

Social Selves: The Self and Others in Kierkegaard, Hegel and Bayer¹

Two hallmarks of the traditional characterization of Kierkegaard's place in post-Kantian European philosophy is (1) that he is a staunch critic of Hegel and (2) that his concept of the self is atomistic and asocial. These two facets of Kierkegaard's thought are most often described separately, though a number of figures have treated them collectively. Marcuse, for instance, explicitly identifies Kierkegaard as the champion of the "isolated individual" in contrast to Hegel's socially-constituted individual.² According to Marcuse, Hegel "demonstrated that the fullest existence of the individual is consummated in his social life," and that the "critical employment of the dialectical method tended to disclose that individual freedom presupposes a free society, and that the true liberation of the individual therefore requires the liberation of society."³ But Kierkegaard's "fixation on the individual alone... amounts to adopting an abstract approach..." which is antithetical to any social or cultural criticism.⁴ Likewise, in *Journeys to Selfhood: Hegel and Kierkegaard*, Mark C. Taylor says that for Kierkegaard, "the journey to selfhood cannot culminate in spiritual community but must be a solitary sojourn that separates self from other."⁵ According to Taylor, Hegel's approach to becoming a self is much more

¹ In citations of Kierkegaard, I abbreviate as follows: *CUP*: *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, v. 1, ed. and trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); *TA*: *Two Ages* ed. and trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978); *UDVS*: *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*, ed. and trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); *WL*: *Works of Love*, ed. and trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); *SUD*: *Sickness Unto Death*, ed. and trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983); *JP*: *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, v. I-VII, ed. and trans. Howard Hong and Edna Hong (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967); *LD*: *Letter and Documents*, ed. and trans. Henrik Rosenmeier (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979); *SKS*: *Søren Kierkegaards Skrifter*, v. 1-28, ed. by Niels Jørgen Cappelørn, et al. (Copenhagen: Gads Forlag, 1997-2009); and *Pap*: *Søren Kierkegaards Papirer*, ed. P.A. Heiberg, V. Kuhr, E. Torsting, N. Thulstrup, v. I-XIII (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1968-1970); *B&A*: *Breve og Aktstykker vedrørende Søren Kierkegaard*, ed. N. Thulstrup, v. 1 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1953-54). All references identify the English translation first (even when I have translated the passage myself) and then the Danish reference.

² Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1941) pp. 262-263.

³ Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, pp. 262-263.

⁴ Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, p. 263.

⁵ Mark Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood: Hegel and Kierkegaard* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980) p. 179.

coherent and philosophically defensible because Hegel's notion of self is inherently relational and social whereas Kierkegaard's notion is fundamentally disconnected from any other(s).

Taylor's view echoes Marcuse's view that Kierkegaard and Hegel represent antipodes regarding the relationship between the relative importance of the individual and the community.

This paper challenges this view by demonstrating that Kierkegaard directly appropriates the work of Hegel's student, Karl Bayer, in the development of his "Dialectic of Community." As a result, Kierkegaard's conception of the relationship between the self and others borrows the structure, terminology and basic ideas found generally in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and more specifically in Bayer's "The Concept of the Moral Community."⁶ This historical connection demonstrates, on the one hand, that Kierkegaard's concept of the single self (*den Enkelte*) is rightly understood as a contribution to post-Kantian European social and political philosophy, and on the other hand, that the views of Hegel and Kierkegaard are contiguous with one another.

In section one, I will describe Jon Stewart's recent work on the relationships between Hegel and Kierkegaard.⁷ Stewart's claim is that the two figures have much more in common than ordinarily presumed. This seminal work challenges the traditional understanding of Kierkegaard's place in 19th century philosophy as a critic of Hegel. In section two, I will evaluate two objections to Stewart's claim. The first is that he overstates the similarity between Kierkegaard and Hegel particularly concerning matters of faith and religiosity, and the second is that he mistakenly places Kierkegaard outside the philosophical tradition as it developed in the 19th century. These two objections pose a significant problem for Stewart's account of the relationship between Kierkegaard and Hegel.

⁶ G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. H.B. Nisbet and ed. Allen Wood (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Karl Bayer, "Der Begriff der sittlichen Gemeinschaft [The Concept of the Moral Community]," *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und spekulative Theologie*, vol. 13, 1844, pp. 69-102.

⁷ Jon Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

In section three, I will describe the historical relationship between Hegel, Karl Bayer and Kierkegaard, and I will characterize Kierkegaard's dialectic of community as an appropriation and further elaboration of Karl Bayer's work where Kierkegaard continues to develop his understanding of the single self and his or her relation to others. In section four, I will explain how my account of the relationship between Hegel and Kierkegaard concerning the relation between the self and others is immune to the two objections to Stewart's thesis. This account shows that Kierkegaard's direct appropriation of Karl Bayer's work on community shows a clear and specific connection between Hegel and Kierkegaard, but it does so in such a way that Kierkegaard's work on the topic is understood as a continuation and further development of topics and themes that figure prominently in 19th century social and political philosophy.

In section five, I will explain how Kierkegaard's dialectic of community challenges the atomistic, asocial understanding of the single self by giving an account of how the earlier characterization of the single self who is radically alone before God, separate from all others, is further developed by Kierkegaard's discussion of sociality. This understanding anticipates views later expressed in Kierkegaard's "second ethics."⁸ In section six, I will indicate how this revisionist characterization of Kierkegaard's self as a social self can reshape the ways in which social unity is understood and conceptualized in contemporary social philosophy.

I.

Although this view is no longer as universal as it once was, Kierkegaard is generally regarded as a strict opponent of Hegel's philosophical system. There is a substantial amount of apparent textual support for this type of view, but it has maintained its dominance primarily

⁸ Kierkegaard's second ethics traditionally refers to his ethics of love in *Works of Love*, but I would also include *Upbuilding Discourses in Various Spirits*. UDVS / SKS 8; WL / SKS 9.

because of historical and institutional reasons rather than for textual reasons.⁹ These historical and institutional reasons prefigure the way that many people interpret critical comments directed explicitly at Hegel. One of the most recent and in depth attempts to understand the relationship between Hegel and Kierkegaard is Jon Stewart's *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*. Stewart attempts to point out the inadequacy of what he describes as the "standard view" of the relationship between Hegel and Kierkegaard. Stewart states that the standard view envisions the relationship as a "purely negative one" where Kierkegaard "... rejected Hegel's philosophy wholesale and... used aspects of it only to ridicule them, often ironically. Kierkegaard is thought to have been entirely original and to have taken leave of his philosophical predecessor right from the beginning."¹⁰ In other passages, Stewart associates the "standard view" with those who would maintain that Kierkegaard was a "critic of Hegel"¹¹ and "engaged in a campaign against Hegel."¹²

Stewart's thesis is "that from the perspective of Kierkegaard's own assessment, he never had the great anti-Hegel campaign that much of the secondary literature has ascribed to him. On the contrary, Hegel had a quite positive influence on him."¹³ Stewart is critical of these standard approaches to the relationship between Hegel and Kierkegaard for textual, historical, and philosophical reasons. Stewart situates Kierkegaard's authorship within an intellectual culture which includes both Danish Hegelians and their opponents. He argues that this social and historical context indicates not only that Kierkegaard was primarily critical of Danish Hegelians (as many others have commonly maintained as well) rather than Hegel himself, but furthermore

⁹ The reception of Kierkegaard's thought in the early 20th century and the traditional understanding of the developmental of 19th century continental philosophy are the primary contributors to the dominance of this understanding. This basic view is reinscribed in introductory textbooks as well as volumes on the history of philosophy. Jon Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, pp. 4-14.

¹⁰ Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, p. 3.

¹¹ Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, p. 9.

¹² Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, p. 11.

¹³ Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, p. 631.

that Kierkegaard's critique of these Danish Hegelians establishes "a positive influence of Hegel on Kierkegaard" where "... there are many more points of comparison and similarity between the two thinkers than are generally recognized."¹⁴

Stewart intends the defense of his thesis to be a direct challenge to Niels Thulstrup's thesis in his book *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel* which 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."¹⁵ Although the sheer magnitude of historical information Stewart brings to bear on the discussion is unparalleled, there have been a number of scholars who have made claims similar to Stewart's central thesis.¹⁶ These scholars indicate structural similarities as well as very important differences between the two thinkers. Stewart's work, however, goes much further than previous accounts. He performs a detailed study of Kierkegaard's corpus from his earliest published piece "From The Papers of One Still Living" (1838) to *The Sickness Unto Death* (1849) as well as a detailed study of Kierkegaard's Danish interlocutors. He argues that an overwhelming majority of the overt references to 'Hegel' or 'Hegelianism' are actually references to Danish Hegelians such as Martensen, Heiberg, and Adler. Stewart concludes with a developmental thesis regarding the relationship between Hegel and Kierkegaard. He claims that Kierkegaard's relation to Hegel develops over time beginning with an initial more Hegelian period (1834-1843) which includes his earliest journal entries, several minor publications, and Kierkegaard's dissertation *The Concept of Irony* (which Kierkegaard later describes as an example of what a "Hegelian fool" he was). This period ends

¹⁴ Stewart, *Kierkegaard's Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, p. 32.

¹⁵ Niels Thulstrup, *Kierkegaard's Relation to Hegel*, trans. George L. Stengren (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 12.

¹⁶ Cf. Wilhelm Anz, *Kierkegaard und der deutsche Idealismus* (Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1956); Stephen N. Dunning, *Kierkegaard's Dialectic of Inwardness* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); and Mark C. Taylor, *Journeys to Selfhood: Hegel and Kierkegaard*.

with the publication of *Either/Or* where “Hegel’s influence continues.”¹⁷ The second period (1843-1846) begins with the publication of *Fear and Trembling* and culminates in 1846 with the publication of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* and was when most of *The Book on Adler* was written which includes the last direct references to Hegel. This period is the shortest of the three periods and the most interesting to philosophers because of the particular texts in this period. During this period, Kierkegaard engaged in what Stewart terms “outward polemics against Hegel and speculative philosophy.”¹⁸ The third period of Kierkegaard’s relation to Hegel ranges from 1847 to his death in 1855. The primary work from this period that Stewart discusses is *The Sickness Unto Death*. It demonstrates that Kierkegaard was well versed in “Hegel’s dialectical method and in this aspect can be regarded as being positively influenced by Hegel.”¹⁹ But this period is characterized by a general indifference to Hegel himself. Kierkegaard never mentions Hegel directly in this period, and yet still uses Hegelian vocabulary, style, and methodology. Furthermore, in this period Kierkegaard’s critiques of his contemporaries (especially H.L. Martensen) are no longer clothed in criticism of Hegel.

II.

Stewart’s interpretation is insightful and provocative, and it has provoked a number of critical appraisals of his argument. These criticisms revolve around two major objections to his thesis. The first concerns the identification of Kierkegaard’s polemical target as the Danish Hegelians rather than Hegel himself, and the second concerns the claim that Kierkegaard ought not be thought of as a participant in the development of 19th century philosophy. In this section, I will describe both objections as well as Stewart’s response.

¹⁷ Stewart, *Kierkegaard’s Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, p. 600

¹⁸ Stewart, *Kierkegaard’s Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, p. 605.

¹⁹ Stewart, *Kierkegaard’s Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, p. 613.

In the second period described above, Stewart maintains that Kierkegaard should be viewed as targeting Danish Hegelians with his merely “outward polemics” directed against Hegel. In fact, particular passages in this period can be interpreted as indirectly defending Hegel against those who would interpret him improperly. This interpretation is not controversial because Stewart identifies the Danish context for Kierkegaard’s criticism of Hegel and Hegelianism; rather, it is controversial because (a) it is often difficult to clearly and definitively identify the precise object of criticism²⁰ and (b) a weak aspect of Stewart’s argument is when he argues for a deep philosophical or conceptual divide between Hegel himself and his Danish students.²¹ Many of their views (especially Heiberg and Martensen) appear very similar to the positions adopted by other “right Hegelians;” and if Stewart fails to establish that Danish Hegelians are bad exemplars of Hegelian philosophy, then merely pointing out that Kierkegaard cloaks his criticism of Heiberg, Martensen, or Adler in a critique of Hegel is insufficient to show that Kierkegaard is not critical of Hegel as well. Although the occasion or reference which prompted Kierkegaard to make the criticism may well have come from one of the Danish Hegelians, the criticism would apply to Hegel insofar as the particular view accurately represents Hegel’s views as well.

Stewart’s response to this objection is two-fold: First, he examines Kierkegaard’s references to Hegel or Danish Hegelians and he reconstructs each of their respective views based on the appropriate texts. This strategy reveals that the reconstructed views of the Danish Hegelians deviate substantially from the way in which Stewart has reconstructed Hegel’s views. According to Stewart’s reconstructions the Danish Hegelians improperly apply Hegel’s views to

²⁰ Arne Grøn is critical of Stewart for this reason among others in his “Ambiguous and Deeply Differentiated: Kierkegaard’s Relations to Hegel” *Kierkegaardiana* 23 (2003), p. 183.

²¹ Merold Westphal challenges Stewart on precisely this point in his review of *Kierkegaard’s Relations to Hegel Reconsidered* in *The Søren Kierkegaard Newsletter*, 48: Sept. 2004.

spheres of life that both Kierkegaard and Hegel want to keep separate – namely, the spheres of philosophy and thought on the one hand and existence and religiosity on the other. Although there are broad differences concerning which domain the thinker is concerned with, this difference arises in the context of a shared assumption that these spheres ought to be separate. Thus, Kierkegaard’s criticism of the Danish Hegelians implicitly and indirectly shows a positive relationship to Hegel.

Stewart second response to the objection addresses more specifically how Kierkegaard and Hegel are at cross-purposes. It may very well be that in some cases “Kierkegaard is indeed criticizing Hegel directly on some substantive philosophical point,”²² but these broad disagreements between the two thinkers indicate “that 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.”²³ The usual portrayal of Kierkegaard with his polemic aim at Hegel is because scholars have not sufficiently understood how each thinker understands his project, and “Kierkegaard’s famous ‘critique’ of Hegel has been misunderstood in large part precisely because of the mistaken classification of Kierkegaard as a philosopher.”²⁴ Stewart characterizes the differences between Hegel and Kierkegaard as two ships passing in the night – one is concerned with issues of philosophy and knowledge and the other is concerned with the private character of faith, particular moral issues and social criticism. As a result, Stewart claims that Kierkegaard does not fit within the history of 19th century European philosophy. He claims that Kierkegaard is best understood as “a moralist, [a] social critic, or simply [a] religious

²² Stewart, *Kierkegaard’s Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, p. 633.

²³ Stewart, *Kierkegaard’s Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, p. 633.

²⁴ Stewart, *Kierkegaard’s Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, p. 650.

thinker.”²⁵ Rather than comparing his thought to Hegel and to the German Idealist tradition, we ought to understand him as a participant in some other conversation as a literary figure or religious thinker. This characterization of Kierkegaard is the source of the second major objection to Stewart’s thesis.

The two objections to Stewart’s overall thesis are: first, his interpretation of Hegel overemphasizes the differences between Danish Hegelians and their master and therefore, he is wrong to suggest that a critique directed at Danish Hegelians is not applicable to Hegel himself. Second, Kierkegaard’s thought addresses issues and problems that arise for 19th century philosophers and it is a mistake to isolate Kierkegaard from that tradition. In the next section, I will show how Kierkegaard’s direct appropriation of Karl Bayer’s work and in section four, I will argue that this historical and conceptual relationship sheds light on Stewart’s argument and these two objections.

III.

In a significant journal entry written sometime between January and September of 1846, after Kierkegaard had written *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard discusses “the dialectic of community or society.” This journal entry is helpful for illustrating both the prevalence of the concept of community for Kierkegaard, and also for establishing Kierkegaard’s debt to Hegel concerning the concept. The entry is as follows:

*The Dialectic of Community [menighedens]
or Society [samfundet] Is as Follows:*

- (1) the particulars [*Enkelheder*] who in the relation relate themselves to each other are themselves inferior to the relation.

Just as in the bodily organism the particulars [*det Enkelte*] are inferior; in the solar system the particular heavenly bodies are.

- (2) the particulars who in the relation relate to each other are each essentially equal in the relation.

²⁵ Stewart, *Kierkegaard’s Relations to Hegel Reconsidered*, p. 650.

Just as in earthly love each one is for itself, but the need for the relationship is the same for both.

- (3) the particulars who in the relation relate to each other in the relation are each more important than the relation.

Just as in the most important religious form. The single self [*den Enkelte*] relates himself first to God and then to the community [*menighedens*], but this first relation is the most important, even though the single self does not reject the second.

See also *Concluding Postscript*, p. 327 [CUP 428 / SKS 7, 389.28]---that the task is not to move from the individual [*Individ*] to the race but from the individual through the race to reach the individual.

See an article by Dr. Bayer, “*Der Begriff der sittlichen Gemeinschaft*” (in Fichte’s journal, 1844, XIII, p. 80). His tripartition is: *Beziehung, Bezug, Einheit* [connection, relation, unity]. (See pp. 80 and 81.)²⁶

The first line of the journal entry, “The dialectic of community or society is as follows” indicates the theme for this passage. Here Kierkegaard develops his own dialectic of community, though it still leaves much to be desired in terms of a coherent development of a distinct theory of associations or community. This entry purports to show how the particular self becomes progressively more important as the community develops. Ultimately, the dialectic culminates in a stage where the self is more important than the self’s relations. Kierkegaard explains this concept by pointing out how the God-relation is more important than other relations but then stresses that this does not undermine one’s other relations. This claim is fascinating given Kierkegaard’s elaboration of the God-relation, and it also opens up the possibility for a theory of community that is consistent with Kierkegaard’s conception of the God-relation – that is, it is consistent with an account of the self’s relation to other people on the other side of the religious.

²⁶JP 4, 4110 / SKS 18, 283, JJ:430. The translation is my own, but I have included the reference to the English translation. This particular passage has some strange features. First, Kierkegaard’s “particulars” [*Enkelheder*] is etymologically similar to his concept of the single self [*den Enkelte*]. Hong and Hong consistently translate to *den Enkelte* as “the single individual,” but I have chosen the single self to more clearly distinguish the concept from Kierkegaard’s use of “the individual” [*Individet*]. Second, Kierkegaard’s Danish is grammatically incorrect in his gloss of the third stage, and it is unclear whether he simply made an error when writing or whether he deliberately made the mistake. The end result of the mistake is that it is ambiguous whether the highest form is the religious (in comparison to ethical or aesthetic forms) or whether it is the highest form of the religious in comparison to other forms of the religious. Every translation that I am aware of fixes the grammatical error by imposing a particular interpretation on the text. I maintain that the latter interpretation is best in light of the context of the passage and Kierkegaard’s views expressed elsewhere and thus, I have rendering it “the religious and most important form”

This sort of account indicates that for Kierkegaard there is an intimate connection between the earlier authorship's focus on becoming the single self and the later emphasis in the second ethics on human relationships and community. Nevertheless, Kierkegaard's development here is unclear and provides very little in terms of a positive account of community.²⁷

Kierkegaard does, however, provide two helpful clues for understanding his presentation of the dialectic of community. First, he suggests that we look at a passage in *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, where he says, "the task is not to move from the individual to the race but from the individual through the race to reach the individual."²⁸ This reference establishes that the race, the universal, the community are not only ends in themselves but also a means for developing the individual in some capacity. The Danish term *Individ* derives from the Latin, and for Kierkegaard it refers to the basic, indivisible unit of existence. This unit is both the prerequisite for and the product of community. This passage emphasizes Kierkegaard's conception of the development of self as a process, and it illustrates a further connection between the earlier authorship and Kierkegaard's writings about sociality and community.

²⁷ The Danish terms used for "community" (*menighedens*) or "society" (*samfundet*) are somewhat ambiguous in the passage. It is not clear whether Kierkegaard means to distinguish the two terms or not. *Menighedens* can be translated a variety of ways but it, almost without exception, has a distinctive religious character as a religious community or congregation, and this word is used in the third numbered stage of community when Kierkegaard writes, "The individual is primarily related to God and then to the community, but this primary relation is the highest, yet he does not neglect the second." It appears, then, that Kierkegaard is illustrating his point here by describing how the individual can be higher than any of his or her relations yet not demean the relation by claiming that one can have a one-to-one relation to God, and yet that will not demean one's relation to one's religious community. "*Samfundet*" also has a multitude of meanings. It can mean community, society, a religious society, an association, a communion, or the entire social system. It is not clear in the journal entry whether Kierkegaard intends the terms to be interchangeable or whether it begins as *samfundet* and culminates in *menighedens*. Although the use of *menighedens* in the third stage may lend some credence to the latter view, I do not find it definitive. It must be remembered that each of the sentences where Kierkegaard glosses his description of the status of the individual vis-à-vis the relation are merely illustrative. They are not intended to capture the entire content or to limit the application of the concepts. Furthermore, Kierkegaard also fails to use either of the terms in any other place throughout the journal entry. For this reason, it appears most likely that Kierkegaard is using the two terms interchangeably. There are only a handful of other passages where both *menighedens* and *samfundet* are mentioned. They are neither consistently distinguished nor consistently used interchangeably. There is simply no consistent usage of these two terms for Kierkegaard.

²⁸ JP 4, 4110 / SKS 18, 283, JJ:430. CUP 428 / SKS 7, 389.28.

The second suggestion Kierkegaard gives for deciphering this passage is a reference to Karl Bayer.²⁹ Kierkegaard specifically suggests that we “See an article by Dr. Bayer, ‘*Der Begriff der sittlichen Gemeinschaft*’ [“The Concept of the Moral Community”] (in Fichte’s journal, 1844, vol. 13, p. 80). His tripartition is: *Beziehung, Bezug, Einheit* [connection, relation, unity]. (See pp. 80-81.)”³⁰ Not only does this suggestion provide a clue for understanding what Kierkegaard is trying to accomplish in this passage, but it also shows that Kierkegaard is not directly comparing his dialectic of community to Hegel’s in *The Philosophy of Right*.³¹ Although the comparison to Hegel’s dialectic of community might seem initially plausible, and it may be quite philosophically fruitful, it is not explicitly Kierkegaard’s source or inspiration for the passage, though Bayer’s theory of community is distinctively Hegelian in many respects.³²

Because Kierkegaard explicitly references Bayer as an interpretive clue to this passage, it is important to examine Bayer’s theory of community and Kierkegaard’s relationship to it. Kierkegaard’s explicit reference to Bayer’s article and the overall similarity between each of their theories of community strongly supports the claim that Bayer is influential, at least for this journal entry, but also perhaps for Kierkegaard’s own conception of community. Both of their

²⁹ Karl Bayer was a contemporary German philosopher and teacher who later became an important political figure in Bavaria in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Bayer studied philosophy and theology at both Erlangen and Berlin working with both Friedrich Schleiermacher and G.W.F. Hegel. Bayer made a name for himself philosophically by writing books such as *Betrachtungen über den Begriff des sittlichen Geistes und über das Wesen der Tugend* [*Contributions to the Concept of the Moral Spirit and the Nature of Virtue*], and by publishing regularly in some of the more prominent philosophical journals in the mid-nineteenth century such as the “anti-Hegelian” *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und spekulative Theologie* [*Journal of Philosophy and Speculative Theology*]. *Dictionary of German Biography*, ed. Walther Killy and Rudolf Vierhaus, vols. 1, (Munich: K.G. Saur 1995-2003), p. 359.

³⁰ JP 4, 4110 / SKS 18, 283, JJ:430.

³¹ Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*.

³² Although it is quite evident that Bayer’s thought deviates substantially from Hegel, it is equally true that Bayer was heavily influenced by Hegel’s thought and methodology, as he was a student of Hegel at Berlin in the 1820s. This influence is evident in the types of questions Bayer addressed (e.g., the relationship between freedom and thought, and the relationship between community and morality) as well as the dialectical approach he employed. If one, however, were to compare Kierkegaard’s and Hegel’s dialectics of community, then one should be clear about the structural differences between them. In Hegel’s view, the stages in the dialectic represent the development of a particular type of freedom and the reconciliation of unity and particularity. Kierkegaard’s conception, however focuses on the development of the individual in her relation to others. This difference, however, only reinforces the striking similarities and Kierkegaard’s positive appropriation of Hegel’s work through Bayer.

theories emphasize the importance of the self as a participant in the community, and they criticize other conceptions of community for leaving out an adequate concept of the self. They both identify the production and development of selves as an important task of community, and the specific three-fold structure of Kierkegaard's dialectic of community is structurally similar to Bayer's three-fold classification in "The Concept of the Moral Community."³³

For both Bayer and Kierkegaard, the free self who is able to enter into a social relationship is the central feature in the structure of community. This notion of a free self is undermined in both mechanical and organic forms of unity.³⁴ On the one hand, Bayer thinks that mechanical views of community, such as an account of human community based solely in terms of economic laws and principles, improperly conceive of these persons as mere parts of the whole. On the other hand, Bayer asserts that organic theories of communities where solidarity arises out of "common values" minimize the relative importance of the person. Bayer directly asserts that the "space" of community is the self, and that selfhood is essential if one is to achieve a genuine sense of unity.³⁵ No shared end, territory, language, values, etc. supplant selfhood as the ground of community. In Kierkegaardian language, solidarity in this sense is only in the "externals" rather than a product of "inward deepening."

These similarities, however, only indicate broad agreements between Kierkegaard and Bayer. The structural similarities between Bayer's threefold classification of the different forms of being-together and Kierkegaard's dialectic of community reveal Kierkegaard's use of Bayer even more clearly. Bayer's threefold classification of "*Beziehung, Bezug, Einheit*" represents different forms of being-together, and the development from connection to unity constitutes Bayer's dialectic of community. "Connection" (*Beziehung*) is the type of relation that is merely

³³ Bayer, "Der Begriff der sittlichen Gemeinschaft," p. 80.

³⁴ Bayer, "Der Begriff der sittlichen Gemeinschaft," p. 74.

³⁵ Bayer, "Der Begriff der sittlichen Gemeinschaft," p. 83.

external in nature, and Bayer gives the example of a planetary system where entities are related to one another simply because they are on the same planet.³⁶ “Relation” (*Bezug*), for Bayer, is the relationship that exists in a living community. Within this type of community, there is a unifying principle which directs all of the members of the community toward the same ultimate end.³⁷ The common end unites the members of the aggregate. Although Bayer does not say this explicitly, he seems to have animal communities in mind, e.g., an ant colony or a wolf pack, when discussing this form of being-together. Presumably animals do not think about why they are united in the common endeavor to protect and provide for one another but are instead united by common biological desires and ancestors. The final type of community is characterized by a relationship of “unity.” This type of community is the only fully realized and genuine community. Bayer says that this type of community is realized in the realm of spirit. It is the moral-spiritual community grounded in the free acts of its members.³⁸

There are two things to point out about Bayer’s moral-spiritual community, which Kierkegaard seems to stress as well: first, there is ambiguity about the relationship between the moral and the spiritual, at least in regards to the community. It is not clear how to distinguish the moral realm from the spiritual. It could be that adequate moral practices would suffice to establish a moral-spiritual community, or it may require more concrete religious practices. Kierkegaard maintains this ambiguity in some places as well, e.g., in *A Literary Review* he claims that to be religiously educated is to “become essentially human in the full sense of equality.”³⁹ Second, autonomy is a key characteristic of Bayer’s concept of community.

Although it is lacking in the planetary system or a pack of animals, it is a constitutive character

³⁶ Bayer, “*Der Begriff der sittlichen Gemeinschaft*,” p. 80.

³⁷ Bayer, “*Der Begriff der sittlichen Gemeinschaft*,” p. 81.

³⁸ Bayer, “*Der Begriff der sittlichen Gemeinschaft*,” p. 81.

³⁹ *TA* 88 / *SKS* 8, 84-85. Though Kierkegaard’s concept of “equality” is deeply religious in the sense that God-relation or the possibility of the God-relation is the ground of human equality.

of human community. Kierkegaard stresses this same concept by arguing that the particular self is more important than the relation in the third stage of community and that a decision on the part of the whole can limit one's freedom by calling into question the extent of one's freedom.⁴⁰

Kierkegaard's three stages of community are remarkably similar to Bayer's and they express his view on the essential connection between the development of selfhood and the development of community. In the first stage, the social relation fully determines the self as a member of some relation. That is, when a person first becomes conscious of him- or herself as a person, he or she is already a participant in some social relation or institution and is determined purely by external, contingent factors such as one's environment or a group or set of groups to which one associates. Awareness of this fact is a necessary condition for the development of selfhood, but it is not a sufficient condition. Therefore, the development of selfhood must arise from an autonomous choice where a person refuses to allow external contingencies to completely shape and direct one's life but instead freely appropriates them. This stage in the development of selfhood is essential in the cultivation of higher forms of selfhood and it shows that it is impossible for a person to come to know him- or herself outside of his or her own relations to others.

Mutuality is the primary characteristic of relationships within the second stage. The desire for mutuality presupposes a uniformly egoistic conception of the self. Even a person's apparently other-regarding actions implicitly contain within this stage the expectation that such actions will be returned by the others. Everyone is considered equal in this stage, at least inasmuch as everyone is thought to be an egoistic, rational actor who ultimately only looks out only for one's own (or one's own group) interest. These interests, however, are produced only in relation to the interests of others. That is to say, the interest of each person is modeled at least

⁴⁰ *TA* 85 / *SKS* 8, 81.

partly on the interest of others. Kierkegaard contrasts the person who has a genuine or primitive self to the self ('a second nature') that is acquired through aping others.⁴¹ The choice that confronts a person in Kierkegaard's second stage of the dialectic of community is the choice to pursue some higher end other than one's own self-interest. The result of progressing through the first two stages is that a transcendent core self is developed that eludes being fully determined by society or abstract characterizations of the human self (e.g., as a rational, self-interested agent).

In Kierkegaard's final and third stage, the particular self is more important than the relation to others. Kierkegaard's explanatory comment about the third stage, however, suggests that there is still no ultimate conflict between self and others. He writes, "The single self relates himself first to God and then to the community, but this first relation is the most important, even though the single self does not reject the second."⁴² The God-relation is not simply temporally prior to the relation to the community, but it has qualitative primacy over the latter relation. Nevertheless, the priority of the God-relation involves no fundamental conflict between self and others. Even though he does not spell out the connection in this passage, Kierkegaard clearly implies that being a single self and having a proper relation to God is necessary for one to properly relate to others. I will return to this issue in sections five and six but in the next section, I will discuss how Kierkegaard's appropriation of Bayer's work establishes a line of appropriation from Hegel to Kierkegaard.

IV.

Karl Bayer, whose thought Kierkegaard deeply appreciated, was a student of Hegel. There is no evidence that Kierkegaard was aware of this fact, but Bayer clearly adopted the language, argumentative style, and many of the concepts that his mentor used. The connection

⁴¹ *JP* 3, 632, 3560 / *Pap* XI 1 A 62; *JP* 6, 535-537, 6917 / *Pap* XI 2 A 19.

⁴² *JP* 4, 4110 / *SKS* 18, 283, JJ:430. The translation is my own.

between Hegel and Bayer along with Kierkegaard's appropriation of Bayer's theory of community reveals a new dimension to the relationship between Kierkegaard and Hegel. In this section, I will explain how Kierkegaard's relation to Bayer reveals a facet to the already complex relationship between Kierkegaard and Hegel by addressing the two objections to Stewart's thesis in light of this particular relation between Hegel and Kierkegaard.

The two objections to Stewart's thesis concerning the relation between Kierkegaard and Hegel are (1) that he minimizes the divergence between Hegelians and Hegel himself and (2) that it is a mistake to sever Kierkegaard's work from the philosophical tradition of which he was apart. My account of Kierkegaard's social philosophy and his relationship to Bayer can respond to these objections in such a way that a new line of relation emerges between Hegel and Kierkegaard which reveals an interesting account of the development of post-Kantian European social and political philosophy.

Kierkegaard's dialectic of community is evidence that there is overlap in the thought of Hegel and Kierkegaard concerning the relationship between self and other. Kierkegaard indirectly adopts some of Hegel's views when he appropriates Bayer's theory of community. This line of appropriation shows a more direct line of similarity between Hegel and Kierkegaard on these topics than Stewart's argument. His argument proceeds by reconstructing Kierkegaard's argument and showing how it is responsive to particular Danish Hegelians. He then reconstructs Hegel's view of the subject which turns out to be rather different from the way his Danish students addressed the issue. The result is that Kierkegaard can be understood as indirectly defending Hegel insofar as he is critical of those who abuse and misuse his thought. My argument is more direct in that Kierkegaard appropriates and uses Bayer's three-fold classification of community in his own dialectic of community which serves as an important

feature in his second ethics. Although there is no evidence that Kierkegaard was aware that Bayer was Hegel's student, the dialectical structure of Bayer's work on community – progressing from an organic community grounded in natural affection by means of the developmental of the individual subject toward a community that is constituted by the collective autonomy of its citizens – is similar in many respects to Hegel's progression from family through civil society to the rational state. Furthermore, Bayer's conception of the relationship between freedom and thought, and the relationship between community, spirit and morality, as well as the method he employed in his description of the development of community are all derived from Hegel. Insofar as Kierkegaard was influenced positively by Bayer in areas where Bayer was profoundly influenced by Hegel, and, indeed, Kierkegaard adopted almost word-for-word Bayer's dialectic of community, then there is a much more concrete and direct connection between Hegel and Kierkegaard than the more general and indirect relationships that Stewart discusses.

This particular connection between Hegel and Kierkegaard also shows that Kierkegaard's ideas about community and interpersonal relationships arise out of broader philosophical literature on the topic. One reason this similarity has been, as of yet, unrecognized is because the interpretation of Kierkegaard as champion of the radical, isolated individual has only recently subsided and furthermore, many Kierkegaard scholars have an inadequate and outdated conception of Hegel's social philosophy.⁴³ Nevertheless, I suspect that many people familiar

⁴³ Gregor Malantschuk, a relatively early Kierkegaard scholar, portrayed Hegel's philosophy as a regression "to a type of paganism" where the state is deified with the individual subordinate to it. Malantschuk's criticism deals with Hegel's view of the state, but it is primarily a religious criticism. He argued that Hegel's "regression" undermines any belief in the transcendent God. Gregor Malantschuk, *Kierkegaard's Way To The Truth*, trans. Mary Michelsen (Montreal: InterEditions, 1987) p. 15-16. The view that the individual is subordinate to, rather than a self-determining citizen of, the state is a poor interpretation of Hegel's social and political thought. This interpretation of Hegel relies on work that wrongly interprets Hegel as a defender of the totalitarian or authoritarian state. Cf. Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, p. 178. Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, v. II (London: G. Routledge & Sons, 1945). Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). These views are inconsistent with Hegel's claim that the rational state respect individual and particular interests of its citizens. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, p. 282. Even

with Kierkegaard and Hegel would agree with my claim to some extent, so long as I limited my claim to Kierkegaard's portrayal of the so-called "ethical sphere" rather than it also applying to Kierkegaard's second ethics. But my defense of Kierkegaard's social views does not arise out of the ethical as it is portrayed in the ethical sphere. Rather, I have shown that Kierkegaard thinks the highest form of human community is further developed by means of the God-relation. Thus, Kierkegaard's fully developed views concerning interpersonal relationships and community are much more in line with Hegel's views that is often admitted.

This point shows the limit of Stewart's characterization of Kierkegaard as merely a moralist, social critic and a religious thinker. Although Kierkegaard addresses his most central topics – the nature and life of faith, the paradox, the importance of subjectivity in religiousness – from the standpoint of a religious thinker rather than from the perspective of a 19th century philosopher, it is not the case that Kierkegaard's concerns are wholly distinguishable from the general philosophical projects advanced in the 19th century. Kierkegaard's dialectic of community, its significance for the second ethics, and his direct appropriation of the view of Karl Bayer, a social and political philosopher, shows that there is a line of continuity between Kierkegaard and his philosophical predecessors concerning the relation between self and others.

This argument, however, should not be understood as a criticism of Stewart or his critics. First, whereas Stewart only addresses Kierkegaard's relationship to Danish Hegelians, I am concerned with his relationship to one of Hegel's German students. Neither Stewart nor his critics discuss this topic. Second, although Stewart makes the argument that Kierkegaard is better understood as a social critic or religious thinker rather than a philosopher, he is primarily

concerning one of the more problematic aspects of Hegel's theory of state, i.e., the necessity of the monarch, there are compelling arguments that the Hegelian monarch will respect and promote individual liberties. Cf. Thom Brooks "No Rubber Stamp: Hegel's Constitutional Monarch" *History of Political Thought*, v. 28.1, Spring 2007, pp. 100-102, 109-110.

concerned with some of the more dominant themes in Kierkegaard's authorship (e.g., the nature of faith as inwardness, the paradox, etc.) which are informed by his own project that radically diverges from Hegel's attempt to situate the life of faith in a political community. It is not clear to me whether Stewart would object to my characterization of the continuity between Hegel and Kierkegaard's understanding of the relationship between the self and other.

V.

The relationship between the social thought of Kierkegaard and Hegel is important not only historically, but it also portrays a vibrant, philosophically important account of social unity. In section six, I will describe how Kierkegaard's conception of social unity is important in the context of 19th and 20th century European social and political thought, but I will first describe the basic elements of Kierkegaard's social philosophy. Rather than focusing on the role of political economy and social institutions in the structure and function of community life, Kierkegaard is concerned with the role of the single self in the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships. The cultivation of the single self is the primary function and the key distinguishing characteristic of Kierkegaard's dialectic of community. Kierkegaard's characterization of this development shows that: (1) selfhood only arises out of a social context, (2) a self is always more than what it is taken to be, and (3) the dual character of the Kierkegaardian self as both socially-constituted and transcendent is the foundation of human ethics and social relationships.

These three points are expressed in Kierkegaard's dialectic of community, but it is also described more explicitly in *The Sickness Unto Death*. The enigmatic words in the first paragraph describe the self as follows: "The human being is spirit. But what is spirit? Spirit is the self. But what is the self? The self is a relation that relates itself to its own self, or it is in the relation the fact that the relation relates itself to its own self; the self is not the relation, but the

fact that the relation relates itself to its own self.”⁴⁴ There are three notions of self described in this passage: the self who does the relating (the subjective, transcendent self), the self who is being related to (the objective, empirical self), and Kierkegaard’s primary concern – the self who is the relation. The empirical self is a produced and formed through a person’s social relationships and a myriad of other factors. When a person becomes conscious of one’s own self, he or she is always already in a social relation. It is the empirical self that gives content and a particular meaning to life, but it is the subjective or transcendent self that makes it possible for a person to reflect on and freely appropriate or reject characteristics of the empirical self. The transcendent self is the condition for the possibility of higher order reflection, but it considered independently of the empirical self is empty. That is, there are no formal distinguishing marks between transcendent selves, except perhaps for the fact that the one is mine and the other is yours; and furthermore, a person only develops the capacity for higher order reflection in social relations with others.

Both components of the relational self are necessary for having a social self. The key issue for Kierkegaard is not to give an account that distinguishes these two concepts of self; rather it is to integrate and describe the self as the relation between these two poles. This concept of the self lies at the heart of Kierkegaard’s social philosophy. He explains:

In community [*Menighed*] the single self [*den Enkelte*] is; the single self is dialectically decisive as the presupposition for forming community, and in community the single self is qualitatively something essential and can at any moment become higher than "community," specifically, as soon as "the others" fall away from the idea. The cohesiveness of community comes from each one's being a single individual... Every single individual in community guarantees the community... "Community" is certainly more than a sum, but yet it is truly a sum of ones...⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *SUD* 13 / *SKS* 11, 129. The translation is my own.

⁴⁵ *JP* 3, 2952 / *SKS* 23, 40 NB15:60, NB15:60.a.

Meaningful human relationships presuppose the development of a single self who is neither completely determined by one's social environment nor detached from human relationships. The relational self described by Kierkegaard cannot be fully colonized and determined by external human relationships and it always goes beyond whatever account we give of it, but this critical distance opens up the possibility for meaningful social relationships with others.

In one passage, Kierkegaard applies this idea to political developments in 19th century Europe. He claims that the political developments in Europe are a “vortex” [*Hvirvel*] – a series of movements back and forth, like a typhoon, that lacks a fixed point. Kierkegaard thought the calls for revolution and political change in Europe were grounded in terms of competing teleological visions of how government should operate and function. Kierkegaard's criticism is that such a foundation for political change can only result in back and forth struggle between two (or more) competing visions of how society should be. While the current government is enacting its political agenda, the reformers overreact in their opposition to it. Eventually, the reformers will win out and enact their political agenda as an opposition party, and the old vanguard will overreact against the reformers and so on and so forth. The result is that the split in society grows ever larger encompassing a greater number of people and groups. These movements are in constant conflict with one another and each one is unable to stop the other just as a gadfly [*Bremse*] is unable to stop a train.⁴⁶

In light of this situation, what most people believe about political movements is mistaken. “Most people believe that so long as one has a fixed point *to which* one wants to get, then motion is no vortex. But this is a misunderstanding. It all depends on having a fixed point *from which to set out*. Stopping is not possible at a point *ahead*, but at a point *behind*. That is, stopping is in the

⁴⁶ *LD*, 260-261, Letter 186 / *B&A*, vol. 1, 206-207. The same Danish word [*Bremse*] means gadfly or dragonfly as well as a brake.

motion, consolidating the motion... for the fixed point, the only fixed point, lies behind.”⁴⁷

Kierkegaard characterizes this “fixed point” as “that single self”⁴⁸ who is able to unite to others even when doing so requires that one take a stand against social morality, ethical customs and religious practices. For Kierkegaard, there is no *telos* that grounds social advances and revolutions. In fact, presenting and striving toward a teleological image of society contributes to the problem at hand. Political injustice and failure can only be remedied by means of a clear and fixed standard that unites those already engaged in the conflict.

Socrates who called himself a “gadfly” [*Bremse*] exemplifies this strategy of revolution. “[W]ith his gadfly’s sting he drove them forward in such a way that they really moved backward, or in such a way that Sophistry perished and the single self came to his senses at the fixed point behind.”⁴⁹ Socrates showed how the *telos* toward which the Sophist aimed was not fixed at all. The only fixed point, on the contrary, is in the single self and in inwardness. The Sophist makes the same mistake that the 19th century political reformers made – that is, they presented alternative visions of where they were going rather than coming from an ethically developed and secure foundation.

VI.

Kierkegaard’s conception of the single self is the foundation for his conception of social and interpersonal relationships. The fact that Kierkegaard articulates a conception of social relations is interesting for its own sake, but his account also provides a new way of imagining 19th century social thought. Rather than characterizing unity as a product of a common teleological purpose that excludes those who do not fit the imagined idea of unity (e.g., nationalism excluding immigrants or ethnic minorities) or who simply fail to appropriate the idea

⁴⁷ *LD*, 262, Letter 186 / *B&A*, vol. 1, 207.

⁴⁸ *LD*, 260-261, Letter 186 / *B&A*, vol. 1, 206. Translation modified.

⁴⁹ *LD*, 262, Letter 186 / *B&A*, vol. 1, 262. Translation modified.

for themselves; unity is something that is presupposed in one's practices and activities as a human person. As Kierkegaard says, it is something that lies behind rather than something to which we strive toward, and this presumed unity allows for multiplicity and difference to flourish against a backdrop of a shared commitment to one another. What is shared here is not a set of social and moral customs (as it is, for example, in the Greek *Sittlichkeit*); nor is it an abstract notion of the human person stripped of the particularities of human existence. Rather, what is shared is the fact that one is able to become a self – a self who is able to make an internal commitment to another person that is manifested in external practices and actions even when the public or society demands otherwise. For Kierkegaard, this type of individual is the foundation and ground of genuine unity. This conception of unity reframes 20th century developments in social thought and political theology. In order to show this, I will briefly describe and assess Carl Schmitt's conception of political unity in light of Kierkegaard's conception of social unity forged by single selves. My characterization of Schmitt will be not be exhaustive or in great detail. My aim is not to elaborate Schmitt's conception of political unity; rather, I am illustrating how Kierkegaard's concept of social unity contributes to our understanding of 20th century and contemporary social thought.

According to Schmitt, the friend/enemy distinction is the key distinguishing criteria of the political and the basis of social and political unity. It is also distinguished from other distinctions, e.g., the beautiful and the ugly in aesthetics, good and evil in ethics, profitable and unprofitable in economics, sacred and profane in religion. The political arises independently from these other domains; that is, having a political friend is not tied to the friend being beautiful, good, profitable or sacred, and likewise, not all enemies are ugly, evil, unprofitable or profane. Although the logic of the friend/enemy distinction arises independently of these other

features, its ability to inflame and unify the people against a common enemy subsumes, structures and colonizes these relatively independent spheres. The enemy is not just someone who is our foe – rather it is someone that is a monster, an enemy that must be destroyed. This political concept unites the body politic against the other, and it is the essence of “political unity” for Schmitt.⁵⁰

There are two significant problems for Schmitt’s account. First, the form of unity achieved through the friend/enemy opposition is a degenerate form of unity. Opposition is so crucial to Schmitt’s conception of unity that even when the other is destroyed or “peace” is forged, a new enemy must be conceived and constructed in order to forge a new political unity. Unity is conditioned on the continual identification of and vehement opposition to an other. Therefore, unity cannot reside in the body politic but only in the relation between the body politic and its other. As such, it will be dissolved as soon as the other is null. In saying that Schmitt’s concept of political unity is degenerate, I am not making a moral judgment about the quality of the relation. Rather I simply mean that it will ultimately bring about its own downfall through either its own destruction or the destruction of the other.

The second problem is that it mistakenly presumes that unity can only be forged through the logic of friend/enemy. The domain of the social can be understood as a relatively autonomous sphere separate from the political. The moral domain is concerned with good and evil, the aesthetic sphere with the beautiful and the ugly, economics with profitable and unprofitable, the political with friend and enemy, and the social is concerned with unity and disunity. It is not reducible to any of the other spheres; there could be a unity of evil, the ugly, or unprofitable or even between enemies. Likewise, a group could be opposed to another group

⁵⁰ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* trans. George Schwab (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1976)

even though both are good, beautiful, or even friends. Generally speaking friends will be unified together and enemies will not, but this fact is because the political sphere usually subsumes and structures the social sphere according to its own purposes. Nevertheless, it is possible to forge unity outside of this logic. Kierkegaard's concept of the single self is fundamental here and it allows for the individual to stand against the pressures and constraints of the passions associated with the logic of friend and enemy. If one is properly cultivated as a single self, then the construction of an other as an enemy need not colonize all of one's interactions and experiences of the other. What is unique about Kierkegaard's contribution here is that his conception of social unity does not depend on rejecting the role of conflict and opposition in contemporary political life. One can adopt the central insight of Schmitt's concept of the political – i.e., that opposition and conflict are integral components of contemporary life in a diverse and pluralistic world while rejecting the idea that the political construction of an enemy shapes and structures a citizen's experience with each member of the enemy class. That is, a single self has critical distance necessary to stand with the other even when his or her political entity characterizes the other as an enemy.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that the common characterization of Kierkegaard as an anti-Hegelian and as a thinker who neglects sociality in favor of the individual is inaccurate. Kierkegaard's understanding of his own contributions to 19th century social thought shows that he has appropriated elements of Hegel's social philosophy and that there is a distinctive social dimension to his thought. My argument shows that the traditional understanding of Kierkegaard's place in 19th century philosophy is mistaken, and it also indicates how his work is a contribution to 20th century and contemporary social philosophy. This paper lays also lays the

groundwork for further articulating Kierkegaard's contributions in both contemporary and post-Kantian European social philosophy.