on Faith and Politics
Kierkegaard and Hegel

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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
In his work, Hegel explores the nature of reason and its development. The concept of reason is central to Hegel's philosophy, which is fundamentally dialectical. In the context of "The Phenomenology of Spirit," Hegel argues that reason is the ultimate reality, and the process of reason is the dialectical process of historical development. Hegel's dialectical method involves the negation of the negation, where the apparent contradiction is resolved through the synthesis of opposites. This process is essential for understanding the evolution of human consciousness and the historical progression of societies. Hegel's philosophy is a significant contribution to the field of political philosophy, offering insights into the nature of law, politics, and society.
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.