

The Philosopher's Voice: Philosophy, Politics, and Language in the Nineteenth Century. Andrew Fiala. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002. vii + 316 pp. \$86.50 h.c. 0-7914-5483-5; \$29.95 pbk. 0-7914-5484-3.

This fine work compares the political philosophies of four German philosophers whose collective careers spanned the first century after the American and French revolutions: Kant (1764–1802), Fichte (1762–1814), Hegel (1770–1831), and Marx (1818–1883). Anyone familiar with these philosophers' works knows they disagreed about many issues, including how if at all a philosopher can help bring about social change. Moreover, we routinely identify Marx as the most active proponent of social change. Fiala preserves these understandings. He argues quite convincingly, though, that each of the others was also committed to making his discipline a relevant player in the contemporary liberation drama. To accomplish this, he analyzes and compares how each delineated the philosopher's political role. This role, they all agreed, involves using language politically (the philosopher's voice) to enhance people's legitimate freedom. Studying each philosopher's approach sequentially, Fiala produces what might be thought of as a classical symphony in four movements. The theme of freedom is present throughout different variations. In the first movement it is heard mostly in the higher registers (Kant). In the second movement it is transmuted into nationalistic bombast (Fichte), and this gives way in the third to rich orchestral renditions (Hegel). In the finale, the horns and percussion are in full command (Marx). Be warned, however, that this musical metaphor has limits, especially because it disregards the crucial question of who is in the audience—what Fiala calls "the political location of the philosopher's voice" (14, 237).

The dual challenge these philosophers faced was to determine how and to whom a philosopher can speak to advance enlightenment and freedom. Toward this end each had to come to terms with the discontinuity between addressing political issues and remaining loyal to philosophy's standards of rationality. This they did by reflecting, if not theorizing, on the diverse uses of language in order to identify those best suited to the philosopher's voice. This task required distinguishing the appropriate linguistic roles of poetry at one end of the spectrum, politics at the other, and philosophy as a kind of intermediary between words and action (155–57). Kant, the master of constructivist methodology, made Rousseau's social contract theory, with its emphasis on the general will, the basis for a kingdom of ends that could achieve perpetual peace (39, 53). His audience, he believed, consisted of any and all citizens able to understand and critique impartially the subtle implications of his transcendental ruminations (60ff.). Hegel, like Kant, was an employee of the state; far more than Kant,

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though, he identified the present and future participants in the state bureaucracy, including the monarch, as the primary audience for his lessons about freedom (143–51). Fichte found the German language to be uniquely well suited for speaking about freedom and accordingly took his audience to be the as yet nonexistent German people as a whole. So doing, he undermined the distinction between philosophical and political speech. Marx continued but restructured Fichte's activism (178, 205): instead of ignoring the dichotomy of classes within society, he spoke not to the elite and/or bourgeoisie whom his predecessors had addressed but to workers destined to become the proletariat (186, 216, 217).

Each of these philosophers, then, adopted freedom or enlightenment or both as his objective and saw the philosopher's voice as a catalyst toward its achievement (70, 76, 85, 176). They had markedly different views, however, about how the philosopher could help bring this about. Kant counted on philosophy to educate mankind, the categorical imperative to counter Machiavelian politics, and freedom of speech to render rebellion unnecessary (30, 36–37, 70, 71). Fichte, having persuaded himself that he knew the truth and was thus obliged to educate the German people, viewed rhetoric as embodied philosophy, and believed an authoritarian state could best maximize freedom (93, 98, 115, 123–24). For Hegel, by contrast, truth requires a philosophy of right that encompasses identity and difference regarding the idea of right, its concrete embodiment, and its linguistic expression (128, 164). Kant, Hegel, and Fichte agreed that reason remains above the political fray; Marx by contrast argued that the philosopher's voice is itself political, so by definition ideological (184, 196–98). All prior philosophy being class-biased on his analysis, he decided that revolution is the only politically effective path to freedom.

Fiala's engaging style is itself a useful aid to the reader as he revisits and restates the positions of these philosophers to bring out both differences and similarities among them, e.g., his description of the philosopher's voice as "hover[ing] ambiguously between philosophy and politics" (175) and Hegel's as "located somewhere between the passive hopefulness of Kant and the vigorous activism of Fichte" (132). He does not avoid the occasional inconsistency, however, e.g., after asserting that Marx denied that the voice of the philosopher can have an impact on history (88) he devotes pages to showing just the opposite (chap. 10).

Compared to the wealth of detail Fiala brings to his thesis, this review is of course an overly simplified precis. Even so, it should at least mention the helpful introductory chapter on predecessor political philosophers (especially Machiavelli and Rousseau); a quite helpful biographical/bibliographical/political chronology; and the index, bibliography, and notes one expects in a scholarly work. Especially valuable are notes that discuss other recent interpretations of these German philosophers, both supportive and conflicting (e.g., 9 nn. 7–9; 47 n. 2). These citations simply underpin a mostly tacit albeit provocative fourth

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dimension of this book, namely, whether these long gone German philosophers have anything of political importance to say to us who are living well over a century after them. I believe they do, for the following reasons.

In retrospect, their fledgling efforts to make philosophy an instrument of liberation were in varying degrees all geopolitically naive. Hegel and Fichte, though methodologically incompatible, both put Germany at the center of their philosophy of history. Kant and Marx, unquestionably disparate in their methodologies, both sought peace and justice and recognized their attainment to be a problem of global dimensions (Karatani 2003). None, however, foresaw anything like the tragic history of Germany in the twentieth century, so could not have anticipated the complex political concerns that Habermas has addressed (Matu_tk 2001). Nevertheless, their groundbreaking efforts despite governmental constraints should give pause to anyone who, like the logical positivists and others, considers strategic indifference to be the appropriate political stance of the professional philosopher. In this global world post-Hiroshima and post-Vietnam if not post-9/11, a social/political philosopher is still tempted to focus normative concerns on the home front and leave transnational decision making to realpolitik. So neo-Kantian John Rawls seems to have concluded (Rawls 1999; Hayden 2000). Yet as the growing body of philosophical literature on human rights makes clear, the agenda set in motion by Fiala's foursome is with us still (see, e.g., De Greiff and Cronin 2002). Shall we, then, follow their lead?

Few philosophers today try to cover the gamut of philosophy as they did. And fewer still share their epistemological confidence (Margolis 1996). Nonetheless, philosophers now can know far more about the world and live more securely in it than these four ever could. So postmodern concerns don't justify leaving politics to the politicians; and lighting a candle still beats cursing the darkness.

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