KIERKEGAARD’S RELATIONS TO HEGEL RECONSIDERED

Jon Stewart’s groundbreaking study is a major reevaluation of the complex relations between the philosophies of Kierkegaard and Hegel. The standard view on the subject is that Kierkegaard defined himself explicitly as the antipode of Hegel and thus that he viewed Hegel’s philosophy with utter disdain. Jon Stewart shows convincingly that Kierkegaard’s criticism was not primarily of Hegel but of a number of contemporary Danish Hegelians. Kierkegaard’s own view of Hegel was in fact much more positive than is usually thought, even to the point where he was directly influenced by some aspects of Hegel’s work.

Any scholar working in the tradition of Continental philosophy will find this an insightful and provocative book with implications for the subsequent history of philosophy in the twentieth century. The book will also appeal to scholars in religious studies and the history of ideas.

Jon Stewart is Associate Research Professor of Philosophy at the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre at the University of Copenhagen, an institution funded by the Danish National Research Foundation.
MODERN EUROPEAN PHILOSOPHY

General Editor
Robert B. Pippin, University of Chicago

Advisory Board
Gary Gutting, University of Notre Dame
Rolf-Peter Horstmann, Humboldt University, Berlin
Mark Sacks, University of Essex

Some Recent Titles
Daniel W. Conway: Nietzsche’s Dangerous Game
John P. McCormick: Carl Schmitt’s Critique of Liberalism
Frederick A. Olafson: Heidegger and the Ground of Ethics
Günter Zöhler: Fichte’s Transcendental Philosophy
Warren Breckman: Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory
William Blattner: Heidegger’s Temporal Idealism
Charles Griswold: Adam Smith and the Virtues of the Enlightenment
Gary Gutting: Pragmatic Liberalism and the Critique of Modernity
Allen Wood: Kant’s Ethical Thought
Karl Ameriks: Kant and the Fate of Autonomy
Alfredo Ferrarin: Hegel and Aristotle
Cristina Lafont: Heidegger, Language and World-Discourse
Nicholas Wolsterstorff: Thomas Reid and the Story of Epistemology
Daniel Dahlstrom: Heidegger’s Concept of Truth
Michelle Grier: Kant’s Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion
Henry Allison: Kant’s Theory of Taste
Allen Speight: Hegel, Literature and the Problem of Agency
J. M. Bernstein: Adorno
Will Dudley: Hegel, Nietzsche and Philosophy
Taylor Carman: Heidegger’s Analytic
Douglas Moggach: The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer
KIERKEGAARD’S RELATIONS TO HEGEL RECONSIDERED

JON STEWART

The Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre
at the University of Copenhagen
## CONTENTS

ollisiongements .......................... xiii  
Abbreviations of Primary Texts .......................... xv  
Preface .......................... xix

### Introduction

I. The Standard View of Kierkegaard’s Relation to Hegel .......................... 3  
II. Thulstrup’s Formulation of the Standard View .......................... 14  
III. The Reception of the Issue after Thulstrup .......................... 27  
IV. Thesis and Methodological Considerations .......................... 32

1 Kierkegaard and Danish Hegelianism .......................... 45  
   I. Right and Left Hegelianism in Prussia and the German States .......................... 45  
   II. The Danish Hegelians .......................... 50  
   III. The Critics of Hegel in Denmark .......................... 70  
   Appendix: Historical and Biographical Overview .......................... 83

2 Traces of Hegel in From Papers of One Still Living and the Early Works .......................... 90  
   I. Hegel’s Absence in “Another Defense of Woman’s Great Abilities” .......................... 92  
   II. Hegel and Kierkegaard’s Early Theory of Stages .......................... 97  
   III. Von Jumping-Jack in The Battle between the Old and the New Soap-Cellars .......................... 105  
   IV. Heiberg’s Perseus and From the Papers of One Still Living .......................... 115  
      A. Some Background Information about Perseus .......................... 115  
      B. References to the Beginning of Philosophy in Hegel’s Logic .......................... 118  
      C. References to the Stages of Poetry in Hegel and Heiberg .......................... 123  
      D. The Reception of From the Papers of One Still Living .......................... 126
CONTENTS

3 The Ironic Thesis and Hegel's Presence in *The Concept of Irony* 132
   I. The Ironic Thesis 135
   II. Kierkegaard's Own Assessment of His Hegelianism 141
   III. The Structure of the Text 144
   IV. Hegel's Account of the Daimon 150
   V. Hegel's Account of Socrates vis-à-vis the Other Greek Schools 157
   VI. Hegel's Account of Socrates as the Founder of Morality 161
   VII. Hegel's Account of Irony and the Ironic Subject 166
   VIII. Hegel's Criticism of Romantic Irony 170

4 Hegel's *Aufhebung* and Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* 182
   I. The Title "Either/Or" and Its Origin 184
   II. The Problem of the *Aufhebung* of the Law of Excluded Middle 195
   III. The Work of Art and Its Dialectic 209
   IV. Two Interpretations of *Antigone* 218
   V. The Aesthetic Validity of Marriage: "Love's Dialectic" 225

5 Kierkegaard's Polemic with Martensen in *Johannes Climacus, or De omnibus dubitandum est* 238
   I. The Allusion to Martensen in the Title 242
   II. Kierkegaard's Discussion of Absolute Knowing 249
      A. The Concept of Absolute Knowing in Hegel 250
      B. Johannes Climacus and Absolute Knowing 254
   III. The Individual and the Subjective Beginning of Philosophy with Doubt 261
      A. Doubt and the Justification of Science in Hegel 262
      B. Johannes Climacus' Examination of Subjective Doubt 263
   IV. Kierkegaard's Appropriation of Hegel on "Sense-Certainty" 268
      A. Hegel's Analysis of "Sense-Certainty" 269
      B. Johannes Climacus, Language, and Consciousness 273

6 Kierkegaard's Repetition and Hegel's Dialectical Mediation 282
   I. The Contradiction of Consciousness in *De Omnibus* 284
   II. Repetition as an Ethical Concept 288
   III. Repetition, Mediation, and Movement in Logic 292
   IV. Repetition as a Religious Concept 297

7 Hegel's View of Moral Conscience and Kierkegaard's Interpretation of Abraham 305
   I. Descartes and Martensen in the Preface 307
## CONTENTS

II. Problema I: The Murderer Sand and Kierkegaard’s Abraham
   A. Hegel’s View of Ethics and the Moral Conscience 310
   B. Johannes de silentio’s Criticism 315
   C. An Analogous Example 321

III. Problema II: Absolute Duty and the Inner and the Outer

IV. Problema III: The Problem of Communication and Justification

Martensen’s Doctrine of Immanence and Kierkegaard’s Transcendence in the *Philosophical Fragments*

   I. The Paradox and Mediation 336
      A. Climacus’ Doctrine of the Paradox 339
      B. The Role of Mediation 341
      C. The Allusions to Martensen 345
      D. The Criticism of Martensen’s Article on Mediation 347
   II. The Modal Categories 355
   III. Necessity in History 359
   IV. The Absolute Method 368

The Dispute with Adler in *The Concept of Anxiety*

   I. Actuality and the Spheres of Logic and Existence 380
   II. Immediacy and Faith 385
   III. Reconciliation and Mediation 390
   IV. Movement in Logic 396
      A. Hegel’s Conception of Dialectical Movement 397
      B. Vigilius Haufniensis’ Criticism 399
   V. Quantity, Quality, and the Leap 405
   VI. Innocence and Immediacy 411
      A. Hegel’s Account of the Original Sin as Immediacy 412
      B. Vigilius Haufniensis’ Criticism of Innocence as Immediacy 414

The Polemic with Heiberg in *Prefaces*

   I. Kierkegaard’s Relation to Heiberg Immediately Prior to *Prefaces* 419
   II. Systematic Philosophy and the Conception of *Prefaces* as a Work 421
   III. References to the System in Preface I 424
   IV. The Reference to the Systematic Tendency in Preface VI 427
   V. Hegel and Mediation in Preface VII 437
   VI. Hegel and Hegelians in Preface VIII 441
Subjective and Objective Thinking: Hegel in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript

I. The True Targets of the Postscript
II. Speculative Philosophy and Eternal Happiness
III. Speculative Philosophy and the Paradox of Christianity
IV. Speculative Philosophy's Conceptual Understanding of Christianity
   A. Hegel's Conceptual Understanding of Christianity
   B. Climacus' Criticism of Christianity as a Form of Knowing
V. Speculative Philosophy and Forgetting Oneself
VI. The Criticism of the Presuppositionless Beginning
VII. The Criticism of the World-Historical Perspective
VIII. The Criticism of the Unity of Thought and Being
IX. Speculative Philosophy and the Law of Excluded Middle
X. The Absence of an Ethics in the System

Adler's Confusions and the Results of Hegel's Philosophy

I. Kierkegaard's Contact with Adler
II. Christianity as a Sublated Concept
III. Adler's Attempt to Explain His Revelation
IV. Adler and the Absence of an Ethics in Hegel

Kierkegaard's Phenomenology of Despair in The Sickness unto Death

I. Speculative Thought's Mistaken Moral Psychology
II. The Misguided Attempt to Comprehend Sin
III. Rational Theology or the Pastor's Rational Justification of Faith
IV. Martensen and the God-Man
V. Anti-Climacus' Dialectic and Phenomenology
   A. Hegel's Dialectical Method
   B. Phenomenology and Dialectic in "The Forms of This Sickness"
   C. Phenomenology and Dialectic in "The Continuance of Sin"
   D. A Change in Position?

Kierkegaard and the Development of Nineteenth-Century Continental Philosophy: Conclusions, Reflections, and Reevaluations

I. The Results of the Present Study: Attempt at an Overview
A. The First Period: 1834–1843 597
B. The Second Period: 1843–1846 605
C. The Third Period: 1847–1855 612
D. Conclusions about the Development of Kierkegaard’s Relation to Hegel 615

II. The Standard Picture of the History of Nineteenth-Century Continental Philosophy 618

III. The Consequences of the Present Study for the Standard Picture 622

IV. Kierkegaard, Hegel, and the Nature of Nineteenth-Century Continental Philosophy 632
   A. Some Examples Indicative of a Metalevel Dispute 633
   B. Kierkegaard’s Conception of Himself and of Philosophy 640
   C. The Classification of Kierkegaard in the History of Nineteenth-Century Continental Philosophy 650

Foreign Language Summaries 653
Bibliographies 659
Subject Index 685
Index of Persons 689
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express my deepest gratitude to the Danish National Research Foundation and the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre at the University of Copenhagen where I have been employed in the capacity of Forskningslektor or Associate Research Professor since 1995. The excellent resources at the Centre have greatly facilitated work on this project and increased its scholarly merits immeasurably. The human resources there have also been of inestimable importance, and in this regard I would like to thank above all the Centre’s Director, Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, for his constant encouragement and unwavering belief in both this project and me.

In addition, I thank Alastair Hannay, Hermann Deuser, and Arne Grøn for their support through the years. I am also indebted to Michael Theunissen for his guidance and invaluable suggestions at the initial stages of my research. Many thanks are also due to those who have helped me to proofread various parts of this work: Daniel Conway, Louie Matz, Richard Purkarthofer, and Loy Stewart; their suggestions have improved the manuscript significantly. I am deeply grateful to my friends and colleagues at the Centre for many useful discussions through the years: Noel Adams, Søren Bruun, István Czakó, Simonella Davini, Niels Nymann Eriksen, Dario González, Jan Holmgaard, Bruce Kirmmse, Zachary Price, Ettore Rocca, Wang Qi, Brian Söderquist, Bronislaw Swiderski, Christian Fink Tolstrup, and Arild Waaler.

This project was written over a period of several years. During this time I have used parts of the manuscript for public lectures; in addition, some parts of it have appeared in earlier drafts as articles in academic journals. I gratefully acknowledge the cooperation of the editors of the Jahrbuch für Hegelforschung, Kierkegaardiana, the Kierkegaard Studies Yearbook, and Persona y Derecho for allowing me to reprint this previously published material here in its full context.
I am thankful to the Danish Research Agency for its generous financial support of this publication.

Finally, I thank my friends, David Kangas and András Nagy, for relentlessly pushing me to see to an end this project, which I often despaired of ever completing.
ABBREVIATIONS OF PRIMARY TEXTS

HEGEL’S WRITINGS


ABBREVIATIONS OF PRIMARY TEXTS


PR = Elements of the Philosophy of Right, translated by H. B. Nisbet, edited by Allen Wood. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press 1991. Cited by paragraph number (§) with the exception of the Preface which is so noted and cited by page number.


KIERKEGAARD’S WRITINGS


EPW = Early Polemical Writings: From the Papers of One Still Living; Articles from Student Days; The Battle between the Old and the New Soap-Cellars,
ABBREVIATIONS OF PRIMARY TEXTS


SKS = *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, 28 text volumes and 28 commentary volumes, edited by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Joakim Garff, Jette
ABBREVIATIONS OF PRIMARY TEXTS


As an aid to the non-Danish reader, I have made it my practice to translate the titles of Danish books and articles in the body of my text and to give the original titles in footnotes. I have, however, allowed titles of works in the Danish secondary literature and Danish journal titles to stand in the original. German and French titles have been given in the original languages. All quotations from Hegel’s primary texts are from those works given in the list of abbreviations. When referring to Kierkegaard’s quotations of Hegel, I have usually chosen to cite from the standard translations of Hegel’s writings instead of using Hong’s translations of Kierkegaard’s quotations.

Many of the Danish works used in this study, in both the primary and the secondary literature, have yet to be translated into English. Since this material is not accessible to the non-Danish reader, it would have been unreasonable simply to allude to it briefly in a footnote and leave it to the reader to do the follow-up work. Due to this I have found myself obliged to quote this material extensively. I have tried to integrate these quotations into my text as much as possible so that they do not make for onerous reading. All translations from these works are my own unless otherwise noted.

When possible, I have used as my main Danish text the new critical edition of Kierkegaard’s works currently being produced by the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre (i.e., Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter, edited by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, Joakim Garff, Jette Knudsen, Johnny Kondrup and Alastair McKinnon, Copenhagen: Gad Publishers 1997– ). In my work I have frequently used the philological account of the various texts and the Realkommentar, both of which are found in the volumes of commentary that accompany the text volumes of the edition. The use of this often new material has been a great benefit to this investigation, and I am indebted to my colleagues for it.
KIERKEGAARD’S RELATIONS TO HEGEL RECONSIDERED