

How Hegelian Was Marx? A Contribution to the History of Marx and Young Hegelianism

Among the various reminiscences of Marx and Engels left by their friends and acquaintances there is an especially interesting account written in 1927 by a Russian socialist, A. M. Voden. He recalled meeting Engels in London, in 1893, and spending much time discussing Marx's ideas and unpublished writings. Despite the fact that many decades had passed and that all anecdotes must be taken with a grain of salt, Voden's story still contains much of interest. For example, he related that

When I asked whether Marx was ever a Hegelian in the strict sense of the word, Engels answered that the very thesis on the differences between Democritus and Epicurus allows us to state that at the very beginning of his literary career, Marx, who had completely mastered Hegel's dialectical method and had not yet been obliged by the course of his studies to replace it by the materialist dialectical method, showed perfect independence of Hegel in the application of Hegel's own dialectics, and that in the very sphere in which Hegel was strongest – the history of thought.¹

This is a terribly intriguing point. According to Voden's testimony, Engels argued that from the very beginning Marx had not only mastered Hegel's method, but applied it with a full independence; thus, he implied that Marx was already beyond, or moving beyond Hegel. This, of course, runs counter to the Soviet interpretation of so-called "Marxist Philosophy," i.e. the mythical "dialectical materialism."² This view held that when Marx was young he was a Hegelian idealist and only later transitioned, thanks to Feuerbach, towards materialism.

The standard Soviet biography of Marx makes the claim that, during the writing of his doctoral thesis, Marx "on the whole" remained "a Hegelian, an idealist" but was also "outspokenly an atheist."³ This is, of course, absurd. While the full reasons for why this is will be discussed below, for now I will simply point out that although a subjective idealist, like Fichte, could be an atheist, an objective idealist cannot, and that was exactly what Hegel was.⁴ Since no one has, to this day, dared to describe Marx as a subjective idealist, the contradiction in the Soviet position is glaring. This is seen even more in the case of T. Oizerman whose work is directly premised on defending and supporting the views of that same biography.⁵ He made the incorrect claim that Marx's thesis was "written in the light of Hegel's idealism."⁶ He further wrote, more specifically, that since "Marx still takes the idealistic approach, he puts an idealistic interpretation on Epicurean physics, regarding the motion of the atom as an expression of its

¹ A. Voden, "Talks with Engels," in *Reminiscences of Marx and Engels* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d.), 332-333.

² Jason Devine, "On the "Philosophy" of "Dialectical Materialism"," accessed 28 July 2023, <https://links.org.au/philosophy-dialectical-materialism>.

³ P.N. Fedoseyev, et. al., *Karl Marx: A Biography* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 34.

⁴ Interestingly, Engels himself noted, in one of the texts that the Soviet ideology of dialectical materialism is based upon, that "Those who asserted the primacy of spirit to nature and, therefore, in the last instance, assumed world creation in some form or other – and among the philosophers, Hegel, for example, this creation often becomes still more intricate and impossible than in Christianity – comprised the camp of idealism." It is impossible to assert atheism and yet assume "world creation," since atheism is precisely the denial of the latter.

⁵ T.I. Oizerman, *The Making of the Marxist Philosophy* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 10.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 50.

materiality, and its declination as the ideal in-itself-being of the atom.”⁷ Finally he claimed that “Marx still failed to see the fundamental untenability of the basis of Hegel’s idealism.”⁸ These assertions are simply wrong. The question of the atom will be discussed further on, but anyone who has bothered to study Hegel knows that the basis of his idealism is, as Marx later noted, precisely his belief in a higher being, in a god.⁹ For Marx to criticise the idea of god and yet fail to see how that idea was untenable is the absurd conclusion to which this myth of Marx’s idealism is driven.

The basic contradiction in the Soviet position here, as noted above, is the claim that Marx was an objective, i.e. Hegelian, idealist and yet an atheist. To square this circle, Oizerman engaged in page after page of cherry-picking, quoting out of context, and extensive sophistry. It would take us too far afield to refute every crass error, but two more examples must suffice. Oizerman claimed that although Marx was writing about the ancient materialists Democritus and Epicurus, that did “not at all indicate that at that time he had already adopted the ideas of materialism.”¹⁰ Atheism is one of the basic positions of any materialism and so as Marx was already, as will be seen later, aggressively atheist, clearly he had adopted some “ideas of materialism.” However, Oizerman also seized upon Marx’s dedication to his future father-in-law, Ludwig von Westphalen, where he referred positively to “idealism.” However, he selectively quoted only one line, giving a false impression.¹¹ Here is Marx wrote about “idealism:”

May everyone who doubts of the Idea be so fortunate as I, to be able to admire an old man who has the strength of youth, who greets every forward step of the times with the enthusiasm and the prudence of truth and who, with that profoundly convincing sun-bright idealism which alone knows the true word at whose call all the spirits of the world appear, never recoiled before the deep shadows of retrograde ghosts, before the often dark clouds of the times, but rather with godly energy and manly confident gaze saw through all veils the empyreum which burns at the heart of the world. *You, my fatherly*

⁷ Ibid., 51.

⁸ Ibid., 54.

⁹ “My dialectical method is, in its foundations, not only different from the Hegelian, but exactly opposite to it. For Hegel, the process of thinking, which he even transforms into an independent subject, under the name of ‘the Idea’, is the creator of the real world, and the real world is only the external appearance of the idea. With me the reverse is true: the ideal is nothing but the material world reflected in the mind of man, and translated into forms of thought.” Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One*, tran. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 102; “Does not the sublime Christian knowledge of God as Triune merit respect of a wholly different order...I am a Lutheran, and through philosophy have been at once completely confirmed in Lutheranism.” G.W.F. Hegel, “Hegel to Tholuck, Berlin, July 3, 1826,” in G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel: The Letters*, trans. Clark Butler and Christiane Seiler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 520; “God is the one and only object of philosophy. [Its concern is] to occupy itself with God, to apprehend everything in him, to lead everything back to him, as well as to derive everything particular from God and to justify everything only insofar as it stems from God, is sustained through its relationship with him... Thus philosophy is theology, and [one’s] occupation with philosophy – or rather in philosophy – is of itself the service of God.” G.W.F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: Volume 1, Introduction and the Concept of Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, tran. R.F. Brown, P.C. Hodgson, and J.M. Stewart (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007), 84; “Instead, what is implied by all that we have said so far is that there may be religion without philosophy, but there cannot be philosophy without religion, because philosophy includes religion within it.” Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, 12.

¹⁰ Ibid., 55.

¹¹ Ibid., 58.

friend, were always a living *argumentum ad oculos* to me, that idealism is no figment of the imagination, but a truth.¹²

The majority of Marx's writings before his doctoral thesis was poetry and he even wrote an entire book of poems to his father in 1837.¹³ Thus it is no surprise that Marx's dedication here is poetical to the point of being high flown. Yet, what is abundantly clear from the above, especially when one is not wearing ideological blinders, is that Marx was talking about *ethical idealism*, not *philosophical idealism*. Marx did not praise God or Hegel's system, but his father-in-law for his positive and progressive outlook, for looking forward to the future, and not giving into horrible events and happenings. This can be no surprise, as Marx and Westphalen used to chat while walking through the countryside when Marx as still a young boy; of these occasions, "Marx was fondest of recalling those in which Westphalen awakened in him his first interest in the character and teachings of Saint-Simon."¹⁴ It was old Westphalen's ethical idealism, the belief in the possibility of a better world, that Marx esteemed, just as he and Engels esteemed the utopian socialists for the same reason.¹⁵

The Soviet perspective on the development of Marx was simply not based on facts, but, ultimately, on the authority of Lenin viz. on what he had said as if he were *the* expert on the life of Marx.¹⁶ Rather than admit that Lenin was incorrect, generations of Soviet ideologues set out

¹² Karl Marx, "Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works, Volume 1: 1835-1843* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 28.

¹³ Karl Marx, "A Book of Verse Dedicated by Marx to His Father," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works, Volume 1: 1835-1843* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 533-632.

¹⁴ Boris Nicolaievsky and Otto Maenchen-Helfen, *Karl Marx: Man and Fighter* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), 27.

¹⁵ "The Socialist and Communist systems, properly so called, those of Saint-Simon, Fourier, Owen, and others, spring into existence in the early undeveloped period...of the struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie... Such fantastic pictures of future society, painted at a time when the proletariat is still in a very undeveloped state and has but a fantastic conception of its own position, correspond with the first instinctive yearnings of that class for a general reconstruction of society. But these Socialist and Communist publications contain also a critical element. They attack every principle of existing society. Hence, they are full of the most valuable materials for the enlightenment of the working class." Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), 60-61. "The first socialists (Fourier, Owen, Saint-Simon, etc.), since social conditions were not sufficiently developed to allow the working class to constitute itself as a militant class, were necessarily obliged to limit themselves to dreams about the *model society* of the future...But while we cannot repudiate these patriarchs of socialism, just as chemists cannot repudiate their forebears the alchemists, we must at least avoid falling back into their mistakes." Karl Marx, "Political Indifferentism," in Karl Marx, *Political Writings Volume III: The First International and After*, ed. David Fernbach (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 329. "These new social systems were foredoomed as Utopian; the more completely they were worked out in detail, the more they could not avoid drifting off into pure phantasies...We can leave it to the literary small fry to solemnly quibble over these phantasies, which today only make us smile, and to crow over the superiority of their own bald reasoning, as compared with such 'insanity'. For ourselves, we delight in the stupendously grand thoughts and germs of thought that everywhere break out through their phantastic covering, and to which these Philistines are blind." Frederick Engels, "Socialism: Utopian and Scientific," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), 403.

¹⁶ "Lenin attached prime importance to the analysis of the development of Marxism... While some of their early works were first published after Lenin's death... Lenin's indication of the principal specific aspects of the shaping of the Marxist philosophy remains of paramount importance." Oizerman, *The Making of the Marxist Philosophy*, 12-13.

to trim the facts to fit their preconceived notion and thus defend and buttress Lenin's authority.¹⁷ However, as I have shown previously, Lenin's understanding of Marx's development and his relation to Young Hegelianism was gained second-hand via Plekhanov, and the latter openly distorted the relationship between Marx and Feuerbach. Further, Lenin did not study Hegel directly until late in life.¹⁸ Reading what Lenin wrote about Marx can really only tell us what the former thought about the latter. Therefore, it is best not to commit a logical fallacy and base our understanding of this question on Lenin's authority, but, instead, refer back to actual sources, to the actual participants. In this way it will be proven that the idea that Marx was a Hegelian idealist is pure myth, one which is related to what can be termed the Feuerbach myth.

I am arguing, then, that there is a kernel of truth to Voden's anecdote. The two reasons why this is so is because: 1. Marx was never a member of the Hegelian school proper and 2. In his thesis Marx was already beyond Hegel. Specifically, in his doctoral dissertation he critically utilised Hegel's dialectical method, disagreed with the latter's estimation of Epicurus, and promoted atheist positions. Consequently, he was never an advocate of Hegelian idealism. I will first, therefore, discuss the historical development of the Young Hegelian movement and then turn to an analysis of Marx's work on Epicurus. I will thus prove historically and logically that Marx was never a Hegelian and show why he was able to break from the limitations of Young Hegelianism earlier than anyone.

Marx was not a Hegelian for the basic reason that he was never a member of Hegel's school, nor could he have been. He had never attended any of Hegel's lectures, as Hegel died before he entered university. Nor did he publish any works in the Hegelian journal, the *Berliner Jahrbucher fur wissenschaftliche Kritik*. Thus, understandably, he was never considered a member by actual participants of that school. As to the Young Hegelian movement, it lasted less than half the time the Hegelian school existed and neither Marx nor Engels initiated it and were only active leaders in its final stages. That is, Marx's proximity to Hegel was quite removed in that he only came to study Hegel after the latter's death.

The Hegelian school took shape in the last ten years of Hegel's life, during the 1820s.¹⁹ It was capped with the foundation of the school's above-mentioned journal in 1826. The main spirit in creating the journal was Marx's future professor Eduard Gans.²⁰ Johann Eduard

¹⁷ The need to hold up Lenin's authority as infallible was rooted in the ideological needs of the Soviet bureaucracy, specifically the need to maintain legitimacy. This is one of the reasons why, as I have noted before, the Soviet philosophy of dialectical materialism was not a science, but an *ideology*. Jason Devine, "'Dialectical materialism,' ideology and revisionism," accessed 29 July 2023, <https://links.org.au/dialectical-materialism-ideology-and-revisionism>. See also, Alexander Surmava, "Marxism: from ideology to science," accessed 29 July 2023, https://ww.wacade.mia.edu/83600036/Marxism_from_ideology_to_science.

¹⁸ Jason Devine, "On Lenin's Materialism and Empirio-Criticism: Critical Comments on a Confused Philosophy," accessed 29 July 2023, <https://links.org.au/lenins-materialism-and-empirio-criticism-critical-comments-confused-philosophy>; Jason Devine, "From Kautsky and the Bolsheviks, to Hegel and Marx: Dialectics, the triad and triplicity," accessed 29 July 2023, <https://links.org.au/kautsky-and-bolsheviks-hegel-and-marx-dialectics-triad-and-triplicity>.

¹⁹ Tom Rockmore, *Before & After Hegel: A Historical Introduction to Hegel's Thought* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2003), 139.

²⁰ Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 535-536, 538.

Erdmann, one of Hegel's students and an Old Hegelian, wrote the following in his important, three-volume *History of Philosophy*:

To the fortunate position of the harvester which was above assigned to Hegel, the good-fortune was also added that, just as the first steps of those who intended to carry him out were heard before the door, and the first signs indicated that even upon the basis laid by him dispute was possible, he died. He lived to see the culmination of his doctrine, and the existence of a completely formed School, which in the *Berliner Jahrbucher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*, called into life by him, as well as in their own works, sought to maintain the principles of his philosophy in the most varied spheres.²¹

The second volume of Erdmann's work culminated with the Hegelian school and it is significant that Marx was not mentioned once in that work. More importantly, the "dispute" that Erdmann alluded to was the famous split in the Hegelian school. Hegel had died in 1831 and immediately his students worked to publish his work in eighteen volumes.²² The unity in the school did not last long, as they began to split in 1834 and by 1837 there were two separate groups. The birth of the Young Hegelian movement was the final death of the Hegelian school. The Young Hegelian movement ended in 1843 and by 1844 it no longer existed. Thus, Hegelianism dissolved between 1834 and 1837 and Young Hegelianism dissolved between 1842 and 1843.

Certainly, there has been some disagreement about the actual life span of Young Hegelianism. For example, Lawrence Stepelevich has argued that as "an identifiable philosophic movement, Young Hegelianism endured for less than two decades, from 1830 to 1848."²³ Specifically, he claimed that what he also termed a "school, ... first appeared in Feuerbach's ignored treatise, *Gedanken über Tod und Unsterblichkeit*, and it made its last coherent expression in Karl Schmidt's *Das Verstandestum und das Individuum*."²⁴ There are some problems with this however. First, while it is undoubtedly true that Feuerbach's work was one of the intellectual antecedents of Young Hegelianism, it is actually a fully Hegelian work, both in method and in outlook.²⁵ Thus it predates his actual break with Hegelianism, his 1839 piece "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy"²⁶

The other difficulty here is that we cannot speak of Young Hegelianism as a school in the same meaningful way we speak of a Hegelian school. There was no head of the school, such as we may speak of Epicureans, Socratics, Platonists, or, indeed, Hegelians. While there were common concerns, above all that of religion, there was no shared framework in the sense of a

²¹ Johann Eduard Erdmann, *History of Philosophy, Volume II: Modern Philosophy*, tran. Williston S. Hough (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co Limd., 1897), 701.

²² *Ibid.*, 683.

²³ Lawrence S. Stepelevich, "Introduction," in *The Young Hegelians: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence S. Stepelevich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁵ "God is life, love, consciousness Spirit, nature, time, space everything, in both its unity and distinction... God is immortal." Ludwig Feuerbach, *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*, tran. James A. Massey (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 173.

²⁶ Ludwig Feuerbach, "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy," in Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Fiery Brook: Selected Writings*, tran. Zawar Hanfi (New York: Verso, 2012), 53-96.

basic philosophical system; for each took out of Hegel what he deemed important. There is also a level of conscious identification that exists viz. participants have to identify themselves or be identified by others as actually being a part of a definable school. As we will see, nobody used the term Young Hegelian until after 1835. Finally, whether we use the term “school,” or more properly “movement,” there was no organized, unified, or coherent grouping of people adhering to Young Hegelianism until the late 1830s. Stepelevich therefore dates the birth of Young Hegelianism too early and its death too late.

Far closer to the truth is David McLellan. He has argued that, in regards to “the Young Hegelians, it is impossible to speak of a ‘movement’ before about 1840,” and that “by the end of 1844 the Young Hegelian movement was dead as a coherent force.”²⁷ McLellan was wrong about his assertion that there was no Young Hegelian movement before 1840, but his dating of the end is far more plausible. My own view is more in line with that of William Brazill who has pinpointed the beginning of the movement with the 1835 publication of “David Friedrich Strauss’s *Life of Jesus*,” and placed the end at 1843, because as “the *Hallische Jahrbucher* was the organ of the Young Hegelian party, whatever organizational unity that party had was provided by the journal. The foundation of the journal in 1838, its course of development, and its final suppression in 1843, formed the external history of the Young Hegelian party.”²⁸

Wolfgang Eßbach, in his wide-ranging, sociological study of the Young Hegelian movement argues that the movement existed about seven years, from 1838 to 1845/46.²⁹ The latter dating is, again, far too late and, for that matter, so is the beginning. For he went on to point out that in 1837 groups of Young Hegelians could be found in three different cities.³⁰ This makes complete sense, as in the same year Arnold Ruge and others had come up with idea of founding a periodical to counter the Hegelian journal.³¹ This was the *Hallische Jahrbucher* and Ruge went on a trip, as the editor, to promote it and to connect the different Young Hegelian circles and groups together.³² That is, while these spontaneous clubs formed and carried on study groups, discussions, debates, and writing letters across the country, it was moving towards an organized basis.³³ Ruge’s goal was to make the journal the “rallying-point” for Young

²⁷ David McLellan, *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx* (London: Macmillan, 1969), 6, 47.

²⁸ William J. Brazill, *The Young Hegelians* (London: Yale University Press, 1970), 6, 76.

²⁹ “Von 1838 bis 1845/46 hat ein junghegelianischer Gruppenzusammenhang bestanden, in dem die vier verschiedenen Selbstdefinitionen der Gruppe durchdiskutiert und experimentiert wurden.” Wolfgang Eßbach, *Die Junghegelianer: Soziologie einer Intellektuellengruppe* (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1988), 25.

³⁰ “Etwa um 1837 sind junghegelianische Gruppen - abgesehen von Tübingen - in Berlin und in Halle nachweisbar. Anfang der 40er Jahre haben sich in Köln sowie in Königsberg Gruppenzusammenhänge herausgebildet, die junghegelianisch genannt werden können.” Ibid., 40.

³¹ “In Halle entsteht 1837 in einem Kreis junger Privatdozenten, Professoren und Lehrer um Arnold Ruge die Idee einer Zeitschrift, die sich als Gegenprojekt zu den von Hegel gegründeten Berliner Jahrbüchern (JWK) versteht.” Ibid., 40.

³² This was later echoed by Marx and Engels who emphasised the movement-building importance that radical publications have, and which, even later, was repeated by Lenin.

³³ Eßbach, *Die Junghegelianer*, 41, 46.

Hegelianism.³⁴ Sidney Hook has therefore rightly argued that, in his role as editor, “Arnold Ruge was the central figure of the Young Hegelian movement.”³⁵

Of inestimable value for the study of this question is Erdmann’s already-mentioned *History*. His third volume is concerned with the development and decomposition of the Hegelian school. Erdmann pointed out that after Hegel’s death the school came under increasing attacks from anti-Hegelians and so to the members of their school fell “the role of defenders, who partly explain the teaching of the master, and partly give it greater definiteness in those points in which it had been left indefinite.”³⁶ In the context of clarifying, refining, and defending the Hegelian system, a debate opened in the school’s ranks on the question of the immortality of the soul. Although Feuerbach’s work, *Thoughts on Death and Immortality*, was the first Hegelian publication on this issue, Erdmann pointed out that it “made no impression on the rest of the Hegelians,” and this was not only because “of the invectives against Marheineke and some allusions which might be taken as referring to Hegel...but in particular because its arguments rested wholly on the contrast of infinite and finite, essence and appearance, etc., beyond which, according to Hegel, only the abstract understanding does not get.”³⁷

It was not until the Hegelian Friedrich Richter published two works in 1833 that the debate truly began. He aimed at proving that “according to Hegel’s principles, an enduring personal existence is out of the question.”³⁸ The following year saw the appearance of “criticism by Göschel...of the works of Richter...which, not unreasonably, had been anxiously awaited by the School; for it is from its appearance that the split in the School dates which, ever since Strauss uttered his witty conceit, has been known as the contrast of the Right and Left sides.”³⁹ Thus the Hegelian school first split in 1834. The division became deeper as, in the words of Erdmann, “the interest felt by the Hegelian school in the philosophy of religion had been transferred from the anthropological question to the christological, in connection with which...the gulf which separated the two sides from each other was to become visible.”⁴⁰ The christological turn, which became “the essentially burning question in the Hegelian school,” was initiated by the 1835 publication of David Friedrich Strauss’ *The Life of Jesus*.⁴¹ Strauss faced attacks from both inside and outside the school. His main opponent was his fellow Hegelian, Bruno Bauer. In late 1835 Bauer published, in the Hegelian journal *Berliner Jahrbucher*, a critical review of Strauss’ book in which he set forth the orthodox Hegelian view.⁴²

In 1837 Strauss not only responded to further criticisms, but he also took stock of the debate, and, most importantly, he characterised how exactly he thought the Hegelians were

³⁴ Gustav Mayer, *Friedrich Engels: A Biography* (London: Chapman & Hall, Ltd., 1936), 25.

³⁵ Sidney Hook, *From Hegel to Marx: Studies in the Intellectual Development of Karl Marx* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1971), 126.

³⁶ Johann Eduard Erdmann, *A History of Philosophy, Volume III: German Philosophy Since Hegel*, tran. Williston S. Hough (London: George Allen & Company, Ltd., 1913), 6.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 59.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 59-60.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 63, 64.

divided. In his view, the school “like the French parliament, was breaking up into two sides. On the Left he himself sits...while Goschel, Gabler, Bruno Bauer, occupy the Right, and Rosenkranz takes the Centre.”⁴³ More specifically, the division of Hegelians concerned how far “they were willing to accommodate the Christian revelation into the system of philosophy. Right Hegelians held that all, center Hegelians held that some, and left Hegelians held that none of the Christian revelation conforms to the concept or idea.”⁴⁴ In the continuing debate the Left Hegelians developed two different tendencies of pantheism and atheism, while Bruno Bauer, from being in the vanguard of Right Hegelians, ended up an atheist and the leading intellectual light of the Left Hegelians. The Right Hegelians, of course, adhered to Christian orthodoxy.⁴⁵

Finally, while Erdmann’s book went into great detail over the different debates, shifting positions, and fate of the various figures, it must be noted that he did not mention Engels once, and only mentioned Marx three times in passing.⁴⁶ This is because they were never members of the Hegelian school and only played leading roles in the Young Hegelian movement during its dissolution. However, it is significant that Erdmann never used the latter designation. That is, the division of Left, Right, and Centre was the original way in which the split was understood and accepted by those in and outside the Hegelian school. While the original split concerned religious question, the new one occurred over critically applying Hegel’s method against his system. Thus it was only afterwards that the terms Old Hegelian and Young Hegelian arose with the difference being between “Old Hegelians who had been Hegel’s students and Young Hegelians, newcomers only mediately familiar with the master’s teachings.”⁴⁷ It was only over time that Left Hegelian and Young Hegelian became synonymous. Although this makes little sense as, for example, Bauer was a leading figure among the Young Hegelians, but clearly was no newcomer as he had been one of Hegel’s students. Regardless, what matters is that the Hegelian school was at an end.

To briefly review, the Hegelian school started to split in 1834 and the division was finalised and the terms Left, Centre, and Right Hegelians were coined by Strauss in 1837. That same year Ruge and others started preparations for a new journal. In late-1837 Marx began his study of Hegel, met many of the latter’s students, and joined a Young Hegelian club in Berlin, thus entering the movement.⁴⁸ As to Engels, he only started studying Hegel in 1839 after he had

⁴³ Ibid., 66.

⁴⁴ Frederick C. Beiser, *David Friedrich Strauß, Father of Unbelief: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 10.

⁴⁵ Erdmann, *History of Philosophy, Volume III*, 69-70, 74-80,

⁴⁶ Ibid., 96, 100, 136.

⁴⁷ André Liebich, “August Cieszkowski: praxis and messianism as reform,” in August Cieszkowski, *Selected Writings of August Cieszkowski*, ed. André Liebich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 6.

⁴⁸ “I had read fragments of Hegel’s philosophy, the grotesque craggy melody of which did not appeal to me... While I was ill I got to know Hegel from beginning to end, together with most of his disciples. Through a number of meetings with friends in Stralow I came across a Doctors’ Club, which includes some university lecturers and my most intimate Berlin friend, Dr. Rutenberg. In controversy here, many conflicting views were expressed, and I became ever more firmly bound to the modern world philosophy from which I had thought to escape, but all rich chords were silenced and I was seized with a veritable fury of irony, as could easily happen after so much had been negated.” Karl Marx, “Letter from Marx to His Father,” in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works, Volume 1: 1835-1843* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 18-19.

already read Strauss.⁴⁹ He also only became an active Young Hegelian between 1841 and 1842. In that period he published articles attacking Schelling, joined the “Die Freien,” the Berlin club of Young Hegelians once known as the Doctor’s Club, and began contributing to Ruge’s new journal, the *Deutsche Jahrbücher*.⁵⁰ Marx and Engels, therefore, became Young Hegelians in time to participate in its dissolution. They were neither initiators nor leaders, and thus only arose in its death throes. Engels himself wrote an extended essay in 1843 describing the “the New, or Young Hegelians,” as a philosophical party and he referred to the “leaders of the party, such as Dr. Bruno Bauer, Dr. Feuerbach, and Dr. Ruge.”⁵¹ Marx and Engels were only designated or made into leading Young Hegelians retroactively, far after the fact. Their roles were inflated because of their later development and influence.

The socio-economic basis for the development of the Young Hegelian movement was the rapid expansion of the Prussian education system. According to Eßbach, “From 1816 to 1846, the number of elementary school students increased by 108%. Berlin University counted 910 students in the summer of 1820, and 2001 in the winter of 1833/34.”⁵² Now regardless of funding levels, with rising student enrollments there must be a minimum increase in the number of possible teaching careers. With rising literacy and knowledge, there is generally an increase in hopes for social advancement among those who are a part of the educational advance.⁵³

In this context it is fully understandable that the “Young Hegelians expect for themselves careers as part of the official intelligentsia: Koppen, Rutenberg, Stirner, Witt have passed teacher’s exams; Bayrhoffer, B. Bauer, Feuerbach, Gottschall, Marx, Nauwerck, Prutz, Rüge all expect a career as a university professor.”⁵⁴ This was true for the whole movement, as most

⁴⁹ “For I am on the point of becoming a Hegelian. Whether I shall become one I don’t, of course, know yet but Strauss has lit up lights on Hegel for me which make the thing quite plausible. His (Hegel’s) philosophy of history is anyway written as from my own heart.” Frederick Engels, “To Wilhelm Graeber,” in Frederick Engels, *Letters of the Young Engels 1838-1845* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), 124.

⁵⁰ “Dear Doctor, Enclosed please find an article for the *Jahrbücher*. I have put the Dante thing to one side for the time being. I would have sent it sooner if I had had anything like enough time. I got your letter after it had gone to a number of wrong addresses. Why didn’t I send *Schelling und die Offenbarung* to the *Jahrbücher*? 1) Because what I had in mind was a book of between 5 and 6 folios and this was cut down to 3 1/2 folios only in the course of my negotiations with the publishers. 2) Because up to then the *Jahrbücher* had been a little reserved about Schelling. 3) Because people here advised against attacking Schelling in a journal and told me rather to put out a pamphlet against him. *Schelling, der Philosoph in Christo* is also from my pen. Apart from all this, I am not a Doctor and cannot ever become one. I am only a merchant and a Royal Prussian artillerist, so kindly spare me that title. I hope to send you another manuscript very soon.” Frederick Engels, “To Arnold Ruge,” in Frederick Engels, *Letters of the Young Engels 1838-1845* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), 190; Mayer, *Friedrich Engels*, 26.

⁵¹ Frederick Engels, “Progress of Social Reform On the Continent,” in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works, Volume 3: 1843-1844* (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 403, 404, 406.

⁵² “Von 1816 bis 1846 steigt die Zahl der Volksschüler um 108 %. Die Berliner Universität zählt im Sommer 1820 910 Studenten, im Winter 1833/34 sind es 2001.” Eßbach, *Die Junghegelianer*, 117.

⁵³ The connection between educational expansion and radicalism is also to be seen in Tsarist Russia and in the USA during the 1960s.

⁵⁴ “Die Junghegelianer erwarten für sich Karrieren als Teile der beamteten Intelligenz: Koppen, Rutenberg, Stirner, Witt haben Lehrerexamen abgelegt; Bayrhoffer, B. Bauer, Feuerbach, Gottschall, Marx, Nauwerck, Prutz, Rüge erwarten für sich eine Karriere als Universitätsprofessoren. Für eine ganze Reihe von Junghegelianern handelt es sich bei dieser beruflichen Orientierung zudem um die Erwartung eines sozialen Aufstiegs durch Bildung.” Ibid., 117.

came from well-to-do, middle-class families, such as could afford to send their sons to a university...Apart from Hess and Engels, both to some extent autodidacts in philosophy since their fathers wished them to go into the family business, all the Young Hegelians wished to go in for teaching in some form or another, most of them in universities, though Koppen and Stirner taught in high schools.⁵⁵

However, this was not to be as the whole fulcrum of the movement was its increasingly radical interpretation and application of Hegel's ideas to religion and later politics. The tragedy of the Young Hegelians "was that, owing to their unorthodox ideas, the universities were gradually closed to them and they found themselves without a job and cut off from society."⁵⁶ These dashed hopes had the effect of pushing many of them even further down the radical path. Thus Toews rightly pointed out that the "failure to obtain secure academic positions was a significant factor in the transformation of some of the younger Hegelians...into radical cultural critics...The members of the Left either were *Privatdozenten* or had chosen or been forced to leave the academic profession."⁵⁷

This is wholly understandable. To dedicate one's life to not merely attaining the truth but teaching it, and then have one's hopes dashed. To not advance, but rather be shut down and shut out. To realise that keeping up the fight will bring no plaudits, but only censure. That no career will be forthcoming, but merely vistas of penury and even grinding poverty. To feel like one has let down one's self and family. That the lofty dream is merely an ongoing nightmare. In this situation it is only rational that one becomes radical, or further radicalised in such a soul-crushing situation. Those who have and those who will someday walk this path will understand. But the important aspect in all this is not the radicalisation of those who went through this, but those who kept going. For all of this we must esteem not merely Marx, but all the Young Hegelians who suffered in the fight for human freedom.

The Young Hegelian movement fell apart between 1842 and 1843, fully ceasing to exist by 1844. The reasons for this are much the same as for the fate of the Hegelian school itself viz. while coming under increasing attack from all sides, divisions began to rend them apart. Unity began to evaporate in 1842 as Marx increasingly found himself at odds with Bauer over the actions of "Die Freien." Bauer was still the main figure and the group had, overtime, come to engage in purposely aggressive and flamboyantly outrageous attacks on religion. By this time Marx had become the editor of *Rheinische Zeitung* and no longer believed the critique of religion to be a pressing need of the movement; this was a part of the overall shift to politics. As a result, Marx "refused to publish articles by Meyen, Buhl, Koppen, Rutenberg, Stirner and other members of the group."⁵⁸ There were other antics carried out by the group as well and Marx was

⁵⁵ McLellan, *Young Hegelians*, 7.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵⁷ John Edward Toews, *Hegelianism: The Path Toward Dialectical Humanism, 1805-1841* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press: 1980), 216.

⁵⁸ Zvi Rosen, *Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx: The Influence of Bruno Bauer on Marx's Thought* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1977), 131.

far past engaging in any student hijinks.⁵⁹ He was deadly serious about revolutionary critique and so he called upon “Bauer to cease supporting the group which was engaged in provocation against the authorities and could cause the closing-down of his paper. But Bauer, in his letter of 13.12.1842, supported Die Freien and this led to deterioration of the friendship and increasing controversy between the two.”⁶⁰

The divisions in the movement only grew sharper. Marx, in 1843, wrote “On *The Jewish Question*,” which attacked Bauer’s recent publication of the same year, although it was only published in the following year 1844 in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, the journal edited by Marx and Ruge.⁶¹ In mid-1844 Marx was working on a project which was unfinished and has come to be known as the *Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. There he developed a short critique of the movement, writing that “even now, after all these delightful antics of idealism (i.e., of Young Hegelianism) expiring in the guise of criticism – even now it has not expressed the suspicion that the time was ripe for a critical settling of accounts with the mother of Young Hegelianism – the Hegelian dialectic.”⁶² Finally, despite the cool initial encounter between Marx and Engels in 1842, the two would strike up their famous friendship and begin to work together critiquing the Young Hegelians individually and as a whole. Thus their first joint work, *The Holy Family*, written in late 1844, went after a number of members, and, above all, Bruno Bauer.⁶³ It is, therefore, abundantly clear that by 1844 the Young Hegelian movement was irretrievably fractured and dead: there were no longer any common leaders, goals, approaches, or frameworks, and no general unity personally and professionally.

Marx’s doctoral dissertation, “The Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature,” was written between 1840 and March 1841. This was immediately preceded, in 1839, by seven notebooks which he filled with quotations and notes on Epicurean philosophy and related material. A number of sections from the latter he imported into his dissertation, though at times shortening, expanding, or even re-writing them. The dissertation and notebooks are not the work of a Hegelian, but of a critically independent Young Hegelian. Moreover, not only did Marx separate himself from Hegel, but his work stood autonomous from

⁵⁹ “According to reliable information Köppen kept himself aloof from the antics of the ‘Freemen,’ but Bruno Bauer certainly did not and, in fact, he even played the role of standard bearer in their buffooneries. The ragging processions through the streets, the scandalous scenes in brothels and taverns, and the deplorable taunting of a defenceless clergyman at Stirner’s wedding, when Bauer removed the brass rings from a knitted purse he was carrying and handed them to the officiating clergyman with the remark that they were quite good enough to serve as wedding rings, made them the object half of admiration and half of horror for all tame Philistines, but they hopelessly compromised the cause which they were supposed to represent.” Franz Mehring, *Karl Marx: The Story of His Life* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1962), 45.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 131-132. In fact, Marx was now so opposed to his erstwhile comrades that his initial meeting with Engels did not portend well: “Engels chose to travel via Cologne, in order to seize the opportunity of meeting the staff of the *Rheinische Zeitung*. His first meeting with Marx passed off coolly. Marx was just about to break with the Berlin ‘Freien’ and saw in Engels one of their allies. Engels on his side had been prejudiced against Marx by Bruno Bauer. However, they agreed to the extent that it was arranged that Engels should continue to contribute to the *Rheinische Zeitung* from England.” Nicolaievsky and Maenchen-Helfen, *Karl Marx*, 93.

⁶¹ David McLellan, *Karl Marx: His Life & Thought* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1973), 77, 80-81.

⁶² Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1981), 127.

⁶³ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Holy Family, Or Critique of Critical Criticism* (Moscow: Progress Publishers).

one of the leading Young Hegelians of that specific period, i.e. Bruno Bauer. Although there are similar themes between the two, Bauer's influence on Marx was solely limited to professional academic matters, job advice, etc. The idea that Marx was a follower of Bauer is incorrect; in truth the latter played no appreciable influence on the former's dissertation.

McLellan has argued that "Marx's period of study of religion and philosophy corresponded precisely to the period of his friendship with Bruno Bauer and was no doubt inspired by him."⁶⁴ However, no direct evidence was proffered for this assertion, one which was undoubtedly based on the assumption that since Bauer was older and more experienced, Marx could not have come up with the idea on his own. Thus we find that McLellan made the far more general assertion that "Marx's choice of subject was influenced by the general interest that the Young Hegelians (particularly Bauer and Koppen) had in post-Aristotelian Greek philosophy."⁶⁵ This certainly appears more reasonable and possible, but again there is no direct evidence. The fact is that it is just as possible that Marx influenced the others on this point. Indeed, McLellan even reported that Koppen described Marx as "'a true arsenal of thoughts, a veritable factory of ideas' and remarked that Bruno Bauer's *The Christian State in our Time* - the first directly political article of the Young Hegelians - drew largely on Marx's ideas."⁶⁶ Finally, it is even more plausible that they all came to this out of their own readings of Hegel.

This is important to consider because the argument made by McLellan that Marx's dissertation was "marked by many of Bauer's ideas," is based on a superficial similarities between the two men's writings.⁶⁷ That is to say, the argument is primarily based on the importance of "the philosophy of self-consciousness" developed by Bauer.⁶⁸ Thus McLellan wrote that Marx "showed himself a disciple of Bauer when he wrote" in the forward to his dissertation "that philosophy was against 'all gods in heaven and earth that do not recognise human self-consciousness as the highest godhead. There shall be no other beside it'."⁶⁹ Rosen went even further with this claim writing that

Marx employs Bauer's slogan on the struggle of the free self-consciousness which fights 'against all the gods of heaven and earth who do not recognize man's self-consciousness as the highest divinity,' i.e. transforms human self-consciousness into the supreme value....But the amazing fact is that several years later, in *The Holy Family*, Marx was to criticize Bauer for advocating the self-consciousness as a hypostasis, and to mock him for detaching self-consciousness from man, the standard-bearer of this consciousness. Marx forgot the fact that he himself was the faithful disciple of Bauer on this point.⁷⁰

Yet just because both men utilised the category of "self-consciousness" it does not logically follow that one influenced the other. As they were both Young Hegelians, it is far more plausible

⁶⁴ McLellan, *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx*, 69-70.

⁶⁵ McLellan, *Karl Marx*, 34.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁶⁷ McLellan, *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx*, 71.

⁶⁸ Rosen, *Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx*, 156; Marx and Engels, *The Holy Family*, 169-175.

⁶⁹ McLellan, *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx*, 71.

⁷⁰ Rosen, *Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx*, 153.

that the importance of the category flowed rather from a common origin viz. Hegel, specifically his *Phenomenology of Spirit*.⁷¹

Hegel himself described this work as “the exposition of the coming to be of knowledge.”⁷² It presented his epistemological views and showed the development of human knowledge from the immediate empirical standpoint up to speculative, philosophical science, i.e. absolute knowledge.⁷³ Thus the Old Hegelian Rosenkranz rightly described the book as holding Hegel’s “theory of consciousness” where humanity

advances in its consciousness from step to step. Each lower stage is shown upon the next higher to have been a relative error, but it is not therefore nothing, but a necessary condition of the higher. This, when it is entered upon, seems to be the highest, but progress reduces this to a mere seeming. It is therefore not entirely false, but only relatively so, in that it was taken as ultimate.⁷⁴

This is the historical march of humanity towards self-consciousness viz. not merely a consciousness of an other, but consciousness of the other as self, i.e. absolute knowledge. This progress is recapitulated at the level of the individual who grasps it and so the advance of the individual’s knowledge is the return and recalling of the past. This is exactly the path taken in the *Phenomenology*. Hegel once referred to this work as “his voyage of discovery.”⁷⁵ Yet it was not just his voyage of discovery, but that of humanity as well.

The same metaphor actually holds for Young Hegelians as a whole, since that book was the most important one for the theoretical basis of the movement. Thus Brazill has rightly noted that Bauer’s biblical criticism “was based on Hegel’s view of self-consciousness,” and, more importantly that all “the Young Hegelians used this view in opposing Christianity and in developing their philosophical humanism.”⁷⁶ Further, even Bauer himself did not claim great originality on this point. As Moggach has pointed out, “Bauer’s theory of revolutionary self-consciousness” was “attributed to Hegel himself...It develops on the terrain of Hegelian philosophy.”⁷⁷ This, above all, refers to Bauer’s work

⁷¹ The *Phänomenologie des Geistes* has also been translated as the *Phenomenology of Mind*.

⁷² Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, “Hegel’s Advertisement and Hegel’s Note to Himself,” in Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, tran. and ed. Terry Pinkard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 468.

⁷³ “It is in itself the movement which is cognition – the transforming of that *in-itself* into that which is *for itself*, of Substance into Subject, of the object of *consciousness* into an object of *self-consciousness*, i.e. into an object that is just as much superseded, or into the *Notion*...Consequently, until Spirit has completed itself *in itself*, until it has completed itself as world-Spirit, it cannot reach its consummation as *self-conscious* Spirit. Therefore, the content of religion proclaims earlier in time than does Science, what *Spirit is*, but only Science is its true knowledge of itself.” G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, tran. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 488.

⁷⁴ Karl Rosenkranz, *Hegel as the National Philosopher of Germany*, tran. Geo. S. Hall (St. Louis: Gray, Baker & Co., 1874), 130-131.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 32; Walter Kaufmann, *Hegel: A Reinterpretation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), 143; Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography*, 203.

⁷⁶ Brazill, *The Young Hegelians*, 190.

⁷⁷ Douglas Moggach, *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 107.

The Trumpet of the Last Judgement over Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist: An Ultimatum (*Die Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts über Hegel den Atheisten und Antichristen: ein Ultimatum*). It appeared anonymously, but as if written by a violently anti-Hegelian Pietist. This short work, whose authorship was soon revealed, cast Hegel into the form of a covert revolutionary and atheist - the exact opposite of what had been generally held concerning him at that time. It attempted to prove, by an expert employment of citations taken from the works of Hegel, that the Young Hegelians were not heretical Hegelians, but the true disciples of Hegel.⁷⁸

Anyone who has read Bauer's book knows that through the course of over one hundred pages he provides quote after quote from Hegel to prove his arguments.⁷⁹ The words and ideas of Hegel were literally the basis and source for his arguments. To say that Marx got his ideas on self-consciousness from Bauer is to assume that he had not yet read the *Phenomenology*. Yet this is an assumption for which there is no proof and is highly unlikely, as Marx had already stated to his father in late-1837 that he had studied Hegel's works and, knowing the importance of the *Phenomenology* for Young Hegelianism, he likely read the book that same year.

Bauer's *Posaune* has been referred to by both McLellan and Rosen as evidence for Bauer's influence on Marx. Thus McLellan wrote that "Bauer's distinction in the *Posaune* between an esoteric and exoteric Hegel is repeated by Marx."⁸⁰ While Rosen cited the *Posaune* to prove that the "distinction between post-Aristotelian Greek philosophical thought and modern European rationalism serves as the key to understanding of Bauer's theory that the Hegelian element emerges triumphant from the struggle with Christianity," and asserting that such "motifs were developed by Marx."⁸¹ He also directly stated that Marx "shared the opinions voiced by Bauer in his 1841 essay, i.e. at the time when Marx was engaged in writing his dissertation, to the point where the *Posaune* was believed by many to have been written by the two in collaboration."⁸² There was indeed collaboration between the two Young Hegelians, but there is other evidence to consider first.

⁷⁸ Lawrence S. Stepelevich, "Bruno Bauer," in *The Young Hegelians: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence S. Stepelevich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 176.

⁷⁹ To give merely one example: "Pride is the only feeling which Hegel can instill into his disciples. That meekness and humility which alone can give honor to the Lord and modesty to man is foreign to him. The first thing to which he calls forth his disciples is a profane travesty of the *sursum corda*: 'Man cannot think highly enough of the greatness and power of his mind' (*Geschichte der Philosophie* [History of Philosophy], I, 6; H., I, xiii)...Philosophy is, for him, the 'Temple of self-conscious reason,' a temple which is quite other than the temple of the 'Jews' in which the Living God resides (G.P., I, 49; H., I, 35). The philosophers are the architects of this temple, in which the cult of self-consciousness is celebrated, that unity of God, Priest and Community." Bruno Bauer, *The Trumpet of the Last Judgement Against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist: An Ultimatum*, tran. Lawrence Stepelevich (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1989), 125.

⁸⁰ McLellan, *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx*, 73.

⁸¹ Rosen, *Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx*, 150.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 159.

Marx finished his doctoral dissertation in March 1841 and it was submitted in April.⁸³ However, Bauer's *Posaune* was only published "in November 1841."⁸⁴ Marx's work therefore *predates* that of Bauer's, so there is simply no way Marx could have repeated or echoed the latter. Further, Bauer only came up with the idea for the *Posaune* after Marx had finished his thesis. As Kangal has reported

In early 1841 Marx and Bauer had initially wanted to found an atheistic journal, as they considered the *Hallische Jahrbücher* published by Arnold Ruge to be insufficiently radical in its critique of religion. This project, however, was abandoned. Instead, they came up with the idea of developing the atheistic potential and revolutionary character of Hegel's philosophy and writing a book together on the subject. Bauer's anonymous text *Posaune*...which appeared in November 1841, is a product of this collaboration.⁸⁵

This new Young Hegelian journal was to be "entitled *Atheistic Archives*," and, according to McLellan, Marx and Bauer had only come up with the idea since "March 1841."⁸⁶ Marx likely had more influence in planning the new journal, as Bauer did not become an atheist until "the end of 1839 or perhaps the beginning of 1840."⁸⁷ Thus, Marx was actually an atheist before Bauer was and so it is understandable that the latter suggested to the former that he "leave out the aggressively atheistic preface" to his dissertation.⁸⁸ Marx did not in any way heed his friend's professional advice in this regard.

Kangal has also noted that it was Edgar Bauer who "had encouraged his brother on the road to atheism," and that "Marx may have also had an influence on him. On 3 June 1841 Karl Friedrich Köppen...wrote that Bauer's few ideas came from 'Schützenstraße' (Marx's address in Berlin at the time)."⁸⁹ Thus, it should be abundantly clear that far from Bauer influencing his junior Young Hegelian, it was the other way around. Kangal is therefore correct to point out where Marx's influence on the *Posaune* can be seen and to note that although Bauer wrote that book by himself, when "Marx's friend from Cologne, Georg Jung, wrote to Ruge that the *Trumpet* was 'by Bauer and Marx', it should be understood that he means Marx's participation in the intellectual groundwork in the full project of the *Trumpet*."⁹⁰ This work was therefore

⁸³ Marx, "Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy," 26; Dr. Carl Friedrich Bachmann, "Recommendatory Reference on the Dissertation of Karl Marx," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works, Volume 1: 1835-1843* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 705.

⁸⁴ Kaan Kangal, "Marx's Bonn Notebooks in Context: Reconsidering the Relationship between Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx between 1839 and 1842," accessed 4 August 2023, https://www.academia.edu/44776971/Marx_s_Bonn_Notebooks_in_Context_Reconsidering_the_Relationship_between_Bruno_Bauer_and_Karl_Marx_between_1839_and_1842.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ McLellan, *Karl Marx*, 42.

⁸⁷ Kangal, "Marx's Bonn Notebooks in Context," accessed 4 August 2023, https://www.academia.edu/44776971/Marx_s_Bonn_Notebooks_in_Context_Reconsidering_the_Relationship_between_Bruno_Bauer_and_Karl_Marx_between_1839_and_1842.

⁸⁸ Jonathan Sperber, *Karl Marx: A Nineteenth-Century Life* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2013), 74.

⁸⁹ Kangal, "Marx's Bonn Notebooks in Context," accessed 4 August 2023, https://www.academia.edu/44776971/Marx_s_Bonn_Notebooks_in_Context_Reconsidering_the_Relationship_between_Bruno_Bauer_and_Karl_Marx_between_1839_and_1842.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

influenced by Marx and *not echoed* by him and, as a result, it cannot be logically used to show the influence of Bauer on Marx's doctoral dissertation. Aside from this work, the evidence points to the fact that even before it, Marx was the dominant intellectual force between the two. Marx was never Bauer's student or disciple.

Marx's choice of topic was taken from Hegel's *History of Philosophy* and *Phenomenology*, while the framework for understanding Epicurean and Democritean physics was based on his *Philosophy of Nature*. That is, the theoretical foundations of Marx's doctoral dissertation was taken directly from Hegel and not Bauer. Marx pointed out in the foreword that his writing should be considered "only as the preliminary to a larger work in which I shall present in detail the cycle of Epicurean, Stoic and Sceptic philosophy in their relation to the whole of Greek speculation."⁹¹ These are, of course, the three great schools that arose after the death of Aristotle, although Marx never got around to completing his overall project. Continuing on he asserted that

Hegel has on the whole correctly defined the general aspects of the above-mentioned systems. But in the admirably great and bold plan of his history of philosophy, from which alone the history of philosophy can in general be dated, it was impossible, on the one hand, to go into detail, and on the other hand, the giant thinker was hindered by his view of what he called speculative thought *par excellence* from recognising in these systems their great importance for the history of Greek philosophy and for the Greek mind in general. These systems are the key to the true history of Greek philosophy.⁹²

With this Marx gave Hegel high praise indeed. He declared that he was in agreement with the latter's general account and even argued that Hegel was the *originator* of the actual, proper history of philosophy. However, already here, *at the beginning*, Marx set forth his disagreement, his divergence from Hegel by setting the latter against himself. Specifically, Marx critically applied Hegel's dialectical logic against the latter's systematisation of Greek philosophy which determined how Hegel values the different philosophies.

In Hegel's view Greek philosophy could be divided into three periods, with the first period structured by three divisions. The first division consists of the majority of the pre-Socratic philosophers, the second of the Sophists and the Socratics, and the third of Plato and Aristotle. The second period contains the Stoics, the Epicureans, and Scepticism. The third and final period covers the Neo-Platonists.⁹³ In this schema, the "first period shows the beginning of philosophic thought, and goes on to its development and perfection as a totality of knowledge in itself; this takes place in Aristotle as representing the unity of what has come before."⁹⁴ The first period is therefore a period of unity and Aristotle is seen as the summit. In the dialectic's form of triplicity

⁹¹ Marx, "Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy," 29.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 29-30.

⁹³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume 1: Greek Philosophy to Plato*, trans. E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), viii-ix; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume 2: Plato and the Platonists*, trans. E.S. Haldane and Frances H. Simson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), v-vi.

⁹⁴ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume 1*, 163.

the period of unity, of immediacy, must give way to division, to mediation.⁹⁵ Thus the “second period is that in which science breaks itself up into different systems. A one-sided principle is carried through the whole conception of the world.”⁹⁶ Again, following the tripartite form, division must give way to a restored unity, and hence the “third period is the affirmative, the withdrawal of the opposition into an ideal world or a world of thought, a divine world.”⁹⁷ As Hegel considered Aristotle the height of Greek thought, the latter was therefore held to have attained the highest reaches of philosophy viz. speculative thought, that which unites various determinations.⁹⁸ Thus Hegel said of Aristotle that “no one is more comprehensive and speculative than he,” and “although Aristotle’s system does not appear to be developed in its parts from the Notion, and its parts are merely ranged side by side, they still form a totality of truly speculative philosophy.”⁹⁹

Whereas the higher form of thought, speculation, unites opposed determinations, the lower form is the understanding, which hold fast to these oppositions and misses the unity. Therefore, since post-Aristotelian philosophy is a period of division, of opposed one-sided determinations, one can see why Hegel would argue that the character of this period “is a philosophizing of the understanding, in which Plato’s and Aristotle’s speculative greatness is no longer present.”¹⁰⁰ Hegel also argued that the “highest maturity, the highest stage, which anything can attain is that in which its downfall begins.”¹⁰¹ Hence we can also understand why Hegel did not and could not hold the Stoic, Epicurean, and Sceptic philosophies in as high regard. We can equally see what Marx meant when he said that Hegel’s view of speculative thought prevented him from grasping the true significance of post-Aristotelian philosophies.

However, even though Marx did not make the point, the truth is that Hegel’s schema was incorrect. For while he placed Neo-Platonism at the end of Greek philosophy, the truth is that Neo-Platonism was not Greek but Roman. Hegel himself showed how this philosophy developed in the Roman world. In fact, he had expressly said of the post-Aristotelian philosophies that “as regards their origin, pertain to Greece, and their great teachers were always Greeks, they were yet transferred to the Roman world; thus Philosophy passed into the Roman world.”¹⁰² According to Hegel’s own writings then, not to mention empirical fact, Greek philosophy ended here, and his placing of Neo-Platonism at the end must be considered incorrect and arbitrary. This means that the end of Greek philosophy was actually the second period, not the third.

⁹⁵ Jason Devine, “From Kautsky and the Bolsheviks, to Hegel and Marx,” accessed 4 August 2023, <https://links.org.au/kautsky-and-bolsheviks-hegel-and-marx-dialectics-triad-and-triplicity>.

⁹⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume 1*, 163-164.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁹⁸ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume 2*, 229.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 117, 118.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 232.

¹⁰¹ G.W. F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Science of Logic*, tran. A.V. Miller (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1969), 611.

¹⁰² Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume 2*, 234. It is quite clear, then, how wrong Rosen was when he wrote that “In total accord with Bauer’s conception, Marx argues that the schools of self-consciousness evolved in Greece were transferred to Rome and hence to the modern world.” This was not Bauer’s conception, but Hegel’s. See, Rosen, *Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx*, 151.

Hegel, at the beginning of the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, made two important points. The first was that “the aim of Philosophy...is in thought and in conception to grasp the Truth,” and the second is that “Philosophy is system in development; the history of Philosophy is the same.”¹⁰³ The history of philosophy is therefore the progressive realisation of the truth; a point that Hegel also made in the preface to his *Phenomenology* where he described that “diversity of philosophical systems as the progressive unfolding of truth.”¹⁰⁴ A dialectical progression is made from the simple to the complex, from the lower to the higher where each “phase of philosophy comes forth as a whole unto itself, only to be found wanting. It is then overcome and in being sublated is included in the forward march. This is repeated with the continual inclusion of previous stages as moments in the forming concrete totality.”¹⁰⁵ Each succeeding stage or period is therefore a closer approximation to the truth, is in fact the truth of the lower stage as the conclusion is the truth of the syllogism. As Hegel stated elsewhere, “we wish to see the truth precisely in the form of a result.”¹⁰⁶ This is precisely the dialectics of the historical and logical:

The truth is concrete, and understood concretely, this does not merely mean that the truth is only a unity of diverse aspects, but also that it is a *result* which only arrives after the process of the abstract being sublated into the concrete. The latter...constitutes a system and can only be comprehended and portrayed as such. The organic totality structures the sequence and is the actual basis for why one concept comes earlier than another and one comes later viz. one is more abstract and the other is concrete. This is another aspect as to why the conceptual or logical sequence diverges from the historical or temporal. Thus, if the truth is a result, i.e. if it is historically subsequent, then it must be logically prior. Contrariwise, the historically prior must be the logically subsequent.¹⁰⁷

This is why Marx referred to Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Scepticism as “the key to the true history of Greek philosophy,” viz. since they were the actual end and true result of Greek Philosophy, they summed up and explained the previous development.¹⁰⁸ Marx continued to apply this dialectical logic, Hegel’s method, in later years as can be seen when he wrote in the *Grundrisse* that “Human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape. The intimations of higher development among the subordinate animal species, however, can be understood only after the higher development is already known. The bourgeois economy thus supplies the key to

¹⁰³ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume 1*, 19, 29.

¹⁰⁴ Hegel, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Jason Devine, “The Dialectics of the Historical and Logical in Hegel and Marx,” accessed 5 August 2023, <https://links.org.au/dialectics-historical-and-logical-hegel-and-marx>.

¹⁰⁶ G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen W. Wood and tran. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 61-62.

¹⁰⁷ Jason Devine, “The Dialectics of the Historical and Logical in Hegel and Marx,” accessed 5 August 2023, <https://links.org.au/dialectics-historical-and-logical-hegel-and-marx>.

¹⁰⁸ Hegel also said that “Greece is the Substantial, which is at the same time *individual*.” Thus the post-Aristotelian philosophies, as philosophies of self-consciousness, were the perfect expression of the Greek spirit. See, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1956), 225.

the ancient, etc.”¹⁰⁹ Thus, Marx showed his independence at the very beginning of his literary career by using Hegel’s own logic to criticise Hegel.

Marx had planned to have his work published for the public the following year and he wrote a new preface for it. In this he characterised the three schools of thought as “the *philosophers of self-consciousness*.”¹¹⁰ Marx was simply following Hegel, for the latter had stated that the “pure relation of self-consciousness to itself is thus the principle in all these philosophies.”¹¹¹ Here Hegel was replicating what he had previously argued in the *Phenomenology*. Its section B is entitled “Self-consciousness,” and the second half of that section is entitled “Freedom of self-consciousness: Stoicism, Scepticism, and the Unhappy Consciousness.”¹¹² There Hegel argued that “Stoicism is the freedom which always comes directly out of bondage and returns into the pure universality of thought. As a universal form of the World-Spirit Stoicism could only appear on the scene in a time of universal fear and bondage, but also a time of universal culture which had raised itself to the level of thought.”¹¹³ He further argued that “*Scepticism* is the realization of that of which Stoicism was only the Notion, and is the actual experience of what the freedom of thought is.”¹¹⁴ He finally stated, even more explicitly, that with “Stoicism, self-consciousness is the simple freedom of itself. In Scepticism, this freedom becomes a reality.”¹¹⁵ The idea that the post-Aristotelian philosophers were the philosophers of self-consciousness was not a Bauerian conception, but a Hegelian one.

Yet it is a very crucial fact that Hegel had left Epicurus entirely out of his discussion of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology*. This was reflective of his ambivalent attitude towards the latter. The reason for this is as follows. While Hegel was discussing Stoic philosophy, he noted that as

the Stoics recognized the rational as the active principle in nature, they took its phenomena in their individuality as manifestations of the divine; and their pantheism has thereby associated itself with the common ideas about the gods as with the superstitions which are connected therewith, with belief in all sorts of miracles and with divination...Epicureanism, on the contrary, proceeds towards the liberation of men from this superstition to which the Stoics are entirely given over.¹¹⁶

Hegel, even before he had started his actual analysis of Epicureanism, made a point of highlighting that the Epicureans were against popular religions and their superstitions, and so sought to free people from them, to bring an enlightenment.¹¹⁷ Although Hegel did not state it

¹⁰⁹ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy*, tran. Martin Nicolaus (New York: Vintage Books, 1973), 105.

¹¹⁰ Karl Marx, “Draft of New Preface,” in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works, Volume 1: 1835-1843* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 106.

¹¹¹ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume 2*, 233.

¹¹² Hegel, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*, xxxiii.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 121.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹¹⁶ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume 2*, 248.

¹¹⁷ It is for this work that the Roman Epicurean poet Lucretius praised Epicurus in the following terms: “When human life lay grovelling in all men’s sight, crushed to the earth under the dead weight of superstition whose grim

explicitly, I will argue that this is the primary reason for his attitude toward Epicurus viz. for the latter's *de facto atheism*. In Hegel's view philosophy was a higher form of consciousness, of knowledge, than religion.¹¹⁸ However, in accordance with the dialectical method, the lower forms are as necessary as the higher forms.¹¹⁹ So that while Epicureanism was to be esteemed precisely as a philosophy, it was also found wanting because it did not recognise the importance of religious truths, and which was rooted in its empiricism, its sensationalist materialism.

We shall, then, find that Hegel oscillated between characterising Epicureanism as a philosophy and denying its philosophical character. For example, in introducing the second period of Greek philosophy Hegel argued that "however gloomy men may consider Scepticism, and however low a view they take of Epicureanism, all these have in this way been philosophies."¹²⁰ Yet he will later argue that even though Epicurus provided

a higher scientific form to the doctrines of the Cyrenaics, it is yet self-evident that if existence for sensation is to be regarded as the truth, the necessity for the Notion is altogether abrogated, and in the absence of speculative interest things cease to form a united whole, all things being in point of fact lowered to the point of view of the ordinary human understanding.¹²¹

Here he was denying that Epicureanism was actually philosophical. The reason for this flowed from Hegel's outlook viz. that basic human consciousness is the realm of the understanding, a limited, contingent point of view, while philosophy is the realm of speculation, a universal, necessary consciousness that alone can reach the truth.¹²² Again, Hegel hammered away at this point, that as concerns "the Epicurean philosophy, it is by no means to be looked on as setting forth a system of Notions, but, on the contrary, as a system of ordinary conceptions or even of

features loomed menacingly upon mortals from the four quarters of the sky, a man of Greece was first to raise mortal eyes in defiance, first to stand erect and brave the challenge. Fables of the gods did not crush him, nor the lightning flash and the growling menace of the sky. Rather they quickened his manhood, so that he, first of all men, longed to smash the constraining locks of nature's doors. The vital vigour of his mind prevailed. He ventured far out beyond the flaming ramparts of the world and voyaged in mind throughout infinity. Returning victorious, he proclaimed to us what can be and what cannot: how a limit is fixed to the power of everything and an immovable frontier post. Therefore superstition in its turn lies crushed beneath his feet, and we by his triumph are lifted level with the skies." Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1986), 29.

¹¹⁸ "This science is the unity of Art and Religion... Philosophy not merely keeps them together to make a total, but even unifies them into the simple spiritual vision, and then in that raises them to self-conscious thought." G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind, Being Part Three of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, tran. William Wallace and A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 302.

¹¹⁹ "These forms are not just distinguished from one another, they also supplant one another as mutually incompatible. Yet at the same time their fluid nature makes them moments of an organic unity in which they not only do not conflict, but in which each is as necessary as the other; and this mutual necessity alone constitutes the life of the whole." Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, 2.

¹²⁰ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume 2*, 236.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 277.

¹²² "In his view philosophy could and should be a science and hence it should aim for the truth. Following Heraclitus he held the truth to be what is common, what is universal...Hegel was not denying the importance of empirical knowledge or other sciences. Rather he was emphasising that knowledge cannot arise from the contingency of sense-perception." Jason Devine, "On Lenin's Materialism and Empirio-Criticism: Critical Comments on a Confused Philosophy," accessed 7 August 2023, <https://links.org.au/lenins-materialism-and-empirio-criticism-critical-comments-confused-philosophy>.

sensuous existence, which, looked at from the ordinary point of view as perceived by the senses, Epicurus has made the very foundation and standard of truth.”¹²³ Hegel repeated this idea over and over.¹²⁴ So the reader may well indeed think that Hegel has very little good to say of Epicurus. Yet Hegel also said that

if Physical Science is considered to relate to immediate experience on the one hand, and, on the other hand...to relate to the application of the above according to a resemblance existing between it and that which is not matter of experience, in that case Epicurus may well be looked on as the chief promoter, if not the originator of this method...Of the Epicurean method in philosophy we may say this, that it likewise has a side on which it possesses value, and we may in some measure assent when we hear, as we frequently do, the Epicurean physics favourably spoken of... It may thus be said that Epicurus is the inventor of empiric Natural Science, of empiric Psychology.¹²⁵

No matter how much Hegel found time to complain or criticise the weakness, absurdity, or emptiness of Epicurus’ philosophy, the above quotation was absolutely high praise, and he even asserted that Epicurus’ method was “still peculiarly the method of our times.”¹²⁶ Hegel also expressly recognised Epicureanism as a philosophy of importance later on.¹²⁷ His ambivalence was therefore expressed in his simultaneous positing and negating of the scientific character of Epicurean philosophy.¹²⁸ It was easy to leave it out the *Phenomenology*, for this work only sought to provide an outline of the general development of human consciousness, but in an actual history of philosophy, one which aimed to be scientific, it had to be engaged with.

In analysing Epicurus’ views on atomism Hegel noted that the former privileged the category of chance or accident over necessity. As a result of this, Epicurus was led to “declare himself against a universal end in the world, against every relation of purpose...and, further, against the teleological representations of the wisdom of a Creator in the world, his government, &c.”¹²⁹ That is, Epicurus’ method of natural science had logically concluded in denying not merely superstitions, but that there was some higher reason, a god or gods, structuring

¹²³ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume 2*, 281.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 284-286.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 296-297.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 293.

¹²⁷ The “content of the Epicurean philosophy, its aim and result, stands thus on as high a level as the Stoic philosophy.” *Ibid.*, 310.

¹²⁸ Another reason for Hegel’s stance is that he considered all philosophy to be idealism and thus materialism could only be an inconsistent, limited idealism viz. not *truly* philosophy: “Every philosophy is essentially an idealism or at least has idealism for its principle, and the question then is only how far this principle is actually carried out. This is as true of philosophy as of religion; for religion equally does not recognize finitude as a veritable being, as something ultimate and absolute or as something underived, uncreated, eternal. Consequently the opposition of idealistic and realistic philosophy has no significance. A philosophy which ascribed veritable, ultimate, absolute being to finite existence as such, would not deserve the name of philosophy; the principles of ancient or modern philosophies, water, or matter, or atoms are *thoughts*, universals, ideal entities, not things as they immediately present themselves to us, that is, in their sensuous individuality – not even the water of Thales.” Hegel, *Hegel’s Science of Logic*, 154-155.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 292.

everything. Although Hegel would have a dim view of such a denial, he later made a series of revealing comments which deserves to be quoted in full:

The same effect which followed the rise of a knowledge of natural laws, &c., in the modern world was produced by the Epicurean philosophy in its own sphere, that is to say, in so far as it is directed against the arbitrary invention of causes. The more, in later times, men made acquaintance with the laws of Nature, the more superstition, miracles, astrology, &c. disappeared; all this fades away owing to the contradiction offered to it by the knowledge of natural laws. The method of Epicurus was directed more especially against the senseless superstition of astrology &c., in whose methods there is neither reason nor thought, for it is quite a thing of the imagination, downright fabrication being resorted to, or what we may even term lying. In contrast with this, the way in which Epicurus works... accords with truth. For it does not go beyond what is perceived by the sight, and hearing, and the other senses, but keeps to what is present and not alien to the mind, not speaking of certain things as if they could be seen and heard, when that is quite impossible, seeing that the things are pure inventions. The effect of the Epicurean philosophy in its own time was therefore this, that it set itself against the superstition of the Greeks and Romans, and elevated men above it...

The physics of Epicurus were therefore famous for the reason that they introduced more enlightened views in regard to what is physical, and banished the fear of the gods. Superstition passes straightway from immediate appearances to God, angels, demons; or it expects from finite things other effects than the conditions admit of, phenomena of a higher kind. To this the Epicurean natural philosophy is utterly opposed, because in the sphere of the finite it refuses to go beyond the finite, and admits finite causes alone; for the so-called enlightenment is the fact of remaining in the sphere of the finite.¹³⁰

Hegel expressly described Epicurus as developing an enlightenment in ancient Greece, and defined that enlightenment as opposing superstition and, ultimately, religious beliefs. But with this Hegel implicitly, and unwittingly, opened the door to critiquing Christianity, for the logic of his argument placed a question mark over it. Indeed, already in the *Phenomenology* Hegel had included a sub-section on “The struggle of the Enlightenment with Superstition.”¹³¹ There he wrote that “Enlightenment regards faith as error and prejudice” and this is because “when it says that what is for faith the absolute Being, is a Being of its own consciousness, is its own thought, something that is a creation of consciousness itself.”¹³² He furthered argued that “Enlightenment has only a human right as against faith and for the support of its own truth,” and this right “is the right of self-consciousness.”¹³³ Still, Hegel maintained that although the Enlightenment was correct, it was still just as limited as faith for it was itself a product of human consciousness itself.¹³⁴ His view of the Enlightenment was just like that of Epicurus: ambivalent. In light of all

¹³⁰ Ibid., 297-298.

¹³¹ Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, 329.

¹³² Ibid., 333, 334.

¹³³ Ibid., 343.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 333, 348.

this, it is therefore clear why Hegel would not hold Epicurus in high regard compared to other philosophers, and especially for his materialist, *de facto atheism*.

Here we find yet another reason why Marx diverged from Hegel in his estimation of Epicureanism. For Hegel had also argued that the philosophies of self-consciousness were the historical antecedents of Christianity. Philosophy, under the oppressive conditions of the Roman world, “could only seek for reason in itself and could only care for its individuality – just as abstract Christians only care for their own salvation.”¹³⁵ Moreover, when they gave way to Neo-Platonism they became “closely connected with the revolution which was caused in the world by Christianity.”¹³⁶ In Hegel’s view Christianity was the child of Greek philosophy and Epicureanism essentially ran counter to this.¹³⁷ Thus, when Marx wrote in his foreword that “Philosophy makes no secret of it. The confession of Prometheus: ‘In simple words, I hate the pack of gods,’ is its own confession, its own aphorism against all heavenly and earthly gods who do not acknowledge human self-consciousness as the highest divinity. It will have none other beside,” we see here an inversion in the significance of self-consciousness.¹³⁸ That is, it was an expression of Marx’s atheism and of his disagreement with Hegel. This is why he wrote near the end of his dissertation that “Epicurus is therefore the greatest representative of Greek Enlightenment, and he deserves the praise of Lucretius.”¹³⁹ By reading Hegel critically Marx was following the logic of Hegel’s works and drawing conclusions that Hegel himself could not.

The theoretical basis for Marx’s atheism and consequently his praise of the Enlightenment’s fight against superstition, was precisely because the gods were made by humans. This insight was, again, not unique to Strauss, Bauer, or Feuerbach, but rather was rooted in Hegel’s own writings, and this is why it was a common position in the Young Hegelian movement. In Hegel’s view there were “three stages in the development of religious consciousness: natural religion, artistic religion, and absolute religion.”¹⁴⁰ Now, according to Marx “*Epicurus’* theory of the celestial bodies and the processes connected with them...stands in opposition not only to Democritus, but to the opinion of Greek philosophy as a whole.”¹⁴¹ More specifically, the worship

of the celestial bodies is a cult practised by all Greek philosophers. The system of the celestial bodies is the first naive and nature-determined existence of true reason. The same position is taken by Greek self-consciousness in the domain of the mind. It is the

¹³⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume 2*, 234.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 374.

¹³⁷ Hegelianism is also a child of Greek philosophy, and indeed, “is an organic integration and summation of all previous philosophy.” See, Jason Devine, “Dialectical logic in Plato’s ‘Parmenides’, Hegel’s ‘Logic’ and Marx’s ‘Critique of Political Economy’,” accessed 8 August 2023, <https://links.org.au/dialectical-logic-platos-parmenides-hegels-logic-and-marxs-critique-political-economy>.

¹³⁸ Marx, “Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy,” 30.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 73.

¹⁴⁰ Brazill, *The Young Hegelians*, 44.

¹⁴¹ Marx, “Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy,” 66.

solar system of the mind. The Greek philosophers therefore worshipped their own mind in the celestial bodies.¹⁴²

While Hegel held the Greeks to be the second form of religion, the artistic, Marx argued that Greek philosophers themselves were engaged in the first, the natural. The point, however, is that the idea that the celestial bodies are gods was a product of human reason, and in worshipping the elements in the solar system, humans were simply worshipping their own reason, though in an alienated form. As Hegel himself noted

“Herodotus (II. 53) asserts, with equal decision, that ‘*Homer and Hesiod invented a Theogony for the Greeks*, and assigned to the gods their appropriate epithets’...the fact is that the Greeks evolved the Spiritual from the materials which they had received. The Natural, as *explained by man – i.e.*, its internal essential element – is, as a universal principle, the beginning of the Divine.”¹⁴³

Here Hegel located the origin of religion literally in human activity viz. in the application of human reason, in seeking to explain the natural environment.¹⁴⁴ Or, as he said elsewhere “these gods are humanly made...Every priest was, so to speak, a maker of gods...they emerge from human phantasy.”¹⁴⁵ None of this is different from what he wrote in the *Phenomenology*: “the divine nature is the same as the human.”¹⁴⁶ While a superficial reading could interpret this to mean that god had made humanity, or even that Christ exemplifies this unity, in view of what Hegel had argued in different places, it logically implied atheism. Thus Hegel even wrote that “God is God only so far as he knows himself: his self-knowledge is, further, his self-consciousness in man, and man’s knowledge of God, which proceeds to man’s self-knowledge in God”¹⁴⁷ Anyone who read Hegel *critically* and *extensively* could only draw atheistic conclusions from this; for by placing God’s actuality in the mind of man, he was making God’s existence dependent on humanity. Hence atheism was an integral trend in the Young Hegelian movement.

It really cannot be emphasised enough how crucial Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* was for the movement.¹⁴⁸ For example, according to Brazill, Strauss and “his friends formed a small private study group and spent their time devouring Hegel’s *Phenomenology*...For the remainder

¹⁴² Ibid., 66.

¹⁴³ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 237.

¹⁴⁴ In looking at Hegel’s lecture notes for the *Phenomenology* it is quite apparent how the book laid the basis for an atheist reading by the Young Hegelians: “Self-Consciousness has, in its formative development or movement, three stages: (1) Of **Desire** in so far as it is directed to other things; (2) Of the relation of **Master and Slave** in so far as it is directed to another self-Consciousness unlike itself; (3) Of the **Universal Self-Consciousness** which recognizes itself in other self-Consciousnesses, and is identical with them as they are identical with it.” First humans have a desire to know, to understand. This then leads to the creation of and submission to gods. Finally, there is the realisation gods are merely an alienated reflection of human consciousness. See, G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophical Propaedeutic*, tran. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Basil Blackwood Ltd., 1986), 59-60.

¹⁴⁵ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: One-Volume Edition, The Lectures of 1827*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson, tran. R.F. Brown, P.C. Hodgson, and J.M. Stewart (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 346.

¹⁴⁶ Hegel, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*, 460.

¹⁴⁷ Hegel, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind*, 298.

¹⁴⁸ “They regarded the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, with its description of the progressive development of different phases of individual and social consciousness, as Hegel’s most important work.” Hook, *From Hegel to Marx*, 130.

of his life he regarded it as ‘the alpha and omega of Hegel’s work’...It was this book that had the greatest influence on Strauss.”¹⁴⁹ Marx himself would write in 1844 that in order to understand Hegel’s philosophy one “must begin with Hegel’s *Phänomenologie*, the true point of origin and the secret of the Hegelian philosophy.”¹⁵⁰ Therefore, it is easy to see why the Young Hegelians began with a critique of religion and drew atheistic conclusions from Hegel when they read lines such as this: “The masses are the victims of the deception of a *priesthood* which, in its envious conceit, holds itself to be the sole possessor of insight and pursues its other selfish ends as well. At the same time it conspires with *despotism*.”¹⁵¹ Marx, then, did not grasp the importance of the Enlightenment from any other Hegelian, but directly from Hegel himself. The logic of Hegel’s work is that humanity made God and therefore was a vindication of the Enlightenment and implied a higher importance to Epicurus than Hegel himself consciously held.

Marx, in one of his longest footnotes to his dissertation, gave an analysis of the “proofs of the existence of God,” and he commented, ironically that “*Hegel* has turned all these theological demonstrations upside-down, that is, he has rejected them in order to justify them. What kind of clients are those whom the defending lawyer can only save from conviction by killing them himself?”¹⁵² How exactly did Hegel demolish these famous proofs? Hegel pointed out that “Proof is, in general, *mediated cognition*,” that is, proof is something adduced from another thing, it does not stand alone.¹⁵³ Hence, the “proofs of the existence of God adduce a *ground for* this existence. It is not supposed to be an objective ground of God’s existence; for this existence is in and for itself. Thus it is merely a *ground for cognition*.”¹⁵⁴ That is to say, if God is, then, as universal and self-mediated, he is the ground of his own being; yet the proofs imply that his existence is dependent on something other than himself.¹⁵⁵ For Hegel, the proofs ultimately prove God by basing the infinite on the finite, the unlimited on the limited. This would, of course, be to reduce the infinite to the finite and a virtual denial of God. So the proof only gave a basis, not for the latter, but for cognition viz. for gaining a knowledge of God. By this Hegel had implied that God is unprovable, but, by his own words, anything that is not demonstrated, not proven according to the rules of logic “amounts only to assertions which are scientifically worthless.”¹⁵⁶

Whereas to save the proofs Hegel implicitly killed them, Marx, the atheist, directly, explicitly went for the kill in attacking them. Thus he wrote that the “proofs of the existence of God are either mere *hollow tautologies*” or “such proofs are *proofs of the existence of essential human self-consciousness, logical explanations of it*.”¹⁵⁷ He then concluded that “all proofs of

¹⁴⁹ Brazill, *The Young Hegelians*, 104.

¹⁵⁰ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 128.

¹⁵¹ Hegel, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*, 330.

¹⁵² Marx, “Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy,” 103.

¹⁵³ Hegel, *Hegel’s Science of Logic*, 481.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 482.

¹⁵⁵ “In the proofs it is argued that, because the finite is, for that reason the infinite is, too. What is expressed here, therefore, is that the finite is; this is the point of departure, the foundation. From this arises the objection against these proofs that they are said to make the finite into the foundation for the being of God.” Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 171-172.

¹⁵⁶ Hegel, *Hegel’s Science of Logic*, 92.

¹⁵⁷ Marx, “Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy,” 104.

the existence of God are proofs of his *non-existence*.¹⁵⁸ So when Hegel said that the proofs can only be a basis for cognition Marx went further and argued that they were proofs not of God, but of *human consciousness*. This is a brilliant dialectical turn as Marx inverted Hegel's reversal. It had been asserted that because the finite is, therefore the infinite is also. As we saw above, for Hegel this logically implied rather that because the finite is, the infinite is not. He therefore reversed this and argued that because the infinite is, therefore the finite is not.¹⁵⁹ On this basis Marx then inverted the implication of Hegel's position: to the argument that because God is, man is not, Marx replied that because man is, God is not. Thus Marx inverted the Hegelian conception of God before Feuerbach did in his 1842 *Principles of Philosophy of the Future*.¹⁶⁰

It will be recalled that in Hegel's view, a profoundly historical one, religion developed in stages. It is a dual process of the coming-to-be of humanity's religious consciousness and the realisation of God's consciousness. According to Hegel this development found its height in Christianity: "Here, therefore, God is *revealed as He is*; He is immediately present as He is *in Himself*, i.e. He is immediately *present as Spirit*. God is attainable in pure speculative knowledge alone and *is only in that knowledge*, and is only that knowledge itself, for He is Spirit; and this speculative knowledge is the knowledge of the *revealed religion*."¹⁶¹ Religion is like everything else in that it develops, forms a system, and it impelled by the dialectic. Thus, the logic of this is that the lower stages must lead to the higher stages which reveal the truth of the former. Hence, all previous religious forms have led to the birth of Christianity: "The hopes and expectations of the world up till now had pressed forward solely to this revelation, to behold what absolute Being is, and in it to find itself."¹⁶² Christianity in turn gave birth to Hegelianism and the latter, in its turn, led to atheism in the form of Young Hegelianism and eventually to materialism.

All previous moments or forms in history, then, have led to the knowledge that it was and is humans who have made their gods. This is because history is, above all, the coming to be of humanity, its self-formation. Hegelianism is, at its core, the recognition and expression of the logic of human history, but it is distorted by its idealist inconsistency.¹⁶³ Marxism is therefore the development, the refinement of that dialectical logic. This was achieved by Marx applying Hegel's principles more consistently. The logic of history was to lead from Greek philosophy to Christianity, then to Hegelianism, then to atheism, and finally to Marxism. Each succeeding moment expresses the truth of the preceding from which it results and as higher, more concrete,

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 104-105.

¹⁵⁹ "The sole import of this procedure is that *the infinite alone is*; the finite has no genuine being, whereas God alone has only genuine being." Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, 172.

¹⁶⁰ Marx also made the following point in his notebooks concerning speculative construction: "Ordinary thinking always has ready abstract predicates which it separates from the subject. All philosophers have made the predicates themselves into subjects." See, Karl Marx, "Notebooks on Epicurean Philosophy," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works, Volume 1: 1835-1843* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 458.

¹⁶¹ Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, 461.

¹⁶² Ibid., 461.

¹⁶³ "The outstanding achievement of Hegel's *Phänomenologie* and of its final outcome, the dialectic of negativity as the moving and generating principle, is thus first that Hegel conceives the self-creation of man as a process, conceives objectification as loss of the object, as alienation and as transcendence of this alienation; that he thus grasps the essence of *labour* and comprehends objective man – true, because real man – as the outcome of man's *own labour*." Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 132.

cannot be reduced to the lower. Hence these are stages in the growth of humanity and its coming to practical self-consciousness and mastery of itself, stages in its self-creation. In this sense Hegel was correct when he argued that the “History of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom.”¹⁶⁴ Yet he was equally just as correct when he said that history was “the slaughter-bench at which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of States, and the virtue of individuals have been victimized.”¹⁶⁵ Every real advance in freedom has been paid for in toil, suffering, and death.

That Marx was an independent Young Hegelian is best shown in the footnote to chapter four of his dissertation. This is one of the most important sections of his work and is essential for grasping the state of Young Hegelianism and Marx’s outlook at the time. Here he gave an overview of the fate the Hegelian school, the arising of the Young Hegelian movement, and the logic of its future development. Marx argued that “in relation to Hegel it is mere ignorance on the part of his pupils, when they explain one or the other determination of his system by his desire for accommodation and the like, hence, in one word, explain it in terms of *morality*.”¹⁶⁶ What he was referring to was the inconsistencies in the Hegelian system. A number of Hegelians argued that Hegel was hiding his true positions out of fear or support for the authorities. Marx agreed that it was certainly conceivable “for a philosopher to fall into one or another apparent inconsistency through some sort of accommodation,” and that this philosopher “may be conscious of it.”¹⁶⁷ However, Marx continued “what he is not conscious of, is the possibility that this apparent accommodation has its deepest roots in an inadequacy or in an inadequate formulation of his principle itself.”¹⁶⁸ That is, the apparent inconsistency in a philosopher’s pronouncement may not be a conscious act, but may lie in the limitations of their principles, or their inadequate formulation. Indeed, the philosopher in question may not even fully grasp the import of what they are arguing, viz. they might not see the logic of their own position.

If a philosopher’s accommodation is not an aberration, if it is a question of being consistently inconsistent, then a task is set for the students. According to Marx “his pupils must explain *from his inner essential consciousness* that which *for him himself* had the form of an *exoteric consciousness*. In this way, that which appears as progress of conscience is at the same time progress of knowledge.”¹⁶⁹ What Marx was arguing is that any divergence from principles must still be explained by those *same* principles viz. the outer form of a philosophic system must be explained by that system’s inner logic. Again, it is not a matter of morality and so no “suspicion is cast upon the particular conscience of the philosopher, but his essential form of consciousness is construed, raised to a definite shape and meaning and in this way also transcended.”¹⁷⁰ Only by consistently applying that philosopher’s principles can their system be

¹⁶⁴ Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 19.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁶⁶ Marx, “Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy,” 84.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

overcome, sublated. This is exactly what Marx did in relation to Hegel and it started with his work on the dissertation.

Already, in 1839, in his seventh and final notebook on Epicurean philosophy, Marx had made the above points. There he wrote that “essential consciousness of the philosopher is separate from his own manifest knowledge, but this manifest knowledge itself, in its discourses with itself as it were about its real internal urge, about the thought which it thinks, is conditioned, and conditioned by the principle which is the essence of his consciousness.”¹⁷¹ He was raising the dialectical point, that although there is a distinction between the inner and outer form of philosophical consciousness, the two cannot be severed and are intertwined. This distinction was one of the bedrocks of analysing the history of philosophy. Hence Marx went on to describe what he thought was the essence of the endeavour and all of which was sourced from Hegel:

Philosophical historiography is not concerned either with comprehending the personality...of the philosopher as, in a manner of speaking, the focus and the image of his system, or still less with indulging in psychological hair-splitting and point-scoring. Its concern is to distinguish in each system the determinations themselves, the actual crystallisations pervading the whole system, from the proofs, the justifications in argument, the self-presentation of the philosophers as they know themselves; to distinguish the silent, persevering mole of real philosophical knowledge from the voluble, exoteric, variously behaving phenomenological consciousness of the subject which is the vessel and motive force of those elaborations. It is in the division of this consciousness into aspects mutually giving each other the lie that precisely its unity is proved. This critical element in the presentation of a philosophy which has its place in history is absolutely indispensable in order scientifically to expound a system in connection with its historical existence, a connection which must not be [over]looked precisely because the [system’s] existence is historical, but which at the same time must be asserted as philosophical, and hence be developed according to its essence...Anybody who writes the history of philosophy separates essential from unessential, exposition from content.¹⁷²

First, a philosophy is to be explained by its inner coherence, not the specific personality of the philosopher in question.¹⁷³ Second, the crux of the matter is to study how the principles have been developed, expressed, justified. That is, the distinction between the inner logic and outer form is founded upon the same division in the consciousness of the philosopher. This division of mutually exclusive aspects is actually the very basis of their unity.¹⁷⁴ Both aspects must be analysed because the philosopher exists in time, is a product of historical conditions, and hence so is their system. Yet as a philosophical, theoretical product, a system has to be comprehended

¹⁷¹ Marx, “Notebooks on Epicurean Philosophy,” 506.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 506.

¹⁷³ “The inner necessity that knowing should be Science lies in its nature, and only the systematic exposition of philosophy itself provides it. But the *external* necessity, so far as it is grasped in a general way, setting aside accidental matters of person and motivation, is the same as the inner, or in other words it lies in the shape in which time sets forth the sequential existence of its moments.” Hegel, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*, 3.

¹⁷⁴ “This exclusion is at the same time a relation to others, and hence is also an **Attraction**.” Hegel, *The Philosophical Propaedeutic*, 78.

on its own terms, *as a philosophy*, that is according to *its logic*. To get to the heart of the matter the essential must be distinguished from inessential.

As Marx's guide and inspiration in the realm of the history of philosophy was Hegel, we will see, yet again, that the former gathered his insights from the latter. In the introduction to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* Hegel remarked that what this history reveals "is a succession of noble minds, a gallery of heroes of thought, who, by the power of Reason, have penetrated into the being of things, of nature and of spirit, into the Being of God, and have won for us by their labours the highest treasure, the treasure of reasoned knowledge."¹⁷⁵ Yet he was quick to note that in philosophy "the less deserts and merits are accorded to the particular individual, the better is the history."¹⁷⁶ Hegel went on to make his famous claim that "the sequence in the systems of Philosophy in History is similar to the sequence in the logical deduction of the Notion - determinations in the Idea."¹⁷⁷ That is, that the succession of philosophical systems in history parallels the succession of categories in the scientific system of logic. In order to perceive this it is necessary that the "fundamental conceptions of the systems appearing in the history of Philosophy be entirely divested of what regards their outward form, their relation to the particular."¹⁷⁸ Reason, human thought, striving towards the truth is what is universal and necessary in this sphere and so it is important to disregard, as much as possible, the particular and accidental aspects. Therefore, "in the logical progression taken for itself, there is, so far as its principal elements are concerned, the progression of historical manifestations," and although it might "be thought that Philosophy must have another order as to the stages in the Idea than that in which these Notions have gone forth in time; but in the main the order is the same."¹⁷⁹ That is, the progress of philosophy is largely parallel between the logical and historical. The succession of the different philosophical systems gains its logical coherence from that fact that it is actually the march of *one single system*, that of human reason, and that all share the same motive force, the dialectic.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁵ Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy, Volume 1*, 1.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 1-2.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁸⁰ "The first result which follows from what has been said, is that the whole of the history of Philosophy is a progression impelled by an inherent necessity, and one which is implicitly rational and *a priori* determined through its Idea; and this the history of Philosophy has to exemplify. Contingency must vanish on the appearance of Philosophy. Its history is just as absolutely determined as the development of Notions, and the impelling force is the inner dialectic of the forms." *Ibid.*, 36-37; "The dialectic... is the *immanent* transcending, in which the one-sidedness and restrictedness of the determinations of the understanding displays itself as what it is, i.e., as their negation. That is what everything finite is: its own sublation. Hence, the dialectical constitutes the moving soul of scientific progression, and it is the principle through which alone *immanent coherence and necessity* enter into the content of science." G.W.F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences with the Zusätze*, trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchting, and H. S. Harris (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1991), 128; "Because of the simple fact that every succeeding generation finds itself in possession of the productive forces acquired by the previous generation, and that they serve it as the raw material for new production, a coherence arises in human history, a history of humanity takes shape which becomes all the more a history of humanity the more the productive forces of men and therefore the social relations develop." Karl Marx, "Marx to P.V. Annekov," in Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy: Answer to the "Philosophy of Poverty" by M. Proudhon* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978), 167.

Marx repeated the distinction between the essence and appearance, the esoteric and exoteric, nineteen years later in an 1858 letter to Ferdinand Lassalle. The latter had finished a study on Heraclitus, a philosopher whom both Hegel and Marx had great affection, and had sent it to Marx for comment.¹⁸¹ The latter wrote to Lassalle saying that

I am all the more aware of the difficulties you had to surmount in this work in that ABOUT 18 years ago I myself attempted a similar work on a far easier philosopher, Epicurus – namely the portrayal of a complete system from fragments, a system which I am convinced, by the by, was – as with Heraclitus – only *implicitly* present in his work, not consciously as a system. Even in the case of philosophers who give systematic form to their work, Spinoza for instance, the true inner structure of the system is quite unlike the form in which it was consciously presented by him.¹⁸²

This division is essentially between the system and method of a philosopher.¹⁸³ This is precisely what Marx was referring to when he argued that in regards to Hegel’s dialectic it was “to be sure, the ultimate word in philosophy and hence there is all the more need to divest it of the mystical aura given it by Hegel.”¹⁸⁴ He repeated this theme in the 1873 afterword to the second German edition of *Capital* when he wrote that the “mystification which the dialectic suffers in Hegel’s hands by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general forms of motion in a comprehensive and conscious manner. With him it is standing on its head. It must be inverted, in order to discover the rational kernel within the mystical shell.”¹⁸⁵ Marx accepted the essentials of Hegel’s approach to the history of philosophy and applied it to Hegel himself; only he discarded the mystical, idealist conception of the distinction between essence and appearance, between form and content, which posited each philosophical system as a progressive realisation of the Absolute Idea, of God. Thus while Marx used Hegel against religion, he also used Hegel against Hegel. Marx did this by applying Hegel’s method critically, that is more consistently, and so the logic of Hegel lead to the logic of Marx.¹⁸⁶

Marx had already *begun* his critique of what he termed the “mystificatory side of the Hegelian dialectic” in his doctoral dissertation.¹⁸⁷ He finished that critique between 1843 and 1844; that is between the writing of his 1843 *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy*

¹⁸¹ Jason Devine, “On Fire: A Dialectical Heritage,” accessed 11 August 2023, <https://links.org.au/fire-dialectical-heritage>.

¹⁸² Karl Marx, “Marx to Ferdinand Lassalle, 31 May 1858,” in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works, Volume 40: Letters 1856-59* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1983), 316.

¹⁸³ “For the method is nothing but the structure set forth in its pure essentiality” Hegel, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*, 28.

¹⁸⁴ Marx, “Marx to Ferdinand Lassalle, 31 May 1858,” 316.

¹⁸⁵ Marx, *Capital*, 103.

¹⁸⁶ This is, incidentally, another reason why there is no Marxist system. For in dialectically overcoming Hegelianism, the necessity for ideological systems was done away with. As Marx wrote pointedly: “Techo further ‘imagines’ that I have ‘tailored’ a ‘system’ while on the contrary, even in the *Manifesto*, which was intended directly for workers, I rejected *all* systems, and in their place put ‘the critical insight into the conditions, the course, and the general results of real social movement’. Such an ‘insight’, however, can be neither conjured up nor ‘tailored’ to order.” Karl Marx, *Herr Vogt* (London: New Park Publications, 1982), 72.

¹⁸⁷ Marx, *Capital*, 102.

of *Law and the Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. But, again, Marx was following the logic of Hegel's own work, because as he noted in 1844, inside the *Phenomenology* there was

a hidden, mystifying and still uncertain criticism; but inasmuch as it depicts man's *estrangement*, even though man appears only as mind, there lie concealed in it *all* the elements of criticism, already *prepared* and *elaborated* in a manner often rising far above the Hegelian standpoint. The 'unhappy consciousness', the 'honest consciousness', the struggle of the 'noble and base consciousness', etc., etc. – these separate sections contain, but still in an estranged form, the *critical* elements of whole spheres such as religion, the state, civil life, etc..¹⁸⁸

Marx had already started a critical, materialist takeover of these elements and, as an atheist, he understood that the world of humanity had produced ideas and consequently gods. He just did not know yet the exact details of the roots of this process. Thus he shifted his focus as his studies developed. As he wrote in his 1844 introduction to the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*: "For Germany the *criticism of religion* is in the main complete, and criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism... The basis of irreligious criticism is: *Man makes religion*, religion does not make man."¹⁸⁹ However, there is no "man" in the abstract, but rather humans with a concrete existence in a specific society and state, which are the premises, the bases for religion. So, in turn, "the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the earth, the *criticism of religion* into the *criticism of law* and the *criticism of theology* into the *criticism of politics*."¹⁹⁰ Marx commented on this in the preface to his 1859 *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*:

The first work which I undertook to dispel the doubts assailing me was a critical re-examination of the Hegelian philosophy of law... My inquiry led me to the conclusion that neither legal relations nor political forms could be comprehended whether by themselves or on the basis of a so-called general development of the human mind, but that on the contrary they originate in the material conditions of life, the totality of which Hegel...embraces within the term 'civil society'; that the anatomy of this civil society, however, has to be sought in political economy.¹⁹¹

From this we can see that there has been one ongoing Marxist project of critique: first religion and philosophy, then the state and politics, and then political economy and the capitalist mode of production.¹⁹² This critical project began right in 1839 with Marx's Epicurean notebooks. Here it must be noted that Young Hegelians were limited in simply moving from a critique of religion to

¹⁸⁸ Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 131.

¹⁸⁹ Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. Introduction," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works, Volume 3: 1843-1844* (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 175.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 176.

¹⁹¹ Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (New York: International Publishers, 1989), 20.

¹⁹² "The work I am presently concerned with is a *Critique of Economic Categories* or, IF YOU LIKE, a critical exposé of the system of the bourgeois economy. It is at once an exposé and, by the same token, a critique of the system." Karl Marx, "Marx to Ferdinand Lassalle, 22 February 1858," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works, Volume 40: Letters 1856-59* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1983), 270.

that of politics.¹⁹³ Only Marx went further because he combined the criticisms of religion and politics with a criticism of Hegel. The trajectory of his position was already pointing to beyond Young Hegelianism even while he was a member of that movement.¹⁹⁴

This is further seen by returning to Marx's footnote on the fate of Hegelianism. Marx, in his highly poetic language of the period, argued that "the theoretical mind, once liberated in itself, turns into practical energy, and, leaving the shadowy empire of Amenthes as *will*, turns itself against the reality of the world existing without it."¹⁹⁵ Hegel had written that the "system of logic is the realm of shadows," but here Marx described philosophy as a whole as such a kingdom.¹⁹⁶ His point is that having reached completion, it must turn outward towards material reality. At this point a conflict begins, because when "philosophy turns itself as will against the world of appearance, then the system is lowered to an abstract totality, that is, it has become one aspect of the world which opposes another one... Inspired by the urge to realise itself, it enters into tension against the other."¹⁹⁷ In this situation, "inner self-contentment and completeness" of the philosophical system i.e. Hegelianism, "has been broken," and so

as the world becomes philosophical, philosophy also becomes worldly, that its realisation is also its loss, that what it struggles against on the outside is its own inner deficiency, that in the very struggle it falls precisely into those defects which it fights as defects in the opposite camp, and that it can only overcome these defects by falling into them.¹⁹⁸

Philosophy seeks to change the world according to its views, thus to make it philosophical; but as it does so, philosophy ceases to be philosophy viz. in realising itself practically, it loses itself. Here Marx already declared what he would later repeat in his final thesis on Feuerbach: the end of philosophy proper.¹⁹⁹ Marx was also making a reference to Hegel's description of the Enlightenment. Although the Enlightenment fought against the errors of faith and superstition, it shared the same errors and so was actually fighting itself.²⁰⁰ The division between the world and

¹⁹³ "Our times are political, and our politics intend the freedom of this world. No longer do we lay the ground for the ecclesiastical state, but for the secular state." Arnold Ruge, "Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right' and the Politics of our Times (1842)," in *The Young Hegelians: An Anthology*, ed. Lawrence S. Stepelevich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 211.

¹⁹⁴ The revolutionary continuity in Marx's project of critique can be seen in the brilliant parallel he drew between theologians and bourgeois political economists: "Economists have a singular method of procedure. There are only two kinds of institutions for them, artificial and natural. The institutions of feudalism are artificial institutions, those of the bourgeoisie are natural institutions. In this, they resemble the theologians, who likewise establish two kinds of religion. Every religion which is not theirs is an invention of men, while their own is an emanation from God." Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy: Answer to the "Philosophy of Poverty" by M. Proudhon* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1978), 112.

¹⁹⁵ Marx, "Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy," 85.

¹⁹⁶ Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, 58.

¹⁹⁷ Marx, "Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy," 85.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁹⁹ "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it." Karl Marx, "Theses On Feuerbach," in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology: Critique of Modern German Philosophy According to Its Representatives Feuerbach, B. Bauer and Stirner, and of German Socialism According to Its Various Prophets* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), 617.

²⁰⁰ "This nature of the struggle of the Enlightenment with errors, that of fighting itself in them, and of condemning in them what it itself asserts, is explicit *for us*, or what Enlightenment and its struggle is *in itself*." Hegel, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, 333.

philosophy was thus replicated inside philosophy itself, in the self-consciousness of its adherents. Hence their “liberation of the world from un-philosophy is at the same time their own liberation from the philosophy that held them in fetters as a particular system.”²⁰¹ The development of Hegelianism had to lead to action and this in turn had to lead to a division of the school.²⁰² Thus the “duality of philosophical self-consciousness appears finally as a double trend, each side utterly opposed to the other. One side, the *liberal party*...maintains as its main determination the concept and the principle of philosophy; the other side, its *non-concept*, the moment of reality. This second side is *positive philosophy*.”²⁰³ The “liberal party” here referred to the Young Hegelian movement, while the other party was the Old Hegelians. The first maintained its fidelity to the principle of the philosophy and thus sought to change the world. The second clung to the system and accepted the word in its essentials. In Marx’s words:

The act of the first side is critique, hence precisely that turning-towards-the-outside of philosophy; the act of the second is the attempt to philosophise, hence the turning-in-towards-itself of philosophy. This second side knows that the inadequacy is immanent in philosophy, while the first understands it as inadequacy of the world which has to be made philosophical.²⁰⁴

Whereas the Young Hegelians aimed at applying the Hegelian dialectic in the form of critique, to change the world, the Old Hegelians merely sought to refine the system.²⁰⁵ While the former party has historically proven itself to have been more revolutionary and productive there is still a minor loss here. That is, it was only the Old Hegelians who sought to systematically develop Hegel’s logic, because those who followed Marx focused on practical activity and social analysis. The attempt to see how much of Hegel’s system of logic was salvageable was only started in the USSR in the late 1920s, but was ended by Stalinism.²⁰⁶ The advances and attempts by the Old Hegelians were only appreciated by academic Hegelians in the USA in the late 1860s-1890s, who were centered in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*; in this publication they translated and reprinted works, especially from Rosenkranz. The journal was founded by its

²⁰¹ Marx, “Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy,” 86.

²⁰² In this Marx was again referring to Hegel’s discussion of the Enlightenment in the *Phenomenology*: “In regard to that absolute Being, Enlightenment is caught up in the same internal conflict that it formerly experienced in connection with faith, and it divides itself into two parties. One party proves itself to be victorious by breaking up into two parties; for in so doing, it shows that it contains within itself the principle it is attacking, and thus has rid itself of the one-sidedness in which it previously appeared. The interest which was divided between itself and the other party now falls entirely within itself, and the other party is forgotten, because that interest finds within itself the antithesis which occupies its attention. At the same time, however, it has been raised into the higher victorious element in which it exhibits itself in a clarified form. So that the schism that arises in one of the parties and seems to be a misfortune, demonstrates rather that party’s good fortune.” See, Hegel, *Hegel’s Phenomenology*, 350-351.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 86.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

²⁰⁵ Marx viewed the Young Hegelian movement as the modern incarnation of the Enlightenment, whose ancient precursor was Epicurus. After the Hegelian School split into two parties, the Young Hegelian side would itself split. For within the next two years, Marx and Engels would consign the bulk of the Young Hegelians to the “positive philosophy” side and the liberal party would be redefined as the *Communist Party*.

²⁰⁶ Yehoshua Yakhot, *The Suppression of Philosophy in the USSR (The 1920s & 1930s)* (Michigan: Mehring Books, 2012), 72-74, 149.

editor, William Torrey Harris, who was also the United States Commissioner of Education.²⁰⁷ This is one of the reasons for the historically-ongoing theoretical weakness of the modern communist movement and the perennial returns to Hegel. That is, because Hegel's logic was never systematically and critically developed on a materialist basis. Marx did not create a revolution in logic, Hegel did.²⁰⁸ Marx's revolution was in social theory, which he achieved by critically unifying various spheres (politics, economics, culture, etc.) on the basis of the dialectic. So while there is a logic of Marxism, there is currently no Marxist logic. Undoubtedly, a critical engagement with the efforts of the Old Hegelians could help expedite this necessary task.²⁰⁹

As noted above, Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* was foundational for Marx's dissertation. Just as Marx did not uncritically accept Hegel's view of history, he also did not uncritically accept his view of nature.²¹⁰ Marx was not setting out to assess the scientific viability of Hegel's view of nature, nor that of Epicurus. Instead he sought to utilise Hegel's work to reconstruct Epicurus' philosophy of nature. In Marx's words, his dissertation would be aimed at "expounding Epicurean philosophy and its immanent dialectics"²¹¹ The notebooks are where he carried out, firstly, his analysis and, secondly, began the reconstruction of Epicurus' implicit system according to its own logic. The total, organic presentation only occurred in his finished dissertation. Marx referred to this as "the genetic exposition" of Epicurus' philosophy.²¹² This is another name for the dialectical method. Indeed, Hegel spoke of his *Science of Logic* in the same manner, writing that: "*Objective logic* therefore, which treats of *being* and *essence* constitutes properly the *genetic exposition of the Notion*."²¹³ We see, again, the continuity of Marx's project and his application of Hegel's dialectic in what he wrote in his unfinished, fourth volume of *Capital*. There he noted that "analysis is the necessary prerequisite of genetical presentation, and

²⁰⁷ William T. Harris, *Hegel's Logic: A Book on the Genesis of the Categories of the Mind, A Critical Exposition* (Chicago: S.C. Griggs and Company, 1890). As the leading figure, Harris was the force behind printing the partial translation of Rosenkranz's book on Hegel and, unsurprisingly, contributed an introductory essay to the latter. See, W.T. Harris, "Introduction to Hegel's Philosophic Method," in Karl Rosenkranz, *Hegel as the National Philosopher of Germany*, tran. Geo. S. Hall (St. Louis: Gray, Baker & Co., 1874), 1-16.

²⁰⁸ Hegel achieved this by reconstructing logic, viz. by combing logic and metaphysics and systematically deducing each category and form. See, Jason Devine, "From Kautsky and the Bolsheviks, to Hegel and Marx," accessed 11 August 2023, <https://links.org.au/kautsky-and-bolsheviks-hegel-and-marx-dialectics-triad-and-triplicity>. The idea that logic lacked a systematic form originated with Kant who argued that his table of categories was "made systematically from a common principle...and has not arisen rhapsodically," unlike Aristotle who, lacking "any guiding principle, he picked them up just as they occurred to him." Moreover, he argued that reason "cannot permit our knowledge to remain in an unconnected and rhapsodistic state, but requires that the sum of our knowledge should constitute a system." See, Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, tran. J.M.D. Meiklejohn and ed. Vasilis Politis (London: J.M. Dent, 2002), 86, 532.

²⁰⁹ The issues that need be considered are: which categories of Hegel's logic should be retained and which discarded, and, further, which transitions between categories are legitimate and which are not. Especially important for this endeavour is the following work: Johann Eduard Erdmann, *Outlines of Logic and Metaphysics*, tran. B.C. Burt (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1896).

²¹⁰ Although Marx rejected philosophy, and hence any philosophy of nature, he always agreed with Hegel that nature was dialectical. This was a view he upheld the rest of his life. See, Devine, "On the "Philosophy" of "Dialectical Materialism"," accessed 11 August 2023, <https://links.org.au/philosophy-dialectical-materialism>.

²¹¹ Marx, "Notebooks on Epicurean Philosophy," 413.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 505.

²¹³ Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, 577.

of the understanding of the real, formative process in its different phases.”²¹⁴ That is, an analysis of the actual, empirical matter at hand (in this latter case, bourgeois social relations), must precede the presentation of that same matter according to its own internal dialectical logic.

To discuss Epicurus’ philosophy and Marx’s exposition of it would take us too far afield. This is especially so as it will be recalled that Marx stated that he agreed with Hegel’s overall picture and only disagreed on certain points. Therefore, a short discussion will suffice to show Marx’s relation to Hegel on this matter. In Marx’s sixth notebook he outlined the contents of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature* as contained in volume two of his *Encyclopedia*.²¹⁵ He made three versions and each succeeding one contained less information than the preceding version. So that while the first contained brief descriptions of what was included under a specific leading category, the final one gave only the briefest outline featuring only the main categories such as space, time, place, motion, etc.²¹⁶ Since Marx had Hegel’s book at hand the outlines were clearly intended for Marx as aids in memorisation and guiding his study. In fact, since Hegel’s system follows a basic rhythm, one replicated in each section, even the barest version would present the main transition points. As Erdmann noted, Hegel’s categories “are the universal relations of reason, which, because they govern every rational system may be called souls of all reality...they are only the laws that govern everywhere the same” and “are not affected by the distinction of nature and spirit.”²¹⁷

For example, Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature* is structured by three main divisions of mechanics, physics, and organics, and the first three categories of mechanics are space, time, and place. Space, as the initial form, is “mediationless indifference...it is absolutely continuous...contains no specific difference within itself.”²¹⁸ It is, therefore, the moment of unity, of immediateness. The second category, time, contains the “dimensions of...*present*, *future*, and *past*,” and it is the negative, the moment of division, of mediation.²¹⁹ Finally, place, the third form, is the “*posited* identity of space and time.”²²⁰ Here we have a restored unity, a mediated-immediateness, self-mediation. This course can be described as moving from abstract unity to division to concrete unity, or as progressing from the immediate to the mediate to the absolutely mediate. However, while in this case the development covered three categories, there are times where the second moment, as a moment of division, can and will split into *two categories*.²²¹ This can be seen in the progression from matter to repulsion and attraction to

²¹⁴ Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value: Volume IV of Capital, Part III* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), 500.

²¹⁵ However, he generally excluded the third section or division of the book as Epicurus’ philosophy is primarily concerned with physics and not organics.

²¹⁶ Karl Marx, “Plan of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Nature*,” in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works, Volume 1: 1835-1843* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 510-514.

²¹⁷ Erdmann, *History of Philosophy, Volume II*, 687.

²¹⁸ G.W.F. Hegel, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Nature, Being Part Two of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences (1830)*, tran. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 30.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

²²¹ This is one of the reasons why a number cannot be attached to the dialectic: even though its *appearance* is as a triplicity, its *essence* is that of a *single self-development*.

gravity. Here matter is an abstract identity which falls asunder into attraction and repulsion. This division is then sublated, by the restored, higher self-unity of matter in the form of gravity.²²²

Marx followed this logic in explicating the dialectics of Epicurus' atomism *vis-à-vis* that of Democritus. The latter had postulated that the basic elements of everything were atoms moving in the void and when they collide they stick together and later fall apart. Hence nothing lasts forever except the atoms and void. However, he did not say how exactly they moved.²²³ As to Epicurus, he was far more specific. He argued that the atoms fell downwards in the unlimited void, but he further stated that atoms would also make the slightest swerve and thus they would run into each other and both repel and combine.²²⁴ Marx rightly perceived in the progression of Epicurus' account an aspect of the spatial dialectic. That is, Hegel had written that the category of space moves through categories of point, line, and surface.²²⁵ This was actually a systematisation of a viewpoint of early Greek philosophy. Thus, "for the Pythagoreans the unit-point came first, from it the line, from line surface and from surface solid."²²⁶ However, Hegel himself did not see that the spatial dialectic explained the logic of Epicurus' view of the atom, and this is another example Marx's independence. Thus Marx started his analysis of the declination of the atom by arguing that

Just as the point is negated in the line, so is every falling body negated in the straight line it describes. Its specific quality does not matter here at all...Every body, insofar as we are concerned with the motion of falling, is therefore nothing but a moving point, and indeed a point without independence, which in a certain mode of being – the straight line which it describes – surrenders its individuality.²²⁷

Just as the point was sublated in the line, so the atom as well would "disappear in the straight line; for the solidity of the atom does not even enter into the picture, insofar as it is only considered as something falling in a straight line."²²⁸ Yet this raised a problem since the "atom is

²²² "Through the moment of its negativity, of its abstract *separation into parts*, matter holds itself asunder in opposition to its self-identity; this is the *repulsion* of matter. But since these different parts are one and the same, matter is no less essentially the negative unity of this sundered being-for-self and is therefore continuous; this is its *attraction*, Matter is inseparably both and is the negative unity of these two moments, singularity. But this singularity as still *distinguished* from the *immediate* asunderness of matter and consequently *not yet posited as material*, is an *ideal* singularity, a *centre: gravity*." Ibid., 44.

²²³ Aristotle, *The Metaphysics* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1998), 17-18, 370.

²²⁴ Cicero, "On Goals," in *Hellenistic Philosophy Introductory Readings*, tran. Brad Inwood and L. P. Gerson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 45-46.

²²⁵ "(β) The difference of space is, however, essentially a determinate, qualitative difference. As such, it is (a), first, the *negation* of space itself, because this is immediate *differenceless* self-externality, the *point*. (β) But the negation is the negation of *space*, i.e. it is itself spatial. The point, as essentially this relation, i.e. as sublating itself, is the *line*, the first other-being, i.e. spatial being, of the point, (γ) The truth of other-being is, however, negation of the negation. The line consequently passes over into the plane, which, on the one hand, is a determinateness opposed to line and point, and so surface, simply as such, but, on the other hand, is the sublated negation of space. It is thus the restoration of the spatial totality which now contains the negative moment within itself, an *enclosing surface* which separates off a *single* whole space." Hegel, *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature*, 31.

²²⁶ W.K.C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy: Volume 1, The Earlier Presocratics and the Pythagoreans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 259.

²²⁷ Marx, "Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy," 48.

²²⁸ Ibid., 48.

that of being pure form, negation of all relativity, of all relation to another mode of being.”²²⁹ That is, the atom is the indestructible, unique element of everything and, as such, it does not depend on others for its existence, they depend on it. This is a contradiction and so Marx posed the question: “How then can Epicurus give reality to the pure form-determination of the atom, the concept of pure individuality, negating any mode of being determined by another being?”²³⁰ The answer is the swerve of the atom: “the *relative existence* which confronts the atom, *the mode of being which it has to negate*, is *the straight line*. The immediate negation of this motion is *another motion*, which, therefore, spatially conceived, is the *declination from the straight line*.”²³¹ Just as the atom is negated by falling in a straight line, this in turn is negated.

In this dialectic the declination of the atom is the realisation of its self-development. The whole process is the coming to be of the atom. Where the atom lost itself in the straight line, it regained itself in the swerve. The importance of the atom for Epicurus’ philosophy is that it not merely exemplifies the freedom of self-consciousness, but that it is the very physical basis of the latter.²³² Indeed, as Marx wrote, the

*declination of the atom from the straight line is...not a particular determination which appears accidentally in Epicurean physics. On the contrary, the law which it expresses goes through the whole Epicurean philosophy...Thus, while the atom frees itself from its relative existence, the straight line...by swerving away from it; so the entire Epicurean philosophy swerves away from the restrictive mode of being wherever the concept of abstract individuality, self-sufficiency and negation of all relation to other things must be represented in its existence.*²³³

This is seen in Epicurean ethics, where pleasure, rationally understood, is the highest good. The individual seeks to be free from mental and physical agony, and so the aim of their conduct is “swerving away from pain and confusion...the good is the flight from evil, pleasure the swerving away from suffering.”²³⁴ Just as the atom frees itself, so humans can be free as well. As the atom overcomes the straight line, humans can overcome their distressing circumstances. Concern for the health of the self is the beginning and the end of Epicurean philosophy. It can be seen, then, why Marx referred to Epicurus’ philosophy, and that of his contemporaries, as philosophies of self-consciousness. It should also be clear, from all of this, that Marx did not provide an idealistic interpretation of Epicurus’ physics as Oizerman alleged, but gave the genetic exposition of the actual dialectics of Epicureanism.

The Young Hegelian movement was born from an idealist school. As it developed in an atheistic direction it sought to free itself from Hegel’s idealism, but ultimately failed to do so. Only Marx achieved this and it was, as I have shown, because he was never a Hegelian and was

²²⁹ Ibid., 48.

²³⁰ Ibid., 48.

²³¹ Ibid., 49.

²³² “*Lucretius* therefore is correct when he maintains that the declination breaks the *fati foedera*, and, since he applies this immediately to consciousness, it can be said of the atom that the declination is that something in its breast that can fight back and resist.” Ibid., 49.

²³³ Ibid., 50.

²³⁴ Ibid., 51.

a critical, independent Young Hegelian. He was an atheist before all the leading Young Hegelians and was the only one to consistently develop and critique philosophy and religion, Hegel and Christianity. It is clear then, that when Mehring wrote that Marx, when writing his dissertation, was “still completely on the idealist basis of the Hegelian philosophy,” he was utterly wrong.²³⁵ It is not an accident that he gave no proof of his claim and merely asserted it. More specifically, he was the source of the myth of Marx being an idealist when he wrote his dissertation and he clearly could not grasp and understand what Marx wrote as he did not have a grounding in Hegel. This is also because he is the source of the Feuerbach myth. Thus he wrote in 1893 that “Feuerbach was the link between Hegel and Marx.”²³⁶ Marx was temporarily influenced by certain ideas of Feuerbach, but only starting in 1842 with the publication of the latter’s “Provisional Theses for the Reformation of Philosophy.” He already expressed reservations at the time about what Feuerbach wrote, and by early 1845 he had decisively refuted him in his famous twelve theses.²³⁷ In light of everything above, it simply is not true that Marx left Hegel thanks to Feuerbach, that he became a materialist because of the latter.

Marx was never a member of the Hegelian school. But it also cannot be argued that Marx was a Hegelian because he applied the dialectical method. For if that were so, then he never ceased to be Hegelian. Rather he took Hegel’s greatest insight, his logical method, and applied it in an ongoing project of revolutionary critique.²³⁸ In fact, Marx himself described *Capital* as the “FIRST ATTEMPT AT APPLYING THE *DIALECTIC METHOD* TO POLITICAL ECONOMY.”²³⁹ Clearly *Capital* is not and was not a Hegelian work. Therefore, all the talk of the alleged differences and even a break between the so-called Young Marx and Old Marx was a wasted exercise and much time would have been saved had people actually bothered to read Marx’s doctoral dissertation and had an understanding of Hegel. Of course, when one spurns Hegel and discards dialectics, one will come up with all sorts of absurdities, such as replacing an empirically faithful reconstruction of Marx’s development with a selective and, ultimately, dishonest reading.

In order to form a true, and thus critical picture of the importance of both Hegel and Young Hegelianism for the development of Marx, an engagement with his doctoral thesis is

²³⁵ Mehring, *Karl Marx*, 30.

²³⁶ Franz Mehring, “On Historical Materialism,” accessed 12 August 2023, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/mehring/1893/histmat/01.htm>.

²³⁷ “Feuerbach’s aphorisms seem to me incorrect only in one respect, that he refers too much to nature and too little to politics. That, however, is the only alliance by which present-day philosophy can become truth.” Karl Marx, “To Arnold Ruge. March 13, 1843,” in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works, Volume 1: 1835-1843* (New York: International Publishers, 1976), 400.

²³⁸ The project of critique was *not* a Young Hegelian innovation, but had been inaugurated by Kant in 1781: “Our age is the age of criticism, to which everything must be subjected. The sacredness of religion, and the authority of legislation, are by many regarded as grounds of exemption from the examination of this tribunal. But, if they are exempted, they become the subjects of just suspicion, and cannot lay claim to sincere respect, which reason accords only to that which has stood the test of a free and public examination.” See, Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 4-5. This was echoed later, in 1843, by Marx when he said that the present task was the “*ruthless criticism of all that exists.*” See, Karl Marx, “Letters from the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*,” in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works, Volume 3: 1843-1844* (New York: International Publishers, 1975), 142.

²³⁹ Karl Marx, “Marx to Engels. 7 November 1867,” in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works, Volume 42: Marx and Engels, 1864-1868* (New York: International Publishers, 1987), 464.

indispensable. This is important not simply for understanding the theoretical roots and originality of Marx, but also for preventing a repetition of the errors of the past. For that fact is that much of what passes for Marxist theory is actually so-called “dialectical materialism,” which, in essence, is a reversion to Young Hegelianism and is built upon shoddy scholarship and sheer myths. Marxist science was born of a break with ideology and the present-day communist movement will see no success as long as it continues to labour under the illusions of an ideology. The work of proletarian self-liberation cannot be achieved with the flawed tools of a false consciousness.