for understanding of truth, were appropriated in this rebirth.

## 5. EDUCATION OF THEOLOGY

In the previous chapter I referred to an idea by Hugh Pypers (2011:53) that named Johannes Climacus of *Fragments* as a teacher who is to teach us to exist. The chapter itself was concerned with an exposition of the *how* of education. I have referred above to the “logic of education” and thus implied that there is a system in Kierkegaard, a system that could be explicated as the “Kierkegaardian Theology of Education.” However, Johannes Climacus, in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, states ‘[c]onsequently, (a) a logical system can be given; (b) but a system of existence [*Tilværelsens System*] cannot be given’ (CUP1:109; emphasis original).<sup>204</sup> Here lies Kierkegaard’s critique of my thesis. I will thus first present what exactly Kierkegaard (as Climacus) means by a system, especially through the idea of an open and closed system. Then, I will turn to the concepts of method and system in Hegel to demonstrate to what extent my own treatment of Kierkegaard through the influence of Tubbs follows Hegel, but also how Kierkegaard, while critiquing Hegelianism, makes use of Hegel. I will then present an example of the way Kierkegaardian education is systematised as “upbuilding education,” before presenting a (re)defined “theological” system [of education] in Kierkegaard. This “system” of “upbuilding education” enables the thesis to present a practical outcome and demonstrate the relevance of the theology of education to pedagogical practice today.

The theological system of education re-presents an education that was already experienced in chapter 4. Here this experience is presented “directly-indirectly” (Saeverot, 2013:509) by Kierkegaard in *The Point of View* where he gives some practical advice to those “pedagogues” that want to remove the illusions people are in and ‘introduce Christianity again – into Christendom’ (PV:42). Or rather, in the context of this thesis, to introduce education back into schooling/learning. In other words, if the previous chapter expounded on what education as existence-communication is, then this chapter presents how to teach for such education. This is following Kierkegaard’s own project in *The Point of View*, where half-way through, he states that having presented his direct-indirect, esthetic-religious system, ‘the book describes the second way – *back* from the system, the speculative, etc. to becoming a Christian’ (PV:55; emphasis original). This chapter stands in relation to the previous chapter and, as such, should be read in terms of the logic of education – the experience of education – already presented. Yet this chapter also produces abstract statements as a work of this thesis.

The critical discussion of *whom we are to teach* concludes the chapter by exploring Kierkegaard’s concept of “the single individual.” This concept is already dialectical, as the single individual is the teacher who is doing the teaching (and thus teaches oneself) and the student (whom the teacher ought to teach to become the single individual). It is in this discussion that a hermeneutical

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<sup>204</sup> This does not mean that the system of existence does not exist; it does, just not for us, but for God (Edwards, 1985:204).

key for the whole thesis is presented in positing Kierkegaard's claim (communicated "directly") about where God is in education of the single individual. God is indeed found to be education (as relation).

The chapter concludes by reflecting back on the theories of the theology of education presented in chapter 1 and shows what the theology of education learned about itself in the movements of this thesis.

## 5.1. System [of Education]

### 5.1.1. System in Hegel and Kierkegaard: The case of open and closed

#### 5.1.1.1. The issue in Kierkegaard

In a recent journal article, Kevin Gary and Drew Chambers write about Kierkegaard:

Rather than build a clear, logical system, he does philosophy by way of examples, canvassing pseudonyms that idealize and typify, according to Paul Holmer, "the range of real [men and women] and their options, choices, attitudes, passions, and reasoning" (2021:382).

This can be erroneously read<sup>205</sup> as a suggestion that Kierkegaard does not have a system (of philosophy). At a closer inspection, and especially in the work of the previous chapter, it became clear that there is indeed a system and a logic to Kierkegaard.<sup>206</sup> The error, however, may arise in (mis)understandings related to what Kierkegaard means by a system, and what this thesis (as well as other scholarship) means by a system. If this distinction is acknowledged, then the "systematic" nature of this thesis is also defensible.

Kierkegaard as Climacus in *Postscript* argues that if a system is not finished, it is not a system and hence, if something is a system, it is concluded (CUP1:107). The remarks take place during Climacus' discussion on Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and the systematicians (that is Danish Hegelians). Climacus comments that both Lessing and the systematicians are concerned with truth. 'Lessing and the systematician, both speak of a continued striving – the only difference is that Lessing is obtuse or truthful enough to call it a continued striving, the systematician sagacious or untruthful enough to call it the system' (CUP1:108). The problem is then in being truthful about what one is doing, being in a continuous process and calling it as such, or trying to systematise (and thus conclude)

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<sup>205</sup> I admit that this was my view before I went through the work of this thesis.

<sup>206</sup> The examination has to proceed very carefully, as Ian McPherson rightly observes that  
The wider scope of irony here includes the possibility that we, Kierkegaard's readers, will unwittingly re-enact Hegel in our attempts to appropriate or apply, place or dismiss, Kierkegaard himself, so that the discomfited teacher (Hegel) is, after all, superimposed on his unruly pupil (2001:159).

something that is still taking place. Here is the difficulty for education, as to find a [systematic] theology of such is to conclude education that is still taking place. Education is always in motion. For Kierkegaard, any *conclusion* of education is impossible.

However, one ought not only to be cautious of concluding but also of beginning, as '[w]here we "begin" our education is already illusion, for it is already a positing of what education is' (Tubbs, 1997:191). Ronald R. Johnson (1997) has argued that although the Kierkegaardian leap should be understood as a reaction against and an appropriation of Hegelian sublation, the difference between the two of them is pedagogical. According to Johnson (1997:159), Kierkegaard leaves it to the reader to discover that the leap as sublation is the next step that needs to be accomplished, meaning that the "necessity" is not emphasised and should be arrived at by the reader on their own. Furthermore, Kierkegaard holds that Hegel has failed to see sublation as a leap (Johnson, 1997:162). I see in Johnson's treatment a response to Tubbs' warning. Johnson argues with respect to Climacus' treatment of the Hegelian system that '[i]nsofar as the dialectic has a beginning, existing individuals must cause it to begin: that is, someone must make the leap of beginning it' (1997:164). Or in our case, as long as there is a beginning of education, someone has to make the leap and begin – to have the courage to presuppose education. Kierkegaard himself acknowledges that he begins only via an (intermediary) end, that is, he sees his own development as an author only in retrospect (PV:12).

In the Introduction of his *Shorter Logic*, Hegel begins by having Kant in mind (Tubbs, 1997:117) who states quite "scientifically" that '[w]e should first get to know about the *instrument*, before undertaking the task that is supposed to be accompanied by means of it' (Hegel, 1991:34 [§10]; emphasis original). The critique of Kant by Hegel here is as follows:

But the investigation of cognition<sup>207</sup> cannot take place in any other way than *cognitively*; in the case of this so-called tool, the "investigation" of it means nothing but the cognition of it. But to want to have cognition *before* we have any is as absurd as the wise resolve of Scholasticus to learn to *swim before he ventured into the water* (1991:34[§10]; emphasis original).

Thus if we begin in this way, we are left with a tautology. Tubbs notes here that the '[c]ritique as method is always the presupposition of what is to be known before it is known' (1997:117). The answer that Tubbs gives to the problem is that '[c]ritique is therefore required to begin with itself as a question and not a method, as an uncertainty and a negation, not an enlightenment' (1997:183). Tubbs (2017:5) later on clearly states (see also chapter 2) that even the question exists in the logic of mastery of the answer. The task is then that '[t]he imperfection of all beginnings (and therefore of all teachers) has to be part of the pedagogy, and become a part of the whole which is the educational relation'

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<sup>207</sup> In Tubbs' (1997:117) reading, cognition is translated as knowledge.

(Tubbs, 1997:221). Therefore, there is indeed a need for a Kierkegaardian leap in the beginning. In the words of Tubbs, ‘[e]ducation is the risk which freedom demands’ (1997:183), the courage to pose a question, the courage to risk education, (the courage to yield to freedom’s own necessity).

#### 5.1.1.2. The question of method

At the end of his *Science of Logic*, Hegel states, that ‘[a]ccordingly, what is to be considered as method here is only the movement of the *concept* itself’ (2010b:737). He further adds that ‘[w]e already know the nature of this movement’ (Hegel, 2010b:737). Likewise, this thesis at the end returns to the questions of method posed in the first chapter, as well as the definition of education that was avoided in being presented in the second chapter. Now, Hegel can be re-read as “what is to be considered as method here is only the movement of the concept of *Education* itself, and we already know the nature of this movement from chapter 4.” Or, with reference to *Shorter Logic*, we have learned what education is by being educated. Hegel continues that ‘[t]he firm principle that formal thinking lays down for itself here is that contradiction cannot be thought. But in fact the thought of contradiction is the essential moment of the concept’ (2010b:745). Likewise, the chapter above argued for the education of and by contradiction. For Hegel, the contradiction here is *Aufhebung* (2010b:745–747) and becomes truth, not as a resolution, or as a movement to a higher stage, but, if read in light of Gillian Rose, as ‘another term for speculative experience, for the experience of difference or negation, of relative identity, of a contradiction between consciousness’ definition of itself and its real existence which is miscognized and re-cognized at the same time’ (2009:110). Hegel writes:

Now, on closer examination, the *third* is the immediate, but the immediate through *sublation of mediation*, the simple through the *sublating of difference*, the positive through the sublating of the negative; it is the concept that has realized itself through its otherness, and through the sublating of this reality has rejoined itself and has restored its absolute reality, its *simple* self-reference. This *result* is therefore the *truth*. It is *just as much* immediacy as mediation (2010b:747; emphasis original).

The above reading of Hegel through Rose is close to my reading of Kierkegaard, for whom the contradiction has its own truth – in this specific case, the contradiction being the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who is a sign of contradiction (PC:124) of the unity of the infinite and the finite, God and man. Kierkegaard wants to maintain at all costs the offence of the absurdity of Jesus being fully God and fully human. There is, however, a pedagogical difference between Hegel and Kierkegaard, understood in terms of the ascent of the student and the descent of the teacher of the previous chapter (sections 4.3.3. and 4.3.4.). Hegel’s speculative philosophy in this framework is of the ascent (Willows, 2001:59), where

Kierkegaard's is of the descent.<sup>208</sup> In this also appears the difference between Christendom and Christianity so crucial to Kierkegaard, however it is beyond the scope of this chapter to present a thorough study of this difference. That being said, I will sketch an argument as far as this difference relates to the understanding of method in theology.

In her *Hegel Contra Sociology*, Gillian Rose asks: 'How can there be a methodological statement that there can be no method?' (2009:159). In discussing Hegel's *Phenomenology*, and the way it is at times misread, Rose states that '[t]he *Phenomenology* does not consist solely of the presentation of the experience of natural consciousness, but also of the *science* of that experience' (2009:159; emphasis original). Likewise, this thesis, and especially the previous chapter, attempted to grapple with Kierkegaard's difficulty – the difficulty of him making us believe that he does not have a system, the difficulty of the experience of education, and the difficulty of using Kierkegaard both as an "object" of study and as a method for that study. The study of education in the previous chapter tried to do what Hegel, according to Rose, did in *Phenomenology*, that is, not only to present the *science* of education but also the *experience* of that education. Kierkegaard as Johannes Climacus employed similar tactics in *Fragments* where '[t]he middle chapter of the book [*Philosophical Fragments*], chapter III, not only deals with the problem ... but it *performs* the problem' (Grøn, 2004:92; emphasis original). There is an openness in Hegel's *Phenomenology* according to Rose. Even though it

culminates in science ... even though the oppositions of consciousness have been surmounted, we still cannot have an abstract statement of the absolute or substance. As science we still have to continue to rediscover "the passage of the concept into consciousness", into misrepresentation, and this, too, is a process which eludes statement. The attainment of science is no end (Rose, 2009:193).

According to Rose, the '[s]elf-knowing spirit is a relation and this knowing whether presented in the historical shapes of consciousness or as science is perpetual and never-ending' (2009:194). Rose further maintains that Hegel's need to write a Preface (written last) and introduction to *Phenomenology* 'are not simply abstract statements denouncing abstract statement. The abstract rejection of abstraction is the only way to induce abstract consciousness to begin to think non-abstractly' (2009:160). She sees that precisely in '[t]his consistency is the

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<sup>208</sup> I am aware of the difficulty present in talking about the ascent and the descent, especially in light of my *Aufhebung* comment above. David Willows certainly conceives of an ascent as a movement to a higher stage, an 'ascent to a new generation' (2001:59). This is thinking in terms of the ascent of human consciousness, an ascent understood as a self-knowledge of consciousness. While Kierkegaard can be thought of in a similar manner, as movement across the stages or spheres of existence (see chapter 3), what is in mind here is a kind of "closeness to God." On Kierkegaard's account, one can move *up* to the religious sphere, but one did not thus become closer to God. That is only due to God coming closer, descending to human beings.

Hegelian *system*' (Rose, 2009:160; emphasis original). Rose and Hegel become methodologically useful, as Rose's statement that the 'idea of a whole which cannot be grasped in one moment or in one statement for it must be experienced is the idea of the system' (2009:194) can be re-read as "God who cannot be grasped in one moment or in one statement for he must be experienced is the idea of God is education."

Thus, as Rose argued above, *Phenomenology* is necessary for the experience of God, but Hegel also needs to write his *Science of Logic* as '[o]nly in the *Logic* can the absolute be thought' (Rose, 2009:101). There is a need for both/and – the experience and the science of that experience.

Furthermore, it is through the reading of Rose that Tubbs<sup>209</sup> reads his Hegel and his Kierkegaard, and is able to arrive at the question of whether 'God is education' (2017:1). The influence of Rose will now become more apparent if one is to re-read the previous chapter of this thesis. It is not my intention to do the re-reading here. At present, this excursion into Rose is necessary to highlight an error often done in readings of Kierkegaard that oppose him to Hegel, and read their systems as either/or of open and closed. Kierkegaard is rather Hegelian, upon my reading. They both have an open system. I see in Kierkegaard's pseudonyms and rejection of the authority of authorship a nod to Hegel, where Kierkegaard, in his "system" of authorship, is trying to educate us *without authority*, knowing full well that the authority is present all along.

### 5.1.1.3. Christological problem

In Hegel (of Rose and Tubbs), God (especially as Christ) is in danger of becoming a part of the science of the self-knowing spirit as relation. Daniel P. Jamros maintains that for Hegel, 'the fundamental appearance of God occurs in rational thinking per se' (1995:276), and this is the lens through which incarnation in Hegel should be understood. He further states '[i]n Hegel's theory God appears as human thinking; even Jesus incarnates God's presence in this way' (Jamros, 1995:277). Thus Jamros concludes 'divine incarnation should occur wherever human thinking occurs' (1995:277). The key, for Jamros, is that deity appears in human nature, rather than a single person. Here, Jamros (1995:279–280) acknowledges that on this point he follows David Friedrich Strauss' interpretation of Hegel, and that it is a better interpretation of Hegel than of those who want to make it consistent with "traditional" Christian theology. Though at the same time he acknowledges that Strauss was not necessarily accurate enough in interpreting Hegel. Therefore Jamros interprets the "universality" of the incarnation not as a collective meaning of the incarnation in the whole of humanity (Strauss), but rather as 'a definition which applies universally to each single instance illustrating it' (1995:280). What Jamros calls 'repeatedly individual

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<sup>209</sup> Hegelianism of Tubbs via Rose was studied by Rebekah Howes (2013). But with reference to the preceding paragraph, one can look for *Contradiction of Enlightenment* (Tubbs, 1997), pages 104–105 specifically.

incarnation' (1995:280). Contrary to this, Kierkegaard (of chapter 4) demonstrates how Christ is not just a cog in the machine of the movement of the system or 'the supreme "postulate"' (Rose, 2009:189), but rather the condition of possibility of it, as without Christ there is no relation to God and no love of neighbour.

I find the study of David James (2007) helpful here in explaining how Hegel and Kierkegaard diverge in their treatment of the paradox of the incarnation. James argues that Hegel 'seems to appreciate the fact that the unity of the human and the divine, as represented in the person of Christ, presents a problem for the human understanding when he describes the idea of the God-man' (2007:110), that is a non-speculative understanding, thus far being in agreement with Kierkegaard. For James, where the two radically differ is 'that for Hegel the task of speculative philosophy is simply to demonstrate the necessity of the divine-human unity, whereas the task of demonstrating in which individual this unity becomes actual must remain a matter of historical enquiry' (2007:115). In other words, where both for Hegel and Kierkegaard, the incarnation presents a paradox and expresses the 'deeper truth ... [of] the unity of thought and being, and the infinite and the finite' (James, 2007:113), for Hegel, it only matters that there was such a God-man. As for Kierkegaard, however, it is of absolute importance to maintain that this God-man was, in fact, the historical figure we know as Jesus Christ. James argues there is no offence at the paradox in the Hegelian attempt of speculative philosophy to demonstrate the divine-human unity, but the offence at the paradox does exist for Kierkegaard 'as long as one wants to maintain that there once existed an historical figure called Jesus of Nazareth who really was the Son of God' (2007:117). This is a position also taken in this thesis, that the incarnation is, in fact, a historical event that has taken place in the single individual the Gospels call Jesus Christ, in whom the human and divine are united. And it is this incarnated Christ that was absent in Tubbs' original position of God is education and had to be introduced in chapter 4.

In chapter 3 of her *Hegel Contra Sociology*, Rose argues that Hegel's philosophy of religion that begins in 'God exists' (2009:100) comes to an impasse and is rescued through the speculative Good Friday of the philosophy of history (Howes, 2013:73, 75). Rose begins with a question of '[h]ow can the absolute be thought' (2009:98). This is a variation of a Socratic learning paradox, on the difference between reason and revelation or faith and knowledge that, according to David Willows (2001:this is a subject matter of part 1 of his book), philosophy and theology since at least Augustine have tried to reconcile. Tubbs begins his *God, Education, and Modern Metaphysics* precisely with this distinction, which is also acknowledged by Kierkegaard, that '[r]eason and revelation have never sat comfortably together' (2017:xi). To an extent, the whole project thus far was also concerned with this.

The acknowledgement of this difficulty was also the case for Immanuel Kant and Johann Gottlieb Fichte who, on Rose's account, are in agreement with Hegel at least in that 'our concept of God is our concept of ourselves, of our freedom'

(2009:103). Yet, they are unsuccessful in their task of uniting the two realms. According to Willows

Kant therefore finds himself in a dilemma: either God lies within the scope of what can be known to human reason, in which case he cannot be that which transcends the domain of the mind and his divinity is called into question, or he exists as one who remains shrouded in mystery and uncertainty (2001:50).

God remains unknowable for Kant, hence the need ‘to *deny* knowledge, in order to leave room for *faith*’ (1929:p.29 [§Bxxx]; emphasis original), and furthermore to deny knowledge *from* faith. Or as put by Rose – there is no reconciliation possible – ‘[e]ither the infinite dominates the finite in an incomprehensible way (God) [Kant], or the finite dominates the infinite as sensuous enjoyment [Fichte]’ (2009:105). For Hegel, however, on Rose’s account ‘[i]f “God” is unknowable, we are unknowable, and hence powerless’ (2009:98).

Historical religion (historical Good Friday in Hegel) is the medium that tries to represent God, and hence to unite reason and revelation – or knowledge and faith – but it fails, as the Christian God is always beyond our *knowing* (Rose, 2009:99–100). Instead, a speculative conception of religion is necessary, that is, an ‘uncovering of the *truth* and *untruth* of religious representation, of the social relations to which such representation corresponds, and of the different *relations* to which it refers’ (Rose, 2009:99; emphasis added). Rose’s emphasis on the relation of *truth* and *untruth*, and relations in general, is quite in line with my own project. The speculative Good Friday will not attempt to become a new absolute as an imposed identity of an either/or, but remain speculative, holding the absolute represented as subject (Rose, 2009:112).

It is necessary, however, to take a step back. The claim of the Christian religion is that the eternal became historical in the incarnation and, through that, enabled the unity of faith and knowledge, or reason and revelation. Rose is in agreement here, that

The means (*Mitte*), the mediation which may make the experience of unity possible is Christ. In the revelation Christ is God become man, the infinite and finite unified without suppression. This reconciliation is not a dualistic suppression but a triune re-cognition or trinity. Hence it represents freedom not domination (2009:114–115).

This is, however, her reading of a speculative religion. With regard to the historical religion, things are different. Discussing Hegel’s ideas of the kingdom of the son and the kingdom of the spirit, she argues, a change occurs in Hegel where ‘the speculative account of Christian doctrine and ritual, is fundamentally different from the real history of Christianity in time and space’ (Rose, 2009:116). Ultimately, with her discussion of the kingdom of the son, Rose concludes that for Hegel, the incarnation of Christ is paradoxical (and upon my reading of Rose’s argument impossible altogether), as ‘[t]here has never been a common (universal) conception of universality [God] which is present in its determination [Kierke-

guardian God-man], in its existence [Christ]' (2009:117). The historical religion is different and results in misrepresentation. Rose writes:

The basic Christian experience is not of Christ, the mediator, of freedom, but of spiritual bondage to a dead God. Christ's resurrection and Christian love should restore the unity and freedom of human and divine nature, but they can only do so "if God is known as trinity". However, reconciliation in religion always remains implicit and abstract, because it is only achieved as religion, as a spiritual and not as a worldly community (2009:118).

This gloom arises from the experience of Good Friday, as Rose argues '[t]he feeling that God is dead or absent has always been central to Christian religious experience, because in the Christian religion the absolute is misrepresented as beyond human life, not present in it' (2009:111). Rebekah Howes commenting on this aspect in Rose writes

Even knowing God incarnate in the person of Christ fails to unify particular existence with the universal for the actuality of Christ as a finite individual disappeared so that reconciliation becomes a hope beyond *real* relations and thus the mere feeling of a unity beyond actual human experience (2013:78; emphasis added).

What Howes means here is that since Christ is no longer present physically on earth, there is no *real* relation to him; relation exists only in *hope* for the afterlife. I am not convinced by this understanding of a *real* relation to Christ, as it goes against the theological understanding of Christ's presence among us even today (not to say in the Eucharist). Neither am I convinced by the gloom of Hegel and Rose, as Good Friday misses the experience of Easter and resurrection. Nonetheless, this leads Rose to conclude that in Hegel '[t]he contradiction between speculative truth and religious misrepresentation is repeatedly presented as a paradox' (2009:118).

If this paradoxical reading is not maintained, is resolved either one way or the other, or simply missed, readings of the incarnation and the Church in Hegel arise that see 'Hegel's God become[] human in a ... necessary way' (Jamros, 1995:282) which is traced in the development of consciousness in *Phenomenology*. There Hegel's God becomes knowable because the human self becomes knowable (Jamros, 1995:284). Furthermore, as Jamros argues, for Hegel, '[f]or divine essence to be truly universal in fact, its unique individual appearance (namely, Jesus) must disappear and be replaced by the universal spirit of the Church' (1995:286). The paradox of the individual in the abyss before God is thus replaced by the Church. Jamros further argues that for Hegel absolute knowing is speculative knowing that resembles Christianity (1995:289). Furthermore, he argues, Hegel claims 'that speculative knowing not only knows God but *is* God' (Jamros, 1995:289; emphasis original) and in the end 'God appears in the philosopher even more profoundly than in Jesus' (Jamros, 1995:289–290). No wonder then, at Kierkegaard's animosity towards "Hegelian" philosophers.

Willows (2001:64) also reads the reconciliation of faith and knowledge in Hegel as a transfiguration of faith into philosophy. And although he then acknowledges that Hegel does justice to faith to make peace with religion

Such a reconciliation, however, is entirely founded upon philosophical terms: it cannot allow for the possibility of human frailty, or the disclosure of Truth from outside the subject, or the continuing significance of the particular (Willows, 2001:65).

This would be precisely Climacus' criticism, that even the above paradox between speculative and historical religion arose to one's experience through one's own work. Rather, as Climacus argues, '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 splendor to understanding' (PF:52–53). It is from the paradox that one learns, but one does not originate the paradox in one's own understanding.

Lastly, I argue that in maintaining that Christ had rejected *Sittlichkeit* (ethical life) (2009:122), Hegel, on Rose's account, falls exactly into the confusion of Christianity and Christendom. It would require a further study beyond the scope of this research, but to offer some pointers, I am not convinced whether the loss of freedom attributed to Christ and his followers is correct. Commenting on the biblical passage of 'Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's' (Mark 12:17), Hegel states 'the question is precisely to determine what is Caesar's, i.e. what belongs to the worldly authority; and we know well enough everything the worldly authority has wilfully arrogated to itself, just as for its part the spiritual authority has done' (2010a:253). Biblical scholar David Clines has extensively argued with regard to this passage that the reading of the text does indeed at first separate the world into two realms, the divine and Caesars (1998:110), but he further asks '[b]ut what if Caesar himself belongs to God?' (1998:112). Clines sees the text to be deconstructing itself in the deconstruction of the binary opposition presented; the text undermines itself, and thus, one can conclude if one wants, that nothing should be given to Caesar. In a way, Rose anticipated this response and states '[i]f this question is not answered, the answer will be "imperialism", the encroachment of Caesar on God, or God on Caesar' (2009:123). However, with regard to the statement in Mark, Rose quotes Hegel to argue that 'neither Jesus nor his followers' (2009:123) could annul the state and thus '[t]he result was that Jesus could "find freedom only in his heart, only in the void"' (2009:123). It is in light of this that I invite Rose's earlier statement to be read, that Hegel's criticism lies in seeing 'reconciliation in religion always remain[ing] implicit and abstract, because it is only achieved as religion, as spiritual and not as worldly community' (2009:118). I presume the spiritual community implied here to be the Kingdom of Heaven established by Jesus, instead of an expectation that his contemporaries had of the revolution and overthrow of Roman occupiers. This would, however, miss the

point that the Kingdom of Heaven is already here on Earth and is most evident in the celebration of the Eucharist (Schmemmann, 2003), where the Church, the worldly community, comes together with the spiritual community, joined in one Sacrament. If, however, one is to go along with Hegel and Rose in maintaining that the state and religion are identical, my critique in distinguishing the Kingdom of Heaven and Earth does fail, but in this case, one is no longer dealing with Christianity, but with mere Christendom. Kierkegaard would not necessarily object to the unity of the state and religion, but it would no longer be Christianity, and thus no longer an existence-communication. This would then mean to miss the point of chapter 5 of Climacus' *Fragments*. The generations of followers of Christ, faced with the paradox, are not helped by the development of history (or the advancement of the Spirit in *Phenomenology*). Climacus writes:

If that fact came into the world as the absolute paradox, all that comes later would be of no help, because this remains for all eternity the consequences of a paradox and thus just as definitively improbable as the paradox, unless it is assumed that the consequences (which, after all, are derived) gained retroactive power to transform the paradox, which would be just as acceptable as the assumption that a son received retroactive power to transform his father (PF:94–95).

There is no retroactive power to transform the paradox; even if the state and religion become the same in Christian history as Christendom, this does not help the paradox of the incarnation, nor the offence at the paradox. Climacus adds:

that fact is supposed to have been *naturalized* little by little ... then the later generation plainly is in a position of advantage ... The fact, however, has no respect for domestication, is too proud to desire a follower who joins on the strength of the successful outcome of the matter ... refuses to be naturalized under the protection of a king or a professor – it is and remains the paradox and does not permit attainment by speculation. That fact is only for faith (PF:95–96; emphasis original).

I read the mention of professor and speculation in the same sentence, as Climacus' direct attack on [Danish] Hegel[ians].

But maybe the redemption of Hegel is found in very Kierkegaardian terms in Rose. Towards the end of her discussion of the chapter on “Philosophy of History” she states ‘[t]hese are rare and revealing passages in which Hegel does not disguise a *Sollen* as the rationality of the real, but simply despairs’ (Rose, 2009:126). I already showed in chapter 3 how, for Kierkegaard, it is precisely despair that the individual should fall into, in order for any change in the stage of existence to be possible, and thus for any beginning of learning to be possible (chapter 4). Where Hegel despairs upon Christendom, Kierkegaard finds the task of educating the person to exist out of Christendom and into Christianity. And for Rose also, maybe in *Love's Work* Rose's ‘[k]eep your mind in hell, and despair not’ (1996:epigraph and p.105) could now be understood in a very Kierkegaardian sense (advanced in the previous chapter) – that of the offence of the

understanding at the paradox, but at the same time of a happy passion that enables the mutual understanding in the collapse? In Kierkegaard's own words 'in its paradoxical passion the understanding does indeed will its own downfall. But the paradox, too, wills this downfall of the understanding, and thus the two have a mutual understanding, but this understanding is present only in the moment of passion' (PF:47). I have explored the moment of understanding in section 4.3.5. above.

### 5.1.2. An interlude: Upbuilding Education

When a reader is to search for a specific example of a “system of education” in academic literature in Kierkegaard, they will eventually come across his term *upbuilding* [opbyggelige]. This concept was initially interpreted almost exclusively as related to Kierkegaard's theory of indirect communication (see discussion in: Søltoft, 2000:20). More recently, *upbuilding* was theorised and “systematised” in relation to theories of education. I will present the sketch of what academic literature means by it, before opening up the *system of upbuilding* to the influence of education found in the previous chapter. The *upbuilding education* in Kierkegaard was theorised by Tubbs (2003, 2004, 2005) and Stein M. Wivestad (2011, 2013, 2023), who also engages and responds to Tubbs.<sup>210</sup> There Wivestad (2011:614–615) points out that although one can use Kierkegaard's concept of upbuilding in relation to education, “upbuilding education” as such is Tubbs' own invention, drawn from the reading of *Eighteen Upbuilding Discourses*.<sup>211</sup> Wivestad (2011:615) argues that the only use by Kierkegaard<sup>212</sup> of upbuilding and education together (in this case understood as *Bildung*) makes for a reading of conditions for *upbuilding* to be present in all forms of education. Furthermore, Tubbs is hesitant in naming an *upbuilding* education as some theory

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<sup>210</sup> I would like to note that, although the study by Pia Søltoft “To Let Oneself be Upbuilt” still examines upbuilding in terms of communication, she nonetheless does acknowledge the educational aspect of communication, stating:

“The upbuilding” as a new theory of communication founded upon the *equality* between the receiver and the communicator thus has an advantage over the “dialectic of communication” inasmuch as it accentuates the possibility that the message can give shape or *educate* both parties involved in the communication, without deception (2000:22; emphasis original).

<sup>211</sup> Elsewhere, Wivestad (2013) asks what makes Kierkegaard's *Upbuilding Discourses* upbuilding, answering ‘[i]t is the encounter between possibilities in the texts and the reader's own life experiences’ (Wivestad, 2013:520). This thesis has used the same approach, especially in the explication of the Kierkegaardian theology of education in chapter 4, to let the reader encounter the argument and narrative of the text through the reader's own experience. This was also the argument in chapter 1 for the re-reading of Kierkegaard by each individual, against some authoritative narrative.

<sup>212</sup> ‘[A]l anden Dannelse uden Opbyggelse er, evig forstaaet, Misdannelse’ (Kierkegaard, 2010; Available online <https://tekster.kb.dk/text/sks-p381-txt-root> [Accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2024])

that can be implemented in professional practice, writing that ‘a different question emerges for the teacher: not what should I do, but what do I learn about myself in deciding what to do’ (2005:227). The subject of upbuilding education is thus not only the other but also myself.

Worthy of notice is that Tubbs’ (2003) first theorising takes place in relation to the discussion of (and Tubbs’ own context as an academic in) Church colleges within the Higher Education in the United Kingdom.<sup>213</sup> This draws attention to the necessity of a theological perspective to education and, more specifically, theorising on the *theology of education*, that can contribute to the self-examination of the ever changing identities of educational institutions. In the Estonian context this might seem irrelevant, as the only religious institutions of higher education are church affiliated theological institutes and seminaries, but even in Estonia we see the rise in popularity of faith affiliated private schools. Universities (including universities in Estonia) are a part of the global community; a prerequisite today for *Wissenschaft*, and for academic freedom and integrity. From a global perspective, there are a large number of universities with religious affiliation and a clear tendency to reflect on their values and service to the common good as well as to their local communities, as a chapter by John Wood (2017) demonstrates.

Tubbs’ thinking on *upbuilding education* arises in reflecting on a paradox faced by the Church colleges; ‘[i]f they are Christian institutions offering education *into* Christianity through the curriculum then they threaten academic freedom. If they merely teach *about* Christianity then they relativise their truth, implying that it is, like the rest of the curriculum, “incomplete and to that extent untrue”’ (2003:55; emphasis original). This is just another shape that the paradoxical logic discussed in chapter 4 takes. The problem faced by the Church colleges, but also secular universities, is in answering the question of “what is education” and what is the educational experience of higher education (Tubbs, 2003:55). Tubbs points to Hegel’s statements about religion in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* from 1827, where Hegel describes a view that ‘one knows *that* God is, *not what* God is ... it is further declared that we can know only our relation to God, not what God himself is’ (Hegel, 1984b:162–163; emphasis original). This is a mainstream statement of Christian theology,<sup>214</sup> but for Tubbs it means that the Christian teaching offered by the Church colleges is ‘engaging only as education *about* and *into* Christianity, rather than expressing

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<sup>213</sup> After various reforms in the UK higher education sector, Church colleges have become universities. This includes Tubbs’ own King Alfred’s College becoming the University of Winchester in 2005. Today, many are a part of the Cathedrals Group of Universities (<https://cathedralsgroup.ac.uk/>). More on theological perspectives on Church related colleges and universities can be read in a chapter by Elizabeth Stuart and Michael Holman (2017).

<sup>214</sup> I already referred in this chapter to a paper by Jamros (1995) in describing Hegel’s position on the incarnation. There, he argues that Hegel, in fact, does not share theological orthodoxy with regard to Christology, and though statements in *Lectures* may seem different to *Phenomenology*, they nonetheless do not demonstrate a shift in Hegel’s thinking. For Jamros, Hegel remains, in that sense heterodox, though Jamros does not use this word himself.

cognitive, philosophical experiences as religious education ... In other words such religion cannot transform the experience of the eternal into *education*' (Tubbs, 2003:60; emphasis original) as an experience of God, or the experience of the paradox (of the incarnation). The previous chapter has already challenged this position of "religious" education in Church colleges and demonstrated how it is precisely the experience of the paradox that is grounded for Kierkegaard in the ultimate paradox of the incarnation that allows for the type of education that Tubbs is calling for. Tubbs imaginatively puts that '[f]or Kierkegaard the absolute can be taught because the absolute is learning. However, no teacher can teach the absolute to another for the teacher can do nothing by himself' (2003:64). Section 5.2. below will examine the possibility for this teaching in more detail.

Turning back to *upbuilding education*, Wivestad (2011) sees in Tubbs' (2005:232–234) reading 'stages in the upbuilding of the human soul' (2011:617) that, in his interpretation, are '1. the stage of being possessed, 2. the stage of impatience and doubt, and 3. the stage of patience in the struggle with oneself' (2011:617). Wivestad suggests that '[p]erhaps the stages in upbuilding may be seen as possibilities for the development of Religiousness B' (2011:617). The latter is an interesting claim, as Religiousness B is paradoxical religiosity (see more in section 3.2.3.2.), and thus, to have stages of development of a paradox is to have a system of a paradox. George Pattison has called those stages 'threefold modelling of the self' (2002:37) and admitted that the 'modelling ... is related to but not identical with that other famous Kierkegaardian triad' (2002:37) of the stages of existence, thus being more reserved than Wivestad in relation to Religiousness B. Pattison (2002:37–38) names the three stages of modelling of the self to be *immediacy*, *reflective consciousness*, and the third one is a rather difficult one – that cannot be nicely summarised – of an anxious awareness in self-reflection of a dependency on God.

Wivestad (2011:615) argues that *upbuilding* in Kierkegaard is explicitly linked to unconditional love. Wivestad refers to *Works of Love* where Kierkegaard writes '[w]herever upbuilding is, there is love, and wherever love is, there is upbuilding' (WL:214), 'in love is upbuilding' (WL:215), 'knowledge and the communication of knowledge can indeed also be upbuilding, but if they are, then it is because love is present' (WL:215), and "'to build up" is exclusively characteristic of love' (WL:212) as examples. In his 2013 paper, Wivestad gives a summary of what it means for something to be upbuilding:

1. it helps us to a realistic understanding of our own limitations, helps us to acknowledge that we, in our striving to possess the world and become masters, will also be possessed by the world and thereby lose ourselves,
2. it helps us to see that our life as a whole is a good gift that we have been given,
3. it helps us to view others without hatred, envy and egoistic calculation, helps us to share with others the good gifts that we have been given (2013:520).

His commentary on points 2 and 3 becomes especially important in relation to the understanding of unconditional love. With regard to point 2, Wivestad explains that it requires us to understand that ‘our best abilities and efforts are always imperfect, and that the *only* possible foundation for *upbuilding* would be the *love* that has been given *unconditionally to all*’ (2013:520; emphasis added).

With the above claim, Wivestad is committing the same “sin” of which he shows Tubbs to be guilty. As was mentioned above, *upbuilding education* is not found in Kierkegaard as a term but is rather theorised by Tubbs, where Wivestad points out that ‘Tubbs here makes reference to one of his own papers’ (2011:614). Wivestad, in claiming that ‘[f]or Kierkegaard the foundation is a love that “has been present in every human being ever since creation”’; and everyone has got this foundation, because we are created by God, who is love’ (2013:521) also does not quote Kierkegaard, but rather refers to a paper by Pia Søltoft (2000:25). From a later paper by Wivestad (2023) it appears that he argues for this position through an appeal to human beings being created in *imago Dei*. He states ‘[i]f you posit that God is love and that all human beings are created in the image of God, then you may presuppose unconditional love as a possibility in all persons you encounter’ (Wivestad, 2023:10).

Kierkegaard does indeed talk about love as a gift of God ‘which he implanted in the human heart’ (WL:163) and warns against wasting God’s gift. Furthermore, Kierkegaard writes in the context of *upbuilding* love that ‘[i]t is God, the Creator, who must implant love in each human being, he who himself is Love’ (WL:216). When it comes to an individual person Kierkegaard maintains that ‘[t]he one who loves presupposes that love is in the other person’s heart and by this very presupposition builds up love in him’ (WL:216–217). However, I argued in my reading of Kierkegaard’s *Philosophical Fragments* in the previous chapter that what is necessary is for a human being to be born again (PF:19). I do not deny the importance of thinking in terms of *imago Dei*, rather I want to emphasise the utter dependence on God for love and for the *work* of love in the human being. Yes, ‘we are commanded to love with a love that is unconditional in scope and bindingness. Everyone is my neighbour because all are equally God’s children’ (Ferreira, 2013:337) but, as I argued elsewhere, love is impossible as it is ‘love in a paradoxical religious sphere’ (Ahmedov, 2023:28). As Kierkegaard acknowledges in the *Works of Love*, the duty of love makes it paradoxical, ‘*You shall love*, because this is the very mark of Christian love and is its distinctive characteristic – that it contains this apparent contradiction: to love is a duty’ (WL:24; emphasis original).<sup>215</sup> Love thus becomes a demand too high to bear by oneself. This demand is also acknowledged by Rowan Williams:

To say that we are made in the divine image is to say that our personal being is not centred in an enclosed selfhood but realised in relatedness; we are always already in relation, always involved in what is other, and there is no mental or

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<sup>215</sup> In the draft of the *Works of Love* Kierkegaard states that the concept of a neighbour does not exist without this “duty” love (see WL:430).

“spiritual” life that is not generated by this fact of being in the other and the other’s being in us (2017b:60).

Williams here brings us back to the logic of education of chapter 4 (especially section 4.1). But it is this creation in *imago Dei* where love is constituting my relation to the other. Here is something that is required of me, but which I know full well I am unable to fulfil. Yet this constitutes our education, even in the impossibility and failure, not to be discouraged but to let ourselves be upbuilt. As Kierkegaard maintains in *The Single Individual*

The neighbor is the absolutely true expression for human equality. If everyone in truth loved the neighbor as himself, then perfect human equality would be achieved unconditionally. Everyone who in truth loves the neighbor expresses human equality unconditionally; everyone who, even if he confesses, as I do, that his striving is weak and imperfect, is still aware that the task is to love the neighbor; he is also aware of what human equality is (PV:111).

But this is no easy task (more on this in the next section).

Nonetheless, it is this emphasis on love that is actually at the heart of Wivestad’s disagreement with Tubbs’ reading of Kierkegaard’s *Upbuilding Discourses*. According to Wivestad, Tubbs takes the gift, the foundation of the *upbuilding education*, to be doubt, where faith and love are only functions of named doubt (Wivestad, 2011:619). Tubbs argues that for Kierkegaard, God ‘has given us the gift of doubt, and God in doubt offers a potentially stronger relationship to God than one of professed belief’ (2005:230). Unfortunately, Tubbs does not clarify what he means in this context by “professed belief.” If it means Christendom as envisioned by Kierkegaard, then indeed doubt is a better relationship. (Kierkegaard states that ‘[a]ll doubt ... is nothing but disobedience to God if it is regarded ethically’ (PV:123).) In the next sentence, Tubbs refers to Abraham as the knight of faith who has ‘faith by virtue of the absurd’ (Tubbs, 2005:230). Abraham, of course, cannot “profess” his belief by speaking, but he does “profess” it in the leap of faith and the absurd of absolute obedience, which is higher than doubt. Tubbs then, seems to treat doubt in the paradoxical-religious sphere.

Contrary to the discussion above, Wivestad reads the discourse ‘not see[ing] doubt *as such* as a gift from God, but as a result of human action ... the condition for receiving God’s gift is itself a gift from God’ (2011:619; emphasis original). On this point, I agree with Wivestad,<sup>216</sup> this being already argued by me in the

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<sup>216</sup> Although Wivestad demonstrates well how Tubbs’ reading of doubt and gift are conditioned by his reading of the English translation, and how the Danish original makes such reading problematic and rather supports Wivestad’s own reading, it is hard to conclude (and neither is it my intention to here) whether Wivestad’s reading of Tubbs is correct. Wivestad’s analysis of Tubbs’ Kierkegaardian doubt rests on the reading of *Upbuilding Discourses*, and Wivestad (2011:614) repeats that he is sympathetic to Tubbs’ project. It is the reading of Danish he aims to correct. Full treatment of Tubbs’ Kierkegaardian doubt would require analysis of Tubbs’ treatment of doubt as inspired by his reading of *Johannes Climacus* (Tubbs, 2004) and is done in part by me in section 4.2.3.

previous chapter in the reading of *Philosophical Fragments*, where God gives both the truth and conditions for understanding the truth. I also read there the truth as a gift as learning and argued for the fundamental importance of love to the process (e.g. section 4.3.2. to 4.3.4.).

Kierkegaard, in *Works of Love*, does present a foundation of upbuilding (and by extension *upbuilding education* as theorised by Tubbs<sup>217</sup>) as relying solely on love. Kierkegaard writes ‘[t]here is nothing, nothing at all, that cannot be done or said in such a way that it becomes upbuilding, but whatever it is, if it is upbuilding, then love is present’ (WL:212), or in other words, saying “Do everything for upbuilding.” It could just as well have said, “Do everything in love,” and it would have said the very same thing’ (WL:213). However, I argue that the exegesis of Kierkegaard should go even further and state that when Kierkegaard says “Do everything in love”, it means the same thing as “Do everything in God,”<sup>218</sup> where God should be understood here as the one presented in chapter 4.

Coming back to *upbuilding education*, Wivestad emphasises in education the gift that teachers give to others is itself a gift that the teachers have received, and ‘[t]his humiliating condition implies a Socratic doubt in oneself and in one’s own doubt’ (2013:526). This doubt in doubt is a relation of relation (see section 4.1.), always already an education of the one giving the gift. This view is supported by Tubbs who states that one ought to ‘give to recognise receipt of the gift’ (2004:99).

An aspect that is present in Tubbs but is absent in Wivestad’s various references<sup>219</sup> to Tubbs, is recognition that *upbuilding education* operates under paradoxical logic (that was elaborated on in the previous chapter). Referring to Kierkegaard’s discourse “To Gain One’s Soul in Patience” (EUD:159 onwards), Tubbs ‘asks how is it possible to gain one’s soul in upbuilding education if one already possesses one’s soul?’ (2004:100) and answers ‘the contradiction appears that one “cannot simultaneously possess and gain” ... the same thing’ (2004:100). Kierkegaard’s answer, as the title of the discourse suggests, is through patience. Tubbs argues that

Patience ... shares the same educational structure of faith, the teleological suspension of the ethical, doubt and repetition. Each in their own way are examples of the work in which the gift is received by itself, from itself, within the absolute relation whose presupposition this work is, and whose work is the presupposition (2004:101).

The educational structure Tubbs refers to here is what the previous chapter has named “the logic of education,” the paradoxical logic of education. Tubbs’ “the

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<sup>217</sup> None of the monographs authored by Tubbs make a reference to Kierkegaard’s *Works of Love*.

<sup>218</sup> I refer the reader to section 3.4. where I elaborated on Kierkegaard’s idea that “God is love.”

<sup>219</sup> It is important to note that Wivestad, in his engagement with Tubbs, never refers to Tubbs’ (2004) work *Philosophy’s Higher Education*, which also touches upon *upbuilding education*.

gift is received by itself, from itself” needs to be understood as a relation of relation (what he calls in the quotation above the absolute relation), the type of relation where God is education where, in Kierkegaard’s words, everything that one learns about the paradox one learns from the paradox itself (PF:53). I will now turn to a system of education that Kierkegaard himself presented in his posthumous works and throughout my commentary compare how the theory of “upbuilding” education found by Tubbs and Wivestad in Kierkegaard compares to Kierkegaard’s own idea, thus bridging a gap between a contemporary theory of education found in Kierkegaard (actuality), and Kierkegaard’s own proposal (ideality).

## 5.2. “Theological” System [of Education]:<sup>220</sup> *The Point of View*

I have shown above that it is possible to think of Kierkegaard as having a system, and demonstrated how, through the re-reading of Rose, Kierkegaard is rather close to Hegel in system as a method. The divergence between the two occurred in Kierkegaard’s treatment of the Absolute Paradox of the incarnation and his critique of the Hegelian interpretation of it. If the previous chapter was mainly concerned with the experience of God as education, and the section above demonstrated the theory of such experience, this chapter now proceeds to the theory of practice of that experience. Furthermore, this section picks up the discussion presented in the interlude above and argues how a theory of education presented by Kierkegaard at the end of his authorship goes beyond Tubbs’ and Wivestad’s treatment.

In giving an accounting of his authorship, Kierkegaard claims that ‘the communication ... must sooner or later end in direct communication’ (PV:7).<sup>221</sup> So now this thesis reaches some solid ground after hovering over the movements of education of the previous chapter. In *The Point of View for My Work as an Author*, a book that was published posthumously and that Kierkegaard wants to be read as a religious book, he states his ‘whole authorship pertains to

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<sup>220</sup> The system presented here is theological rather than philosophical, because it attempts to communicate something about God not as a mere speculation, but trying to be truthful to the demands and the experience of the Absolute Paradox. The abstract statements about the system, thus, can only be made when not treated separately from the statements about the experience of education of the previous chapter.

<sup>221</sup> I am aware of the scholarly view that suggests reading this statement as ironic, that considers ‘a direct commentary on authorship [a]s really just another form of indirect communication’ (Amir, 2014:115), yet the reason for trusting Kierkegaard will unfold in the course of this section, as an attempt at communicating in the difficulty of “directly-indirectly.” This is an argument also made by Lydia Amir (2014:138–139) with regards to later Kierkegaard, namely that he abandons indirect communication for communicating Christianity “directly-indirectly.” I do not want to pose it as mere abandonment, but rather to see it as a necessary step in the learning that the reader of Kierkegaard has to undergo, but also that Kierkegaard himself underwent based on his reflections in *The Point of View*.

Christianity, to the issue: becoming a Christian' (PV:23). Kierkegaard makes fun of those who are not satisfied with this being the theme of his authorship: '[t]hat what it means to become a Christian should *actually* be the fundamental idea in the whole authorship – how boring!' (PV:92; emphasis original). However, in a dialectical manner, Kierkegaard argues at the end of another work, *The Single Individual*, that his work was to *make aware* (I will return to this idea below) people of the category of *the single individual* (PV:123–124). For the first time this category was used by Socrates, and now in Christendom for the second time (PV:123). For Kierkegaard, education of the *single individual* did not just necessarily mean that one would become a Christian, but also included the work of *seriously considering oneself not a Christian*. In education, then, it should also be kept in mind that one is not educating the crowd but single individuals. Furthermore, that *telos* of education is not something external to be reached (Christianity) but is education itself (seriously considering oneself [not] a Christian).

Kierkegaard names *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* as a midpoint (PV:9), and the turning point (PV:55) of his authorship. In *Postscript* Johannes Climacus writes:

But while everyone is busy with learnedly defining and speculatively understanding Christianity, one never sees the question “What is Christianity?” presented in such a way that one discovers that the person asking about it is asking in terms of existing and in the interest of existing (CUP1:373).

Kierkegaard does not communicate to us either systematic<sup>222</sup>-dogmatic or speculative theology, rather he communicates what it means to be/come a Christian. In a journal entry, Kierkegaard claims that ‘Xnty is an existence communication and can only be presented – by existing’ (NB6:56). Once again, Climacus in *Postscript* is helpful here

In our day, it is thought that knowledge determines the issue and that if one just comes to know the truth, the more concisely and quickly the better, one is helped. But existing is something quite different from knowing (CUP1:297).

This thesis has grappled with this in chapter 4, where a theology of education as an experience of the teacher and the student was presented. Where the task was not just to tell the “truth” of what the object of study is but to present the experience of this knowing. This work, the existence-communication, is the work of the theology of education claimed above.

Kierkegaard views Christendom as an enormous illusion (PV:41). Most of the people living in Christendom ‘live in esthetic or, at most, esthetic-ethical categories’ (PV:43).<sup>223</sup> An enormous amount of patience is required of a teacher who is to attempt to break the illusion (PV:43). The learning in Christendom can take two different paths, ‘to become a Christian is either to become what one is (the

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<sup>222</sup> Understood in the contemporary academic sense.

<sup>223</sup> See chapter 3 for the discussion on the stages of existence.

inwardness of reflection or the reflection of inward deepening), or it is first of all to be wrested out of a delusion' (PV:55–56). However, it is not only the teacher but also the learner who must take time

There is unconditionally one thing that can be understood neither by a noisy assembly nor by an esteemed public, nor in a half-hour, and that is: what Christian self-denial is. In order to understand this, much fear and trembling, quiet solitude, are required, and for a long time (PV:25).

This teaching, transmission of the message of Christianity, the existence-communication ought to be accomplished by the indirect communication that Kierkegaard is employing (Johnson, 1997:158). According to Ronald R. Johnson (1997:158), eventually all the different voices of pseudonymous and the modes of existence they embody come to be in tension with each other. Johnson argues that '[i]n case, an irresolvable dilemma signals the need for a sublation of some kind, but Kierkegaard, unlike Hegel, leaves the reader to discover this need, and he does not explicitly state (in the pseudonymous works) how the dilemma is to be resolved' (1997:158). For Johnson (1997:162), what the existing individual ought to arrive at is the logic of existential leaping.

The teacher and the student, in their education of chapter 4, have followed along the educational journey and arrived at the paradox. And although it is faithful to Kierkegaard to state that to live with the paradox, one has to make a leap – from being offended at the paradox, to the need to make peace with the paradox, the importance of learning from the paradox was emphasised, where no leap is possible, prior to going through that learning.

Now the thesis has arrived at the point mentioned at the beginning of the section – to communicate directly. Johnson above is correct in stating that Kierkegaard leaves the reader without an explicitly stated system in the pseudonymous works. But Kierkegaard does advise the reader directly-indirectly in the works under his own name; of interest to us is *The Point of View*. I use the term directly-indirectly to indicate the dual nature of what Kierkegaard is communicating to the reader. On the one hand, he directly elaborates what his experience of the work as an author was about. On the other, because it is his experience, and not the readers, it is already an indirect communication, as the reader needs to go through this *work* by themselves.

In *The Point of View*, Kierkegaard presents a teacher of existence-communication with advice on how to conduct education into Christianity. Kierkegaard does warn that it would be unfair before God to say that he had an entire dialectical overview from the beginning (PV:76–77). He states:

I cannot understand the whole simply because I can understand the whole down to the slightest detail; but what I cannot understand is that I can now understand it and yet by no means dare to say that I understood it so accurately at the beginning – and yet I certainly am the one who has done it and with reflection has taken every step (PV:77).

With this in mind, and with the work of the previous chapters of the thesis behind, it is now time to, in reflection, look forward to directly communicating an indirect experience of education as existence-communication.

#### 5.2.1.1. Begin where They are: the Teacher as Helper

Kierkegaard argues that '*If One Is Truly to Succeed in Leading a Person to a Specific Place, One Must First and Foremost Take Care to Find Him Where He Is and Begin There*' (PV:45; emphasis and capitalization Kierkegaard's own). This is precisely what was argued in this thesis already with regard to the decent of God and beginning where the human-student is (see section 4.3.4.). For Kierkegaard '[t]his is the secret in the entire art of helping' (PV:45). The teacher/helper 'must first humble himself under the person he wants to help and thereby understand that to help is not to dominate but to serve' (PV:45). All true teaching, 'all true helping begins with a humbling' (PV:45), as was also emphasised in the previous chapter with reference to education as the gift (see section 4.3.4.). Kierkegaard, however, goes beyond Wivestad's and Tubbs' understanding of the gift of *upbuilding education* (section 5.1.2.), and I mean here not necessarily in terms of the content of the gift, but in terms of to whom the gift should be given. In Kierkegaard's reflection upon his own work, it becomes apparent that in giving the gift of helping / education / of introducing Christianity into Christendom, it is not only the other to whom the gift is given. Kierkegaard writes:

But I do still take a childish delight in having served in this way, although in relation to God I offer this my entire work more shamefacedly and bashfully than a child who gives its parents a gift the parents have given the child. Oh, but what parents would be so cruel as to take the gift from the child and say, "Why, this is ours!" instead of smiling at the child and going along with its idea that it is a gift – so also with God; he is not that cruel when someone brings him as a gift – his own (PV:87-89 footnote).

In other words, by giving the gift to the other, one is serving God and thus giving the gift back to God.

The beginning of teaching for Kierkegaard is 'in such a way that it seems as if it is [the person in the wrong] who should teach you' (PV:45). This is of course a very Socratic approach at claiming one's ignorance, but then also it is required, just as Socrates had, to show the student their untruth. This is a demanding task for a teacher. Kierkegaard's description of the teacher, who ought to teach 'only in much fear and trembling' (PV:46) deserves to be quoted in full here:

To be a teacher is not to say: This is the way it is, nor is it to assign lessons and the like. No, to be a teacher is truly to be the learner. Instruction begins with this, that you, the teacher, learn from the learner, place yourself in what he has understood and how he has understood it, if you yourself have not understood it previously, or that you, if you have understood it, then let him examine you, as it were, so that he can be sure that you know your lesson. (PV:46-47).

Herner Saeverot, in constructing an existential teaching out of Kierkegaard based on the above citation, argues that the teacher conducting the teaching must possess more understanding than the student does, and that includes ‘understanding what the student herself understands’ (2013:505). If the teacher does not possess more understanding than the student, then the teacher falls into the desire to be admired by the student, and on this account, the teacher is the master (in the worst form possible) (Saeverot, 2013:505). I argue that this possession of “more” understanding than a student is precisely what was explored in chapter 4, as the teacher also needs to bring the condition for understanding the truth. First, in understanding what the student understands, the teacher helps the student to uncover one’s own untruth. The teacher descends to the student and “takes the form of a servant,” but as was argued in the previous chapter this form is not something put on but should be the actual condition of the teacher as servant. The teacher understands more than the student also in another way; the teacher always already, if they are to teach something, knows more of the subject matter.

However, one needs to beware of talk about the “subject matter.” While this approach is indeed applicable to teaching subjects in schools and universities, Kierkegaard ‘requires the teacher to step out of the traditional role where the aim is to teach the student something’ (Saeverot, 2013:505). Thus, what is specifically in mind here is the predisposition towards teaching more generally. The teacher is an “existence-communicator”, they are to teach the student how to exist, how to learn, also already within the context of traditional classroom teaching. This is then the teacher ‘who gives the condition and gives the truth’ (PF:15), who was described in chapter 4 as the God-teacher. But the key is that first the untruth has to be taught and only then, the truth. The *upbuilding*, as the section above maintains, happens in love.

### 5.2.1.2. Teaching to Compel to Become Aware

The next advice Kierkegaard offers to the teachers has to do with the students who are unwilling to be educated. Kierkegaard maintains that it is not in the power of an ordinary teacher to ‘[c]ompell a person to an opinion, a conviction, a belief’ (PV:50). What the teacher can do, however, is to compel one to become aware, that is to judge oneself (PV:50). Here lies an important observation with relation to the discussion of *upbuilding education* above (section 5.1.2.). In discussing the stages of upbuilding, Wivestad (2011:617) was quoted stating that the first stage of upbuilding is “being possessed”. However, in a later paper Wivestad has expanded the language a little to ‘be *aware* of being possessed’ (2023:11; emphasis mine). This correction that Wivestad makes is, therefore, in line with Kierkegaard’s advice to the teachers, that one cannot “be aware” out of nothing unless one is *compelled* to become aware.

In the previous chapter, this was discussed under realising the truth of one’s position – that one actually is untruth and that by one’s own fault (section 4.2.2.; PF:18–19). But, Kierkegaard warns, what the student will judge is out of the teacher’s control:

Perhaps he judges the very opposite of what I desire. Furthermore, that he was compelled to judge perhaps makes him infuriated, ragingly infuriated – Infuriated with the cause, with me – and perhaps I become the victim of my daring venture (PV:50).

Recall the discussion on the education of Johannes in *De omnibus dubitandum est* that the teacher ought to be prepared to be slain as soon as they begin teaching (section 4.4.3.; PF:155). The teacher ought to relinquish the power of control over the outcome, as a form of mastery. Kierkegaard reminds of Jesus' experience as a teacher, where the students 'did become aware – they put him to death' (PV:50–51). But there is an important clarification that a) God was willing to have it happen to him, b) this did not stop Jesus' work/teaching, and c) 'the momentum of his work began precisely with his death' (PV:51).

Kierkegaard summarises the pedagogical method in one sentence, while also reminding the reader that '[i]n the communication of Christianity ... there is not a direct relation' (PV:52):

The whole thing can be stated in one phrase, the whole thing, which can indeed take days and years of work to develop, the most vigilant attention night and day, incessant scale finger-exercising in the dialectical every day, and a never-slumbering fear and trembling – the method must become indirect (PV:52).

This thesis has also advanced the view that the educational relation, the dialectical relationship (see section 4.1.), is already a relation of relation; it is once removed, and hence already indirect. Kierkegaard calls this a 'relationship of reflection' (PV:74).

### 5.2.1.3. Educational Deception

Kierkegaard argues that there is a great difference between the type of persons teachers ought to educate:

one who is ignorant and must be given some knowledge, and therefore he is like the empty vessel that must be filled or like the blank sheet of paper that must be written upon – and one who is under a delusion that must first be taken away (PV:53–54).

The student that was dealt with in this thesis is not a blank slate; it was demonstrated extensively in chapter 4 what it means to be in untruth and what one can learn from it. Recall section 4.2.2. where it was observed that the state of untruth (PF:13–14) indeed initially appears as the blank sheet of paper, or non relation, however, as the discussion proceeded, untruth was demonstrated to possess its own truth, this being the paradox from which one was invited to learn. This is an important point for Kierkegaardian education, based on the discussion in chapter 4, and with Kierkegaard's own statement in *The Point of View*, the student has content that first must be taken away.

Recalling the idea of *upbuilding education* described above, Wivestad had argued that for Kierkegaard “[b]uilding up is different from “building on” ... “To build up is to erect something from the ground up” (2023:10; emphasis original, cf. WL:211). Thus, before the upbuilding takes place, one has to be stripped or reorientated. This is why Johannes Climacus in *Fragments* argues that the student ought to become a new person (PF:18).

Kierkegaard views his own work as a “holy deception” and states that he does not know whether he should repent of deceiving people, yet he views it as necessary in order to show the illusion of Christendom (PV:88). Kierkegaard warns the reader ‘not to be deceived by the word *deception*’ (PV:53; emphasis original) and redefines what “to deceive” means ‘that one does not begin *directly* with what one wishes to communicate but begins by taking the other’s delusion at face value’ (PV:54; emphasis original). It is not ‘I am Christian, you are not a Christian – but this way: You are a Christian, I am not Christian’ (PV:54). But such teaching is a risk-taking, that not every teacher dares to take. Kierkegaard presents a situation where:

someone who wants to be a teacher and is too much occupied with the thought of what those he wants to teach will judge of him and his teaching, his knowledge, etc. Such a teacher really has no elbowroom at all in teaching. Suppose, for example, that for the sake of the learner he thought it most appropriate to say he did not understand something he really did understand. Heaven forbid! Out of fear that the learner would actually believe that he did not understand it, he would not dare – that is, he is really not fit to be a teacher. Although calling himself a teacher, he is so far from being one that he really aspires to be cited for excellence – by the learner (PV:49).

The kind of teacher Kierkegaard asks for is the one who is well-versed in the subject matter (of Christianity as existence communication), that is, the teacher who is in fear and trembling, not before what the student will think, but before what they are to teach.

Kierkegaard begins chapter 2 of *The Point of View* lamenting that people in “the present age” ‘have utterly lost the idea that to be an author is and ought to be a work and therefore a personal existing’ (PV:57). As thus far Kierkegaard was also providing examples from teaching, I claim that it is correct to re-read the above sentence by substituting the author with the teacher. He then spends chapter 3 of *The Point of View* presenting the reader with his own experience of education, that is, the experience of him becoming an author and how Governance (that is God) has guided him.

Kierkegaard aims to provide a very important corrective that he claims is present in the turn to antiquity, to re-discover the author/the teacher as an individual human being. He sees in his time that ‘the secret of evil has become wisdom ... that one is not to ask about the communicator but only about the communication, only about “what” (PV:57), only about the what of communication, forgetting to ask about the *who*. In education then, it is not only the “content” that matters.

Chapter 4 has demonstrated how education already involves a relation, and not between the student and the subject matter, but between the teacher and the student.

The deception that ought to happen also orients itself differently towards the communication/teaching. Kierkegaard distinguishes between two types of teachers who are using educational deceptions, those ‘who want the communication to serve them instead of their serving the communication’ (PV:58), and those who serve the communication, education, and are called ‘the despised, the “truth-witness[es]”’ (PV:59). This should be contrasted to the type of “truth-witness” that Professor Martensen, soon to become the primate of Denmark, in a eulogy proclaimed his predecessor Bishop Mynster to be (M:3).

During the discussion on the authorship and authority with which he speaks, Kierkegaard once again reaffirms that he is without authority (PV:78). Interestingly enough, though Kierkegaard states ‘[t]his is indeed why more than one of the pseudonymous writers calls himself a policeman’ (PV:78), he maintains that the authority of the policeman is still without authority. This is due to the direction of authority, not towards an other, but towards oneself – one’s own self is whom Kierkegaard is policing. He further states:

Am I then the teacher, the one who does the upbringing? No, not that either. I am the one who himself has been brought up, or the one whose authorship describes what it means to be brought up to become a Christian; just as the upbringing and accordingly as the upbringing puts pressure on me, I in turn put pressure on the age, but teacher I am not – only a fellow-pupil (PV:78–79).

The authority is of the Governance (God) and not Kierkegaard’s as an author, he claims.

#### 5.2.1.4. The Single Individual:

Kierkegaard states that in death, all identity, glory, and esteem that a person may have held while alive is discarded. There is, however, one exception made ‘only for anyone who has been a religious author, teacher, speaker, etc. in his lifetime and has been that on his own responsibility and at his own risk’ (PV:68). The teacher would not be able to discard one’s identity

And with this bundle he must enter the place where he shall be judged. After all, he was a religious teacher; so he will be judged by the authentic religious teachers, all those who as long as they lived were insulted, persecuted, laughed to scorn, mocked, spat upon (PV:68).

Kierkegaard once again draws a parallel to Christ, as well as to the other martyrs of the Church. Kierkegaard is developing this in the context of the discussion on the “crowd” and poses the category of “the single individual” against it. This is the category of the person who is a Christian in Christendom, the one who has

been educated in and through existence-communication.<sup>224</sup> Of special interest is the way Kierkegaard concludes *The Point of View*, admitting that throughout his authorship he sought the single individual, but in the end, he himself became one more and more (PV:97). This resonates with the challenge to the teacher this thesis has presented above, that although one may set out in search of pedagogy to teach students, one actually learns something about oneself as a result.

However, one has to turn to a different work by Kierkegaard, the posthumous *The Single Individual* where Kierkegaard explores this category in much more detail. Furthermore, it is precisely there that the connection is made to a category narrated in chapter 4 of this thesis – the God-teacher.

For Kierkegaard, the result of education, that is, of introducing Christianity into Christendom, is *the single individual*. He writes that ‘this category has been used only once, its first time, in a decisively dialectical way, by Socrates, in order to disintegrate paganism. In Christendom, it will be used a second time in the very opposite way, to make people (the Christians) Christians’ (PV:123). Yet at the same time he claims that this category was the subject of every upbuilding work (PV:115) and thus, by extension, of the upbuilding education examined above (that draws its theory out of these works).

The person ‘[a]s *the single individual* he is alone, alone in the whole world, alone – face-to-face before God’ (PV:123; emphasis original, see also this thesis section 3.4.1.), alone before the paradox from which one is to learn (see section 4.3. for the experience of this learning). The critiques mounted at Kierkegaard that he is a strict individualist, however, are incorrect and have been appropriately challenged in recent years.<sup>225</sup> What Kierkegaard was against is individuals gathering in a crowd and disposing of any ethical obligations towards the other, thus by virtue of being gathered in a crowd, nobody took responsibility. It is this emphasis on responsibility that differentiates the crowd from an “authentic” community in Kierkegaard (Ahmedov, 2023:25). Kierkegaard does not make the single individual a kind of a superhero, something that is unachievable, although, in his pseudonymous works, this individual does appear to be an extraordinary one. No, he treats the category dialectically, ‘[t]he *single individual* can mean the most unique of all, and *the single individual* can mean everyone’ (PV:115; emphasis original). Kierkegaard admits that ‘[t]o be sure, a crowd is formed of individuals; consequently each one has the power to remain what he is – an individual. No one, no one, is excluded from being an individual, except the one who excludes himself by becoming many’ (PV:112). What makes up the true community, as opposed to the crowd, is precisely this assembly of single individuals.

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<sup>224</sup> See also chapter 3, where the single individual was discussed in relation to the stages of existence and the ethical stage in particular.

<sup>225</sup> Since it is not my intention to give an exposition of the disagreement in Kierkegaard scholarship on this matter of interpretation of Kierkegaard, I refer the reader to section 2 of a recent article by J. Aaron Simmons (2021) who provides an overview of the debate and difference between individualism and the single individual.

Of crucial importance to this thesis was a claim in *Philosophical Fragments* that '[t]he teacher, then, is the god, who gives the condition and gives the truth' (PF:15). It was claimed that this needs to be satisfied in order for "God is education" to be true. It was further claimed that the human teacher can be the one teaching both the truth and the condition as a figure of God-teacher.<sup>226</sup> In his treatment of *the single individual*, Kierkegaard provides the reader with an attempt to understand the idea of "God is education". He argues that in order to introduce Christianity into Christendom, or in this thesis' terms education into learning, 'God must again become the thoroughly decisive middle term' (PV:122). In the context of what was argued in chapter 4, this middle term corresponds to the idea of relationality, where God and education are a relation of relation between individuals. Kierkegaard states

The truth can neither be communicated nor be received without being, as it were, under the eyes of God, without the help of God, without God's being a participant, the middle term, since God is the truth (PV:111).

I argue this ought to be interpreted as God being the educational relation (simply put education). Furthermore, the quotation above supports the view that the human teacher can bring both condition and the truth to the student, but as was shown in section 5.1.2., in this kind of education, the teacher ought to be humble before the gift they give. The giving of the gift, the receiving of the gift, and the gift itself cannot take place without the help of God, as Kierkegaard states above. The entire process of gift giving, the relation that takes place, is permeated with God. As St Paul, standing in front of the Areopagus, told the Athenians '[i]n him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28).

### 5.3. Theology of Education

Concluding (but not the conclusion of) the education of this thesis, the problem that this thesis addresses is that there is a gap between what is being taught in the university classroom and the students' experiences of the world, whether that be education in systematic theology and the experience of a priest (or even a lay theologian) in answering a parishioner's question about life struggles, or a student-teacher and what they experience in a classroom in front of teenagers. Tubbs in his *Philosophy of the Teacher* (2005) recounts an experience heard during his teacher training course worthy of being quoted here:

Tutor: (summing up his lecture) And so, those are perspectives that can be applied to understanding the classroom. Are there any questions?

Student: I have one. How does any of this help me with the struggles I am having on my teaching practice?

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<sup>226</sup> I have mused with the term God[ly] teacher, a human teacher who is in constant tension between his position as a master and servant of the student, elsewhere (Ahmedov, 2024).

Tutor: That wasn't the point of the lecture?

Student: It never is. (Tubbs, 2005:62).

If, in the case of teacher training and educational sciences, one can go and do empirical research in schools that then would inform teaching at the university level to try and bridge the gap, in theology, the “research-informed teaching” is harder to achieve. In either case, the “classroom” experience is always ahead of what is being taught to students, the future professionals, at universities. This work has struggled with the difficulty of the question posed by the student in the quotation above, how does it help me in the struggles I am having?

I find it appropriate at the very end of this thesis to return to the beginning of Kierkegaard's own thinking. In 1835, a young Kierkegaard wrote in his journal:

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. It is a question of understanding my own destiny, of seeing what the Deity really wants *me* to do; the thing is to find a truth which is truth *for me*, to find the *idea for which I am willing to live and die*. And 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 philosophers' systems and were able to call them all to account on request, point out inconsistencies in every single circle? And what use would it be in that respect to be able to work out a theory of the state, and put all the pieces from so many places into one whole, construct a world which, again, I myself did not inhabit but merely held up for others to see? 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*? (AA:12; emphasis original).

Kierkegaard, of course, found this truth, this idea, and made it the purpose of living and dying – an introduction of Christianity back into Christendom.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I opposed the view of theology (of education) of John Hull (1990:5) that one either *does* theology (and thus is a Christian) or one *studies* it (as appropriate for the theological study in the secular university context). This thesis has inverted the understanding and presented a theology of education that shows how [the study of] theology already *does* something to the learner. It is not only the *subject* of educational context that does something to the *object* (a course or a module) and hence is the master of their own formation (education). Rather, in the process, theology and education rediscovered their own truth as learning about oneself. One could object that the truth of education presented here cannot be education's own as, quite obviously, education cannot speak. But as I already argued in chapter 4, education was able to speak its own truth, through the work, the *doing* of theology (and of this thesis) that it has done upon the author of this thesis. To remember Tubbs' statement quoted in chapter 2, '[t]o know something is to be changed in the knowing' (2017:15). It is not the learner, the author, the researcher, who changed oneself, but rather it was education that changed the learner.

Theology of education is an existence communication and not a (closed in a Kierkegaardian sense) system, because this education never stops, because God [is education] never stops to be active in the world, through always reminding us of the absolute paradox of the incarnation. In this sense, 'theology [is] an existential activity' (Hull, 1990:5). Theology of education as existence communication is, to use a modern educational term, also life-long learning, understood in a sense of 'learning about *doing*' (Williams, 2000a:132; emphasis original). This learning about *doing* happens to the learner who is already involved in a relation of teacher and student, in the context of education. It happens in the giving of the gift to the other, while recognising that in this gift giving, one already gives the gift to God, and that God is already this gift.

To return to the question posed by the student in Tubbs' example at the beginning of this section, Kierkegaardian theology of education helps with the struggles that the student-teacher is having in their practice by letting the truth of the struggle speak to the student-teacher as their own education, that is, in being willing to pose the question even knowing that there might be no answer, nonetheless learning from the paradox.

## CONCLUDING THE THESIS: AN ACCOUNTING

This thesis had as its task the presentation of a Kierkegaardian theology of education. It began with two difficulties, the concepts of “theology” (chapter 1) and “education” (chapter 2). Both of these concepts were redefined in the working out of this thesis, constituting the education of theology and the theology of education.

The thesis has pushed the frontiers of theology by integrating modern metaphysics into theological thinking, where God is education. This modern metaphysics, its logic, and the new understanding of God and Education were examined through the study of Johannes Climacus’ *Philosophical Fragments*. The thesis engaged with the thought-project of ‘Can the truth be learned?’ (PF:9). Three re-readings of the work that followed demonstrated ways in which the relationship between God and humans – teacher and student – is established. This relationship was then re-read once more through the incarnational paradigm, where God was not anymore an abstract, but God-incarnate – Jesus Christ. The incarnational aspect produced a distinctive aspect of the theology of education – an experience of the God-teacher in relation to the human-student. Through this approach, the thesis has challenged the view prevalent in Kierkegaard’s studies that separates Kierkegaard’s educational theory in *Fragments* into two – a divine and a human teaching. “God is education” is shown to be the relation of the experience of the relation of the teacher to the student and the experience of the relation of the student to the teacher. Where this experience of the relation, the experience of education, is the experience of Christianity as existence-communication, that is the *experience* of the theology of education.

When I began thinking about education, the issue of equality between the teacher and student motivated my inquiry. I am aware of the abstraction that the concept of equality carries. And yet the question of whether I as a teacher am simply lying to the students when I try to perform *education* that is inclusive of everyone in the classroom, does not matter whether it is a classroom in a primary school or university. Having exhausted resources in philosophy of education I have turned to theology, where the paradox of Jesus Christ looked very promising as an answer. God becomes man. God dies for our sins. God *includes* humanity in his nature. God’s identity in Jesus Christ is the paradox. I hope that the *education* this paradox of identity enables will speak to the teacher who struggles with their own identities, where the approach is not to dominate, or to try to solve the issue, but, in conversation (in existence-communication), to let the issue the teacher is being faced with speak to the truth of their experience.

This thesis carries within itself an anxiety summarised in a potential critique of “you simply cannot do academic theology like this.” I am aware that the thesis is a unique endeavour in terms of its methodological underpinning. It was acknowledged throughout the thesis that it is a risk-taking enterprise to write about Kierkegaard in the spirit of Kierkegaard. I remember a talk at the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre 2018 annual conference where a question from the

audience included a phrase “I am not Kierkegaardian, but...” and the presenter answered “I am also not a Kierkegaardian.” It was illuminating for a young masters graduate that I was, to find out, that one does not need to share with Kierkegaard in his ideas, in order to study him. This thesis, however, tries to be Kierkegaardian, and thus opens itself up to the critique from fellow scholars on how successful this Kierkegaardianism was.

Nonetheless, I hope that this method and methodology will equip scholars<sup>227</sup> in disciplines like theology and philosophy by breaking down requirements social sciences thinking (especially at Tartu) places upon the way scholars ought to think and operate. Although I am mindful of embracing “isms” and the critiques this can bring with itself, I hope that the Kierkegaardianism this thesis presents would make a refreshing contribution to the method in theology by enabling us to talk about God not as an abstract concept but rather as what is happening to us in our relation to God, and that this will help to bring *existence* back into *thinking* and connect the separated *studying* and *doing* of theology. Kierkegaard and his dislike of assistant professors remains useful. It enables scholars to protest at the discipline of academia and, through this, to change the discipline (I use two different meanings of the word discipline here).

Where do we go from here? Firstly, the thesis mounts a challenge to a separation in Kierkegaard studies of “merely human” vs divine education. This study does not defend the position that the theological categories ought to be secularised and applied to education. Rather, as the critique of Tubbs’ treatment of the incarnation offered shows, education studies benefit from a serious theological reflection, on theology’s terms. Yet this theological examination should be done in the attitude of *repentance*, as not to become another master. The second issue is the Hegelianism of Kierkegaard through Gillian Rose. This thesis is open to the critique of this interpretation, and I would welcome further academic engagement on this matter. Gillian Rose has received relatively little scholarly attention (although the tide seems to be changing in the last couple of years). Yet I was unable to find a study (of a monograph length) that would systematically engage in Rose’s readings of Kierkegaard, a study that I find is needed both for the readers of Kierkegaard and for the readers of Rose. Thirdly, I argue that this study is the first self-critique of the modern metaphysics, through approaching modern metaphysics via modern metaphysics. While scholarship of Nigel Tubbs has received some engagement, mainly in the field of philosophy of education, his work among the theologians (with exception of Rowan Williams) remains largely unknown. This is a shame, as Tubbs’s work and the project of modern metaphysics has far-reaching implications to theological thinking, implications that this thesis aimed to demonstrate – at least through the incarnational lens.

Thankfully, the education began here never concludes.

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<sup>227</sup> Especially undergraduate students.

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# EESTIKEELNE KOKKUVÕTE

## Kierkegaardian Theology of Education

Väitekirja eesmärk on esitleda kierkegaardlikku haridusteoloogiat. Esimene ja teine peatükk käsitleb ja mõtestab ümber probleemsed mõisted nagu „teoloogia“ ja „haridus“. Esmalt rõhutatakse teoloogilise uurimuse üldist keerukust ning selle seost interdistsiplinaarsete Kierkegaardi uuringutega. Teoloogia peab hakkama end ümber mõtestama (või pigem harima) vastavalt Kierkegaardi teoloogia jaotusele objektiiivseks, subjektiivseks ja eksistentsi-kommunikatsiooniks. Teoloogia harimine (ja ümbermõtestamine) avaldub läbi väitekirja kõigi peatükkide.

Juba väitekirja esimeses peatükis minnakse kaugemale mõiste „haridus“ iga-päevasest tähendusest. Teises peatükis käsitletakse esmalt sõnaga „haridus“ seotud keerukusi, näidates, et isegi see, mis algul tundub „mõistuspärane“, sisaldab juba ebamäärasust. Seda võib täheldada näiteks sõnades *educere* ja *educare* või *hariduse* ja *kasvatuse* duaalsuses. Paul Standishi (2010) järgi on mõttetu mõisteid defineerides püüda vastata küsimusele „mis on?“. Selle asemel pakutakse väitekirjas hegeliapäline vastus küsimusele „mis on haridus?“ – haridus on Lääne filosoofilise traditsiooni ajalooline areng. Haridust näidatakse kui arusaama eneseteadvusest – sellise visandi kaudu näidatakse, et haridus kannab endas loogikat selle kohta, mida Nigel Tubbs (2017) on nimetanud kaasaegseks metafüüsikaks, milleks on „Jumal (ehk esimene printsiip) haridusena“.

Uut arusaama Jumalast ja haridusest vaadeldakse väitekirjas Kierkegaardi perspektiivist. Selle kaudu nihutatakse teoloogia piire, kaasates kaasaegset metafüüsikat teoloogilisse mõtlemisse. Kolmandas peatükis esitatakse võtme-kontseptsioonid, mida tuleb eeldada igas tõsisel Kierkegaardi käsitluses: eksistentsi sfäärid, usk ja hüpe ning olulisim mõiste – Jumal. Jumala kontseptsiooni käsitlemisel Kierkegaardi teostes kaasatakse nii Kierkegaardi originaalteoseid kui ka sekundaarset kirjandust, et tuua esile kaks olulist kategooriat: absoluutne paradoks ja kvalitatiivselt erinev. Need kaks kategooriat on eriti olulised järgnevas Tubbsi Kierkegaardi kriitilises tõlgenduses.

Väitekiri, olles eelnevalt esitanud väite „Jumal on haridus“, keskendub seejärel selle väite loogika tõestamisele neljandas peatükis, uurides Søren Kierkegaardi pseudonüümi Johannes Climacuse teost „Filosoofilised pudemed.“ Väitekiri käsitleb Kierkegaardi mõtteprojekti küsimust „Kas tõde saab õppida?“ (PF:9) sokraatliku, climacusliku ja tubbsiliku tõlgenduse kaudu. Need kolm tõlgendust näitavad viise, kuidas Jumala ja inimese, õpetaja ja õpilase suhe on loodud. Seda suhet vaadeldakse uuesti inkarnatsiooni paradigmas, kus Jumal pole enam abstraktne, vaid kehastunud Jeesus Kristusena. Inkarnatsiooni aspekt toob esile ühe haridusteoloogia eristuva elemendi – kogemuse Jumal-õpetajast, mida esitletakse inimese-õpilase suhte kaudu. Selle lähenemise kaudu seatakse kahtluse alla Kierkegaardi uuringutes valitsev vaade, mis jagab Kierkegaardi haridusteooria „Filosoofilistes pudemetes“ kaheks – jumalikuks ja inimlikuks õpetamiseks.

Väitekiri esitleb hegeliaanlikku fenomenoloogilist õpetaja ja õpilase hariduse kogemust. „Jumal on haridus“ avaldub õpetaja ja õpilase suhtes. Ilmneb, et selle suhte kogemus, hariduse kogemus, on kristluse kui eksistentsi-kommunikatsiooni kogemus, see on haridusteoloogia kogemus.

Väitekiri lõpeb praktilise dilemmaga: kuidas õpetada kristlust kui eksistentsi-kommunikatsiooni. Teisisõnu, hegeliaanlikult küsin, mis on teoloogia hariduse *teadus*. Väidan, et Kierkegaardil on tõepoolest süsteem ning just see on väitekirja panus Kierkegaardi hegeliaanlikesse tõlgendustesse. Süsteemi kui haridusteooriat demonstreeritakse juba kirjanduses eksisteeriva ülesehitava [*oppbygelige*] hariduse näitega.

Väitekirja viimane peatükk tegeleb parandustega ülesehitava hariduse teoorias, vaadelduna haridusteoloogia teaduse perspektiivist, kasutades Kierkegaardi enda märkusi „otsese kommunikatsiooni“ kohta tema kirjutistes. Väitekiri uurib kriitiliselt Nigel Tubbsi ja Stein Wivestadi vahelist debatti, jätkates nõnda akadeemilist arutelu Kierkegaardi ülesehitava hariduse teooria üle ning korrigeerides mõlema autori käsitlust Kierkegaardist.

Uurides Søren Kierkegaardi teoseid Nigel Tubbsi kaasaegse metafüüsika abil, väidetakse, et Kierkegaardlikku haridusteoloogiat tuleb mõista kristliku eksistentsi-kommunikatsioonina. Seda eksistentsi-kommunikatsiooni kogemust käsitletakse väitekirjas Jumal-õpetaja ja inimene-õpilane suhtena.

Töö tähtsus ei seisne mitte ainult Kierkegaardi ja hariduse valdkonna teaduse edendamises, vaid sellel on otsene mõju teoloogia akadeemilisele uurimisele. Väitekiri esitab väljakutse haridusteoloogias levinud lähenemisele, mis eraldab teoloogia *tegemise* ja *uurimise* kaheks eraldi sfääriks, mis on kaasaegses sekulaarses ülikoolis lepitamatud.

Väitekirja ainulaadne panus haridusteoloogia valdkonda seisneb mõttesuuna ja haridus(kogemuse) taasavastamises, mis on loomulikult olemas teoloogia distsipliinis iseeneses, kui teoloogia ülesannet mõistetakse eksistentsi-kommunikatsioonina.

Autor loodab, et väitekiri kõnetab mitte ainult teolooge ja filosoofe, vaid ka haridustöötajaid ja õpetajakoolituse tudengeid, kuna kogu ülal esitatud teoreetiline arutelu käsitleb õpetaja kogemust, kes võitleb oma õpetaja-identiteediga.

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