

[Guest Paper] †

**Kierkegaard's Concept of Irony and his Critiques on Romantic Irony****[Kierkegaard'ın İroni Kavramı ve Romantik İroni Üzerine Eleştirileri]**

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Research Article

**Abstract:** Søren Kierkegaard's doctoral dissertation, *The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates* (1841) is not only a comprehensive analysis of the concept of irony but it also comprises his own characterization of irony. Kierkegaard both elaborates on Socratic irony by addressing interpretations of Xenophon, Plato and Aristophanes and looks into core principles of romantic irony by concentrating on German Romantics in it. This article first examines the key features of Kierkegaard's irony and his critiques on romantic irony particularly through Friedrich Schlegel's famous novel, *Lucinde*. Then, it discusses whether Schlegel's romantic irony satisfies the necessary requirements of irony specified in *The Concept of Irony*. It also shows that in the light of Kierkegaard's critiques on Schlegel's irony, the traces of the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious spheres of existence which form the outline of Kierkegaard's existential philosophy and the place of irony as a border territory between the aesthetic and the ethical spheres, depicted in his later works, can already be found in *The Concept of Irony*.

**Keywords:** Kierkegaard, irony, romantic irony, Schlegel, the spheres of existence.

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## 1. Introduction

How do we see life and understand the world? How do we realize our existence? We all dedicate our lives to something which motivates us. Some of us live for the moment; are fond of satisfaction, pleasure and humble accomplishments, some live in a modest way by adhering to moral obligations, and some of us pursue a religious goal through faith. It is not possible to suppose a single way of living. These themes are analyzed in detail and human existence is elaborated from different perspectives in the works of Danish philosopher, Søren Kierkegaard. He categorizes the spheres or the stages of existence as the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious. All these types of existence are related to human beings due to the fact that existence does not merely imply proper functioning of a living entity but it also involves one's relation to himself and the world. The aesthetic sphere of existence becomes the symbol of level of possibilities and refers both the indulgence of sensuous inclinations and the pursuit of unlimited enjoyments, amusements and earthly pleasures. An aesthete is one who lives in accordance with pleasure, satisfaction and momentary delight. Satisfaction might not be the only result of a physical beauty; an intellectual idea or an artistic work might also lead to it. Freedom, creativity, standing and staying out of conventions and commitments generate the main characteristics of the imaginative world of an aesthete. As Patrick Gardiner underlines that the aesthetic sphere "can take on different guises; it manifests itself at diverse levels of sophistication and self-consciousness and it ramifies in directions beyond those of a mere pursuit of pleasure for pleasure's sake; indeed what he [Kierkegaard] says about it is more frequently reminiscent of nineteenth-century Romantic attitudes than the rather mundane hedonism associated with much eighteenth-century philosophical literature" (1988: 43).

On the other hand, the ethical sphere of existence involves the level of reality and action. In other words, in this sphere, one attempts to choose and live a moral life. As a moral agent, she takes responsibility for her actions and her choices. Besides, she has a high opinion of sound and proper moral judgments. The ethical individual takes life more seriously by being stuck with her personal identity. Of course, this does not mean that the ethical individual does not experience aesthetic pleasure and satisfaction, rather; her actions, responsibilities, moral judgments and choices have priority over aesthetic pleasures. Like other existentialist philosophers, Kierkegaard maintains that the

ultimate goal of human existence is the experience of possibilities of life and overcoming crises, limitations and boundary situations. Melancholy and despair are limitations for an aesthete and an ethical individual. The transition from one sphere to another is directly associated with individual choice. When an individual experiences limitations in one of the spheres she tries to overcome them in order to touch her deepest self or achieve the third sphere, the religious. This sphere signifies the awareness of God and the phenomenon of faith. One, who experiences this sphere, has an inclination to seek the infinite instead of the finite. Kierkegaard gives the outline of three spheres of existence through various pseudonyms in *Either/Or*, *Fear and Trembling*, *Repetition* and *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. In *Either/Or*, he touches upon the significance of the aesthetic and the ethical spheres and tries to identify the margin between these two spheres with narrative of an aesthete and a representative of the ethical. *Fear and Trembling* also gives insight into religious sphere through Kierkegaard's narration of a Biblical story, Abraham's sacrifice of his son, Isaac. In this article, initially, Kierkegaard's theory of irony will be analyzed and his critiques on Romantic irony with reference to Friedrich Schlegel's famous novel *Lucinde* will be reviewed. Then, the place of irony in his existential system will be elaborated within the context of his ethical criticism.

## 2. Kierkegaard's Remarks on Irony

When considered the lexical meaning of irony, it purports a mode of speaking that a speaker means opposite what she says. *The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates* (1841), both Kierkegaard's first work and his doctoral dissertation, serves for a detailed inquiry concerning the concept of irony. Not only does his dissertation include Kierkegaard's analysis of Socratic irony from perspectives of Xenophon, Plato and Aristophanes but it also comprises his critiques on Hegel and Romantic irony with reference to Friedrich Schlegel, Tieck and Solger.

In *The Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard initially focuses on necessary connection between Socrates and the concept of irony. He states that "the concept of irony makes its entry into the world through Socrates" (Kierkegaard, 1989: 9). Many of us today settle over this fact and we believe just like Kierkegaard that for Socrates, irony was not an instrument for philosophical practice rather; it stood for a way of living. Kierkegaard remarks the fact that utterly apart from

mockery and deception, Socrates himself pretended to be ignorant and condoned the interlocutor's smattering and even supercilious manners. The more Socrates descended the depths of irony, the more every word gravitated to infinite possibilities. Kierkegaard investigates the nature and the characteristics of irony with a systematic method in *The Concept of Irony*. He writes that in irony "the phenomenon is not the essence but the opposite of the essence. When I am speaking, the thought, the meaning, is the essence, and the word is the phenomenon. These two elements are absolutely necessary..." (Kierkegaard, 1989: 247). This means that spoken words are not compatible with the meaning. Irony, says Kierkegaard, arises from subjectivity of an individual and one has to live subjectivity's subjectivity. Qualification of subjectivity and floating immense and boundless ocean of possibilities excite and energize the ironist for the process of destroying given actuality. Kierkegaard borrows an expression from Hegelian terminology and characterizes irony as "infinite absolute negativity" (1989: 254). Irony is "infinite" in the sense that it is not "directed against this or that particular existing entity but against the entire given actuality at a certain time and under certain conditions" (Kierkegaard, 1989: 254). Besides, it is "negative" because it negates given actuality. And it is absolute due to the fact that "which it negates is higher something that still is not" (Kierkegaard, 1989: 261). Here, Kierkegaard gives Socratic irony as an example which explicitly meets such criteria. For Kierkegaard, "[i]t was not *actuality in general* that he negated; it was the *given actuality* at a particular time, the substantial actuality as it was in Greece, and what his irony was demanding was the actuality of subjectivity, of ideality" (1989: 271, emphasis added).

Besides all these, says Kierkegaard, proper irony necessitates possessing negative freedom. As a speaking subject if one is aware of what she is saying and efficiently expressing what she means and a listener is able to grasp what she means, then she is said to be positively free. In this case, ironic speech annihilates itself because of the fact that it seems to violate one of the main rules of irony which is phenomenon's being opposite of essence. In other words, the essence "meaning" and phenomenon "word" become identical (Kierkegaard, 1989: 248). On the other hand, if one is free from all constraints of given actuality, she is said to be negatively free. Such freedom enables individual to burst with excitement and be astonished due to infinity of possibilities. Kierkegaard draws a parallel between an ironist and a prophet but at the same time an ironist differs from a prophet. Since a prophet does not know the future

but has only anticipation of it, similarly an ironist points out something that he does not know but he has the recognition of its coming. However, an ironist differs from a prophet in the sense that while a prophet "walks arm in arm with his age, the ironist has stepped out of line with his age, has turned around and faced it" (Kierkegaard, 1989: 261).

### 3. Schlegel's *Lucinde* and Kierkegaard's Critique on Schlegel's Romantic Irony

Friedrich Schlegel is considered as one of the pioneers of Early German Romanticism (Jena Romanticism). Schlegel's enthusiasm regarding literary theory, specifically the theory of novel and poetics, directed him to carry out his theory into practice in the wake of literary vision in Jena-Germany. The journey to new and dynamic movement, namely German Romanticism, began with his journal *Athenaeum* in 1798. Frederick Schlegel published this journal together with his brother, August Wilhelm Schlegel. After the appearance of the first volume, the seeds of a new movement were sown throughout the literary field which would then break the traditional and familiar chain of neoclassicism. A romantic battle started against seventeenth century literary movement with his best-known novel *Lucinde*<sup>1</sup>. In *Friedrick Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments*<sup>2</sup>, Peter Firchow makes an analogy between Romantic Movement and the French Revolution:

In 1799, the year of its [*Lucinde*] publication, the French Revolution was taking its first military steps into Empire, and a new literary and philosophical movement, as yet unnamed, and was also preparing to march against the old establishment. For Napoleon, it was supposedly a struggle of the liberal French armies against the restrictive forces of the conservative world; for the Romantics, as they came later to be called; it was war against the rational, neoclassic conception of art and

<sup>1</sup> *Lucinde* is the famous novel of Friedrich Schlegel. It was published in 1799. It has a characteristic of indicating relationship between German Romantic theory and practice. It is a love story between Julius, the male protagonist, and Lucinde, the female protagonist. The novel consists of thirteen sections with varying length. These are respectively: Confessions of a Blunderer, A Dithyrambic Fantasy on the Loveliest Situation in the World, A Character Sketch of Little Wilhelmine, Allegory of Impudence, A Idyll of Idleness, Fidelity and Playfulness, Apprenticeship for Manhood, Metamorphoses, Two Letters, A Reflection, Julius to Antonio, Yearning and Peace, Dalliance of the Imagination.

<sup>2</sup> All the references to Schlegel's fragments are given in parentheses with the number of page, the name of the fragment and the number of fragment. The abbreviations are: *Critical Fragments* (CF) and *Athenaeum Fragments* (AF).

life, symbolized by the French authors and philosophers of the seventeenth century (1971: 3).

So then, romanticism can be counted as a watershed due to its representation of something entirely new in literature. The main feature of romantic poetry lies at the heart of self-reflection and “it tries to and should mix and fuse poetry and prose, inspiration and criticism, the poetry of art and the poetry of nature; and make poetry lively and sociable, and life and society poetical; poeticize wit and fill and saturate the forms of art with every kind of good, solid matter of instruction, and animate them with the pulsations of humor” (Schlegel, 1971: 175, AF 116). Romanticism, completely independent from established conventions, concentrates on emotional experience and boundlessness of imagination. The creative imagination results from sentimentality, emotional intensity, fantasy of free souls. Romantic poetry unveils a rebellious and revolutionary force by means of refusing to abide one single poetic structure and theme. It emerges exactly from mystery, fantasy and fairy tale. It falls back upon the nature, delusions, different expressions of feeling of loneliness and longing.

As Schlegel states in *Critical Fragments*, irony which is the key element of Romantic poetry “surveys everything and rises infinitely above all limitations, even above its own art, virtue, or genius” (Schlegel, 1971:148, CF 42). In romantic poetry, irony is defined to see all conflicts and dilemmas of life from a certain distance. It turns into a formal and fictional means of expression from a dramatic and rhetorical way of expression. Schlegel designates the notion of romantic irony as a form of “paradox” (1971: 149, CF 48). Besides, romantic irony serves not only for aesthetic purpose but also it has a philosophical aspect. It sticks to assimilation of aesthetic impression within the philosophical practice. “Philosophy is the real homeland of irony, which one would like to define as logical beauty: for wherever philosophy appears in oral or written dialogues—and is not simply confined into rigid systems—there irony should be asked for and provided” (Schlegel, 1971: 148, CF 42). The main purpose of denomination of philosophy as a real homeland of irony underlies the name of Socrates who is commemorated as the first practitioner of irony and his technique resulting in logical beauty. Schlegel differentiates romantic irony from the rhetorical one. The real intention, says Schlegel, is to form a bridge between the ancient and the modern. He states that “[t]here are ancient and

modern poems that are pervaded by the divine breath of irony throughout and informed by a truly transcendental buffoonery. Internally the mood that surveys everything and rises infinitely above all limitations, even above its own art, virtue, or genius; externally, in its execution: the mimic style of an averagely gifted Italian *buffo*" (Schlegel, 1971: 148, CF 42).

We realize that Romantic irony enlivens in his famous novel, *Lucinde* in the sense that Schlegel accentuates this through the narration his male protagonist that "destruction and creation; one and all; and so may the eternal spirit hover forever over the eternal system of time and life, and observe each bold wave before it ebbs away" (Schlegel, 1971: 57). Although the novel was accepted and appreciated by literary milieu and seen as a "Gospel of Young Germany Movement" (Kierkegaard, 1989: 286) it was subjected to severe criticisms. Reputation of the novel seems to be a little complicated; although many authors recognized and accepted it as a representation of a new vision in literature and poetry, many others expressed their disapproval by criticizing its genre. The novel does not narrate a simple love story but both sensual and spiritual forms of love. There are some clear remarks especially which underline unusual aspect of it. The concept of persona has great importance for Schlegel; therefore, he uses "parabasis" as a technique. Parabasis or method of interruption has a connection with the idea of irony. That is to say, parabasis reflects "a continual self-consciousness of the work itself, of an awareness of the work of art as a fiction and as an imitation of reality at one and the same time" (Firchow, 1971: 29). For Schlegel, one can realize both the finite reality and its paltriness when desecrating the eternity. The main themes become more comprehensible with an analysis of some parts of the novel. The first parts of the novel give idiosyncrasy of Julius, the male protagonist, which prepare a departure reader to the uncommon and extraordinary characteristic of the novel.

The first part, the letter from Julius to Lucinde, symbolically suggests several of the themes which will occupy the novel: its setting in a garden indicates the importance of nature; expression of passionate love for Lucinde (as girl, woman and mother) strikes a note which will be picked up repeatedly later on; its dichotomy of illusion and reality prepares us for subsequent fantasies and allegories—all of them, significantly, products of the imagination; and, finally, its emphasis upon confusion in nature and art warns us to expect further innovations in the structure of the novel (Firchow, 1971: 32).

Other significant themes prominent in *Lucinde* are as follows: Assuming love as beyond any moral system and religious belief, Schlegel attempts to achieve conceptualization of a different religious and moral system in his novel. Having believed and also convinced of a demand for a new religious view, not in strict sense, he aims a naïve delineation of a new religion and mythology in *Lucinde*. The content of the novel comprises several religious remarks like “references to Julius as a priest, Lucinde as a priestess, to both being purified, to his being anointed, to her being, at least in a vision, beatified” (Firchow, 1971: 23). The part known as “Apprenticeship for Manhood” clearly beckons to interrogative manner of Julius “regarding what and why one should believe, and how, in consequence, one is to act” (Firchow, 1971: 23). Here, what Schlegel means by a new religion is actually religion of love which carries metaphorical connotation through Lucinde’s being a priestess and Julius’ priesthood. Moreover, in another part of the novel, “Allegory of Impudence”, Julius learns to reject the conventional morality by setting and interiorizing an unorthodox system of morality. “A Description of Little Wilhelmine” also expresses distinction between morality of nature and traditional morality figuratively. For Schlegel, one can recognize her existence only by means of loving another person. The love and the passion between two people tie them closely and lead to an intimate relationship. The ultimate goal of the lovers is to attain complete infinity and form a sensual and spiritual union. The only possible way for this attainment is to abide by the marvelous and the magical nature of love. In second section of the novel, “A Dithyrambic Fantasy on the Loveliest Situation in the World”, Julius identifies his passionate love with unity and infinity (Schlegel, 1971: 47). Schlegel also establishes the notion of union of opposites by pointing out nature and universe. He, then, attempts to demonstrate a process, a metamorphosis and state of becoming by means of union of opposites. Julius signifies the notion of the union of opposites in nature with following words:

After much preparation, one plants the seed in the earth; the little plant strains and labors to make a little room for itself, and finally it pushes itself up into the open air. Then the sun shines, the rain falls, and springtime blows over the earth. The little plant thrives and all its parts and grows ever lovelier; everything goes well and properly and slowly; and everyone who sees it, finds pleasure in it. Then the blossom comes. For a few moments the whole plant is transfigured, and then it withers. Now what was the destiny of this flower; to bloom or to wither?... And the heart? Well, it must beat—first calmly, then quickly (and more quickly), then slowly again, until it finally bleeds to death (Schlegel, 1971: 137).

As mentioned earlier, throughout *Lucinde*, Schlegel aims to distinguish morality of nature from conventional morality by accepting new and untraditional one. He also generates a new religious system, namely religion of love, by focusing on a spiritual transformation from physical love. In one of the last parts of the novel, "Two Letters", there are new recognitions related to human existence. Julius and Lucinde reach a higher stage with the pregnancy of Lucinde. This news leads to new realization that "faced with prospect of fatherhood, Julius discovers within himself not only a new esteem for parental responsibility and useful, domestic objects, but also the knowledge that the union of two bodies and spirits is not final and complete. A more complete union, a greater wholeness, can only be achieved through the creation of new life" (Firchow, 1971: 35). Along with the feeling of parenthood which gives rise to a further recognition and new awareness related to complete union, the novel also reflects a different and new manifestation of love. Both for Lucinde and Julius, friendship is a different kind of union and a further gratification of their existence. In "Dalliance of Imagination", the reader can observe that imagination which is essential for the attainment of the infinite provides comprehensive awareness of one's being.

After all mentioned aspects of *Lucinde* in this article a question arises: Does Schlegel's irony in *Lucinde* satisfy the necessary requirements of Kierkegaard's irony? It seems that it fulfills them. This is because the notion of negative freedom is clearly discerned from both the letters of protagonists and from third person narrative in the novel. Lucinde is characterized as follows: "Only whatever she loved and respected in her heart had any true reality for her; everything else was spurious: and she knew what was valuable. Also she had renounced all ties and social rules daringly and decisively and lived a completely free and independent life" (Schlegel, 1971: 98). Besides, Lucinde and Julius intend to build up unconventional moral and religious system; this means that they feel free from all constraints. Furthermore, Lucinde as a name means "light" in Latin, but in novel it is connoted as moon light instead of day light (Firchow, 1971: 24). Here, this satisfies another main rule of irony which is phenomenon's being opposite of essence. In other words, the essence "meaning" and phenomenon "word" are not identical. "The moon and woman are mirrors, are passive, and the man who loves a woman truly sees his own light and his own image reflected in her; he loves himself, Narcissus-like, in her. The love of woman leads, consequently, to a fuller awareness of the self"

(Firchow, 1971: 24). Additionally, the departure from actuality to the world of imagination and infinity of possibilities constitute already the mainframe of *Lucinde*. It also unites sensuality, passion and spirituality and it reflects successively the union of opposites. Romantic poet creates his possible world from his self-reflection of the outer world and fuses together antithetical elements by means of symbols and allegories.

Kierkegaard touches on Schlegel's Romantic creed and criticizes *Lucinde* thoroughly in *The Concept of Irony* by focusing on various other conditions. First of all, Kierkegaard says that if Romantic poetry is said to be a departure from actuality to imagination, it is crucial for Romantics not to disrupt the balance between the actual and the imaginative world. If an imbalance is at stake, in that case; one becomes closer to fantasy and drifts away from actuality. Kierkegaard illustrates this by pointing out Julius as a "personality trapped in reflection who develops only in successive process" (1989: 293). After that, he evaluates *Lucinde* from an ethical perspective. Although initially Kierkegaard interprets the novel as "obscene" (1989: 286) he looks into *Lucinde* by focusing on character traits and personalities of the male and the female protagonists lest an injustice to be done to Schlegel. However, in the end, he affirms his earlier belief regarding the indecency of the novel. In early 1800s, scandalous, shameless and impudent aspects of the novel also led to some serious criticisms in philosophical and literary circles. For some commentators, *Lucinde* formed and expressed love as passionate but there was a poor sense of spiritual love. In other words, physical love definitely precluded spiritual love. Considering the cultural conventions, moral traditions and relationship between sexes in 1800s the novel was interpreted as highly improper and unethical.<sup>3</sup> Kierkegaard also endorses that "what *Lucinde* attempts, then, is to annul all ethics—not only in the sense of custom and usage, but all the ethics that is the validity of spirit, the mastery of the spirit over the flesh" (1989: 293).<sup>4</sup> Söderquist also says the following regarding Kierkegaard's stance:

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<sup>3</sup> However, Frederick C. Beiser remarks that what Schlegel criticized in *Lucinde* were accepted social norms and conventions of the era because "he could see nothing right with a marriage and chastity if it resulted in repression and indignity" (2003: 104).

<sup>4</sup> George Pattison states that "[f]or ethics depends on the acquisition of a life-view and the life-view depends on the integration of ideality and reality, of the transcendence of the subject *and* of the subject's involvement with the daily detail of life" (1998: 94). This is, I believe, why Kierkegaard accuses Schlegel's *Lucinde* of annihilating ethics.

Kierkegaard describes romantic irony as a cultivated freedom from conventional life that eventually ends in nothing other than an abstract freedom. The laws, morals, habits, and ethical customs which are constitutive of the actual world cease to impose themselves as demands on the ironist. It is precisely the ironist's insistence upon negative freedom which marks the fundamental break with his or her inherited social context (2003: 81).

Earlier in his short essay entitled "On the Concept of Irony" Poul Martin Møller, the mentor of Kierkegaard at the University of Copenhagen, harshly criticized Schlegel's novel. He maintained that *Lucinde* was a shameless book. The moral and the ethical system which Schlegel attempted to set up in *Lucinde*, said Møller, was condemned to fail due to its lack of content and its empty structure which was utterly based upon extreme subjectivity and disjointed with ordinary life.<sup>5</sup> "Both hyper-subjectivism and the exaggerated sentimentalism of poetic infinity-seeking assumed for Møller the colors of self-deceit's irony and practical nihilism since neither paid any regard to individual everyday experience[...] For the subjective ego no such moral habits exist: a purely individual judgment postulates the standards of the moment..." (Thielst, 2003:59).

It is significant to analyze irony's place in existential spheres in order to decide how convenient and fruitful Kierkegaard's critique about the novel's obscenity and licentiousness. Kierkegaard identifies irony as *confinium* (border territory) between two spheres of existence: the aesthetic sphere and the ethical sphere. In other words, it is "an existence-qualification in which an individual stands between the immediacy of the aesthetic and the duty of the ethical" (Jothan, 2014: 181). It means that irony stands between two spheres of existence and belongs to neither of them. Although we encounter a specific analysis and examination regarding the exact place of irony in existential spheres in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), I believe, it is possible to trace its place back to *The Concept of Irony*. In his dissertation, Kierkegaard defines "transitional element" or a "confinium" (border territory) while discussing two types of irony and two types of dialectic. When it comes to the position where the mythical belongs to Kierkegaard states that "the mythical is not indispensably related to either the first two or the last two but is more like an

<sup>5</sup> K. Brian Söderquist also comments that "[t]he ethical objection to irony is evident in the remainder of his [Møller's] essay: at the heart of romanticism lies a distances subjectivity that views the world outside the subject as devoid of all moral and ethical authority" (2003: 92).

anticipation engendered by the one-sidedness of the first two or like a transitional element, a *confinium* [border territory], that actually belongs neither to the one nor to the other" (1989: 121). It follows from Kierkegaard's portrayal of the ironist in *The Concept of Irony* that although the ironist is well aware of limitations of aesthetic experience he does not still seem to be ready to commit himself an ethical task. Even so, says Kierkegaard, "it cannot really be said that the ironist places himself outside and above morality and ethics, but he lives far too abstractly, far too metaphysically and esthetically to reach the concretion of the moral and the ethical" (1989: 283). In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* Kierkegaard identifies humor as another border which stands between the ethical and the religious sphere. He writes that "[t]here are three existence-spheres: the aesthetic, the ethical, the religious. To these there correspond two boundaries: irony is the boundary between the aesthetic and the ethical; humour the boundary between the ethical and the religious" (Kierkegaard, 2009: 420-1). Climacus, Kierkegaard's spokesman in *Postscript*, states that "an ironic self is partially trapped or tilted towards either the demands of the aesthetic or ethical stage" (Jøthen, 2017: 181). In that case, it is not wrong to say that as in *The Concept of Irony* the ironist discerns the restrictions that he encountered in the aesthetic sphere because "the aesthete endlessly toys with and reflects upon various existential possibilities, but perpetually postpones vital decisions concerning his own existence" (Lippitt, 2000: 63) but at the same time "he is not prepared to make the concrete commitment to 'the eternal' that is characteristic of the ethical" (Lippitt, 2000: 63).

Romantic irony, for Schlegel, can "hover at the midpoint between the portrayed and the portrayer, free of all real and ideal self-interest, on the wings of poetic reflection, and can raise that reflection again and again to a higher power, can multiply it in an endless succession of mirrors" (Schlegel, 1971: 175, AF 116). Here, Kierkegaard suggests controlled irony. He is right in proposing that irony must be controlled because such an endless process may cause same reflections again and again. "In fact, the nihilistic lens of irony has a necessary place: but irony must be controlled with a commitment to living in the world" (Söderquist, 2003: 82). In *The Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard regards poetic life as an essential element for ironical attitude.<sup>6</sup> He accepts possession of negative

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<sup>6</sup> Kierkegaard writes that when the ironist gains a victory over given actuality and liberates himself from all constraints, he attains the ideal of living poetically. He states:

freedom and inward infinity on the path of poetical life as necessary requirements for an ironist. However, he considers Romantic irony as unpoetical. For him, “[t]he suspension of morality and ethical forms of life did not open a poetic existence for the Romantic ironist. Instead, the result was tedious emptiness. As the ironist lived in a totally hypothetical, subjunctive way, his life lost all *continuity*” (Kylliäinen, 2009: 64). Although Kierkegaard's critique regarding poetic life is against early Romantic Movement he gives *Lucinde* as a perfect example due to its representative characteristic of early Romantic trend. He propounds that the sign of living poetically in *Lucinde* falls into “an esthetic stupefaction” and gives an arbitrary self-satisfaction (Kierkegaard, 1989: 295-6). The reason of arbitrary self-satisfaction and spirituality is predominance of naked and amiss sensuality, voluptuousness and dithyrambic sexuality, in other words; mastery of flesh over the spirit dominates the entire novel.

Kierkegaard also comments that *Lucinde* is irreligious because “irony and the corresponding concept of ‘living poetically’ need to be re-contextualized in terms of a religious life-view. In such a re-contextualization, irony is ‘mastered’ by being applied in service of a higher ethical earnestness, rather than providing merely idle diversions for the poet’s fancy” (Rasmussen, 2005: 23). Only the religious, says Kierkegaard, is able to triumph over given actuality by means of negative freedom and attain the infinite. Here, he uses the religious instead of the ironist and he means an individual who possesses a sense of inward infinity. Kierkegaard emphasizes that “only the religious is able to bring about the true reconciliation, because it infinitizes actuality for me. Therefore, the poetic is a kind of victory over actuality, but the infinitizing is more of an emigration from actuality than a continuance in it. To live poetically, then, is to live infinitely” (1989: 297). We can see that in *The Concept of Irony*, Kierkegaard attempts to systematize his arguments against Schlegel's irony by collecting them under three categories: respectively the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious. These three elements which make up the content of his critiques remind us his spheres of existence whose general framework is given in his later

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“Irony is indeed free from its joys, free from the sorrows of actuality, but also free from its joys, free from its blessing, for inasmuch as it has nothing higher than itself, it can receive no blessing, since it is always the lesser that is blessed by the greater. This is the freedom that irony craves. Therefore, it watches over itself and fears nothing more than that some impression or other might overwhelm it, because until one is free in that way does one live poetically, and, as is well known, irony's great requirement was to live poetically” (Kierkegaard, 1989: 280).

works. These three specific subjects of his criticisms might be considered as indicative evidences of his system to be set up later through his pseudonymous works.

#### 4. Conclusion

It can be seen that Schlegel's method of irony in *Lucinde* is clearly different from rhetorical irony when evaluated from the aesthetic perspective. His concept of irony based upon creativity, freedom, pure imagination and indulgence of sentiments floats on the ocean of possibilities. As he is not committed to any social rules and convention, he only yearns for the ideal and the infinite. His concept of irony just fulfills the necessary requirements of Kierkegaard's irony portrayed in detail in *The Concept of Irony*. However, as a follower of his mentor, Poul Martin Møller, Kierkegaard specifically criticizes Schlegel's irony from ethical perspective. Although irony in *Lucinde* fulfills the necessary requirements it seems to be trapped in the aesthetic sphere because of its lack of ethical concern. Kierkegaard presents that the ironist who is in conflict with given actuality and enjoys fully his negative freedom might suspend conventional ethics. However, this does not imply that the ironist gets the better of actuality in general, disregards the whole ethical order and annihilates all principles of morality and ethics. It is true that Kierkegaard does not accept the ironist as an ethicist but at the same time he does not portray the ironist devoid of any moral and ethical principles. Then, it can be considered that Kierkegaard's irony "hides the moral character of subjectivity behind its mockery and negativity" (Gonzalez, 2014: 176). Consequently, we can say that on the basis of Kierkegaard's critical approach towards Schlegel's *Lucinde*, the traces of the place of irony which is given as an intermediary stage between the aesthetic and the ethical sphere in Kierkegaard's later work *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* can be seen in his earlier work, *The Concept of Irony*.

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**Öz:** Søren Kierkegaard'ın doktora tezi *Sokrates'e Yoğun Göndermelerle İroni Kavramı* (1841) sadece ironi kavramının kapsamlı bir tahlili değildir, aynı zamanda Kierkegaard'ın kendi ironi tanımını da içerir. Kierkegaard tezinde hem Ksenophon, Platon ve Aristofanes'in yorumlarına değinerek Sokratik ironi üzerinde durur hem de Alman Romantikleri'ne odaklanarak romantik ironinin temel ilkelerini sorgular. Bu makale, ilk olarak Kierkegaard'ın ironisinin ana özelliklerini ve onun özellikle Friedrich Schlegel'in ünlü romanı *Lucinde* üzerinden yaptığı romantik ironi eleştirilerini incelemektedir. Daha sonra, Schlegel'in romantik ironisinin *İroni Kavramı*'nda belirtilen zorunlu koşulları sağlayıp sağlamadığını tartışmaktadır. Makale ayrıca, Schlegel'in ironisi üzerine eleştirileri ışığında, Kierkegaard'ın sonraki eserlerinde betimlenen varoluşçu felsefesinin ana hatlarını oluşturan estetik, etik ve dinî var oluş alanlarına ve estetik ve etik alan arasında sınır bölge olan ironinin yerine dair izlerin hâlihazırda *İroni Kavramı*'nda bulunabileceğini göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kierkegaard, ironi, romantik ironi, Schlegel, var oluş alanları.

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