KIERKEGAARD AND CLASSICAL GREEK THOUGHT

Edited by
William McDonald
Andrew J. Burgess

ACTA KIERKEGAARDIANA
Vol. 7

Central European Research Institute &
of Søren Kierkegaard, Filozoficka fakulta
Univerzity Konstantina Filozofa v Nitrě, Slovakia
Kierkegaard Circle
Trinity College
University of Toronto
2017
This work is under copyright protection by the publishers. No part of it is to be reproduced and distributed without their prior permission, except for fair use (less than 1% of an essay) for research, scholarship, criticism or teaching purpose.

We would like to thank Northwestern University Press for kindly granting Acta Kierkegaardiana permission to reprint within this volume parts of Adam Buben's book Meaning and Morality in Kierkegaard and Heidegger (Copyright © 2016 by Northwestern University Press. Published 2011. All rights reserved) in his essay "Kierkegaard's Philosophy of Death: Between Socrates and Epicurus."

Publishers:
Kierkegaard Circle & Central European Research Institute of Søren Kierkegaard
Trinity College, University of Toronto Constantine the Philosopher University
Toronto, Ontario Nitra, Slovakia
Canada M5S 1H8

Book design: Luboslav Horvát
Typesetting: Luboslav Horvát
Cover illustration: Radovan Novelinka
Copyright: 2018 by Kierkegaard Circle

Order: Central European Research Institute or Kierkegaard Circle
of Søren Kierkegaard
http://sites.utoronto.ca/kierkegaard/inquiry.htm khanah@chass.utoronto.ca
kierkegaard@centrum.sk www.actakierkegaardiana.com
english@martinus.sk

Price: 25 Euros or 30 USD

Published by the funds of an International Scientific Research Project (Goethe University Frankfurt):

ISBN: 978-0-9878168-5-6
Printed in Nitra, Slovakia, 2017
Climacus as a Reader of the *Hippias Major*

in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*

Daphne Giofko (UK)

Ἀλλὰ δὴ γ', ὦ Σωκράτες, τι οἱ ἕνατες εἰναι ἡμῶνατα; κινήσεως τοι ἑστὶ καὶ πειρατήματα τῶν λόγων, ὅπερ ἁρτί εἰλογω, κατὰ βραχὺ διηρήμενα.

*Hippias Major,* § 304 A.

(But really, Socrates, what do you suppose all this amounts to? As I said a little while ago, it is mere scrapings and shavings of discourse, cut up into little bits...)

A quotation from the early Platonic dialogue *Hippias Major* is used as an epigraph to Kierkegaard’s *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Crumbs* (1846). Apart from this liminal presence of the Platonic text, “the *Hippias* as an introduction to the beautiful” could serve, according to Johannes Climacus, “as a kind of analogy to an introduction such as” his own book aims to be; namely, an introduction that would not only throw “light on what Christianity is” but make “it difficult to become a Christian.” The aim of the present paper is to explore whether this claim can be attested in the *Postscript* and how the Platonic dialogue helps Climacus develop “a new approach to the problem of the *Crumbs*.” First, I will refer to the theoretical treatment of epigraphs as paratextual devices, proposed by the French literary theorist Gérard Genette in his book *Paratexts* (*Seuil*), and use his theory as a framework in order to formulate some initial questions. Then, I will turn to the sources that may have influenced Kierkegaard’s reception of the *Hippias Major*, including Schleiermacher’s edition of Plato’s *Works* and Clement of Egypt’s *Stromateis* (*Στρομάτεις*). Finally, I will try to see if there is textual ground to argue that Climacus closely follows the Platonic text and responds to the philosophical problems raised in the dialogue.

Kierkegaard didn’t lack a poetics of epigraphs; in his review of Hans Christian Andersen’s *Only a Fiddler*, he refers to the “musical power” of an epigraph, which ought to “put the readers into a definite mood…or it ought to relate piquantly to the whole section.” The task of choosing an epigraph requires from the writer “a high degree of inwardness in one’s own subject,” so that the choice does not stray into “loci communes [commonplace remarks].”

### I. The Epigraph as Paratextual Device

According to the typology introduced by Genette, epigraphs belong to the paratextual elements of a book. The term “paratext” denotes all those elements which stand outside, or better, at the boundaries of the main text, such as: the name of the author (the case of pseudonymity included), the title and/or intertitles, dedications, epigraphs, prefaces, notes and appendices, epilogues and postepilogues. These devices lay bare the materiality of the book and function as *topoi*—to use the word with both its spatial and rhetorical connotations—that is, as spaces and openings of communication with the reader. Genette notes: “For us, accordingly, the paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public. More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather…

---

498 SKS 7, 8 / CUPH, 2 / CUP1, 3. All English translation page references in this essay are from *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Crumbs*, ed. and trans. Alastair Hannay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), abbreviated as CUPH. The corresponding page references for the Hong translation, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments*, follow (CUP1).

499 SKS 7, 349-50 / CUPH, 322 / CUP1, 384.

500 SKS 7, 26 / CUPH, 18 / CUP1, 17.

---
a threshold. The ambivalent position of the paratext, situated at the same time inside and outside the text, accounts for its liminality, which, in turn, issues in semantic ambivalence. Hence, despite the illocutionary force of its message, the paratext often becomes an oblique textual fold for the reader.

The epigraph is defined by Genette as “a quotation placed en exergue,” which means “off the work” or “at the edge of the work.” This outside is supposed to comment “on the text, whose meaning it indirectly specifies or emphasizes” or on the title, but equally, it sometimes “casts a curious light (or shadow) on the text.” Genette closes his book Paratexts by saying that “a threshold exists to be crossed.” In this context of crossing a threshold, the etymology of the verb “to cite” is pertinent here; it derives from the Latin verb citare, which means “to summon, urge; to put in sudden motion.” The etymology goes back to the Greek verb κατακειμί, which in turn means “to move, set in motion; to change, stir up.” The contemporary meaning “to quote a passage of writing” is attested around the 16th century.

Granted that the epigraph is often another text, Genette posits three main questions that will help to study its diverse functions: (a) Who is the author, real or putative, of the text quoted? (b) Who is the person who proposes this quotation to the reader? In other words, who has the authorial responsibility for choosing the quotation? (c) Who is its addressee? Genette alerts readers to the possibility that, depending on the text, the one who “put[s] forward” the motto is not necessarily the author.

Regarding the quotation from the Hippias Major in the Postscript, answering these questions is not an easy task, the relationship between the pseudonymous author and the editor being only one aspect of this intricacy. The quotation per se has a peculiar status, creating a kind of (re)doubling or mirror-effect. The name of Plato as the author of the Hippias is totally effaced. Inside the quotation, as it were, there is an addressee, namely, Socrates;

in addition, the expectation of an answer—at least, from Socrates—is raised. We find ourselves in the middle of a dialogic situation: someone—we assume it is Hippias—asks Socrates what is the purpose/conclusion of all this; furthermore, he repeats what he said “a little while ago,” but what he is now saying characterizes all that had been said in the dialogue as mere scrapings and shavings of discourse. We assume it is Hippias because of the vagueness of who is speaking; we know it is Hippias, only if we know that every Platonic dialogue is usually named after the most important person who converses with Socrates, and there are only two interlocutors in the Hippias Major. But, what exactly was Hippias saying “a little while ago”?

The hermeneutical uncertainty of the motto, accentuated by a number of absent elements, induces the reader to engage in the communicational situation of the Postscript. Additionally, the motto enacts and reflects the post-post relation between the Philosophical Crumbs and its Postscript. As Clímaco writes, “[t]he first part is the promised sequel, the second part a renewed attempt on the same lines as the piece, a new approach to the problem of the Crumbs.” Yet, how are we to make the passage from the Crumbs to the Postscript and further, from the first to the second part of the Postscript, crossing the threshold, moving? And, after the reading of the book, the motto continues to act retrogressively and at the expense of the author: But really, Clímaco, what do you suppose all this amounts to?

In a draft title page of Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Kierkegaard notes: “To be used as the epigraph, the last lines of Hippias in the dialogue Hippias and the first of Socrates’ subsequent last lines.” From this note it is clear that Kierkegaard did not adhere to his initial choice of lines but he definitely opted for the final exchange between Hippias and Socrates. After the lines quoted in the motto, Hippias praises “the ability to produce a discourse well and beautifully in a court of law...or before any other public body”;
in this way, one achieves "the salvation of oneself, one's property, and one's friends."²⁵⁴ He urges Socrates to renounce:

... these petty arguments [μικρολογίας], that one may not, by busying oneself, as at present, with mere talk and nonsense [άρους], appear to be a fool.
—My dear Hippias, you are truly blessed because you know the things a man ought to practise and have, as you say, practised them satisfactorily.²⁵⁵

His own "daimoniac fortune [δαιμονία τις τύχη]," Socrates continues, is to be always in a state of wandering and aporia.²⁵⁶ He concludes by admitting that now he understands the meaning of the proverbial saying: "beautiful things are difficult,"²⁵⁷ This is a comment both on the subject matter of the dialogue, the beautiful, and the difficulties in coming up with a definition of the beautiful. However, the saying itself conveys the fragility of the human condition in which happiness could suddenly turn to unhappiness. I wouldn't exclude that in the words "salvation" (σωτηρία) and "blessed" (μακάριος) of the original ancient text. Climacus hears, by a kind of "acoustical illusion,"²⁵⁸ the different meaning these words acquired in the Christian context.

Comparing the concluding part of the conversation between Socrates and Hippias with the lines that Kierkegaard actually used as a motto, there is a significant shift from what is said to how it is said.²⁵⁹ This brings us to the second reference to the Hippias in the main body of the Postscript.

The second reference appears at the end of §3, "The problem of the Crumbs as preposterous not to Christianity but to becoming a Christian" of Chapter 4 in Section I and before Climacus addresses "The problem itself" in Section II (Part Two, Section Two). The passage thus hinges on a turning point in the structure of the Postscript:²⁶⁰ Climacus has already launched his attack against "the 'Christian congregation'" where everybody thinks of themselves as Christians²⁶¹ and against speculative philosophy, which adopts "the predicate 'Christian.'"²⁶² In Section II, Climacus elaborates on the problem of how eternal happiness, as the absolute τέλος for the individual, is decided in time.

The dialogue, as a whole this time, retains its liminal position; it is pushed back, as it were, to the margins of the text. The Hippias could serve as "a kind of analogy of an introduction" not because a positive conclusion was reached at the end of the dialogue but rather a negative one; what Socrates has learnt about the beautiful is "that it is difficult."²⁶³ Climacus continues: "Had the Hippias clarified the notion of the beautiful, there would have been absolutely no remainder that had been made difficult, and the dialogue would have had absolutely nothing corresponding to the two-fold nature of our enterprise."²⁶⁴ He repeats that he undertakes to write an introduction that "in making it difficult for people to become Christians" puts them off.²⁶⁵ Climacus employs two illustrations of movement, which correspond to two different kinds of introduction to Christianity; the "immediate transition"²⁶⁶ and the leap. Philosophical, historical or rhetorical introductions introduce Christianity as doctrine. It is like hotels hiring servants "to meet the travellers at the customs house"—another boundary area—"and recommend accommodation." This kind of introduction though brings one not "a single step nearer" to becoming a Christian, which is a matter of leaping, "the absolute decision [Afjærende]."²⁶⁷

The affinity that Climacus highlights between his own project and the Hippias is its inconclusiveness, the remainder left after the closing of the book/dialogue. However, it could be argued that the same holds true for every Socratic dialogue that revolves around the definitional question "What is X?" and ends with the aporia of a definite answer. What could be so special about the Hippias Major?²⁶⁸ An answer could be traced back to Kierkegaard's

---


²⁵⁵ Hippias, 304b. According to the note, these are the lines that Kierkegaard was going to choose as a motto.

²⁵⁶ ibid., 304b-c.

²⁵⁷ ibid., 304c.

²⁵⁸ SKS 4, 253 / PF, 49-54.

²⁵⁹ Cf. SKS 7, 185 / CUPH, 170 / CUP1, 202: "The objective accent falls on what is said, the subjective on how it is said" (emphasis in original).

²⁶⁰ For helpful analysis of the frame and structure of the Postscript, see Andrew J. Burgess, "The Bilateral Symmetry of Kierkegaard's Postscript," International Kierkegaard Commentary to Concluding Unscientific Postscript to "Philosophical Fragments," 329-45.

²⁶¹ SKS 7, 340 / CUPH, 314 / CUP1, 374.

²⁶² SKS 7, 343 / CUPH, 317 / CUP1, 377-8.

²⁶³ SKS 7, 349 / CUPH, 322 / CUP1, 384.

²⁶⁴ SKS 7, 350 / CUPH, 322 (my emphasis) / CUP1, 384.

²⁶⁵ SKS 7, 348 / CUPH, 321 / CUP1, 383.

²⁶⁶ SKS 7, 347 / CUPH, 320 / CUP1, 381.

²⁶⁷ SKS 7, 349-50 / CUPH, 322-3 / CUP1, 384.

²⁶⁸ Jacob Howland draws the conclusion that "Taken together with the epigram of Fragments, the meaning of the Postscript epigram could hardly be clearer: the proponents of the Hegelian system are sophists or sham-philosophers, and Climacus will extend the Socratic critique of them that he initiated in Fragments." See Jacob Howland, Kierkegaard and Socrates: A Study in Philosophy and Faith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 188. What I shall argue here is rather that
readings when he was writing his dissertation on The Concept of Irony, with Continual Reference to Socrates (1841).

II. The Hippias Major in Schleiermacher’s edition of the Platonic dialogues

Schleiermacher translated and edited the Hippias Major, although he did not place it in the main body of Plato’s Works but in the Appendix (Anhang), since he argued against the authenticity of the dialogue. This choice was in accordance with his method of arranging the Platonic dialogues, which employed three main criteria: the organic harmony between the form and content of a dialogue, the place of each dialogue in the Platonic corpus, and the distinctive language of Plato. As Julia A. Lamm explains, the same criteria determined whether a dialogue should be attributed to Plato’s authorship or not.

The subject matter of the Hippias Major, “the idea of the beautiful,” Schleiermacher contends, is certainly worthy of philosophical investigation. The treatment of the subject though lacks the appropriate “scientific tone” or—if we are to conform to Climacus’ terminology—is “unscientific.” Schleiermacher’s main objection is summed up in that after a series of refutations and behind Socrates’ “verbal dialectics” not even “the basis of the theory” regarding the beautiful could be discerned; “so completely is all such” (i.e., the theory of the beautiful and the scientific treatment thereof) “kept out of sight.” Hippias the sophist becomes the target of “personal ridicule” and he is portrayed with “such an unheard of degree of stupidity” that, in the end, the impression left to the reader is the “polemical purpose” of the dialogue. The language about pots, kitchen-furniture, and the examples “taken from trifling things” may well have been introduced as a parody of those who depreciate Socrates’

the motto complicates the relations between the couples: Hippias-Socrates and Climacus-Kierkegaard.

529 Volume 2, part 3 of Platonis Werke von F. Schleiermacher (Berlin, 1809) comprises the following dialogues: Phaedo, Philebus, Theages, Eraste, Alcibiades I, Menexenus, Hippias Major, Crito, Ion, The last six dialogues are edited in the Appendix.


532 Schleiermacher’s Introductions to the Dialogues of Plato, 341-2.

533 Ibid., 343-4.

teaching method. Still, Schleiermacher finds the device of Socrates talking to himself and assuming the voice of an anonymous questioner (“the play with the man in the background”) or “the extravagances of the humour” unworthy of Plato’s philosophy. Overall, he considered the dialogue too coarse to be reconciled with the propriety and polish of Plato. Finally, there are two dialogues with the title Hippias and “it is not very probable” that Plato would have chosen the same interlocutor twice. Consequently, one of the two Hippias dialogues is spurious. Schleiermacher assumes that most likely the author of the Hippias Minor was an imitator of Plato, who “had the larger [Hippias] before him.”

535 The disputed authorship of the dialogue may account for the efficacy of Plato’s name in the motto. More importantly, Schleiermacher’s introduction outlines a number of features (e.g. the play with the doubles, the spurious philosophical language, the conversation about trifling things) that would have made the Hippias Major the favourite dialogue of Climacus. Indeed, Climacus writes that the words of Diogenes about Socrates’ method of philosophizing in the workshops and in the marketplace “will always remain a beautiful eulogy,” bitingly insinuating that Hegel’s philosophy would hardly withstand the test of the Socratic elenchus:

I am by no means of the opinion that Hegel should engage in conversation with a manservant, and that anything would be proved should the latter fail to understand him; ...this is not what I mean and my proposal is least of all like a street-lounger’s attempt to assassinate science.

537 Other editions of Plato’s dialogues that Kierkegaard may have consulted include: Platonis quae extant opera, Vol. 9, trans. Friedrich Ast, Leipzig 1827 and Platonis opera omnia: continens Menexenus, Lysidem, Hippias Urnique, Ionem, Vol. 4, trans. with commentary G. Stahlbaum (Gotthof and Erfurt, 1833). Stahlbaum considered the dialogue authentic, written while Plato was young, whereas Ast dismissed it as inauthentic.

538 SKS 7, 298-9 / CUPH, 274 / CUP1, 327.

III. Who is Hippias?

Further light on the role played by the references to this dialogue can be found by looking briefly at Hippias himself. Hippias was one of the sophists, re-
nowned for being an expert on a variety of subjects (e.g. astronomy, grammar, history, genealogy, mathematics, geometry) and his ability to deliver long speeches on any given subject. A work is attributed to him under the title Συγγραμμή, which is translated as “collection,” “miscellany.” The only known passage from this work is quoted by Clement of Alexandria, a Greek Church Father (ca.150-220), in his work Stromateis, whose title also means “Miscellanies.” It reads as follows:

It may be that some of this has been said by Orpheus, some briefly, here and there, by Museus, some by Hesiod and some by Homer; some in other poets and some in prose-writers both Greek and foreign. For my part, I have collected from all these writers what is most important and belongs together to make this new [καλόν] and composite work.  

Clement cites the above passage as testimony of “the propensity of the Greeks to plagiarism in expressions and dogmas [το εὑσπροφων εἰς κλότην τῶν Ἑλλήνων κατὰ τοὺς λόγους τε καὶ τὰ δόγματα],” since the Greek poets and philosophers are caught stealing from one another, they are even more ready to steal from “the truth which belongs to us,” that is, the truth of the Scriptures, the revealed truth. As evidence he provides long catalogues of verses and various quotations from Greek poets and philosophers. As Clement notes, some of them admit, “so as not to be convicted of ingratitude,” that they have received the most important of their doctrines from Socrates.

We may recall that Climacus is faced with the accusation of plagiarism in the Crumbs: “Now if someone were to say, ‘What you are composing is the shabbiest plagiarism ever to appear, since it is nothing more or less than what any child knows,’ then I presumably must hear with shame that I am a liar.” Climaicus starts reversing the apologetic tradition, to which Clement of Alexandria belongs, by saying that a poet always steals from another poet, whereas here the divine poetics is different from every human poetic composition: “the poem was so different from every human poem that it was no poem at all but the wonder.”

IV. Hippias Major or On the Beautiful (refutative)

In this section I will try to show, taking into account both the form and the content of the dialogue, why Kierkegaard turned to the Hippias Major in the Postscript.

The dialogue is set most probably in the agora where the two interlocutors meet by chance. Socrates asks Hippias, since he knows how to talk eloquently about the “beautiful pursuits” young men should follow, to teach him “the beautiful itself [καλόν το καλόν], what it is.” Not only does Socrates pretend ignorance but he feigns that a friend (an unnamed questioner) keeps interrogating him about the beautiful, insults him for not being able to make the appropriate distinctions and it is he who constantly raises objections to Hippias’ definitions. Socrates’ indirect mockery contributes to the comic effect of the dialogue; Hippias attacks the anonymous friend as “uncultivated” and “an ignoramus” having Socrates reveal in the end that the vexatious fellow is “the son of Sophroniscus,” Socrates himself.

At the beginning of their conversation, both Socrates and Hippias agree to the following premise: if it is “by wisdom” that wise people are wise and “by

540 Kierkegaard refers to Clement of Alexandria’s Stromateis (Book V9) in Repetition (SKS 4, 91 / R, 225).
541 Str. VI.2 (PG 9, 228C-229D). As translated and quoted in Guthrie, A History of Greek Philosophy, 283. Stromateis abounds in quotations from the Platonic dialogues, being a valuable resource for philologists and editors.
542 Str. VI.2 (PG 9, 228C, trans. Philip Schaff). The word used by Clement is “theft [κλοπής].”
543 Ibid.
544 SKS 4, 241 / PF, 35. Cf. Climacus does not deny that all the allegations of the anonymous accuser aim at “my mixing of borrowed phrases in what I said” but he intends in the next part of his pamphlet “to clothe the issue in its historical costume” (SKS 4, 305 / PF, 199). See also the comments on these passages by Jolita Pons, Stealing a Gift: Kierkegaard’s Pseudonyms and the Bible (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 127-9.
545 SKS 4, 242 / PF, 36.
546 Only in The Concept of Irony he briefly mentions a conversation between Socrates and the sophist Hippas as it takes place in Xenophon’s Memorabilia (IV.4). See SKS 1: 88, 274 / CI, 26, 232.
547 Hippias, 286c.
548 Ibid., 286c-e.
549 Ibid., 288d.
550 Ibid., 290c.
551 Ibid., 298c.
justice" that the just are just, so it must be "by the beautiful" that all beautiful things are beautiful.552 Surprisingly, Hippias' first reply to the question as to what is the beautiful is: "a beautiful maiden is beautiful."553 Socrates retorts that this "something" they are seeking to define is "by reason of which" every particular beautiful thing is beautiful and certainly "a beautiful maiden" is not the answer.554 When Socrates next refines his question, enquiring this time if the beautiful is that "by the addition of which all other things are...made to appear beautiful," Hippias' second reply is: gold.555 The definitions of the beautiful proposed and refuted include: the appropriate, the beneficial, and the pleasant to the sight and hearing.

The various interpretations given to the dialogue rest upon the philosophical approach to the definitional question "what is X?" Paul Woodruff, for example, argues that the Socratic questioning is "ontologically neutral."556 Socrates' concern is to make clear distinctions and not to propose the separate existence of Forms, in this case the Form of the beautiful. Thus, in approaching the Hippias there is no reason that we should take the next step in the development of Plato's ontology, which will take shape in the middle and later dialogues.557 For Michael L. Morgan, on the contrary, the Hippias Major "may exhibit an early stage in Plato's metaphysical thinking."558 What underlies the dispute around the definition of the beautiful is "the continuous doctrine of reality (τὸ ὅραμα) according to Hippias,"559 as Socrates names it. Hippias argues that there are continuous properties: if two things are wise, beautiful etc., both collectively are wise and each individually is necessarily wise.560 Socrates, on the other hand, allows for the possibility of discontinuous properties: two (duality), one (unity), each, both, odd or even number.561 If each of us is, for instance, an odd number, we cannot be odd when added together, and vice versa.562 As David Wolfsdorf, whose interpretation I follow here, explains, for Hippias the same substance (οὐσία) is continuous and present in every particular "among the aggregate of entities of a kind."563 Therefore, Hippias accuses Socrates of being wrong in trying in his discourse to separate the beautiful (τὸ καλὸν) from every beautiful thing. Hippias' attack against Socrates' mode of "conversing (διαλέγοντας)" culminates in what he did say "a little while ago," that is, before the motto-citation:

But you see, Socrates, you do not consider the entirety [ὅλα] of things, nor do they with whom you are in the habit of conversing, but you all test [κροῦστε] the beautiful and the other beings [ἐξουσιών τῶν ὀρέων] by taking them separately in your speeches and cutting them to pieces [κατασχοῦσκε]. Because of that it escapes you that the bodies of being are naturally large and continuous.565

Interestingly, Friedrich Ast in his Platon's Leben und Schriften makes special reference to Socrates' "scrappings and shavings of discourse"566 in conjunction with the abovementioned passage as an exemplar of "die eristischen Begriffsspalter" (the eristic division of concepts).567 This portrayal of Socrates is familiar from Aristophanes' Clouds. The intertextual link between Aristophanes' comedy and the Platonic Hippias Major has been identified, though the import of this connection is yet to be researched.568 Kierkegaard argues in The

552 Ibid., 287c-d.
553 Ibid., 287c.
554 Ibid., 288a.
555 Ibid., 288d-c.
556 Ibid., 289d-c.
558 Ibid., 105 and 113-14.
560 Hippias, 301e.
561 Ibid., 300c-301b.
562 Morgan, 147.
563 Hippias, 302a-e.
564 Ibid., 304a.
565 Friedrich Ast, Platon's Leben und Schriften (Leipzig, 1816), 461.
567 Zuckert dates the conversation between Socrates and Hippias dramatically around 421/420 BC, that is after the staging of the Clouds in 424/423 BC. She suggests that in the Hippias Major Plato "seems to have presented a comic response to Aristophanes' comic critique of the philosopher." (258).
Concept of Irony that "the Socrates brought on stage by Aristophanes is the actual Socrates." Socrates, "armed with sophisms," is identified with the sophists but the identification renders the utmost distance from both the sophists and Plato, for the reason that "Aristophanes' view is appropriate precisely as comic." On the one hand, Socrates' dialectic is depicted parodically as "an idle vagabond" who "spends time and energy on the most foolish hairsplitting [Ordklaverier] λόγων ἀμύβαν σχινδαλύμον [the nice hairsplittings of subtle logic]."

Nevertheless, the negative dialectic of Socrates is most accurately displayed by the comic vein of Aristophanes.

Between these two extreme points lies the dialectic activity whose validity is actualized in dividing. That is, while the essential philosophical dialectic, speculative, unites, the negative dialectic, because it relinquishes the idea, is a broker who continually makes transactions in a lower sphere; that is, it separates [den er adskillende].

The memory of the Aristophanic Socrates—"λεπτοτάτων λύρων ισεθ [high priest of this most subtle nonsense]"—contours essential facets of the figure of Climacus and his Postscript. While the dramatic features of the dialogue might have more bearing on Kierkegaard's reading of the Hippias Major, the engagement with the philosophical content proves no less important. If Socrates' dialectical method consists in cutting to pieces, in separating, similarly Climacus employs his existential dialectic, undermining whatever provides en masse identities, such as: the age, the generation, humanity, world history. Everyone, Climacus writes, "joined in a project of abandoning themselves to become something en masse with the help of the generation" and "every one, as quickly as possible, makes an attempt to determine his own crumbs of existence [Smule Existent] in relation to the age." In the same vein, Climacus unearths the attempts to appropriate the truth by numbers: "...to become more than one is, by joining forces socially in the hope of impressing the history of spirit by numbers." In all these attempts Climacus diagnoses the symptoms of "despair over being a human being" facing "the horror of existence."

Climacus' critique is twofold: against the Christian doctrine as metaphysical truth and against any aggregate (e.g., the State, the Church, Christendom) taking the position of a metaphysical truth. He shows the confusion between the definitional question "Who is Christian?" and the presupposition that "in Christendom all are Christians." In this regard, we might find help in Alastair Hannay's remark that "in literary context 'fragments' suggests detached parts of a composition...fragments that as with a jigsaw puzzle might conceivably be put together to form a whole again. Crumbs, however, will never make a loaf." What Socrates saves with "his 'crumb' [Smule] of uncertainty" is his own crumbs of existence, which is not reducible to a whole; the remainder of the possibility to relate to the eternal truth with the infinite passion of inwardness.

Taking the motto as our point of departure—and our point of entry into the Postscript, we are led to paths and nodes of various texts and scholarly resources with the figure of Socrates being ubiquitously present. In our reading process, the jesting of the epigraph brought to the fore a deeper engagement with the philosophical content of the Hippias Major, a dialogue which otherwise remains marginal in Climacus' (and Kierkegaard's) authorship. Kierkegaard envisaged certain analogies between Climacus' "Mimic-Pethetic Dialectic Compilation" and Plato's "witty urbanistica derision" of the sophists, according to Stahlbaum's felicitous characterization of the Hippias. How to become a Christian, just like the idea of the beautiful, resists discursive ana-
ysis and, therefore, a comic Socrates—"the greatest Sophist"—was needed to articulate this failure of discourse. Yet, it is the author’s "inwardness" in his own subject, as Kierkegaard puts it, in this case, the subject of the Postscript, which calls forth the epigraphic text; it is precisely with this inwardness that our reading response is striving to attune.

Section V:
Greek Philosophers Other than Socrates and Plato

581 SKS 1, 189 / CL, 139.
582 SKS 1, 48 / EPW, 93.