

The Problem of Faith and Knowledge

A Historical-Critical Treatise

Problemet om Tro og Viden

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Preface

This work reproduces, in all essential respects unchanged, the content of the lectures I delivered at the University of Copenhagen in the autumn semester of 1867 on the relation between faith and knowledge, between religion, philosophy, and ethics. These lectures encompassed the historical-critical part of the investigation and formed the preparation for an attempt at an independent resolution of the problem under discussion, which will be published in the course of this year.

The historical-critical part of the investigation provides, beyond a brief sketch of the problem's genesis, a detailed critique of those proposed solutions that have acquired a special significance in our literature — among them one, the solution originating with S. Kierkegaard, that was executed with an originality, a seriousness, and a depth that will preserve for it this significance at all times. Through the critique of these proposed solutions — which, in the course of their development and justification, have stood in a sustained polemical or mediating relation to earlier and foreign contributions, and which can partly be regarded as results of previously dominant tendencies, and have partly substantially accomplished the critique of such tendencies — the most significant of the older and contemporary proposals have been illuminated, and in part the complete preconditions have been supplied for a final judgment upon them. This historical critique will then find its supplement in the work that attaches itself to this one.

The present state of the problem in our literature is marked by the conflict between, on the one side, a form of theology that borrows in an eclectic fashion from newer philosophical hybrid formations the weapons with which it will defend the union of faith and knowledge, and, on the other side, the anti-theological-religious standpoint, which, by means of the principled opposition between faith and knowledge, aims to secure the validity of religion and science in their mutual independence and the possibility of their peaceful coexistence within consciousness — while at the same time, by virtue of this same principled opposition, denying theology all right to bear the name of science, a name theology claims for itself by demanding to be a “science of faith” [*Troesvidenskab*].

The philosophizing theology, which maintains the possibility of appropriating and

expressing the content of faith in the form of knowledge, and which therefore not only wishes to claim the name of science for theology but assigns to it, as the concluding form of revelatory science, primacy among the sciences and judicial authority over them, has had as its historical point of departure the speculative system that, through an ambiguous extension of the concept of “religion,” brought religion in its specific sense into an identical relation with philosophy, from which it was to be distinguished not by any difference of content, but only by a difference of form. After this ambiguous unity had to be abandoned in the struggles that developed following the emergence of Hegel’s philosophy of religion, the theology influenced by philosophy, exchanging the designation of speculation for that of the Christian, nevertheless preserved the tendency toward mediation; but it now rests primarily upon a different philosophical orientation — and in particular upon the system that, by introducing a redoubling into philosophy, creates room for a “free thinking” which borrows from its close relative, the imagination, the “magic cloak” [*Fjederham*] enabling it to soar above the abysses of mystery; and it cautiously inserts a qualification that cuts off even the “higher science’s” consequences whenever thought, despite its “freedom,” involuntarily comes to follow its own essential laws.

The anti-theological theory, which likewise presupposes Hegelian philosophy, but whose relation to that presupposition is originally negative and polemical, had as its historical incitement also the protest — lodged by a philosophy that presents itself at once as the consequence of and as the opposition to that speculative doctrine of mediation — against the unity of religion and philosophy. The most significant representative of this tendency is Feuerbach — a man whose writings are known only very incompletely and judged only very superficially by those in our literature who have criticized him. Conceiving religion’s standpoint as practical in opposition to science’s theoretical standpoint, and determining the former ever more sharply through the emphasis on its alogical element, he arrived at the irreconcilable opposition as his view of the relation, and demanded, in the interest of genuine cognition and genuine ethical action, that religion be absorbed into science and ethics. Religion as such was to disappear — as something alogical, as an imperfect transitional stage in the development of the human spirit’s self-consciousness — leaving behind only its name in an improper and figurative sense.

In agreement with Feuerbach regarding the opposition, but disagreeing as to its grounds and its application, S. Kierkegaard draws the distinction between religion and philosophy in religion’s interest. The human spirit, which in the restlessness of existence cannot grasp the Eternal in the objective certainty of cognition, and which acknowledges

the limits of its own cognition, finds only in the religious relation, in faith, a subjective existential certainty regarding what is its deepest interest; it finds there, and only there, its true reconciliation. The validity of knowledge is not denied, but objective knowledge is bounded to a domain in which the spirit's deepest interests cannot find their satisfaction. Faith and knowledge thus each receive their own territory, and through this, and through knowledge's subordination, the compatibility of both within the same consciousness is to become possible.

This Kierkegaardian conception of the problem of the relation between faith and knowledge has been taken up by Professor R. Nielsen and presented in such a way that some have wished to place him on a par in originality with the theory's originator, attributing to him the resolution of a task of the same creativity as the one Kierkegaard strove to resolve. How little this view is warranted will be demonstrated in this work. It will emerge that the problem has not been advanced by Professor Nielsen; that the form he has given the solution has introduced only uncertainty and vacillation into the decisive determinations; that the attempt at a psychological and metaphysical grounding of the separation of the principle of faith from the principle of knowledge as absolutely heterogeneous with it has failed and leads to irresolvable contradictions; and that the same holds for his grounding of the proposition that the absolutely heterogeneous principles can be united within the same consciousness.

When, then, alongside S. Kierkegaard — the genuine representative of the anti-theological-religious standpoint — such detailed attention is devoted to Professor Nielsen, it is not because the theory has received from him a deeper grounding or a richer development, but because it has through him exchanged the character of an esoteric doctrine for an exoteric one, penetrated into the broad circles of "the cultivated," and in these circles is in the process of changing from a question of knowledge into a question of faith, and of being fixed as dogma by virtue of an unappealable *ipse dixit*.

As representative of the philosophizing theology, Bishop Martensen appears in this work; but since the argument is closely tied to what is given in his writings, the universal, the typical in the standpoint is nowhere lost from view, nor forgotten in favor of the individual. It has not been necessary to give direct consideration to other theological attempts in our literature.

The ultimate task, whose resolution is prepared through the critique — which immediately can yield only a negative result — is the vindication of a standpoint that has not found expression in our discussions, and that has been advanced elsewhere only in forms that cannot satisfy. This standpoint maintains such an opposition between science

— philosophy in particular — and the positive forms of religion, between knowledge and faith understood as revelatory faith, that knowledge and this faith cannot be brought to unity within the same consciousness; — it maintains the impossibility of a genuine and substantial ethics, one that encompasses the whole, real human life, developing on the basis of positive religion with its supernatural law of action; — and it maintains the inner, indissoluble unity between genuine cognition and genuine ethical action, the necessary dependence of the latter upon the former. But while it maintains this opposition, it asserts with equal decisiveness, on the other side — distinguishing the essential determination of the religious from the phenomenal forms of the positive religions, in which it sees only a partial, imperfect, finitizing expression of the former, and thus distinguishing what is religious in the religions from the religions in their historical forms — the inner unity of the religious, the philosophical, and the ethical, and through this inner unity the inner unity of human life: the condition for its true and complete reconciliation, the reconciliation within reality, the reconciliation of undivided human nature with itself in its essential ground. In affirming the essentiality and necessity of the religious relation for the human being, whose self-consciousness is first fully actualized therein, through God-consciousness, and who according to the fundamental relation of its nature has never been and never will be without religion; — in further seeing ethical action and genuine cognition as gaining a higher significance through their unity with the religious fundamental relation; — and in allowing genuine knowledge and genuine ethical action to become an adequate form of actuality for the religious, it conceives this knowledge and this action as containing within themselves a Highest and Unconditioned, in which what is essential in the religions is preserved. This standpoint we designate as *the religiously reconciled humane consciousness*.

It differs from the position occupied by Feuerbach not merely in that its metaphysical fundamental concept is a different one — one upon which a cognition and an action bearing the stamp of ideality and universal validity can be built, and from which the concept of human freedom can be vindicated and a religious relation grounded to the Absolute, with which the human being is in essential unity — but also in that it combats theology and dogma not only in the interest of ethics and science, but first and foremost in the interest of religion itself, in the interest of the infinity of the religious relation.

It differs from the old Hegelian school's conception of religion's relation to cognition, in that it does not see the religious merely as a form of knowledge, but as the expression of a fundamental relation encompassing the whole of human nature in its concreteness, and in that it does not let the medium of spiritual life be an illusory abstract element of

eternity, but reality with its real conditions and limits.

With the anti-theological-religious theory it concurs in its conception of theology's relation to science. Since it rests upon scientific cognition and, in undivided human nature, assigns primacy to cognition, it must be its task to vindicate the clear concept of science and science's autonomy, grounded in its own nature, against equivocations and against attempts, based on equivocations, to subordinate science to the dominion of a foreign, heterogeneous authority. But while there is thus, in an essential point, an agreement between it and that theory, it enters into a decided opposition to the latter when the relation between faith and knowledge, between religion, philosophy, and ethics, is to be determined. This opposition concerns Kierkegaard's conception, with respect to which it will be shown that it undermines the certainty of all cognition and allows the ethical to disappear into an abstract and reality-less religious sphere. But it concerns even more precisely the form in which the theory has been elaborated and presented by Nielsen — a form that Kierkegaard would certainly not recognize as his own. The form in which Nielsen develops the theory leads, despite all the more or less adroit turns that are made in order to avoid this consequence, to an actual dualism in human nature, to a division of the life of the spirit from its very ground by means of the "absolutely heterogeneous" principles, to the inevitable self-dissolution of consciousness; it corrupts the ethical at its root and opens the path to the religious for all that is superstitious and absurd. With the conviction that the absolute heterogeneity Nielsen posits between the principle of knowledge on the one hand and the principles of faith and action on the other is "a misunderstanding that is ruinous for religiosity, morality, and all genuine character development," I have subjected his theory to a thoroughgoing critique, and sought to demonstrate its untenability, its deficient grounding, its self-contradictions, its ruinous consequences.

In publishing this contribution to the investigation of a problem that through the centuries has had, and will continue to have, the most decisive significance for the human spirit, it is my hope that it may occasion a renewed, serious, and conscientious discussion — a sharp and open conflict between principles. Such a conflict, even if carried on with sharp weapons, can only serve the interest of the cause; and one must therefore hold dear the combatant for whom the cause, and not some egoistic self-regard, is the highest consideration. A firm and deep personal conviction I shall always respect; by sound reasons I shall always be just as open to influence as I intend to be impervious to anything other than these.

Chapter 1

Historical Moments Illuminating the Emergence of the Problem

1.1 The Preparation of the Problem in Antiquity

It is first among the Greeks that a definite approximation to a clarification of the problem of the relation between faith and knowledge comes into view. In the Orient, e.g. in India, one becomes aware, where a thinking relatively independent of religion develops, of the discrepancy between its results and the doctrines of religion, and an opposition forms between a heterodox and an orthodox doctrinal edifice; but the distinctive character of Oriental philosophizing, its lack of thoroughly achieved independence from religious doctrine, of the capacity to develop its content in the form of the concept, and of a clear consciousness of the principle of philosophy, brings it about that no reflection is reached concerning the principled ground of the difference—that is, no consciousness of the essential determination of faith and knowledge. The conscious difference is only the factual difference of content.

In Greece, where the knowing spirit becomes conscious of itself in philosophy, and, in unfolding the content of its knowledge, connects it through a single principle, it can, with this content of knowledge—of whose principle and whose connection with the principle it is conscious—enter into relation with religion as it is given in the forms of popular religion, and the problem is intimated; indeed it even seems, at the close of classical antiquity, to come forward in its decisive form. It will, however, become apparent that even where the question of the relation between the doctrines of philosophy and of religion, and of religion's significance for the spirit's cognition, is most strongly accentuated, one does not get beyond intimations, and that what prevents this is the

specific distinctive character of the Greek spirit.

Already in the earliest period of Greek philosophy we see philosophy standing in a critical-polemical relation to popular religion and its myths. Thus the founder of the Eleatic doctrine of unity, Xenophanes, combats the anthropomorphic conceptions of the gods in the myths, and his polemic is repeated in other thinkers of that remote time, but without our finding in any of them a genuine reflection on the significance and nature of popular religion. In the culmination period of Greek philosophy, in Plato and Aristotle, the critical relation to the mythical emerges in connection with a clearer reflection on philosophy's position with respect to the myths and cult of popular religion. Here Aristotle's conception in particular becomes significant. What is distinctive for him, as in general for Greek philosophy up to his time, is that philosophical thought, resting and satisfied in itself, passes judgment upon the positively religious from out of itself, without entertaining doubt about thought's authority. In the doctrines of religion Aristotle acknowledges as true only what is confirmed by philosophy; the mythical clothing, on the other hand, he denies truth without hesitation, tracing it back to conscious invention or unconscious anthropomorphizing, and the forms of cult have significance for him only as what is legally valid in the state.

The situation presents itself differently in the post-Aristotelian period, and in this period it passes through two essentially different stages. As Greek philosophy passes beyond its culmination point and becomes conscious of the inner discord that it cannot reconcile, there first appears a greater attentiveness to the religious, in that the relation to it, both the acknowledging and the polemical, acquires a more essential significance for thought that no longer rests securely in itself. We thus see in the Stoics an attempt to rationalize the myth, and we see this attempt bring about a counter-effect of the mythical upon philosophical theory, a counter-effect that becomes evident in the Stoics' theodicy and in their doctrine of divination. On the opposite side we see in the Epicureans a rational opposition to myth, a struggle to free the spirit from the disturbing influence of the fear of the gods, in which Epicurus sees the essence of religion; and in the later Academics, e.g. Carneades, as in the later Skeptics and in the renewal of Cynicism, we find an opposition directed partly against the theological attempts, partly against popular religion.

A new stage in the development of the relation, and one that in this connection is of essential interest, begins around the time when Christianity appears, historically prepared by the development of the Greek and Oriental spirit, in Neo-Pythagoreanism and in the concluding forms of the older philosophical schools. The more thought was

exhausted, the more the spirit theoretically and practically lost its resting point and through skepticism was brought to despair of its own and of reality's truth, the more was truth—the truth of cognition and of action—sought outside the human spirit in the transcendent divine, which through intermediate beings reveals itself to the spirit; and since such divine revelations were seen in the religions, in them a starting point for knowledge was sought. And the relation to revelation—to that occurring through intermediate beings or already given in the religions—was then posited in Neoplatonism as conditioned by religious purifications and by religious practices, in general by a religious life and a religious disposition. Philosophy, which supports itself on this content of revelation and would draw truth from it, is then transformed into theology, and in Neoplatonism, which assigns to philosophy the task of justifying the content of myth, and, in assimilating the idealized myth, of taking the place of the religions as a universal religion, we see within paganism the parallel to Christian-medieval Scholasticism.

At this point one has come as close to posing the problem of the relation between faith and knowledge in its decisive form as can be reached among the Greeks at all. Here there has been reflection on the spirit's—when left to itself—lack of capacity to grasp what is decisive in the last instance in both practical and theoretical respects; philosophy, the unfolding of autonomous thought, has been placed alongside divine revelation, and it has been declared as the result of this juxtaposition that the relation to the Absolute, to absolute truth, cannot be reached through knowledge, but only through the religious life and the religious disposition. Yet the problem in its sharpness does not emerge even here; one reaches only the intimation, and the decisive reason is that the Greek spirit apprehends itself exclusively under the determination of knowledge, that it lets knowledge constitute the essence of the human being—whereby from the outset the possibility is cut off of a principle coordinate with knowledge in its own distinctive character, and still more of a valid opposition to knowledge; but only through the distinction and the opposition can the problem be brought forward and the reconciling unity be recognized.

That the Greek spirit becomes conscious of itself only in the determination of knowledge can be made evident from a double point of view. If we first fix our gaze on Greek ethics, it is immediately striking that in it the concept of virtue becomes the central concept, while the concept of duty recedes. But if we then investigate how virtue is determined, we find it determined as knowledge; and since for the Greeks virtue expresses the activity of the essence according to its undisturbed nature, the proposition that virtue is knowledge becomes equivalent to the proposition that knowledge is the

essential determination of the human being.

To the same result we are led when we consider the way in which the greatest Greek thinkers determine the divine. For Plato the highest is the Idea, more precisely the Idea of the Good, but the Idea is the objectified and hypostatized thought-content, which receives from Plato the determinations *nous* and *phronesis*. In Aristotle the divine is determined as *nous* and more precisely as *noesis noeseos*, which in eternal, uninterrupted energy relates thinkingly to itself and from which all determination of will is excluded. But the essential determination of the divine is the ideal of the human spirit, and it becomes also for these thinkers the highest expression of the essential determination of the human spirit. For Plato the human soul is closely related to the Idea, indissolubly connected with it, and for Aristotle the human spirit in its highest form as *nous poietikos* is in unity with the divine spirit itself, whose essence is exhausted in thought.

How the Greek consciousness, despite the attempts that are made in that direction, does not definitively get beyond the determination of knowledge, becomes apparent when we more closely consider the relation between knowledge and will and between knowledge and faith.

As for the first relation, even where the volitional side of the human spirit is more strongly accentuated—which already occurs in Aristotle, and still more in the last period of Greek philosophy—the distinctive nature of will is never properly recognized, and the attempts to demonstrate the source of this distinctiveness fail, so that will is continually reabsorbed by knowledge. Indeed even where, at the close of Greek philosophy, among the Neoplatonists, it is declared that genuine cognition is conditioned by the right disposition—where, that is, a primacy of will over thought is formally asserted—even there the movement is only a circular movement from knowledge back to knowledge, and knowledge shows itself in the last instance as the sole original. The right disposition, namely—that disposition which turns away from the finite and as such the untrue and vanishing—is immediately determined by a knowledge of this fundamental determination of the finite, such that cognition, in being determined by this disposition, relates only to itself through will, and in its determinateness as concrete cognition has as its actual condition and presupposition the abstract cognition of the fundamental relation. The relation of will to cognition also becomes clear through the abstraction in which will remains: will as will receives no distinctive positive content; it moves only in the generality of the negative; its highest goal becomes the spirit's ecstatic absorption into the indeterminate infinite.

What holds for the relation of cognition to will holds also for its relation to faith.

When we speak of faith, we must make a definite distinction between the concept's application in the earlier period and in a later one. In Plato, *pistis* is placed alongside *doxa* and stands as something lower in opposition to the true form of knowledge; in Aristotle, *pistis* (in the *Rhetoric*) acquires the meaning of means of persuasion. In the meaning of something higher in relation to knowledge, the concept of faith is first used in the concluding period of Greek philosophy. In Philo, who is at least as much a Jewish believer as a Greek thinker, the concept appears in the meaning of the trusting reception and acknowledgment of the content of revelation, and after him the concept is preserved as the concept of that which is higher than knowledge. For Iamblichus the first condition for genuine knowledge of God becomes the faith that nothing is impossible for God. For Proclus, faith designates the immediate relation to the divine unity, in which union with it through the contemplation of its pure being is given. It here forms the opposition to knowledge, which is always determined by the plurality of reflection and which is said to be unable to reach the highest. And yet, despite these determinations, despite the fact that faith, as the higher, is distinguished from knowledge, faith falls under knowledge; the movement here too is only a circular movement from knowledge to knowledge. In the Neoplatonists the indeterminate, infinite unity to which faith relates is precisely nothing other than the negation of determinate knowledge posited through the most extreme abstraction by a knowledge that has come to despair of itself—a negation that exists only through thought, through knowledge, and that in its negativity is determined by it. And in Philo the relation of devotion to the self-revealing divine in its highest and true form becomes the devoted absorption, occurring in ecstasy, into the abstract unity; but this indeterminate unity is the last residuum of abstracting thought, an object of negative knowledge.

The Greek consciousness can thus reach the point of seeing the difference between the content of knowledge unfolded in the system of philosophy and the determinations of religion unfolded in myth and cult, and of becoming conscious of the principle of knowledge; but it cannot, in its monism of knowledge, recognize the principle of religion in its distinctive character, through which it could show itself as something different from or opposed to philosophy and yet valid—just as it cannot, owing to its deficient conception of the movement of the concept, of the nature of spiritual development, while making knowledge its sole point of view, see the principle of religion as the principle of a subordinate stage in the spirit's teleological development toward philosophical cognition as the spirit's true and adequate form.

1.2 The Emergence of the Problem in Christianity

1.2.1 The New Testament's Pronouncements on the Relation

1.2.2 The Patristic Period's Relation to the Problem

1.2.3 The Development of the Problem in Scholasticism

1.3 The Problem's Resolution in Modern Philosophy and Theology

Chapter 2

Preliminary Conceptual Determinations Illuminating the Problem

Chapter 3

Theology's Answer to the Problem

3.1 Theology's Task as a Science of Faith

3.2 The Relation of Will to Knowledge and to the Essence of the Human

3.3 Will and Knowledge in God

3.4 Critique of the Concept of God

3.4.1 The Relation of the Ethical Concept of God to the Logical

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3.4.8 The General View of Existence

3.4.9 The Result of the Critique of the Concept of God

3.4.10 What is Typical for Theology in the Criticized Conception

3.5 Critique of the Concept of Science

Chapter 4

The Principled Separation of Faith and Knowledge in the Interest of Reconciliation

From the critique of theology's unachievable attempts at unification we now proceed, in order to test that possibility, to the critical examination of the theory that, precisely by positing the principled separation of the territories of faith and knowledge, aims to vindicate both in their validity; and we occupy ourselves first with the theory in the form in which it has been presented by its founder: S. Kierkegaard.

4.1 The Main Features of S. Kierkegaard's Theory

In the historical introduction the main features of S. Kierkegaard's conception of the relation between faith and knowledge have already been indicated, with particular attention to the comparison with Nielsen's theory. At this point these main features are to be developed more fully.

Kierkegaard's conception is developed through a polemic against speculation, particularly as it appears in Hegelian philosophy; but the polemic is directed against speculation because Kierkegaard sees in it the strongest expression of the whole age's misdirection: having forgotten to exist, forgotten what inwardness is. For speculative philosophy the highest task of the human spirit was to transpose itself into a medium of eternity, to live a pure life of eternity, and this task was to be realized through pure thought, in that the individual's thinking of the Absolute was posited as one and the same with the Absolute's thinking of itself, with the absolute thought existing in the element of

eternity. The life of the individual, which found its exhaustive expression in logical thought, through its thinking of the Absolute's eternal life-process encompassing all truth and reality, became a moment in this eternal process, and was freed from the determination of finitude. Against this conception of human life and its task Kierkegaard protests. Against speculation's volatilization of existence, against its forgetting of existence's claim upon the individual who is subject to the demands of the ethical, against its overlooking of the conditions of existence, against the illusory movement in a sphere of abstract eternity, Kierkegaard accentuates existence, gathers everything around the question: how do I, as existing, express the truth? As existing, the human being is not merely eternal, as speculation would have it, but is a synthesis of the temporal and the eternal, of the finite and the infinite; as existing, the spirit that is eternal according to its nature is subject to conditions of finitude, is in becoming; as existing, the thinker must in all his thought think along with it that he is existing; he must set all his thought into becoming. But becoming is the alternation between being and non-being; through becoming the determination of negation is brought at every moment into the spirit's being and thinking. From this it follows with necessity that the human being is prevented by existence from reaching the positive, secure rest in eternity; for since the existing being cannot hold fast the infinite and eternal—which is the only thing certain—in the element of infinity, but must hold it fast in the element of finitude, in existence, the relation does not become one of secure certainty, but must express the determination of negation that lies in becoming, and the eternal can therefore be had by the existing being—for whom it converts itself into something future—only in the form of uncertainty for cognition. Herein lies, then, that objective knowledge in none of its forms can attain such security that it could become the foundation for the infinite decision for the subject, for a decision with respect to what concerns the subject's deepest need. Sensory certainty is a deception, historical knowledge is an approximation, mathematical cognition is an abstraction, speculative thinking likewise an abstraction and in the last instance a hypothesis in relation to existence; upon none of these forms of knowledge can the decision that infinitely interests the individual therefore be built. But if the goal cannot be reached by the path of objectivity, then it must be reached by that of subjectivity: in a relation of subjectivity the eternal must be grasped, and this relation of subjectivity is the one in which the certainty of the eternal is grasped with the passion of faith out of objective uncertainty. Faith is "objective uncertainty, held fast in the most passionate appropriation of inwardness."

The task for the individual is therefore: to become subjective; and since what is

posited as a task is what every human being might seem, without further ado, already to be, the becoming subjective acquires the more determinate meaning: to become what the human being according to its nature is, to let subjectivity develop, be transformed in itself over against the eternal. Only for such a subjectivity, which is the developed possibility of subjectivity's first possibility, does truth come into being. The subject, which is referred to itself, receives the task of being infinitely concerned about itself; but this infinite concern about oneself is the direction toward the eternal in relation to existence; it leads toward the ethical and the ethico-religious, the essential truth and the only essential cognition. The claim of existence prevents the individual from remaining in the metaphysical, sets it the task: to understand itself in existence. In being referred to a relation of subjectivity, the subject is thus referred to the fact that it reaches it only through a choice between this and the relation of objectivity, and this choice is the choice between the personal and the impersonal relation to truth. For the existing being there is no mediation's unity of the subjective and the objective relation. Mediation, which would connect them, leads us only back to abstraction; it does not explain how the eternal truth is to be understood in the determination of time by one who, by existing, is himself in time.

In the subjective relation, the how of the relation becomes the essential. In the objective relation the direction goes away from the individual, strives toward the objective, finished result, and its maximum is the self-contradiction that the existing subjectivity vanishes, while the objectivity that comes into being is, subjectively considered, either a hypothesis or an approximation, because all eternal decision lies in subjectivity. In the subjective relation, objectivity drops out, and the how of the relation becomes the decisive. At its maximum this how is the passion of infinity, and the passion of infinity is truth itself. But the passion of infinity is precisely subjectivity, and thus subjectivity is truth.

The relation of faith, the expression for the relation of subjectivity, for the relation of infinitely passionate interest, is thus the highest, because in existence it becomes the only possible relation to truth, the form of truth in the actuality of existence. Truth in the conception of objective thinking, as the unity of thought and being, becomes merely a chimera of abstraction and in truth only a creature's longing—not because truth is not this, but because the knower is an existing being, and thus truth cannot be this for him so long as he exists, because existence spaces apart thought and being and for the existing spirit sets truth itself into becoming. The passion of faith, the infinitely passionate interest, thus becomes the form in which the eternal is grasped; in it the

eternal is present in a negative way in subjectivity, and the negative infinity becomes in existence the one true expression for the infinite; the infinite negative resolution becomes individuality's form for God's being in it. And faith in the strictest sense is faith in the absolute paradox, which is constituted not, as the Socratic, by the eternal truth's relating itself to the existing being, but by the eternal truth itself becoming the paradox by coming into being in time. As faith in the paradox, faith is the infinitely passionate holding fast of what is absurd for thought, and precisely through the repulsion of the absurd is passion potentiated to its highest. The absolute paradox is the central point of Christianity, and the question of how I as existing express the truth thus coincides with the question: how do I become a Christian? The answer is: through faith in the paradox; and what in the last instance bears the burden of the paradox and compels the individual to hold it fast in faith despite its absolute unthinkability is the despair of the consciousness of sin, which does not find reconciliation in the ethical, nor in the religiosity that still rests in the unbroken relation of immanence, but only in the Christian, in faith in "the god in time."

In this theory there is thus posited a self-limitation of knowledge, grounded in the fundamental relation of the existing spirit. Knowledge receives its limitation—conditioned by the contradiction of existence and acknowledged by knowledge itself—a limitation in a double respect: in respect of certainty and in respect of concreteness; and through this double limitation there is established an incommensurability-relation between objective knowledge and the striving and need of personality. But under the limitation, knowledge is vindicated a justified place, though a subordinate one, and a validity, though only a relative one. It receives its validity and security within the sphere of the abstract and the impersonal, within the mathematical and logical; it finds its limit where it reaches the concrete and existential; it does not, on account of this limit, become decisive for personality's deepest and highest interests, for the relation to eternal blessedness; the decisive conclusion does not become possible in its territory. Its sphere extends to the point where the sphere of faith begins, where the relation of faith is posited through a breach with objective knowledge; and within the sphere of faith, thought, in entering into a serving relation to faith, again acquires a significance through the task of unfolding the de-

terminations in which one is to exist, and to defend the paradox as paradox, to protect it against every attempt to comprehend it. A comprehension of the paradox would precisely be an annihilation of its distinctive significance, of faith's specific object; therefore theology, which posits such a comprehension as its goal, rests on a fundamental

contradiction.

In that faith comes into being through a breach with objective knowledge, it vindicates its distinctive territory and its principled validity; it becomes—while it is unattainable for knowledge—inaccessible to knowledge's attack. Knowledge and faith each receive their own sphere, to which they relate as distinctive principles. Faith as religious faith rests on a choice that in a higher potency expresses the same decision of subjectivity as the choice by which the individual's ethical life is constituted. The reconciliation between faith and knowledge is grounded in the separation of the spheres and principles, and in the subordination of knowledge under faith. The certainty of faith, which victoriously rises above doubt, is the higher certainty compared to that of cognition, which, in its relation to the concrete and actual, continually remains afflicted with doubt.

4.2 Its Relation to Other Contemporary Conceptions

Through what has been developed, the relation between Kierkegaard's conception of religion and faith and other contemporary conceptions becomes clear.

Speculative philosophy of religion had let religion be a stage in the spirit's development of cognition, which found its completion in philosophy, in speculative thought that with logical necessity unfolded itself from the lower form. Only in the concept did it let the content of faith find its true form; by being converted into the form of philosophical cognition, the content of faith received a higher truth; for the truth of thought, of the concept, is the highest truth. In Kierkegaard the relation of the spheres is seen from a different point of view. Science becomes one thing, life another; the unfolding of thought in the form of objectivity, in the medium of possibility, according to the law of necessity, is separated from truth's appropriation in the individual in the form of subjectivity, in the medium of actuality, according to the law of freedom. The personal existence of truth is accentuated as the highest; the relation of subjectivity becomes the form of this existence; and within the personal forms of existence the religious becomes the highest, and within it again the relation of faith to what is absolutely inaccessible to thought: the paradoxical, the specific determination of Christianity. The task of thought here becomes not to assimilate the object of faith, to dissolve it in the concept, but to discover thought's opposite: the absolutely unthinkable, the paradox, and to hold it fast as paradox so that one may then believe by virtue of the absurd.

Ordinary theology immerses itself objectively in learned investigations; it aims through these to bring out what Christianity is as objective doctrine; by the path of

history and criticism it aims to secure certainty on this point, and in this striving, which by the nature of the case loses itself in an infinite approximation, it lets it be the presupposition that the investigator is a Christian and that what matters is the scientific result, whose appropriation is supposed to follow of itself. For Kierkegaard the infinite decision of existence is the main thing: the approximation, by which precisely the decision is prevented, is the deception; appropriation is the task, and what is essential is not a what but a how. The question is not what Christianity historically is; but the question is: how do I become a Christian? Truth is the inwardness of appropriation; truth is subjectivity.

In Feuerbach, as in Kierkegaard, the spheres of knowledge and faith are separated, but in that Feuerbach determines religion as the irrational, he vindicates the right of thought against faith and posits religion as the untrue, which is to be abandoned. The opposition between Feuerbach and Kierkegaard in the conception of religion and especially of Christianity is therefore the greatest possible, and yet there is no contemporary with whom Kierkegaard has more points of contact in the determination of what Christianity is. This has not escaped him either, and he has, precisely on account of his conception of Christianity, not been able to wonder at it. If the individual's relation to Christianity is a relation of subjectivity, and more precisely one in which subjectivity is at its highest potentiation, at its most energetic passion, then besides the believer, who in passion holds it fast as truth, only the one who in passion rejects it can grasp its nature. The latter, standing outside Christianity, will be able decisively and sharply to say what Christianity is; he will be able to portray it in such a way that the believer can in everything recognize his portrayal. It is undoubtedly Feuerbach whom Kierkegaard has had in mind when he (in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 473), after having discussed theology's and revivalism's confusion of the Christian, says: "on the other side: a scoffer attacks Christianity and presents it at the same time so admirably that it is a pleasure to read him, so that one who is at a loss to have it determinately presented almost has to resort to him." We also find an agreement in the conception on a series of the most essential points. Feuerbach and Kierkegaard agree in determining the relation of religion as a subjective one, even if the nature of the subjectivity is conceived differently; they agree in the conception of the religious standpoint as a practical one, and of faith's opposition to thought; in the denial of the possibility of a knowledge of a being higher than the human; in vindicating the category of the single individual for the religious; in the conception of religion's absolute relation as separating itself from and therefore in reality negating the relative relations; in holding fast the equal relation of the Incarnation to all

subsequent ages; in conceiving Christianity's relation to the world as unchangeable, as an abiding relation of opposition; in the conception of suffering as Christianity's mark, of dying away as the believer's wish; in the determination of the Christian's relation to the natural, in the limitation of Christians' sympathy to Christians, and in the close connection in which they place the concepts: God as the absolute *telos*, and eternal blessedness. These parallels could be further multiplied, but those cited are the most prominent.

The relation between Kierkegaard's and Nielsen's conceptions has been treated in the foregoing and determined in such a way that the two forms of the theory agree in all the main points significant for the development of the problem, while what Nielsen has added does not advance the problem and is self-contradictory and untenable. On account of this relation, the connected presentation of the theory's secondary form is immediately appended to the presentation of the original, and the more detailed critique of the standpoint is attached to the former, to be then completed by a critique of what is distinctive to the theory in its primitive form.

4.3 The Main Features of Prof. R. Nielsen's Theory

In that Nielsen, like Kierkegaard, determines the fundamental relation between faith and knowledge as one of separation, and more precisely as a relation of principled separation, and precisely through the separation seeks the possibility of vindicating both principles and both spheres in their validity and letting them subsist as reconciled in the same consciousness, he concentrates his theory in the proposition: the absolutely heterogeneous principles, faith and knowledge, can, precisely on account of their absolute heterogeneity, be united in the same consciousness. The principled opposition, which is here determined as an opposition between faith and knowledge, is also brought under other determinations already found in Kierkegaard: under the determinations life (existence) and knowledge, subjectivity and objectivity, personal and impersonal truth, or under the determinations: will and knowledge.

this last opposition, and through it the others, is then led by Nielsen back to the metaphysical opposition, the opposition between the fundamental ideas: Power and Knowledge, or the Good and the True.

The opposition between will and knowledge, between the principle of will and the principle of thought, becomes the predominant one in the later, more detailed communications from Nielsen's own hand and from his expositors. Both the opposed

activities of spirit are sought to be conceived as totalities, such that in the activity of cognition a will is present, but everywhere as serving thought, as a will-to-know, while in the activity of will a thought is said to be present, but as subordinate to and serving will, as a will-thought. Faith is led back to will; the religious, which is conceived as exclusively practical, is through the principle of will inseparably connected with the ethical, which has its highest form in the anti-rational religio-ethical.

From the psychological starting point, the underivable distinctiveness of will in relation to knowledge is then accentuated. Will is said indeed to presuppose thought, but not theoretical, only practical thinking, and in this presupposing it is said to be just as original as thought. In its distinctiveness will has its principled significance and its ideal just as knowledge does, and as the determinations of will and the determinations of knowledge develop in their independence, governed by their distinctive principle, they form two self-enclosed totalities that do not come into conflict with each other. This lies precisely in the absolute heterogeneity. The form of the opposition is the expression of the factual dualism in the human spirit. In the Absolute, the principle of knowledge and the principle of will—the Idea of the Good and the Idea of the True—are in concrete, absolutely transparent unity; in the finite spirit, the psychological consciousness, a dualism is present that lets what is united in the Idea step forth in absolute opposition. The task for the individual is precisely to comprehend the opposition as such and thereby to win the reconciliation. Philosophy's main task is to discover the limits of human knowledge—that is, its own limits—and, in discovering them, to acknowledge the other principle, which, together with the whole sphere of determinations attached to it, is mirrored by knowledge but not assimilated, not comprehended. Since the two spheres are contained in the same consciousness, they must indeed touch each other and to that extent have a boundary against each other; but the boundary is not a hampering, restricting boundary, for it is set from within by each principle's distinctive determinateness, and “the absolute mystery” prevents the collision. While knowledge thus, mirroring its opposite, clarifies the relation of the principles, it unfolds itself unhindered within its own sphere, following only its own laws: it unfolds a science on the foundation of the Idea that encompasses all the humane forms of life and gives a true expression of the concrete, real existence. And at the same time faith unfolds its content for the believing consciousness, whose cognition is practical, not theoretical. The gap between religion and philosophy is to be filled by ethics in its double form as rational and religious ethics. The border-science is the philosophy of religion, which as science belongs to the circle of knowledge, while, as having the religious for its content, it is to provide orientation in the

sphere of faith. It is to show how one and the same concept can become heterogeneous with itself depending on whether it is developed into a “knowledge-concept” or a “faith-concept.” It is to demonstrate an all-sidedly articulated reciprocal determination, an exact mutual correspondence, between the heterogeneous concepts, which occurs in such a way that the knowledge-concepts serve as intellectual substratum, while the faith-concepts step into the foreground and are developed systematically.

As will, which has its autonomy by virtue of its distinctive principle and in choice asserts its independence, autonomously potentiates itself through ever more intensive concentrations, the progressive series of stages of will appears—the stages of the ethical—whose advance is marked by the cognitive moment being more and more absorbed and becoming invisible, and by the regard for theory being more and more displaced by the energy of will. The maximum of the rationally ethical is present where subjectivity, by virtue of a decision of will, turns its back on theory. But even beyond this standpoint one advances into the paradoxical, anti-rationally ethical. “The concentration is here so decisive that all regard for theory vanishes.” The energy of will is so intensive that it not only takes no account of theory but even breaks with it. Indeed not even rational ethics at its maximum can here come into consideration, because its tasks are immanent, its faith a faith of reason. At the height of the paradoxical ethics, the human being is addressed in nothing but imperatives; it acts by virtue of the absurd.

The ethical is here placed in the closest relation to the paradoxically religious, just as in general its principle is posited in unity with the principle of religion; and the ethical is conceived as by itself pointing toward the religious, because the Good is to be comprehended only through the Good One. Already in the territory of the ethical there is therefore talk of faith, but this faith is a “rational faith” before it, through the progressive concentration of will, becomes a faith in relation to the paradox. Religion has its stages just as the ethical does, and they are marked, like those of the ethical, by the deepening of will and faith—a deepening that becomes clear when, for example, Greek religion with its myths is compared with Judaism with its conception of Jehovah as holy will, and with Christianity.

As the concluding stages of the ethical and the religious are reached, the original apparent relation of coordination between faith and knowledge transforms itself into a relation of subordination. The relation of faith and the ideal of will become the highest; knowledge the subordinate. There is talk of “religion’s supra-scientific truths,” of “something higher than science,” of a “supra-scientific teleology.” To this corresponds exactly the conception of will as the true constitutive element in the human being. At the

concluding stage of the ethical, where the breach with theory has occurred, the whole of life is so absorbed in acts of will, in action, in a working upon the task of becoming an ethical character, that no room remains for an independent cognition, for a life in knowledge.

Through the given presentation of the main points in Kierkegaard's and Nielsen's theory, the earlier demonstration of the agreement between them will have been supplemented, while the real and apparent deviations also emerge more determinately. Through the developments that follow, the relation between the original theory and the derived one will be still more completely clarified.

4.4 Critique of Nielsen's Theory

The critique of the theory in the form that Nielsen has given it must first confine itself to the determination of the form of the principled opposition. But in several of the expressions that have been given for the opposition, especially those taken from Kierkegaard, there appears an ambiguity and an arbitrariness in the conception that render them unfit to serve as starting points for the critique; they need only be illuminated in order to make the relation between Nielsen and Kierkegaard clearer.

What has been said here applies to the opposition between existence (life) and knowledge (theory), and between the subjective and the objective. As for the first opposition, the concept of existence is taken in an arbitrary double meaning, upon which a sophistical inference is built. Existence is taken, first, in order to be asserted as a universal presupposition and necessary condition for every concrete determination—thus also for knowledge—in the meaning of individual being in general; and then, in order that through the concept of existence the practical may be claimed a priority and a preponderance, in the meaning of volitional being (“existence is practical”). Without this subreption the argumentation, which is supposed to lead to the conclusion that it is possible to place existence highest and yet retain theory, but impossible to place theory highest and yet retain existence, and further to establish the superiority of faith over knowledge, could not advance at all. And in the proof of this proposition, the first premise—that a consciousness can exist without being theoretical, but cannot be theoretical without existing—also contains an untruth. All being in the form of individuality is existence; there can therefore be an existence that is not consciousness, not theoretical. But when consciousness becomes the subject of existence, existence includes theory, for consciousness is only existing as being theoretical.

The unclarity arises from Nielsen's taking up Kierkegaard's determinations but altering the presuppositions. Kierkegaard accentuated in the determination "existence" the alternation between being and non-being, which set the existing person's thought into becoming and cut off objective knowledge's certainty from it. He then obtained the opposition between existential (subjective) thinking and objective thinking, and subjective thinking became for him the thinking whose goal was existential inwardness, existing in what is thought. Nielsen lets knowledge unfold itself into a system, with a different certainty and a different relation to the system of existence than in Kierkegaard. Existence is then conceived not as that which, as a determination for the thinker, prevents objectively certain knowledge; rather, existence receives the determination of particularity in opposition to universality, and since universality is the determination of knowledge, existence is posited as practical. The fact that existence, in Kierkegaard's conception, becomes that to which regard must be paid, from which one cannot abstract without conflict with the ethical and without inner contradiction, becomes for Nielsen the claim that existence, i.e. the practical, is the presupposition; but in order to be asserted as such, it must be taken in the double meaning demonstrated above.

A similar unclarity and arbitrariness appears where the opposition is determined by the subjective and the objective, of which the former relates to life, the latter to science. Where the opposition is determined by these forms (e.g. in the *Philosophisk Propædeutik* §15), "subjectivity" and "the subjective" are taken in a double meaning, so that it now comes to express the accidentally individual and the egoistic, which falls outside the objectively valid, and now the universal form of subjectivity. Here too the relation to Kierkegaard is determinative. For Kierkegaard, subjective truth designated appropriated truth. This truth is, in the territory of the ethical, the universal that is realized in existence and that must be thought in order that one may exist in it. In the territory of the paradoxically religious, the truth that is to be appropriated has the determination of the paradox. In all spheres, the appropriation of truth is posited, because existence prevents objective certainty, as conditioned by an act that everywhere can be designated as an act of faith. In Nielsen, where it is not the uncertainty of existence but the abstract opposition between the universal and the particular that conditions the disjunction between knowledge and existence, the subjective, in relation to the objectivity of knowledge, is placed under the determinateness of a one-sided opposition, as being in individuality's opposition to the universal, and from this comes the double meaning, in that partly the Kierkegaardian determination continues to operate, and partly the new meaning exclusively comes forward. But in that the concept of subjectivity is

conceived in this meaning through a one-sided and abstract opposition, it is overlooked that the form of subjectivity also contains what is objectively valid, that the subject takes it up as a norm in itself without the content being changed, that subjective action can have objective principles, that there is an objectively true and valid element in reason-determined subjectivity. The standpoint of subjectivity, of life, comes in that conception to coincide with the standpoint of egoism.

In the same way as the concept of subjectivity, the concept of objectivity also receives a double meaning. Where the main stages of subjectivity are developed, the objective now means objective evil or the merely abstract universal, and now the universal and universally valid that encompasses the totality of the subjective. And as the abstract opposition is definitively maintained, it is arbitrarily ignored that at the different stages the subject's determinateness— which especially appears clearly at the stage designated as that of infinite subjectivity—is precisely by virtue of what has been determined as the objective principle of existence, and that it expresses this. It is overlooked that subjective truth is precisely the appropriated and, in the appropriation, essentially identical objective truth.

The opposition between life and science, subjective and objective, is led by Nielsen back to the opposition between will and cognition, which becomes the psychological foundation for the opposition between faith and knowledge, just as this last opposition has its metaphysical foundation in the opposition of the fundamental ideas, in the ontological fundamental determinations of absolute subjectivity. The opposition between will and cognition, the fundamental psychological opposition, must become the critique's proper starting point; the examination of the determination of their relation must be the fundamental one; and from the psychological we shall then, through the ethical, be led to the metaphysical, where the definitive decision is to take place and the final result to be won.

4.4.1 The Psychological Opposition between Will and Knowledge

What is rightly urged by Nielsen is that will, as a primitive function of spirit, has a distinctiveness that makes it impossible to reduce it to thought, in the sense that it should become a mere modification of the latter. From the fact that it, like cognition, has its distinctiveness, there must then follow a total activity of spirit, a presence of all the spirit's functions within each of the two activities of spirit, and a distinctive fundamental form for these; and they must in this distinctive form be objectified for consciousness, which encompasses both the theoretical and the practical.

4.4.2 The Ethical and the Religious in Relation to Cognition

**4.4.3 The Presuppositions of the Psychological Determinations
in the Metaphysical**

4.5 The Theory's Consequences

4.5.1 With Respect to the Psychological

4.5.2 With Respect to the Ethical

4.5.3 With Respect to the Religious

4.6 Result of the Critique of Nielsen's Theory

**4.7 What is Common to Kierkegaard and Nielsen and
What is Distinctive to Each**

4.8 Critique of the Determinations Distinctive to Kierkegaard

4.9 Final Result

Conclusion