

The goal of my essay was to present two interpretive options to the difficult passage at the beginning of "Problem I" in *Fear and Trembling*, in which reference is made to the section "The Good and Conscience" in Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion*. My procedure was to try to understand what to make of this reference by trying to see it in terms of, on the one hand, Hegel's social-political philosophy and, on the other hand, the statements made about faith and revelation in *Fear and Trembling* as a whole. The interpretive thesis that I came to and that I set forth in the essay was that either, Kierkegaard's reference to Hegel in this context is out of place since Hegel's goal in the *Philosophy of Religion* is wholly different from Kierkegaard's here, or that seen in the context of Hegel's politi-

It was with a profound sense of pleasure and satisfaction that I learned of the review article by Gordon Marino and Anthony Rudd in response to my essay "Hegel's View of Moral Conscience and Kierkegaard's Interpretation of Abraham." It is always an honor to have one's work taken seriously by distinguished scholars and to receive one's colleagues' responses to one's research. It was also with great pleasure that prior to reading the review, I willingly consented to the generous offer of the editors of this journal to respond to it since I felt certain that the comments it contained would stimulate an interesting and productive discussion. Unfortunately my enthusiasm was quickly dispelled as I read the review, for it seemed to me to be based on a fundamental misunderstanding of my article. Thus, it is only with great reluctance and consciousness of my article that I write this response since I cannot imagine what I have already said in the article in order to clarify a misreading that the readers of this journal will benefit from my simply restating my promise to the editors that I write this response since I cannot imagine that the editors of this journal will benefit from my article. Thus, it is only with great reluctance and consciousness of my article that I write this response since I read the review, for it seemed to me to be based on a fundamental misunderstanding of my article. Thus, it is only with great reluctance and consciousness of my article that I write this response since I can only imagine that the editors of this journal will benefit from my article. Thus, it is only with great reluctance and consciousness of my article that I write this response since I can only imagine that the editors of this journal will benefit from my article.

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John Stewart

# Kierkegaard and Hegel on Faith and Politics

cal philosophy, Kierkegaard's own position ultimately reduces to absurdity" (pp. 58–59). My procedure was then to assume first the one option (i.e. that the reference to Hegel is inappropriate since Kierkegaard is not concerned with political philosophy), and then to explore what would follow from that assumed premise; then I assumed the other possibility (i.e. that the reference to Hegel is appropriate since Kierkegaard is in fact concerned with politics in *Fear and Trembling*), and did the same. Thus, I tried to sketch out these two interpretive options and their consequences in the hope of arriving at a better understanding of the passage in question and of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel generally.

Given that the essay was interpretive and not critical, one can imagine my surprise when I read that my paper represented "a vigorous Hegelian critique of Kierkegaard" and "a vehement attack on him." The paper was never intended to be a criticism of Kierkegaard or anyone else, let alone a vigorous or vehement one. It is inconceivable to me how a paper that purports to be nothing but interpretive can be construed as aggressively critical. Upon rereading the review I was struck by how often the authors immediately assume my position to be identical with that of Hegel. They write "Hegel and Stewart" or "For Hegel and it seems, for Stewart," thus immediately making an inference which is by no means grounded in anything said in the paper. Indeed, the only claims that I make are interpretive ones concerning the passage in question, and I can hardly flatter myself with the belief that my own political views could be of any interest whatsoever to the readers of this journal. This conflation of what are imagined to be my own opinions on politics and the social order with those of Hegel perhaps explains the mistaken perception that the essay was intended to offer a criticism of Kierkegaard.

The first half of my procedure involved assuming that the reference to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is simply out of place since the context of the two works is so different as to defy genuine comparison. Kierkegaard is concerned with religion and Hegel with political philosophy. On this reading, the reference at the beginning of "Problema I" can be seen as rhetorical or polemical, but it is difficult to see in it anything of philosophically substantive content, given the two radically different contexts. Thus, as the authors agree, "If ... Kierkegaard quotes Hegel in a rather misleading way in a couple of places, then the result would be a fairly trivial one" (pp. 245–246).

The real criticism issued by the authors concerns the second half of my thesis. The main claim is that I have begged the question in the favor

At the end of the review there is a telling sentence which I quote beggining and fail to grasp the true inward nature of faith.

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He too is discussing questions of political philosophy. All that is being Kierkegaard's reference to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is appropriate since ploring the results of the assumption (exactly stated in the thesis) that giving since there is no critical claim being made here. I am simply ex- for action to the table for negotiation. Thus, there is no question beg- phillosophy it is not too much to demand that people bring their reasons are in agreement, i.e. Marino, Rudd, Stewart and Hegel, that in political is there is no talk of faith but of ethics and political philosophy, and all missed the point since the upshot of Fear and Trembling is that revelation and faith are not discursive, justifiable or communitable. But in the analysis and faith are not discursive, justifiable or communitable. But in the analysis imprecision that Stewart and Hegel require this kind of justification not just in the political sphere but generally. Thus, Stewart and Hegel have imprecision that Stewart and Hegel require this kind of justification not imprecise. The authors, however, quote from the essay, giving the caption for action. The right to demand reasons and some form of discursive justifi- all feel the right to demand reasons and some form of discursive justifi- derstood in the context of political philosophy. It is in this context where we field. Given this assumption, the comments in my analysis are to be under- garded also wants to make some comments or reflections relevant for that to Hegel's political philosophy is correct and appropriate since Kierke- the second half of my thesis, which is hypothetical, is that the reference that of ethics and political philosophy. The interpretive assumption of text of this part of the essay, which is clearly indicated in the thesis, is tickle out of their proper context in order to make this charge. The con- The authors have misleadingly quoted a number of passages from my ar- and have not recognized the radical nature of Kierkegaard's position. able. Thus, they argue, I have missed the point of Fear and Trembling of Hegel by assuming that all belief and action must be discursively justi-

here: "If, on reflection, we find that we cannot abandon the natural Hegelian assumptions, we will at least have had things clarified, since we will now see that we cannot consistently maintain a Biblical faith as well" (249). This claim is striking since the entire body of the article purports to discuss *Fear and Trembling* and the statements made there about faith, but then suddenly here at the end this is identified immediately with "Biblical faith." Kierkegaard's analyses of the Bible are certainly interesting and illuminating, but can they so readily be taken as synonymous with the basis for Biblical faith? The Bible is open to a manifold of interpretations, and for this reason it means many things to many people. Certainly one has the right to interpret it in a manner that is at variance with Kierkegaard's analyses. Thus, one can ask how helpful it is to identify a passage in *Fear and Trembling* with the basis for "a Biblical faith." Such an identification seems to betray an investment on the part of those who perceive anything that contains so much as a hint of a criticism of Kierkegaard as being an open attack on the Bible and on their faith. By assuming that Kierkegaard represents Biblical faith, the authors put themselves in the position of having to defend him at all cost. But surely there could be other understandings of Biblical faith than Kierkegaard's interpretation, and Biblical faith does need to stand or fall with him. (Let it be noted that Hegel himself did not view his position as undermining Biblical faith, but as strengthening it.) But the question of one's own personal view of Biblical faith is not an issue for scholarship, and it was certainly not the issue of my paper. Moreover, the disposition of wanting to identify Kierkegaard with Biblical faith does not serve either Kierkegaard, the man, or Kierkegaard scholarship. At least as I read his texts, the last thing Kierkegaard wanted was to become an icon for someone else's faith.