Meaning in History? The Young Hegelian's Battle for Historical Meaning and the Resurgence of Nihilism

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MEANING IN HISTORY? THE YOUNG HEGELIAN'S BATTLE FOR HISTORICAL MEANING AND THE RESURGENCE OF NIHILISM

by

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B.A. December 2003, SUNY Cortland

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

HISTORY

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
August 2009

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ABSTRACT

MEANING IN HISTORY? THE YOUNG HEGELIAN’S BATTLE FOR HISTORICAL MEANING AND THE RESURGENCE OF NIHILISM

Angelo J. Letizia
Old Dominion University, 2009
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After the Reign of Terror, the German thinker J.H. Jacobi saw only two options for Europe: faith in God or nihilism, the belief in nothing. His ultimatum between faith and nihilism for the modern era called into question for some thinkers the entire revolutionary project and its ideals of reason and self government. Two answers to Jacobi’s ultimatum were put forth by the German philosophers Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel who rejected both faith and nihilism, and instead crafted a vision of progress, and Arthur Schopenhauer who opted for nihilism. Jacobi’s ultimatum, and Hegel and Schopenhauer’s answers to it, opened up new paths for German thinkers to follow in their assessment of post-Revolutionary Europe, these being faith, teleology and nihilism.

This paper will argue that Hegelian teleology was adapted by Hegel’s more radical followers during the 1830s and 1840s to situate the events of the post-revolutionary era in a larger historical progression, so as to give the events, along with history itself, a purposeful movement toward a goal. Teleology was used to steer a course through the unappealing boundaries of traditional Christian faith and the new threat of nihilism. However, after the European-wide revolutions of 1848, the teleological theories of the Hegelians collapsed. Schopenhauer, after a thirty year hiatus, was believed by some to best articulate the changes of their time. Yet for a short time, Hegel’s teleology was used to give meaning to, in many respects, an infant and rootless society.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks are in order for the successful completion of this thesis. First off, I would like to thank my colleagues Kathy Burns for her helpful comments and suggestions on the draft, and Guadalupe Fernandez for her comments and advice. I would like to thank the staff of the Gloucester County Public Library, with especial thanks to Mary, for their time and patience. I would also like to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Jane Merritt and Dr. Maura Hametz for their extremely beneficial criticisms. Special thanks go to my advisor, Dr. Michael Carhart, who guided me for over two and half years through the arduous process of writing this work. Lastly, I would like to thank my wife Janet, and my son Troy who always served as my inspiration, even if they did not realize it.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION: HEGEL AND SCHOPENHAUER

In February 1848, a coalition of middle and working class members ousted the repressive government of King Louis Philippe in Paris. This coalition then set up a provisional republican government, with a permanent one in the works. Shortly after, similar republican revolutions swept through other European cities, such as Berlin, Frankfurt, Leipzig and Rome.¹ For many, these revolutions were a long time in coming; they were the culmination of years of anticipation and hope for a better world.

Specifically, a small group of thinkers who came to be known as the Young Hegelians saw these revolutions as a sort of secular apocalypse, as the redemption of a degenerative humanity in the face of the growing ills of industrialization and a slumping economy. They seized upon the theories of an earlier thinker, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who argued that all existence was a rational and purposeful movement. For Hegel, all historical events had meaning because all events were ultimately “progress toward perfection.”² The Young Hegelians refused to admit the events of their age were in vain. They argued that the events of 1848 were not momentary expressions of a


² This is Hegel’s first major work. This is the definitive English translation. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. A.V. Miller, with an foreword by J.N. Findlay (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 357.
hungry and frustrated people, but the heralds of a new age and the final age of peace and prosperity for mankind.

Yet the revolutions failed a short time later, and for thinkers like the Hegelians, this failure marked a definitive end to a historical epoch. In June 1848, the middle class waged war against the working class, their former allies. The middle class did not want a societal regeneration like many of the working class; rather, they simply wanted more economic and political freedoms. The outcome was never really in doubt. The middle classes, who commanded the professional armies, easily triumphed. As the dust settled and the century wore on, Hegelianism with its emphasis on societal regeneration and progress was neglected in favor of the ideas of more pessimistic thinkers, most notable of these was Arthur Schopenhauer. A contemporary of Hegel’s, Schopenhauer was widely neglected until the 1850s. Yet his despairing theories became a mouthpiece for the angst experienced by some thinkers after 1848. In one telling excerpt in 1851 Schopenhauer wrote, “You can...look upon our life as an episode unprofitably disturbing the blessed calm of nothingness.” For him, life was not progress as Hegel had argued, but only an aberration to be ended quickly. History and life, as opposed to the Hegelian notions of meaning, were meaningless.

Yet the desire for social regeneration had been ignited long before February of 1848. For many, this yearning for change began in 1789 with the fall of the Bastille. In the years following the fall of the Bastille, the French had abolished the long standing seigniorial privileges of the nobility, executed the absolute monarch Louis XVI, severely

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restricted the power of the Catholic Church, established a republic and fought a war the likes of which no one had ever experienced with almost all of Europe. In retrospect, the 1790s can be seen as the decade of the emergence of a societal and historical void, where the foundations that had buttressed European society were rejected by an increasing number of people, in the most influential country in Europe. These institutions were by no means completely eradicated from European life; in fact many recoiled from the uncertainty of this time by a pious devotion of faith to the church. However, a substantial number of thinkers increasingly turned away from faith and monarchy altogether. The revolutions of 1848 were the most visible and violent expression of this desire for some sort of guidance in the void. While these institutions were in question for at least two centuries due to the advancements in science and the theories of the Enlightenment it was the French Revolution that dealt them a serious blow from which they would never fully recover.

This paper will argue that a battle for the precise meaning of the historical events of the early nineteenth century emerged within this void, represented by the conflicting theories of Hegel's progress and Schopenhauer's meaninglessness. Meaning, in this case, is defined as a reason to exist at all. The appropriation of Hegel’s progressive theories by a small group of radical thinkers of the next generation, combined with their rejection of the notion of historical meaninglessness, as well as their rejection of traditional faith, seemed to signal a Hegelian victory. In this void, the Young Hegelians, as they came to be called, each proposed various methods, and battled each other, for the actual implementation of this rational meaning. Specifically, whether this meaning would be established by the individual or collectively by society; whether it would be realized democratically or communistically, whether it was a progressive or destructive meaning
and whether it was even in man's control. Yet the failures of 1848 largely marked the defeat of the Hegelian vision of meaning, and helped pave the way for Schopenhauer's popularity. This paper will also argue that while the defeat of Hegelianism left the question of the void unanswered for thinkers of the later nineteenth century, Hegel's followers, despite their failure, nonetheless first initiated the battle against it by trying to give a rational meaning to the historical events of their time.

The earliest event which most clearly illustrated the emergence of this void was the Reign of Terror, and that is where this paper will begin its assessment of historical meaning. In many ways, the Reign of Terror set the trajectory for the differing evaluations of the modern age. In September of 1793, in an effort to save the fledgling French Republic, the National Convention under the guidance of Maximiilien Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety enacted the Law of Suspects, officially beginning the Terror. This decree gave the Committee near limitless powers to imprison and execute any enemies hostile to the republic. By July 1794, some estimates put the total dead at over 40,000. Yet, the purpose of the Terror was not to guillotine enemies of the republic in a senseless bloodbath. The main purpose was to build a modern republic founded on the Enlightenment notions of freedom, equality and ultimately reason. According to Robespierre and the committee, seigniorial privileges, the divine right of

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5 R.R. Palmer's work Twelve Who Ruled, was first published in 1941, and the second edition was published in 1989 (also by Palmer). This work specifically examines the Reign of Terror, and the men behind it, by drawing on the vast records, correspondence and speeches of the members Committee of Public Safety, as well as other relevant individuals. Palmer's purpose is to assess the actual role, impact and overall meaning of the Terror and the Committee of Public Safety. Palmer illustrates how the Reign of Terror was absolutely necessary, despite its more grisly events. It curbed the massive inflation by making the hoarding of bread a crime punishable by death, it enacted the largest military draft in modern European history up to that time, and ultimately this draft allowed the French to defeat the English, Austrians and the Prussians. Yet these benefits were difficult to see at the time and in the midst of the Terror's use of violence to achieve its ends. R.R. Palmer, Twelve Who Ruled: The Year of the Terror in the French Revolution, 2d ed. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 153.
kings and Christianity were stubborn relics, obstacles to modern progress because they encouraged tyranny, superstition, and inequality.6 The Committee and Robespierre felt the Terror a small price to pay for the birth of a new, rational world. Many did not agree with this assessment.

One such dissenter was the German thinker F.H. Jacobi. Jacobi, a contemporary of Robespierre, was one of the first thinkers who recognized the presence of this void, and he first framed the question of meaning which both Hegel and Schopenhauer were to answer.7 Jacobi supported many of the changes of the initial phase of the revolution, but as it wore on and the Terror ensued, he felt that it had degenerated into a free for all of crude egoism, which threatened property, religion and traditional morality. For Jacobi, it was also evidence that man needed to believe in God, because without this belief, chaos ensued.8

On a more philosophical level, in Robespierre and the French Republic, Jacobi saw the Enlightenment notion of reason paradoxically threaten the very foundations of stability and order, which it was supposed to establish. He argued that if reason were

6 Palmer, 178.

7 By far, the most influential and renowned critic of the French Revolution was the English thinker Edmund Burke. In 1790, three years before the Terror, Burke had published a pamphlet titled Reflections on the Revolution in France. In it, he portrayed the revolutionaries as fanatical followers of a skewed vision of reason. Reflections was almost immediately translated into German. Jacobi’s criticism piggybacked off of Burke’s. Gareth Stedman Jones, introduction to The Communist Manifesto, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (New York: Penguin Press, 2002), 76.

8 Frederick Beiser is one of the main authorities on modern Post-Kantian and Hegelian scholarship. He published the Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Fichte to Hegel in 1987 and Enlightenment, Revolution and Romanticism: The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought 1790-1800 in 1992. In both of these works he examines stance toward the Revolution. As Beiser points out, it is important to note that Jacobi was not an irrationalist, or a critic of reason altogether. He believed in many tenets of the Enlightenment, such as religious tolerance. What he argued was that reason had limits. Frederick Besier, Enlightenment, Revolution and Romanticism: The Genesis of Modern German Political Thought 1790-1800 (Massachusetts: Harvard Press, 1992), 129.
applied to questions such as the existence of God, as Robespierre tried to do, it would never uncover a provable answer, thus leaving absolutely nothing for man to believe in. Jacobi described this deplorable condition as nihilism; it was the eradication of all traditions, beliefs and foundations; the only stable thing was the belief in absolutely nothing.

In 1799, the Terror and the political instability in France had convinced Jacobi that the notion of Enlightenment reason, which he had been suspicious of since the 1760s, had been taken to its limit. Jacobi believed the modern world faced an “ultimatum.” As he saw it, there were only two options for Europe after the Reign of Terror, that of faith or nihilism. Either modern man accepted that there were limits to his reason and ascribed the rest to God, or he must follow reason to its inevitable end, which was the complete negation of meaning and purpose for man’s existence. He knew that reason had a limit, and the limit was God. He wrote, “Thus, my reason teaches me instinctively: God.” Jacobi opted for faith to preserve any meaning for man in this glaring void.

Jacobi’s fear of nihilism can be used to illustrate certain reservations of post-revolutionary society. If the price of the modern state could only be paid for with the

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9 F.H. Jacobi, Werke, (1799), quoted in Frederick Beiser, The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Fichte to Hegel (Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 81 and 340n. Also see Beiser, Enlightenment, Revolution and Romanticism, 75.


11 While not commenting directly on Jacobi, Hobsbawm wrote that “Groups of exalted young men thus flung themselves from the horrors of the intellect into the welcoming arms of Rome.” For many,
guillotine and blood, many did not want to pay. The price of modernity was too high. For
some, the historical void was ominous and threatening. Jacobi’s ultimatum and his
opting for faith represented a longing for the past in the face of an uncertain future and a
violent present. It also set the stage for Hegel and Schopenhauer’s conflict, who, unlike
Jacobi, did not resign themselves to the notion of faith. Each disagreed with Jacobi, and
their theories each answered Jacobi in a different way. In doing so each formulated an
interpretation of the events of the modern age which later thinkers molded to their own
historical circumstances.

On the afternoon of October 14, 1806, seven years after Jacobi’s rumination on
nihilism and faith, Napoleon Bonaparte swept through the small town of Jena, located
near Bavaria. He effortlessly crushed the army contingent that engaged him there. The
philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel personally witnessed the French attack.
While this battle was rather anticlimactic in comparison to the larger battles of the
Napoleonic wars, for Hegel personally, it was a significant event. He did not flinch like
Jacobi had done with the Terror, rather, as he witnessed the erosion of feudalism,
absolutism and Christianity, he had a profound sense that his world was changing before
his eyes.

As legend has it, Hegel, at the time an unfunded lecturer at the University of
Jena, completed his masterpiece, Phenomenology of Spirit, as Napoleon’s cannons
shelled the city. While this legend was slightly embellished (Hegel had already

especially those of the lower middle, working and peasant classes, literal, old fashioned faith was a method
of coping with the violence and upheavals of the early nineteenth century which ensued from the
disturbing questions raised by the Enlightenment. The number of adherents to religious groups such as the
Seventh Day Adventists, Mormons and Irvingites, as well as traditional religions, steadily increased. Faith
offered a sense of emotional attachment, tradition and community that many felt were now missing. For
members of the clergy and nobility, faith became a powerful tool for conservatives to rebut the
revolutionary and Jacobin tendencies of their populations. Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution, 231.
completed the majority of the manuscript well before the battle) it is nonetheless significant, even in exaggeration. For Hegel, this battle, the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars in general were the gateway to the modern era. Hegel believed that all of history was a rational progression toward freedom and the French Revolution was the final stage of this progression. The advance of reason, inaugurated at the beginning of history and with its culmination in the French Revolution, had brought freedom to all people, regardless of birth, class or creed. In *Phenomenology*, regarding the role of the French Revolution in world history, he wrote “Absolute freedom ascends the throne of the world without any power being able to resist it.” The development of freedom, for Hegel, was unstoppable, and it was in history where it manifested itself.

The *Phenomenology* was in many respects a rebuttal of Jacobi. Hegel did not see the French Revolution as Jacobi’s nihilistic nightmare. Rather, he believed that the French Revolution was a “glorious mental dawn” for humankind. For the first time in recorded history, man realized that his existence was the product of his own rational faculty, not the arbitrary whim of some mythical God. In direct contrast to Jacobi’s nihilism, Hegel saw the French Revolution, even with the Reign of Terror, as the most

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13 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 357.

14 Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 357.

15 Pinkard, 229.

16 Hegel’s *Philosophy of History* is actually a collection of his lectures which were published posthumously. Hegel’s position in the *Philosophy of History* toward the French revolution, which was composed mainly during the 1820s and 1830s, is essentially the same as his position in the *Phenomenology*, which was published in 1806. Hegel was a supporter of the French Revolution all his life, from the time of his youth until his death. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree, with an introduction by David A. Duquette (New York: Barnes and Noble Publishing, 2004), 525.
purposeful event in the history of mankind. A return to faith now would be cowardice in the face of progress, an unwillingness to move ahead.

Beginning in ancient China and progressing though Persia, Greece, Rome and Medieval Europe, Hegel argued that the Human Spirit which was none other than the mind of humanity taken as a whole, developed rationally. History was teleological movement, meaning that it moved with a definite purpose and toward a goal. In the beginning, there was an undifferentiated unity of all things which Hegel referred to as the Absolute or God. This unity eventually ruptured. Yet this rupture was necessary for the Absolute to truly know and understand itself, to become a concrete entity. As one phase of history ended, its achievements were preserved in the next historical phase, thus no historical content was every truly past, it was always preserved in the next phase. The process of reunification of the Absolute was the teleological progress of history, of the Absolute becoming whole again, but with knowledge of itself.¹⁷

Thus historical events were not random, isolated occurrences. The executions of the Terror, while gruesome, were not the whims of sadistic madmen; they forged the hard path to freedom.¹⁸ Specifically, Hegel argued the Terror occurred because the revolution was incomplete. At that stage, it had only established an abstract notion of

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¹⁷ Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 537. Hegel used the German word *Aufheben* to denote the simultaneous destruction and preservation of the content of historical moments. Another problematic term that Hegel used was *Geist*, to refer to the human spirit or Mind or Reason. Generally, Spirit refers to the human mind as a collective, rational entity, standing outside the individual and guiding humanity. *Aufheben* and *Geist* do not have English equivalents. Pinkard, 331.

¹⁸ For Hegel, freedom was not the ability to simply do as one pleased. Rather, freedom was when the individual became part of the community, when the individual no longer acted out of self-interest, but rather when his self-interest was identical to the interest of the community at large. Hegel termed this as *Sittlichkeit*, which has no true English translation. It is usually translated as "ethical community." Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 537. For an excellent rendition of the term *Sittlichkeit*, see Laurence Dickey, *Hegel: Religion, Economics, and the Politics of Spirit, 1770-1807* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), ix.
freedom which the individual could not embrace because it was an alien concept.\(^\text{19}\) Thus the Terror ensued to establish this abstract freedom at the expense of the individual. Yet this abstraction was the necessary precursor for the establishment of true, individual freedom, within the bounds of the objective state. Only when this occurred, would history culminate in the Absolute.\(^\text{20}\)

The French Revolution and the Reign of Terror, as well as the Enlightenment produced feelings of uncertainty for many during the early nineteenth century. Jacobi's fear of nihilism was a poignant articulation of this uncertainty, and many agreed with it. In response to Jacobi's uncertainty, Hegel offered modernity a new type of salvation, based on purpose and reason. He also offered his unstable time a sense of hope, and more importantly, a task to be performed and a goal to be reached. Events were not meaningless; people did not have to despair in the face of violence, even violence of the magnitude of the Terror. Historical events were meaningful but \textit{only} in teleological progression toward the Absolute. Thus, Hegel viewed the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century with a sense of optimism, despite the violence and upheaval.

After the publication of \textit{Phenomenology}, Hegel's popularity steadily grew. Where Jacobi represented a retreat, Hegel's ideas represented progress, and a desire to achieve the ideals of 1789. Many thinkers saw Hegelianism, with its emphasis on reason, scientific thinking and especially teleology, as a way to express the radical changes of the post-revolutionary society. Hegel attracted a small but devoted and powerful group of followers.\(^\text{21}\) In 1818 he was asked to become the head of the University at Berlin.

\(^{19}\) Hegel, \textit{Phenomenology of Spirit}, 360.

\(^{20}\) Hegel, \textit{Philosophy of History}, 534.
In many ways Hegel’s theories acted like a magnet, attracting some thinkers while repelling others. Conservative thinkers attacked Hegel for subverting traditional Christian faith and the notion of a personal and transcendent God. He was denied entry into the prestigious Royal Prussian Academy for the Sciences. In addition, he carried on a public and long running debate with his colleague at Berlin, the law professor Jakob Friedrich Fries, as well as the speculative theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher. They each saw Hegel’s theories as too abstract and objective for the individual.  

His most trenchant and biting critic however, was at the time an unheard of philosopher named Arthur Schopenhauer. What set Schopenhauer apart was not his deep hatred for Hegel, which many of his contemporaries shared, nor was it the ferocity of his attacks, which many of his contemporaries also shared. Rather, it was the motivation for his criticism of Hegel, which was unlike any other in Germany. Simply put, Schopenhauer denied any meaning in history exactly where Hegel affirmed it. Schopenhauer arrived at the University of Berlin in the hopes of attaining a teaching position. More accurately, he felt that a teaching position would allow him to counter the influence of Hegel by spreading his ideas to young and eager minds.  

Schopenhauer had just recently published his major work, *The World as Will and


Representation in 1818. He obtained a teaching post and imprudently asked to schedule his lectures at the same exact time as Hegel. Hegel, bewildered and slightly amused, agreed. This proved to be an abject failure for Schopenhauer, for Hegel was much more popular. After one semester, Schopenhauer quit his post and never returned to academia.\textsuperscript{24} He remained in the city for the rest of Hegel's tenure, a silent but patient adversary.

The reasons for Schopenhauer's early neglect are complex. However, the most likely reason is that, as a whole, many were not ready to embrace his pessimistic and ultimately nihilistic ideas. Until the 1850s, references to Schopenhauer's work by other thinkers were minimal and not very many copies of his work were sold. The only serious writer to comment on his work was the novelist Jean Paul who praised its greatness, but also extolled its bleakness. Throughout the 1830s and 1840s, while Hegelianism captivated Germany, Schopenhauer's works were available to anyone who wanted to read it. Most simply chose not to.

The recent historical events did not inspire any hope in Schopenhauer, because he did not see in them any teleological progression. Schopenhauer's attitude toward teleology is made explicitly clear in the World as Will. He wrote one would be foolish to believe, like the supposedly learned men of his time "that time itself as a whole has beginning and end, plan and development, and in some way has for its final goal the highest perfection."\textsuperscript{25} Thus, the recent events were not phases in development; they were

\textsuperscript{24} Bryan Magee is one of the main authorities on Schopenhauer. This work, originally published in 1983 and reprinted in 1997 with added sections, is one of the only complete works on Schopenhauer's life, work and influence. Bryan Magee, The Philosophy of Schopenhauer, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 238.
not steps toward any predestined goal. At best, man made advancements, but ultimately, all historical events such as the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror were nothing but a series of “wars and tumults.”

Schopenhauer did point to one recent event as noteworthy however, the Enlightenment and especially Kantian philosophy. In trying to build a world based on reason, man discovered that his reason had limits. Schopenhauer, like Jacobi earlier, followed reason to a definitive boundary. He wrote “knowledge...opens the road to salvation.” Yet this was not any type of religious salvation, it was not Jacobi’s God. Since man’s knowledge of the objective world was limited, Schopenhauer turned inward toward his own consciousness. Here, he encountered his own will and desires, which he believed controlled the intellect. He then argued that one’s subjective will was representative of all existence because one’s will was actually only a piece of the will, the all-encompassing, irrational essence of all existence. In the face of this absurd and horrific prospect, one would come to the realization that true happiness lay in the denial of existence. For one who finally denied the will to live would come to realize “this very real world of ours with all its suns and galaxies is-nothing.” This was the highest and


26 Schopenhauer, Essays and Aphorisms, 42.

27 Schopenhauer, The World as Will, 416.

28 Schopenhauer, Essays and Aphorisms, 21. For Schopenhauer, the intellect or reason was a manifestation of the will to better achieve the will’s aims (of course the will was not a conscious entity). Yet in some cases the intellect could break free from the will and lead to salvation. Schopenhauer, World as Will, 152. The term will is problematic because sometimes Schopenhauer makes the will seem a solely subjective entity, when ultimately it is beyond individual comprehension. A more accurate translation may be force, energy or movement. Magee, 203.

29 However, Schopenhauer did not advocate suicide, as this was denying what was painful in life. The real key was to forego what was pleasurable, similar to Buddhist monks, Hindu ascetics and Christian
most sublime truth. There was no meaning to history or life, just the prospect of nihilistic salvation. Man’s intellect allowed him to see this.

Schopenhauer argued that the Reign of Terror and the Napoleonic Wars were simply naked barbarism; he did not try to justify them in anyway by reverting to teleology or reason. However, instead of resigning to faith, Schopenhauer joyfully opted for nihilism. He would most likely have agreed with Hegel that faith was cowardice, but he would also have charged him with cowardice as well because he took refuge in another sort of faith; teleology. Schopenhauer saw the events of history, but particularly the modern events of the Enlightenment and the Terror as indicative of one inexorable conclusion: life was ultimately meaningless, and one must come face to face with this meaninglessness.

While Schopenhauer’s influence was not immediately felt, his condemnation of Hegel represented a frightening conclusion to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Schopenhauer’s work was not a direct answer to Jacobi’s “ultimatum,” yet it nonetheless represented the unthinkable adaptation of the option of nihilism, the latent choice that no one wanted to make. While many of Hegel’s followers may not have known Schopenhauer per se, his nihilistic declaration was the most extreme, most bleak

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saints. Schopenhauer, The World as Will, 411 and Essays and Aphorisms, 77. In addition, some commentators do not hold that Schopenhauer was a nihilist. In her essay “The Influences of Eastern Thought on Schopenhauer’s Doctrine of the Thing-in-Itself,” Moira Nicholls contends that Schopenhauer’s conception of the denial of the will to live changed over the course of his life. While in the first edition of World as Will he spoke of a complete denial of existence, Nicholl’s argues that because of his increasing contact with Eastern thought he later characterized this as a denial of only the negative aspects of the existence, namely will, and left open the possibility of a will-less positive existence which of course would be beyond comprehension to a limited human intellect. While there may be truth in this interpretation (which she admits is an educated guess), the fact remains that Schopenhauer found salvation in a negation of all that existed, in a nothingness which could not be described. And this path was opened up for Schopenhauer by what Jacobi explicitly warned against: following one’s reason. See Christopher Janaway, ed., The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer; “The Influences of Eastern Thought on Schopenhauer’s Doctrine of the Thing-in-Itself,” by Moira Nicholls (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 193.
and pessimistic articulation of the theory of nihilism which was a hotly debated notion in early nineteenth century Germany. It was nihilism, and by extension Schopenhauer’s embracing of it, which Hegel’s followers neglected.

In the early nineteenth century, Hegel and Schopenhauer stood at the precipice of a historical crossroads. The Reign of Terror and the Napoleonic Wars forced many to ask if Enlightenment rationalism had been taken too far. Had it liberated man from the bondage of medieval Catholicism and absolutism and laid the foundation of the modern state, or did it simply reveal to man his own meaninglessness? Was the notion of God a fetter, or necessary condition for social stability? The events of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century affected Hegel and Schopenhauer in a particular way, and their divergent theories are evidence of this effect. Hegel and Schopenhauer’s theories became a battle for the meaning of the historical events of their time and of history in general. Yet it was a battle not fought between them, but rather in the subsequent decades between their followers and detractors.

When the revolutions of 1848 erupted, the Young Hegelians believed that a new world was emerging, a purposeful, meaningful world, and thus their rejection of nihilism, of which Schopenhauer’s philosophy was the ultimate culmination. Yet, from 1848 through 1851 these dreams died on the barricades. By the 1850s, it became obvious to many that a new world was indeed emerging, but it was one in which the pessimistic ideas of Schopenhauer were much more relevant.

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METHODOLOGY

Jacobi, Hegel and Schopenhauer presented three divergent avenues for later German thinkers to follow in their societal assessment of the early nineteenth century. These avenues were, respectively, a retreat to faith, a teleological redemption of humanity, and the prospect of nihilism.\(^{31}\) Later generations of thinkers were exposed to each of these ideas, along with other modes of assessment. Initially, it was Hegel’s teleology which appealed to many young thinkers after Hegel’s death in 1831 that still held onto the promises of the French Revolution of 1789.

Yet their time was different from Hegel’s time. After 1830, in Germany, the effects of industrialization and technology, the repressive attempts of conservative governments to quell any subversive movements, and an economic depression added to the volatility of an already shaky time. Hegelian teleology offered a way for thinkers to ascribe a rational meaning to a world where traditional norms were quickly deteriorating and the threat of nihilism loomed. It was this desire for a rational meaning in the post-revolutionary era which this paper aims to fully explore. How exactly did the Young Hegelians plan to realize their ideas of meaning and rebut reactionary faith and nihilism in an increasingly industrial and conservative society? And after 1848, what exactly did the rise of Schopenhauer mean for Hegelianism?

The organization of this paper is as follows. First the modern historiography of the “battle” between Hegel and Schopenhauer will be traced. The paper will chronicle

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\(^{31}\) These three avenues were by no means the only methods of interpretation during the post-revolutionary era. Romanticism, an artistic and literary movement was very popular in the early nineteenth century. While it varied tremendously, it essentially was a movement that stressed creativity and imagination in response to the rigid rationalism espoused by the Enlightenment. The Napoleonic Wars had also led to widespread movements for nationalism and unification, most notably in the Italian and German provinces. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution*, 133 and 259.
how different thinkers have approached various aspects of Hegel and Schopenhauer’s philosophy and integrate these interpretations into the overall project of reconstructing the battle between these two thinkers.

The bulk of this paper will illustrate how Hegelian teleology, as appropriated by a small group of increasingly radical followers, temporarily triumphed over the competing modes of societal assessment during the early nineteenth century. Yet, their ideas of meaning all differed. This paper casts the Young Hegelians as opponents, and their competing theories not just as societal assessments, but as varied attempts to give meaning to the nineteenth century, which suddenly found itself facing a void.

Specifically, the Hegelian debates are anchored around key issues with regards to the outcome of Hegelian teleology. The law professor Eduard Gans and the theologian David Strauss, as well as the theologian Ludwig Feuerbach and the gymnasium teacher Max Stirner all focused on the notions of community and individuality. The theologian Bruno Bauer and the aesthetician Theodore Vischer focused on the notions of criticism and aestheticism. The journalist Arnold Ruge and the journalist Karl Marx focused on the notion of post revolutionary government, specifically republicanism and communism. Marx and another journalist, Moses Hess, focused on the notion of human freedom. By casting these various positions as debates, we can track the evolution of the idea of teleology and meaning through tumultuous nineteenth century,

The Hegelian victory was short-lived. Jacobi’s fear of nihilism returned to end the Hegelian vision of progress after the failures of 1848. The last section will be an examination of the rise of Schopenhauer’s ideas after 1848. It will conclude by elucidating a new interpretation of what Hegel and his more radical followers attempt at meaning represented in post-revolutionary Europe.
CHAPTER II
HISTORIOGRAPHY

The question of meaning in history continued from the 1840s to the present. This present section will trace how the debate between Hegel and Schopenhauer has been viewed since the original debate. It will be divided into three parts. The first part will examine the ideas of two twentieth century German thinkers, Carl Schmitt, who was influenced by Hegel, and an outspoken critic of him, Karl Löwith, who resembled Schopenhauer. Their debate took place against the backdrop of the interwar and World War periods. The second part will examine how later European thinkers approached the debate during the twentieth century, and how they built on or rejected the positions of Hegel and Schopenhauer in light of the events of their own time. These particular thinkers used the positions of Hegel and Schopenhauer to help create their own doctrines. The next part of the section will chronicle the debate as it appeared in American scholarship after the 1960s. After this time, the postmodernist American scholars, unlike the earlier modernist European scholars, did not write in favor of either Hegel or Schopenhauer. Rather they tried to examine objectively the positions of either thinker. This section is further divided into the works of historians and philosophers. Many did not even directly comment on the debate or acknowledge it as such, but they nonetheless advanced positions critical to understanding it. The last part of this section will attempt to place the present work in its proper historiographical context.

Hegel remarked that all events in history happen twice. One of his followers, Karl Marx, then added that the first time they occur they are tragic, but the second time they
occur they are farcical.\textsuperscript{1} Ironically, these observations about the repetition of historical events apply directly to the debate between Hegel and Schopenhauer. The first time the question over the meaning of historical events was posed was during the Reign of Terror. For some, like Hegel and his followers, the Terror and the Napoleonic Wars seemed to be the only way to secure any meaning for historical events. After 1848, their ideas no longer seemed credible. By the mid twentieth century this question of meaning surfaced again in Germany, yet it was far from comical. While the parameters of the debate had changed from the previous century, the basic tenets of Hegelianism and Schopenhauerianism remained. The second time the question of meaning arose, it arose during the Weimar Republic and then again shortly after the Second World War.

Since the late eighteenth century, it has been war that usually seemed to bring out the nihilistic attitudes in thinkers. The wars of the nineteenth and especially the twentieth century created feelings of dislocation, fear, anxiety and foreboding for many, and thinkers like Hegel and Schopenhauer, and later Schmitt and Löwith attest to this. Since the events directly prior to and directly proceeding the Second World War brought out the ideas of the original Hegel and Schopenhauer debate in full, tragic display during the twentieth century, that is where we will begin our examination of the historiography of the debate in the twentieth century.

THE MEANING OF NATIONAL SOCIALISM

Schmitt published his major work, \textit{The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy} in 1922, and again in 1926 (this work will use the 1926 version). Löwith's major work,

Meaning in History was published in 1949. While not expanding on it, Löwith was one of the first modern thinkers to comment directly on the debate between Hegel and Schopenhauer. In an earlier work, he wrote that Schopenhauer, with his pessimistic and nihilistic theories was Hegel’s antithesis. Just as Schopenhauer attacked Hegelianism and refuted the notion of historical meaning during the nineteenth century, Löwith would attack Schmitt and do the same in the twentieth.

Schmitt had originally been a legal advisor to the Weimar regime, which he increasingly saw as corrupt. Yet after its collapse and Hitler’s seizure of power in 1933, Schmitt became a jurist for the National Socialist movement. At the time, Schmitt was not the only thinker calling for a strong authoritarian government. As the depression of the interwar years worsened, many felt parliamentary government which was rule by elected delegates, was unable to solve Europe’s financial and political problems; they clambered for state intervention and authoritarianism to solve Germany’s economic woes.

In Crisis, Schmitt argued that the institution of modern Parliamentary Democracy, most notably the Weimar Republic in Germany, was simply a formality which no longer represented the people. Thus its time had come to be destroyed and replaced with a more effective institution, which he argued was a rationalist

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3 Mark Mazower is a historian of twentieth century history, and his book Dark Continent offers a different interpretation of the rise of Fascism and Communism, charging that these movements were not the evil regimes that they have been made out to be by later historians, but rather they were alternatives to democracy which was failing during the interwar period. Mazower specifically mentions Schmitt in this chorus of voices. Mark Mazower, Dark Continent: Europe’s Twentieth Century (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 130.
dictatorship. He argued that the notion of Parliamentarism was originally based on open discussion of opposing viewpoints, and through this rational discussion, the truth would emerge. Yet, the dictates of the Weimar Republic were anything but the products of free, open discussion. Rather they were products of factionalism, political parties, secretive extra-parliamentary committees, statistical majorities and finally the interests of the profit-minded bourgeoisie.

In his disillusionment with modern Parliamentary Democracy, Schmitt turned to Hegel and Marx. He wrote that Hegel had the courage to construct his theories from history itself, Marx then made Hegel’s treatment of history concrete and tangible. After Hegel’s historical theory, all current events had to be placed within their proper historical context. Schmitt did precisely this; the dissolution of Parliamentary Democracy was not an arbitrary or contingent fact. It was the most significant event in the modern era. He held that since the June revolutions of 1848, democracy led an inevitable march forward against absolutism. Yet, now the deficiencies of modern Parliamentary Democracy were exposed, and thus it was ready for destruction. In its place, Schmitt advocated a rationalist dictator, like Marx’s dictatorship of the proletariat or most recently, Italy’s Benito Mussolini, who could use his instinct to act decisively and not be paralyzed by


5 Schmitt, 50.

6 His use of Hegel is central to this thesis. Schmitt was influenced by the Neo-Hegelian movement, which began during the 1890s. It saw a revitalization of certain strands of Hegelianism, namely Hegel’s belief that all events must be understood in a historical context. The founder of this movement is usually regarded as the German philosopher and historian Wilhelm Dilthey. Dilthey wrote during Germany’s rapid militarization and ascent to power in the 1890s and early 1900s, at a time when many Germans felt it was their historical destiny to rule Europe. Thus his rendition of Hegel was in tune with certain currents of the times. Schmitt’s Crisis is a direct reflection of this historical thinking. Calvin Rand, “Two Meanings of Historicism in the Writings of Dilthey, Troeltsch and Meinecke” Journal of the History of Ideas 25 (October 1964): 503-518.
the empty banality of modern parliamentary discussion. In some respects, Schmitt continued Hegelian teleology into the twentieth century. He used it as a boundary marker, as the gateway to a new age. In 1933, Schmitt's new age was seemingly vindicated by the rise of Adolf Hitler to power in Germany. He was a supporter of the Nazi regime throughout the duration of the war.

Writing twenty-five years after Schmitt and less than five years after the Second World War, Löwith was not favorable toward National Socialism. During the war, he had left Germany due to his opposition to National Socialism. After the Second World War, teleological theories which sought to place all historical events in a system or pattern, such as Hitler's claim of the historical destiny of the German people and the Third Reich, no longer appealed to many European thinkers. Löwith's *Meaning in History* is a prime expression of this post-war discontent with teleology.

Löwith argued that historical teleological theories were ultimately a product of Judeo-Christian thinking, which he referred to as secularization. After the bible and the early church fathers, he pointed to the thirteenth century Italian mystic, Joachim of Floris as inaugurating the first worldly rendition of Christian teleology, by prognosticating a third age of the holy spirit which was supposed to manifest on earth. Löwith held that this idea of a coming apocalypse, approaching within the bounds of secular history, heavily influenced later European thinkers. Löwith then pointed to Hegel as the prime culprit of modern secularization. He argued that Hegel had performed the vital task of transforming the faith based Joachimism into a historical progression based on Enlightenment reason. Hegel had translated the ancient notion of faith into a modern

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7 Schmitt, 75.

8 Mazower, 389.
notion of reason. In addition, Löwith saw Hegel’s most influential follower, Karl Marx continue Hegel’s secularization by purging it of any mystical movement, and rendering it in completely empirical terms.

Löwith saw Hegel and Marx’s teleological theories as a refusal to admit that the movement of history was ultimately purposeless. In response to the historical vindication by Hegel and Marx, and similar to Schopenhauer a century earlier, Löwith bluntly wrote “to the critical mind, no providential design or natural law of development is discernible.” For Löwith, like Schopenhauer, history had no meaning. Events could not be fit into a pattern like a jigsaw puzzle and pointed to some later goal. Like Hegel and his followers attempt to integrate the Reign of Terror into a meaningful historical system in the nineteenth century, Löwith held that thinkers like Schmitt similarly attempted to give meaning to the unstable events of their time, mainly the rise of National Socialism, by way of secularization. Löwith saw the movement of history as nothing but an endless progression of contingent events, with no predestined pattern, and to try to prognosticate any type of pattern was simply ludicrous, foolish and pathetic.

In one telling section he declared that Hegel and Marx were the second dispensation of Joachim’s followers and “the third dispensation of the Joachities reappeared as a...third Reich, inaugurated by...a Fuhrer who was acclaimed as a savior and greeted by millions with Heil!” Schmitt, like Hegel and Marx before him could not

10 Löwith, Meaning in History, 18.
11 Löwith, Meaning in History, v.
12 Löwith, Meaning in History, v.
admit that the volatility of their time was merely the result of an aimless historical movement. So they declared that this volatility heralded the dawn of a new age. In response to this, Löwith believed their teleological thinking was used to justify one of the most horrific events in human history. In retrospect, Löwith saw Schmitt cast Hitler and the Nazis as a sort of secular redemption for Europe.

THE MODERNISTS

The ongoing conflict between the theories of Hegel and Schopenhauer was not limited solely to Germany; it took place in England, France, the United States and even Australia. Michel Foucault, a French thinker, took up the question of historical meaning in his major work, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*, written in 1966. Foucault argued that nineteenth century science increasingly showed an empirical world which was an alien entity, indifferent to human concern. It was no longer divine, or analogous to man. In response to this, Foucault argued that Hegel, by positing an Absolute, which was a state of unity, tried to make the empirical world a part of man’s self-consciousness; he tried to reunite nature with the human mind. Yet, ultimately, Foucault saw Hegelianism as a failed attempt to join the empirical and mental worlds in a rational way.

After Hegel’s attempt, Foucault argued that a new worldview began to emerge. He used Schopenhauer’s language to cast a radical new vision of reality which he argued began shortly after Hegel. Nature, including man and inert matter came only to be seen

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as a transitory and fleeting appearance. The empirical world, including man, was animated only by an "untamed ontology" of pure life.\textsuperscript{15} Simply put, the Hegelian idea of rational phases existing apriori were a fallacy. There were no phases or stages as in Hegel’s theories, life was not rational. There was only “pure will,” which was irrational and untamable, and will was “the root of all existence.”\textsuperscript{16} The empirical world was not rational as Hegel believed, and to try and place any order in it was madness. Foucault saw this new notion of reality as the present one.

A decade later, another German historian, Arthur Hübscher, joined in the Hegel and Schopenhauer debate, clearly on the side of Schopenhauer. He wrote \textit{The Philosophy of Schopenhauer in its Intellectual Context: A Thinker Against the Tide} in 1973 and an essay “Hegel and Schopenhauer, the Aftermath and the Present,” in 1980. In \textit{The Philosophy of Schopenhauer} Hübscher was one of the first modern thinkers to label the conflict between Hegel and Schopenhauer as a “battle.” He saw Schopenhauerianism as the dark undercurrent which perpetually underscored the notion of Hegelian progress of the 1830s and 1840s, and ultimately dismissed it in the 1850s.\textsuperscript{17} Similar to Foucault, Hübscher argued that after 1848 Schopenhauerianism became the method of choice for the assessment of society, because Schopenhauer had effectively elucidated the irrational element of man’s nature and the universe which Hegel had failed to do. He argued that it was inconceivable that anyone could take Hegel’s optimism and teleology seriously in the present day, after the two world wars. In addition, he held Hegelianism responsible

\textsuperscript{15} Foucault, 248.

\textsuperscript{16} Foucault, 279.

\textsuperscript{17} However, Hübscher stated that his work was meant for the present (the 1970s). He described the 1970s as “this miserable, wretched time.” Hübscher, \textit{The Philosophy of Schopenhauer}, 12.
for Fascism because of its conservative interpretation of state worship, and for
Communism, by way of Marx. He ultimately saw Hegel’s historical philosophizing
eclipsed by the existentialist movement, to which he labeled Schopenhauer a precursor.

In his later essay, Hübscher espoused similar notions yet with some more
clarifications. He wrote that where Hegel identified history with spirit and transcendence,
Schopenhauer simply saw history as an extension of man’s animal nature. Hübscher
contended that the shift to nature from Spirit inaugurated by Schopenhauer marked the
course of twentieth century thought. In addition, Hübscher wrote that Schopenhauer’s
praise of the individual as opposed to Hegel’s praise of the totality of man and Spirit was
a much more realistic development after the totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century.
The concluding sentence of the essay declares Schopenhauer’s ideas more relevant and
overall superior to that of Hegel’s. 18

In 1983, the British historian Bryan Magee wrote what has become one of the
definitive works on Schopenhauer, The Philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer. It is
primarily concerned with Schopenhauer, but Magee devotes a chapter to the feud
between Schopenhauer and Hegel. As for their respective places in the history of ideas,
Magee, writing during the Cold War and less than forty years after the end of World War
II, like Hübscher ultimately holds Hegelianism responsible for Nazism as well as
Stalinism because of his influence on Marx. Conversely, he views Schopenhauer as a
sort of precursor to Darwin for his theories of struggle, Freud for his theories of will, and
Einstein for his equation of matter and energy.19

18 Arthur Hübscher, “Hegel and Schopenhauer: The Aftermath and the Present,” in
THE NEW METHOD

The thinkers in this section, unlike the modernists, approached aspects of Hegelianism and Schopenhauerianism objectively. In 1962, the American historian Eric Hobsbawm wrote *The Age of Revolution: 1789-1848*. Hobsbawm, a historian, was primarily concerned with how events from 1830 until 1848 affected the application of Hegelianism. In his examination of the radical movement among Hegel’s younger followers, Hobsbawm followed the French Revolutionary time line. He saw the radical rendition of Hegelianism begin with the revolution of 1830, and end with the revolution of 1848. Hobsbawm painted Hegel as primarily a liberal philosopher, and he argued that the Left or Young Hegelians as they came to be called, pushed Hegel’s thought further than their master. While Hobsbawm did not offer a detailed analysis of the Hegelian movement, he argued that it became increasingly atheistic, radical and revolutionary after 1830.20

A later work which expanded on Hobsbawm’s thesis of radicalization was William Brazill’s *The Young Hegelians*, written in 1970. He agreed that the theories of Hegelianism radicalized over two generations, and that there was a sharp distinction between the two generations. The first generation, composed of David Strauss, Friedrich Vischer, Max Stirner, Bruno Bauer, Ludwig Feuerbach and Arnold Ruge, was primarily concerned with religious problems.21 The second, composed of Marx, Friedrich Engels, Moses Hess and Mikhail Bakunin, was concerned primarily with social and political

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20 Magee points out that as Leibniz before him, Schopenhauer equated energy with matter, as did Einstein in the twentieth century. Magee, *The Philosophy of Schopenhauer*, 432.

problems, due to the rise of industry during the mid-1840s. He also tightened the boundaries of the Young Hegelian movement, marking 1835 as the beginning, with the publication of Strauss’s Life of Jesus, and marking 1844 as its end with the rise of Karl Marx’s communism. Despite the generational differences, Brazill argued that Hegelianism was used as a tool to interpret the changes of the modern era.

In 1975, the American historian Paul Gottfried wrote an article entitled “Arthur Schopenhauer as a Critic of History”, in which he tried to situate the Hegel-Schopenhauer debate in modern scholarship. Gottfried argued that Schopenhauer’s attack on Hegel opened up the possibility of the absurdist universe posed by modern existential theories. Gottfried believed that by the second half of the nineteenth century, Hegel’s rational optimism had succumbed to Schopenhauer’s absurdist pessimism, and this shift was still evident in modern thinking. His analysis is in agreement with Hübscher and would be echoed by Magee a decade a later. All three argue that Schopenhauer was a precursor to the existentialist movement, and that in some respects he paved the way for the later theories of Darwin and Freud.

A later historian, John Toews, adopted Hobsbawm’s and Brazill’s radicalization argument only partially, in his work Hegelianism: The Path Toward Dialectal Humanism in 1981. Toews, unlike Hobsbawm and Brazill, wrote that the religious theories of Hegel’s earlier followers were bound up with social and political concerns. While Toews does not mention Schopenhauer, his work nonetheless elucidates an important facet of the Hegelian and Schopenhauer debate. Overall, he saw Hegelianism

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fill the void left by the continual erosion of Christianity over the last three centuries.\textsuperscript{23} Hegelianism, with its call for reason, progress and brotherhood, was a response to the religious void that many experienced during the nineteenth century, and a response which Toews admits failed by the mid 1840s.

One of the most recent works on Young Hegelian scholarship is *Marx, The Young Hegelians, and Origins of Radical Social Theory* written by the American historian Warren Breckman in 1999. Breckmen argues that through the 1830s and 1840s, Hegelianism was approached in an increasingly radical fashion. Yet, he outright challenges the radicalization thesis first laid out by Hobsbawm. Instead, he argued that there was no abrupt switch from religious to political concerns of the Hegelians. He, like Toews before him, saw political implications intertwined within the strictly religious responses of the early Hegelians. By the time Marx was writing, Breckman argued that by and large the religious question was not forgotten, but rather solved. He argues that Marx did not neglect religion, but rather built on the foundations of earlier religious criticisms and moved toward political and social questions from that foundation. This paper will follow Toews and Breckman. While there was a definite radicalization of Hegelian thought, and while the religious questions predominated the earlier theories, the political and social questions were nonetheless intertwined from the beginning. In addition, Breckman’s work illustrates how the ideas of the Young Hegelians in the 1830s and 1840s were in many ways responses to the debates over nihilism, pantheism and personality of the 1780s.

\textsuperscript{23} In the preface, Toews remarks that similar to Hegel and his followers during the 1830s, he, in the 1960s and 1970s, was also searching for some type of universal cultural integration in a time of uncertainty. Toews, 2.
Where historians have sought to assess the impact of historical events on the theories of the Hegel, Schopenhauer and the Young Hegelians, as well as placing their theories in a historical context, philosophers have approached Hegel and Schopenhauer in different ways. The philosophers drawn from in this paper focused primarily on the actual philosophical content of their theories; in particular, they focused on Hegel’s theorization of a reasonable existence for man after the volatile events of the French Revolution. What exactly did Hegel and his followers theories consist of? How did they use reason and teleology? The three philosophers below are all Hegelian philosophers. The Schopenhauerian philosophers, Hübscher and Magee, were included in the earlier section because unlike the philosophers below, they were not impartial towards the debate. They overwhelmingly exonerated Schopenhauer at the expense of Hegel.

One of the earliest philosophers to assess the debate impartially was the Australian Eugene Kamenka, in his work, *The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach*, published in 1970. He wrote that after the failed revolutions of 1848, Feuerbach “seethed in chagrin while the public turned to the suddenly fashionable Schopenhauerian pessimism.” While brief, his assessment is extremely valuable. The tenor and climate of Germany’s intellectual circles had changed drastically. Where Schopenhauer’s pessimistic and nihilistic theories were at one time rejected for Hegelian teleology, Kamenka maintained that after 1848 they became the method of choice for some thinkers to assess German society. For some, reason and teleology were rejected for nihilism.

The American philosopher Frederick Beiser, similar to Kamenka, examined some of the tensions between Hegel’s rationalism and the looming threat of nihilism in post-

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revolutionary Germany. Yet instead of examining the movement after Hegel, he examined the conditions that influenced Hegelianism. His major work, *The Fate of Reason: German Philosophy from Kant to Fichte*, was published in 1987. In it, he argues that Hegelianism was an attempt to uphold the notion of Enlightenment reason after Jacobi’s criticisms. While Beiser did not examine Schopenhauer in any detail, he did note one important aspect of their feud. Schopenhauer, contrary to Hegel, stressed the primacy of the will over the intellect and reason. This idea of a will driven existence eventually triumphed over Hegel’s ideas of rational progression. Beiser’s brief treatment of Schopenhauer is also important because it shows that both Hegel and Schopenhauer were reared in the same intellectual climate and both produced drastically different theories.

One of the most recent works of Hegelian scholarship was written by the American philosopher Terry Pinkard. His *Hegel: A Life* was published in 2000. It is the first comprehensive bibliography of Hegel in the last half century. Pinkard framed Hegel’s reaction to Jacobi. He wrote that Hegel’s *Phenomenology* was an attempt to answer Jacobi’s ultimatum for modernity. As for Schopenhauer, Pinkard recognizes him as one of Hegel’s many enemies, but does not expand on their ideological differences.

**HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE PRESENT WORK**

While various works have focused on either Hegel or Schopenhauer and have tried to exalt one at the expense of the other, or simply ignored one thinker completely, this work, contrary to previous approaches, views Hegel and Schopenhauer as equal thinkers who each had a unique answer to the questions of modernity. At the heart of this paper’s methodological approach is the treatment of Hegelianism, with respect to Jacobi
and Schopenhauer. No work has cast the Hegelian movement that followed the Hegel and Schopenhauer debate as a short term Hegelian victory over Schopenhauer’s nihilistic declaration, as one of the first attempts to give man and history a rational meaning in the face of the void.

Despite their common desire for change, the Hegelians did not present a unified front; they could not agree on exactly how to fight their common enemies and how to go about establishing this meaning for post-revolutionary society. Nonetheless their disagreements are instructive (at least for the intellectual historian). Due to their ruthless criticism of each others works, the historian can draw out ever more complex notions of historical meaning from their works. Radical visions became moderate as more extreme radicalism took its place. This paper views the debates holistically and casts the Young Hegelian ideas as eruditions of historical meaning. This paper will cast Hegel’s more radical followers, the Young Hegelians, as attempting to rescue the events of their time from the constricting boundaries of faith and nihilism, yet ultimately failing in the face of Schopenhauer’s nihilism.
CHAPTER III
THE PROGRESS OF PROGRESS

Confronted with Jacobi’s ultimatum of faith or nihilism in his interpretation of modernity, Hegel opted for a third avenue, that of a rational teleology. Yet, as he grew older, Hegel learned that the idea of progress could be a stubborn and even dangerous notion, because without a limit, it could go further than its author intended. While Hegel used the notion of progress to make peace with and in some respects justify the events of his time, some younger thinkers used his notion of teleology to call those very ideas into question. Hegel’s teleology sparked an intellectual movement spanning from the publication of the *Phenomenology* in 1807 until the failed revolutions in 1848.

In light of the historical situation in post-revolutionary Germany, the movement that Hegel sparked became an answer to the question of the void, at least for a small group of German thinkers; most notably Gans, Strauss, Bauer, Vischer, Feuerbach, Stirner, Marx, Ruge and Hess. In Hegelianism, Hegel’s followers saw a way to give meaning to history after it had been called into question during the Terror and by the entire revolutionary movement in general. They did not believe in the void; they believed in progress. Thus, the adaptation of Hegelianism represented a victory for Hegelian teleology, at least in the short run. The seized upon Hegel’s interpretation of modernity; however, they altered it in light of the conditions of their own time and society.¹

Friedrich Vischer, a prominent Hegelian, epitomized the Hegelian movement when he said “we [the Young Hegelians] were propelled by a fervent and proud trust that the

¹ Brazill, 7.
Hegelian philosophy...gave us possession of the real truth." This truth was the meaning of history; it was a secular, rational meaning, as opposed to faith and nihilism.

This paper presents the Young Hegelian ideas as a series of debates. Each consists of the following: first, the methodology of each debate will be discussed and the purpose of pairing the two thinkers together will be stated. Next, the historiography of the debate will be discussed, namely, which sources are being used and which modern writers have paired them together before. Then, the bulk of the debate will consist of an examination of each thinker's opposed theories by using primary sources. Each debate will not only be examined philosophically, but just as importantly, each debate will be examined in its historical context as well. Lastly, each section will conclude with a brief sketch the debate and its implications. By examining these debates, we can track the transformation of Hegel's initial adaption of progress in response to faith and nihilism. Each debate added another radical dimension to Hegel's teleology, each debate was in some way a reaction to historical pressures, and each put forth a new method to interpret the meaning of the nineteenth century.

The various Hegelian responses were rooted in the larger political climate of post-revolutionary Europe, as it had developed since 1789. As a response to the French Revolution of 1789, different political factions developed during the 1790s in Europe. Conservatives were usually members of or thinkers who supported the crown, the nobility and the church. They were traditional in their thinking and by and large disagreed with many of the more progressive doctrines of the Enlightenment. Liberals, on the other hand, were usually members of or thinkers who supported the middle class

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and bourgeoisie. By and large, they adhered to the more rationalistic and progressive notions of the Enlightenment. However, what really defined the liberal platform was the militant defense of individual freedoms which meshed perfectly with the competitive nature of capitalism. It is also important to note that Beiser distinguishes between the various divisions within conservatism and liberalism in Germany. He argues that conservatism and liberalism were not rigid or monolithic labels, but rather fluid entities with room for much variation.³

The events of the 1790s were not the focus for Hegel's followers. In a sense they were updating and modernizing Hegel for a new age. They were of the generation after Hegel, and their focus was on the events of their own time. No event polarized Hegel's followers more than the French Revolution of 1830. Despite the defeat of Napoleon in 1815 and the restoration of the House of Bourbon, France seethed with unrest. After King Louis XVIII died in 1824, his ultra-radical brother, Charles X took the throne. Where Louis had grudgingly kept many of the reforms of revolution, Charles, a staunch conservative, upheld the belief in the restoration of the old absolutist order, which had ensued across Europe after the defeat of Napoleon. However, the liberal element in France, subdued but not broken by the conservative forces since 1815, rose to the challenge. By July of 1830, once again against the backdrop of food shortages and high unemployment, the tension surfaced. Liberal and working class members took to the streets, where they battled royal forces, supported by the conservatives and the church.

Realizing his support was dwindling fast, Charles abdicated after three days. In his place, the Duke of Orleans, Louis Philippe was made constitutional monarch of France. \(^4\)

The events of 1830 resonated strongly with many German thinkers. While many embraced the revolution as a positive change, others were weary of revolution and conflict. In response, a good number of thinkers tended to lean toward conservatism. Hegel straddled a fine line as a philosopher employed by the increasingly conservative Prussian state and at the same time preaching a doctrine of progress and change. Hegel did not desire to turn back the clock or undo the revolution, however, he did firmly believe that progress had limits, and that limit had been reached. He felt that by the 1830s, the Prussian state had reached its apogee, or the Absolute. It had a constitutional monarchy, its citizens had civil liberties and overall, their freedom. For Hegel, the task now was to fine tune what was already apparent.

Despite Hegel’s conservatism of his later years, by his death in 1831, forces were in motion which would soon turn the tide of public opinion against his notion of teleology. After 1830, conservatism became a powerful, and in the eyes of many, a repressive force due to the fear of a similar revolution in Prussia. If ministers of the Prussian state had ever been given the choice between faith, teleology or nihilism, most (but by no means all) would have undoubtedly chosen faith. Teleology, which now made many uncomfortable with its promise for continued revolutionary action, was rejected for faith. In the eyes of many thinkers, including Hegel’s conservative followers, further progress could no longer give meaning to modern man, it would only lead to continued violence and instability.

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Hegel’s more progressive followers did not share their conservative counterpart’s enthusiasm for the Prussian state of the 1830s. In turn, many embraced the revolution of 1830 as a continuation of change. The revolution began to polarize the Hegelian school, which had been fracturing even during Hegel’s lifetime, into three distinct factions; the conservative or Right Hegelians, the moderate or Center Hegelians, and then later the radical or Left Hegelians. The radical sect of Hegelianism known as the Young or Left Hegelians emerged by the mid 1830s.\(^5\)

In many respects, the revolution did not so much create cracks in the Hegelian school as deepen the already existing ones into full blown ruptures. In 1829 Ludwig Feuerbach wrote a seemingly inconsequential letter to his master and teacher, Hegel. Yet this letter became a watershed in the radical Hegelian movement.\(^6\) In it, Feuerbach rejected Christianity completely, hailing it as an outdated religion of a past era, which was in complete contrast to Hegel who did not want to supersede Christianity but rather realize its ethics in modern life. Instead, Feuerbach turned his attention to the secular

\(^5\) The terms “Left” and “Young” must be clarified because there has been a debate in the recent scholarship over their usage. In 1962, Hobsbawm used the term “Young” to delineate Hegel’s radical followers without any further clarification of the term. Brazill, in 1970, also used the term “Young” to label Hegel’s more radical followers. He equated their theories with youthfulness, an enthusiasm for the changes of the modern age. He also termed Marx, Engels and Hess as second generation Hegelians, because they wrote a generation after the original Young Hegelians, and were two generations removed from Hegel. R.W.K. Paterson, another Hegelian scholar who wrote *Stirner: The Nihilistic Egoist* in 1970, as well as Hobsbawm and Kamenka, used the term “Young,” without any further explanation. Yet in 1981, Toews argued against the usage of “Young” because it caused generational misconceptions. Toews pointed out that some of the Young Hegelians were actually older than the Old Hegelians. In addition, the left right division mirrored the growing polarizations of European society during post revolutionary era. Thus, he labeled Hegel’s radical followers as Left. However, in 1999, Breckman argued that the terms were interchangeable, as did many Hegelian scholars of the 1970s, and he used Young Hegelians in the title of his work. In summation, both terms, young and left are important, and descriptive of different aspects of the Hegelian debate. This paper will follow Breckman’s advice and use the terms interchangeably, so as to capture both the youthful vigor of the Hegelians, if not in age than in spirit, as well as their political positions in post-revolutionary society. This paper will also follow Brazill’s delineation of first and second generation Hegelians.

world. Laurence Dickey, as well as John Toews, hail Feuerbach's rejection of Christianity and his turn to secularism as the beginning of radical Hegelianism or "new left Hegelianism," as opposed to the older left Hegelianism of the 1820s, which still sought to integrate Christian values in the rendition of modernity. This radical and secular Hegelianism was than furthered by the French Revolution of 1830.7

Hegel saw progress as unstoppable. It relentlessly marched forward, usually violently. Yet for his entire academic tenure, Hegel's ideas had the backing of the Prussian state. His radical followers were not so fortunate. The increased opposition of the Prussian state due to the reverberations of the French Revolution altered Hegel's follower's views of progress. They adapted teleology, because, like Hegel, they saw history and human existence as a meaningful endeavor. Yet, unlike Hegel, his followers believed that while history was a purposeful movement, it could be stymied and impeded by human action (with the exception of Marx). Their job was not simply to enlighten people to this progress, but to actively fight for it.8 The Young Hegelians carried Hegelian teleology to new, ever more extreme conclusions in the increasingly repressive environment of Prussian conservatism.

EDUARD GANS AND DAVID STRAUSS

The reason for contrasting the theories of these thinkers is to illustrate the major break between Hegelian liberalism and Hegelian radicalism. This is crucial to the overall question of historical meaning, because liberals and radicals posed drastically different answers. Gans, a moderate or Center Hegelian, saw Hegel's teleology as a liberal notion;

8 Brazil, 278.
he used it to enshrine the liberty of the individual in the modern state. Strauss, the first Left Hegelian on the other hand, saw Hegel’s teleology leading to a radical pantheistic vision of modernity. While pantheism can have many applications, at times even conflicted ones, it is usually defined as the belief that all is God, and it also usually entails a rejection of one divine being outside of humanity. Specifically, this paper will argue that the pantheistic conclusions drawn from their debate became the weapon of choice for some of Hegel’s more radical followers to rebut both faith and nihilism and to give meaning to the historical events of their time. First Gans’s and Strauss’s theories will be examined and put into conversation with each other, and then Strauss’s pantheism will be illustrated against Gans’s individualism.

This section will specifically use Gans’s “Vorwort zur 2. Ausgabe der Rechtspolitik,” which is the introduction to his edition of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right republished in 1827, his “Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der letzten fünfzig Jahre,” in 1834, his Rückblicke auf Personen und Zustände published in 1836 and his Über die Grundlage des Besitzes published in 1839, the year of his death. Unfortunately, Gans’s work has not been translated into English, which makes his work not readily assessable for research purposes. Thus, this paper mainly utilizes Gans’s words where they have been quoted verbatim in secondary sources. As for David Strauss, this work will exclusively draw on his seminal work, the Life of Jesus, published in 1835. The version used here is the fourth German edition, which was published and translated by George Eliot in 1892.

9 Hegel had been repeatedly accused of pantheism, but denied this charge because he insisted that what was divine was only Spirit or mind. Conversely, many of his followers espoused straight pantheistic ideas. Breckmen, Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory, 14, 23 and 206.
In modern scholarship the Gans and Strauss contrast has been approached by Warren Breckman, in his work *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory*. Breckman devotes a sizable portion of the fourth chapter to a discussion of Strauss's radicalization of Hegelianism. He then devotes the last portion of the chapter to an examination of the tensions that arose because of Strauss's radicalism by examining the ideas of Eduard Gans. Where this present work differs from Breckman's work is that this work aims to capture the teleological aspect of this debate, and describe how both Gans and Strauss used Hegelian teleology in a vastly different way to interpret their society and assign meaning to history. Breckman aimed primarily to capture the ways in which each thinker approached the notion of personality during the 1830s.

The debate between the theories of Gans and Strauss ignited tremendous controversy when it erupted in 1835. After the French Revolution of 1830 there was a considerable upsurge of conservative power in Prussian government, which continued to gain ground as the decade wore on. With Strauss's publication of *Life of Jesus* in 1835, the conservative opposition to Hegelianism strengthened. Hegelianism, which had been hailed by many conservative minded thinkers as the official philosophy of the Prussian state since the early 1820s, almost overnight had became its enemy.  

During this upsurge of conservative power in Prussia, Eduard Gans was in many ways the heir to Hegel at the University of Berlin. Although he never actually took a class under Hegel, he studied and mastered the Hegelian system. By the late 1820s, it was Gans, not Hegel, who lectured on Hegelianism. Gans's clear and enthusiastic lecturing style drew crowds of students to the Hegelian system. Yet Gans was not a

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10 Toews, 254.
servile lackey. He was a law professor, and he interpreted Hegelianism according to his system.\(^{11}\)

Similar to Hegel, Gans argued that history was a teleological movement. However, he linked history to the evolution of legal philosophy, and in particular the legal notion of individual rights. He declared that in the 1830s, it became necessary “to offer a new interpretation of reality,” based on Hegelian principles.\(^{12}\) This new conception of reality was that of the secular principle of personal liberty. The most visible change was the growing desire for more democratic government in an industrial society. The modern state as Gans conceived it was initially made possible by Christianity and the Protestant Reformation in particular because through them, the notion of individualism was elucidated. Here, Gans leaned toward the Right Hegelian position, he entrusted Christianity a special place in world history for its role in bringing about the notion of modern individualism. The liberalist doctrines of the Enlightenment, the French Revolution of 1789 and the French Revolution of 1830 all helped to further this notion of individual liberty. As Gans saw it, the now outdated institutions of Christianity, feudalism and absolutism served as necessary stages in the progression to the modern state. At this stage in the progression of history, Gans felt that no longer should entire populations be subject to the whims of arbitrary despots, but rather, each individual should now be afforded the rights of human beings. In light of his teleological individualism he wrote that “Antiquity worked with slaves. We [moderns] work with our

\(^{11}\) Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory*, 161.

own person.” In the modern state, there would no longer be just a nameless mass of subjects personified by the absolute monarch, and there certainly would be no states of slavery or servitude. Gans went further than Hegel and argued for universal manhood suffrage.

Gans’s notion of individualism must also be seen in light of the increasing industrial state of Prussia, a fact which Hegel did not really have to deal with, owing mainly to the fact that he died in 1831. While it was by no means on par with England, Prussia of the 1830s was in the embryonic stages of industrialization. Gans approached the rising tide of industry with mixed feelings, because he understood the consequences of unfettered capitalistic competition and asocial egoism. Yet, in the Burger or the growing Prussian merchant class, Gans saw his ideas of modern individuality and liberalism beginning to take form. He wrote that in the modern state, which he did not think Prussia was as of yet, “one would have to become accustomed to perceiving in the Burger a free, independent person who” and here is the crux of Gansian thought “participates in the state and is left free to care for his own affairs.” In the modern state, Gans wanted to see free men who were left to their own affairs, but who also contributed to the state without their contribution negating his own personal liberty.

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Thus, Gans saw any type of collectivism where the state controls the individual, as a threat to modern society because the freedom of the individual was threatened. In Gans’s view, the individual did not belong to any collectivity, rather “the person belongs to himself.” The individual lived and worked for himself while being able to contribute to the state at his own discretion. As a consequence, the modern state, through constitutional and other legal means had to uphold this notion of individualism.

Gans’s notion of modern individualism was a method to assess the various changes in Prussian society. In particular, it was a liberal oriented method which stressed individual liberty. This is how Gans gave meaning to the events of his time; he did not resign to faith or nihilism. Rather he saw the turbulent events of his time as part of the Hegelian teleology, which for Gans, ultimately led to the liberalist conception of individualism within the modern state. In his words, history had progressed to this modern stage which “made impossible the restoration of anything truly past.” There was no way to return to the ancient Christian faith as Jacobi argued, and the teleological process of history negated the prospect of nihilism.

David Strauss called into question many of Gans’s ideas. In a wider sense, Strauss’s ideas also subverted the ideas of the more conservative Hegelians. Many Right and Center Hegelians like Gans saw Hegelian teleology leading to an affirmation of the notion of individuality in modern society, as well as cementing Christianity’s continuing place as the religion of the modern era. Strauss’s Life of Jesus attacked both of these ideas, and inspired later Hegelians to do the same, opening up a new method of historical interpretation, that of radical pantheism.

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17 Gans, Rückblicke, 169.

Strauss had originally come to Berlin in 1831 in order to better understand the Hegelian system from the master and his disciples. He felt that Hegelianism offered the best method for an understanding of Christianity in the modern age. Eventually he accepted a theology position at the University of Tübingen, which was a leader in biblical criticism and exegesis. During the post-revolutionary era, many no longer could believe in the fantastic stories of the bible. Jacobi’s faith just did not seem like a viable option after the upheaval of the French Revolution. Similarly, Hegel’s followers were not willing to go down the path of nihilism, as had Schopenhauer. Strauss became part of larger movement at the university and really across Western Europe which sought to assess Christianity’s place in the modern world using scientific criticism of the biblical texts.

The 1830s were vastly different from any other period of history, and Strauss, like many thinkers, was acutely aware of this. The use of photography, railroads, industrial factories, and the steam engine were some of the more notable advances. In addition, there was also the emergence of modern republican and bureaucratic nations such as America and France. In short, Strauss lived in a world increasingly based on science and reason. He was a theologian and his primary concern was the relationship between traditional faith and the new visible science and reason. In 1835, Strauss published his controversial work The Life of Jesus: Critically Examined.

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19 Toews, 256.
20 Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution, 222.
21 The first railroad was built in Berlin in 1835, four years after Hegel’s death. Brazill, 4.
22 Toews, 259.
In *Life of Jesus*, Strauss unlike Gans and the Right and Center leaning Hegelians, bluntly denied the validity of Christianity, regulating it to the same position as Greek mythology and paganism. He argued that Christianity was no different from any other religion; it was simply a stage in the progression of history. Instead of trying to uphold the doctrines of Christianity within the cultural void of the nineteenth century as Gans did, Strauss sought to surpass Christianity and establish something more relevant to the modern age. Strauss believed that world history was passing from the age of religion into the age of philosophy. In the age of religion, eternal truths regarding the universe and human life and death could only be expressed in what Strauss called mythical form, such as the biblical stories, because people were not advanced enough, they were unscientific. Christianity was only one of many ancient and now obsolete ways of expressing eternal truths because the modern scientific age had no room for myth, miracle, or prayer. His goal in *Life of Jesus* was to translate the divine stories of Jesus into scientific and rational terms for the modern age, and make them useful and meaningful for a scientific people.

In order to make Christianity rational, Strauss wanted to show that the biblical stories of Jesus were simply myths that concealed a timeless, universal truth: the entire human race, not just Jesus, was divine. Strauss condemned Christianity for the very reason that Gans afforded it a special and continuing place in world history; its recognition of the individual. He argued that the traditional notion of Jesus being an actual messiah, or an individual exalted above the human race was now only a relic of


24 Strauss, 758.

25 Strauss, 48.

26 Strauss, 777.
the past age. He went so far as to say that this individualist conception of Jesus was a sickness that had affected Europe for the last eighteen centuries. 27 He wrote that God “is not wont to lavish all its fullness on one exemplar and be stingy towards all others.” 28 In Strauss’s estimation, divinity would not restrict itself to one perfect individual and leave the entire rest imperfect. When man placed all his adoration onto a foreign entity like Jesus, he denied what was divine in himself, and what was divine was his participation in the human species. All men had a responsibility to work with and for each other, not pray to an imaginary ideal. All men, not just one, were divine. He believed the notion of the all-powerful God with the white beard in the sky ruling over his sinful flock of sheep seemed childish to most modern thinkers.

Specifically, for Strauss, the modern age of industry and revolution of the 1830s was not a prospect to be feared as Jacobi had, and it was not devoid of purpose as Schopenhauer suggested. Rather, Strauss saw the modern era as nearing the culmination of history. Only when man realized that Jesus was not an individual, but only an unscientific representation of the species, would humanity pass into the final stage of its progression, into the age of philosophy and pantheism. 29

Strauss lamented the fact that modern day Christians turned away from the problems of the modern world and put faith into something that did not exist. He wrote “Shall we interest ourselves more in the cure of some sick people in Galilee, than in the miracles of intellectual life belonging to the history of the world?” 30 Strauss wanted man

27 Strauss, 780.
28 Strauss, 766.
29 Strauss, 784.
to realize he is God, but only as a species. Only as a species could man achieve salvation, but here on earth. Without this realization, man remained alienated from God and ultimately from himself. With the realization of pantheism, modern man could finally concentrate on the construction of the here and now, as some were finally beginning to do, of which modern science was a testament. This realization was the purpose of history. Yet many of his time, even university professors, remained mired in medieval ignorance and superstition.

This notion of pantheism only appealed to a small number of thinkers however. Virtually all of the Right and Center Hegelians saw pantheism as a threat to individualism and traditional Christianity and thus disdained it. In addition, Jacobi had equated any type of pantheism with atheism and ultimately nihilism, for him, only a transcendental God based on faith could see man through the void. Yet, Strauss’s ideas of pantheism became the weapon of choice for the small group of Left Hegelians. Many of them wielded various forms of pantheism against the ancient threat of faith and the modern threat of nihilism because as Strauss insisted, it was a way to keep the truth of Christianity, which was brotherhood and community, while pruning it of its mythical and otherworldly attributes, mainly its faith and dogma. They used pantheistic ideas to give meaning to the events of their time.

While Strauss confined his work mainly to theology, the political implications were unmistakable. The individualist conception of God that Strauss attacked was traditionally used to justify the power of the monarch. This was the case in Prussia

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30 Strauss, 781. John Toews wrote that the inspiration for Life of Jesus came from Strauss’s father. Strauss’s father became a devout pietist and increasingly abandoned his family and his earthly duties for God. Toews notes that Strauss always harbored a deep resentment toward his father for his escapism and neglect of the present. Thus, Strauss’s work is in some ways a personal rebuttal of his father’s pietism.
during the Restoration. An attack on religion became synonymous with an attack on the state. The Prussian government viewed absolutism and Christianity as the bulwarks of tradition. While Gans’s liberal and republican sympathies were by no means Restoration friendly, his ardent individualism could still be adapted to the ethos of the emerging bourgeoisie class. It was Strauss’s radical theories that drew the full power of conservatives simply because if Strauss’s divinized humanity were taken literally then the king’s claim of divine right would be worthless, because all were divine. Similarly, his type of pantheism was increasingly associated with French Jacobinism. The memories of 1793 were still fresh in the minds of many.

Gans, a liberal, was suspect in the eyes of the authorities for his democratic and liberal leanings, yet he never had any consequences as a result of his work. Strauss was not so lucky. While Life of Jesus was not banned because it was considered a scholarly work, Strauss’s harsh biblical criticism and his theories of collectivity and pantheism were increasingly associated with revolution, anti-monarchial tendencies and radicalism in general. As a result, Strauss lost his teaching position at the University of Tübingen.

Strauss was not the only political victim as conservatism took hold of all of Germany. When the monarch Ernest August ascended the Saxon throne in 1837, he

31 Breckman, Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory. 135.
32 Breckman, Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory. 135.
33 Liberalism in Germany was of a different brand than the rest of Europe. German liberalism, while focusing on the individual, also put more emphasis on wider society, as evidenced by Gans’s situating the individual within larger society. Nonetheless, Gans was a devout liberal. Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution, 249.
34 Brazill, 4.
35 Brazill, 114.
declared the Saxon constitution invalid. Several professors at Göttingen University in nearby Prussia publicly proclaimed their opposition. They were removed from their positions, and some were driven into exile. This served as a reminder to liberals and radicals, and to the Hegelians in particular, how much opposition was standing in their way of establishing a new world and the Hegelian apocalypse of pantheistic unity.

The notion of the coming apocalypse or Absolute, along with the notion of pantheism and alienation became the foundation of the majority of Left Hegelian thought. Each thinker cast history as moving toward some apocalypse, some amelioration of the present ills they saw in society. In the various stages of this progression, man was alienated from himself, because he was still in the process of development. The Left Hegelian teleological theories were meant to reunite man with his alienated nature. Only when he reached the Absolute, would man be whole. The Left Hegelians viewed the past as incomplete pieces of the Absolute; all was in a state of becoming whole. This is what Löwith would later attack as “secularization,” the deliberate adoption of the Christian pattern of fall and redemption to prophesize a coming event. For most of the Left Hegelians, this apocalypse involved some variation of pantheism or social unity, and questions of the individual in society, and for some, it involved a negation of pantheism.37


37 It is important to note that this apocalyptic expectation was not unique to Hegelianism. Many religious groups shared the same ideas, for instance, the Mormons who emerged in the 1820s in Upstate New York. What differentiated the religious interpretation of apocalypse from the Hegelian interpretation were two things. For one, Hegel and his later followers prophesized a rational or secular apocalypse. It was not to be an otherworldly phenomenon, but one to make the lives of people better on earth. Second, the Hegelian apocalypse was based on the fact of earthly progress, the religious one based on earthly degeneration.
After the polarization of Hegelianism due to the French Revolution of 1830, Strauss’s showed that Hegelianism could have a revolutionary application, not just a conservative or even liberal one. Thus, in 1835 *Life of Jesus* quickly became the rallying cry for the radical branch of Left Hegelians. It was Strauss’s leftist ideas, as opposed to Gans’s more liberal ideas, which caused the first major rupture in the Hegelian school in 1835 and which is usually marked as the beginning of the Young Hegelian movement and its decisive break from liberalism. The key was pantheism.

Both Gans and Strauss interpreted modernity within a Hegelian framework based on historical progression and teleology. They both disdained the idea of traditional faith and the prospect of nihilism. However Strauss pushed Hegelian teleology past the liberal boundaries set up by Gans and opened up a new and radical method for the interpretation of modernity: pantheism and specifically the divination of humanity. If the modern events like the Reign of Terror and the French Revolution of 1830 could be shown to be part of a process of human and divine unification, then they would be made intelligible and rational, and most importantly, they would be rescued from nihilism and meaninglessness. Strauss’s conflict with Gans engendered a new, radical method to give meaning to the violence and upheaval of the 1830s.

**BRUNO BAUER AND FRIEDRICH VISCHER**

Along with this new pantheistic interpretation, Hegel’s followers also debated the actual substance of his teleological movement of history. All the Hegelians agreed that history was meaningful because it progressed. But the question then was how exactly did it move; how was the void to be filled? Was the movement a progressive, creative movement which built on the past as a foundation, or was it a digressive purification
which cleared the past away to make room for new institutions? This facet of Hegelian teleology was fully expounded on in the conflict between the aesthetcian Friedrich Vischer and the theologian Bruno Bauer. Each saw the movement of Hegelianism in the opposing terms of progression and digression, Vischer progressive, Bauer digressive, and thus they have been paired together in this paper to demonstrate how two opposed appropriations of Hegelian teleology were both used to give meaning to the events of the post-revolutionary era.

William Brazill is the only historian to examine the Vischer Bauer debate in any sense. In his 1970 work, *The Young Hegelians*, he devoted a chapter to the progressive oriented theories of Vischer, and a later chapter to the digressive theories of Bauer. However, he never actually put the two thinkers in any sort of dialogue or discussion. He only mentioned them together once. Brazill recounted Vischer’s and Bauer’s contributions to the *Hallische Jahrbucher*, Arnold Ruge’s Hegelian journal and the main organ of Hegelian thought in Germany. Brazill states that Vischer began to drift away from the journal in the early 1840s because he disagreed with Bauer’s more radical tendencies, and by 1842, Vischer had stopped contributing to the journal.38 Herein lay their conflict. What did Vischer find disagreeable in Bauer’s theories and how did their disagreement reflect the increased volatility of Hegelianism in the 1840s?

This work will draw on primary sources. Bauer’s *The Last Judgment on Hegel the Atheist and the Antichrist: An Ultimatum*, originally published in 1841 marked another radicalization of the Left Hegelian movement. It became a rallying cry for many of the more radical Hegelians, such as Stirner and the young Marx. The edition used in

38 Brazill, 166.
this work is the 1989 edition translated by Laurence Stepelevich. For Vischer, the task is more difficult, because his work has not been translated into English, and the German editions are not readily available for research purposes. In fact, William Brazill is the only recent author to do any extended work on Vischer’s theories. In addition, his major work of the period Aesthetics, or the Knowledge of the Beautiful only appeared in 1847, long after his disagreement with Bauer. During the period in question, the early 1840s, Vischer’s work was scattered in various journals, articles and letters, most of his work did not appear until after 1848. Due to the scattered nature of his work, as well as the restricted availability, this present work draws on the available translated sections in Brazill’s work; namely his Aesthetics, his Kritische Gange: neue Folge published in 1860, his Auch Einer, published in 1879, his Altes und Neues published in 1882, as well as various letters and correspondences.39

In 1840, the resistance to Hegelianism received a massive boost with the ascension of Frederick William IV to the Prussian throne on the death of his father, Frederick William III. In addition, the pro-Hegelian educational minister Altenstein also died in 1840 and was replaced by the anti- Hegelian Karl Eichorn. During his tenure, Altenstein had advocated for the teaching of Hegelianism in German universities. Yet Eichorn led a movement to ban the teaching of Hegelianism from German education. This increased governmental resistance shaped the course of Hegelianism for the rest of the 1840s.

Frederick IV, unlike his more liberal father, was not content to allow potentially controversial ideas to disseminate. Frederick William IV desired to create a traditional,

39 While many of these works appeared after 1848, Brazill notes that Vischer did not really alter his theories regarding aesthetics, and in particular, his progressive theories.
absolutist state founded on Christian principles, and he saw Hegelianism as nothing but a subversive and dangerous tool to undermine the orderly state, as evidenced by the ideas of Strauss. By 1840, the government was decidedly anti-Hegelian. While there had always been considerable resistance to Hegelianism, it now became official state policy. After Hegel’s death, Berlin remained the center of Hegelian philosophy, and Frederick William IV wanted to rid the university, and all of Prussia, of Hegel’s dangerous influence.

One of Frederick William’s first actions was to appoint the conservative philosopher Joseph Schelling to Hegel’s old position at the University of Berlin. Schelling, one time Hegel’s confidant and colleague, now held a position similar to Jacobi. Essentially, Schelling argued that the dark forces of nature could not be comprehended by the intellect, and like Jacobi, argued for a belief in a transcendent god. It was in the midst of this conservative backlash that Bauer and Vischer, and the other Hegelians began to espouse their radical interpretations of Hegelianism.  

Bruno Bauer began his career in the late 1830s as an ardent Right Hegelian. In 1839, he was appointed to a professorship of theology at the University of Bonn by Altenstien. Yet, by 1842, he was dismissed from his position, by the new educational minister Eichorn, on charges of atheism. There are no records of his personal feelings to indicate exactly why his thinking had taken such a dramatic turn in so short a time. What

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40 While Schelling became an object of contempt for the more radical Hegelians, his criticism of Hegel nonetheless struck a chord with many of them, and influenced their later positions. Schelling accused Hegelianism of being too abstract and rejecting real, empirical conditions. Schelling claimed that Hegel used reason to explain existence when in actuality, the situation was reversed. Existence had to account for reason. Ultimately, Schelling scorned Hegel for not giving an adequate account of existence. For this, Schelling turned to a more conservative vision of a non-pantheistic, transcendent god. This is where most of the radical Hegelian’s departed. Jones, 103 and Breckman, 58.
is clear is that his conversion to Left Hegelianism was rapid and complete by 1840.\textsuperscript{41} By
the time Bauer emerged from his radical atheist conversion, he stood face to face with
the Restoration and Prussia’s conservative government, in the face of Eichorn, and it was
Bauer’s digressive appropriation of Hegelian teleology that made him the prime target.

Like all Left Hegelians, Bauer (after 1840) believed that Christianity was simply
an outdated notion which in the present age alienated man. However, Bauer did not
believe it alienated man from any outside entities, such as some abstract Absolute or
notion of Pantheistic Man, as did Strauss, but simply from the individual’s own self-
consciousness, from his own thinking being. Every individual’s self-consciousness was
the Absolute in finite particular form. Human self-consciousness was divine. In short, the
Absolute did not exist outside the individual.\textsuperscript{42} This is the meaning of Bauer’s title;
\textit{Hegel the Atheist and the Antichrist}. Bauer believed the progression of history, from the
Reformation, through the Enlightenment, through the French Revolution and
Hegelianism ultimately led to atheism.\textsuperscript{43} Yet unlike Jacobi, Bauer did not equate this
atheism with nihilism, but rather liberation and ultimately the salvation of modern man
from the tumults of the modern age. Bauer saw Hegel’s teleology leading to this
revelation of the individual self-consciousness in the modern age and the divesting of all
other abstract fetters. Pure, unfettered thought could never be shackled to any outside
notions. It was a continual and destructive motion which criticized and eventually
dissolved all things before it.

\textsuperscript{41} Brazill, 193.

\textsuperscript{42} Bruno Bauer, \textit{The Trumpet of the Last Judgment against Hegel, the Atheist and Antichrist. An

\textsuperscript{43} Bauer, \textit{Trumpet}, 94.
Thus, Bauer saw the Right Hegelian attempts and the Restoration’s attempt to uphold Christianity in the modern era as futile. He wrote “God is dead for philosophy, and only...self-consciousness...lives, creates, acts, and is all.”\textsuperscript{44} Here, Bauer stood in the void of the nineteenth century and stared down the threat of nihilism. The Christian God had been the source of meaning and purpose for European civilization for over thousand years. In its absence, Bauer did not capitulate to nihilism or faith; instead he turned to the philosopher. He saw human thought, specifically criticism, as the foundation of the universe. This realization prompted Bauer to proclaim that only “philosophers are the Lords of this World,” indeed, only they had the power to “create the destiny of mankind” by dissolving all outdated obstacles. Philosophers were the only ones who could give meaning to the world because they were the only ones who could truly understand it.

As for the rest of people, the kings, the generals, the doctors, the priests, Bauer cited Hegel: “all men other than philosophers are oxen.”\textsuperscript{45} These oxen were always tied down to some outside and alienated fetter, such as an irrational love affair, a blinding patriotism, the lure of profit or prestige, and thus could not effectively rule. What was before them consumed them, and they saw it as eternal. In reality, the events of history were momentary and fleeting, the oxen did not understand the totality of existence and progression of history, and the role of criticism in bringing about the movement of history. All supposedly learned men were to submit to the philosopher. In a later work Bauer epitomized his notion of criticism when he declared that “Nobody who has not gone through the flames of criticism will be able to enter the new world which will soon

\textsuperscript{44} Bauer, \textit{Trumpet}, 122. Nietzsche would reiterate this phrase some forty years later. Not surprisingly, he and Bauer were confidants.

\textsuperscript{45} Bauer, \textit{Trumpet}, 125.
A new world, based on rational human thought, was on the horizon, and the purifying flames of criticism marked its birth. For Bauer, self-consciousness was the sole source of meaning in the modern age.

Yet, despite this revelation of self-consciousness, in the modern age, still, the oxen were in control. To rectify this, the philosopher needed to take swift action. In 1841, Bauer only felt the grip of the Restoration stymie the philosopher in the actions of Frederick William IV and Eichorn. He saw institutions (i.e. the church, monarchy), that in his opinion should have perished long ago, running the lives of man with their alien images. Essentially, for Bauer, the way things were, and the ways things should be came into conflict. It was only the philosopher, the critic, that had the power to bring the should into reality through a purifying criticism, to once again establish a purposeful existence for modern man.

The movement of history was not complete. Hegel had not gone far enough. Thus, the philosopher had to act "whenever the established order is to be disturbed" and Bauer saw the volatile 1840s as such a time. The work of the French Revolution was not yet complete because while it had inaugurated the destruction of the old world, remnants of it still stood, and these remnants blocked modern man from his true purpose, from his own mind. He wrote that the philosopher’s criticism “must see its highest goal in the overthrow of the established order.” Only then could man’s life be made truly meaningful and the void eradicated. Bauer concluded The Trumpet with a warning for


47 Bauer, Trumpet, 128.

48 Bauer, Trumpet, 90.

49 Bauer, Trumpet, 203.
everyone and everything of the establishment “Take Care! Philosophy intends...a revolution, a revolution against everything affirmed.” This revolution would liberate man’s mind and finally establish a meaningful existence.

Bauer enshrined criticism as the highest function of the modern age, and he primarily aimed this criticism at the Prussian government, and above all, Christianity. Criticism was to bring forth the Hegelian apocalypse, which for Bauer was the liberation of the individual’s self-consciousness. However criticism was a foundation of all Left Hegelian theories because they all found the present state of society unsuitable to their ultimate goals. Yet Bauer made criticism not only the foundation, but the pinnacle of his philosophy.

Bauer’s radical appropriation of Hegelian teleology was not without its opponents within the Hegelian school. One such opponent was Friedrich Vischer, who saw Hegelian teleology as a progressive and creative movement, not Bauer’s wrecking ball. Vischer completed his studies in theology at the University of Tübingen in 1830. Yet, his private readings of Hegel eventually caused him to leave his profession and pursue a career in philosophy. He returned to Tübingen to begin his courses in philosophy. He eventually became a part time professor. In 1837, the journalist and Left Hegelian Arnold Ruge came to Tübingen to garner support for Hegelianism. Vischer agreed to be a publicist for the Ruge’s journal, the *Hallische Jahrbucher*. This action irritated his more orthodox colleagues. Vischer obtained his full professorship in 1844, and in his inaugural lecture he expounded on his Hegelian ideas. This gave his orthodox colleagues all the fuel they needed; he was suspended from his post for teaching

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subversive and atheistic material. He resigned. Like Strauss and Bauer, Vischer became a victim of the Restoration and the radical conservatism of the Prussian state.

In response, he turned to philosophy. Like all of the Left Hegelians, Vischer denied a transcendent God; he was a pantheist, and believed that God was immanent in all of humanity. What set Vischer apart was his insistence on aesthetics as the mode to comprehend this immanent God. It was through art and ultimately man’s creative capacities that Vischer sought to give meaning to the turbulent events of the age. Subsequently, the art of the revolutionary period from 1789-1848 was very distinct and unlike any other time, thus, Vischer’s aesthetics resonated with his generation. Artists like Eugene Delacroix, with his painting, Liberty Leading the People, epitomized the revolutionary period. The painting features ragged but determined working class revolutionaries storming the old order, led by Marianne, the French Lady Liberty, who is wearing the Tricolor banner. Hobsbawm stated that the art of the revolutionary period was art with a mission. It was meant to inspire and aid humanity in their struggle for freedom. Vischer would have agreed. He wrote, the “mission of the new art is to glorify this God” whose “true presence is the spirit of humanity.” God was humanity taken as a whole, but with an added component, it was man as a creator. Modern art was the key to expressing this.

In earlier times, man created images of his God in the forms of statues and poems. Specifically, in ancient Greece as well as the Middle Ages, God was projected as

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51 Brazill, 169.

52 Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution, 270.

an article of faith to be worshipped. In the modern age, man was ready to unite with his creations, which were really alienated pieces of himself, and achieve a unity of spirit and matter. This ever increasing fusion of spirit and matter, this aesthetic pantheism, was the entire purpose of history. Man was God the creator, but “not God in a static way, but that God might continually improve his existence...God is really this wondrous and holy restlessness.” Religion, government, philosophy, science and technology were but a few examples of God continually recreating and improving himself, it was man becoming God through his own creations. This is an indication of Vischer’s position and attitude toward the historical void that emerged after the French Revolution. If mankind was God, Vischer left it up to him to create the future and move forward, not cower behind faith or resign to nihilism. Moving forward, for Vischer, entailed the creation of a new world, not simply the destruction of the old one. In a sense, for Vischer, creation, the holy restlessness of spirit, was the purpose of existence.

Vischer argued that man’s creative capabilities drove the universe forward, drove the progression of history by creating ever higher forms of existence. Vischer did not relish in the destructive nature of spirit as did Bauer, rather he extolled its creative and progressive capabilities. Spirit was ultimately a creative organ, not a destructive one, and by the 1840s, man was on the brink of his most meaningful and important creation to date: a pantheistic society, the fusion of spirit and matter, creator and creation. Jacobi’s call for faith in a transcendent God was merely a relic of “naïve times” for Vischer.

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was a step backwards, or more accurately, an unwillingness to move forward. The
French Revolution of 1789 and all events prior were not meaningless episodes of
violence, but had laid the groundwork for the ideal society. The anticipation that many
felt during the 1840s was indicative of this coming realization. For Vischer, Hegelianism
and the Left Hegelian movement finally made this recognition a reality for post-
revolutionary society. The approaching Hegelian apocalypse would be the final
realization of man that he was the author and artist of existence.

Along with pantheism, criticism and teleology, aesthetics was a crucial tenet of
Left Hegelian thought of the 1830s and 1840s. Hegel saw the emergence of Reason in
three phases in any culture; as a tangible object of art, as a mental article of faith in
religion and finally as rational thought in philosophy. Aesthetics led to spirit. Bauer and
Vischer agreed with Hegel, yet they inverted his order. They placed art between religion
and philosophy because they saw it as the bridge from theology to reason. However,
Bauer believed that art was still a form of alienation because there was an alien entity
outside the self-consciousness. The highest form of reason was philosophy, but as
criticism. Conversely, Vischer saw religion and philosophy, along with aesthetics, as
forms of art because they were all human creations.

Bauer saw purifying criticism as the highest form of Hegelian progress while
Vischer saw aesthetic creation as the highest form of Hegelian progress. Each used an
opposed appropriation of Hegel's teleology to invest the events of their time with
meaning. Vischer and Bauer would both have agreed that the French Revolution was not
an arbitrary or sporadic episode of violence; like Jacobi or Schopenhauer, rather it was

56 Brazill, 193.

57 Brazill, 166.
part of the historical progression. Where they would have differed was on the actual meaning of it within the historical progression. For Bauer, the meaning of the modern historical events lay solely in their critical application toward the crowning of self-consciousness as the sole power in the universe. For Vischer, their meaning lay in their creative capabilities as the foundation for a pantheistic society of human creation. Their opposing theories on the nature of teleology foreshadowed some of the future appropriations of Hegelian teleology during the mid and later 1840s.

LUDWIG FEUERBACH AND MAX STIRNER

The contrast between the theories of the Left Hegelians, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Max Stirner are in many ways a continuation and further radicalization of the debate between Gans’s individualism and Strauss’s pantheism. Feuerbach, like Strauss, denied a personal god, but he also disagreed with Strauss’s mystical pantheism. Feuerbach argued that Strauss’s pantheistic divination of humanity was still an abstraction like Hegel’s absolute or the Christian God. Instead, Feuerbach looked to actual, sensuous human beings as they appeared in nature and society. He concluded that individuals could simply not exist without each other, and only through the progressive movement of history could mankind finally recognize this fact. Thus, he gradually transformed Strauss’s pantheism into a more radical pantheistic humanism, centered more on the sensuous conception of man rather than on abstractions like “humanity.”

Three years after the publication of Essence, Stirner viciously attacked Feuerbach’s humanism, and

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like Gans, took an individualistic position. Yet, his penetrating critique of humanism raised some very thorny questions regarding pantheistic and humanistic theories as a viable option for the modern age. Like Bauer, Stirner used Hegelian teleology in a digressive fashion. He saw the end result of Hegelian teleology not as humanism or social unity, but simply as a radical individualism, taking it much further than Gans had ever intended to go. Thus, these thinkers have been paired together in order to better illustrate some of the concerns over pantheistic and humanistic interpretations of Hegelian teleology.

While Stirner's attack on Feuerbach has been duly addressed in Hegelian scholarship, there is another often overlooked aspect of the debate which this paper intends to explore; the actual role and duty of the individual in the newly emergent void of the nineteenth century, at least with regards to the differing appropriations of Hegelian teleology. Specifically, as an alternative to faith and nihilism, did the teleological progression of history lead to a new pantheistic or humanistic concept of individual duty and responsibility to the species as a whole, or conversely, did it finally free the individual from all social unity and responsibility and simply leave the individual to himself?

Feuerbach published his major work The Essence of Christianity in 1841, and the essay "Provisional Theses for the Reformation of Philosophy," in 1843. In 1844, Stirner published his only work The Ego and His Own. This section will draw on these primary works. The Essence of Christianity was translated and published by George Eliot in 1957. "Provisional Theses" was translated by Daniel Dahlstrom and appeared in Laurence Stepelevich's The Young Hegelians: An Anthology in 1983. The Ego and His Own was translated and published by John Carroll of Churchill College in 1971.
In modern scholarship, the conflict has been addressed by almost every Left Hegelian scholar. In 1970, three books appeared which each addressed it; William Brazill's *The Young Hegelians*, Eugene Kamenka's *The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach* and R.W.K. Paterson's *The Nihilistic Ego: Max Stirner*. Each author approached the conflict in a similar fashion, yet not quite identically. Brazill did not put the two thinkers into dialogue with each other, but rather devoted one section to Feuerbach and another to Stirner. He wrote that Stirner, with his attack on Feuerbach broadened the concept of religion. In Stirner's estimation, no longer was religion simply traditional Christianity. He broadened religion to include any abstract system which claimed the individual's allegiance and unquestioned faith. Kamenka, like Brazill, also did not place the two thinkers in dialogue, and really did not deal significantly with Stirner. Kamenka, writing with a Feuerbachian bias, wrote that Feuerbach responded to Stirner that man as an individual was incomplete, and only through the species could he whole. Paterson, at various times puts Feuerbach and Stirner in dialogue, as well as compares their theories. With both techniques, he demonstrates Stirner's exact criticisms of Feuerbach's pantheistic conception of man. Overall Paterson, writing from a Stirnerian bias, wrote that only through his criticism of Feuerbach did Stirner define his position as a nihilistic egoist. In addition, he wrote that Stirner was Feuerbach's "grave digger."  

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John Toews's 1981 work *Hegelianism: The Path Toward Dialectal Humanism*, while only briefly mentioning the debate on the last page of the epilogue, nonetheless elucidated some crucial concepts of it. While Toews did not place the thinkers in an actual dialogue with each other, he argued Stirner's criticism showed that the liberation of the concrete self could in no way be reconciled with the revolutionary task of many of the Young Hegelians, specifically with their notions of unity, collectivity and social responsibility. This present work will expand on Toews's charge.

One of the most controversial Left Hegelian works, Ludwig Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* was published in 1841 into the storm of government repression and censorship that commenced with the ascension of Frederick William IV to the Prussian throne. However, Feuerbach had been a target of the Restoration for eleven years already. His first work, *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*, published in 1830, despite the more relaxed policies of Frederick William III, had cost Feuerbach his teaching position at the University of Erlangen. After 1830, Feuerbach never held an academic position again. He continued his attack on Christianity and the Restoration.

Along with *Life of Jesus* and *The Judgment*, *Essence* became a rallying cry for the Left Hegelians. The book was instantly banned by the censors. At the same time, many conservatives, fundamentalists and other anti-Hegelians rose to power in the Restoration atmosphere of the Prussian state due to the effects of the French Revolution of 1830. The conflict that had been brewing over the last decade finally became

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62 Toews, 251. Another thinker, the composer Richard Wagner, who would later play a fundamental role in the Schopenhauerian revival, was initially attracted to the ideas of Feuerbach as well. Magee, 289.

63 Toews, 253.
apparent and the Left Hegelians increasingly defined themselves and their ideas in opposition to the blatant conservatism of the Prussian state.

In *The Essence of Christianity*, Feuerbach opted for a type of Hegelian teleology to give meaning to the historical events of the nineteenth century, as opposed to traditional faith of Jacobi or the nihilism of Schopenhauer. Like Strauss, Feuerbach believed that in the modern, scientific age the notion of a transcendent God was outdated and had to be replaced with the new pantheistic, or more accurately, a new humanistic conception of “Man” (Man with capital M).

Feuerbach defined “Man” as the species-being, or the entire species taken together. An individual human being, in isolation, is limited. He has a limited number of talents and capabilities, as well as many faults. It was only in union with others that the individual could rise above his limited nature, because the faults of the individual were cancelled by the positive attributes of the species taken as a whole. For Feuerbach, “the ego [the individual] attains to consciousness of the world through the consciousness of the thou [another].”64 This is Feuerbach’s “I-thou” notion, and it is the cornerstone of his entire philosophy. Individuals needed each other, not God or even the Absolute, in order to be happy and more importantly, to have a purpose to exist at all. The “I” or the individual could only be perceived in the consciousness of the “thou,” of another being. Feuerbach argued that God was not one, undividable supreme substance, rather, “God” could only exist as an exchange between two beings, and in the most profound instance,

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as a sexual union between man and woman.\textsuperscript{65} He wrote that “without other men, the world is not only empty and cold, but meaningless.”\textsuperscript{66}

Here, Feuerbach approached Jacobi’s and ultimately Schopenhauer’s nihilism. He feared that without others, without love, companionship and cooperation, the world would be meaningless; it would be a nihilistic abyss of aimless individuals. There would be no society, no interaction and no creation. By worshiping a transcendent God outside of himself in the modern, scientific age, modern man alienated the “Thou” and fragmented the species, fragmented the true God, and hovered over this abyss. Feuerbach sought meaning in the “thou.”

Feuerbach, like Strauss, believed that the stubborn and now outdated idea of a transcendent God, represented by the theories of Jacobi and the actions of Frederick William IV were not only superfluous, but harmful to the modern era. Feuerbach used Hegelian teleology in conjunction with Strauss’s pantheism to situate the events of the modern era. His humanistic conception of “Man” was not an a priori notion, but a historically conditioned notion not attainable in past ages. Only in the modern age was “Man” beginning to be understood, but society still had an arduous task ahead of it to completely dispense with the notion of a transcendent God altogether. History was progressing and modern man needed to realize this and face it, not cower in front of it. Hence, Frederick William’s idea of a Christian state was anathema to Feuerbach. The notion of a transcendent God was “in flagrant contradiction with our fire and life insurance companies, our railroads and steam-carriages, our picture and sculpture

\textsuperscript{65} Feuerbach, \textit{Essence}, 4.

\textsuperscript{66} Feuerbach, \textit{Essence}, 82.
galleries, our military and industrial schools, our theaters and scientific museums."\textsuperscript{67}

Devotion to an alien God stunted humanities creative capabilities because instead of working towards achievable goals, the individual insisted on passively waiting for some transcendental salvation that was not going to come.

The crux of Feuerbachianism, as adopted from Hegel, is this: modern man had a duty. No longer could he hide behind the wall of faith and wish for a better life or meaning as Jacobi had argued for. Instead he had to courageously take it upon himself to realize his own earthly salvation through hard work, not prayer.\textsuperscript{68} A man’s vocation, his actual work and livelihood had to become his true purpose, “every man, therefore, must place before himself a God, i.e., an aim, a purpose.” His work, his contribution to the species, became his worship, and “he, who has no aim, has no home, no sanctuary; aimlessness is the greatest unhappiness.”\textsuperscript{69} Without some form of responsibility and duty to the species, the individual in modern society would sever himself from the new divinity of reason and community. Ultimately, he would face nihilism; his life would have no meaning. Man’s highest calling was to contribute to the spiritual life of humanity, to art, science, literature and other creative endeavors. The knowledge and talents of one person were limited, only in conjunction with each could the true powers and capabilities of mankind emerge. The individual’s entire existence was only a result of the common work and achievement of the species and thus he owed duty to it, for without it, he would be nothing.

\textsuperscript{67} Feuerbach, \textit{Essence}, xliv.

\textsuperscript{68} Feuerbach, \textit{Essence}, 106.

\textsuperscript{69} Feuerbach, \textit{Essence}, 64. Feuerbach echoed similar sentiments in his “Provisional Theses.” Feuerbach, “Provisional Theses,” 163.
During the height of Feuerbach’s fame, an unknown secondary school teacher, who called himself Max Stirner (his birth name was Johann Casper Schmitt) was preparing an assault on Feuerbach’s humanism that would implicate all of the other Hegelians as well. In 1841, Stirner began attending the boisterous meetings of a group known as “Freien” at Hippel’s, a local Tavern in Berlin. The “Freien” (The Free) were one of many political-social groups that debated all sorts of political and philosophical topics in rowdy and drunken taverns. Stirner was quiet, usually smoked his cigar and rarely spoke a word, but he absorbed and appropriated the prominent doctrines of the time, namely those of liberalism, romanticism, Hegelianism as well as Feuerbachianism into his own work. With these common tenets as a starting point, Stirner then crafted the most radical and extreme method to interpret the modern epoch. Ironically, Stirner’s method, derived from Hegelianism, came to represent what Jacobi feared, and what Schopenhauer would carry to its ultimate nihilistic conclusion.

This present work focuses on Stirner’s attack of Feuerbach. However, Stirner agreed with Feuerbach on two critical points which are crucial to an understanding of Stirner’s ideas. As a good Hegelian, Stirner’s thought was teleological in nature, culminating in a goal. He interpreted the modern era as the result of a historical progression, referring to “we moderns” as the heirs of the modern era of the 1840s, as did Hegel. Like all of the Left Hegelians, Stirner felt that “we moderns” were engendered by the French Revolution and the Enlightenment. In addition, like Feuerbach, Stirner argued that the worship of any type of religious essence alienated man from himself. All

70 Other notable members of this group were Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, Arnold Ruge, Bruno Bauer, as well as the Russian anarchist Michel Bakunin. Brazill, 209.

deities and doctrines were simply enslaving abstractions which needed to be discarded in the modern age.

The religious questions raised by Strauss and Feuerbach over the validity and the future role of the biblical stories preoccupied almost all of the German thinkers during the 1840s. On a larger scale, the general trend of the period from 1789 to 1848 in all Western Europe was one of “emphatic secularization,” as a result of the French Revolution and Industrialization. The influence of this secularization is obvious in Stirner’s criticism of Feuerbach. Ironically, Stirner’s work was actually passed through by the censors because they deemed it a piece of unintelligible nonsense which was too ridiculous to be offensive. Whatever the merit of this claim, Stirner’s work nonetheless resounded within his small circle of thinkers.

Stirner attacked Feuerbach’s use of “Man” to articulate the changes of the modern age. He argued that Feuerbach’s notions of Man, species-being and society were meaningless phantoms that demanded the individual’s allegiance and freedom, just like the former notion of the Christian God. He wrote “after the annihilation of faith” by Feuerbach “only the God is changed.” Stirner balked at Feuerbach’s “raising of the individual to the species.” There was no species, just competing individuals. There was no brotherly bond of virtue between men, only power. He simply retorted with “I am my species.” For Stirner, the “I,” the flesh and blood self, the individual of Max Stirner.

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72 Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution, 222.

73 He also attacked Bauer’s idea of criticism. While Stirner was heavily influenced by Bauer’s use of criticism to divest reality of all outside entities, he accused Bauer of stopping with an alien entity; that of mind or criticism. Stirner saw himself as completing Feuerbach and Bauer’s ideas. Stirner, 53.

74 Stirner, 55. The American Philosopher, R.W.K. Paterson in his work, Max Stirner: The Nihilistic Egoist, claimed that Stirner was the most radical thinker of the nineteenth and the twentieth century, because he stood in front of the void and did not recoil from it. Paterson claims that unlike the
was the end of the Hegelian progression, not God, the Absolute, Love, Man or any other fictitious entity. Stirner, like Jacobi and Schopenhauer, faced the prospect of nihilism because for Stirner, there was absolutely nothing outside of the concrete individual that the individual had to affiliate with. Instead, everything outside the individual was there for the taking, there was no rule, no norm, no morality, nothing, just the individual lost in an indifferent world.

Stirner charged that liberalism and the likes of Feuerbach's *Essence* were the last manifestations of Christianity. The Enlightenment and French Revolution had destroyed the traditional notion of God, but Stirner argued that new Gods were put in its place by liberals and socialists. He believed that the historical progression would eventually divest the individual of *all* alienations and lead straight to the flesh and blood individual.\(^75\)

Since there was absolutely nothing outside of the individual, Stirner felt as little compelled to work for the species as he did to pray to God. This refusal to adhere to any outside authority is the crux of the Feuerbach Stirner debate. In opposition to Feuerbach, Stirner argued that Hegel's teleology did not lead to humanism, which was simply enslavement. Rather, for Stirner, Hegelian teleology led to the individual who, in the modern era had no calling, duty, responsibility or possibility. Stirner held the word "possible" responsible for all the enslavement in history because it compelled man to

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\(^75\) Stirner, 261.
pray, to work, to believe, etc.\textsuperscript{76} It led man to believe that he could achieve something that he could not. Regarding the word “possible,” Stirner wrote that “thousands of years were...in ambush behind it,” because for centuries men forced other men to pray, to believe in God, to be rational etc, all because they envisioned some unattainable possibility and then coerced others into pursuing it.\textsuperscript{77} Stirner did not want to be moral, give his life to the species or even obey laws. All he wanted to do was enjoy life with no moral restraints and he believed that the modern era had finally made this possible. He saw Hegelian teleology lead to the extinction of any responsibility of the individual in the modern era.

Both Feuerbach and Stirner’s theories were a response to Strauss’s pantheistic interpretation of Hegelian teleology. Their debate also posed a crucial question for Left Hegelianism in general: after the continuing criticism of traditional religion and its values of community, brotherhood, and purpose, could pantheism or radical humanism be a suitable replacement during the scientific era or was it simply just a new artificial religion? The Enlightenment and the French Revolution had irrevocably changed the status of the individual in early nineteenth century society. Feuerbach saw humanism as the Hegelian Absolute, while Stirner saw the individual as the Absolute. In the declining state of Christianity, and in light of Hegel’s teleological movement of history, did the individual in the modern age still have a duty to contribute to society or was the individual now liberated from all external obligations in the modern age? Within the void of post-revolutionary society, was the individual’s purpose his species or himself?

\textsuperscript{76} Stirner, 236.

\textsuperscript{77} Stirner. 236.
Humanistic theories attracted a limited number of adherents during the later nineteenth century, as evidenced by the popularity of Marxism. Yet it was Gans's and Stirner's individualism that in many ways foreshadowed the rise of capitalism's preoccupation with a militant individualist ideology during the second half of the nineteenth century and which will also form a component of the next debate.

ARNOLD RUGE AND KARL MARX

The French Revolution of 1789 dealt a severe and fatal blow to the institution of absolutism in France, and all of Western Europe. A monarch who had the power of the state solely in his hands had sat on the French throne since the early Middle Ages. However, since the French Revolution of 1789, European liberals increasingly called for some type of republicanism. As industrialization intensified, and poverty and pauperization became more acute for an increasing number of people however, the middle class liberal and republican ideologies no longer appealed to many because they did not inspire enough change. Instead, many radical thinkers began demanding a total regeneration of society, not just scattered democratic reforms like voting rights. Despite the stubborn and at times coercive attempts of the Restoration governments to enforce absolutism in their countries, many liberal and radical thinkers foresaw a political change for the future. The question for these thinkers boiled down to this: how was the post-revolutionary state to be politically organized?

Two Left Hegelians, Arnold Ruge and Karl Marx attempted to answer this question during the 1840s. Each thinker, building off of Hegelian teleology, rendered

\[\text{78 Hobsbawn, The Age of Revolution, 124.}\]
much different solutions to this question, Ruge republican, Marx communist.\textsuperscript{79} Their answers, while building on the foundations of earlier Hegelians, nonetheless served the same purpose, to situate the events of post-revolutionary Europe into a teleological progression, and to render the events meaningful, as opposed to Jacobi and ultimately Schopenhauer’s nihilistic declarations for modernity. The conflict between Ruge’s republicanism and Marx’s communism was also illustrative of the growing rift between middle class and radical ideologies in the 1840s. This analysis pairs Ruge and Marx in order to examine how Hegelian teleology was further appropriated to render a solution to

\textsuperscript{79} While it is beyond the reach of this paper to discuss the beginning of the socialist and communist movement in detail, a brief note is necessary on Marx’s theories. The founding father of modern socialism is usually regarded as the French thinker, Count Claude Saint-Simon. His pantheistic theories struck a chord with many intellectuals of the late eighteenth century. While his theories, and later his follower’s theories, were very ambiguous and contradictory, generally, Saint-Simon argued for a “New Christianity” which, unlike the former Christianity, elevated both the spiritual and material side of existence. With the elevation of the material side of existence, and drawing on the old dogmas of traditional Christianity, the New Christianity called for brotherly love, charity to the poor (whose numbers had increased dramatically during this period) and substituting of altruism in place of egoism. Like the Left Hegelians, the New Christianity argued for a love of humanity instead for a transcendent God.

Another French thinker, Noel “Gracchus” Babeuf, is commonly regarded as another founding father of French socialism. His moniker derived from the Roman hero, Tiberius Gracchus, who was assassinated for attempting to break up the large land holdings of the rich patricians and redistribute them to the landless plebeians. As the Directory government tried to restore peace to France after the Reign of Terror, Babeuf only saw a government worse than the Old Regime. He wrote that “the rich absorb all valuable productions...while the poor toil as slaves.” The revolution only benefited the rich. In 1796 he formed the Society of Equals with the intent of keeping France true to the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity. He was guillotined in 1797 by the Directory government.

Socialism accelerated as the Industrial Revolution took hold of Europe. Robert Owen, an English Cotton manufacturer as well as utopian socialist, in 1834 wrote “I discovered that there was some grievous error deep in the foundations of society.” This error was that the present government, far from being any benign apparatus for the preservation of society, was merely an evil institution which enriched a few members of the nation at the expense of the majority, and this was done under the guise of Christian principles. He called for public education, workers rights and a moral revolution. In addition, he set up experimental communes across the United States.

These thinkers did not want a return to any primitive society, (at least the thinkers after Rousseau) they saw the industrial revolution as a necessary event; it just had to be properly harnessed for the good of all. It was many of these theories that Marx was exposed to while he was in Paris in the 1840s. He also came in contact with the theories of one of his contemporaries, the leading French socialist, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who held similar ideas of ending the privileges of the upper classes and the exploitation of the lower classes. Proudhon bluntly stated “property is theft.” While this list of early socialists is by no means exhaustive, it serves as an examination of the influences on the young Marx and Hess. See Bob Blaisdell, The Communist Manifesto and Other Revolutionary Writings (New York: Dover Press, 2003), 96-98 and Breckman, Marx, The Young Hegelians and the Origins of Radical Social Theory, 158-164.
the practical question of societal and political organization in an increasingly volatile time.

William Brazill and Warren Breckman both compared the theories of Ruge and Marx. Brazill argued that Ruge’s position was political, only through the framework of politics and the state could man be truly free in the modern age. Marx on the other hand, saw man’s true liberation lay outside of politics. Yet Brazill stopped short here, and left the powder keg unlit. This explosive controversy was only hinted at without being fully developed. This work intends begins from this conflict and develops it fully by putting Ruge’s republicanism into a dialogue with Marx’s communism and elucidating their precise renditions of the meaning of post-revolutionary society. Breckman compares the theories of Ruge and Marx, but for the opposite purpose. He argues that some of Marx’s ideas actually stemmed from Ruge’s. While Ruge disdained any type of socialist theories as espoused by Marx, there were nonetheless crucial similarities between the two thinkers. This present work however is interested primarily in their differences.

The present work relies on various primary sources to reconstruct the debate between Ruge and Marx. Ruge’s works are scarce, yet this work will draw on two pieces he wrote, “Hegel’s ‘Philosophy of Right’ and the Politics of our times,” and “A self-critique of Liberalism.” Both were translated and published in the 1983 work edited by Laurence Stepelevich The Young Hegelians: An Anthology. In addition, due to the restricted availability of Ruge’s primary works, this work will make use of Ruge’s words as they are quoted in Löwith, Brazill, Toews and Breckman. This work also draws on

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80 Brazill, 271.

81 Breckman, Marx, The Young Hegelians and Origins of Radical Social Theory, 289.
Marx’s polemic of Ruge’s reaction to the Silesian weaver’s revolt, “Critical Margin Notes” for direct quotations of Ruge because in response to Ruge, Marx uses Ruge’s actual words. As for Marx, this work also draws on Marx’s “Critical Margin Notes,” “The German Ideology,” “The Coming Upheaval,” “Alienation and Social Classes,” and the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.

During the 1830s and 1840s, if the Left Hegelians were ever thought of as a party, or had any semblance of unity, Ruge would have been the leader. Ruge, by trade a journalist, synthesized much of the thought of the Left Hegelians. In 1838, Ruge founded a journal *Hallische Jahrbücher für Deutsche Wissenschaft und Kunst*. By 1841, the Prussian government under Frederick William IV and Eichorn shut down the journal, which had evolved into a mouthpiece for radical Hegelianism. Ruge then moved it to Saxony where it continued for another two years until the Saxon government, with Prussian pressure, shut it down and finally disbanded it.

Marx had a similar experience to Ruge. In 1841 Marx took a position as the editor of the liberal Prussian newspaper, the *Rheinische Zeitung*. At first it seemed as if the newspaper would survive the censors, but it too was eventually shut down by the Prussian government for its subversive liberal ideas. As editor, Marx was an ardent republican, and he believed that the Prussian government could establish a free, modern state. However, after the closure of the *Rheinische Zeitung*, Marx’s views toward republicanism and the notion of the state in general began to change drastically. In particular, Marx began to doubt Prussia’s ability to establish a free modern state when all avenues of free speech and free press had been shut down.82

82 Jones, 97.
In 1843, Ruge and Marx were both living in exile in Paris. They decided to start a journal together which they named the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher. Its main purpose was to unite German philosophy, mainly Hegelianism, with French political action. At the same time, due to his experience at the Rheinische Zeitung and his increasing contact with workers clubs and the volatile atmosphere of Paris, Marx increasingly leaned toward communism. Ruge, who disdained any type of communal thought, could not follow Marx. Ruge believed that only through a republican government could a free state be established.\(^3\) After only one issue, Ruge and Marx split, and disbanded the journal.

In 1844, Ruge published a tract entitled “The King of Prussia and Social Reform” in the radical German newspaper Vorwärts, where he commented on the reasons for the failure of a recent revolt of weavers in Silesia. Marx quickly responded and attacked his former partner. Their rift was final. Marx was a full-fledged communist. On a personal level, their personalities conflicted, but on a theoretical level, their clash was indicative of the controversies over the more radical appropriations of Hegelianism.

Crucial to an accurate understanding of the Ruge Marx debate was the state of industrialization in continental Europe during the 1840s. Industrialization on the European continent was in its embryonic stages in the 1830s, but by the 1840s, it was affecting all of Western Europe. The most glaring problem of industry was the pauperism of large numbers of rural and urban artisans and laborers, as well as university educated youth. The expansion of unrestricted market relations, technological advance and new industrial organization such as the factory system created this visible and

\(^3\) Breckman, Marx, The Young Hegelians and Origins of Radical Social Theory, 290.
increasing pauper class in continental Europe. Ruge and Marx’s theories were crafted in light of these conditions. Ruge’s adaptation of republicanism and Marx’s communism, in addition to the influence of Hegelianism, were also responses to the growing ills of industry.

Like all Hegelians, Ruge saw history as purposeful. It was the progression of the human Spirit, and the realization of its true freedom. The culmination of this freedom for Ruge was in politics; in the form of the modern republican state. Hegel had written about modern politics (although not a republican state), but Ruge maintained that Hegel remained confined to theory and refused to put his ideas into practice for fear of censorship and conservatism. Yet, Ruge insisted that history constantly pressed “forth to ever new shapes.” As for its newest and final shape, Ruge felt his major task was to awaken the sluggish Germans to the heightened political feeling of the modern era. For inspiration, Ruge looked no further than across the Rhine, to France. Since 1789, he saw France engaged in a struggle to establish a true republican state. In a larger sense, for Ruge, regarding the void of early nineteenth century though, the free republican state was the only alternative to faith and nihilism.

Two major tenets of Ruge’s republicanism were the notion of political parties and representation. In his ideal republican society, opposition parties were crucial, because “without criticism, there is no development and without development no life.” Political

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84 Toews, 362.
86 Ruge, “Hegel’s ‘Philosophy of Right,’” 228
87 Ruge, “Hegel’s ‘Philosophy of Right,’” 218.
parties had to fight for reform in the republican state. The state’s role was as an impartial judge, not dominated by any one class or party. It was in this impartial arena where freedom could truly flourish. The various parties would argue and criticize each other; individuals would pursue their goals, and in the process, bring out the true development of the state. The true core of republican government, compromise, would occur. In this comprise between two opposing parties, unity and true freedom would be achieved. As for national representation, Ruge wrote that it raised “humans in their total worth” and finally allowed them to see that they were the creators of the own freedom.  

Yet Ruge insisted that these could not be the sham parties and representation of the nobility, the monarch and liberals as existed in Prussia. These present day “parties” were not parties because they were not on level ground, the monarchy and the nobility dominated according to their particular interests. In order for a true republic to be established and maintained, a new consciousness, not just new political structures had to emerge. Men had to consciously become political; their political spirit could not simply be bequeathed by a higher power such as God or king.

If the Prussian people wanted to be free, than they would have to fight for their freedom. Ruge believed that the struggle for freedom was the purest, noblest pursuit of man, or as he termed it, “the highest good.” It was the purpose of modern man, and it could only be achieved through a republican state. Without this goal of freedom, man sunk into a paralyzing idleness, of which Ruge felt was already the case in Prussia. He

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88 Ruge, “Hegel’s ‘Philosophy of Right,’” 216  
lamented the constant “lookout for momentary stars and leaders, the idolization of every genius and of every bit of fame, the hollow enthusiasm for dancing girls, gladiators, musicians, athletes” committed by the so called leaders of Prussian culture. Overall, he hated their preoccupation with meaningless endeavors and their neglect of the true purpose of their life—the fight for a free state. To this situation he posed the question “what does all this demonstrate?” His answer sounded a nihilistic note “Nothing but the blasé culture that lacks real work for great goals...the same hollow, insipid, and powerless mélange.” Ruge did not even regard the members of this blasé culture as true people, but rather as mutilated and stupid beings, of which even suicide would not fix. In short, if modern man did not want to fight for a free state, than he was meaningless.

Ruge invested his hope for a new republican consciousness in the rising business class of Prussia, as well as the ongoing process of industrialization. Though he was not blind to the ills of modern industry, Ruge felt that they could be “overcome through republicanism.” He believed that through industry, the modern individual could transform himself and his society because it unleashed his productive capabilities. However, in order for this transformation to occur, Germany’s growing power of industry had to be harnessed and used for the good of the polity, not the just the good of a few wealthy individuals. What was needed was a bridge between the public sphere of community and nationhood and the private sphere of economics, self-interest and industry. This could be accomplished through education, journalism and vigorous


92 Arnold Ruge, “Erinnerungen aus dem auberen Leben, von Ernst Moritz Arndt,” (1840): 184, quoted in Warren Breckman, Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory (Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 244.
political activity. When the two spheres of public and private were joined, only then could a true “spiritual republic,” be founded, which was Ruge’s vision of the Hegelian Absolute.  

This spiritual republic would finally reveal to man his ultimate purpose, to be free and rule himself through politics. Republicanism could only work if it was infused with love and spirit among all of its members, only then could it fill the void and give purpose to modern man.

In 1844, the effects of industrialization and the pauperization of the masses became acute in the Prussian province of Silesia. There, weavers led a series of disturbances. They destroyed machinery, set fire to factory owners’ houses and rioted in the streets. The Prussian army quickly quelled the revolt. Ruge assessed the failure of the revolt in his article “The King of Prussia and Social Reform” and here his views on modern republicanism became evident. Yet in this section, his criticisms were not aimed at the middle class, but rather, the working class that perpetuated the disturbances. He wrote that “All uprisings which break out in this disastrous isolation of people from the community [the state]...will be smothered in blood.” For Ruge, the weavers simply acted out of frustration; they had no concept of politics, thus their “isolation” from the community and their inevitable failure. The weavers acted out of hunger, not spirit. They did not “see beyond their own hearth and home, their own factory, their own district; the

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93 Arnold Ruge, Der Protestantismus und die Romantik, (1839-40): 2, quoted in Warren Breckman, Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Theory (Massachusetts: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 231.


95 Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution, 200.

whole question has so far still been ignored by the all penetrating political soul." The biggest failure of the weavers was that they did not desire the creation of a spiritual republic which could rectify the situation of the entire working class. They were not political; they still only cared for themselves and their immediate plight.

Only when a people engaged in politics, only when it looked beyond its own home and viewed all in their society as totality of spirit, only then would they embrace a political soul. This was true for the middle class as well as the working classes; it was true of all classes. Ruge believed that only a people’s advanced political knowledge and participation in republican government could produce true and lasting social change, which the weaver’s lacked. The weavers lived under the autocratic Prussian government (Silesia was controlled by Prussia), and they needed to fight for their right of popular sovereignty to lead a successful revolution, not just riot because they were angry, this could establish no lasting change. He ended his article with “a social revolution without a political soul...is impossible.”

In many ways this statement can serve as the foundation of Ruge’s thought, it was also what drew the scorn of Marx. For Ruge, politics was the way to ignite a complete societal regeneration, not just rectify immediate ills. Ruge’s treatment of the weavers was indicative of his entire mission, to awaken the political consciousness of his age. In regards to nihilism and faith, popular sovereignty and democratic institutions was the way to establish meaning in history, because only through them could the voice of the people be heard, only through them could the polity act and be free to choose its course. He interpreted Hegelian teleology as the progressive movement of the notion of


the state, and the newest and final state, and the ultimate purpose of man and history was that of the republican state, and he called on the weavers to fight for this.

In July of 1844, Marx responded to Ruge’s “The King of Prussia and Social Reform,” with his essay “Critical Marginal Notes” also published in the newspaper Vorwärts. Marx’s criticism of Ruge’s republicanism became clearly evident, as well as the more radical interpretations of Hegelian teleology, namely communism.

In contrast to Ruge, Marx saw the weaver’s lack of any political knowledge as their greatest strength. The weavers’ did not fight for any narrow minded political causes; such as the establishment of a workers’ party or union, instead their fight was for the true liberation of all workers. Marx expounded on this notion of true liberation, and it formed the basis for his response to the questions of the modern era, and the pressure of the historical void of the nineteenth century. Politics was not the solution, but rather a symptom of a larger problem of contemporary bourgeoisie society. Marx argued that the weavers were not isolated from the political community, rather they were isolated from something much more important and universal; “life itself.”

While the proletarian eked out an existence barely above the poverty level, his work, his productivity and his life was sucked by the bourgeoisie. The proletarian was reduced to an animal-like existence, merely surviving off the scraps of the bourgeoisie, but not truly living. The proletariat had no time or means to cultivate his creativity, no time for recreation, no time to better himself, no time to enjoy his family and friends. In short, he labored to build a world of which he was not a part of. Thus, the proletariat was

99 Karl Marx, “Critical Margin Notes on the Article: The King of Prussia and Social Reform,” in The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. Robert Tucker, 2d ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 131. A brief note on Marxian terminology is required. The term bourgeoisie class refers to members of the middle class, specifically the industrialists; the term proletariat refers to the working class, specifically the factory workers.
alienated from his own existence. It was this notion of human existence that Marx sought to fill the void with. It was this that man had to take back, and this was beyond any political revolution or desire for a specific form of government. For Marx, like the rest of the Hegelians, the approaching Hegelian apocalypse was indeed the liberation of modern man. Yet, it was liberation specifically for the lowest and most reviled class, the proletariat, and it was liberation not just from a transcendental God, feudalism or absolutism, but from politics altogether. Politics was simply another form of alienation because it imposed an alien structure over the individual, in Ruge's case, representatives that supposedly represented the people. Marx saw the Hegelian Absolute as the overthrow of all religion and politics.

Republicanism and all politics in general were not spiritual endeavors, but simply vehicles for the more powerful classes in society to oppress the weaker classes. Thus, they were incapable of giving meaning to the events of the post-revolutionary era. In complete contrast to Ruge, Marx argued that politics, and especially Ruge's vaunted notions of political parties and representation could never liberate man, only enslave him further. He wrote that "any revolution with a political soul...organizes a ruling stratum in society at the expense of society itself." Political parties and representatives did not fight for freedom, only their own self interest. Ruge believed this was a shortcoming of Conservative Prussia and that it could be changed. Marx however pointed to the French Revolution of 1789, where the bourgeoisie sought to unseat the nobility. They claimed

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100 Marx, "Critical Margin Notes," 131.
they represented all of France, but by the nineteenth century, it was clear that they only represented themselves and the interests of their class, and their interests were primarily the securing of property ownership which had been restricted mainly to the nobility, and individual rights, namely the ability to conduct free trade without government interference. Since their liberation due to the events of 1789-1830, it was the bourgeoisie that asserted their common interests at the expense of society itself, especially the proletariat.

At root of Ruge's praise of political parties and representatives, of the different factions of society pursuing their individual aims under an impartial government, at root of the equality, liberty and fraternity of the modern state of which Ruge clambered for; Marx saw the true core of modern republicanism and all politics, which was simply the enshrined separation of man from his fellow man specifically Ruge's vaunted bourgeoisie. In a section of an earlier piece entitled "On the Jewish Question," written in 1843, Marx examined the French Constitutions of 1791, 1793, as well as the Constitutions of Pennsylvania and New Hampshire. He concluded that the much praised notion of individual liberty, inaugurated by the American and French Revolutions were simply a mask for the self-interest of the growing bourgeoisie class.

This so-called political emancipation was nothing more than the reduction of man to an independent and egoistic individual to do as he pleased. There could never be a bridge between the public and private in the political spheres that Ruge called for because politics was built precisely on the separation of these entities. The abstract

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103 Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution, 139.

citizen with rights and duties that Ruge spoke about was a convenient fiction of political thought. While this unattainable notion was said to be the cornerstone of a republican government, in reality, there was only the private, self-seeking individual. The American and especially the French Constitutions, far from liberating man or inaugurating a truly free state as Ruge had hoped, only made it a God given right of the bourgeoisie to exploit the growing class of the proletariat. This was not liberation, just a newer enslavement.

Marx’s political criticisms offered a sobering view for many intellectuals and political thinkers like Ruge. Republicanism, while a definite upgrade from absolutism, and a phase in the evolution of society, was simply the best method for the dominate class of modern society to exploit the working classes. The bourgeoisie could never be infused with love through politics as Ruge hoped; the proletariat would not be vindicated by politics, only the abolition of the political structure. The closing line of the German Ideology is an excellent example of Marx’s disillusionment with politics altogether. He wrote that the proletariat, instead of fighting for a free state as Ruge called for, could only find their true purpose “with the overthrow of the state.” Since true unity could not be the basis of a bourgeoisie republican society because it was founded on the right of separation or individual liberty, modern republicanism could not be the end of history; Hegelian teleology had to lead somewhere further.


106 Karl Marx, The German Ideology, in The Marx-Engels Reader, ed. Robert Tucker, 2d ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 200. Marx was not against the idea of democracy, which in its fundamental erudition is similar to communism; both are based on the will of the people. He was opposed to Ruge’s exaltation of modern republicanism. A true democracy could only exist when the political state was abolished.
In contrast to the artificial polity such as Ruge’s republic, Marx wrote “human nature is the true community of men.”\textsuperscript{107} Since the proletariat built a world he could not take part in, a world he was alienated from, this world had to be returned to the proletariat, and this could not be achieved through politics.\textsuperscript{108} Earlier, in his unpublished Economic and Philosphic Manuscripts, Marx gave the most complete elucidation of this true human community, or true communism. There would be no political factions, social classes or governmental structure at all because representatives and parties did not represent the welfare of their constituents, but simply their own interests. Communist man would be a social man; his actions would not just benefit himself or members of the ruling class, but all of society. In true communism as opposed to modern bourgeois republicanism, the individual was not isolated from other men by competition, factionalism and his inalienable right of personal liberty.\textsuperscript{109} Instead, individuals obtained their freedom in and through their association.\textsuperscript{110} No longer would an absolute monarch, factory owner, priest, party man or self-seeking representative usurp man’s reason and

\textsuperscript{107} Marx, “Critical Margin Notes,” 131.

\textsuperscript{108} Marx’s human community bears the influence of Feuerbach’s humanism. It is also the only time that Marx examined the foundations of the true human community. He said that one could not predict the details of it until the time came, thus, his lack of descriptions in his other works. Karl Marx, Economic and Philosphic Manuscripts of 1844, trans. Martin Milligan (New York: Prometheus Books, 1988), 104.

In addition, it is important to note that Hegel also held a similar view of modern man. For Hegel, man had to be a social man; in the highest phase of history, man had to act for himself and the community, as noted before, this was Hegel’s vision of freedom or Sittlichkeit. Due to the rational and progressive nature of history, Hegel believed that the modern bourgeoisie would eventually assimilate himself as a member of the community. However, this would be done through the framework of the state. Marx on the other hand, saw the bourgeoisie as irredeemable and slated for destruction, and the state as another form of alienation. See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Philosophy of Right, trans. T.M. Knox (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 160 and Löwith, From Hegel to Nietzsche, 277.

\textsuperscript{109} He further argued that in true communism, wealth would no longer be measured in money and capital, but in human devotion to each other, trust would be traded for trust, and love for love, none of these would be for sale as they were in the money-driven capitalist society. In short, the greatest wealth was another human being, and this was a currency that all could partake in. Marx, Economic and Philosphic Manuscripts, 105.

\textsuperscript{110} Marx, The German Ideology, 197
strength. The talents of all individuals would finally be dedicated solely to their community and their fellow man.

As per the void of the nineteenth century, Marx saw Jacobi’s faith as obsolete and he refuted Schopenhauer’s nihilism with communism. His attitude toward any nihilistic interpretation of history is made clear in one telling statement from his “Alienation and Social Classes.” He wrote “Not in vain does [the proletariat] go through the harsh but hardening school of labour." Unlike Schopenhauer, who believed that all human suffering was in vain, Marx saw the proletariat’s struggle as part of the teleological progression of history and leading toward the eventual establishment of true communism. Thus, their struggle was purposeful, as were all the events of the history. Marx drew on Hegelian teleology, as well as Feuerbachian humanism to create one of the most complex and controversial alternatives to traditional faith and modern nihilism for the industrial nineteenth century.

The events of the initial French Revolution of 1789 were increasingly seen by the later Hegelians not as the true liberation of man, as Hegel argued, but merely a step in the process. As this paper has argued, Ruge’s republicanism and Marx’s communism can be seen as answers to Jacobi’s ultimatum, but for an industrial age. The question of how true communism was actually to be made a reality forms the premises for the last debate.

MOSES HESS AND KARL MARX

In the debate between Bauer and Vischer, the course of Hegelian teleology was examined. The debate between Feuerbach and Stirner offered a further example of

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progressive and digressive uses of Hegelian teleology. Two later Hegelians, the German thinkers Moses Hess and Karl Marx, debated another aspect of Hegelian teleology, the actual source of its movement. Herein lay their fundamental disagreement; Hess argued that the progress of history was driven by man; conversely, Marx argued that the progression of history was outside of man’s control. If teleology was the weapon of choice for the Hegelians, then what exactly propelled history? This paper has paired these two thinkers together to shed more light on this question. Hess was a utopian visionary, who based his theory on human action, where Marx sought to be a scientist, and based his theories on (alleged) scientific laws. Hess and Marx have been paired in order to examine different approaches to the actual source of movement of Hegelian teleology.

Marx and Hess’s conflict took place throughout the later 1840s and early 1850s, and it was scattered in various publications and correspondences. However, it is mostly clearly evidenced in Marx’s *The Communist Manifesto* in 1847 where Marx attacked all utopian and idealist communists, such as Hess, for their supposed naivety. The relationship between the two men was more complex than one of simple opposition; at various times they were partners with each other. In an ironic twist of fate, it was Hess that initially introduced Marx to French Socialist theory and illustrated to Engels how Hegelianism ultimately led to communism. In 1841, the year they met, both men collaborated on the *Rheinische Zeitung*, a radical journal, and then later they briefly worked with each other in the late 1840s on various publications.\(^{112}\)

\(^{112}\) In another twist of fate, at the time of the writing of the *Manifesto*, Hess had written to Marx that he was a convert to Marx’s more tough minded, realistic theories. Marx nonetheless always suspected Hess of utopian ideas, which proved to be correct. Less than two years after his “conversion,” Hess began once again preaching his utopian and idealist views and attacked the rigidity of scientific socialism. Isaiah
They shared at best a tenuous and at worst a downright hostile relationship. The conflict in their communistic theories caused an irreproachable breach between the two men, yet it also raised some pertinent questions regarding Hegelian teleology and its appropriation during the 1840s, namely: are human beings responsible for their own actions or are they controlled by an outside force?

This debate has been dealt with by four recent thinkers; John Weiss in his *Moses Hess: Utopian Socialist* published in 1966, William Brazill in his *The Young Hegelians*, published in 1970, Isaiah Berlin in his *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* published in 1979, and most recently Warren Breckman, in his *Marx, the Young Hegelians, and the Origins of Radical Social Thought*, published in 1999. Weiss’s small book examined Hess’s utopian ideas regarding communism in contrast to Marx’s more scientific rigor. However, Weiss writes with a clear bias for Hess. His aim is not to present an impartial picture of the debate on teleology, but rather to exalt what he argues are forgotten merits of utopian socialism. In the conclusion of Brazill’s *The Young Hegelians*, he discusses how the teleological theories of the first generation of Left Hegelians influenced the thinkers of the second generation, specifically Hess and Marx. Berlin’s treatment of the Hess-Max debate is more impartial than Weiss’s treatment, but nonetheless the bulk of his work is devoted to Hess. It is located in an essay entitled “The Life and the Opinions of Moses Hess,” which is part of the larger work *Against the Current*. Berlin’s aim is as the title implies simply to survey Hess’s ideas, and how his ideas ranked with his contemporaries. Berlin argues that Hess, despite the scorn he suffered at the hands of Marx and his neglect by historians, nonetheless made some

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critical contributions to his time period. Breckman’s work does not deal specifically with teleology, but rather with questions of individuality during the nineteenth century. He examines Hess’s ideas as an influence on Marx. Both of their thoughts regarding the movement of history are nonetheless discussed.

What separates this examination of the Hess and Marx debate from the four previously mentioned works is the fact that the present work situates their debate as part of a larger intellectual movement that appropriated Hegelianism as a way to navigate between faith and the nihilism. In addition, the present work will draw on a little examined aspect of their debate, the role of education in teleology. This work will draw on Hess’s first major work, *The Holy History of Mankind*, published in 1837, his article “Socialism and Communism,” published in 1843 and his *Communist Credo*, a brochure published in 1844, all translated by Shlomo Avineri. As for Marx, this work will draw from his essays “The German Ideology,” “The Coming Upheaval,” “Alienation and Social Classes,” and his short work *Economic and Philosphic Manuscripts of 1844*, and finally the pamphlet *The Communist Manifesto*.

During the 1840s, the full effects of industrialization were beginning to be felt in various parts of the world. The Marx-Hess debate is indicative of this change. Across Western Europe and North America, most notably in England, Prussia, Belgium, and the northern US states, the rise of factories, booming industrial centers and the wealth of the middle class was accompanied by the growth of the poor working classes. This growing class of workers was increasingly pushed into overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. The divide between the working classes and the much more well off upper middle class became painfully apparent. Yet the misery of the poor was not an accidental by product of industrialization, but rather a direct and necessary result. The poor suffered precisely
because the rich benefited, it was their chief source of gain.¹¹³ Hess and Marx both
looked to aspects of Hegel’s historical progress and teleology in order to rectify this
misery and the exploitation of the working classes; they both looked to history for
justice.¹¹⁴

Moses Hess, originally Moritz Hess, lived in a self imposed poverty almost his
whole life. His life was spent between Cologne, Brussels and Paris. He finally settled in
Paris in 1850. He adopted Hegelian motifs in his theories, most notably the idea of
historical progression, but it would be hard to peg Hess as following any system to the
letter. In various accounts of his life, both by contemporaries and modern writers, Hess
has been described as idealistic, optimistic, passionate, abstract and dreamy. Whatever
Hess’s faults as a writer, thinker or person, he felt that he had one overarching purpose in
life, which was to fight for the betterment of humanity.¹¹⁵ To this end, he used a version
of Hegelian teleology.

As Hess saw it, the ownership of private property was the chief source of misery
for the poor, because private property unnaturally divided man. Instead of fostering
social unity and cooperation, Hess argued that the desire for property and the arbitrary

¹¹³ Hobsbawm also discusses the notion of class consciousness. He notes that at almost all times
in history, there had been opposition between rich and poor. What distinguished the nineteenth century was
that the working class of factory workers began to think of themselves as a class opposed to another
particular class, the capitalist class or bourgeoisic. Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution, 209.

¹¹⁴ Brazill, 271. In addition, Hess’s first work was published in 1837, which was just prior to the
full emergence of industry in continental Europe. However, this work is crucial to an understanding of
Hess’s later theories because in it, he is already a full fledged socialist, and his affiliation with Left
Hegelianism is made clear. With his publication of the Holy History, Hess is regarded as the first German
socialist. His later works expand more fully on his socialist and communist leanings, especially with
regards to the rise of industry on the continent. Berlin, 218.

¹¹⁵ Moses Hess, The Holy History of Mankind in The Holy History of Mankind and Other
Writings, trans. Shlomo Avineri (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 60. Hess, usually
considered the first German socialist, is also usually regarded as one of the founding fathers of Zionism.
despotism of those who owned it over others who did not own it kept humanity in an all consuming competitive state. He wrote: “What is he who...accumulates for himself alone the products of society? He is a robber; he takes away from society what belongs to it...he is a murderer.” When one man accumulated wealth at the expense of his fellows he murdered them, he took away their ability to be free and develop their talents. True human flourishing was simply impossible in the present state of things because only a few could benefit. Hess argued that it took many members of society to make any type of product, never just one individual. Thus the fruits of society were “the common property” of all men.

Like a good Hegelian, Hess saw history as a progression of definite phases, and the final stage was one of unity and freedom.116 In The Holy History, Hess wrote that all living beings, whether consciously or unconsciously, strive toward perfection.117 As a pantheist, Hess believed that there was one human Spirit which drove all existence. Yet, since this was an unconscious unity, man remained animal like and unable to comprehend himself as a progressive, united whole. Instead he enslaved and killed his fellows, who he saw as enemies. History was mankind becoming conscious of its latent unity. Hess wrote that mankind would probably reach a state of equality one day far off in the future, but this was of little solace to the struggling masses in the present. Rather, he offered methods for the rectification of the present ills of capitalist society.118


117 Hess, The Holy History, 56.

118 Hess, The Holy History, 66.
Hess’s treatment of the present, namely his belief that it could be changed with conscious and direct human action, illustrate that his adaptation of Hegelian teleology was blurred and at times contradictory. He held that since the beginning of time, as society enlarged and man became aware of and chased different interests, he was increasingly taught to accumulate at the expense of others. In reality, these others were his brothers. In fact, the present state of competition could have been avoided “had mankind been highly educated right from the beginning.”

Modern man had been taught how to be immoral and exploitive of his fellow man, it was not an inevitable consequence of the present. In the present education system, Hess held that these robbers and murderers who exploited their fellows were hailed as gentlemen and to be emulated.

Thus, equipped with new knowledge, it followed that mankind could choose to rectify the present ills and reunite with his brothers, if it could break out of its present thought process. This became the crux of Hess’s communism; especially in his later writings, it was his philosophy of the act. Once modern man finally learned that he was Spirit then communism would be opted for, it would be actively imposed by all because it would be the most logical choice to all educated people. Most importantly for Hess, the transition to communism would be done peacefully and without violence.

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120 Moses Hess, “A Communist Credo,” in The Holy History of Mankind and Other Writings, trans. and ed. Shlomo Avineri (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 120. In addition, with the advance of industry and increasing pauperization, many working class members saw their only hope in solidarity and working man associations. While they did not deal in philosophic abstractions and terminology like Hess, Hess’s ideas were representative of a growing movement in society. Hobsbawn, The Age of Capital, 140.

Hess believed that man was moral by nature, and that equality was the most basic, self-evident ideal in human nature, yet it had been buried under the greed of modern society. This primordial equality had to be reinvigorated through education and social programs. Community and cooperation between men had to be taught to children, they had to be raised in the spirit of community. He wrote: "How does one guarantee people's freedom? This happens primarily through education."122 Proper education was the key to societal regeneration, and the true establishment of human unity and ultimately God. Specifically, the young had to be educated to the worth of the human being. Hess believed that as human beings gained in worth, as people were taught to value others and to cooperate with others, and not exploit them, then money and private property would become worthless. The things that many in society held to be of the most worth only appeared so because people had been taught to view them in such a way. He went on to argue that with proper education, it would only take one generation to rectify the present ills of capitalist society.123 Modern man did not have to wait for heaven; he could choose to create it himself.

As all Left Hegelians, Hess saw the French Revolution as the major turning point in modern history, leading to a purposeful existence. Yet, it was not complete. He scorned "weak souls" like Jacobi who "tearfully lament the horrors of the great French Revolution."124 He also scorned the likes of Schopenhauer who capitulated to nihilism. They failed to realize life's true aim. The revolution, despite its violence and excess was the process of man achieving his true salvation and purpose; the unity and freedom of all.

122 Hess, "Credo," 120.
123 Hess, "Credo," 123.
124 Hess, The Holy History, 41.
Yet, the Absolute would not manifest magically for the present. The Hegelian apocalypse which would redeem the present needed to be brought about through tireless work. Hess declared that it was modern man’s duty to arouse the indignation of his fellows to the plight of their fellow man. True human salvation lied within their reach, if only they had the knowledge and the strength to take it. Thus, modern man had to be educated to his purpose in life, which was solidarity, and Hess saw the progression of history, which was a mixture of unconscious and increasingly conscious striving on the part of humanity, having lead to this point. In short, education could establish meaning in the void.

In 1836, a year before the publication of Hess’s *Holy History*, a semi-clandestine organization was founded in Paris and later moved to London, called the League of the Just, which was composed of exiled radical German artisans. As Karl Marx’s fame grew during the 1840s, he became sought after by the league (which had changed its name to the Communist League). In 1847, members of the league approached Marx, who had recently become a member, to draft a manifesto outlining the main principles of the league’s platforms. The result was the most widely read and influential of all socialist and communist documents, *The Communist Manifesto*. In one telling section of the *Manifesto* Marx poured derision on Hess and similar utopian socialists. His derision made public the rupture between his own and Hess’s communism, as well as set the course between two different versions of communism which both attempted to give post-revolutionary man a purpose in light of the void.

David McLellan wrote a short but informative biography of Marx in 1975 which has been cited by numerous other Marxian scholars, such as Breckman. David McLellan, *Karl Marx* (New York: Penguin Press, 1975), 7.
In the *Manifesto*, Marx sarcastically wrote “historical action is to yield to their [the utopian socialists] personal inventive action...future history resolves itself, in their eyes, into the propaganda...of their social plans.”\(^{126}\) He chided the utopian socialists for their insistence on fantastic conditions, concocted out of their own heads, based on nothing but personal whims and desires. Instead, he wrote that history was nothing but the history of class struggles between exploited groups of people and their exploiters. In the present society, the bourgeoisie class or industrial capitalists exploited the proletariat or the working class. Only after the conditions of the proletariats became intolerable, would they overthrow their oppressors.\(^{127}\) For Marx, the communist society would be the result of inevitable historical forces, and more importantly, inevitable economical forces, based on the exploitation of certain groups of people, not the airy abstractions of philosophers. The meaning of the modern age was not a question for Marx, and it would manifest outside of man’s control. Hess’s “philosophy of the act” was an illusion, a way for frustrated and defeated thinkers to seemingly empower themselves.

The *Manifesto* was just a pamphlet written for the public. While Marx took aim at all idealist and humanitarian socialism in the *Manifesto*, his views toward a human centered movement of history are more clearly explained in his earlier unpublished work “The German Ideology,” written with Friedrich Engels in 1845. In fact, Marx and Engels later wrote that they wrote the “Ideology” specifically to purge themselves of any idealistic or utopian influence, and begin to render communism into scientific and

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rational terms.\textsuperscript{128} It is a much more detailed account of Marx’s early attempts at scientific socialism.

Marx wrote that the historical progression was not the result of a Hegelian World Sprit or Hess’s philosophy of the act, but rather, that history was driven by economic factors. Specifically, historical events ensued from any given societies’ adaptation to newer economic conditions.\textsuperscript{129} Teleology was materialistic. Simply put, when an earlier form of intercourse (i.e. cottage industry) could no longer keep pace with the new productive powers (industrial technology of the late 18\textsuperscript{th} into the 19\textsuperscript{th} century) a new method of social intercourse developed over it (the factory system, and bourgeoisie society as a whole) to accommodate the new form of production. The modes of production of any particular society determined that society’s actions or intercourse, in the form of religions, laws, ideologies and the education system. This production consisted of all of man’s material needs, from the necessities to luxuries. The ideology of any given culture stemmed from its material conditions. There was no magical force driving history; no divine spirit, it was simply the exchange between individuals, and the ensuing results of this exchange, compounded with increasingly advanced technology, unleashed forces ultimately out of man’s control.

Here is the crux of Marx’s teleology and his chief rupture with Hess. The forces engendered by the increasing human dominance of nature and human interaction between individuals were the source of history’s teleological movement. They forced outdated modes of intercourse to be destroyed. The present mode of intercourse, the bourgeoisie-capitalist society, was no exception. Marx wrote “in its economic

\textsuperscript{128} Marx, \textit{The German Ideology}, 146.

\textsuperscript{129} Marx, \textit{The German Ideology}, 137.
movement...private property [wealth, money etc] presses towards its own dissolution, but it does this only by means of a developmental course that is unconscious and takes place independently of it and against its will.\textsuperscript{130} In Marx's view, the entire bourgeoisie society was predicated on competition and the ever increasing desire of wealth on the part of the bourgeoisie. Contrary to any moral revolution, it was this ever increasing accumulation of wealth that eventually would destroy bourgeoisie-capitalist society. As an increasing number of weaker members of the bourgeoisie could no longer compete with the more powerful members of the bourgeoisie, they would swell the ranks of the proletariat. The ever more powerful but increasingly small class of bourgeoisie would basically gorge themselves on the blood of society until there was nothing left to take. Eventually, the much more numerous proletariats would overtake the remaining bourgeoisie in a violent struggle and forge the path to a true communist society. This was the end goal of history. Marx believed that he took capitalism, a system based on the accumulation of individual wealth, to its logical and inevitable conclusion.

As for a moral revolution through education, Marx retorted to Hess that neither the proletariat nor the bourgeoisie would change their situations voluntarily, neither could be gently persuaded. There was no choice to make. Rather, as a result of the increasing greed and exploitation of the bourgeoisie, the proletariat would be "forced into indignation against this inhumanity by virtue of an inexorable... absolutely imperious need." This need would be the need to reclaim their life and productive powers back from the bourgeoisie. It was this need for the recovery of their humanity

\textsuperscript{130} Marx, \textit{The German Ideology}, 186.
that would bring about the Absolute and the end of history, and man's final liberation, and this need was prefigured into history, and it is what drove all of history.  

Marx aimed his attack at the very foundations of utopian socialist thought; the foundation was the notion of human morality, and the belief that one could be brought to his moral senses through education. In an assessment of African slavery, Marx wrote in one cynical passage "slavery cannot be abolished without the steam engine and the mule and the spinning jenny." Thus, he argued that slavery in England was not ended by any humanitarian movement, or change of heart, but only by an improved mode of production that made the slave uneconomical. The plight of the modern proletariat was similar. The evils of the present capitalist system would not be rectified through education, morality or humanism. Only when the capitalist system could no longer operate effectively due to its irreconcilable contradictions would the proletariat be vindicated. To the chagrin of Hess, Marx recast morality and humanitarianism as economic adaptations to the specific stage of development within a given society. Morals and education, far from being the most effective tools to establish the true meaning of man, were simply results of economic developments in the progression of any society.

Marxism was also indicative of a larger movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the increasing appeal to science for validity. While the Scientific Revolution had seen the application of reason to the natural world, during the Enlightenment, many tried to apply reason to human behavior. Science seemed to lend certain infallibility to any theory. Hegel, Schopenhauer and Marx all appealed to the validity of science to strengthen their theories.

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132 Marx, The German Ideology, 190.
In particular, the Scottish school of thought known as Political Economy was an
eighteenth century system that sought to apply scientific laws to the economy during the
eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{133} Drawing on the Political Economists, Marx founded his system on
a seemingly scientific basis, and this formed his chief rupture with Hess. In
\textit{Phenomenology}, Hegel insisted that philosophy in the modern age be rational and
scientific. Forty years later, Marx believed that he had finally rendered Hegelian
teleology into precisely that, a scientific fact for a scientific age. This is crucial to an
understanding of Marx’s rendition for meaning. For Marx, there was no historical void,
because all events were part of the historical progression, which Marx elevated to a
scientific fact. Marx did not feel the pressures of this void as Jacobi, Schopenhauer and
to some extent Hess did. Purpose was prefigured into man’s existence and did not have
to be fought for; modern instability was not something to be feared, but rather indicative
of man’s ultimate purpose.

Hess’s teleology of volition and Marx’s scientific teleology were both methods to
appraise the events of the post-revolutionary era using Hegelianism, and more
importantly to give meaning to these events. Within the volatile climate of the nineteenth
century, and based on their appropriation of Hegelian teleology, both Hess and Marx
expected some type of epochal change. In 1847 this belief was not unfounded. A change
indeed was brewing, but it would turn out to be a change that none of the Hegelians
could ever have anticipated.

\textsuperscript{133} Marx, \textit{Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844}, 26. The political economists like
Adam Smith and later David Ricardo believed that if left to itself, capitalism would benefit all classes of
people. By the mid 1840s, this rosy view gave way to the harsh reality of mass pauperization across
Europe. Yet even in Smith and especially Ricardo’s work, the glaring contradictions of capitalism could be
detected. Marx felt that he simply took their work to its logical conclusions, which showed that capitalism
was built on antagonisms, and contained the seeds of its own destruction.
CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION: THE SPECTER OF NIHILISM

The years between the French Revolution of 1830 and the widespread European Revolutions of 1848 nurtured the Left Hegelian belief in the coming apocalypse. For many it was a time of unrest and uncertainty, but nonetheless many looked at this instability and prophesized some type of epochal change. This belief bore fruition in Paris during February of 1848.

By the later 1840s, the government of the liberal king Louis Philippe had quickly lost the support of a large part of the middle class. While the French Revolution of 1830 had empowered certain members of the middle class, mainly the richest members such as the large industrialists and agricultural owners, the overwhelming majority, particularly the lesser industrialists and the lower middle class such as the shopkeepers and printers, were still alienated from French politics. With memories of Jacobin extremism still fresh in the minds of many, the government did not want to expand the franchise to the middle classes.\(^1\) The political structure remained inflexible, and Louis Philippe continually instituted repressive reforms to quell any dissent from an increasingly tense populace. In addition, beginning in 1846, massive inflation, unemployment, falling wages and food shortages rocked Europe.\(^2\) Due to the worsening political and economic conditions, many members of the middle and working classes were increasingly unhappy and tense.

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1 Instead, they relied on the broadening of economic development to augment the number of citizens with the property qualifications to vote. While the electorate did rise from 166,000 to 241,000, it barely made an impact. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution*, 307.

The change came on February 22, 1848, when a series of peaceful political dinners held by politically active liberals and middle class intellectuals, in honor of George Washington’s birthday, was forcibly broken up by the government for engaging in what it considered subversive political activity. The members took to the streets. Many dissatisfied members of the working class also saw this as their opportunity to have themselves heard, and they joined with the liberals in a coalition that overtook the fledgling government. After Louis Philippe fled, a provisional government, composed of liberal, radical and working class members was assembled.  

Almost all of Europe was held in the grip of political repression and economic troubles, and the February revolution in Paris was the event that unleashed a deluge of similar revolutionary activity all over Europe. Berlin, Frankfurt, Leipzig, Rome, Prague and Vienna, just to name a few locations, erupted in revolution. The demands varied, some were democratic, some nationalistic, and some socialist, yet all were unified, if only briefly, for the cause of change. The events of 1789 had set society on a definitive course of action; one that many agreed could not be suppressed. Despite the efforts of the Restoration, the yearning for the ideals of the original French Revolution on the part of many thinkers and revolutionaries could not be extinguished. In 1848, many of smaller bourgeoisie and the growing working class still did not feel as if the ideals of 1789, namely “liberty, equality and fraternity,” applied to society. Many were not free or at least could not participate in government, and many still felt the weight of inequality. Thus, both liberals and radicals saw a common goal in February of 1848, a goal that had been on the lips of their revolutionary brethren in 1789: the final eradication of the power

of the nobility, the church and the old absolutist political order. Many now felt as if they had completed the work begun almost sixty years earlier.

The events of 1848 confirmed the worst fears of conservatives, and ignited the greatest hopes of the liberals and radicals. Fearing insurrections and riots, many conservative governments, such as the Prussian government of Frederick William IV, begrudgingly granted the creation of new assemblies and legislative bodies. A general election was called and on May 18, 1848. On this date, the German National Assembly convened for the first time. The early sessions of the assembly were enthusiastic and productive, they seemed to be working.

A number of Left Hegelians, including Ruge, Vischer, and second generation Hegelians, Hess, Marx and Engels, all took an active part in the revolutionary movements of 1848. Each saw the events of February of 1848 as the final fulfillment of the historical Absolute; they saw the revolutions as finally establishing the true purpose and meaning of history. For Ruge ad Vischer, the meaning of history was the establishment of a republican state, for Marx, Engels and Hess, it was the establishment of the communist state. Richard Wagner, who would later became an ardent Hegelian, was also heavily involved in the revolutions.

Ruge, the Hegelian who perhaps was the most ardent proponent of the revolutions, was a member to the Frankfurt, Berlin and Leipzig parliaments. Ruge saw the events of February of 1848 as the coming of the apocalypse because he thought they finally signaled the democratization of Germany and the end of the old order. No longer

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5 Brazill, 247.
would Germany, and Europe, be held in the clutches of the now outdated absolutist order. On the first day of the assembly, he demanded that it recognize itself as the highest political authority, even over Frederick William IV. He wrote to his wife that “the Assembly has declared itself sovereign and, like a newborn child, has given forth its first cries of life.” This was the birth of the apocalypse, the new and final age of mankind. Along with Ruge, Vischer and Wagner also agitated for republican government and popular sovereignty. Vischer had been elected as a delegate to the Leipzig parliament and Wagner participated in the assembly at Dresden.

Hess, Marx and Engels desired more radical changes than republicanism. After February, they returned to Germany and founded the radical revolutionary newspaper Neue Rheinische Zeitung, of which Marx was editor and chief. In addition, Marx and Engels had published the Communist Manifesto in 1847, and they felt that the events of February of 1848 were the Manifesto come true. The Parisian workers played a substantial part in the revolution, and Marx saw this as the beginnings of the proletariat revolution. In the Manifesto, Marx had predicted the fall of capitalism, and 1848 seemed to be the initial step. Though the Neue Rheinische Zeitung, they hoped to establish the true communist society, the Hegelian apocalypse, the end of history and true redemption of man.

For the second generation of Hegelians, Hess, Marx and Engels, as well as Ruge and Vischer, the events of the winter of 1848 were evidence of each of their specific

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6 Brazill, 245.


8 Shlomo Avineri, introduction to The Holy History of Mankind, by Moses Hess (New York: Cambridge University, 2004), xiii.
visions of the Hegelian apocalypse. The legacy of the French Revolutions of 1789 and 1830, as well as industrialization, had not borne fruit, or at least not for the majority of the people. The apocalyptic expectation of the part of these thinkers showed that many were still unsatisfied with, or were still waiting for the promises of the revolutionary period. In the void of the early nineteenth century, each sought a rational meaning in their respective visions of the future. They turned to Hegelian teleology to invest their unstable society with hope and expectation. In their eyes, similar to Hegel two generations earlier, the events of the revolutionary period were still incomplete, and 1848 marked the beginning of their completion.

Yet, in June of 1848 the coalition government in Paris had fallen apart. The middle class liberals, after a short, unsteady marriage with the working class and radical thinkers, broke with them. The economic crisis of 1846-7 eventually turned the corner, and by the 1850s, most of Europe was experiencing an unprecedented economic boom. Where the radicals, like the Hegelians in Germany, wanted complete societal change and regeneration, many of the middle class bourgeoisie only wanted more moderate reforms, and overall, a government conducive to profit and industry, which soon became a reality after the boom of 1848. Ultimately the middle classes, which also made up the bulk of the army, realigned with the conservative elements, now willing to give some democratic concessions in the name of order. The working classes and the more hopeful radical thinkers were left isolated on the barricades. Street fighting commenced, and after a few days, the working classes and radicals were easily crushed. A republic was established, and Louis Napoleon III, the nephew of Bonaparte, was elected as president. While a

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republic in name, many felt that it had betrayed the democratic ideal, because the second republic as it came to be called mainly served the needs of the bourgeoisie.\textsuperscript{10}

Despite the events in France, the assemblies in Germany held on, but they were failing under the weight of an increasingly strengthening reactionary opposition. Ruge, like many other delegates, feared the growing power of the reaction after the events of June of 1848 in Paris. In addition, also like many others, he had become disillusioned with the assembly. He attacked it, claiming that it was bogged down in bureaucratic nonsense. He felt that while the assembly vacillated under parliamentary delays, the forces of the opposition grew stronger. Ruge and others planned to organize a massive demonstration to aid revolutionaries in Vienna, because they felt if Vienna fell, as did Paris, all hope would be lost. As Ruge and the assembly grew more boisterous, Frederick William’s patience gave way. He summoned the army and ordered the assembly disbanded. The revolutionary hopes of the assembly were dashed. Ruge was ordered to leave Prussia. On his departure from Berlin, Ruge wrote “there is only romantic nonsense now.” He was exiled, left for London, and never returned to Germany.\textsuperscript{11}

Some of the other Young Hegelians had similar experiences and feelings. After the Stuttgart Assembly was disbanded in 1849 at gun point, Vischer gloomily remarked “The whole world appeared to me as gray as the grim autumn day when I went back, alone, to Tübingen.”\textsuperscript{12} While Bruno Bauer did not take an active part in the revolutionary movement he lamented that it was only an “illusion.” What all the hopes, reforms and

\textsuperscript{10} Hobsbawm, \textit{The Age of Capital}, 25.

\textsuperscript{11} Brazill, 260.

battles amounted to was “imperialism and dictatorship.” Similarly, Hess, while never giving up hope, moved to Paris in exile where he stayed the rest of his life.

Yet it was Marx that was the most disheartened with and critical toward the failed revolutions of 1848. He, like Ruge, lived out the rest of his days in exile in London. In 1852, after the dissolution of the second republic and the crowning of Louis Napoleon as dictator of France, he wrote The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte. In it, he insisted that the French Revolution of 1848 was nothing but a comic replay of the French Revolutionary movements of 1789-1815. He wrote “It was only the ghost of the old revolutions which walked in the years from 1848-1851...It was impossible to mistake this relapse in the past, for the old dates arose again, along with the old chronology.”

Essentially, like 1789, Marx saw 1848, with the crowned Napoleon III as its culmination, as a fight not for the proletariat, but a struggle to establish the power of the bourgeois against the old nobility. While he did not lose hope in the proletariat revolution, the events of 1848 to 1852 confirmed his belief that the apocalypse would not be a spontaneous event, but a slow and gradual occurrence.

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15 Despite the collapse of the Hegelian school in 1848, Marxism went on to become an extremely effective tool for the working classes. Its ideals of solidarity and community appealed to the growing union movements. From the 1870s until the First World War, the revolutionary character of Marxism was increasingly downplayed. Instead, Marxism was made compatible with current democratic bourgeois regimes, and in effect became a political party which agitated for working class reforms.

Yet, after the communist revolutionary V. I. Lenin led a communist take over of Russia in 1917, Marxism once again became a revolutionary phenomenon. Lenin scorned the likes of the reform minded Marxists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. He saw them as betraying the true core of Marxism, which was not to accommodate the existing government, but to destroy it. Lenin adhered to many of Marx’s ideas (in some cases with extreme violence against the people he was claiming to fight for), such as the formation of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the abolition of bourgeois private
Richard Wagner also had his share of disappointment. He spent 1849 in exile, still hopeful after the disappointments in Paris a year earlier. Yet, when he heard the news of the coup d’état of Louis Napoleon in 1852, he lost all revolutionary zeal. Wagner remarked that there was no longer any “hope of the regeneration of humanity.” He sunk into a deep depression, and gave up his dreams of a better world.\footnote{For an excellent rendition of late nineteenth century Marxism, see Jones, 45.}

For the Left Hegelians, their long anticipated apocalypse was an abortion, at least for the present. While the disconcerting events of 1848 tempered their ideas of teleology, none of them ever resorted to faith or nihilism; for the most part they all still believed that history had meaning. Yet, among thinkers, they were now in the minority. In 1851, Schopenhauer seemed to punctuate the discontent held by many, and take a direct stab at the Hegelians. His scorn of all political movements put the failures of 1848 in a grim perspective. He wrote “it is easy to see the ignorance...of those philosophers who, in pompous phrases, represent the state as the supreme goal and greatest achievement of mankind.” For him, the revolutions of 1848 were not the first steps of any political or societal regeneration; rather, they were just evidence of the unchangeable violent nature of man, and ultimately the utter purposelessness of existence.

While it is hard to argue that a single event such as the failed revolutions of 1848 changed history almost overnight, the revolutions were a turning point for many in European society. Before 1848, Schopenhauer had a handful of minor followers, most notably the philosopher Julius Frauenstadt, who was a student at the University of Berlin, property, and the emancipation of women. Yet, after his death in 1924, and the rise of Josef Stalin in 1929, it soon became clear that the ideas of Marxism were only given lip service in the Soviet Union, formerly Russia. Stalin and later leaders like Mao Zedong of China and Pol Pot of Cambodia, hijacked Marxism and used it to commit some of the most grievous errors of Marxism, which was to erect a harsh political state that exploited the majority of its citizens, dominated by a small group of self seeking bureaucrats. For an excellent rendition of late nineteenth century Marxism, see Jones, 45.
as well as two lawyers, Doss and Becker. Nonetheless, Arthur Schopenhauer was still relatively unknown in 1848. Yet the seedbed had been prepared for his pessimistic views to germinate later in the century. After 1848, movements based of societal regeneration and idealistic Absolutes no longer attracted many followers. In the words of Hobsbawm, Hegel had become a “deflated balloon.” By the 1850s, Schopenhauer’s pessimism seemed a perfect fit; it soon became part of the higher education curriculum in German universities, starting at the University of Bonn in 1857. Schopenhauer died in 1859, but he was alive long enough to enjoy his own belated victory, and he relished in it.

The rise of Schopenhauer’s influence after the failed revolutions of 1848 is well documented. Bryan Magee wrote that the Young Hegelians, despite their differences, shared a sense of optimism, a sense that things were getting better. Yet the disastrous events of 1848 and the following years made many turn away from the once influential theories of the Hegelians. The philosopher R.J. Hollingdale also argued that Schopenhauer’s success lay in his denial of optimism and teleology, which seemed a much better fit for the later nineteenth century. Similarly, Paul Gottfried argued that it was not so much the revolutions of 1848 that hastened the demise of Hegelianism and the rise of Schopenhauer, but rather the gradual rise of science, religious criticism.

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16 Magee, 354.
17 Magee, 309.
18 Magee, 419.
19 Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital, 252.
industrialization and imperialism of the later nineteenth century. What remains accurate despite the various interpretations is the fact that Hegelian teleology lost its appeal during the second half of the nineteenth century, beginning around 1848; and it gave way to Schopenhauer’s non-teleological theories.

This paper has taken a different approach from the aforementioned approaches to the demise of Hegelianism by positing the adoption of Hegelianism and Schopenhauerianism by later thinkers in regards to Jacobi’s ultimatum. Hegel and his followers turned to history in order to answer Jacobi’s challenge and interpret the events of their age, and ultimately to save existence from the likes of Schopenhauer’s nihilism. Undoubtedly, the cornerstone of the Hegelian argument for meaning in history rested with their treatment of the French Revolution. The violence of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars represented a clear challenge to the notion of meaning in history. Thus, if the events in France from 1789 to 1815 could be integrated into a system of human development, if they could be given a purpose, then the entire course of European, as well as global history, would follow suit.

Marx’s attitude toward the French Revolution as opposed to Hegel’s served as a crucial indicator to measure the drastic change in the tenor of nineteenth century thought. Where Hegel saw the French Revolution as the end of history, Marx saw it as a necessary step, but not the end. The ensuing events from 1789 illustrated to the radical Hegelians that there was still much work to be done in achieving their goal of social regeneration and of establishing a purposeful existence for man within the void of the early nineteenth century.

\[21\] Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche*, 349.
The middle of the nineteenth century looked radically different than the first half, and this is the main reason for the transformation and ultimate rejection of the Hegelian system. With the prospects of the long anticipated but failed revolutions of 1848, industrialization, the rise of capitalism and science, some thinkers of the post 1848 generation turned to the ideas of Schopenhauer. These material factors led many later thinkers to lean toward Schopenhauer's nihilism and away from Jacobi's faith and Hegel's teleology. What Schopenhauer's ascension, as well as Hegel's rejection, in the academic world was in some ways indicative of, was that a good number of intellectuals and academics no longer considered teleology a viable method to interpret the events of the modern age.

Schopenhauer's ideas influenced a small but influential number of thinkers during the latter half of the nineteenth century. While these thinkers did not form any coherent group or unit like the Hegelians, they each appropriated Schopenhauer's pessimism and ideas of historical meaninglessness into their own works in various ways. One of the earliest converts to Schopenhauerianism was Wagner, formerly a

22 Magee, 288 and Gottfried, 245. Specifically, the scientist Charles Darwin, whose ideas of natural selection and survival of the fittest, as put forth in his work On the Origins of Species, published in 1859, had a major influence on nineteenth century thought. Darwin bluntly stated that all of existence was simply a brutal "struggle for existence," and the strongest had the best chance of winning. Darwin repeatedly took aim at any notion of teleology or rational progression in Species. He wrote: "It is so easy to hide our ignorance under such expressions as the 'plan of creation' or the 'unity of design.'" The only meaning in history for Darwin was survival and strength, not any predetermined or rational goals.

Many Europeans, and mainly those of the bourgeois classes, saw the nineteenth century as a time of progress and optimism. Yet, this notion of progress was completely antithetical to Hegelian teleology. It was based solely on competition, strength and survival. In glaring contradiction to Hegelianism, this progress was devoid of any reason, it was only for the strongest, not for the destined, rational or the just. By the 1870s, Darwinism had permeated European thinking and had been translated from biology to society. The notion of survival of the fittest was used to justify the cutthroat nature of capitalism, the ensuing pauperism, imperialism, and European world dominance in general. This became known as Social Darwinism and more loosely, as progress and optimism. Charles Darwin, On the Origin of Species (New York: Bantam Books, 1999), 3, 399 and 400. Also see Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution, 45 and Jacques Barzun, Darwin, Marx, Wagner: Critique of a Heritage, 2d ed. (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1958), 55.
Feuerbachian. After his disenchantment with the revolutions, he discovered Schopenhauer in 1854. Wagner remarked that he had translated Schopenhauer’s pessimism into the realm of music. The Swedish historian Jacob Burckhardt was also profoundly influenced by Schopenhauer. Specifically, Schopenhauer’s abhorrence of any teleological ideas pervaded Burckhardt’s view of history. Later, in the 1860s, a Prussian artillery captain turned philosopher, Eduard von Hartmann, after seeing the horrors of war, used Schopenhauer’s theories to advocate a collective suicide of humanity. His work, *The Philosophy of the Unconscious*, was published in 1869. While forgotten today, it had a tremendous impact on one of the most renowned thinkers of the twentieth century; Sigmund Freud.

In 1873, Friedrich Nietzsche, arguably one of the most influential philosophers of the nineteenth century approached the Hegel and Schopenhauer debate within the new parameters of scientific thought, capitalism and the recent unification of Germany. He did this by attacking the former Hegelian, David Strauss. Nietzsche’s attack on Strauss served as a striking example of the victory of Schopenhauerianism over Hegelian teleology in the works of later thinkers, and in a wider sense, as a confirmation of this thesis.

Strauss, the once controversial inaugurator of Young Hegelianism, no longer held the intellectual influence he had held forty years earlier. His works were not widely read, and Hegelianism in general ceased to be an influential force in the academic world.

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23 In 1871, Germany defeated France in the Franco-Prussian War. After the Franco-Prussian War, Germany was undoubtedly the strongest military power on the continent. This upset the balance of power between the European nations, because now all feared Germany and Germany feared all. German nationalism took hold of many Germans after unification, and this became glaringly obvious and threatening to other non-Germans. Subsequently, this German nationalism was one of the contributing factors of World War I. Magee, 419.
While Strauss had discarded his Hegelianism, Nietzsche still detected traces of Hegelian teleology in his works. Ironically, Nietzsche lumped Strauss’s use of teleology with capitalism and Darwinism (despite their opposition as noted above) as tools of reaction, as a method to uphold the status quo and stifle any creativity.

Nietzsche wrote his *Untimely Meditations*, composed of four lengthy essays. The first essay of his work was entitled “David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer.” In it, Nietzsche condemned Strauss’s latest work, *The Old Faith and the New* as a piece of reactionary rubbish. He then used this critique as a springboard to criticize German culture as a whole. He argued that Strauss, like so many other Germans, simply groveled before German culture. Strauss waved the flags for the military, he hailed Germany as the greatest nation on earth, he reveled in man’s scientific progress specifically Darwinism, but above all, he saw all of these events as proof of man’s, but really Germany’s, cultural and intellectual progress.24

Nietzsche did not buy into any of it. For Nietzsche the German society of the 1870s was not in a phase in any progression of history. Rather, he saw late nineteenth century Prussia as a society where government, militarism, science and capitalism, far from being any progressive or spiritual endeavors, had turned man into lifeless automata, like Strauss who mindlessly regurgitated prefabricated slogans. Despite this, many still hailed these institutions as markers of true culture. In Nietzsche’s estimation, true culture was meant to foster creativity and strength, it was meant to challenge and bring new life. Yet, late nineteenth Prussian culture condemned any type of vigor or creativity; these

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were dangerous, they had the potential to call into question Germany’s supposed greatness.25

Nietzsche specifically condemned Strauss’s use of teleology to justify this pseudo-culture. He argued that Hegelian teleology did not allow for any creativity, because while it prophesized change, it saw the present as absolutely necessary, no matter how unsatisfactory. Specifically regarding Hegel, Nietzsche wrote “He who had once contracted Hegelism...is never quite cured.”26 Hegelianism was a sickness because it deified whatever was successful, no matter how base, gross or unjust, in the name of progress. In 1873, less than forty years after Strauss’s controversial publication of *Life of Jesus* and his implicating use of Hegelian teleology, Nietzsche had reduced teleology to a disease of conservatism.

As a cure to this sickness of teleology, Nietzsche turned to Schopenhauer. In the third essay, entitled “Schopenhauer as Educator,” Nietzsche wrote that Schopenhauer taught him the value of pessimism.27 He taught him how to hate what everyone else loved. Conversely, Nietzsche recalled how Strauss condemned Schopenhauer because of Schopenhauer’s attack on modernity. Strauss could still not admit that existence was meaningless; he still wrapped himself in the garb of Hegelianism to give history and life some meaning.28 Yet the secret was out. Nietzsche argued that the values of his society were predicated on the achievement of idle happiness and the accumulation of maximum profit. Thus, he desired to be a “Schopenhauerian Man,” because Schopenhauer was not

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fooled like Hegel and Strauss. Schopenhauer saw through the propaganda and flag waving, he despised his society's vision of happiness and all its illusionary promises.

Yet, Nietzsche only used Schopenhauerian pessimism as a means to an end. In a way, Nietzsche was similar to the Hegelians. Nietzsche did not want to capitulate to nihilism, but he did recognize it. A true hero had to admit that existence was nihilistic and meaningless, like Schopenhauer, but unlike Schopenhauer, this true hero had to affirm his existence despite this. Only from this despair and proclamation of meaninglessness, not in religion, science, profit, evolution or teleology, could modern man create meaning for himself. In his later work, *The Gay Science*, published in 1882, Nietzsche would go on to declare God had died and man had killed him. This declaration was more than one of anti-religionist sentiment. For Nietzsche, what had died was man's reliance on a transcendental source for purpose and meaning.

In many ways Nietzsche completed the circuit begun by Jacobi. Writing at the end of the eighteenth century, Jacobi recognized nihilism, but retreated to faith to give life meaning. Hegel, writing in the beginning of the nineteenth century, and his followers, writing toward the middle, rejected nihilism and rather sought refuge in teleology and history, but their vision ultimately failed. Schopenhauer, also writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, resigned to nihilism and saw history and all life as meaningless. In contrast to all these approaches, Nietzsche, writing at the end of the century confronted nihilism, but sought to establish a meaning in *spite* of it. Eighty-four years after Jacobi sought purpose in God, Nietzsche pronounced that same God dead.

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In the beginning of the Manifesto, Marx wrote that communism was a specter haunting Europe. This paper has tried to illustrate that there was another specter haunting Europe in 1847; that of nihilism. Jacobi first elucidated it in the 1790s as a response to the Reign of Terror. The bulk of this paper chronicled how Hegel and his followers tried to exorcize this demon without a resort to traditional Christian faith because it threatened the very existence of man. They instead used teleology and history. Yet all the while, Schopenhauer had waged a patient war against their use of teleology. His pessimistic writings combined with the failures of 1848 and the developments of the later nineteenth century led some thinkers to accept a nihilistic existence first hinted at by Jacobi.

In a much wider sense and unbeknownst to them, Hegelian teleology, along with Young Hegelianism, represented a bulwark against Schopenhauer’s nihilistic declaration. Despite their eventual failure at the hands of Schopenhauer, the efforts of the Young Hegelians were not in vain. Unlike Jacobi and Schopenhauer, the Young Hegelians believed that history and all existence was worth fighting for in the face of the void. The study of Hegelianism and its failure, along with the study of later thinkers such as Nietzsche, Schmitt and Foucault, reveal nothing to modernity if not the immense difficulty of waging this fight.
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PAPERS PRESENTED


FUNDING
  March 2008, Hampton Roads Educators Credit Union Scholarship
  (Excellence in teaching award, $1,500 toward graduate education)