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Chapter 9. Is Scriptural Reasoning an Inter-faith Dialogue? SR after Hegel

The question of what kind of dialogue or engagement best describes the practice of Scriptural Reasoning has been asked by some since SR has been a practice, and it certainly remains a question that drives my own interest in and passion for the practice. Is it an *inter-religious* dialogue—better put as an inter-religious triologue—between members of the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic religions?¹ Since it has been limited to these three religious traditions for most of its history, is SR better described as an internal conversation for those who share covenant with Abraham?² Is it an *inter-faith* dialogue or practice between members of the Abrahamic traditions?³ Or is SR best thought of as a type of cosmopolitan universalism that nurtures conversation for the sake of conversation?⁴

¹ This is what Marianne Moyaert considers as the best label for SR; see Moyaert, “Scriptural Reasoning as Inter-Religious Dialogue,” (Blackwell, 2013), 64-86.

² For a defense of this description, see Tom Greggs’s “Peoples of the Covenants: Evangelical Theology and the Plurality of the Covenants in Scripture,” in *Journal of Scriptural Reasoning*, vol. 11, no. 1, (August 2012): <http://jsr.shanti.virginia.edu/back-issues/volume-11-no-1-august-2012/peoples-of-the-covenants-evangelical-theology-and-the-plurality-of-the-covenants-in-scripture/>

³ This is what David Ford considers as the best label for SR; see Ford, “Interfaith Wisdom,” 1-22.

⁴ Stanley Hauerwas makes the judgment that it is a mistake to think of SR in these terms. He writes, “I think there is a danger in interpreting the work of Scriptural Reasoning in large ‘good guy terms’ that doesn’t do justice to the significance of the practice itself. By ‘good guy terms’ I mean that we celebrate what wonderful people we are because we respect one another sufficiently to be reading scripture together in the same room. Such a perception is to give a humanistic and cosmopolitan narrative to the activity that I think betrays anyone who has been shaped by Peter [Ochs]’s understanding of scriptural reasoning” (Hauerwas, “A Conversation with Stanley Hauerwas on Peace and War after Scriptural Reasoning,” in *Journal of Scriptural Reasoning*, vol. 8, no. 1, (January 2009): <http://jsr.shanti.virginia.edu/back-issues/vol-8-no-1-january-2009-reason-scripture-and-war/postscript-a-conversation-with-stanley-hauerwas-on-peace-and-war-after-scriptural-reasoning/>).

In this chapter, I think through the possibility of SR as an inter-faith dialogue or practice. Turning to the work of the German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel (1770 – 1831) I negate the question, should SR should be described as an inter-faith dialogue? My negation concerns protecting the word “faith” and the role of the “faith” in regards to the practitioners of SR. In other words, I argue that the concept of inter-faith dialogue actually downplays the place of “faith” within that dialogue. To make this argument, I borrow and build from the interpretation of Hegel’s philosophy of religion found in Andrew Shanks’s defense of *xenophilia*—how faith ought to lead to a love for the other without making the otherness of the other less other.⁵

First, I explain the pertinent aspects of Hegel’s philosophy of religion—pertinent to the practice of SR. Second, I demonstrate the problems of the concept or phrase “inter-faith dialogue.” Third, I argue that SR provides a “new space” for shifting from the fearfulness of xenophobia to the hopefulness of xenophilia. I conclude by separating myself a bit from Shanks’s interpretation of Hegel’s philosophy of religion.

[A] Faith in Hegel’s Philosophy of Religion

Writing on Hegel’s philosophy of religion remains quite a difficult task, especially for purposes of an introductory companion volume that ought to avoid philosophical technicality. Turning to Hegel’s philosophy of religion, however, is not new for thinking about the practice of SR. In 2015, the *Journal of Scriptural Reasoning* published a set of papers under the section heading of “Philosophical Theology after Hegel.”⁶ In her contribution to that section of the JSR,

⁵ This chapter can be read as a follow-up to my critique of the xenophobia found in American Evangelical Christianity; that chapter was critical and deconstructive whereas this chapter offers up Hegel’s philosophy of religion as a constructive and faithful way forward past the sin(s) of xenophobia.

⁶ The essays were written in order to celebrate and honor the publication of Nicholas Adams’s manuscript on Hegel’s philosophy of religion entitled *Eclipse of Grace*.

Molly Farneth reflects upon what Hegel expects from “inter-religious” encounters (note that she does not use the phrase, inter-faith dialogue)—going as far as suggesting that Hegel envisions the possibility of more than encounters but actual inter-religious communities:

[EXT][Inter-religious practices] require...the relinquishment of the pretense to a God’s-eye view and, in its place, the recognition of mutual authority and accountability. Confession and forgiveness play the role that they do in Hegel’s account of reconciliation because life among people who have abandoned the God’s-eye view of truth, but who insist on making truth-claims nevertheless, are bound to disagree, to err, to require forgiveness, and to be able to offer it. If we care about truth, conflict is a given, but reciprocal recognition and reconciliation remain possibilities in both thought and practice. We learn to endure difference, even to recognize the ways in which we are constituted by it, as we give up a logic of either indifference or opposition and cultivate a logic of distinction-in-inseparable-relation. A Hegelian approach to interreligious encounter, to life in the religiously diverse community, acknowledges the perpetuity of difference and our endurance of it in right relations of tolerance and reciprocal recognition.⁷[/EXT]

I agree with Farneth’s reflections on Hegel and what inter-religious encounters might look like based upon arguments found in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, and I wish to apply more explicitly Hegel’s work to the particular practice of SR. To achieve this, I focus on what Hegel means by faith, reason and universal reason, and truth (also mentioned by Farneth).

What does Hegel mean by faith? His answer in 1802 (in *Faith and Knowledge*) is:

[EXT]In true faith the whole sphere of finitude, of being-something-on-one’s-on-account, the sphere of sensibility sinks into nothing before the thinking...of the eternal.... [A]ll the midges of subjectivity are burned to death in this consuming fire, and *the very* consciousness of this surrender and nullification is nullified.⁸[/EXT]

When Ochs, Hardy, and Ford claim that SR allows its participants to fully bring their own “faith” to the table—and all that is asked that might not be consistent with one’s tradition is to treat the sacred texts of others also as “Scripture” *for the sake of the practice*—it sounds (at least to me) that they are making a Hegelian point about the practice of SR: SR works as a practice if and only if the participants perform “being-something-on-one’s-on-account.” In other words, faith

⁷ Farneth, “God, Community, and the Endurance of Difference,” in *Journal of Scriptural Reasoning*, vol. 14, no. 2, (2015): <https://jsr.shanti.virginia.edu/back-issues/vol-14-no-2-november-2015-philosophy-and-theology/nicholas-adams-and-g-w-f-hegel-god-community-and-the-endurance-of-difference/>

⁸ Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, 141.

enhances the practice of SR because to be faithful is to become more than who one is in a “natural” state. In Hegel’s words: “the midges of subjectivity are burned to death in this consuming fire,” but the need to nullify and surrender one’s self becomes “nullified.”⁹ Faith does not decrease one’s humanity or personhood but enhances it. The Ochs/Hardy/Ford claim about SR involves how faith—participants being fully Christian, Jewish, or Muslim—enhances the practice.

With the first publication of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in 1807, Hegel describes faith as unproblematically both intensely subjective and extensively universal. By which, he means, faith (as claimed in *Faith and Knowledge*) increases who one is internally and subjectively;¹⁰ faith also empowers—note that power and virtue are sometimes interchangeable—one to access “universal reason.”¹¹ In other words, faith intensely affirms and enhances the self while simultaneously moves the self beyond itself to participate extensively in universal reason.

For instance, Christians often use the locution of “I have faith in God”; Hegel wants us to break this down as simultaneously moving in two directions: faith moves toward the “I” in a particular way, and faith means movement toward “God” in another way (what he calls “universal reason”). The first movement affirms persons in their convictions, individuality, and subjectivity; the second movement means that persons of faith must become and remain open to that which is greater or beyond him/her—what Hegel continually calls the work of the Spirit. For

⁹ I should note that this argument can be interpreted as congruent with the New Testament claim that losing one’s self really means gaining one’s self.

¹⁰ “Faith is thereby pure consciousness of the *essence*, which is to say, of *simple inwardness*, and is therefore thought—and thought becomes the chief moment in the nature of faith” (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 321).

¹¹ “[Faith] is thereby pure *being-for-itself*, not as *this individual*, but rather as the self which is *universal*... as a restless movement which attacks and permeates the *motionless essence* of the *thing at issue*” (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 321).

Hegel, genuine faith should not limit one's perspective but open a person up to "universal reason" as determined by and given through the Spirit. This is what means for the faithful to participate in the work of the Spirit.

Within the practice of SR, to fully bring one's faith to the table means asserting one's self as a committed Muslim, Jew, or Christian but also requires an openness in affirming the religious identities of others at the table. This type of *openness* becomes part and parcel of Hegel's understanding of faith. Andrew Shanks explains, "By 'Spirit' Hegel... basically means that which true Faith renders explicit; the otherwise implicit, universal impulse towards perfect truth-as-openness"—the "*Phenomenology* is a systematic study of the universality of that impulse." Shanks capitalizes what Hegel means by "Faith," throughout his book, in order to distinguish what Christians tend to mean by "faith" in their ordinary language—which is up for constant criticism from Shanks. In their ordinary usage of "faith," Shanks thinks that Christians tend toward meaning both a "boasting" about one's self—look how faithful of a Christian I am!—and a "following" of the herd: "The judgment of the herd is in terms of the tick-box, checklist fulfillment of certain readily achievable minimum requirements, assuring one's membership within the said herd."¹² What Christians should mean by "faith," the sense of faith that Shanks capitalizes throughout his book, is what Hegel means by it: "Faith with a capital 'F' is *essentially* a relationship with God made manifest in and through a certain quality of sympathetic moral open-mindedness toward one's neighbors."¹³ My claim is that the type of faith envisioned by

¹² Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 35. I am loathed to admit it, but this description of religion taking on a "herd" mentality reminds me of my own religious family known as the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS). Since 2001, it seems that the LCMS has reduced faith to a "tick-box, checklist fulfillment of certain readily achievable minimum requirements"—such as anti-abortion, anti-LGBTQ+ community, anti-women's ordination, creationism, and religious liberty for Christians but not for other religious traditions—all of which, if the right box is checked, "assur[e]...one's membership" in the LCMS.

¹³ Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 3.

Ochs/Hardy/Ford for SR to work as a practice must be a type of faith much closer to that of Faith—a faith that requires openness—than faith—a faith that means both “boasting” about one’s self and “following” the “judgment of the herd...in terms of the tick-box, checklist fulfillment of certain readily achievable minimum requirements, assuring one’s membership within the said herd.”¹⁴

With his lectures on the philosophy of religion, given twenty years after the first publication of *Phenomenology of Spirit* in 1827, Hegel explicitly connects faith with truth.¹⁵ He says:

[EXT]The expression “faith,” however, is used chiefly for the certainty that there is a God; and it is indeed used inasmuch as we do not have insight into the necessity of this content.... [T]o that extent we say that “faith” is something subjective, as opposed to which the knowledge of necessity is termed objective. For this reason..., we speak of “faith in God”—according to ordinary linguistic usage—because we have no immediate sensible intuition of God. But we do believe in God, and to that extent we have the certainty that God is.... The genuine content of a religion has for its verification the witness of one’s own spirit, that this content conforms to the nature of my spirit and satisfies the needs of my spirit. My spirit knows itself, it knows its essence—that, too, is an immediate knowledge, it is the absolute verification of the eternally true, the simple and true definition of this certainty that is called faith. This certainty (and faith with it) enters into an antithesis with thought, and with truth in general.¹⁶[/EXT]

When it comes to passages like this one, where Hegel pits faith against truth, Shanks points out that Hegel’s assumed target is not “truth-as-openness” but “truth-as-correctness.” I agree with Shanks’s clarificatory move here—which means that we can use it to clarify the end of this

¹⁴ Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 35.

¹⁵ Nicholas Adams warns: “we do not have Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. Instead, we have some manuscripts and some editions based on now-lost manuscripts, and we have a carefully researched German edition that makes the best of a frustrating situation. Anyone citing Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* is thus not citing Hegel, but citing a text that bears some relation (with luck, a close one) to what Hegel delivered in Berlin all those years ago” (Adams, *Eclipse of Grace*, 169). When I cite Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* in this chapter, I claim to be citing Hegel. Because of Adams’s warning, I now consider this the authorial equivalent of Martin Luther’s famous dictum to “sin boldly”!

¹⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 136-137.

passage: “faith...enters into an antithesis with thought, and with truth in general” when truth is assumed and understood to be about possession instead of dispossession.

With the distinction concerning (possession vs. dispossession), we have arrived at one of the “big reveals” about what Hegel contributes to thinking about the significance of SR. When it comes to concerns about inter-faith or inter-religious dialogue, there seems to be two main ones: (a) my possession of the truth will clash with what others believe or think, and (b) religious differences should not be affirmed if one is really true to their own faith. Hegel teaches us that both concerns are misguided, and SR can be a practice that embodies and performs Hegel’s insights. Concerning (a): to be faithful does not mean to have a special claim on truth—to possess truths that others do not possess—but means to dispossess the truth: to dispossess what one thinks is true so that one becomes possessed by the truth. According to David Ford, this sense of truth cannot and should not be divorced from the wisdom found in and offered by the sacred texts of *all three Abrahamic traditions*. Concerning (b): Hegel predicts that what will become the problem within the modern world is not how to achieve communities and a society that nurtures religious differences; rather, Hegel projects that the problem with the modern world will become *indifference* toward religious faith altogether. This is a problem because faith means openness; therefore, when indifference to religion becomes a norm or the norm then we also lose the norm of being open toward and judged by God—which also requires us to be open toward our neighbors: “Faith...is *essentially* a relationship with God made manifest in and through a certain quality of sympathetic moral open-mindedness toward one’s neighbors.”¹⁷ SR not only makes it possible to enjoy religious differences together at the same table and in the same room,

¹⁷ Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 3.

but it also breaks our habit and repairs the indifference to religion that have become the norm within modern society.

[A]The Problems of Inter-faith Dialogue

How can Hegel's understanding of faith in his philosophy of religion help us gain traction on the question of whether SR should be called an inter-faith dialogue? Shanks provides an answer to the question of what Hegel might think of the phrase "inter-faith dialogue," and I apply some of the premises from Shanks's argument to the question of whether SR should be called an inter-faith dialogue?

Shanks argues that Hegel would reject the phrase, "inter-faith dialogue," as one that offers a proper philosophical description of what people of different religious traditions are doing if they converse or engage with one another. The first sentence of Shanks's *Hegel vs. Inter-faith Dialogue* is quite direct and provocative: we should "object to the term 'inter-faith dialogue' because of what it does to the theological concept of 'faith'."¹⁸ The first premise against the phrase "inter-faith dialogue," therefore, concerns how it becomes too reductionist concerning "the theological concept of faith."

The second premise involves a distinction between a *theological understanding* of faith and an *ideological use* of faith. Shanks makes the distinction on these terms: "'interfaith' is an intrinsically xenophilia-restrictive term, forever tending to divert true *theo*-logical consideration of religious diversity away from xenophilia into a merely *ideo*-logical negotiation process, between those representing rival claims to metaphysical truth-as-correctness."¹⁹ The Hegelian

¹⁸ Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 1.

¹⁹ Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 1-2.

lesson here concerns how the phrase “inter-faith dialogue” assumes an *ideological use of faith*. According to Shanks: “Talk of ‘inter-faith dialogue’ suggests a notion of ‘faiths’ in the plural,” and this suggestion turns faith into the kind “defined by tick-tock box, checklist criteria.”²⁰ An ideological use of faith turns faith into exactly what Hegel seeks to avoid in how he constructs and understands faith in his philosophy of religion, and the problematic use of faith is how the word “faith” ought to be taken in the phrase “inter-faith dialogue.”²¹

Shanks’s third premise turns its attention toward what a theological understanding of faith looks like. He claims, “True faith...only ever serves to open minds” because “salvation is, itself..., an [absolute] opening of the mind.”²² A theological understanding of faith necessarily includes salvation, and salvation involves “an opening of the mind.” This openness moves us beyond the contours and restrictions of “inter-faith dialogue” in the sense that true “faith bursts the conceptual bounds of ‘inter-faith dialogue’...by virtue of its sheer intrinsic generosity.”²³ An ideological use of faith means that faith lacks generosity and openness whereas a theological understanding of faith requires both generosity and openness.

The fourth premise becomes quite relevant to the practice of Scriptural Reasoning. According to Shanks, “[T]rue faith...is *in essence* an energizing of perfect truth-as-openness. Hence, it is that potential quality *specifically of Abrahamic religion in general*, which promotes

²⁰ Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 3.

²¹ Shanks claims that none of this is meant to deny “that much of what passes under the name of ‘inter-faith dialogue’ is quite admirable”; his “objection is only to that name, that way of ‘placing’ the enterprise; and to the way it tends to insulate the xenophile impulse at work here, diverting it towards a [reductive] mode of self-expression, which unfortunately disempowers it” (Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 10).

²² Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 2.

²³ Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 3.

the radical xenophilia.”²⁴ Shanks admits that Hegel grasps neither Judaism nor Islam due to his cultural limitations, but Shanks thinks that Hegel sees in Judaism and Islam an understanding of faith connected with generosity and openness—specifically truth-as-openness. Whether Hegel actually sees this in Judaism and Islam matters less for my purposes than what it means for talking about the implications for Christians, Jews, and Muslims to read and study their sacred texts together. If we follow Shanks’s interpretation of Hegel’s philosophy of religion, then the phrase “inter-faith dialogue” does not do justice to what takes place within a SR session. Members of all three traditions come together during SR in a spirit—or we might say “Spirit,” in the Hegelian sense—of generosity and “truth-as-openness.”

At this point in Shanks’s argument, SR practitioners and theorists should be asking what Shanks means by xenophilia. His definitional answer to this question is:

[EXT]By xenophilia, I mean: a fundamental predisposition to love the strangeness of those who are strange...by virtue of temperament or life experience; or those who belong to another social class from one’s own, another ethnic group or another nationality; or those who are shaped by different intellectual, cultural, or religious traditions from one’s own.²⁵ [EXT]

Following the argument of the previous chapter concerning friendship and *philia*, it seems that SR can be a practice that nurtures and promotes *xenophilia*. SR brings together and celebrates in non-competitive ways multiple ethnic groups, nationalities, and “those who are shaped by different intellectual, cultural, or religious traditions.” The intellectual differences found in SR concern different disciplines, methods, and ways of reasoning. The religious differences involves Christians, Jews, and Muslims. Additionally, SR has included Confucians, Hindus, and Mormons.

²⁴ Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 5.

²⁵ Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 5.

Inclusion, however, is not enough for the standard of xenophilia. Shanks claims that it requires “a fundamental disposition to love the strangeness” of others. Would SR practitioners and theorists claim to love “the strangeness” in one another? Staying closer to the Greek, Daniel Smith argues that SR actually achieves philoxenia in the sense commanded or encouraged by Hebrews 13: “Let mutual care [Greek: philadelphia] continue; and do not neglect the care of strangers [Greek: philoxenia], for by doing so, some extended hospitality to angels without knowing.”²⁶ In his essay, Smith’s question concerns intellectual differences—can philosophers and theologians practice philoxenia toward scholars in biblical studies?—a question in which he affirms. Again, following the argument of the previous chapter—and Martha Nussbaum’s insights about *philia*—it seems reasonable to conclude that SR is a practice that can and perhaps does encourage xenophilia: “to love the strangeness of those who are strange.”

This emphasis on strangeness means that we need to be careful and cautious in how we name practices that encourage love of the strangeness of others. The risk of the strangeness needs to be captured by the phrase. Does the phrase, “inter-faith dialogue,” capture this risk? Shanks answers in the negative: “The framing of the xenophile impulse under the rubric of ‘inter-faith dialogue’ . . . has the effect of compartmentalizing” one’s faith; “thereby neutralizing its proper claim to represent the core truth” of the faithful. Shanks concludes, “Thus, [‘inter-faith dialogue’] makes it [one’s faith] too safe” in dialogues or engagements with religious others.²⁷

Shanks continues his strong critique of the phrase “inter-faith dialogue” and eventually returns us to Hegel’s philosophy of religion. “In short,” Shanks continues, “‘inter-faith dialogue’

²⁶ See Daniel Smith, “Between Philadelphia and Philoxenia: Finding Space in Scriptural Reasoning for ‘Hospitable’ Readings in Biblical Studies,” in *Journal of Scriptural Reasoning*, vol. 9, no. 1, (2010): <http://jsr.shanti.virginia.edu/back-issues/vol-9-no-1-december-2010-the-fruits-of-scriptural-reasoning/between-philadelphia-and-philoxenia/>

²⁷ Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 11.

is the name of a theological closet. But what it tends to contain needs un-closeting. I think that it requires quite urgent systematic philosophical re-description, in order to clarify and amplify its proper truth-potential.”²⁸ According to Shanks, Hegel provides this “urgent systematic philosophical re-description” because “Hegel is the great original pioneer of systematic philosophical reflection on religious diversity,” and “his innovative work in this area actually springs...from a profound commitment to xenophilia.”²⁹ Shanks connects xenophilia with the key elements of “Spirit” and “truth-as-openness” in Hegel’s philosophy: “the real originality of Hegel’s theological insight, as it leads him to pioneer the philosophic study of comparative religion,” is that most “religious traditions...have at least some capacity to mediate the imperatives of perfect truth-as-openness. In [most] of them..., ‘Spirit’ is potentially at work.”³⁰

To say that SR is not an “inter-faith dialogue” is simply to say that SR encourages and nurtures genuine faith (“Faith”), the “Spirit” (in the Hegelian sense) to be at work during and within the practice, and “truth-as-openness” amongst its participants.

[A]From the Fearfulness of Xenophobia to the Hopefulness of Xenophilia

For purposes of SR, the most important sentence in Shanks’s *Hegel vs. Inter-faith Dialogue* is: “[I]n his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, he sets out to survey the whole scene of human religious diversity, opening up a new space for all manner of thoughtful interaction between [members of religious] traditions.”³¹ What does this “new space” look like, and can SR be or become this “new space”?

²⁸ Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 11.

²⁹ Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 5.

³⁰ Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 63.

³¹ Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 64.

According to Shanks, the “new space” involves “good conversation,” the priority of trust over fear, and seeking truth communally. He writes,

[EXT][C]onsider the requirements of any good conversation, as such. This requires mutual trust, rather than fear. In order for trust to flourish we have to relax our strivings to control the other person. Good conversation depends upon our learning truly to attend to other people, without seeking always to subdue them to our will.... [I]nsofar as it depends upon...genuine attentiveness to other people..., [truth] requires us to rise above our fears. That is: our fears of other people. It demands, precisely, a cultivation of fear-dispelling hope.... Sacred ideology may confirm our fears of other people...; authentic religious faith serves to promote such hope, opening us up toward our neighbors.³²[/EXT]

SR qualifies as making a “good conversation” possible on Shanks’s terms. SR encourages “mutual trust,” and it discourages “fear.” SR seeks to avoid allowing one participant “to control...other person[s].” To practice SR well participants must “attend to other people, without seeking...to subdue them to [one’s] will.” If SR seeks the truth, then it does so communally through “genuine attentiveness to other people”—and downplays the possibility of truth being known or possessed by a singular person. Lastly, SR helps members of the Abrahamic religious traditions open us toward their religious neighbors—which means, on Shanks’s terms, that SR cultivates and promotes a “fear-dispelling hope.”

Shanks argues that the shift from the fearfulness of xenophobia to the hopefulness of xenophilia requires a willingness to participate in “universal reason.” SR practitioners and theorists tend to express discomfort toward the notion of a “universal reason,” but Shanks’s explanation of the phrase harkens back to the Hebrew Prophets—specifically to Amos. Shanks claims that by the phrase, “universal reason,” Hegel intends to construct an aspect of prophetic reasoning: reason involves an “explosive affirmation of xenophilia (amongst the rich towards the poor [in Amos]) extended and...universalized.”³³ Shanks continues that, for Hegel, “Universal

³² Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 146.

³³ Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 238.

Reason' means absolute truth-as-openness, recognized as the universal essence of true holiness; an attentive, genuinely ready-to-listen openness all round, towards every kind of Other without exception."³⁴ Hegel's notion of universal reason becomes the philosophical name for holding everyone to the standards of prophetic reasoning, and prophetic reasoning requires an "explosive affirmation of xenophilia." For Shanks, xenophilia is the singular word that best captures Hegel's philosophy of religion. If Shenks is right about xenophilia being the singular word that best captures Hegel's philosophy of religion, then I infer that SR is best described as the practice that attempts to embody and perform Hegel's philosophy of religion—hence the "reasoning" of Scriptural Reasoning becomes best understood as a Hegelian "xenophile 'universal reason'."³⁵ If this is correct, then Shanks gives us all the reasons we need to conclude that SR is not an "inter-faith dialogue" since they neither encourage nor lead to xenophilia.

[A]Conclusion

To conclude, I raise one criticism of Shanks's argument in *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*. My difference from Shanks's overall compelling argument concerns how much he treats the word "faith"—in "inter-faith dialogue"—as necessarily static. Shanks does not seek to repair the phrase, "inter-faith dialogue," but to dismiss it. I am sensitive to this because this priority of dismissing over repairing gets to the heart of the difference between Peirce's pragmatism and Richard Rorty's neo-pragmatism. Peirce seeks to repair and clarify beliefs, concepts, ideas, and words. Rorty simply dismisses those beliefs, concepts, ideas, and words that seem to need repair. Shanks comes much closer to Rorty's neo-pragmatism than to Peirce's

³⁴ Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 238.

³⁵ Shanks, *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*, 241.

conviction to repair the phrases that we consider broken. While I am in agreement with Shanks's concerns about the phrase "inter-faith dialogue" and think it worthwhile to apply his argument to the practice of SR—and, therefore, conclude that SR is not a form of inter-faith dialogue—I also think that SR provides hints for repairing all aspects of the phrase "inter-faith dialogue."

I suggest the following repairs to the phrase "inter-faith dialogue":

[EXT](A) "Faith" in "inter-faith" needs to be understood as the type of faith that enhances a person's identity.

(B) "Faith" in "inter-faith" needs to be understood as precisely what makes participants open and sympathetic with one another; the faith that participants of SR bring to the table is the cause of their openness and sympathy with one another, not an impediment to such open-ness and sympathy.³⁶

(C) The "inter" in "inter-faith" needs to exhibit xenophilia among and between participants where the strangeness has the potential to lead to transformation—either behaviorally or conceptually.

(D) "Dialogue," in "inter-faith dialogue," needs to involve more listening than talking—what Shanks describes as "genuine attentiveness to other people"; the talking that occurs ought to be disciplined by the shared words of the text(s) being studied together.

(E) If we continue to use the phrase "inter-faith dialogue" to describe the practice of SR, then we need to use the phrase with an emphasis on how SR allows xenophilia to replace both xenophobia and indifference toward religious believers and religious communities. [/EXT]

Even given these potential repairs, I remain skeptical about calling SR an inter-faith dialogue because faith might be the wrong theological virtue to emphasize for capturing the depth and significance of the practice of SR.

³⁶ I use the word "cause" deliberately here, and I mean by it what Donald Davidson defends and explains as "causes"—which he distinguishes from "reasons"—in his essay "Actions, Reasons, and Causes," (Oxford University Press, 2001), 3-20. The sentence does not read: the faith that participants of SR bring to the table is the reason of their openness and sympathy with one another. I wish to reserve the use of the word "reason" in this companion only to help think through the "reasoning" of Scriptural Reasoning.

For the next chapter, I explore the theological virtue of hope as an alternative to faith for what kind of practice SR ought to be called—is SR an inter-hope engagement?*

* Currently at 665 words of quotations from Andrew Shanks's *Hegel vs. Interfaith Dialogue*.