

# Critique

*Ambiguous and Deeply Differentiated:  
Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel*

*By Arne Grøn*

## A Critique of

Jon Stewart

*Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*

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# Ambiguous and Deeply Differentiated: Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel<sup>1</sup>

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»I have heretofore not mentioned S. Kierkegaard in this overview of Hegelianism in Denmark, and yet he stands in the most intimate relation to it.... Hegelianism came to an end in Kierkegaard, and yet he never completely rejected Hegel.«<sup>2</sup>

»Nicht allein die vor dem eigentlichen Werk liegende Dissertation mit ihrer Sokratesdeutung und ihrer Romantikcritik atmet den Geist Hegels....«<sup>3</sup>

These two passages can serve us as mottoes. The first is taken from Jon Stewart's doctoral thesis; but I am not quoting Stewart, or rather I am quoting Stewart quoting Frederik Helweg (1816–1901). This passage is from an article on Hegelianism in Denmark, published December 16th, 1855, a month after Kierkegaard's death. It indicates, as Stewart puts it, that Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel and Hegelianism is »ambiguous, contradictory, and deeply differentiated.«<sup>4</sup> The second passage<sup>5</sup> captures Kierkegaard's ambiguous relation to Hegel. Kierkegaard's thought sets itself up against German idealism, against Hegel in particular, and yet it also appropriates key themes from it. This passage is taken from Michael Theunissen's introduction to *Materialien zur Philosophie Søren Kierkegaards* from 1979. In its entirety, the passage is long, yet concentrated. It summarizes major points of comparison or similarity between Kierkegaard and German idealism, especially Hegel. »Points of comparison or similarity,« is a phrase I have borrowed from Stewart, but I think it is too weak – what is at issue here is key points in Kierkegaard's own thought.

After having quoted Frederik Helweg, Stewart declares: »In the course of this investigation, I would like to follow Helweg's intuition« (82). The

catchwords for Stewart's thesis are thus that Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel is ambiguous and deeply differentiated. It would come as no surprise that I agree with this claim, having thought of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel in these terms for more than a couple of decades. So my approach to the book is straightforwardly sympathetic. The one question I would like to pose, however, through a series of other questions, is this: Does the ambiguous character of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel not *disappear* in the course of Stewart's thesis? Since it is precisely Stewart's ambition to follow Helweg's intuition, it appears that I will have a hard time substantiating the claim implicit in this suspicion.

I have entered the discussion from the start, *in medias res*. Before proceeding with the discussion, let me therefore say a few words about Jon Stewart's treatise. It is impressive and thorough. It is well-written. It is, however, also abounding with repetitions. Some of these are useful in helping the reader to follow the line of argument and to maintain an overview of the enormous amount of material presented in the book. The size of the book makes repetitions necessary, which in turn enlarges the book considerably (a sort of vicious circle). There are many repetitions, however, that are simply superfluous.

As background for the following discussion, let me repeat the overall assessment of the committee:<sup>6</sup>

The treatise is impressive, not only as to its size and the material presented, but also as to the massive and meticulous scholarship that goes into it. The combination of expertise on Kierkegaard, Hegel and in particular Danish Hegelianism shown in its very detailed studies is indeed remarkable. The treatise provides a gold mine of information about the Danish context of Kierkegaard's work and his relation to it. It is guided by an ambition to differentiate through contextualization which is much needed. Primarily as a comprehensive and convincing study of Kierkegaard's relations to Danish Hegelianism, the treatise contributes significantly to the advancement of the research literature. It thus fulfils the requirement for the doctoral degree. That Kierkegaard's criticism of Hegel has Danish Hegelians, in particular Martensen, Heiberg and Adler, as targets seems to be established beyond doubt. However, as a re-examination of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel the treatise is less convincing. It documents a more differentiated view of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel which has been established in the research literature during the last decades. But the general thesis that Kierkegaard is not engaged in an anti-Hegel cam-

paign is in need of clarification – also as to the question of who the actual target of Jon Stewart’s criticism is. The treatise does not establish that Kierkegaard had no clash with Hegel at all. The further questions raised above [in the report] pertain primarily to the implications of the historical methodology of the treatise. The systematic approach implied in the method of contextualization is not accounted for. The laudable ambition of making the Kierkegaard-Hegel relation more fruitful seems to be undermined by the contextualization itself. However, these criticisms do not affect the overall assessment that the treatise first and foremost as the most comprehensive study of Kierkegaard’s relation to Danish Hegelianism today is a remarkable historical contribution to the literature on Kierkegaard.

In what follows, I will not offer a balanced assessment of Jon Stewart’s treatise one more time, but will instead focus on the critical points mentioned above. The fact that what I am going to say is of a more critical nature should also be taken as a token of recognition of Stewart’s book. Not least, its main thesis deserves a careful and systematic discussion.

### 1. *Two Theses*

Jon Stewart’s treatise puts forward two theses: first, that Kierkegaard is not engaged in an anti-Hegel campaign, and second, that Kierkegaard’s authorship houses different relations to Hegel. The *first* period, which began with Kierkegaard’s early articles (1834–36) and ended with *Either/Or* (1843), is characterized by a close study of Hegel’s primary texts. The *second* period, which is relatively short, begins with *Fear and Trembling* and ends with *The Book on Adler* (1846). This period is characterized by a critique of various Hegelians and shows a general indifference towards Hegel himself. Direct quotations from, and textual analysis of, Hegel’s texts are absent in virtually every work after *Either/Or*. The *third* period, from 1847 to 1855, is characterized by the absence of Hegel as an issue.

The second thesis is meant to support and explicate the first one by showing that Kierkegaard’s relation to Hegel is much more differentiated than it is usually thought to be. The relation is characterized by its plurality, not only at the level of the three periods, but also at the level of the individual works within each of these periods, and even within the individual works themselves. As Stewart succinctly puts it: »The various passages examined display different kinds of relations: inspiration, appropriation,

revision, criticism, polemical allusions, and so on« (617). It is therefore impossible just to speak of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel. Instead, one is obliged to deal with Kierkegaard's *relations* to Hegel (33, 615ff., and, of course, the title of the treatise). Kierkegaard's ambivalent relation to Hegel »was characteristic of the entire age when philosophizing meant being in a dialogue with Hegel« (630).<sup>7</sup>

## 2. *Stewart's Narrative*

The first, general thesis, »that Kierkegaard never had the anti-Hegel campaign that he is so often thought to have had,« (44) and »that there are many more points of comparison and similarity between the two thinkers than are generally recognized« (32), is demonstrated by tracing Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel through the three stages mentioned above. This thesis is presented as the critical counterpart to what Stewart labels, »the standard view« of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel, namely the view that Kierkegaard's position is »a straightforward campaign against Hegel« (14).<sup>8</sup> The introduction gives a survey of the research literature on Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel from this point of view, focusing on Niels Thulstrup's formulation of the standard view, which is most prominent in his doctoral thesis *Kierkegaards Forhold til Hegel og til den spekulative Idealisme indtil 1846* from 1967. The main thesis of Thulstrup's book is that, »Hegel and Kierkegaard have in the main nothing in common as thinkers, neither as regards object, purpose, or method, nor as regards what each considered to be indisputable principles.«<sup>9</sup> According to Stewart, Thulstrup can be said to »have grounded in scholarship the paradigm in mainstream research *today* for understanding Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel« (14, italics added). His view has come to form »a kind of standard background knowledge for the vast majority of Kierkegaard students and scholars« (16). Stewart also claims that Thulstrup's view »has remained largely unchallenged until the present day« (27).

Stewart's claim about the »standard view« in general, and Thulstrup's influence in particular, is misleading, or to put it stronger, it is historically incorrect (depending on how it is interpreted). After reading the book, I was not only impressed, but also surprised and uneasy. The book will uncover myths and simplistic pictures in Kierkegaard research, but I am afraid that it creates a new myth itself. This also has something to do with its rhetoric and the narrative it is a part of. Especially in the analyses of the second period (chapters 7 to 12), the dominant motif is the claim to discover »the true target« or »the actual target« of Kierkegaard's polemics.<sup>10</sup>

This is supported by another recurrent rhetorical figure: »Although it might appear ..., a closer examination ...« (cf. e.g. 365, 379, 437). Part of the rhetoric is also the tone of *Wissenschaftlichkeit* or »dispassionate« or »nonpartisan« research (c.f. e.g. 26f.), in particular in the form of *Quellenforschung*. The *Quellenforschung* put into the book is indeed remarkable, as already noted. What I find problematic, however, is first, the idea that it is possible to identify conclusively or »exactly« (e.g. 502) what the actual targets of a complex philosophical text are.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, I find it problematic that the rhetoric of historical *Wissenschaftlichkeit* conceals what Stewart is doing in the book: interpreting highly sophisticated philosophical texts.

The book not only offers *Quellenforschung*, but it also gives a narrative, part of which is the rhetoric mentioned above. The narrative starts like this: »There seems to be a standard view of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel, which has *today* become firmly ensconced ...« (3, italics added). This is repeated throughout the book. Consider, for example, the following four passages: »Most commentators continue to see it as a foregone conclusion that Kierkegaard rejected everything that had even the slightest look of Hegelianism about it« (16). »While the paradigm set by Thulstrup has dominated the vast part of the mainstream research until today ...« (27). »The standard interpretation« of the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* as Kierkegaard's great polemic with Hegel »is in the final analysis nothing more than a myth based on an ahistorical understanding of the text« (522, cf. 451). The great »standard story« of European philosophy in the nineteenth-century, accompanying »the standard picture« of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel, is a »simplistic picture« or »largely a myth« (622, cf. 618f.). Again, the question is whether Stewart's picture of what he labels the »standard« picture is historically correct. The conception of two parallel traditions, the one characterized by its belief in reason, the other an incipient existentialism or irrationalism, has long been outdated in the research literature on German idealism and post-idealism, and also in the research literature on Kierkegaard. Stewart acknowledges this, but at the same time he maintains that, »it has for whatever reason shown a remarkable longevity in both Kierkegaard studies and other fields. In addition, it is still to be found in reference works and introductory courses to which it has filtered down« (619). Nevertheless, the standard story is used in an almost dramatic way in Stewart's narrative: »I have tried to sketch the way in which a study of a handful of long-since-forgotten Danish philosophers and theologians who were influenced by Hegel can in fact have dramatic repercussions, causing one to rethink a number of the most firmly established and deeply cher-

ished beliefs about the development of European thought« (632). This is indeed a good narrative! The approach is quite sympathetic too. That would indeed be great if the study of a handful of long-since-forgotten Danish philosophers and theologians caused us to rethink some of our most firmly established beliefs about the development of European thought. The problem, however, is that the beliefs that Stewart addresses are not the most firmly established and deeply cherished.

There is, to my mind, too much »standard« view, »standard« picture and »standard« story in the book. This makes it difficult to decide who the targets of Stewart's criticism actually are. Where is the »standard« picture »standard«? On one interpretation, the actual target or addressee of Stewart's criticism is not the research literature, but rather a set of outdated views, that remains popular, presented primarily in textbooks and introductory courses »to which it has filtered down« (619). But Stewart also seems to hold that the standard pictures (of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel, and of the development of European thought in the nineteenth-century) are still standard in Kierkegaard research literature today. It is, however, not historically correct that what Stewart describes as the standard views have remained largely unchallenged in Kierkegaard research<sup>12</sup> (though that depends, of course, on what is meant by »largely«).<sup>13</sup>

Let me return to the passage from Michael Theunissen's introduction, published in 1979. As mentioned, it captures Kierkegaard's ambiguous relations to German Idealism in general, and Hegel in particular, but this is not presented as something new, in contrast to the »standard« view. Let me give a couple of other prominent examples: »Daß Kierkegaard den Begriff Angst dialektisch denkt, dies gründet historisch gesehen in seiner zweideutigen Nähe zu Hegel.«<sup>14</sup> And, as a piece of productive re-interpretation:

Zu den größten Verdiensten Albert Chapelles gehört es, überzeugend dargestellt zu haben, daß Hegel die Paradoxien des Christentums keineswegs, wie man weithin meint, verschleiert, sondern im Gegenteil hervorkehrt [with reference to *Hegel et la religion* t. I, 1964]. Auf das »absolute Paradox« Kierkegaards zielt denn auch der Begriff des Unmittelbaren, der die Identität von Allgemeinheit und Einzelheit, von Ewigkeit und Zeitlichkeit definiert. Das »Dieser« ist im Christentum, wie Hegel in fast schon Kierkegaardscher Sprache sagt, das »Zusammenbinden der ungeheuersten Gegensätze«, die »ungeheuere Zusammensetzung, die der Vorstellung, dem Verstande schlechthin widerspricht« [quotation from Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*].<sup>15</sup>

This goes beyond what Stewart claims. In fact, it asserts something Stewart denies – namely, that from the perspective of the philosophy of religion, Hegel and Kierkegaard share a common problem or ground. These two examples are from around 1970. To my mind, the view expressed in these examples – that Kierkegaard’s relation to Hegel is indeed ambiguous – has been far more influential in the research literature than Thulstrup’s view. When I started to study philosophy in 1971 (to begin my own narrative), one did not consult Thulstrup for an interpretation of Hegel or, for that matter, for an interpretation of Kierkegaard. In the Danish context, one took the lead from scholars such as Kresten Nordentoft and Jørgen K. Bukdahl, who had a sense for dialectics as an issue *between* Kierkegaard and Hegel.<sup>16</sup>

What Stewart terms the »standard view« has not, in fact, been the standard view, at least not in Denmark and Germany. One could take the targets of his standard picture to be American Kierkegaard research. There are, however, prominent counter-examples. Let me quote just one, Merold Westphal who, in an article on »Kierkegaard and Hegel,« states: »There is appropriation as well as negation [i.e. in »Kierkegaard’s complex relation to Hegel«], and Kierkegaard is never simply anti-Hegelian.«<sup>17</sup> Now, one could argue that the issue depends on what is meant by an »anti-Hegel campaign.« My response would be: »Exactly!«

### 3. *How Far? What Is the Thesis?*

The question about the actual target of Stewart’s first, general, thesis, leads back to the thesis itself: How is it to be understood? What is the thesis? This also implies the question of the claimed novelty of the thesis. As we saw, the general thesis is »that Kierkegaard never had the anti-Hegel campaign that he is so often thought to have had« (44) and »that there are many more points of comparison and similarity between the two thinkers than are generally recognized« (32). In the section »The Consequences of the Present Study for the Standard Picture,« Stewart says: »The result of this is that Kierkegaard in fact never had a major campaign against Hegel« (622). Does this mean that he had a campaign against Hegel, but that it was not a major one? Or did he have no anti-Hegel campaign at all?<sup>18</sup> What is meant by »anti-Hegel campaign«? Did Aristotle have an anti-Plato campaign? The key-word »campaign« is too vague.

Thus, the thesis is in need of specification. It is given different interpretations which are not clearly distinguished. Basically, there are two



options: 1) The first thesis – that Kierkegaard never had the anti-Hegel campaign he is supposed to have had – makes sense as a counter-thesis to Thulstrup's thesis that Kierkegaard and Hegel did not have anything in common as thinkers. If the thesis is given this weak interpretation, it is quite a modest one: viz., that »the claim for the absolute discontinuity between Hegel and Kierkegaard is fundamentally incorrect« (622). To Thulstrup's view that Kierkegaard and Hegel had »nothing in common« (631) as thinkers, the counter-thesis is that the two thinkers have, in fact, »much in common« (622, cf. 625). But if this is the thesis, it is not new; in fact, it seems uncontroversial. What Stewart labels »the standard view,« viz. that Kierkegaard is engaged in a *straightforward* anti-Hegel campaign<sup>19</sup> with the implication that there is an absolute discontinuity between Hegel and Kierkegaard, has long been criticized in the research literature. Thus, when Stewart emphasizes Kierkegaard's ambivalence in relation to Hegel, he stands in a strong tradition. The fact that Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel is deeply ambivalent and differentiated, and that there indeed are many positive and substantial points of comparison and similarity between Kierkegaard and Hegel,<sup>20</sup> has long been established in the research literature. This appears already in references given in the treatise itself. 2) If, on the other hand, the general thesis is given a strong interpretation to the effect that Kierkegaard not only has no straightforward anti-Hegel campaign, but *no* anti-Hegel campaign at all, and if this is understood in the sense that, in fact, he is *not* criticizing Hegel, but only Danish Hegelians, then Jon Stewart's thesis says something new, but also highly debatable.

#### 4. Methodology: Contextualization

Let us now move from this preliminary discussion of Stewart's general thesis to the issue of methodology. This move will help us see the implications of the thesis. The methodology of Stewart's treatise is *historical*, and is so in two primary respects. First, it seeks to *reconstruct* Kierkegaard's actual knowledge of Hegel's philosophy. Stewart's main interpretative principle is »to try to understand Kierkegaard as he understood himself« (38). The aim is to understand »Kierkegaard's actual intentions or his own understanding of his relation to Hegel« (3). Thus, Stewart's thesis is limited to what he takes to be »Kierkegaard's own view of his relation to Hegel, to the degree to which that view can be reconstructed« (631). »My methodology has been historical in the sense that I have been concerned with an analysis of Kierkegaard's actual knowledge of Hegel's philosophy and his self-con-

scious assessment of it» (630f.), he says. Consequently, he is not interested in a systematic or thematic analysis of the relation. Second, the treatise is a sustained effort to *contextualize* Kierkegaard's works. This is indeed its main achievement. At the beginning of the final chapter, Stewart suggests an alternative title for the treatise: *Kierkegaard's Relations to Danish Hegelianism* (596). In fact, this title better captures the merits of the treatise than *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*. As Stewart notes, his study leads, again and again, »back to the Danish context in which Hegel's thought was employed and critically discussed at the time« (ibid.). Its major strength lies in this specific contextualization: seeing Kierkegaard's works in his narrow historical or biographical context. However, Stewart's ambition is also to give a larger contextualization: to see Kierkegaard's works in relation to Hegel and, through this, in the context of the development of continental philosophy in the nineteenth- and even the twentieth-century. And here things get rather complicated.

With the second thesis, which is about the three periods in Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel, the overall aim of contextualizing Kierkegaard's works comes to the fore. In order to substantiate the thesis concerning Kierkegaard's different relations to Hegel, Stewart presents illuminating close-readings of the first and second period. The detailed argumentation for the three period thesis offers new insights, especially into Kierkegaard's relations to Danish Hegelianism. But as a reconsideration of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel, the treatise is more misleading than helpful, and this affects the discussion of Kierkegaard's place in the history of nineteenth-century continental philosophy.

The challenge for the second thesis (the three period thesis) is first and foremost to come up with an interpretation of the second period (1843–1846) that is characterized by an overt anti-Hegel polemic. The analyses of the first period are illuminating, but not decisive, whereas the analyses of the third period do not add substantially to the insights that already have been reached in the literature, especially with regard to *The Sickness unto Death*.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the question remains: What is Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel with regard to his direct polemic with Hegel that characterizes the second period?

Stewart's recurrent argument concerning this second period is that, upon closer examination, the true targets of his polemic turn out to be not Hegel, but Danish Hegelians, primarily Martensen, Heiberg and Adler. Hegel's philosophy in itself is not criticized, but rather applications or misapplications of it by specific individuals are criticized. They apply Hegelian

categories of thought to the realm of existence, religion and ethics, where they are not applicable, thus confusing the two spheres, personal existence and abstract thought. What seems to be an overt polemic with Hegel turns out to be encoded or disguised criticism of contemporary Danish Hegelians belonging to Kierkegaard's biographical context.

This raises, however, a number of questions. Given that Stewart is right in pointing to the Danish context for the immediate targets of Kierkegaard's polemic, does this exclude the possibility that Kierkegaard is *also* criticizing Hegel? If Kierkegaard can use the overt polemic with *Hegel* in order to criticize Danish Hegelians, this indirect or mediated polemic against Danish Hegelians might conversely also affect Hegel. In order to exclude *this* possibility, Stewart proceeds in two steps (I offer only an outline of the structure of his argument here). The *first* step is to reconstruct the relevant passages, concepts or thoughts in Hegel, with the aim of showing that Kierkegaard's text does not aim to criticize Hegel thus reconstructed. But this gives rise to the crucial question: Is Stewart here doing what he claims to do, namely reconstructing Kierkegaard's actual knowledge of Hegel? What he offers is *not* simply a historical reconstruction, but systematic, often illuminating and profiled, interpretations of Hegel. His argument only supports his thesis *if* these interpretations of Hegel are *in fact* Kierkegaard's interpretations of Hegel. This means that, according to Stewart's own historical methodology, the deeper burden lies with him to show that his interpretations are actually shared by Kierkegaard. As far as I can see, Stewart does not address this issue. Furthermore, if Danish Hegelians misinterpreted and misapplied Hegel, why should Kierkegaard not also have misinterpreted Hegel?

Thus, when Stewart, after having given his interpretation of Hegel, writes: »With this background information,« the rhetoric is indeed misleading. What the reader has been offered is not a piece of background information, but interpretations of Hegel (of a Kantian flavor)<sup>22</sup> that can be questioned<sup>23</sup> and that must be shown to be Kierkegaard's. The hermeneutics implied in Stewart's methodology is naïve in the sense that it conceals what he is doing.

The *second*, more specific, step in Stewart's argument concerning the second period consists of the claim that Hegel and Kierkegaard are basically in agreement insofar as both keep the sphere of thought and the sphere of existence separate whereas the criticized Danish Hegelians conflate exactly these two spheres. This is a complex question, the discussion of which I will have to postpone in order first to consider the issue of hermeneutics.

### 5. *Hermeneutics: Contextualization?*

The discussion of methodology leads to hermeneutical questions that are not explicitly addressed by Stewart. If we follow the larger context in Stewart's work, what is at stake will become clearer. The argumentation offered by Stewart is more far-reaching than what has just been indicated. He acknowledges that Hegel and Kierkegaard are not only in agreement in many instances, but also in disagreement. One example is Kierkegaard's »insistence on transcendence in contrast to Hegel's philosophy of immanence, or his insistence on the irreducibility of Christianity in contrast to Hegel's understanding of it as the penultimate level of knowing in the system behind philosophical knowing« (623). This formulation reflects a rather traditional view, if not a standard view, of both Hegel and the relation between Kierkegaard and Hegel (understood in the sense that this view tells us what is at stake in this relation). That the issues of transcendence and the irreducibility of Christianity are not peripheral issues in Kierkegaard is also acknowledged by Stewart. In his view, Hegel and Kierkegaard »are fundamentally different thinkers with fundamentally different philosophical views« (ibid.). In fact, the differences between them pertain to the basic philosophical outlook or the »entire conception of philosophy« (522). Hegel and Kierkegaard have »radically different conceptions of what philosophy is and what the goal of their writing should be« (650): on the one hand, a philosophical explanation of the world in terms of concepts, on the other, the religious life of the individual (cf. 633).

What is the implication of this fundamental difference? Stewart does *not* draw what seems to be the natural conclusion, viz. that Kierkegaard's disagreement with Hegel is his critique of Hegel. Instead, according to Stewart, the implication is that the Hegel's thought and Kierkegaard's thought belong to two different spheres: the sphere of the Concept and the sphere of the individual existence, respectively. The further implication, Stewart says, is that the classification of Kierkegaard as a philosopher is a misclassification. Thus, the strong interpretation of the general thesis, that Kierkegaard has no anti-Hegel campaign at all, i.e. that his criticism is not aimed at Hegel – not even *via* his criticism of Danish Hegelians – is maintained. Kierkegaard is said not to be criticizing Hegel *because* the differences between them are so fundamental that their discussions are »at cross-purposes« (cf., e.g., 471, 641).

This raises, however, a general hermeneutical issue, the issue of the meaning and the implications of historical contextualization or, to put it differently, the issue of history and philosophy. As mentioned, Stewart's aim

is not only to understand Kierkegaard in the narrow, biographical context of Danish Hegelianism, but also in the wider context of the history of nineteenth-century continental philosophy. In fact, he claims that the value of his study »lies not so much in its treatment of Kierkegaard's relation to the forgotten figures of the Danish Hegelian movement but rather in the ways in which the interpretation of Kierkegaard presented here will affect what has come to be the standard reading of nineteenth-century European philosophy« (596). As mentioned above, »the standard reading« Stewart criticizes is a set of views that is already outdated in the research literature. But let us put this question aside. What is more interesting is the hermeneutical issue implied in Stewart's historical methodology of reconstruction and contextualization.

Stewart's methodology is emphatically historical, first and foremost because it contextualizes Kierkegaard's works. His historical approach is guided by a sense of the *differences* in context, which is indeed to be welcomed. Kierkegaard is situated not only in the Danish context but also in the context of the generation following Hegel. Thinkers of this generation »lived in a quite different world and had experiences quite different from their distinguished teacher ... the changed social and political circumstances put the constellation of problems into a different context and thus in effect render it a different set of issues« (624). Stewart has a good point in criticizing the ahistorical tendency in a thematic, purely text-immanent interpretation of Kierkegaard (cf. e.g. 627f.). The overall ambition of the treatise – to contextualize Kierkegaard's works – is thus well placed.

Contextualizing a highly complex authorship like Kierkegaard's, however, is not without problems of its own, especially if the historical approach is contrasted with a systematic or thematic approach. In contextualizing Kierkegaard's texts, how do we account for their philosophical and existential meaning which transcends his context? In this respect, the following points seem problematic in Stewart's approach. First, his historical contextualization of Kierkegaard is biographical in the sense that Kierkegaard's change of attitude towards Hegel is explained primarily in terms of Kierkegaard's changed relationships with his immediate Danish contemporaries, in particular with Heiberg. Contextualizing thus consists in decoding Kierkegaard's encoded references. Kierkegaard's biographical circumstances are taken to be an explanation of what is at stake in Kierkegaard's texts (cf. e.g. 624). Second, the issue of locating the actual targets of Kierkegaard's criticism is taken to be a matter of reconstructing his intention. The actual target is the intended target. This fits into the biographical

explanation, but what is left is, ironically, the task of interpreting Kierkegaard's texts. Third, in order to reconstruct Kierkegaard's actual knowledge of Hegel and to historically contextualize his thoughts, Stewart must turn to thematic or systematic interpretations of the relevant works of Kierkegaard and Hegel, as we have seen. The systematic approach implied in the project of contextualization, however, is not accounted for by Stewart's methodology. Fourth, a further crucial issue is how to understand the possibility and meaning of a philosophical interpretation of thinkers belonging to different contexts, e.g. Kierkegaard and Hegel. The conclusion drawn by Stewart is that since Hegel and Kierkegaard are doing quite different things, it is not clear why a comparison of their views should be fruitful in the first place. Kierkegaard is not a philosopher, and consequently, he cannot be viewed as engaged in philosophical dialogue with Hegel. However, this conclusion runs counter to Stewart's own ambition of making the Hegel-Kierkegaard relation richer and more fruitful than before. The implication of the historical contextualization seems to be that because the two thinkers belong to different contexts, the philosophical or systematic relation between them disappears. The conception of an ahistorical Hegel-Kierkegaard debate is itself at cross purposes, Stewart argues (650).

This conclusion raises a *hermeneutical* problem in that it affects our own possibilities for understanding. Stewart emphasizes the contextual differences between Kierkegaard and us. We do not serve Kierkegaard by trying to see him as a thinker of our present day, he states. But how do we account for »the universal appeal and importance« of Kierkegaard's thought (39) if we do not transfer it into a new context, our own? This transfer of context requires precisely a systematic interpretation that does not reduce Kierkegaard's problems to ours, but instead gives us the possibility of interpreting our own problems by putting them into perspective as we interpret Kierkegaard's texts.

To sum up, the hermeneutical problem involved in Stewart's methodology is a double one: First, the methodology of reconstruction seems to rest on a naïve hermeneutic in the sense that it conceals what Stewart is doing as he interprets Kierkegaard's and Hegel's texts. Second, the methodology of contextualization does not account for the problem and possibility of understanding texts that belong to a historical context different from ours. On the one hand, it is, according to Stewart, possible to reconstruct, at least in principle, Kierkegaard's actual knowledge and his actual intentions, and on the other hand, there are fundamental differences in context

that separate us from him. His problems are not ours. The consequence of contextualization then seems to be that there is nothing at issue between Kierkegaard and us.

### 6. »No conflict« or: Distribution of Spheres

After having discussed the methodology and implicit hermeneutic, let us return to the discussion of Stewart's main thesis, and, more specifically, to the second step in his argument, viz. that Kierkegaard and Hegel are in agreement with regard to distinguishing between the two spheres: thought and freedom, speculation and existence, knowledge and faith. As we have seen, their disagreement is taken by Stewart to confirm this basic agreement. It is an agreement in disagreement. Consequently, the thought of Kierkegaard and the thought of Hegel are consigned to two different spheres: Kierkegaard is the thinker of the religious life of the individual, Hegel is the thinker of the Concept.

Thus, according to Stewart, in the *Postscript*, Johannes Climacus is not critical of speculative philosophy *per se*, but only of the improper application of speculative philosophy that arises when it confuses the two spheres of knowledge and faith. Hegel consistently remains on the one side of the dichotomy, i.e., that of thought. Like Climacus, he distinguishes between the two realms, that of scholarship on the one hand, and that of private religious faith on the other. This means, Stewart argues, that Climacus and Hegel are at cross purposes since they discuss two quite different things: Hegel is concerned with philosophical or conceptual understanding, Climacus with private faith.

Stewart concludes: »while Kierkegaard is concerned primarily with the realm of the subjective (i.e., the private faith of the individual), Hegel is concerned primarily with the objective (i.e., the realm of science and scholarship). But so long as Hegel does not pretend to make any claims about the subjective sphere, there is no conflict, a point that Kierkegaard himself recognizes« (636, cf. e.g. 333, 468). Where there seems to be a conflict between existence and speculation, there are in fact two distinct spheres. This is what I called the second step in Stewart's attempt to rule out the possibility that Hegel is also the implicit target of Kierkegaard's criticism. The argument is that Hegel and Kierkegaard are basically in agreement in that both keep the sphere of thought and the sphere of existence separate whereas the Danish Hegelians are criticized precisely for conflating these two spheres.

The question however is this: Does the suggested distribution or consignment of the thought of Hegel (to the sphere of the abstract Concept) and the thought of Kierkegaard (to the subjective or private sphere of existence or faith) not reduce their respective ways of thinking? This reduction primarily affects Hegel's philosophy of religion (in that religion and history cannot simply be reduced to the development of the Concept), and Kierkegaard's theory of subjectivity (in that the subjective is not reducible to the private). I have already mentioned that Stewart represents quite traditional views on Hegel and Kierkegaard: Hegel is said to be the philosopher of immanence, while Kierkegaard is the philosopher of transcendence;<sup>24</sup> Hegel is said to be the philosopher of the Concept, while Kierkegaard is viewed as the religious thinker of individual, or private, existence.<sup>25</sup>

Let me focus on the last point. First, it is important to clarify the character of what Kierkegaard is doing. If we are to distinguish between thought and existence, what we find in Kierkegaard is *thought* about existence. Second, it is likewise important to clarify the character of what he is concerned about. To this end, we must make a crucial distinction: Kierkegaard does not speak of a *private* faith, but rather of *faith* as being private, or rather, as being subjective in the sense of personal.<sup>26</sup> The implication again is twofold: First, what Kierkegaard describes is the *character* of this subjectivity. Part of his claim is that subjectivity is a matter of appropriation; this appropriation, however, is not simply a private matter, but a matter of understanding oneself *as* a human being. The subjective is linked to what is human in the sense of the universally human (*det Almen Menneskelige*), which in turn is *inter-esse*, is something that is at stake between human beings. Second, a further distinction must be made: I am the one to appropriate my own existence, but as I do so, I relate to others and to the human condition we share. In this sense, the subjective is not simply private, but takes place between us. This is the point in his dialectic of communication.

What is at issue can be illustrated by the relation of speculation and existence. Stewart's claim that Kierkegaard has no critique of speculation as such seems questionable. Again, Kierkegaard does not restrict his thought to the subjective in the sense of the private, but is concerned about what is human. Speculation is a human possibility. Kierkegaard's question thus concerns the existential significance of speculation: What role does it play in the existence of human beings? In speculation, humans can forget what it is to be human, in ignoring the distinction between the human and the divine.<sup>27</sup> This is a *human* possibility.



Stewart says that Kierkegaard's »passionate relationships with his immediate Danish contemporaries« would certainly outweigh »any abstract philosophical point of disagreement that he might have had with Hegel« (612). Stewart has rightly contextualized Kierkegaard's works also in terms of these passionate relationships, but Kierkegaard also had a passionate relation to, e.g., Socrates.<sup>28</sup> For Kierkegaard, thinking is passionate, but that does not make it private. Passion here means that something is at stake, and what is at stake is to understand our lives as human beings.

### 6. »At cross purposes« or: Is the Relation Ambiguous?

As announced in the beginning, I want to pose one question via the questions I have raised: Does the ambiguity, or the ambiguous nature, of Kierkegaard's relations to Hegel not *disappear* in the course of Stewart's argument?

Stewart seems to hold a strong interpretation of the thesis that Kierkegaard did not have anti-Hegel campaign: Kierkegaard is not criticizing Hegel, not even through his criticism of Danish Hegelians. Stewart, however, recognizes that Kierkegaard and Hegel are in disagreement on issues which are of central importance in Kierkegaard's works. But he does not take this disagreement to be Kierkegaard's criticism of Hegel. His move goes in the opposite direction: When Kierkegaard seems to criticize Hegel, Kierkegaard and Hegel are, in fact, not speaking of the same thing. The guiding idea of keeping the spheres separate is then turned into a distribution of Kierkegaard's and Hegel's respective thought into two separate spheres, levels or projects: »Kierkegaard and Hegel are engaged in fundamentally different kinds of projects: while Hegel is primarily interested in providing a philosophical explanation of the world in terms of concepts, Kierkegaard is primarily interested in the religious life of the individual« (633). As I have argued, this is quite a traditional, and misleading, way of formulating the difference between Hegel and Kierkegaard. But even more important is the implication: Kierkegaard and Hegel are at cross purposes.

Let me cite from the key passage in Stewart's book: »But given that the two are doing quite different things, it is not clear why a comparison of their views is supposed to be fruitful in the first place« (636, cf. e.g. 323). Kierkegaard's project is »a completely different kind of intellectual project, in large part at odds with philosophy« (636f.). Kierkegaard is not criticizing Hegel because there is no common ground upon which to base such a critique: »A genuinely philosophical criticism would only make sense if

there were a common basis of this kind. If, by contrast, Kierkegaard is not a philosopher in the same sense of the word, then it is not clear why he should be conceived as giving a *philosophical* criticism of Hegel. It seems rather that given the disparate nature of their respective projects, such a criticism would be at cross-purposes« (637). With their consignment into separate spheres, Kierkegaard and Hegel are not speaking of the same thing.

In the end, Stewart thus seems to confirm Thulstrup's thesis that Kierkegaard and Hegel have nothing in common as thinkers. Stewart asks this question himself and answers that there is »no contradiction in saying, on the one hand, contrary to Thulstrup, that Kierkegaard had many things in common with Hegel and was positively influenced by him, while granting, on the other hand, in agreement with Thulstrup that Kierkegaard's project in general was radically different from that of Hegel« (651).<sup>29</sup> But the point is that, according to Stewart, Kierkegaard and Hegel do not have enough in common to justify talk of Kierkegaard's criticism of Hegel. The discussion between them is at »cross purposes.« But if Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel is not also a critical one, if their philosophical projects are so completely different that Kierkegaard's project is not a philosophical one, then the ambiguity in fact disappears. There is nothing at stake *between* their thoughts. If they are doing quite different things, a comparison of their views is not fruitful. In other words, it is not fruitful for us to discuss the relation. The relation is a matter of fundamentally different projects, and thus more a matter of indifference than of passion. As mentioned, this runs counter to Stewart's own ambition to make the relation »considerably richer and more interesting than before« (618, cf. 652). »Kierkegaard always maintains a critical, yet productive, relation to Hegel« (629), Stewart says. But this is not what he shows. How can Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel be critical and productive if their projects are fundamentally at odds in such a way that they are not speaking of the same thing?<sup>30</sup>

The relation will only be fruitful if something important is at stake between Kierkegaard and Hegel. One issue could be dialectics. As Stewart mentions, Kierkegaard »even prides himself on being a dialectician« (623). Despite the fact that dialectics is a recurrent theme in the book, Stewart does not give a sustained analysis of the similarities and differences between Kierkegaard and Hegel in terms of dialectics. That dialectics is a critical and fruitful issue between Kierkegaard and Hegel was noted by Paul Ricoeur in an article »Philosopher après Kierkegaard,« published in 1963, four years before Thulstrup's thesis. Ricoeur's small article has, at least to me, been far more important than Thulstrup's book. The difference can be measured by

the simple fact that we today can still take Ricoeur's suggestion as a fruitful lead: »Le soupçon nous est venu que cette dialectique rompue [Kierkegaard's dialectics] pouvait avoir plus d'affinité avec son meilleur ennemi – Hegel – qu'avec ses héritiers présomptifs.«<sup>31</sup> Dialectics in Kierkegaard is the passion of distinction. In this sense, it is an issue between Kierkegaard and Hegel. The issue of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel, in terms of the issue of Kierkegaard *and* Hegel, is still open.

Stewart's book is a major scholarly achievement. But it is also a remarkable subjective (in the sense of personal, not private) and cultural achievement. Stewart has not only learned Danish – which he mastered almost from the day he arrived in Denmark – in order to work as a research fellow at the Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre, but he has also entered the Danish language with a remarkable sense of culture and history. The result, or one major result, is his doctoral thesis. He has taken Kierkegaard's Danish context more seriously than most Danish Kierkegaard scholars have.<sup>32</sup>

## Notes

1. What follows is a revised version of my opposition *ex officio* to Jon Stewart's thesis, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, at the public defence for the doctoral degree, Faculty of Theology, University of Copenhagen, November 12, 2003. The Danish doctorate corresponds to the German *Habilitation*.
2. Frederik Helweg, »Hegelianismen i Danmark,« *Dansk Kirketidende*, Nr. 51, 1855, p. 829 (the second part was published in Nr. 52, December 23, 1855).
3. Michael Theunissen, »Einleitung: Kierkegaards Werk und Wirkung,« in *Materialien zur Philosophie Søren Kierkegaards*, (eds.) Michael Theunissen and Wilfried Greve, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp 1979, p. 22.
4. Jon Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2003, p. 81. Where nothing else is indicated, all page references in the following will be to Stewart's book.
5. Here is the quote in full: »Sein [i.e. Kierkegaards] Denken lebt von der kritisch-polemischen Auseinandersetzung mit dieser Schulphilosophie seiner Zeit [i.e. German Idealism]. Ihr jedoch bleibt er, der sich als Antisystematiker verstand und als solcher in die Philosophiegeschichte einging, nicht nur insofern verpflichtet, als sie den Grund bildet, von dem sich sein Denken abstoßend erhebt; sondern darüber hinaus übernimmt und verarbeitet er selbst eine Vielzahl idealistischer Theoreme. Nicht allein die vor dem eigentlichen Werk liegende Dissertation mit ihrer Sokratesdeutung und ihrer Romantikkritik atmet den Geist Hegels, auch die in *Entweder/Oder I* entwickelte Kunstästhetik oder die Ethik in *Furcht und Zittern*. Hegelsche Methodik findet sich bei Kierkegaard wieder in dessen dialektischer Denkform und dem Schema von Unmittelbarkeit und Vermittlung, das der sogenannten 'Stadienlehre' zugrunde liegt. An Fichte erinnert die Wahltheorie in *Entweder/Oder II*, von Schelling übernommen ist die Unterscheidung von negativer und positiver Philosophie im *Begriff Angst*. Der Anfang der *Krankheit zum Tode*, um ein Beispiel aus dem späten Werk zu nennen, vereint gleichzeitig Elemente aller Hauptvertreter des Deutschen Idealismus in sich: Die Bestimmung der Verfassung des Menschen als positiver Synthese von antithetisch verbundenen Gliedern wurzelt im Hegelschen Gedanken der Gegensatzseinheit; die Bestimmung des Selbstes als Verhalten dieses synthetischen Verhältnisses zu sich selbst geht auf Fichtes Bestimmung des Ich als 'Tathandlung', als substratloser Prozeß, zurück; und an Schellings Begriff der 'derivierten Absolutheit' orientiert sich Kierkegaard, wenn er dieses in sich abgeschlossene, in der Rückbewegung auf sich selbst absolute menschliche Selbst dennoch als gesetztes Selbst anspricht« (ibid.).
6. The evaluation committee consisted of Merold Westphal, Niels Jørgen Cappelørn and myself.
7. The deep ambivalence displayed by Kierkegaard »was in no way different from that of his contemporaries«, e.g. Heine, Marx and Feuerbach (630).
8. »Kierkegaard is thus said to have waged a rabid campaign against both Hegel's philosophy and his person. This is, generally speaking, what I understand by »the standard view« in the understanding of Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel« (4, cf. 11).
9. Niels Thulstrup, *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel*, Princeton, Princeton University Press 1980, p. 12 (quoted in Stewart p. 16). In Danish the quote reads: »Principielt har Hegel og Kierkegaard saaledes set intet tilfælles som Tænkere, hverken hvad angaar Objekt, Maal eller Metode, ej heller hvad angaar de for dem indiskutable Forudsætninger« (*Kierkegaards Forhold til Hegel og til den spekulative Idealisme indtil 1846*, Copenhagen, Gyldendal 1967, p. 21).

10. Just to give one example, on 627f., »true targets« and »actual targets« occur 5 times.
11. A telling example is the summary statement: »It has generally been possible to identify Kierkegaard's actual targets in most of the passages that have traditionally been taken as his Hegel critique; however, there remain a handful of cases ...« (632f.).
12. After having claimed that Thulstrup's view »has remained largely unchallenged until the present day« (27), Stewart proceeds to mention scholars who have called into question Thulstrup's one-sided view of the matter, but who have done so primarily in a thematic approach and not by means of »*Quellenforschung*« (27ff.). However, the lack of references to Thulstrup among the scholars mentioned, is, I think, more telling.
13. Compare the quote about Thulstrup's view having remained »largely unchallenged until the present day« to the following: »The notion of Kierkegaard having a rabid anti-Hegel campaign is one of the most cherished fixtures in Kierkegaard studies even among scholars with often otherwise very differing views. Yet, like any seemingly permanent fixture in the research, this view has enjoyed such a prolonged lifespan due precisely to the fact that it has gone unquestioned for so long« (612). It goes without saying that a notion can enjoy a prolonged lifespan if it is not questioned. It is, however, difficult to ascertain what is said in the quote. Has the notion gone unquestioned in some of the popular mainstream research, or in Kierkegaard research generally?
14. Walter Schulz, *Philosophie in der veränderten Welt*, Pfullingen, Neske 1972, p. 397.
15. Michael Theunissen, *Hegels Lehre vom absoluten Geist als theologisch-politischer Traktat*, Berlin, de Gruyter 1970, p. 280.
16. For example, in an article published in 1976, Bukdahl refers to how Kierkegaard maintains the dialectics within the sphere of the paradox: »hvordan Kierkegaard bevarer dialektikken inden for paradoksets sfære. (Med dialektik mener jeg med Hegel og Kierkegaard færdighed i at tænke, hvor forstanden ikke slår til, eller med andre ord gennemskuelsen af alle absolutter, alt fikseret, som barnlighed, overtro, fetichisme). Paradokset får jo hos Kierkegaard selv syntesefunktioner, just gennem sin ubegribelighed – det skal aktivere en handlefrihed hos de enkelte, førstehåndshandlinger uden autoritet« [»How Kierkegaard preserves the dialectic within the sphere of the paradox. (With 'dialectic' I mean along with Hegel and Kierkegaard the ability to think when the understanding is not adequate or, in other words, the ability to see through all absolutes and everything fixed such as childishness, superstition, and fetishism). With Kierkegaard, the paradox is even given the function of synthesis, precisely through its incomprehensibility – it activates a free will in the individual, it activates first hand actions without authority.«] (Jørgen K. Bukdahl, *Om Søren Kierkegaard. Artikler i udvalg ved Jan Lindhardt*, Copenhagen, C.A. Reitzel, 1981, p. 134).
17. »Kierkegaard and Hegel«, in *Kierkegaard*, (eds.), Alastair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1998, p. 101.
18. Cf. e.g., p. 13 (»the view that Kierkegaard had a campaign against Hegel«) and 359 (»the guiding intuition that there must be some campaign against Hegel«).
19. Cf. e.g., p. 622: »...that Kierkegaard issued a straightforward critique of Hegel.«
20. Cf. the positive formulation of the thesis: »...my main thesis can be viewed as the claim that there are many more points of comparison and similarity between the two thinkers than are generally recognized« (32).
21. The positive use of Hegel's philosophy could have been illustrated by *Works of Love*, in particular on the question of recognition alluded to in Stewart's interpretation.
22. Cf. for example 256f., where Stewart, after having interpreted absolute knowing as a priori truth, concludes: »Hence, Kierkegaard can again be seen as offering a criticism of some version of Hegel's

- doctrine and not of the original doctrine itself» (italics added). Without further argument, he continues: »There is reason to think that these criticisms were never intended to be of Hegel in the first place« (ibid.).
23. Thus, what precedes the sentence »with this background information« is in one case a highly debatable interpretation of Hegel's philosophy of history, according to which »history is simply the mind's representation of the past to itself« (361). It is difficult to decide whether Hegel's position is realist or anti-realist, but even if one wants to argue for an anti-realist interpretation (in the sense that there is »not an autonomous sphere of history apart from thought« (366) ), one need not say, as Stewart does, that »history is just our series of representations« (ibid.). Cf. also 476.
  24. In this context it must be noted that the treatise would have profited from a more detailed and accurate interpretation of Hegel's *Philosophy of Religion*. Stewart's remark that Hegel »wrote several works on theology, most notably those collected under the title *Early Theological Writings*«(630) could be taken as evidence.
  25. If we place Hegel and Kierkegaard in different spheres – in the sphere of thought (the objective in terms of the Concept) and the sphere of existence (the subjective in terms of the private), respectively – what would prevent us from holding »the standard picture,« according to which Hegel and Kierkegaard inaugurate two competing traditions? The first tradition would be characterized by its belief in reason, and the second, by an incipient existentialism or irrationalism. It is not clear how Stewart, given his placement of the thought of Hegel and Kierkegaard, would avoid affirming what he earlier denied. What is the difference between his distribution and the picture according to which Hegel and Kierkegaard have split philosophy into two competing traditions (622)? Is the difference that Kierkegaard is not a philosopher and consequently does not belong to European philosophy in the nineteenth century?
  26. Therefore, I would not hesitate to describe what Kierkegaard is doing as philosophy of religion. This seems to be in contrast to Stewart, who, on the one hand, states that Hegel's philosophy of religion is not about »the private belief of the individual,« whereas, on the other hand, Kierkegaard's interest in »the personal faith of the individual« has »on its own nothing to do with the academic field of philosophy of religion« (636).
  27. This is in fact what Stewart writes in one passage: »Climacus sees pretension in the desire to view the world from a panoptic perspective of speculative philosophy since this, he claims, is the desire to play God« (485, cf. 154, 204, 255, 577). The issue is philosophical (cf. 645). Climacus inaugurates a philosophy of human finitude.
  28. As mentioned, Stewart claims that the classification of Kierkegaard as a philosopher is a misclassification. Therefore, Kierkegaard and Hegel are engaged in fundamentally different projects. However, Stewart also opens up the possibility that Kierkegaard is engaged in a philosophical project in the Greek, i.e. Socratic, sense (641ff.). He seeks to clarify the classification issue by saying that Kierkegaard is not a philosopher in the nineteenth-century sense of the term. The problem with this classification, however, is that there is a philosophical issue at stake: Kierkegaard and Hegel offer different understandings of the nature, scope and limits of human thought. For Kierkegaard, »philosophy in the most fundamental sense« (644) is not just a matter of doctrines, but concerns the relation of thought and existence. Thought is, as Climacus argues in *Fragments*, a matter of passion, but this is a passion in understanding existence.
  29. In his review of Thulstrup's doctoral thesis (»Personlighedens protest mod systemet,« *Præsteforeningens Blad* 1968/39, p. 654), Jørgen K. Bukdahl points out the fact that Thulstrup's main thesis was formulated by Johannes Sløk in an article from 1941. Sløk writes: »At sammenligne Kierkegaard

- og Hegel er ikke alene en vanskelig, maaske umulig, men endog en misforstaaet Opgave. Deres Tanker har intet med hinanden at gøre, deres Intentioner er ganske forskellige, deres Udgangspunkter, deres Interesser, deres Metoder, deres Indstilling, alt er forskelligt. Det er ikke to Filosofer, der har udtænkt modsatte Tanker om det samme Problem. Det er to Individualiteter, der har tænkt vidtforskellige Tanker om vidtforskellige Problemer» [Comparing Kierkegaard and Hegel is not only a difficult, perhaps impossible task, but even a misdirected task. Their thoughts have nothing to do with each other, their intentions are completely different; their points of departure, their interests, their methods, their attitudes, everything is different. They are not two philosophers who have worked out contrary thoughts about the same problem. They are two individuals who have worked out completely different thoughts about completely different problems] (»En Studie i Kierkegaards Erkendelsesteori«, *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift* 1941, p. 50). Sløk's formulation of the thesis, however, also anticipates Stewart's final point: Hegel and Kierkegaard are not two philosophers who have thought out opposite views on the same problem. They have thought fundamentally different thoughts about fundamentally different problems. Sløk's way of formulating the thesis would not exclude that one could find many points of contacts between Hegel and Kierkegaard, but the point would be that, basically, they are not speaking of the same thing. Bukdahl ends his review by asking: »Er den Sløk-Thulstrupse tese om det manglende problemfællesskab mellem Kierkegaard og Hegel nu rigtig? Jeg vil være tilbøjelig til at benægte det« [But is the Sløk-Thulstrup thesis about the lack of common problems between Kierkegaard and Hegel correct? I would be inclined to disagree] (op.cit., 656). In a sense, one could speak of the »Sløk-Thulstrup-Stewart'ske« thesis that Hegel and Kierkegaard do not share a common problem.
30. Stewart gives another suggestion: »Perhaps some of Kierkegaard's polemical rhetoric against Hegel can be explained precisely by his debt to him; often there are more violent debates among thinkers who have much in common than among those who have no shared presuppositions at all... Kierkegaard's polemic with Hegel may thus betray a hidden recognition of a degree of intellectual kinship and debt« (625). This is a fruitful suggestion. The problem is again that this is not what Stewart has shown in the book. On the contrary, he has persistently argued that Kierkegaard's polemic with Hegel is in fact not with Hegel, and has concluded that Kierkegaard and Hegel do not share presuppositions in terms of common problems.
31. *Revue de théologie et de philosophie* 1963, p. 304. Ricoeur's article was translated into Danish in *Filosofiens kilder*, Copenhagen, Vinten 1973. In Danish the quote reads: »Vi har fået mistanke om, at denne brudte dialektik [the dialectics of Kierkegaard] kunne have mere til fælles med sin ærkefjende – Hegel – end med sine formodede arvtagere« (p. 30).
32. This study was funded by the Danish National Research Foundation. My thanks to Brian Søderquist for carefully checking my English.