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Andreas Frederik Beck's Review of Kierkegaard's *On the Concept of Irony*

Abstract: This article provides an English translation (with commentary) of Andreas Frederik Beck's review of Kierkegaard's *On the Concept of Irony*. Beck's review is notable for its detailed, scholarly discussion of Kierkegaard's text. While Beck draws attention to the unusual style of Kierkegaard's dissertation and to Kierkegaard's occasional use of irony, he does not treat the dissertation as itself ironic in overall form or intent. Kierkegaard's response to this review, in which he makes the rare acknowledgement that Beck "has come quite close to having understood" him, provides indirect textual support for thinking that Beck is right in regarding Kierkegaard's treatise on irony as a serious, scholarly work that is not itself essentially ironic.

The Danish theologian and journalist Andreas Frederik Beck (1816–1861), three years Kierkegaard's junior, published reviews of two of Kierkegaard's most important works, *On the Concept of Irony* and *Philosophical Fragments*.¹ Beck's

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¹ For helpful discussions of Beck's intellectual background and additional secondary sources, see K. Brian Söderquist, "Andreas Frederik Beck: A Good Dialectician and a Bad Reader," in *Kierkegaard and His Danish Contemporaries*, Tome I, *Philosophy, Politics and Social Theory*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Aldershot: Ashgate 2009 (*Kierkegaard Research: Sources, Reception and Resources*, vol. 7), pp. 1–12; Jon Stewart, "Andreas Frederik Beck's Review of *Philosophical Fragments*," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2016, pp. 307–310; Jon Stewart, *Søren Kierkegaard: Subjectivity, Irony and the Crisis of Modernity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2015, pp. 61–64; Jon Stewart, *A History of Hegelianism in Golden Age Denmark*, Tome II, *The Martensen Period: 1837–1842*, Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel 2007 (*Danish Golden Age Studies*, vol. 3), pp. 550–551.

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review of *Fragments* was published anonymously in German in 1845² and is the better known of the two thanks to the response it received in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*.³ His review of *On the Concept of Irony* was published in Danish in 1842.⁴ He later published a slightly revised version in German.⁵

Beck was present at Kierkegaard's dissertation defense on September 29, 1841, and served as one of his *ex auditorio* opponents.⁶ He published his review eight months later. The following week, Kierkegaard published a response in the form of a postscript to an article entitled "Public Confession."⁷ In the main article, Kierkegaard playfully distinguishes between being "disparaged and belittled undeservedly" and being "praised undeservedly" where, in the latter

2 Andreas Frederik Beck [anonymous], "Philosophiske Smuler eller en Smule Philosophie (Philos. Brocken oder ein Bischen Philosophie). Af S. Kierkegaard. Kiöbenhavn (Copenhagen), Reitzel. 1844. 8^o," *Neues Repertorium für die theologische Literatur und kirchliche Statistik*, Berlin, Band 2, Heft 1, April 30, 1845, pp. 44–48. Beck later acknowledged that he was the author of this review. See SKS K7, 245. For an English translation, see Jon Stewart, "Andreas Frederik Beck's Review of *Philosophical Fragments*," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2016, pp. 311–314.

3 See SKS 7, 249–253 / CUP1, 274–277. See also Paul Muench, "The Socratic Method of Kierkegaard's Pseudonym Johannes Climacus: Indirect Communication and the Art of 'Taking Away,'" in *Søren Kierkegaard and the Word(s): Essays on Hermeneutics and Communication*, ed. by Poul Houe and Gordon Marino, Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel 2003, pp. 139–150; Paul Muench, "Understanding Kierkegaard's Johannes Climacus in the *Postscript*: Mirror of the Reader's Faults or Socratic Exemplar?," *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2007, pp. 424–440.

4 Andreas Frederik Beck, "Om Begrebet Ironi, med stadigt Hensyn til Socrates. Af S. A. Kierkegaard. Kjøbenhavn. Philipsen. 1841.," *Fædrelandet*, nos. 890 and 897, May 29 and June 5, 1842, columns 7133–7140; 7189–7191.

5 Andreas Frederick Beck, "Om Begrebet Ironi med stadigt Hensyn til Socrates. Af S. A. Kierkegaard. (Ueber den Begriff der Ironie mit steter Rücksicht auf Sokrates.) Kjöbenhavn 1841. Philipsen," *Deutsche Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Kunst*, nos. 222 and 223, September 17 and September 19, 1842, pp. 885–888; pp. 889–891. See comment 107 below. While the German version of Beck's review follows the Danish text fairly closely, there are on occasion slight omissions, a few reformulations at the sentence level, and a couple of significant additions. My translation readily draws on the German version where it seems to help clarify ambiguities in the Danish text. I also note in the commentary any substantial additions that appear in the German version.

6 See SKS K1, 144 and Bruce Kirmmse's discussion of Beck in his "Socrates in the Fast Lane: Kierkegaard's *Concept of Irony* on the University's Velocifère," in *The Concept of Irony*, ed. by Robert L. Perkins, Macon: Mercer University Press 2001 (*International Kierkegaard Commentary*, vol. 2), pp. 77–80. Beck also appears to have been one of the very first (perhaps the first) to cite *On the Concept of Irony* in a scholarly work. See Andreas Frederik Beck, *Begrebet Mythus eller den religiöse Aands Form*, Copenhagen: Philipsen 1842. See especially p. 31; p. 53; p. 77.

7 Søren Kierkegaard, "Aabenbart Skriftemaal," *Fædrelandet*, no. 904, June 12, 1842, columns 7245–7252. See SKS 14, 39–46 / COR, 3–12.

case, one is “attributed a worth that a person does not feel he himself has.”⁸ He claims that the former can “certainly make one outraged for a time but the proud mind quickly bounces back again and regains its composure simply because the charge was not true,” while the latter “has a more profound, painful, and humiliating effect” and is a “dangerous test for the weak human heart.”⁹ In his own case, Kierkegaard claims that he has recently been subjected to a form of undeserved praise through “being regarded and considered to be the author of a number of substantial, informative, and witty articles” and of “several fliers that were fliers only outwardly, since their contents were solid, weighty, and unpadding.”¹⁰ Denying that he is the author of any of these pieces, he suggests that he has composed the present article both for his “own moral improvement” and so that his contemporaries do not “surrender hope for [him] completely.”¹¹ Someday he hopes to “live up to some of the expectations they once had for [him].”¹² He also declares that a further reason he is making this public confession of personal “weakness” and “idleness” is so that those who do deserve credit for the works of the present age, an age he calls “truly remarkable” and “momentous” in which the “decisive moment is approaching,” will be given the honor they are due.¹³ Kierkegaard proceeds to single out several people by name, including Beck: “Who has failed to notice that Dr. Beck has abolished religion in order to make room for the system?”¹⁴ He closes the main article by declaring that “each and every one must make his contribution”; his contribution, he adds, is his confession that he has “no part in the whole thing, not the slightest.”¹⁵

In the postscript to his article, Kierkegaard turns to a discussion of Beck's review. He acknowledges that it has “extricated [his] dissertation from oblivion” and also claims that it demonstrates the truth of his thesis that “undeserved praise has a far greater effect than criticism.”¹⁶ In his response, Kierkegaard does not address the substance of Beck's review (which is largely complimentary, perhaps rightly so in Kierkegaard's opinion), choosing instead only to respond playfully and ironically to two slight criticisms that Beck raises in

8 SKS 14, 41 / COR, 3.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 SKS 14, 42 / COR, 5; SKS 14, 42 / COR, 4.

12 SKS 14, 42 / COR, 4.

13 SKS 14, 41 / COR, 4; SKS 14, 42 / COR, 5; SKS 14, 44 / COR, 7; SKS 14, 43 / COR, 6.

14 SKS 14, 43 / COR, 6.

15 SKS 14, 45 / COR, 9.

16 Ibid.

his closing paragraph: first, that there are a “number of allusions and intimations in the book that probably very few will understand,” and, second, that he, the reviewer, has found the book quite amusing in places, “but—not to the benefit of the author.”¹⁷ Kierkegaard does allow that Beck has “summarized the contents of the book,” but adds that he, Kierkegaard, “actually learned nothing new” from the review.¹⁸ Though he maintains that “Dr. Beck [incorrectly] believed he had understood [him] in several passages,” he admits that he nevertheless has “produced...an account of [his] dissertation—from which [he, Kierkegaard] learned that Herr Doktor has come quite close to having understood [him].”¹⁹

What is perhaps most striking about Kierkegaard’s response to Beck’s review is what he does not object to or criticize. While it is indisputable that Kierkegaard frequently quotes Hegel in his dissertation and that there appears to be something like a Hegelian framework present, scholars are divided over whether Kierkegaard’s reliance in the dissertation on Hegel and his philosophical methodology is serious and scholarly or merely ironic.²⁰ Beck proceeds on the assumption that Kierkegaard’s use of Hegel is serious and scholarly; he thus approaches the text in effect as one young Hegelian reading and critiquing the work of another.²¹ It is quite remarkable that in his reply to Beck’s review, Kierkegaard does not take issue with the general manner in which Beck has characterized his text. His utter lack of agitation concerning whether or not Beck has properly attended to whatever irony may be present in his dissertation suggests that he does not think that Beck’s account can be faulted on this basis. If Kierkegaard thought that one could not understand his dissertation without appreciating its use of irony, he would presumably have taken Beck to task for neglecting this feature of his work, as he will (in the voice of Johannes Climacus) fault Beck’s review of *Fragments* for failing to highlight its “indefatigable activity

17 Beck, Review of *On the Concept of Irony*, Col. 7191. See comments 113 and 114 below.

18 SKS 14, 45 / COR, 9.

19 SKS 14, 45 / COR, 10; SKS 14, 46 / COR, 11.

20 See Jon Stewart, “The Ironic Thesis and Hegel’s Presence in *The Concept of Irony*” in his *Kierkegaard’s Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003, pp. 132–181.

21 Beck is 26; Kierkegaard is 29. Kierkegaard later criticized himself for how “[i]nfluenced...[he] was by Hegel and everything modern” in his dissertation, calling himself a “Hegelian fool” (SKS 24, 32, NB21:35 / KJN 8, 29). See also SKS 26, 273, NB33:34 / JP 4, 4238, pp. 199–200; SKS 7, 89 / CUP1, 90; Pap. VI B 35,24 / JP 5, 5796, p. 276.

of irony.”²² That he does not do so is a key piece of evidence against the view that Kierkegaard's treatise on irony is itself ironic in any essential sense.

What follows is a complete English translation of Beck's review (appearing in English for the first time), together with a commentary. Column numbers have been inserted in square brackets in order to facilitate comparison with the original Danish text. The page references that Beck gives in his review are, of course, to the first edition of *On the Concept of Irony*.²³

On the Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates. By S. A. Kierkegaard. Copenhagen. Philipsen. 1841.

(Reviewed by Dr. Beck)

I. [cols. 7133 – 7140]

Magister Kierkegaard has set himself a double task in this treatise: on the one hand, the historical task of knowing Socrates in his phenomenal actuality; on the other hand, the philosophical task of grasping the Socratic principle—irony—in terms of its general, world-historical significance. The dual nature of this task, however, is not an arbitrary choice of the author, but one dictated by the subject matter itself. Since it is the nature of universal spirit, of the idea, to implant its single elements [*Momenter*] in particular individuals and to make them the center of life and activity of those individuals, it is only through the knowledge of these substantial individualities that these determinations of the idea can be grasped. But just as the idea only reveals its elements to us through those individualities, it is also, on the other hand, only this inner element through which we arrive at a knowledge of such personalities, and as a consequence this element turns out to be no less an assumption than a conclusion. This contradiction, which is characteristic of every scholarly,

²² SKS 7, 249; CUP1, 275. See also Paul Muench, “Kierkegaard's Socratic Pseudonym: A Profile of Johannes Climacus,” *Kierkegaard's Concluding Unscientific Postscript: A Critical Guide*, ed. by Rick Anthony Furtak, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2010, pp. 25–44.

²³ I provide the corresponding SKS / CI references in my commentary. They can also be located using the concordance provided by the online version of SKS.

scientific investigation, stands out all the more sharply in the present case: the phenomenal actuality presented to us here is, in its various depictions, in complete conflict with itself, only being grasped through the knowledge of the principle whose indeterminateness gave rise to that phenomenal many-sidedness. As the author, however, observes (p. 164), the assumed conclusion is only a possibility, one which in the end is only born again in its actuality and truth after it has reconciled those contradictions through which it moved.

This treatise thus has a speculative-critical character, and furnishes an interesting parallel to the critique of evangelical history that in recent years has amazed the theological world. We do not find here vague and diffuse reasoning—as with Professor Nielsen²⁴—about essence and phenomenon, phenomenon and essence, in | [7134] complete abstraction from the historical element (as if we had only to deal with these concepts in their pure ideality), but instead the author sets a more concrete and determinate task for himself. He observes on p. 163: “Wherever there is a question of reconstructing a phenomenon by means of what might be called a conception in the stricter sense, there is a double task: one must, namely, explain the phenomenon and thereby explain the misunderstanding; one must by means of the misunderstanding acquire the phenomenon and by means of the phenomenon break the spell of the misunderstanding.” It is clearly articulated here how the actual historical phenomenon is concealed beneath another phenomenon, which is its reflection in a certain consciousness that has been unable to appropriate it in its pure objectivity. And, in fact, forces the object that the author treats to proceed by way of such indeterminate abstractions as those in which Mr. Nielsen moves; for if one wanted to apply in its indeterminateness the Niensensian theory—which is not in and of itself untrue—about essence and phenomenon to those depictions of Socrates’ phenomenal actuality (provided by Plato, Xenophon, Aristophanes), then we would obtain the same three Socrates-phenomena, only with the difference that now all three of them would have proved to be historical actualities in the strictest sense of the word. This contradiction in Mr. Nielsen’s theory would appear even if it were applied to the different depictions of evangelical history in the synoptic gospels and John, though not in as glaring and conspicuous a manner as it would if applied to those different conceptions of Socrates.

The reason why a consciousness that has been influenced by a world-historical personality like Socrates does not reproduce for us the phenomenon in its immediate, factual actuality is attributed by the author to the intense

24 [Beck’s footnote:] In his treatise on the application of speculative method to sacred history.

force with which the age is seized by the fullness of life and spirit that falls to its lot by way of such a personality. The author observes that for the secondary consciousness, the relationship to such a personality is not merely enlivening but epoch-making, a spring of eternal life which is inexplicable to the individual himself. This relationship can be elaborated more determinately by observing that when a personality is the head of a world-historical development associated with it, then it is a principle for the nearest receptive consciousness, and this personal principle—which has revealed a new world to spirit—will preserve itself with such a force in the receptive consciousness that it cannot distinguish the wealth which it develops out of itself from that principle, but instead immediately mixes itself together | [7135] with it. Now, to be sure, the principle contains in itself in an undeveloped way or *in abstracto* the entire resulting development (and therein lies the world-historical significance of that personality), but the concrete determination—the unfolding of that substantial wealth—is only brought about by the further work of history above and beyond that personal principle. This principle appears with a certain emptiness and indeterminateness. It is only that person's general awakening influence on consciousness that has an immediate effect: a new spiritual atmosphere spreads, resulting thereby in an opposition to the positivity of life and consciousness which has already developed. The real substance is only revealed in the subsequently grounded new force and in the succeeding development.

But in as much as the immediate historical activities of such persons do not now appear to us in a determinate, finished positivity, in view of which we could at once distinguish their work from that of later ages or that of the circle of followers most closely associated with them, it then becomes a task no less of historical than of philosophical interest to understand those personal, immediate activities as they are in their original determinateness, to discover their phenomenal existence in contradistinction to the resulting development. Here, however, the discussion is not about facts—which could be cleared up merely through empirical analysis and a comparison of pertinent documents—but about thoughts and phenomena of consciousness; the historical critique must therefore be philosophical. Now the consequence of such an inconsiderate critique—which seems to deprive world-history's greatest men of the magnificence with which they have been regarded up to now—is that it will have a shocking effect on the pious, but from the rational standpoint it will be recognized that it is only by being brought back to that which they really are, that those personalities will be vindicated in the eyes of history and protected from the attacks that have been directed against them as long as they have only been beheld from the skewed position in which they immediately appear to us in the depictions of that time and those periods most closely following.

We now have a general sense of the standpoint that is taken up by the critique, having assured ourselves of the right with which it does so; next we will look at how the author draws on this standpoint in order to discover Socrates' phenomenal existence.

We have already discussed the fact that what could only be the result of the investigation must already be presupposed in the view of the personality, which itself is the world-historical representative of the principle at issue; and that consequently, Socrates can only be grasped by means of the concept of irony and his actual phenomenal existence can only be reconstructed in this concept, just as the false, half-true conceptions only find their explanation in the different aspects afforded by this standpoint. Irony here is a hostile power against everything positive (both in the actuality of life and in consciousness), an absolute negativity leveling everything in the abstract. It only has significance through this dissolution—the destruction that it undertakes as this negative, liberating power—not through its result, for that is nothing: it never arrives at a result but is | [7136] only the continual run-up to one while the positive element resulting from the destruction always remains its limit. Irony thus isn't serious about anything; the whole of actuality only has significance for it as the material to which it applies its consuming, dissolving efforts, as that which in itself is nothing; for irony, the absolute is nothing (cf. pp. 162, 152, 81 and elsewhere). The world-historical significance of irony lies, then, in the fact that it helps consciousness out of the difficulties of relativity and thus prepares it for speculation; it sets—as the author observes—the boat of speculation afloat. Irony oscillates between the empirical *I* and the ideal *I* (p. 133), insofar as it is the dissolution of immediacy—in which consciousness was immersed—without there being through this negation any reconstruction of the ideal. Ironic negativity is thus distinct from the immanent, speculative negativity (which, as the subject matter's own movement, is no less positive); it is only the formal, abstract negativity, and herein lies its subjective or—to put it bluntly—its egotistical character, in as much as together with the total dissolution of the positive and immediate elements it does not go to the length of making a sacrifice of itself, but instead remains incorrigible in the midst of this dissolution-process and thereafter, resting in abstract identity with itself (cf. p. 160). Because of this one-sided standpoint one can—like the author—call the ironist an abbreviation of a complete personality: that is, in this negation he has only arrived at the preliminary condition for such a thing.

But a standpoint like this—one which could not go to the length of developing a determinate, positive content, which always remained without a result, and which furthermore took the opportunity from customary, everyday actuality to develop its negative virtuosity—could be conceived from such

different angles and depicted in such different forms that the point where these all meet almost entirely escapes notice. This disparity in conception and in depiction is entirely different from the disparity among the evangelical accounts of the life of Jesus; the absolute result of religion was imparted to the congregation through the personality of the Lord, and it is therefore essentially the same type that speaks throughout the Gospels—the disparity is only formal. No such positive wealth was instilled in the age through Socrates such that his death could immediately turn into a resurrection within consciousness, for the result of his activities was only negative—the liberation of consciousness from the constraint of positive determinations and the love of his person by means of which this release was gained. Now since Socrates' principle was such a latent one—not appearing immediately but only detectable in its activities on consciousness—it was possible, first, for it to be entirely unappreciated and for the significance of the Socratic teachings to be set down in all sorts of finite instructions, exhortations, etc. (Xenophon); second, for the speculative content whose development had been set in motion by this principle (without that principle's being able to convey itself there) to be immediately transferred to it (such as in Plato's depiction); and third, for the negativity of the principle | [7137] to be conceived in its one-sidedness not as a disappearing element by means of which the ideal could develop in its true positivity, but as something which revolts against the substantial forces of life (such as with Aristophanes).

With regard to the assessment of Xenophon, the author has in the reviewer's judgment acquired a merit that cannot be appreciated enough. The author's inconsiderate, scornful treatment of this man stands in strange contrast to the extraordinary attention that otherwise has been shown to him, as if he alone—or at least principally—had depicted Socrates according to historical actuality. Mr. Kierkegaard's critique of Xenophon reveals how insufficient a merely empirical power of observation is for the historian, especially when the object that he wants to portray is something which is as scarcely tangible, ethereally floating, and negatively acting against the immediate appearances as Socrates. It is shown now how Xenophon lacked a sense for situation, i. e., that he was incapable of penetrating with the idea the superficiality and triteness by means of which he brings Socrates to our attention, and that he was incapable of employing this superficiality and triteness as a vehicle for the development of the idea. Furthermore, it is observed that Xenophon lacked an ear for rejoinder, i. e., that the essential in Socratic conversation has escaped him, that faint sound of the idea (of ironic negativity) heard through the seeming chatter of the everyday. These or similar observations have also been advanced by Bruno Bauer with regard to the Gospel according to John. Here question and answer do not at all stand in any necessary relationship to one another, and the different

parties—Jesus and those listening—are not at all able to come that close to one another, but instead each of the parties expresses itself from its own standpoint (which is conceived entirely in abstraction from the opposite one). There is also a total lack of situation in this Gospel; the entire movement is mechanical despite all the detailed, chronological determinateness, and is not brought about through the nature of the circumstances or the position but purely arbitrarily, only in order that the author's general view of the person of Jesus could be given the opportunity to be expressed. Mr. Kierkegaard makes, furthermore, the accusation against Xenophon that he conceives Socrates under categories that are entirely incommensurable with his actual existence, i.e., through categories of finite teleology by means of which the ironist is quite radically transformed into the opposite of himself and is dragged down into the sphere of the most ridiculous philistinism. This is perhaps, as Mr. Kierkegaard observes, a nemesis that fate has let befall Socrates owing to the fact that he so often exposed others to ridicule. With regard to the application of categories which are incommensurable with actuality, John also furnishes an interesting parallel to Xenophon (concerning which the author, who quite often displays clearly enough his preference for traditional theology, naturally has not given a single thought), only with the difference that it is not the Xenophontian categories of usefulness, etc. with which the Evangelist conceives Jesus, but an abstract *Ueberschwenglichkeit* [effusiveness] in which the determinate, pronounced personality of the Lord disappears. Hence the softness and sentimentality which characterize this Gospel and which to such a great extent | [7138] have won for it the love of the theologians. This is not, however, to place Xenophon as a matter of course together with John, who otherwise, on the contrary, is always placed together with Plato. It is not at all our intention to deny the element in John by means of which he is brought into relation to Plato, namely a standpoint which is developed over and above the historical personality.

In the Platonic writings Socrates takes up a standpoint that does not merely raise him high above the sphere lacking the idea (whose representative he appears to be in Xenophon), but which even goes beyond the negative dialectic of irony to the speculative development of the idea. This could happen even though Socrates had not himself arrived there; that is, since Socrates' merely negative standpoint could not make possible a determinate way of teaching in which—as in a third something—his pupils could find themselves in agreement with him (since he only had an effect through the immediate influence of his personality), the relationship of the pupils to the teacher had to become a purely personal relationship of love, such that they wanted to be indebted to Socrates for everything they knew, such that their own thoughts only obtained true significance for them insofar as they heard those thoughts expressed by him (cf. p. 27).

Plato's knowledge, observes the author, was a co-knowledge with Socrates—he was indissolubly fused with him in the unity of spirit—and the confusion between what belonged to the teacher and what to the pupils must have grown after his death, and thus the poetic image must have become entirely confused with the historical actuality. But although the Platonic dialogues lack a definite separation between the historical and the poetic Socrates, they are still not entirely *aus einem Gusse* [a unified whole], in the sense that the dialectic in all of them must be the same and the positive Platonic view must altogether have supplanted the ironic negativity. The author thus points out that we find in the Platonic dialogues a double kind of irony, one which is merely a stimulus for thought, quickening it when it becomes drowsy, and one which is itself both the agent and the terminus towards which it strives. The former is the genuine Platonic irony; in respect of the latter, however, Plato was only reproducing what belonged primarily to Socrates. The author shows how this Socratic irony is found in the first Platonic dialogues (*Symposium*, *Phaedo*, *Protagoras* and the first book of the *Republic*) where everything concrete and determinate (thus in *Protagoras* virtue, in *Phaedo* life after death) is leveled into empty abstractions, ending thus with negative results. But the negativity of irony shows itself especially in the *Apology*, which for every other interpretation poses insurmountable difficulties and which is also why illustrious philologists like Ast have deemed it a botched work wrongly associated with Socrates. When in other dialogues a dialectic emerges from that negative standpoint, then it is to be sure historically incorrect that this be attributed to Socrates, but insofar as that negative ironic standpoint was the necessary nothing by means of which that dialectic must be begun—insofar as it set “the boat of speculation afloat”—it could be said to be *an sich* [in itself] the resulting positivity. Now | [7139] because Plato transfers knowledge that is developed later onto the personality (which only had the abstract principle), he can be brought into contact with John. Christ's consciousness was the absolute religious consciousness in which all finite determinations were sublated [*ophæved*]; as religious it is the consciousness of the vanity and nullity of those finite determinations. Christ's self-consciousness was negatively identical with the consciousness of God insofar as his empirical self was sublated in the absolute, but the Johannine reflection makes this negation a positive self-affirmation despite the fact that what serves as its basis—the immediate limitation (the finite for-itself being of the individual)—is sublated. The affirmation of Christ as God thus falls not to him but to his congregation.

The third conception of Socrates which the author proceeds to consider is that of Aristophanes, i.e. the comic conception. In order, however, to be able to appreciate with what right the comic view of irony asserts itself, it would

have been necessary to point out the inner relationship of these two so closely related concepts. This has been left undone by the author, and as a result this section of the study acquires a somewhat undecided character. The author allows Aristophanes' ridicule of Socrates to be motivated by an interest for substantial life, the state and religion—all of which Socrates undermined; so far so good, but exactly here the difference between the comic and the ironic standpoints ought to be accentuated so that one is not led to believe that Aristophanes was guided by external motives, irrelevant to art, such as the religious and the political. The comic standpoint no less than the ironic standpoint is the leveling of the phenomenon, the positive, but it is not merely subjective but metaphysical, such that the substantial, ideal element is preserved in this negation without the result becoming an abstract nothing. Hence the infinite peace and satisfaction of the comic which irony's endless, negative dialectic is unable to provide²⁵ (compare Vischer *über das Erhabene und Komische* [on the sublime and the comic]). On account of its inner, substantial infinity, the comic standpoint is able to assert itself against irony, which, in contrast to comedy, is itself finite, only existing as the negation of positive actuality—and therefore indissolubly rooted in this—without ever arriving at the idea. Despite all its efforts, irony never arrives at a result and presents itself thereby as comical.

The author has called this first section of his critical study “The Conception Made Possible.” None of the three writers mentioned above reproduces an immediate, faithful picture of Socrates, but rather each one produces a peculiar, one-sided depiction that only makes the genuine historical conception possible. This possibility has now [7140] been brought about by the author by comparing these different depictions and by explaining their one-sidedness on the assumption that the Socratic standpoint was irony.

In the following chapter the author deals with historical data that exist pure and unadulterated and that do not need to be obtained through a mistaken conception. He calls this section of his study “The Conception Made Actual.” Two matters are treated here, namely Socrates' *daimon* and his conviction by the state. As far as the daimonic is concerned, about which much has been said, it can seem to imply a positivity that was contrary to irony as Socrates' presumed standpoint. This, however, is not the case. The author draws attention to how the activity of the *daimon* exclusively restricted itself to warning, therefore to the merely negative; how by doing so the concrete deities were

25 [Beck's footnote:] Except insofar as this negative dialectic was “a world-historical passion.” Socrates found satisfaction in this, but his pupils did not.

leveled into the abstract and indeterminate; and finally, that it never had anything to do with the substantial interests of the state but only dealt with the particular affairs of Socrates and his friends. This is thus very much consistent with the conception of Socrates' standpoint as irony. As the all-leveling, abstract dialectic, this is directly the egoism of the ironic personality. The particularity of the ironic subject preserves itself and in a way becomes affirmed in the daimonic.

Socrates' conviction by the state, as is well-known, has given rise over the centuries to sentimental reflections. In contrast to this, the author maintains that the state was in the right. He points out that by propagating his way of thinking among the youth, Socrates undermined the substantial life of the state, which in Greece reserved for itself far more of the individual's strength than in the modern world (pervaded as the latter is by the principle of subjectivity). Now Socrates' defense really does completely maintain the ironic standpoint and consequently was unable to help secure his acquittal, except insofar as it had to become evident that he was an incommensurable figure to the state, something which to be sure could be known from the universal, historical standpoint, but which the state could not possibly know from its own standpoint. He has been proved right in the eyes of world history just as Christ has, who also was convicted by the state. The fact is that their positions are in a certain respect the same, and yet again infinitely different. With Socrates the Western principle [*occidentalske Princip*], subjectivity, appeared in world history in its first, most abstract determination as irony, as the mere negativity of substantiality; with Christ—the Eastern spirit's [*orientalske Aands*] highest point of development—there also appeared a negativity that disintegrates all of the forces of life, a negativity which, however, as religious was infinitely positive. It is therefore correct when the author says that the similarity between Christ and Socrates consists in their dissimilarity, though he will hardly agree with us about the manner in which we have stated the difference.

II. [cols. 7189 – 7191]

In the third chapter, "The Conception Made Necessary," the author develops further how the Socratic standpoint—irony—resulted from the spiritual condition of the Greek world. The conceited wisdom of the sophists had to be reduced to silence by irony; the superficial positivity in this knowledge could only be overcome by a purely negative standpoint that itself had nothing at all positive to advance. This negativity was the purgatory where that conceited, run-of-the-mill wisdom had to burn itself out in order that consciousness could be prepared

for an actual knowledge of the truth. Thus Socrates' standpoint has a world-historical validity and necessity, and his divine mission can be known even if nothing at all positive is attributed to him.

In an appendix the author considers Hegel's conception of Socrates' standpoint. It is supposed that, in general, Socrates advanced the principle of subjectivity. The author agrees with Hegel about this insofar as irony is the most abstract determination of subjectivity, i.e., purely formal and as yet not reconciled with objectivity. Moreover, it is the case here—as with his conception of Christ—that Hegel has found the right approach in general but not yet carried his view forward to full determinateness, whereby the mutually contradictory elements would cease to exist by themselves (something, moreover, with which Hegel cannot be reproached, since it would be impossible for him to direct so much of his attention to more detailed points given the comprehensive tasks he had to solve). When Hegel reclaims for Socrates the idea of the good, then this seems, true enough, to be a positive thing; but when, however, he wants to define this more closely he gets into difficulties since he cannot show how Socrates conceived of the good. Since it was for him only something infinitely abstract in which all that is positive and determinate was leveled, and was for him without any definite seriousness, one can therefore, as the author observes, only ascribe to Socrates the idea of the good insofar as his standpoint was continually arriving at it—as at a limit—beyond which | [7190] only later generations were conveyed by him. He can be called the founder of morality insofar as he set consciousness free from all positive authority and subjectivity was grasped as the decisive, determining element (where subjectivity was only grasped purely abstractly and not in its concrete form as conscience). Through the absolute (subjectivity), Mr. Kierkegaard says, reality came to nothing, but the absolute was itself nothing. If out of veneration one is tempted to ascribe to Socrates something positive, then Mr. Kierkegaard gives the apt reply that world-historical individualities are great precisely by the fact that the whole of their lives belongs to the world and they have nothing as it were for themselves (p. 250).

In the second part of the study (pp. 251 to 350) the author discusses separately the concept of irony and raises the question of whether irony is justified in making an appearance in world history more than once. It is pointed out here that this concept has appeared twice, namely when subjectivity asserted its rights in the world for the first time and when, having already obtained its rights from the objective powers of worldly life, it wanted to assert itself again as a subjectivity raised to the second power, as the subjective standpoint intensified. Since the question about the concept of irony has already been discussed in the preceding section in every essential respect, our interest in

the present part of the study will lie chiefly in the discussion of the modern form of irony. Furthermore, connected with this discussion is a polemic against Hegel's conception of the concept of irony; his conception is not without a certain one-sidedness owing to the close and decidedly hostile relationship that Hegel had with the modern form of irony as it is found in the Romantic school. Hegel's polemic against that school is always of the most bitter nature (such as in his *Aesthetics*), and he considers irony to be the highest lie (in *Philosophy of Right*), placing it in a class with the worst forms of moral consciousness, Jesuitism and rationalistic *Ueberzeugungstreue* [faithfulness of conviction]. He protests, therefore, against the conception of Socrates' standpoint as irony. The author shows here how Socrates' irony must be distinguished from the modern form, so that one can willingly approve of Hegel's polemic against the latter without subscribing to his conception of the concept in general. This modern form is connected with the Fichtean system that rested on the formal, merely negative principle of infinity, the absolute and | [7191] yet empty principle of subjectivity. But what for Fichte was a metaphysical standpoint became for the Schlegels and other "superior" people something immediately practical.²⁶ It was thus an unjustified standpoint, a capricious obduracy of the subject against actuality, for in this the principle of subjectivity had already obtained its rights, and in these the subject could thus find itself again according to its universal, true determinations. An interesting parallel to this modern, unjustified form of irony is afforded by the modern, specific religiosity—pietism. Religion has its rights as the principle in whose divine positivity this world's profane, untrue essence shall be explained and exalted; it can only preserve its abstract, specific form as long as the world is contrary to the ideality of its principle. But when that ideality has penetrated the actuality of the world, then religious consciousness no longer has those absolute rights against the world as formerly, and when it nevertheless will assert those rights, then outwardly it acquires an abstruse, baroque character, and inwardly it is no longer the movement of the divine principle but of caprice and a subjective gloominess. This is the character of pietism.

Now even though irony's modern form is in general thought by the author to be unjustified, it is not thereby his intention to deprive it of its rights against the triviality and spiritlessness in which both the glory of intelligence and of life can come undone, but since such triviality only has an isolated and limited place

²⁶ [Beck's footnote:] Incidentally, having said this, it appears strange to us that Mr. Kierkegaard has not taken into account the article "Protestantism and Romanticism" in *Hallische Jahrbücher*, which develops the irony of the Romantics more determinately and in greater detail than Hegel does.

and cannot be said to penetrate the life of the world in general, irony only has a role to play as a controlled element [*behersket Moment*]. Nor can religion be deprived of its right to oppose the profane and coarse elements in existence that still have dared to defy the power of ideality, but since this opposition is negligible, is in principle overcome (therefore “*an sich*” [in itself] powerless), religious determinateness can only be an element within the universal life of consciousness.

The language of the author is flowing, light, and free from all the astringency found in school terminology. The presentation itself is permeated by a certain humor that will also make the reading of this work charming for the generally cultured. It must, however, be faulted for the fact that there are to be found a number of allusions and intimations in the book that probably very few will understand, and concerning which the reviewer in particular does not have the honor of following the author. The author also often seems to be less successful when he has in a more positive way wanted to shine forth with his wit; for what can be pleasing and pass muster in a chat that takes place in an alley or in one’s dressing gown makes an entirely different impression through the pretension with which it appears in printed text: to be sure it can be amusing, that we do not deny, and it really has amused the reviewer, but—not to the benefit of the author.

Commentary

col. 7133

1. **...a double task in this treatise:...the historical task of knowing Socrates in his phenomenal actuality;...the philosophical task of grasping the Socratic principle—irony—in terms of its general, world-historical significance]** Before Beck comments upon the individual parts of Kierkegaard’s book (cols. 7136–7140; 7189–7191), he opens his review with a more general sketch of the problem being addressed and immediately appeals to Hegel’s conception of world history and some of the theoretical difficulties associated with the scientific/scholarly study of historical phenomena more generally, while also gathering together several of the general points made about irony that are scattered throughout Kierkegaard’s discussion of Socrates (cols. 7133–7136). In the dissertation Kierkegaard first investigates Socrates and only later, in the second part, does he more explicitly attempt to define irony and locate it within a Hegelian framework

of world-history (see especially *SKS* 1, 281–302 / *CI*, 241–264). When Beck comes to the point in his review where he turns to the second part of the dissertation, he says that he will restrict his discussion to Kierkegaard's account of Romantic irony “since the question about the concept of irony has already been discussed in the preceding section in every essential respect” (col. 7190).—**world-historical significance**] Hegelian terminology denoting something's playing a necessary role in the development of human consciousness and freedom.

2. **...the nature of universal spirit, of the idea, to implant its single elements [Momenter] in particular individuals**] Beck here situates Kierkegaard's project within a Hegelian framework (he later claims that Kierkegaard's dissertation has a “speculative-critical character”—col. 7133). Kierkegaard quotes Hegel (often approvingly) throughout the dissertation and makes frequent appeals to a Hegelian world-historical framework. See, e.g., *SKS* 1, 214 / *CI*, 165; *SKS* 1, 231 / *CI*, 184; *SKS* 1, 297–298; *CI*, 259–260; *SKS* 1, 300 / *CI*, 262–263.
3. **...this element...no less an assumption than a conclusion**] Beck draws attention here to a sort of bootstrapping problem faced by Kierkegaard and anyone else who seeks to investigate a phenomenon. See *SKS* 1, 205–206 / *CI*, 155; *SKS* 1, 179 / *CI*, 127; *SKS* 1, 281–282 / *CI*, 241–242.
4. **...the phenomenal reality presented to us here is, in its various depictions, in complete conflict with itself...the assumed conclusion is only a possibility**] Kierkegaard maintains that if we conceive of Socrates' standpoint as ironic, then it becomes possible to explain the discrepancies in the conceptions of Xenophon, Plato, and Aristophanes, and that this ability to explain these discrepancies makes his preferred conception at least a *possible* candidate for explaining Socrates' phenomenal existence. See *SKS* 1, 205 / *CI*, 155.
5. **...born again in its reality and truth after it has reconciled those contradictions through which it moved**] See *SKS* 1, 206 / *CI*, 155–156; *SKS* 1, 297 / *CI*, 260. Beck here draws attention to further Hegelian imagery which Kierkegaard makes use of in his dissertation. As Kierkegaard considers different types of phenomena which he thinks are pertinent to his investigation of Socrates, he invites his readers to think of his conception of Socrates as something which as it were comes into existence before their eyes, becoming possible in the first chapter, actual in the second chapter, and necessary in the third chapter. These three modalities correspond to the three domains of inquiry addressed by Kierkegaard in the first three chapters of his dissertation: (1) misconceived but possible conceptions of Socrates (by Xenophon, Plato, Aristophanes); (2) actual historical, factual matters about Socrates

- (concerning his daimonion and his trial); (3) necessary, philosophical truth about Socrates (concerning his world-historical significance).
6. **...the critique of evangelical history that in recent years has stirred the theological world]** In a book he published just prior to this review, *Begrebet Mythus eller den religiøse Aands*, Beck draws attention to what he terms “the new theology” and quotes extensively in this work from the writings of Hegel and several of the so-called young (left) Hegelians who took their inspiration from him and who wrote extensively on theological topics, most notably David Strauss, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Bruno Bauer. Later in this review, Beck refers specifically to the work of Bruno Bauer: “These or similar observations have been advanced by Bruno Bauer with regard to the Gospel according to John” (col. 7137).
 7. **We do not find here vague and diffuse reasoning—as with Professor Nielsen—about essence and phenomenon...in | [7134] complete abstraction from the historical element]** Rasmus Nielsen (1809–1884), Professor of Philosophy, University of Copenhagen. Beck refers here to Nielsen’s licentiat dissertation, *Den speculative Methodes Anvendelse paa den hellige Historie*, Copenhagen: H. C. Klein 1842. Beck’s review of this work appeared in *Theologisk Tidsskrift*, vol. 7, 1842, pp. 127–154. He also cites this work in his book *Begrebet Mythus*, p. 91; p. 107 (see comment 6).

col. 7134

8. **“... reconstructing a phenomenon by means of what might be called a conception in the stricter sense...”]** See SKS 1, 205 / CI, 155.
9. **...the actual historical phenomenon is concealed beneath another phenomenon, which is its reflection in a certain consciousness]** Kierkegaard’s goal is to discover what has been “concealed,” to seek out the “actual historical phenomenon” that lies behind how Socrates has been conceived, respectively, by Xenophon, Plato, and Aristophanes. Cf. col. 7136: “...Socrates’ principle was such a latent one—not appearing immediately but only detectable in its activities on consciousness.”
10. **...the object that the author treats has to emerge from beyond the kinds of indeterminate abstractions Mr. Nielsen moves within]** Beck’s thinking here seems to be that Nielsen’s theory about essence and phenomenon, which Beck earlier said suffered from being too abstract and so too removed from historical reality (cols. 7133–7134—see comment 7), is ill-equipped for dealing with the representations of Socrates provided by Xenophon, Plato, and Aristophanes. Beck appears to charge that Nielsen’s theory would incorrectly classify each of these representations as having successfully

captured historical reality, despite the fact that they appear to contradict one another and so do not seem, on the face of it, to be mutually compatible.

11. **...the relationship to such a personality is not merely enlivening but epoch-making]** See *SKS* 1, 90–91 / *CI*, 29.
12. **...this personal principle—which has revealed a new world to spirit—will preserve itself with such a force in the receptive consciousness]** See *SKS* 1, 91–92 / *CI*, 30.

col. 7135

13. **...the principle contains...in abstracto the entire resulting development (and therein lies the world-historical significance of that personality)]** See *SKS* 1, 256 / *CI*, 211; see also col. 7138 (comment 53).
14. **Irony here is a hostile power against everything positive...an absolute negativity leveling everything in the abstract]** See *SKS* 1, 299 / *CI*, 261; *SKS* K1, 175; *CI*, 475–476 (note 64).—**negativity]** Hegelian notion which either denotes a skeptical result (sometimes termed “abstract negation”) or a dialectical moment in a logical sequence (sometimes termed “determinate negation”). See col. 7136 (comment 21): “Ironic negativity is thus distinct from the immanent, speculative negativity.” Cf. Michael Inwood, *Hegel Dictionary*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell 1992, pp. 199–202.
15. **...this negative, liberating power]** See *SKS* 1, 246 / *CI*, 201; *SKS* 1, 175 / *CI*, 123.
16. **...the positive element...always remains its limit]** See cols. 7189–7190 (comment 93).

col. 7136

17. **...for irony, the absolute is nothing (cf. pp. 162, 152, 81 and elsewhere)]** See *SKS* 1, 277 / *CI*, 236; cf. col. 7190 (comment 95). For the passages Beck refers to, see *SKS* 1, 204–205 / *CI*, 154; *SKS* 1, 196 / *CI*, 145–146; *SKS* 1, 136 / *CI*, 77–78. His first reference, however, refers to a page of the dissertation that does not obviously address the topic under discussion. Instead see the previous page (*SKS* 1, 203 / *CI*, 153).—**the absolute]** Hegelian term that denotes the divine. Michael Inwood claims that for Hegel, “‘the absolute’ is the philosophical expression” for God “shorn of its anthropomorphic presuppositions” (*Hegel Dictionary*, p. 27).
18. **The world-historical significance of irony...it helps consciousness out of the difficulties of relativity and thus prepares it for speculation]** Cf. *SKS* 1, 244 / *CI*, 198. As the world-historical development of spirit takes place (where human consciousness and freedom become increasingly

- more articulated), a movement is postulated from a pre-reflective state of immediacy to an ever deepening condition of subjectivity involving the power of reflection (or what Hegel sometimes calls “mediation”). Kierkegaard argues that irony constitutes the first break with immediacy: “irony is...the first and most abstract [determination] of subjectivity” (SKS 1, 302 / CI, 264).—**immediacy**] Hegelian term that denotes a condition prior to and the opposite of those conditions that are partly constituted by the reflective process of mediation. See Inwood, *Hegel Dictionary*, pp. 183–186.
19. **...it sets—as the author observes—the boat of speculation afloat**] See SKS 1, 261 / CI, 217; SKS 1, 175 / CI, 123. See also col. 7138 (comment 53).
 20. **Irony oscillates between the empirical I and the ideal I (p. 133)]** See SKS 1, 179 / CI, 128; SKS 1, 202 / CI, 152.
 21. **Ironic negativity is thus distinct from the immanent, speculative negativity (which, as the subject matter’s own movement, is no less positive)]** The parenthetical clause is changed in the German edition of Beck’s review. See p. 886: “*die als in der Selbstbestimmung des Begriffes gesetzt affirmativ wird*” [which becomes affirmative when posited in the self-determination of the concept]. See comment 14 on Hegel’s two senses of negativity. See also SKS 1, 179 / CI, 46; col. 7138 (comment 39).
 22. **...with the total dissolution of the positive and immediate elements it does not go to the length of making a sacrifice of itself,...resting in abstract identity with itself**] See SKS 1, 203 / CI, 153. See also SKS 1, 301 / CI, 263; SKS 1, 296 / CI, 257; SKS 1, 176 / CI, 124.
 23. **Because of this one-sided standpoint one can—like the author—call the ironist an abbreviation of a complete personality**] See SKS 1, 199 / CI, 149. See also SKS 1, 265 / CI, 221.
 24. **...a standpoint like this...could be conceived from such different angles and depicted in such different forms that the point where these all meet almost entirely escapes notice**] See SKS 1, 179 / CI, 127–128; SKS 1, 204 / CI, 154.
 25. **...for the speculative content...to be immediately transferred to it (such as in Plato’s account)]** See col. 7139 (comment 54): “Plato transfers the later developed knowledge onto the personality [of Socrates] (which only had the abstract principle).”
 26. **...for the negativity of the principle | [7137] to be conceived...as something which revolts against the substantial forces of life (such as with Aristophanes)]** See SKS 1, 214 / CI, 166.

col. 7137

27. **With regard to the assessment of Xenophon, the author has in the reviewer's judgment acquired a merit that cannot be appreciated enough]** See *SKS* 1, 77–89 / *CI*, 15–27; *SKS* 1, 178–179 / *CI*, 126–128; *SKS* 1, 203–205 / *CI*, 153–154. This sentence is reformulated in the German edition of Beck's review. See p. 887: "*Hinsichtlich der Kritik des Xenophon hat der Verf., wenn auch nicht die Sache aufs Reine gebracht, doch durch seine scharfsinnigen Bemerkungen den Anstoß zu einem tiefren und eindringendem Ergründen der eigenthümlichen Art und Weise dieses Schriftstellers gegeben*" [With regard to the critique of Xenophon, even if the author has not entirely settled the matter, still he has through his astute remarks initiated a deeper and more penetrating explanation of this author's characteristic manner].
28. **The author's inconsiderate, scornful treatment of this man stands in strange contrast to the extraordinary attention that otherwise has been shown to him]** Kierkegaard, e.g., claims that he "cannot fully agree with Baur, who thinks that, along with Plato, Xenophon should be most highly regarded" (*SKS* 1, 75 / *CI*, 13). In contrast see, e.g., *SKS* 1, 77 / *CI*, 15; *SKS* 1, 80 / *CI*, 18.—Baur] Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792–1860), German professor of theology at the University of Tübingen and author of *Das Christliche des Platonismus oder Sokrates und Christus*, Tübingen: L. F. Fues 1837.
29. **Mr. Kierkegaard's critique of Xenophon reveals how insufficient a merely empirical power of observation is for the historian]** Kierkegaard draws a contrast between Socrates' outward, empirically observable nature (his "immediacy"—see comment 18) and his inner, ironic nature, which he characterizes as "a spiritual condition that was infinitely bottomless, invisible, and indivisible" (*SKS* 1, 80 / *CI*, 19; see also *SKS* 1, 74 / *CI*, 12). He argues that Xenophon "had no intimation whatever of this secret," contending that he "stopped with Socrates' immediacy and thus has definitely misunderstood him in many ways; whereas Plato and Aristophanes have blazed a trail through the tough exterior to a [conception] of the infinity that is incommensurable with the multifarious events of his life" (*SKS* 1, 75 / *CI*, 13). See also *SKS* 1, 179 / *CI*, 128; *SKS* 1, 85 / *CI*, 23.
30. **It is shown now how Xenophon lacked a sense for situation]** See *SKS* 1, 78–80 / *CI*, 16–18.
31. **...he was incapable of penetrating with the idea the superficiality and triteness by means of which he brings Socrates to our attention]** Kierkegaard argues that Xenophon does not correctly portray the relationship between Socrates' humdrum, everyday examples and the ideal, intellectual

realm he, Socrates, explored by means of these examples. See, e.g., *SKS* 1, 78 / *CI*, 17. Beck here seems to build on this criticism of Xenophon's representation of Socrates, charging that Xenophon was not in effect a properly philosophical historian (in the Hegelian sense).

32. **...it is observed that Xenophon lacked an ear for the spoken line, i.e., that the essential in Socratic conversation has escaped him]** See *SKS* 1, 80–81 / *CI*, 18–19. A footnote was added in the German edition of Beck's review (following the term "conversation"). See p. 887: "*Die Sokratische Methode ist die Frage; sie bewegt sich nicht fort durch die innre Macht des Gegenstandes, sondern nur in solcher subjectiven Weise. Dies Sokratische Fragen vertritt noch dem Verf. die Stelle des Momentes der Negation bei Hegel, nur daß dies letztre durch die immanente Selbstbestimmung des Begriffes gesetzt ist*" [The Socratic method is the question; it does not move by means of the inner power of the issue but only in a subjective manner. Socratic questioning represents, according to the author, the position of the element of negation in Hegel, although the latter is brought about through the immanent self-determination of the concept].—Socratic questioning...the element of negation in Hegel] See *SKS* 1, 96 / *CI*, 35; see also *SKS* 1, 65 / *CI*, 6 (thesis IV).
33. **...that faint sound of the idea (of ironic negativity) heard through the seeming chatter of the everyday]** See, e.g., *SKS* 1, 80 / *CI*, 18. See also *SKS* 1, 89 / *CI*, 27–28.
34. **These or similar observations have also been advanced by Bruno Bauer with regard to the Gospel according to John]** Bruno Bauer (1809–1882), German philosopher, historian, and theologian. Kierkegaard does not discuss Bauer in *On the Concept of Irony* and in his reply to Beck's review he objects to being grouped with him and some of the other young Hegelians: "In the book Herr Doktor recently published [*Begrebet Mythus*], I see that he has most incredibly thrust me in among the Straussians. In formation with Strauss, Feuerbach, Vatke, Bruno Bauer, I must, whether I want to or not, keep step with them while Dr. B[eck] counts: ein, zwei, drei" (*SKS* 14, 45–46 / *COR*, 10–11). This charge, however, may be slightly off the mark. In column 7137 of his review, Beck in fact contends that Kierkegaard "quite often displays...his preference for traditional theology." See Bauer's *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte des Johannes*, Bremen: Carl Schünemann 1840. Concerning this work, John Toews writes: "Bauer's application of the methods of historical criticism to the Johannine Gospel...led him to the conclusion that this biblical text could provide no historical reality for the contemporary philosopher; it was not a credible historical account of the reality of Christ's consciousness or activity but a

secondary, reflective interpretation..." (*Hegelianism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1980, p. 312). See also Douglas Moggach, *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003.

35. **...the accusation against Xenophon that he conceives Socrates under... categories of finite teleology by means of which the ironist is...dragged down into the sphere of the most ridiculous philistinism]** See SKS 1, 178 / CI, 127; SKS 1, 86 / CI, 24–25.
36. **...a nemesis that fate has let befall Socrates]** See SKS 1, 75 / CI, 13; SKS 1, 78 / CI, 16.

col. 7138

37. **...the element in John by means of which he is brought into relation to Plato]** Cf. SKS 1, 75–77 / CI, 13–15. Kierkegaard there approvingly quotes F. C. Baur to similar effect.
38. **In the Platonic writings]** See SKS 1, 89–177 / CI, 27–126; SKS 1, 178–179 / CI, 126–128; SKS 1, 203–205 / CI, 153–154.
39. **Socrates [in Plato's writings] takes up a standpoint that...goes beyond the negative dialectic of irony to the speculative development of the idea]** See, e.g., SKS 1, 178 / CI, 126. See also SKS 1, 93 / CI, 32; SKS 1, 159 / CI, 105. When Kierkegaard wishes to distinguish Socrates from Plato, he does typically tie Socrates' method to a "negative dialectic of irony," insisting that Socrates' practice does not involve the idea, while calling Plato's method "speculative." See SKS 1, 258 / CI, 214; SKS 1, 108 / CI, 46–47; SKS 1, 97 / CI, 36.
40. **Socrates had not himself arrived there]** See, e.g., SKS 1, 243 / CI, 197.
41. **Socrates' merely negative standpoint could not make possible a determinate way of teaching in which—as in a third something—his pupils could find themselves in agreement with him]** See SKS 1, 109 / CI, 48.
42. **...he [Socrates] only had an effect through the immediate influence of his personality]** See SKS 1, 90–91 / CI, 28–29; SKS 1, 111 / CI, 50.
43. **...the relationship of the pupils to the teacher had to become a purely personal relationship of love, such that they wanted to be indebted to Socrates for everything they knew]** See SKS 1, 91–92 / CI, 30; SKS 1, 175 / CI, 123; SKS 1, 235–236 / CI, 188–189.
44. **Plato's knowledge, observes the author, was a co-knowledge with Socrates]** See SKS 1, 92 / CI, 30.

45. **...the confusion between what belonged to the teacher and what to the pupils...the poetic image was entirely mixed together with the historical reality]** See *SKS* 1, 92 / *CI*, 30.
46. **...although the Platonic dialogues lack a definite separation between the historical and the poetic Socrates, they are still not entirely *aus einem Gusse* [a unified whole]** See *SKS* 1, 172–173 / *CI*, 121. Kierkegaard argues that because Plato's dialogues do not form what Beck here terms "a unified whole," it should be possible for him to locate places in Plato's texts where the historical Socrates can be prized apart from the poetic. He ties Socrates to the first form of dialectic discussed in this passage and Plato to the second form (see *SKS* 1, 173–174 / *CI*, 122), and argues that these two distinct patterns of dialectic provide us with a means for separating the properly Socratic from the Platonic. Cf. *SKS* 1, 102 / *CI*, 40.
47. **The author thus points out that we find in the Platonic dialogues a double kind of irony, one which is merely a stimulus for thought... and one which is itself both the agent and the terminus towards which it strives]** See *SKS* 1, 172 / *CI*, 121; *SKS* 1, 144 / *CI*, 87; *SKS* 1, 173–174 / *CI*, 122. Beck and Kierkegaard initially appear to differ on which of the two types of irony should be assigned to Socrates and which to Plato, with Kierkegaard claiming that the first type belongs to Socrates. His later formulation of the Socratic standpoint, however, supports Beck in assigning the first, more restricted type of irony to Plato (an irony that assists thought in some further endeavor) while treating Socratic irony as the latter, more all-encompassing form: "As suggested above, its [the Socratic standpoint's] distinctive features are: irony in its total endeavor [*totale Stræben*], dialectic in its negatively liberating activity" (*SKS* 1, 174 / *CI*, 122). This passage invokes the notion of the striving of irony and surely points back not to the first definition of irony (as *mere* stimulus and disciplinarian) but to the second (as that which is engaged in an activity of striving which totally involves itself, both as agent and as final aim [*den terminus, til hvilken der stræbes*]).
48. **The author shows how this Socratic irony is found in the first Platonic dialogues (*Symposium, Phaedo, Protagoras* and the first book of the *Republic*)... But the negativity of irony shows itself especially in the *Apology*]** Beck here correctly identifies the key Platonic texts that Kierkegaard discusses, but also obscures how Kierkegaard's argument unfolds. He in fact considers three categories of Plato's writings: (1) first or early Platonic dialogues which "are closely connected with Socrates, not simply because they are closest in time...but also because they are assumed to be most kindred to him in spirit" (*SKS* 1, 171 / *CI*, 120): *Symposium* (*SKS* 1,

102–113 / *CI*, 41–52), *Protagoras* (*SKS* 1, 113–122 / *CI*, 52–62), *Phaedo* (*SKS* 1, 122–137 / *CI*, 62–79); (2) *Apology* (*SKS* 1, 138–150 / *CI*, 79–96)—which Kierkegaard terms a “historical document” (*SKS* 1, 126 / *CI*, 66); (3) the first book of the *Republic* (*SKS* 1, 163–171 / *CI*, 109–119)—a later Platonic work that recalls the earlier dialogues (*SKS* 1, 171 / *CI*, 119).

Kierkegaard's argument is thus more nuanced than Beck here suggests. He first turns to what he treats as early Platonic works (the *Symposium*, *Protagoras*, and *Phaedo*) to look for evidence that irony best characterizes Socrates' standpoint. Scholars of Kierkegaard's day engaged in disputes not unlike those at present concerning which of Plato's dialogues might be deemed “early” and so presumably have more to teach us about Socrates. Kierkegaard is aware that many scholars at that time would not tend to classify the *Symposium* and the *Phaedo* as early Platonic works (as is also true today), but notes that “most of them...agree in assigning special significance to the *Symposium* and *Phaedo* in the conception of Socrates” (*SKS* 1, 172 / *CI*, 120). He adds further that while “not all scholars agree on which dialogues should be assigned to this first division,...all of them include the *Protagoras* and most of them the *Gorgias*, which is adequate for [him]” (See *SKS* 1, 172 / *CI*, 120). Though Kierkegaard does not devote an entire section to the *Gorgias*, he does quote heavily from it—see, e.g., *SKS* 1, 95–96 / *CI*, 33–34.

Kierkegaard distinguishes between these early Platonic works and the *Apology*, which he claims “must be assigned a preeminent place as a historical document” (*SKS* 1, 134 / *CI*, 76). He notes that “most scholars agree in assigning historical significance in the stricter sense to the *Apology*” and makes the bolder claim that “in this dialogue we do have, according to the view of the great majority, a historical representation of Socrates' actuality” (*SKS* 1, 172 / *CI*, 120; *SKS* 1, 177 / *CI*, 126). He thus uses his analysis of the *Apology* to help fortify his earlier results while also laying “primary stress upon it” due to its more strictly historical character (*SKS* 1, 172 / *CI*, 120). After a brief discussion of the role of myth in Plato's early works (*SKS* 1, 150–162 / *CI*, 96–109), Kierkegaard then concludes his examination of Plato by looking at the first book of the *Republic*, a work which he claims “is very reminiscent of the earlier dialogues” but that comes after “a whole intermediate cycle of dialogues...totally different from it” (*SKS* 1, 171 / *CI*, 119). He argues that “this section of the *Republic*...provide[s] occasion for

- sanctioning in *compendio* [in summary]...the survey given above” (SKS 1, 164 / CI, 111).²⁷
49. **...where everything concrete and determinate (thus in *Protagoras* virtue, in *Phaedo* life after death) is leveled into empty abstractions, ending thus with negative results]** See SKS 1, 119 / CI, 59; SKS 1, 137 / CI, 79; SKS 1, 115 / CI, 54; SKS 1, 116 / CI, 55–56; SKS 1, 170 / CI, 118.
 50. **...the negativity of irony shows itself especially in the *Apology*, which for every other interpretation [of Plato’s relation to Socrates] poses insurmountable difficulties]** See SKS 1, 139 / CI, 80–81.
 51. **...illustrious philologists like Ast have deemed it [the *Apology*] a botched work wrongly associated with Socrates]** See SKS 1, 138 / CI, 79–80.—Ast] Friedrich Ast (1778–1841), German professor of classics, history of philosophy and aesthetics who edited Plato’s texts and wrote *Platon’s Leben und Schriften*, Leipzig: Weidmann 1816. See SKS K1, 208; 220.
 52. **When in other dialogues a dialectic emerges from that negative standpoint]** See SKS 1, 158 / CI, 105: “[T]hose who have a somewhat more intimate acquaintance with Plato presumably will agree with me in having the more strictly Platonic development begin with the dialectic that appears in the *Parmenides* and the other dialogues in this cycle [*Theaetetus*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*—see SKS 1, 174 / CI, 123] and ends in the constructive dialogues [*Republic*, *Timaeus*, *Critias*—see SKS 1, 113 / CI, 53]. But it has already been pointed out [see SKS 1, 151 / CI, 97] that the dialectic in these dialogues is essentially different from the [Socratic] dialectic described so far [in the early dialogues].”
 53. **...the necessary nothing by means of which that dialectic must be begun—insofar as it set “the boat of speculation afloat”—it could be said to be *an sich* [in itself] the resulting positivity]** See SKS 1, 261 / CI, 217; col. 7136 (comment 19); SKS 1, 256 / CI, 211; col. 7135 (comment 13).

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54. **...because Plato transfers knowledge that is developed later onto the personality (which only had the abstract principle), he can be brought into contact with John]** See SKS 1, 77 / CI, 15.
55. **... in which all finite determinations were sublated [*ophæved*]; ... the Johannine reflection makes this negation a positive self-affirmation]** Beck here returns to his discussion of the recent “critique of evangelical

²⁷ See Paul Muench, “Socratic Irony, Plato’s *Apology*, and Kierkegaard’s *On the Concept of Irony*,” *Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook*, 2009, pp. 71–125, especially pp. 74–85.

- history" (col. 7133—comment 6). See especially cols. 7136; 7137–7138.—**sublated**] Hegelian term associated with the development of a concept or principle of consciousness. See Inwood, *Hegel Dictionary*, pp. 283–285.
56. **The third conception of Socrates...is that of Aristophanes, i.e. the comic conception**] See *SKS* 1, 179–203 / *CI*, 128–153; *SKS* 1, 203–205 / *CI*, 153–154. Kierkegaard argues that Aristophanes' portrait of Socrates is invaluable since "the comic [conception] is an element, in many ways a perpetually corrective element, in making a personality or an enterprise completely intelligible" (*SKS* 1, 179–180 / *CI*, 128). Beck does not address in his review much of Kierkegaard's actual discussion (including his claim that the Socratic principle's being irony rather than subjectivity "affords [it] a much more comic side"—see *SKS* 1, 182 / *CI*, 131; *SKS* 1, 195 / *CI*, 145; *SKS* 1, 202–203 / *CI*, 152–153—and his three-part argument that "Aristophanes has not identified [Socrates] with the Sophists"—see *SKS* 1, 196–202 / *CI*, 146–152). Instead Beck's remarks here are primarily critical in nature, and focus on his claim that Kierkegaard has not adequately distinguished between the ironic and the comic. Cf. Hegel's claim that "the comic must be essentially distinguished from the ironic," in his *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, trans. by T. M. Knox, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1975, p. 67.
57. **...necessary to point out the inner relationship of these two so closely related concepts. This has been left undone by the author and as a result this section of the study acquires a somewhat undecided character**] See, e.g., *SKS* 1, 182 / *CI*, 131; *SKS* 1, 195 / *CI*, 145. Kierkegaard does not address this criticism in his reply to Beck's review.
58. **The author allows Aristophanes' ridicule of Socrates to be motivated by an interest for substantial life, the state and religion**] Kierkegaard in fact expressly denies this. See *SKS* 1, 180 / *CI*, 128–129.
59. **The comic standpoint no less than the ironic standpoint is the leveling of the phenomenon**] In the German version of his review Beck adds after this sentence an additional sentence. See p. 888: "*Die Komödie negiert das Substantielle nicht überhaupt, sondern nur in einer bestimmten, dem Selbstbewußtsein fremd oder gegenständlich gewordenen Form*" [Comedy does not negate the substantial element altogether but only in a certain objective form that has become foreign to self-consciousness]. Cf. *SKS* 1, 195 / *CI*, 145.
60. **...(compare Vischer über das Erhabene und Komische [on the sublime and the comic])**] Cf. *SKS* 17, DD, 18 / *CI*, 431–432.—**Vischer**] Friedrich Theodor Vischer (1807–1887), Professor of aesthetics and German literature at the University of Tübingen. Beck here refers to Vischer's habilitation, *Über das Erhabene und Komische*, Tübingen: Imle & Krauss 1837.

61. **Except insofar as this negative dialectic was “a world-historical passion.” Socrates found satisfaction in this, but his pupils did not]** See *SKS* 1, 256 / *CI*, 211; *SKS* 1, 223 / *CI*, 176.
62. **On account of its inner, substantial infinity, the comic standpoint is able to assert itself against irony...without ever arriving at the idea]** The end of this clause is expanded in the German edition of Beck’s review. See p. 888: “*ohne daß sie jemals aus der schlechten Unendlichkeit des Negirens heraus und zur Idee kommt*” [without ever escaping the bad infinity of negation and arriving at the idea]. On the Hegelian contrast between substantial and bad or spurious infinity, see Hegel’s *Science of Logic*, trans. by A. V. Miller, London: George Allen & Unwin 1969, 1.2C, pp. 137–150; *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, trans. by T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris, Indianapolis: Hackett 1991, sect. 94, pp. 149–150.
63. **Despite all its efforts, irony never arrives at a result]** Cf. *SKS* 1, 243 / *CI*, 197.
64. **The author has called this first section of his critical study “The Conception Made Possible”]** See *SKS* 1, 75 / *CI*, 13; see also *SKS* 1, 205 / *CI*, 155.
65. **...each one produces a peculiar, one-sided account that only makes the genuine historical conception possible]** See *SKS* 1, 205 / *CI*, 155; *SKS* 1, 215 / *CI*, 167; *SKS* 1, 204 / *CI*, 154.
66. **...explaining their one-sidedness on the assumption that the Socratic standpoint was irony]** See comment 4.

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67. **...the author deals with historical data that...do not need to be obtained through a mistaken conception]** See *SKS* 1, 206 / *CI*, 156. In the present chapter, Kierkegaard switches his focus from the misconceptions of Socrates that he has argued exist in the writings of Xenophon, Plato, and Aristophanes to what he takes to be more straightforwardly factual matters about Socrates, namely that he claimed to have a divine sign and that he was tried and convicted for religious unorthodoxy and for corrupting the youth. He thus shifts from examining literary representations of Socrates to those texts that more specifically address Socrates as a historical figure and which concern themselves most explicitly with his interactions with the Athenian state (especially with respect to religious and moral matters). Kierkegaard claims to proceed in this chapter “on a factual basis” and examines more closely what he calls “the historical writings in the stricter sense of the word” (where Plato’s *Apology* remains his principal example

of this genre)—see *SKS* 1, 207 / *CI*, 157; *SKS* 1, 210 / *CI*, 160. See also, e.g., *SKS* 1, 208 / *CI*, 158; *SKS* 1, 215 / *CI*, 167. Beck follows the order of the text, first addressing Kierkegaard's discussion of Socrates' daimonion and then his relationship to the state; his discussion of the latter is fairly brief and does not address the details of Kierkegaard's discussion (including his account of Socratic ignorance—see *SKS* 1, 217–225 / *CI*, 169–178—and his discussion of Socrates' relation to the youth—see *SKS* 1, 231–239 / *CI*, 183–192).

68. **He calls this part of his study “The Conception Made Actual”]** See *SKS* 1, 207–243 / *CI*, 157–197; *SKS* 1, 206 / *CI*, 156. Just as he argued in chapter one that his own conception of Socrates had—by the end of the chapter—become possible (see *SKS* 1, 205 / *CI*, 155), Kierkegaard here continues this manner of speaking, arguing that as he shows in the present chapter that his conception of Socrates can accommodate Socrates' historical actuality, so does his own conception itself thereby in a sense actually come into existence (and so become actual). See comment 5.
69. **Socrates' daimon]** See, e.g., Plato's *Apology*, 31c-d: “I have a divine or spiritual sign....This began when I was a child. It is a voice, and whenever it speaks it turns me away from something I am about to do, but it never encourages me to do anything,” trans. by G. M. A. Grube, *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. by John Cooper, Indianapolis: Hackett 1997.
70. **The author draws attention to how the activity of the daimon exclusively restricted itself to warning, therefore to the merely negative]** Kierkegaard in fact points out that the two main accounts from antiquity (Plato and Xenophon) which discuss Socrates' daimonion are in conflict concerning this point. He argues that Plato's account is superior. See *SKS* 1, 209 / *CI*, 159.
71. **...the concrete deities were leveled into the abstract and indeterminate]** See *SKS* 1, 210 / *CI*, 160.
72. **...it [Socrates' daimonion] never had anything to do with the substantial interests of the state but only dealt with the particular affairs of Socrates and his friends]** See *SKS* 1, 210–211 / *CI*, 160–161; see also *SKS* 1, 217 / *CI*, 168–169.
73. **The particularity of the ironic subject preserves itself and in a way becomes affirmed in the daimonic]** See *SKS* 1, 214 / *CI*, 165–166.
74. **Socrates' conviction by the state, as is well-known, has given rise over the centuries to sentimental reflections]** See *SKS* 1, 216 / *CI*, 167–168.
75. **...the author maintains that the state was in the right]** In the German edition of his review, Beck adds a reference to Hegel. See p. 889: “*In Uebereinstimmung mit Hegel!*” [in agreement with Hegel]. Kierkegaard does

not in fact simply take the side of the state. Instead he seems to follow Hegel in his view that Athens was justified in condemning Socrates even as he was justified in his behavior towards the city. Kierkegaard opens this section by rhetorically asking whether he might “with a clear conscience dare [to] indulge in joy over the bold and vigorous brushstrokes of the modern scholarship that sketches Socrates as a tragic hero who was simultaneously right and wrong” (SKS 1, 216 / CI, 168). He later approvingly quotes Hegel; see SKS 1, 240 / CI, 193. Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, vol. 1, trans. by E. S. Haldane, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press 1995, pp. 426 and 444.

76. **Socrates undermined the substantial life of the state, which in Greece reserved for itself far more of the individual’s strength than in the modern world]** See SKS 1, 226 / CI, 179.
77. **...it had to become evident that he was an incommensurable figure to the state]** See SKS 1, 227 / CI, 180; cf. SKS 1, 242 / CI, 195. See also SKS 1, 242–243 / CI, 196.
78. **...something which...the state could not possibly know from its own standpoint]** See SKS 1, 228–229 / CI, 181; but see also SKS 1, 215 / CI, 167.
79. **He has been proved right in the eyes of world history]** See SKS 1, 308 / CI, 271.
80. **With Socrates the Western principle [*occidentalske Princip*], subjectivity, appeared in world history in its first, most abstract determination as irony]** See comment 89.
81. **...with Christ—the Eastern spirit’s [*orientalske Aands*] highest point of development—there also appeared a negativity that disintegrates all of the forces of life, a negativity which, however, as religious was infinitely positive]** A footnote is added in the German edition of Beck’s review (following the term “religious”). See p. 889: “*oder als das Pathos, die Wahrheit in die Welt zu bringen und ‘im Reiche Gottes’ zu verwirklichen*” [or as the pathos to bring the truth to the world and to realize it ‘in the kingdom of God’].
82. **...when the author says that the similarity between Christ and Socrates consists in their dissimilarity]** See SKS 1, 76 / CI, 14–15; see also SKS 1, 265 / CI, 220; SKS 1, 65 / CI, 6. In the German edition of his review Beck adds a reference to Baur (see comment 28). See p. 889: “*wenn der Verf. gegen Baur bemerkt*” [when the author remarks against Baur].

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83. **In the third chapter, “The Conception Made Necessary,”]** See *SKS* 1, 244–262 / *CI*, 198–218. In this chapter Kierkegaard steps back from his discussion of some of the factual matters pertaining to Socrates' life (his daimonion and his trial and conviction by the state) and examines Socrates from the point of view of a Hegelian-conceived world history, where the aim is “to conjure [Socrates] forth with the aid of the idea, to make him become visible in his ideal form—in other words, to become conscious of...the phase [*Moment*] in the development of world spirit that is symbolically indicated by the singularity of his existence in history” (*SKS* 1, 244 / *CI*, 198). He argues that Socrates is a world-historically significant individual who served as a “turning point” between a declining, traditional Athenian society and the later development of subjectivity and speculative philosophy. In keeping with the imagery from the previous two chapters (see comment 5), the title of this chapter suggests that as Kierkegaard demonstrates in the present chapter that his conception of Socrates can accommodate and account for the necessary role that Socrates plays in world history, so is his own conception itself revealed to be not merely possible or actual but necessary for explaining and understanding Socrates. While the chapter addresses “the age before [Socrates] and the age after him,” Beck primarily restricts his discussion here to Kierkegaard's account of sophistry and his claim that Socrates had to combat the sophists in order to make way for the further development of Athenian society (*SKS* 1, 245 / *CI*, 200).
84. **...how the Socratic standpoint—irony—resulted from the spiritual condition of the Greek world]** See *SKS* 1, 255–256 / *CI*, 211.
85. **This negativity was the purgatory where that conceited, run-of-the-mill wisdom had to burn itself out]** See *SKS* 1, 255–256 / *CI*, 209–210. See also *SKS* 1, 262 / *CI*, 217–218; *SKS* 1, 270–271 / *CI*, 228.
86. **Thus Socrates' standpoint has a world-historical validity]** See *SKS* 1, 255 / *CI*, 211; see also *SKS* 1, 297 / *CI*, 259.
87. **...his divine mission]** See *SKS* 1, 100 / *CI*, 38. See also *SKS* 1, 220–221 / *CI*, 173.
88. **In an appendix the author considers Hegel's conception of Socrates' standpoint]** See *SKS* 1, 263–278 / *CI*, 219–237. Kierkegaard resumes this discussion at *SKS* 1, 302–307 / *CI*, 265–270.
89. **The author agrees with Hegel...irony is the most abstract determination of subjectivity]** See *SKS* 1, 302 / *CI*, 264; *SKS* 1, 255 / *CI*, 211.
90. **Hegel has found the right approach in general but not yet carried his view forward to full determinateness]** Kierkegaard faults Hegel on precisely this point. See *SKS* 1, 264–266 / *CI*, 221–222.

91. **When Hegel reclaims for Socrates the idea of the good...he gets into difficulties since he cannot show how Socrates conceived of the good]** See *SKS* 1, 276 / *CI*, 235.
92. **...something infinitely abstract in which all that is positive and determinate was leveled]** See *SKS* 1, 277 / *CI*, 236.
93. **...only ascribe to Socrates the idea of the good insofar as his standpoint was continually arriving at it—as at a limit—beyond which | [7190] only later generations were conveyed by him]** See *SKS* 1, 243 / *CI*, 197; *SKS* 1, 276 / *CI*, 235.

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94. **He can be called the founder of morality]** See *SKS* 1, 270–271 / *CI*, 228; see also *SKS* 1, 269–278 / *CI*, 225–237.
95. **Through the absolute (subjectivity), Mr. Kierkegaard says, reality came to nothing, but the absolute was itself nothing]** See *SKS* 1, 277 / *CI*, 236. See also comment 17.
96. **...world-historical individualities are great...the whole of their lives belongs to the world and they have nothing as it were for themselves]** See *SKS* 1, 277 / *CI*, 236–237.
97. **In the second part of the study...the author discusses separately the concept of irony]** See *SKS* 1, 279–357 / *CI*, 239–329. Having focused in the more lengthy first part of his dissertation on Socrates and the standpoint he occupied, Kierkegaard now turns in the second part to a more explicit examination of the concept of irony, including a brief discussion of Romantic irony (which he treats as a second manifestation of the concept and argues was world-historically unjustified).
98. **...the question of whether irony is justified in making an appearance in world history more than once]** See *SKS* 1, 282 / *CI*, 242; see also *SKS* 1, 301 / *CI*, 263–264.
99. **...this concept has appeared twice, namely when subjectivity asserted its rights in the world for the first time and when...it wanted to assert itself again as a subjectivity raised to the second power]** See *SKS* 1, 282 / *CI*, 242. See also *SKS* 1, 302 / *CI*, 264; *SKS* 1, 311 / *CI*, 275; *SKS* 1, 243 / *CI*, 197.
100. **...our interest in the present part of the study will lie chiefly in the discussion of the modern form of irony]** The second part of Kierkegaard's dissertation has four chapters: (i) Observations for Orientation (a preliminary discussion of the concept of irony: *SKS* 1, 285–296 / *CI*, 246–258); (ii) The World-Historical Validity of Irony, the Irony of Socrates

(further discussion of the concept of irony together with an examination of Hegel's conception of Socratic irony: *SKS* 1, 297–308 / *CI*, 259–271); (iii) Irony after Fichte (Kierkegaard's discussion of Romantic irony: *SKS* 1, 308–352 / *CI*, 272–323); (iv) Irony as a Controlled Element, the Truth of Irony (a very brief discussion of the role irony can play in Kierkegaard's time in art and human life: *SKS* 1, 352–357 / *CI*, 324–329). Beck restricts his discussion here to Kierkegaard's second discussion of Hegel and to his examination of Romantic irony. He does not discuss the first chapter and a half of this part of the dissertation, where Kierkegaard most explicitly attempts to define the concept of irony; instead, he seems to have found it more fruitful to draw upon this material at the very beginning of his review. See comment 1.

101. **...a polemic against Hegel's conception...this conception is not without a certain one-sidedness]** See *SKS* 1, 302–307 / *CI*, 265–270; see especially *SKS* 1, 302–303 / *CI*, 265.
102. **Hegel's polemic against that school is always of the most bitter nature (such as in his *Aesthetics*)]** See *SKS* 1, 303 / *CI*, 265–266; see also *SKS* 1, 284 / *CI*, 244; *SKS* 1, 318–319 / *CI*, 283. In his discussion of the modern form of irony, Hegel singles out for special consideration Friedrich Schlegel, K. W. F. Solger, and Ludwig Tieck—see his discussion of irony in his *Aesthetics*, vol. 1, pp. 64–69. Kierkegaard follows Hegel and treats these three as principal figures in the Romantic movement. See *SKS* 1, 282 / *CI*, 242. Beck's review does not consider in any detail Kierkegaard's discussion of these three figures (*SKS* 1, 321–352; *CI*, 286–323).
103. **...he [Hegel] considers irony to be the highest lie (in *Philosophy of Right*), placing it in a class with the worst forms of moral consciousness, Jesuitism and rationalistic *Ueberzeugungstreue* [faithfulness of conviction]]** See Hegel's "The Good and the Conscience," *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. by H. B. Nisbet, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991, section 140, pp. 170–184. See also *SKS* 1, 270 / *CI*, 228; *SKS* 1, 294 / *CI*, 256.—**rationalistic *Ueberzeugungstreue*** In the German edition of his review Beck reformulates this phrase. See p. 890: "*dem nur formellen Moralprincip der subjectiven Ueberzeugung*" [the nothing but formal moral principle of subjective conviction].
104. **He [Hegel] protests, therefore, against the conception of Socrates' standpoint as irony]** See *SKS* 1, 302 / *CI*, 264–265.
105. **This modern form is connected with the Fichtean system that rested on the formal, merely negative principle of infinity, the absolute and | [7191] yet empty principle of subjectivity]** See, e. g., *SKS* 1, 309–310 / *CI*, p. 273.

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106. **But what for Fichte was a metaphysical standpoint became for the Schlegels and other “superior” people something immediately practical]** See SKS 1, 305 / CI, 268. See also Hegel’s “Review of Solger’s *Posthumous Writings and Correspondence*,” *Miscellaneous Writings of G. W. F. Hegel*, ed. by Jon Stewart, Evanston: Northwestern University Press 2002, p. 387; SKS 1, 311 / CI, 275.—**“superior” people]** See SKS 1, 302–303 / CI, 265; see also SKS K1, 336 / CI, 540; SKS 1, 287 / CI, 248.
107. **...Kierkegaard has not taken into account the article “Protestantism and Romanticism” in *Hallische Jahrbücher*]** This substantial treatise, “Der Protestantismus und die Romantik: Zur Verständigung über die Zeit und ihrer Gegensätze” (subtitled “*ein Manifest*”) was published anonymously and appeared in two parts in the Hegelian journal *Hallische Jahrbücher für deutsche Wissenschaft und Kunst*, ed. by Arnold Ruge and Theodor Echtermeyer, October 12–19, and November 5–12, 1839, issues 245–251; 265–271. This journal was first published in 1838 and “soon became,” writes Lawrence Stepelevich, “the central organ of Young Hegelian propaganda, and for a generation of German liberals it served as the only bridge between philosophical theory and political and social activism. In 1841, the journal was suppressed in Prussia, but Ruge took its editorial offices to the more liberal climate of Dresden, where it reappeared under a new title, the *Deutsche Jahrbücher*. It lost none of its humanistic fire, and continued to provide a platform for Young Hegelian themes and writers, themes which continually provoked the authorities of both Church and state, and writers whose unrestrained atheistic and revolutionary sentiments could not be ignored” (in *Young Hegelians*, ed. by Lawrence Stepelevich, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1983, p. 209). It is worth noting that in 1842 Beck published the German translation of his review of *On the Concept of Irony in Deutsche Jahrbücher*.
108. **It [the modern form of irony] was thus an unjustified standpoint]** See SKS 1, 311 / CI, 275. See also SKS 1, 282 / CI, 242.
109. **...the modern, specific religiosity—pietism]** In the German edition of his review Beck reformulates this phrase. See p. 890: “*die moderne, abstracte Religiosität, der Pietismus.*”
110. **...it is not thereby his intention to deprive it of its rights against the triviality and spiritlessness in which both the glory of intelligence and of life can come undone]** See SKS 1, 284 / CI, 244; SKS 1, 302 / CI, 265; SKS 1, 322–323 / CI, 287–288; SKS 1, 336–337 / CI, 304.
111. **...irony only has a role to play as a controlled element]** Without explicitly referring to the last chapter of Kierkegaard’s dissertation

("Irony as a Controlled Element, the Truth of Irony"—SKS 1, 352–357 / CI, 324–329), Beck invokes here a crucial characterization of irony with which Kierkegaard concludes his dissertation. See SKS 1, 354–356 / CI, 326–328.

112. **The language of the author is flowing, light, and free from all the astringency found in school terminology** In the German edition of his review Beck reformulates this sentence. See p. 891: "*Die Sprache des hrn. Verf. ist fließend, leicht, nur von einem gewissen Sichgehenlassen und von Incorrectheit nicht ganz frei*" [The language of the author is flowing, light, only not entirely free of a certain degree of letting loose and of inappropriateness].
113. **...faulted for the fact that there are to be found a number of allusions and intimations in the book that probably very few will understand, and concerning which the reviewer in particular does not have the honor of following the author** In the German edition of his review Beck reformulates the first part of this phrase. See p. 891: "*im Buche [finden sich] eine Menge Anspielungen und Hindeutungen auf (Gott weiss, welche) Verhältnisse, Zustände, Vorgänge meistens wohl in Dänemark oder vielmehr in Kopenhagen..., die nicht als allbekannt vorausgesetzt werden dürfen*" [in the book are found a number of allusions and things pointing to (God knows which) relationships, situations, proceedings most of which probably occur in Denmark or rather in Copenhagen and which ought not to be allowed except on the condition that they are well known]. In his reply to Beck's review, Kierkegaard offers a somewhat teasing response that nevertheless reminds his readers of Beck's involvement with (then radical) democratic politics: "[Dr. Beck] finally concludes that I deserve to be criticized because there are several allusions he does not understand. Well, admittedly he did not say it exactly that way; he said, in fact, that the majority [*de Fleste*] do not understand them.²⁸ But since I cannot possibly assume that Dr. Beck had the opportunity to poll the opinion of the majority, Dr. Beck no doubt is using this expression as a party man. It must, therefore, be regarded as a genuinely emotional party expres-

²⁸ Actually, Beck says that "probably very few [a minority] will understand them." By recasting this claim in terms of who does not understand his allusions (namely most people or "the majority"), Kierkegaard can then somewhat tongue-in-cheek accuse Beck of being a "party man" (with connotations of being someone who is too taken with the recent democratic developments in politics). Beck's later inability to obtain a permanent university post in Copenhagen may in fact have been due in part to his involvement with democratic politics (together with his embrace more generally of the young Hegelian movement).

sion....That being the case, it is entirely appropriate for me not to reflect on it but to limit myself to my first statement, that Dr. Beck has not understood them. The problem is to explain how Dr. Beck, who otherwise is a dialectician and an expert in categories, has not perceived that several other conclusions can be arrived at from the sentence presented. There are several allusions that Dr. Beck has not understood. From that Dr. Beck concludes that I deserve criticism. What if someone drew the conclusion that Dr. Beck deserves criticism? This conclusion is much closer to the point, because, after all, my treatise was not intended for Dr. Beck alone, whereas Dr. B[eck] *proprio motu* [on his own initiative] has set himself up as my critic and thus may justifiably be asked to take the trouble to understand. [A] second conclusion could read: There are several allusions that Dr. Beck did not understand; therefore, the author deserves praise. A third conclusion could be set forth this way: There are several allusions that Dr. B[eck] did not understand; therefore Dr. B[eck] deserves praise—in other words, it indicates a laudable naiveté, but it by no means follows that the author deserves criticism. It is incredible that so much can be [concluded] from the fact that Dr. B[eck] has not understood; would that one might conclude as much from what Dr. B[eck] has understood” (SKS 14, 45 / COR, 9–10).

114. **The author also often seems to be less successful when he has in a more positive way wanted to shine forth with his wit;...to be sure it can be amusing, that we do not deny, and it really has amused the reviewer, but—not to the benefit of the author]** In the German edition of his review Beck reformulates the first part of this sentence. See p. 891: “*ebenfalls scheint der Verf. zuweilen invita Minerva mit seinem Witz glänzen zu wollen*” [also the author seems at times—calling on *Minerva*—to want to shine forth with his wit]. In his reply to Beck, Kierkegaard does not directly address the charge of having been “less successful” when he “wanted to shine forth with his wit.” While the context suggests that it is this failure of wit on Kierkegaard’s part that Beck claims “has amused the reader, but—not to the benefit of the author” (suggesting that Kierkegaard’s failed attempts at being witty are what is actually amusing about the book), Kierkegaard purports to find “ambiguous and obscure” the idea that Beck’s amusement could have failed to benefit him and then proceeds to offer his own comic interpretation of one respect in which Beck’s response to his book might genuinely have harmed him (the author), if namely it led him to lose money: “At the end [of his review], my esteemed critic adds that there are various things that have amused him—but not to my [benefit]. This passage is very ambiguous and obscure....If the reviewer had said,

for my benefit, that there were various things he was amused over, I would not have understood him, either. Herr Doktor must by no means attribute this to lack of good will. The book cost me 182 rix-dollars, 4 marks, and 8 shillings to publish, and it is highly plausible that I wanted every legitimate benefit from it without becoming guilty of what for an author is an unworthy [desire for benefit]. But for the same reason that my critic's opinion would have been an enigma to me if he had expressed himself this way, it is an enigma to me why my critic has been amused by my book in such a way that it is not to my benefit, or, in other words, is to my detriment....I have done my utmost to find an explanation, the only one I can find. The critic perhaps has bought a copy of my dissertation, has not been satisfied with it, and now has returned it to the publisher and demanded his money back. I do not know if it is customary for the publisher to return the money—if so, then the critic has caused me an additional loss of 9 marks....If that is the way it turns out, then the critic is right—he has caused me a loss, and it really has not been to my [benefit] that he has been amused” (SKS 14, 46 / COR, 11–12).