Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*: Writing Assignment

Please refer to the “Moral” (111) that concludes *Philosophical Fragments*.

Johannes Climacus, Kierkegaard’s pseudonym for the writing of *Philosophical Fragments*, ends this work with a “Moral” that emphasizes the work’s relationship to Plato’s Socratic ideal. While Climacus is sure that his thought-project has gone beyond the Socratic “at every point,” he says that this does not necessarily mean that it is “more true” than the Socratic. In so doing, Climacus signals his respect and admiration for the Socratic conception of “teaching” and its pursuit of truth. What Climacus clearly does not admire is the contemporary Hegelian philosophical school, which claims to have gone beyond Socrates but “essentially says the same thing as he, only not nearly so well.”

Write an essay in which you explain how Climacus has “gone beyond Socrates” yet maintains respect for the Socratic ideal. Your essay should also address the question of how we should think about the question of whether what Climacus has done is “more true” than the Socratic.

I left the last part of the essay topic open so that you can discuss what you find valuable in each of the thinkers. You will have to decide for yourself what basis you’ll use for deciding whether one is “more true” than the other. It is possible to discuss what one would have to know in order to decide the truth question without actually deciding it.

Due: **Tuesday, November 16**. Please turn your essay in during class. (Either Dr. Steve Wagner, the Philosophy Department Chair or the Department secretary will be there to collect them).

(I also left the length open. My guess is that it would be hard to do a good job on this in less than 1000 words, but I think you should be able to do it in under 1800 words.)

**Option 2:**

It is clear that one of Kierkegaard’s purposes in *Philosophical Fragments* is to understand something essential about Christian faith by contrasting it not only to Socrates, but to both the culture of Christianity (“Christendom”) and especially to purely rational approaches to understanding the essence of Christian teaching. Write an essay that discusses what the *Philosophical Fragments* accomplishes in this regard. In other words, what light does Climacus’ thought-project in the *Philosophical Fragments* shed on the essential meaning of the Christian gospel?