Chapter 8
Kierkegaard

INTRODUCTION

In a footnote to Chapter II, Book II of the Concluding Unscientific Postscript, Kierkegaard, or Johannes Climacus as he signs himself for this volume, makes a dialectical remark that represents Kierkegaard’s direct and indirect relationship to Hegel and his direct and indirect means of communicating the truth of that relationship.

The frivolity with which systematists concede that Hegel has perhaps not been successful in introducing movement everywhere in logic, about as when a huckster thinks that a couple of oranges more or less is nothing to worry about when the purchase is a large one—this farcical complaisance is naturally an expression of contempt for Hegel, which not even his most violent antagonist has permitted himself (Kierkegaard, 1968, p. 99f).

But Kierkegaard concludes this footnote with the following insightful remark: ‘Let admirers of Hegel keep to themselves the privilege of making him out to be a bungler; an opponent will always know how to hold him in honour, as one who has willed something great, though without having achieved it’ (p. 100f). Read carefully, Kierkegaard is assigning to Hegel’s supporters the usual critique of Hegel as having a system that is closed and finished, even though there may be one or two loose ends that still need to be tied up in order to finish it off. Behind Kierkegaard’s wit here lies the insight that it is the claims of these supporters for the system that are in fact the real misunderstandings of the system. Kierkegaard is unforgiving and relentless in his critique of these ‘Hegelians’. To those who argue for the system as complete, even despite a few minor alterations that might be necessary, Kierkegaard asks when will it be finished? Perhaps ‘by next Sunday’ (p. 97). And he adds: ‘I shall be as willing as the next man to fall down in worship before the System, if only I can manage to set eyes on it’ (pp. 97–98). He continues:

once or twice I have been on the verge of bending the knee. But at the last moment, when I already had my handkerchief spread on the ground, to avoid soiling my trousers, and I made a trusting appeal to one of the initiated who stood by: ‘Tell me now sincerely, is it entirely finished; for if so I will kneel down before it, even at the risk of ruining a pair of trousers . . .’—I always received the same answer: ‘No, it is not yet quite finished.’ And so there was another postponement—of the System and of my homage (p. 98).
Why, then, asks Kierkegaard, call it a system at all? If it is not finished, why is it offered as such? ‘A fragment of a system is nonsense’ (ibid.).

The relation of Kierkegaard to Hegel is not, I think, an attempt by the former to rescue the truth from the system, but rather a way of representing the asymmetry of the relation—within the system and in relation to it—as the true. One example of the complexity of this difficult relation that Kierkegaard must keep open to Hegel is in his own direct and indirect communication about him within the Postscript. At first sight Kierkegaard seems to provide ample evidence of his opposition to Hegel and to Hegelianism. The Postscript is littered with biting and withering criticisms of the Hegelian system. In addition, the issue of direct and indirect communication is central to understanding not only Kierkegaard’s critique of Hegelians, but also his style of writing. In the Postscript he attacks Hegelians for their direct communication of the system. In a long footnote Kierkegaard writes that Hegel is supposed ‘to have died with the words upon his lips, that there was only one man who had understood him, and he had misunderstood him’ (1968, p. 65f). Why, then, asks Kierkegaard, did Hegel write in such a direct fashion? If he had sought to be understood, why did he write ‘the entire series of seventeen volumes [as] direct communication?’ (p. 66f). In this way, Hegel had ‘absolutely nothing in common with Socrates’ (ibid.).

This footnote requires careful reading. Kierkegaard is communicating directly that Hegel communicated directly. Yet for Kierkegaard this direct communication is equally inappropriate as the form for his critique of Hegel. The danger here is that Kierkegaard will be understood and, therein, not understood at all. Kierkegaard employs direct communication to induce misunderstanding. He notes, for example, in the Postscript, that approval of his work will corrupt its ‘dialectical precision’ (Kierkegaard, 1968, p. 14). It is better, therefore that the work remain imperceptible. ‘Better well hanged than ill wed’ he states, as the motto to the Fragments. Indeed, for the truths of double reflection that Kierkegaard is working with, direct communication is the most indirect form of communication possible. Thus he honours Hegel, for the latter’s direct communication, as we saw above regarding the philosophical structure of the speculative proposition, is equally indirect. For both Hegel and Kierkegaard the movement of thought is the truth of thought, and Kierkegaard plays this brilliantly with bluff and counter-bluff through the Postscript, as throughout all his texts. His pseudonyms are the clearest example of the way that the direct and the indirect are related and separated in his communications.

In addition, Kierkegaard further teases Hegelians over the issue of ‘beginning’, a question also raised at the beginning of Hegel’s Science of Logic that asks ‘With What Must Science Begin?’ If, as Hegelians claim, the system begins with the immediate, then surely, says Kierkegaard, such a conclusion can only be reached through reflection? This perfectly represents what Hegel is arguing in the system, for the system, and as the system. Any beginning, ‘precisely because it is the beginning, is

imperfect’ (Hegel, 1984b, p. 293). Since ‘thinking is always the negation of what we have immediately before us’ (Hegel, 1975, p. 17), then it is impossible to begin with the beginning. Furthermore, the ‘Hegelians’ might offer a systematic answer that a beginning is made with nothing. But this would not be true for Hegel. On the contrary, and as we have seen above many times now, a beginning is always made with the abstract, which is also immediately mediated. If there is a beginning, it is in the broken middle of the beginning where immediacy and mediation are in the relation of their relation and separation.

This question of beginning is one of the ways in which Hegel and Kierkegaard share a philosophy of the teacher. It is in the misrecognition of the beginning that, as we saw earlier, critical, post-Enlightenment and spiritual pedagogies suppress philosophical education by refusing thought’s relation to itself as subject and substance. In their judgements that education can overcome its illusions, be this for emancipation, pluralism or forms of intersubjectivity or spirit, a mistake is made regarding the beginning. Self-consciousness is always reflective and abstract. ‘There is nothing’, says Hegel, ‘nothing in heaven or in nature or mind or anywhere else which does not equally contain both immediacy and mediation’ (Hegel, 1969, p. 68), and this is known philosophically and aperitically as the third partner in the relation. If the abstract is overcome, then middles are posited that suppress the difficulty, the inequality, of the beginning. Readers of Kierkegaard need to take account of the considerable efforts that the latter goes to in order to reveal why indirect communication must always oppose itself. It is Kierkegaard who knows the significance of being Hegel’s opponent rather than his supporter. It is by ensuring the abstract in Hegel, as the abstract teacher of the system, that the system is the truth of the teacher. Kierkegaard honours the abstract in Hegel in a way that ‘Hegelians’ often do not. Throughout the Postscript when Kierkegaard says that Hegel has failed to achieve the movement of the existing subjectivity of the system, it is precisely this recognition of failure that recognises the movement in the system.

THE ETHICAL AND THE ABSOLUTE

It is as commonplace to oppose Hegel and Kierkegaard as it is to oppose Hegel and Nietzsche. In a recent article in the Journal of Philosophy of Education, however, Ian McPherson has argued for a greater level of complexity within their commonly stereotyped relation. Against abstract readings of Kierkegaard as ascetic, individualist, existentialist and even as analyst/therapist, McPherson argues for a reading of Kierkegaard that is based within his ambivalent relationship to Hegel. On the one hand, McPherson claims that communication in Kierkegaard is influenced by Hegel’s ethic of recognition, which, he says, has been ‘brilliantly retrieved’ (McPherson, 2001, p. 158) by Robert R. Williams (1997), whose account lends itself to an interpretation of Kierkegaard based on communication as ‘interpretive exchange’ (McPherson, 2001, p. 159).
On the other hand, McPherson argues that Kierkegaard saw in Hegel ‘an impatient grasping for an intellectual totality’ (p. 158), which results in the latter losing ‘himself and his followers in his system [and] that his system substitutes itself for human life and Christian life’ (p. 162). As such, Kierkegaard’s campaign against Hegel is ‘a prophetic “no” to intellectual and educational idolatry’ (p. 163).5

McPherson argues that communication in Kierkegaard is an interpretive exchange between different ways of being and different capacities. If direct communication is more product than process then indirect communication is more process than product. The former lends itself to closure and to the ‘what’ of communication; the latter to development, to the ‘communication of a capacity or capacities’ (p. 164) and to the ‘how’ or means of communication. There are significant educational implications here for McPherson. First, both the ‘how’ and the ‘what’ of communication can mean self-involvement or inwardness. They can both contribute to the truth of subjectivity. Second, indirect communication has a particular relevance for teachers because the communication of the ‘how’ aims to help others ‘to develop for themselves the capacities they need’ (p. 167). Thus indirect communication lends itself to the asymmetry of the teacher–student relation where the relevant abilities ‘are less equally shared’ (p. 166). It is in the nature of indirect communication to respect the privacy of the other, to inspire in him concern and unrest, but leaving him with the impulse to go his own way.6 In addition, McPherson pursues this difference and asymmetry in the relation between the finite and the infinite. For example, the indirect communication of Kierkegaard’s pseudonyms can be both a non-interfering device to leave the reader to go his own way, or a recognition of the unequal relation between human and divine communication. This inequality, says McPherson, is the absurd paradox in Kierkegaard between God and man, and requires ‘indirect communication, via interpretive exchange’ (p. 169), in order to ensure that the relation is kept open. Beginning to take responsibility in this way is, he says, the leap from the aesthetic to the ethical and finally to the religious. It is not just the ‘what’ of God that is communicated in religion, but more importantly the ‘how’ of that communication. As the ‘what’ can be reduced to idolatry, so the ‘how’ keeps open the asymmetry of the relation between God and man. For McPherson, ‘religiousness A’ in Kierkegaard is the paradox of this asymmetry whilst ‘religiousness B’ is the transformation of the asymmetrical relation into the truth of God. Thus, ‘the relatively modest paradox of type A is trumped by the absolute paradox of type B’ (p. 172).

There is much of interest here to the philosophy of the teacher. McPherson’s retrieval of Kierkegaard’s difficult relation to Hegel opens up Kierkegaard’s work to the wider speculative tradition of which it is a seminal contribution, and contradicts many of the more common ideas on Kierkegaard that misread this. Of greater significance is the observation of the asymmetry in the relation of teacher to student and of God to man. In his notion of indirect communication, at least as it is related by him to the teacher and his pupil, McPherson acknowledges this imbalance as the substance of the relation.
The speculative import of this latter relation is, however, threatened by McPherson’s reading of Hegel and in particular by the concept of the ‘ethics of recognition’ (p. 158) that he takes from Williams. There is not space here to engage fully with Williams’ thesis. Of immediate concern, however, is his claim that ‘recognition is a general concept of intersubjectivity’ (Williams, 1997, p. 10). Williams argues that the master–slave relation is merely a ‘first phase of unequal recognition that must and can be transcended . . . Genuine recognition is fundamentally reciprocal and involves the mutual mediation of freedom’ (ibid.). It is a gross error, he continues, to equate ‘recognition with the struggle between master and slave’ (ibid.).

Such a notion of mutual recognition as ethical relation, however, sits unhappily with McPherson’s argument. I shall make three brief points in relation to this. First, the notion of interpretive exchange that McPherson posits wherein ‘each self recognises itself in the other, and the other in the self’ (2001, p. 172) suppresses the very inequality that indirect communication expresses. Second, the master–slave relation is the template of recognition in that it plays out the continuing recognition of mis-recognition; as spirit it is a recognition that can only repeat the asymmetry of this relation. Third, the idea of reciprocity or mutuality in recognition, because it is not the current form and content of spirit, becomes for Williams, as for McPherson, a sollen (an ought). It repeats the domination of social relations because this domination is excluded from its representation in spirit. Overall, the notion of interpretive exchange conflates paradox or the absurd into intersubjectivity. This is to fail to read Kierkegaard speculatively at his most difficult point, namely, the relation between the ethical and the absolute. Ironically, then, it is actually McPherson’s misreading of Hegel that then sees the reduction of the absolute in Kierkegaard to the ethical.

There are implications here for Kierkegaard’s philosophy of the teacher, and we will explore this in more detail in a moment. In brief, however, if McPherson’s notion of indirect communication is ultimately a unity of the ‘how’ and the ‘what’ in the mutual dependence in communication of each with the other, then it cannot be appropriate for the communication of teacher and student, for it would have to assert the mutual over the different shapes of struggle that McPherson acknowledges within the inequality between teacher and student. Similarly, if indirect communication is appropriate to the teacher and student relation, then it cannot also be posited as mutual exchange between persons. The unity of the ‘how’ and the ‘what’ that McPerson finds in religiousness B, in its transcendence of religiousness A—the sublime in the pedestrian—does acknowledge difficulty as philosophical content. But it does not then represent its inequality to itself as subject and substance. This leaves McPherson’s interpretation of Kierkegaard, of Hegel, of spirit, and of the absolute without the asymmetry of the relation that they re-present. Mutuality becomes a middle that is posited over and against the broken middle, a relation that is the condition of its (mutuality’s) own (negative) possibility.
In a way, this is to read McPherson against himself. He follows Kierkegaard’s systematic and abstract account of the relation of inwardness to itself in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Here, the relation of the person to the ethical is the experience of inequality that, as the third partner, is religion. Further, the relation between religiousness A (inequality) and religiousness B (the inequality of religion itself) is again a triadic relation. Precisely where McPherson needs to refuse this relation of religion to itself—to refuse it a middle—he turns indirect communication into the balanced relation of mutual dependence and exchange. The absolute in Kierkegaard, as in Hegel, is inequality known to itself as torn halves of a relation that does not add up to itself. It is the absolute known in the torn halves of relations of process and product, direct and indirect communication, immediacy and mediation, and, in Kierkegaard in particular, here, as religiousness A and B. The third partner is the representation of this asymmetry; and is why the master–slave relation carries all such relations within it. Intersubjectivity, mutual recognition and interpretive exchange are, therefore, only so many suppressions of the absolute that they fail to re-present absolutely. This is why religiousness B in McPherson’s reading becomes the transcendence of religiousness A. He is able to say that ‘this divine self-communication is . . . absolutely beyond all of us, and beyond each part of each of us’ (McPherson, 2001, p. 172) only because he has posited the self-communication of the divine as unable to be expressed in the finite. Yet de Silentio *speaks* in *Fear and Trembling*; Climacus climbs the heights that his philosophical texts decry, and Kierkegaard, who can do nothing, nevertheless works for his soul in his *Upbuilding Discourses*.9 As we have seen throughout our study of the philosophy of the teacher, failing to know the absolute in the finite, as it is shaped in and by social and political relations, is a failure to recognise those relations as they are present in our thinking and our not thinking the absolute. It is not inequality, power and paradox that are overcome by mutuality and interpretive exchange; on the contrary, it is the illusions of the latter that re-present the former as our knowing of the absolute. In short, intersubjectivity robs Kierkegaard of the inequality of the absolute, and thus ensures that his work, as he would say, does not move beyond the Socratic. So, in order to retrieve the insights that McPherson draws out for the teacher–student relation in indirect communication, we must look instead to the *Philosophical Fragments* where the truth of that inequality is explored. I shall return to this in a moment.

**SUBJECTIVITY’S SUBJECTIVITY**

I shall begin this exploration of Kierkegaard’s philosophy of the teacher where Part II above ‘ended’, namely with the issue of Socrates’ midwifery. In 1841, Kierkegaard wrote his PhD thesis on Socrates and criticised several aspects of the latter’s negative pedagogy.10 First, he noted that Socrates could only truly be a servant of the student’s own philosophical development through irony. Socrates says he knows
nothing; he says he has nothing to teach; he says he is not a teacher. At best teaching that one has nothing to teach is housed within the opposition of direct and indirect communication; the truth of which can only be ironic for Socrates.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, Kierkegaard argues that by remaining with the ironic, Socrates and his students are never able to learn the full implications of this opposition in terms of educational development. There is, as it were, a higher education that they make possible but never attain. This is because, says Kierkegaard, Socrates is content to ask questions without any interest in the answer. As far as Socrates is concerned, all answers are equivalent, for what he is actually trying to do is to show the inadequacy of all answers and to introduce the students to doubt through their own thinking. Socrates aims only ‘to suck out the apparent content by means of the question and thereby to leave an emptiness behind’ (Kierkegaard, 1989, p. 36) Or, even more graphically, Kierkegaard says, ‘he [Socrates] placed individuals under his dialectical vacuum pump, pumped away the atmospheric air they were accustomed to breathing, and left them standing there. For them, everything was now lost …’ (p. 178).

As the teacher who fills his students with content is the master, so the teacher who drains them of content is also the master. Indeed, Kierkegaard goes further, calling Socrates a seducer because he excited a passion to learn that he did not fulfil, abandoning the beloved as soon as the passion was aroused. He thus engendered passion without satisfaction, questioning without answers and negativity without the positive. This might sound acceptable in the sense that this teacher is serving the student’s development by refusing to inculcate pre-given answers into them. But perhaps it is even worse than the positive and dominating master in the enlightenment model, for this teacher pulls the rug out from under the feet of the students and leaves them with nothing—indeed, it leaves them looking down and staring into an abyss that threatens nihilism.

Kierkegaard also notes, however, that this was about as far as Socrates could go. A different philosophy of the teacher was required after Socrates in order to understand how this negative master could also be enough of a master to provide the student with something positive, something substantial, which could be the source of further growth and development. It is as the philosopher Johannes Climacus that Kierkegaard reasons as to how this substance is to be realised. Climacus is the pseudonym of Kierkegaard’s philosophical doubt and is in many ways the closest of Kierkegaard’s incarnations to Hegel. As Climacus, Kierkegaard describes himself as in love with thinking (1985, p. 118). As a boy, he had enjoyed listening to his father engage in argument over dinner where he displayed the ability to turn the case of his opponent against him (as Socrates had done). His father embodied a Socratic spirit, listening to the arguments of his guests before ‘in an instant, everything was turned upside down; the explicable was made inexplicable, the certain doubtful, the opposite was made obvious’ (p. 122).

In his private moments Kierkegaard admits to the joy of trying to think something through, finding faults in his own arguments, seeing the whole
thing collapse and then beginning again. Like his namesake John Climacus and his ladder of divine ascent (see Climacus, 1982), his joy is to climb, step by step, to higher thoughts. Even more joyful was to make the same movement, up and down, down and up, to try to ensure that the movement and the result were perfect to each other and complete. ‘His soul was anxious lest one single coherent thought slip out, for then the whole thing would collapse’ (p. 119), but he learned early on that joy and anxiety coexist in thinking.

Whilst for Kierkegaard—still telling this story through the identity of Johannes Climacus—his ‘whole life was thinking’ (p. 123), nevertheless even as a university student it had not occurred to him to be a philosopher. Whilst the latter sought answers, the former was in love only with the process. Indeed, as his reading proceeded, he began to learn that the results that philosophers offered were often characterised by dissemblance. Titles did not fulfil their promise and lacked the ‘rigorous dialectical movement’ (p. 130) that he loved. In addition, he noticed how alert he was at the beginning of lectures, but ‘how dejected at the end, since he perceived that not a single word had been said . . . although it gave the appearance of saying something’ (p. 165). Everything must be doubted, and everything must begin with doubt, but in fact Kierkegaard observed how they employed doubt only selectively. He was forced to think through for himself the totality of doubt and its contradictions. In an insight that is central to understanding Kierkegaardian thinking and education, he notes that if one begins to doubt, then it must be because somehow doubt has already existed.

He thought through the thesis again and again, tried to forget what he had thought in order to begin again, but, lo and behold, he always arrived at the same point. Yet he could not abandon the thesis; it seemed as if a mysterious power held him to it, as if something were whispering to him: something is hiding behind this misunderstanding (p. 139).

How, he asks himself, does the question of truth arise? He concludes that it must be by way of untruth, because the moment he asks about truth, he has already admitted the presence of truth as a lack, as not-known, or in its untruth. In the question of truth, consciousness is brought into relation with something else, and what makes this relation possible is untruth (p. 167). Within the speculative logic of this dialectic he reasons that immediacy is always cancelled by mediation and that as such, mediation can only presuppose immediacy. So, he asks, what is immediacy? Immediacy is ‘reality’ (ibid.), whilst mediacy is the expression of reality. In their relation there is always a contradiction, for what is expressed is never its expression. ‘The moment I make a statement about reality, contradiction is present, for what I say is ideality’ (p. 168). He extends this logic of doubt and untruth to consciousness and its ‘beginning’. In the contradiction of ideality and reality is the coming into existence of consciousness. He says, ‘reflection is the possibility of the relation; consciousness is the relation, the first form of which is contradiction’
(p. 169). But if consciousness is itself of this relation then a further relation exists between consciousness and itself, the relation of knowing that relation. As for Hegel, so for Kierkegaard, whilst categories of reflection are always ‘dichotomous’ because they make possible the relation or the dualism, the categories of consciousness are ‘trichotomous’. This is because only in the latter is doubt possible as the relation to, or of, the relation: ‘Consciousness is mind, and it is remarkable that when one is divided in the world of mind, there are three, never two . . . If there were nothing but dichotomies, doubt would not exist, for the possibility of doubt resides precisely in the third, which places the two in relation to each other’ (ibid.).

This is significant in the whole of Kierkegaard’s works. It is where spirit in Kierkegaard separates itself from spirit as it appeared in Chapter 5 above with Buber, Weil and Heidegger. Spirit in Kierkegaard is the relation of the relation, or the relation become philosophical content. This realises a substance that of necessity eluded Socrates. When Socrates taught for the negative experience of our knowing nothing, nothing positive was learned. But now, because the mind can relate itself to itself as both the work and the actuality, a great deal can be learned that is of enormous significance. The difference from Socrates is this. Whereas Socrates brought doubt and knowledge together and left only doubt, Kierkegaard reasons that the work is our own thinking, and that the work is how we come to know ourselves. We have learned something about ourselves that Socrates did not, something that Kierkegaard calls ‘subjectivity’s subjectivity’ (Kierkegaard, 1989, p. 242). Where philosophical content becomes both the subject and the substance of thought, as here, then our education, our learning from experience, participates in its own act and we come to know the opposition of subject and substance in new ways. We are, as it were, servant to ourselves as master.

What, then, are the implications of subjectivity’s subjectivity for the teacher? I want to answer this question in two related ways: first, briefly, around the relation of the teacher to the eternal through recollection and repetition, and in the light of its importance for the pedagogy of direct and indirect communication; and second, by relating this philosophy of the teacher to Kierkegaard’s *Upbuilding Discourses* and to the philosophical character that this upbuilding education, this formation and re-formation, demands.

**RECOLLECTION AND REPETITION**

Subjectivity’s subjectivity complicates the teacher–student relationship for many reasons, but for two in particular. First, if the thinker can now become his own master and student, what part can a teacher play in what appears to be an internal process? We have addressed this question throughout the book for at its centre stands the dilemma for the teacher of the relation of freedom and authority in education. Second, might it be the case that the teacher has to become his own student before he should even
consider teaching others to question? If you have not understood the full significance of being a question for yourself, what right do you have to make others do it?\textsuperscript{12}

We will consider both questions. What contribution can a teacher make if learning through questioning must occur \textit{in the mind of the student}? Any input from the teacher will distract from, even perhaps resolve, the difficulty that is the work. The teacher who understands this paradox of questioning and doubt now recognises his own contradiction in trying to be the teacher who encourages questioning and doubt. We know from Socrates that it can be a most dangerous, even terrifying enterprise to engage in, as it can leave the student distraught and despairing, and seemingly with nothing. Yet it is also the case that without the teacher there is no certainty that the student will come to have doubt as the object of her thinking. This is not to say that the student will not doubt; she does this all the time. It is to say, however, that she may not come to understand the ways in which doubt becomes content as philosophical experience, nor, therefore, its formative educational significance and the part it plays in her own self-identity and its continual negation. Here the task for the teacher is not only to hear these questions and doubts but also to recognise their substantial formative import. We have seen how, for example, Buber and Weil sought to influence and attend to this import. But unlike Hegel, Nietzsche and now Kierkegaard, they did not recognise the speculative form and content of doubt and could not, therefore, fully develop a philosophy of the teacher.

Here then we approach Kierkegaard’s philosophy of the teacher. As we will see now, the teacher knows that the truth of a student’s own development through thinking is not the teacher’s to give. When the student understands doubt, it is because the doubts are his own, the work is his own and what he realises about himself is that he is at the same time both master and servant of this work. Kierkegaard is able to give this learning, this education, philosophical form and content, and to comprehend this we must employ two further Kierkegaardian terms, repetition and recollection.

For Kierkegaard, the truth of education through questioning cannot be introduced into a student. It must already be there, implicitly and potentially, waiting to be recognised by the student. This is why Socrates is a midwife. He only delivers what is the conception of the student herself. Kierkegaard’s philosophy of the teacher demands that the teacher also understands that although the moment of delivery is here and now, its very nature is something eternal, something that exists before and after the moment of each delivery. A teacher, therefore, cannot teach the truth of the moment, for that would be to become the master of the eternal. But she can teach the untruth of the moment, i.e. that untruth has always been the condition of the student. Untruth is realised by the learner when what he recollects from his (new state of) knowing is that he now knows that ‘previously’ he did not know. Indeed, it was ‘his own fault’ (Kierkegaard, 1985, p. 15) that he did not know. In this new state of knowing that he was in untruth, he is nevertheless still in untruth, for now all he knows is that
he did not know, and by knowing that he did not know, he is removed from or ‘excluded from the truth, even more than when he was ignorant of being untruth’ (p. 14). The moment, the teacher, is the truth of that untruth. It can be brought about by the teacher but precisely at the moment when the teacher becomes redundant. She has been the keeper of the truth of the student’s doubt, but now that the gift has been received by the student from himself, the keeper’s job is done. Kierkegaard is clear. The teacher can ‘save’ the student from himself, ‘deliver’ him from his own self-captivity and ‘reconcile’ the student to knowing himself through the contradiction of his own doubting, his own thinking and his own work. The student becomes ‘a new person’ (p. 18). The teacher has been ‘the occasion for the pupil to understand himself’ (p. 24).

What exactly does it mean for the teacher to be the moment or the occasion of truth and untruth? Her part in this recollection is in effect determined in and by repetition. Climacus understands consciousness to be reality and ideality, and understands consciousness of this relation to be the third partner or subjectivity’s subjectivity. In this respect, the third partner is already presupposed in any experience; experience is, therefore, always a repetition of what it has not yet realised but what must be presupposed if there is to be any experience at all. Without repetition, without the third partner, there is, as Kierkegaard keeps repeating throughout his analysis of the teacher in Philosophical Fragments, only the (empty repetition of the) Socratic. Repetition is not merely reflective, for the latter is only a duality. Repetition is speculative because it repeats precisely the impossibility of a beginning that can be known only as unknown. Recollection is of repetition, and repetition is of recollection. The teacher is implicated in this relation as its actuality. She has not provided the condition for learning, that is, she has not been able to begin with doubt. Nor has she been able to be the whole circle of learning, the whole of recollection and repetition. The vocation of the teacher here is to be the love that gives recollection and repetition its actual moment, its subjectivity and its inequality with itself.

Since the eternal alone is the beginning and the end that are presupposed but known as untruth, and since the eternal has love within and not without, then this actuality of learning is love being made known. Love is what moves the eternal ‘to make his appearance’ (p. 24) says Kierkegaard, for only love can find equality or unity in what is unequal. In this philosophy of education, and its import for the philosophy of the teacher, it is love that is eternity fulfilled in time as the moment, and love that is the moment ‘swallowed by recollection into its eternity’ (p. 25).13 Kierkegaard says of the teacher as this moment, or this occasion, that ‘the moment emerges precisely in the relation of the eternal resolution to the unequal occasion. If this is not the case then we return to the Socratic and do not have the god or the eternal resolution or the moment’ (ibid.). Or, let us say, the teacher emerges precisely in the relation of the eternal to the finite. If this were not the case, then learning and teaching would have no substance and subjectivity of their own; there could be no philosophy of the teacher for there could be no occasion of inequality.
In *Philosophical Fragments* Kierkegaard argues that recollection is the ancient form of repetition, lacking, as it were, subjectivity’s subjectivity. Viewed merely Socratically, recollection does not have the significance of an historical point of departure, a third partner between knowing and object. Thus Socrates is a midwife but not a teacher. But recollection as the eternal relation of the duplexity of consciousness, or as repetition, becomes a moment ‘in time [that] must have [a] decisive significance’ (p. 13) for it is when the previously unknown and nonexistent eternal ‘came into existence’ (ibid.). The decisive significance of this historical point of departure, where recollection is repetition, or is subjectivity’s subjectivity, is also the philosophy of the teacher in Kierkegaard: the moment of decisive educational significance, but not the significance itself. The lover and the beloved, God and his children, are known to each other in the inequality of time and the moment. This ‘unhappiness is the result not of the lovers’ being unable to have each other but of their being unable to understand each other’ (p. 25). This equality in inequality is the vocation of Kierkegaard’s philosophical teacher.

If we want to locate this third partner within a philosophical pedagogy, we can return to Kierkegaard’s notion of indirect communication. In the *Postscript* he notes a crucial difference between thinking that is objective and thinking that is subjective. In line with the demand that there needs to be a ‘form of communication suitable to each’ (Kierkegaard, 1968, p. 68), Kierkegaard discusses what those forms might be. Objective knowledge is what is final, complete, and known as a result. As such, it can be copied and learned by rote. It ‘imparts itself without further ado, and, at the most, takes refuge in assurances respecting its own truth, in recommendations as to its trustworthiness, and in promises that all men will at some time accept it—it is so certain’ (p. 70). Indeed, such certainty, says Kierkegaard, may even be for ‘the sake of the teacher, who feels the need of the security and dependability afforded by being in a majority’ (p. 71).

The case with subjective knowledge is, however, entirely different. We have seen throughout this study of the philosophy of the teacher that the goal of the teacher to attend to the student thinking for himself repeats the aporetic (and unequal) relation of freedom and authority. We have also seen the irony that the more successful the teacher is in teaching someone to think for herself, the greater is the danger that the student merely re-thinks what she has been told by the teacher. Kierkegaard notes a similar problem with regard to teaching all forms of knowledge and thinking that are subjective and have their truth as activity inwardly and not outwardly. First, their characteristics differ. Objective knowledge is abstract and certain, whereas subjective knowledge is always in the process of becoming, or being generated inwardly by experience. Their modes of communication are, therefore, very different. Objective knowledge can be taught directly since the subjective dispositions of teacher and taught do not affect its veracity. With subjective knowledge, however, the situation is the opposite. By definition, such knowledge is not directly transferable from one person to another. Therefore—the second point—Kierkegaard
refers to the communication of subjective knowledge as containing ‘a double reflection’ (p. 68). ‘The reflection of inwardness gives to the subjective thinker a double reflection. In thinking, he thinks the universal; but as existing in this thought and as assimilating it in his inwardness, he becomes more and more subjectively isolated’ (ibid.).

Kierkegaard cites a few examples to illustrate this conundrum of communication. For example, suppose someone wanted to communicate that Truth is inwardness, that in the God-relationship each must know the truth of God inwardly. Suppose, says Kierkegaard, this teacher was ‘a philanthropic soul who simply had to proclaim this to all and sundry; suppose he hit upon the excellent short cut of communicating it in a direct form through the newspapers, thus winning masses of adherents’ (p. 72). His problem, of course, would be that adherents to or disciples of the message ‘think for yourselves’ act contrary to the truth that they espouse. Indeed, Kierkegaard goes as far as to say that the truth of subjective inwardness when it attracts disciples gets bellowed out by ‘town criers of inwardness’ (p. 71). Such a man is ‘quite a remarkable species of animal’ (pp. 71–72) for he fails to see the contradiction of being a disciple of the truth of someone else’s inwardness. What is at stake here is the nature of the negative. The double reflection of inwardness is both the thinking of the universal and the relationship of the subject to that universal. Through the latter he becomes conscious of the negative, for truth is only as it appears for him—that is to say, it is subjective, and thus precisely its universality is negated in being known. If this, then, is the truth of the content—that it can only be known negatively—it is this truth that has to be taught. Yet it cannot be taught directly as if it were positive knowledge. So Kierkegaard says that in his relation to his knowledge, the subjective thinker is ‘as negative as he is positive; for his positiveness consists in the continuous realisation of the inwardness through which he becomes conscious of the negative’ (p. 78). Those disciples who then try to teach the truth of negative knowledge are like town criers trying to ‘advertise, prescribe and offer for sale their beatific negative wisdom’. They are, however, ‘deceived’ for whilst the genuine subjective thinker of the truth of the inward ‘constantly keeps the wound of the negative open’, the town criers ‘let the wound heal over and become positive’ (ibid.).

The difference between the teacher who knows the truth of inwardness and the teacher who mis-recognises its negativity and its difficulty lies, then, in their respective modes of communication, or in their methods of teaching. The teachers who are town criers are vain because they believe that ‘some other human being needs their help’ (p. 73), and they hold that their interventions ‘must have results’ (p. 79). As such, they communicate directly the kind of knowledge that ‘does not lend itself to direct utterance’ (p. 73). Subjective knowledge, which is essentially negative and always in process of becoming, ‘cannot’, says Kierkegaard, ‘be directly communicated’. Thus, ‘when anyone proposes to communicate such truth directly, he proves his stupidity; and if anyone else demands this of him, he too shows that he is stupid’ (ibid.).
It is easy to see here how the difference between objective and subjective knowledge that Kierkegaard describes leads to the conclusion that indirect communication avoids or perhaps overcomes the abstraction of direct communication. But this is not the truth of Kierkegaard’s observations here. To teach the negative indirectly requires abstraction because the negative will be realised in the deficiencies of that abstraction. To teach the negative directly is also abstraction, for the negative is not direct. Therefore the teacher, in order to take the negative seriously, must take its abstraction seriously enough to recognise the essential part it too plays in education. Kierkegaard is not offering the teacher a choice here between either direct or indirect pedagogies in teaching for the moment or for the occasion of learning. Seen as a choice, the negative is again abstracted, this time from itself as the relation of the relation of direct and indirect communication. When Kierkegaard’s dualisms are not read speculatively, their triadic truth in and as the education of self-consciousness is suppressed. This is true, in one way or another, of each of the perspectives in philosophy of education and educational theory explored above in Parts I and II. To take education seriously the teacher has to take its abstraction seriously and, indeed, teach abstraction, and be abstraction. Only in this risk is the third partner, the work, free to be itself within the conditions of its possibility. Kierkegaard offers a pedagogy of both direct and indirect communication, as we saw above, as love and as the inequality of the true as it exists. The inequality of teacher and student in the philosophy of the teacher is not optional. It is precisely where the educational substance of the relationship is to be found. The same is the case in recollection and repetition. The teacher must teach for recollection, and then be negated in repetition. It is an inequality that teaches abstractly for its own (educational) truth.

We can further understand this in terms of the master and the servant. Kierkegaard is not saying that the teacher must not try to teach the students to think for themselves. Rather, as with Hegel’s and Nietzsche’s philosophies of the teacher, it is the truth of the teacher to do so. There is a great deal at stake here, for Kierkegaard confers upon the recollection and repetition of doubt, and the teacher’s abstraction and negation within it, the highest possible significance.

The negativity that pervades existence, or rather, the negativity of the existing subject . . . has its ground in the subject’s synthesis: that he is an existing infinite spirit. The infinite and eternal is the only certainty, but as being in the subject it is in existence; and the first expression for this, is its elusiveness, and this tremendous contradiction, that the eternal becomes, that it comes into being (pp. 75–76).

The philosophical and spiritual significance of this is clear. It is in our negative experiences that the infinite and the eternal come into being, in us, as subjective and inwardly self-conscious individuals. Many people may ‘know’ objectively of infinity and the eternal, or of God, or of Truth, or whatever, but to know them objectively, merely as knowledge, is an illusion because in ‘direct utterance the elusiveness is omitted’ (p. 76).
Therefore, and on the other hand, negative thinkers who recognise the necessity of the illusion ‘always have one advantage, in that they have something positive, being aware of the negative element in existence’ (p. 75). The teacher of the negative is thus master of, yet also servant to, the ambivalence of subjective knowledge. Such a teacher in communicating the truth of this ambivalence remains master and servant in his own subjectivity to that ambivalence, i.e. to its being negative and positive. He is ‘constantly in process of becoming . . . [he] constantly reproduces this existential situation in his thoughts, and translates all his thinking into terms of process’ (p. 79). Such a teacher has his pedagogy ‘in the decisive dialectic of the infinite’ (p. 79f) and yet continues to teach. As such, this philosophical teacher ‘is the elusiveness that pertains to the infinite in existence’ (p. 79).

PHILOSOPHICAL CHARACTER
The philosophy of the teacher as we are presenting it here is not a matter merely of knowing what philosophers have said. It lies elsewhere, in the contradictory and aporetic experiences that teachers have; in the ways that these experiences both mis-recognise and recognise the work that teachers are engaged in; and, perhaps most crucially, in the meaning and significance that can be discovered within this work. There is always a temptation, however, for teachers to seek, and for theorists to provide, prescriptions as to what should be done—if, for example, one is to practise the theory under consideration. This is not the way to approach the kinds of thinking and reasoning that contribute to and constitute the philosophy of the teacher as presented here. Instead, a different question emerges for the teacher: not what should I do, but what do I learn about myself in deciding what to do? In Part I, earlier, we saw the kind of protesting spirit that could live in the equivocation of the broken middle and the failure of nerve of those who could not. We saw the courage required in the face of the overwhelming power of abstraction in modern life to hold to the commitment that our thinking must examine itself. We saw also in Part II the kinds of oppositions that thinking was likely to face in leaving and returning to the Cave, and we saw in the conclusion how Rose argued that it is in such struggles and oppositions, in one’s actual work and life, that ‘you discover you are a philosopher: it is not something you ever become’; it is ‘a passion’ (Rose, 1999, p. 42).

The philosophy of the teacher, understood in this way, speaks then of the formation of character gained in working with difficulties and oppositions, and of the significance of the learning therein. In the previous chapter we opposed Miss Marple to Deleuze’s knight of faith, arguing that in Marple the transcendental is present in her passing unnoticed whilst noticing everything, and present because its re-presentation in Marple is its condition of possibility and hers. We can expand now upon the knights of faith and resignation as they appear in Kierkegaard’s Fear and Trembling. As with Miss Marple, it is not the knight of faith himself who
is imperceptible. On the contrary, his ordinariness makes him easily recognisable. He looks like ‘the tax collector’ (Kierkegaard, 1983, p. 39), a book-keeper, a church-goer, a husband, a bourgeois and the local butcher. What is imperceptible in him is the difficult relation between the infinite and the finite. This knight of faith only makes sense in relation to the knight who precedes him, the knight of infinite resignation. This latter, says Kierkegaard, knows the infinite but is resigned to its being impossible in the finite. This is to express the infinite spiritually for it is to know that the truth of the infinite in the finite is negative and as such is true when renounced. The knight of infinite resignation must lose the infinite in the finite in order to gain the infinite in the finite negatively, or spiritually. The ascetic is happy here for there is ‘comfort in pain’ (p. 45). Thus these knights ‘are easily recognisable’ (p. 38) for one can see the pain they suffer and the comfort they attain in suffering for the sake of the infinite in the finite.

The knight of faith, on the other hand, has found the infinite in the finite not negatively, in its renunciation, but positively. As such, contra the ascetic, the knight of faith gains the finite ‘whole and intact’ (p. 37). He too is recognisable, but says Kierkegaard (or Johannes de Silentio, Kierkegaard’s pseudonym here) ‘they who carry the treasure of faith are likely to disappoint for externally they have a striking resemblance to bourgeois philistinism, which infinite resignation, like faith, deeply disdains’ (p. 38). The most striking thing about the knight of faith is his lack of distinguishing features. What is not easily recognised here is the infinite in the finite, the sublime in the pedestrian, or how this man of faith has faith without resignation.

Kierkegaard’s discussion of the knights in terms of movement, which, as we saw above, is what Deleuze picks up on, contrasts their manner of dancing. The knights of infinite resignation are the ballet dancers who leap and return to earth, but on landing ‘are unable to assume the posture immediately, they waver for a moment, and this wavering shows that they are aliens in the world’ (p. 41). However, the knight of faith knows finitude to be ‘the surest thing of all’ (p. 40) and when he lands from his leap he shows himself able ‘to come down in such a way that instantaneously [he] seems to stand and to walk, to change the leap into life into walking’ (p. 41). This knight does not waver on landing; indeed, there is no distinction to be seen between leaping, landing and walking, or between the infinite and the finite. But this knight of faith is not, as Deleuze would have it, the grass between the paving stones. The movement of this knight of faith is not rhizomatic. Quite the contrary. The roots of the knights are in each other, in the sky as under the ground. The knight of faith and the knight of infinite resignation exist in relation to each other; it is here, in the relation, that the absolute is known and not-known. The knight of faith has found the infinite in the renunciation of resignation and has therein, by virtue of what Kierkegaard calls the absurd, regained what was lost. The point is that it has to be lost in order that faith is found in the loss. If there is no renunciation, then faith is not absurd, and if faith is not absurd, then the infinite does not return, contradictorily, to the finite.
The relation of the knights is the same relation, seen above, of recollection and repetition. The knight of infinite resignation finds peace in suffering through recollection or in reminding himself of the fact that he does not have the eternal. This is infinite movement. The knight of faith finds peace through repetition, or in the movement of knowing the eternal in recollection. Kept separate from each other, the knight of infinite resignation never makes movement his own truth, and the knight of faith never makes truth his own movement. Together, as recollection and repetition, as infinite resignation and faith, they are the movement of truth and the truth of movement, and very different from the idea of movement that Deleuze finds here. When the observer knows what to look for, neither of the knights, nor the truth that encompasses them, is imperceptible. But the observer must not look only for movement, she must also look for the movement of movement, or the relation of learning in truth and truth in learning.

Kierkegaard has made this same argument for the teacher. The transcendent is present but unnoticed in the moment of educational decisiveness between teacher and student. The teacher, here, is the representation of the eternal in its moment of inequality as love. We must not underestimate the challenge, the struggle, and the pain that such representation demands of teachers. Equally, we must not underestimate the philosophical character that they display in realising the truth of such work. If the philosophy of the teacher is to contribute anything to this, it is to help all of us who teach to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning and significance of our struggles: to recognise the transcendent in our own misrecognitions. It is to Kierkegaard now, at the end of our study, that we turn finally for a philosophical, spiritual and religious examination of the character demanded for such struggles. We will make use here of some of his *Upbuilding Discourses* written between 1843 and 1844.

We saw above how doubt for Kierkegaard is the eternal and the finite in recollection and repetition. We saw also the humbling implications of this for the teacher. Knowing that in doubt ‘man has a condition he cannot give himself’ (1990, p. 137), and further that ‘no man can give what he himself has not been given’ (p. 156), the teacher finds the essentially negative truth of his work. In Kierkegaard’s *Upbuilding Discourses* we find that he extends this humility beyond teaching to the struggle for nothing less than the soul. Because, as we will see, the gift of the soul is determined within the same aporia of recollection and repetition as doubt, the same human characteristics demanded by the latter are, now, also demanded by the former.

With doubt we saw that the teacher must be the occasion of the gift even though it is not hers to give. This can only be worked through or lived out in her own doubting as spiritual difficulty, and known and realised in and as the philosophy of the teacher. She cannot at any time claim to own the gift, for that would be to usurp the gift and assume the title and status of master. Twice within a few pages Kierkegaard emphasises that teachers should honour the gift by giving but should always ensure that they are ‘more insignificant than the gift’ (p. 147).
Equally, just because the gift is not hers, she cannot simply give up on teaching altogether and become a pious servant with no significance as the occasion or the moment for the student. What Kierkegaard says the teacher needs to do is to struggle with the complexities of the gift and with her part in its being given and received. Thus, he says,

if you have any truth to offer mankind, reduce the impact of yourself. Nullify yourself, sacrifice yourself when offering your gift lest people take you instead of the gift . . . Then you are indeed the giver, but nevertheless more insignificant than the gift, and every good and perfect gift is from above, even though it came through you (p. 151, emphasis removed).

But, the question prompts itself, does one have to believe in God to be this kind of teacher and to experience teaching as being both master and servant? The answer is far from unproblematic. Kierkegaard was not a straightforward believer in God. He questions most strongly what a believer is. For Kierkegaard God is present in all the ways that we do not understand ourselves and the world, that is, in the inequality of the relationship. He has given us the gift of doubt, and God in doubt offers a potentially stronger relationship to God than one of professed belief. The only response he can make to the knights of faith—for example, Abraham—is that they have faith by virtue of the absurd. Indeed, in Kierkegaard’s terms, for subjectivity to know itself in doubt is to know itself as the need for God, and further to know that the need for God is the highest perfection.

The view ‘that to need God is a human being’s highest perfection, does indeed make life more difficult, but it also views life according to its perfection, and in this view a person, through the piecemeal experience of [this need], which is the right understanding with God, comes to know God’ (p. 321). In these terms there are then many ways that God can be present in the lives of teachers that do not involve being a member of a religion, or requiring church attendance, or even a professed faith. God can be present in all of the ways that a teacher embodies the philosophical struggle for the education of the student. Any teacher who is master so that she may become less than the master is involved in a spiritual struggle and, for Kierkegaard, is working on behalf of a gift that she knows is not hers to give. The teacher here, in Kierkegaard’s terms, undergoes a spiritual trial, for in giving the gift that has been given, she will not directly be the master of another. The gift of doubt has a contradictory character; it will ‘rob you as it gives’ (p. 137) and as such its truth can only be actual negatively.

This whole experience of the negation of the teacher, brought about by her own teaching, reveals the teacher to be both master and servant. In this relationship, with its attendant difficulties and contradictions, Kierkegaard finds what he calls an upbuilding education. Such an education is countered by the lives that people lead. Even though ‘every human life is planned religiously . . . who troubles himself to think of such things?’ . . .
one has no time . . . one grasps only what lies nearest’ (Kierkegaard, 1967, p. 94).

The same commitment to the oppositions and trials of formative work in the material world also apply to the soul. The idea that one should try to gain one’s soul begs the more difficult question of whether one is born with or without a soul. If born with a soul, then there is no need to gain it; if born without a soul then it is impossible to gain it, for it cannot be possessed as something external. As with doubt, the soul is not to be found in the temporal except as the inequality of the present transcendent. ‘The soul is the contradiction of the temporal and the eternal, and here, therefore, the same thing can be possessed and the same thing gained and at the same time’ (Kierkegaard, 1990, p. 163). As doubt could be gained and possessed in recollection and repetition, so the soul can also be gained and possessed in a similar, contradictory way. One gains one’s soul in the recollection that one has lacked a soul thus far; and one possesses one’s soul in the repetition of this recognition of its absence. Like doubt and the teacher, the soul for Kierkegaard is ‘the infinity in the life of the world in its difference from itself’ (p. 165). Or, in more detail,

[The] soul is a self-contradiction between the external and the internal, the temporal and the eternal. It is a self-contradiction, because wanting to express the contradiction within itself is precisely what makes it what it is. Therefore, his soul is in contradiction and is self-contradiction. If it were not in contradiction, it would be lost in the life of the world; if it were not self-contradiction, movement would be impossible. It is to be possessed and gained at the same time; it belongs to the world as its illegitimate possession; it belongs to God as his legitimate possession; it belongs to the person himself as his possession, that is, as a possession that is to be gained. Consequently he gains—if he actually does gain—his soul from God, away from the world, through himself (pp. 166–7).

‘Through himself’ here opens up for us the question of character that was raised at the beginning of this section. The struggle for the soul is the struggle of the eternal in the temporal. It is, we might say, the struggle of the broken middle between truth and being. Have we the philosophical character required to live within the difficulty, to struggle to live in and work for a truth that appears everywhere as a trial of our character? Kierkegaard notes the difficulties that oppose our doing so, and foremost among them is the idea that the meaning of the difficulty is that truth cannot be known. This denial, he says, takes three forms. First, there is the person who becomes ‘infatuated with temporality and worldly desires’ (p. 187); who seizes ‘the certainty of the moment’; ‘who danced the dance of pleasure until the end’ (ibid.); and who ‘vanishes in the life of the world [and] has won the world’ (p. 165). Second, there is what Kierkegaard calls ‘false doubt’. ‘False doubt doubts everything except itself’ (p. 137). Such doubt, says Kierkegaard, takes ‘arrogant pride in differences’ (p. 142). Equality in the one is discarded for the differences, or the heterogeneity of the earthly. Third, we stop thinking altogether: ‘if a person’s soul comes to
a standstill in the monotony of self-concern and self-preoccupation, then he is bordering on soul rot unless the contemplation stirs and moves him’ (p. 207).

Kierkegaard also describes stages in this philosophical development and education. In a pathway that resembles Hegel’s pathway of doubt or way of despair, Kierkegaard says:

in the first moment, then, a person is in a position that people later crave as something glorious; he is lost in the life of the world; he possesses the world, that is, he is possessed by it. But in the same moment he is different from the whole world, and he senses a resistance that does not follow the movements of the world’s life (p. 165).

At this point, in the disquiet of his separation from the world, he is in doubt. He realise that ‘life is uncertain’ and is ‘gripped by new anxiety’ (p. 185).

Faced by this anxiety, he may well respond in one of the ways described above. He may cut his losses and just gain for himself as much as possible whilst he is alive; he may become resigned to difference, forgetting that it fails to recognise its own illusion; or he may give up thinking altogether and get soul rot. In each case, Kierkegaard’s warning is the same. Faced by difficulty he becomes impatient for some kind of decision that will move him on:

Impatience can take many forms . . . In the beginning, one scarcely recognises it—it is so gentle, so indulgent, so inviting, so encouraging, so wistful, so sympathetic—and when it has exhausted all its arts, it finally becomes loud mouthed, defiant, and wants to explain everything although it never understood a thing (p. 196).

The result? Impatience regarding the loss of the unity with the one establishes itself ‘in all its agonising emptiness . . . as that cold fire that consumes the soul’ (ibid.). ‘If unity,’ he says, ‘does not lie at the base of diversity, similarity at the base of dissimilarity, then everything has disintegrated . . . [and] the soul is lost’ (p. 193). The child and the youth are a unity with life. But life gets tougher as doubt and uncertainty become more powerful. ‘The child is astonished at insignificant things. The adult has laid aside childish things; he has seen the wondrous, but it amazes him no more; there is nothing new under the sun and nothing marvellous in life’ (p. 226). The child, says Kierkegaard, has an immediate relation to God but ‘when one grows older, it is a long way to heaven, and the noise on earth makes it difficult to hear the voice’ (p. 243). Youth has a single voice, the older voice has too many; the older one gets, ‘the more complicated the accounting becomes’ (p. 246). With age and experience comes doubt and the separation from God, such that ‘the wrath of the separation seem[s] to make an understanding impossible’ (p. 248).

The way to retrieve joy in heaven and on earth is not through impatience but rather through patience. ‘Impatience is always untrue’ (p. 216).
Patience, however, is seen as the patience to remain with the contradictions, knowing patiently that in the contradiction is the gaining of one’s soul. To have patience is, therefore, to grow in patience, and this growth is upbuilding; it is educationally formative of character, for as one grows patient, so one gains one’s soul.

The person who wants to gain his soul in patience knows that his soul does not belong to him, that there is a power from which he must gain it, a power by whom he must gain it, and that he must gain it himself. He never abandons patience, not when he has gained it, since it was indeed patience that he gained, and as soon as he gives up patience he gives up the acquisition again . . . the gain is only in patience’ (p. 174).

Patience, he says, is ‘joy and sorrow’ (p. 189).

And what of the child, the youth and the older person? The child and the youth have no need of patience, their walking is easy, and when patience calls to them, it is of no concern to them for ‘at every moment there is a world to win’ (p. 195). But suddenly, at some point, and who can tell when it will be, life gets more difficult. Faced with searching now for a meaning to some difficulty in life, perhaps he now questions the glitter and vanity of the easy life; perhaps he now sees through the shallowness of his impatience? He goes on his way again, but this time the walking is much harder and others seem to pass him easily. And ‘no one stayed with him for fear of being held back’ (ibid.).

But patience—the truth of difficulty and struggle—‘does not abandon anyone in distress’ (p. 197). It knows ‘to use its assistance again in order to understand in all quietness that the most crucial issues are decided slowly, little by little, not in haste and all at once’ (p. 199):

[If] a person knew how to make himself truly what he truly is—nothing—knew how to set the seal of patience on what he had understood—ah, then his life, whether he is the greatest or the lowliest, would even today be a joyful surprise and be filled with blessed wonder and would be that throughout all his days, because there is truly only one eternal object of wonder—that is God—and only one possible hindrance to wonder—and that is a person when he himself wants to be something (p. 226).

Patience is the sign of ‘a healthy soul in the temporal’ (p. 259). The greater our anxiety, the greater our patience. Such expectancy, Kierkegaard says, ‘will reconcile everyone with his neighbour, with his friend, and with his enemy in an understanding of the essential’ (p. 265). How? Because we know that what we give is already given, and that what we hope for is already here. Thus Kierkegaard’s maxim for serving truth in life is the truly difficult: ‘He must increase; but I must decrease’ (John, 3, 30). And for the teacher, in the philosophy of the teacher, we can read this as ‘learning must increase; but I, as teacher, must decrease’.

Herein then is Kierkegaard’s upbuilding education, or formation and re-formation of philosophical and spiritual character. Here also is the import of Kierkegaard’s philosophy of the teacher; not merely knowledge but the
struggle of its being known and not-known, of its certainty and uncertainty. This philosophy of the teacher is wherever one finds the teacher struggling patiently as master to serve the student’s own education. Really good teachers know humility, as much as they know mastery, for they understand that however much is achieved in their classrooms by students, the work that is required by teachers is to make themselves unnecessary. So often one finds dedicated teachers humbly stepping back at the moments of greatest educational significance for the student.

Even more difficult, as we noted previously, teachers know that they may never see the fruits of their labours, for the work they have done may only bear fruit many years later. For Kierkegaard this humility in the face of the gift of education, a humility in which teachers recognise they have to be master in order to be servant, is education as God’s work, as love’s work. Whether teachers are religious in a formal sense or not, the work they do is spiritual work: they are willingly putting themselves forward in the truth of mis-recognition, as teachers, in order that the truth of philosophical experience and education be actual and not suppressed. This is the sacrifice that teachers make: not just to work for others but also to be themselves, to be teachers. This struggle is the teachers’ own inner struggle. It is their education about the kinds of persons they are, but it is an education generated by their work with students. Kierkegaard goes as far as to say that a truly spiritual person continually learns through their work that ‘the highest is this: that a person is fully convinced that he himself is capable of nothing, nothing at all’ (p. 307). To the judgement on Kierkegaard here that such piety is as misplaced as it is impossible, the response must be that this, precisely, is the point! To become nothing in the truth of the occasion of educational significance means that we must also risk being the something that we already are—the teacher! Only in the risk of this work with the student can the teacher realise ‘the condition for coming to know himself” (p. 317).

NOTES

1. Kierkegaard re-presents this problematic relationship between the beginning and the end of a system within his own work. The complex relationship between the Philosophical Fragments and its Concluding Unscientific Postscript is rehearsed by Kierkegaard at the beginning of the later text, raising the question as to whether the Postscript is a conclusion, an addendum, and a system. For a discussion of this, see Mulhall, 2001, Part Three.

2. It is for this reason that I speak of Kierkegaard in this chapter rather than refer to his pseudonyms. Contra Kierkegaard, we can see the author as the speculative relation of direct and indirect communication. To use only the pseudonyms is to suppress the third partner that Kierkegaard is commending us to recognise.

3. Except perhaps in one sense. A beginning is made with nothing in the life and death struggle as it appears in the Phenomenology. Nothing, or death, is determinate in the struggle, and life itself is only this determinate negation. Nothing happens, as it were. The Science of Logic also ends with this subjectivity of life.

4. This acts as an argument for McPherson against Wittgenstein’s reading of Kierkegaard as private and mentalistic (McPherson, 2001, p. 162).

5. In this ambivalence between Kierkegaard and Hegel, McPherson argues that we, the reader, in seeking to place or identify Kierkegaard’s philosophy too abstractly, or too directly, may
re-enact Hegel in our attempts to appropriate or apply, place or dismiss, Kierkegaard himself” (McPherson, 2001, p. 159).

6. Perhaps in some ways this is similar in nature to the concept of influence seen earlier in Buber: to inspire by influence but not by interference.

7. I have argued elsewhere, to the contrary, that the master–slave relation is the whole of Hegel’s philosophy; see Tubbs, 2004, Chapter 2. In addition, of course, the structure of the philosophy of the teacher as I have been presenting it grounds its inequality within the master–slave relation.

8. I do not think this is what McPherson intends, arguing as he is for opening the problematic of the inequality of indirect (and direct) communication, but it is the inevitable result of trying to impose the mutual onto a relation of inequality.

9. Johannes de Silentio and Johannes Climacus are two of the pseudonyms employed by Kierkegaard in his writing.

10. In 1841 Kierkegaard was awarded the Magister Artium diploma. This Magister degree corresponded, however, to the PhD in other faculties of the University of Copenhagen, a recognition made in the public announcement of Kierkegaard’s success. All those holding such degrees were declared to be Doctors of Philosophy in 1854 when the Magister degree was abolished.

11. The triadic nature of both thinkers was also explored earlier in Chapter 1.

12. This journal’s referee pointed out the obviousness of this observation. On the contrary, it is precisely the relation of the teacher as teacher and student that is the substance of the philosophy of the teacher. It may be obvious in an abstract sense, but it is the substance of difficulty in a philosophical sense.

13. Love, here, contra McPherson, is not any kind of mutuality. It is the inequality of God and man known as inequality in the relation of inequality.

14. Although it is part of Kierkegaard’s argument that such knowledge is not certain at all. See, for example, Kierkegaard, 1968, p. 71f.

15. Kierkegaard notes of Lessing that he prevented any following of disciples, ‘fearing to be made ridiculous through repetitioners who reproduce what is said like a prattling echo’ (Kierkegaard, 1968, p. 67).

16. As we saw earlier in Chapter 7, it is the same dilemma that Nietzsche’s Zarathustra is forced to re-present, eternally, as the teacher of the eternal return of will to power.

17. In Philosophical Fragments, Kierkegaard, as Climacus, says of himself ‘I have trained myself and am training myself always to be able to dance lightly in the service of thought’ (Kierkegaard, 1985, p. 7). He adds, ‘all I have is my life, which I promptly stake every time a difficulty appears. Then it is easy to dance, for the thought of death is a good dancing partner, my dancing partner’ (p. 8).

18. And, of course, doubt in God.

19. See also Tubbs, 2003c.

20. This forms the title of one of Kierkegaard’s Discourses; see Kierkegaard, 1990, pp. 275–289.