KARL MARX AND RELIGION: 1841-1846

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By

KATHLEEN CLARKSON

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AUTHOR: Kathleen L. Clarkson

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SCOPE AND CONTENT:

A recurrent theme throughout the writings of Karl Marx from 1841 through 1846 is his attack on religion. This thesis will first explicate the precise nature of his atheism. Then it will detail his critique of religion by means of a chronological analysis of his major early works. Finally, it will indicate some implications of his attack on religion for the "Christian-Marxist" dialogue.

PREFACE

Throughout this thesis, I have used the standard translations of Karl Marx's works as are noted in the Bibliography. Since many of the references do come from Marx's (and Engels') various writings, for the sake of convenience, I have used certain abbreviations for those cited most often. I also have abbreviated one secondary source. They are as follows:

Critique	Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'
Dissertation	The Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature
German Ideology	The German Ideology
Holy Family	The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Critique Against Bruno Bauer and Company
"Introduction"	"Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right': Introduction"
"Jewish Question"	"On the Jewish Question"
Manifesto	Manifesto of the Communist Party
"Theses"	"Theses on Feuerbach"
Young Hegelians	The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx

Finally, I would like to thank the members of my supervisory committee for their help during the various stages of writing. In particular, I am grateful to Dr. L. Greenspan. I would also like

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INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that the writings of Karl Marx have had a major impact on the modern world. Because of the global significance of Marx's ideas, numerous scholars have delved into different aspects of his philosophy. Volumes have been written on Marxian economics, Marxian socialism, and the Marxian dialectic. Very little, however, has been written on Karl Marx and religion. The delayed publication of the complete writings of Marx from 1841-1846 seems a main reason for this, since it was during these years that Marx developed his critique of religion. It is the purpose of the present study to determine the precise nature of Karl Marx's attack on religion throughout the corpus of these important writings from 1841-1846.

In Chapter I, I deal with the question of Karl Marx's atheism in terms of the influence of Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach. This approach is not simply an antiquarian pursuit of who influenced whom, but it sheds light on Marx's specific view of religion. From a comparison of Marx with Feuerback and Bauer, I attempt to show both the intellectual debt to these two thinkers, as well as the novelty of his own position. I argue that Marx took the content of his critique of religion from Bauer, not

Feuerbach. Part of that argument involves a refutation of a commonly held misconception that Marx derived his critique of religion from Feuerbach's The Essence of Christianity. Rather, I argue that Marx elaborated a theory of ideology from certain features of Feuerbach's thought. To magnify the difference between Marx and Feuerbach, I examine Marx's atheism in relation to Bauer's atheism. Most significantly, I show that Marx assimilated Bauer's macabre description of religion. As a result, his atheism, unlike Feuerbach's, was of an extremely militant variety. After analyzing the comparative influence of these two formative thinkers on Marx, I conclude this chapter by elucidating the distinctiveness of his own attack on religion.

In Chapter II, I detail Marx's critique of religion by means of a chronological analysis of his major early works. I concentrate mainly on his writings from 1841 through 1846, because during that period, Marx articulated his attack on religion. Occasional reference is made to Marx's later works in order to illustrate the persistence of his critique as a theme in all of his writings, but he made no significant innovations beyond 1846. This detailed study is necessary to substantiate the general argument presented in Chapter I.

Finally, in the Conclusion, I indicate some implications of this study for the "Christian-Marxist" dialogue. Although it

is beyond the scope of this thesis to enter into that debate between "Christians" and "Marxists", I do point out some general questions on which the dialogue should focus.

Since this thesis is limited to an historical study, it will not be possible to examine other avenues to the complex question of the relationship between Marx and religion. For example, the work of Frederick Engels will be considered only in those books which he wrote in collaboration with Marx, chiefly The Holy Family and The German Ideology. It is not my concern to ask whether Engels presents a different view elsewhere, nor to allude to him to clarify Marx. Furthermore, I have been careful to distinguish between an historical study and a biographical approach grounded in psychology. In part, the latter approach has been taken by Arend Th. van Leeuwen; e.g., in discussing the imagery of water in Marx's poetry, he suggests:

> . . . investigation from a psycho-analytic viewpoint is likely to discover a strong inclination towards maternalistic symbols, arising out of a latent desire to return to the pre-natal and pre-conscious bliss of the womb.[1]

While this approach may be interesting in itself, it does not speak to the point of this study. Thirdly, I do not deal with the question of whether Marxism itself is a religion - a problem

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[1] Arend Th. van Leeuwen, Critique of Heaven (London, 1972), p. 48.

more suitable for sociological enquiry. Finally, with respect to the "Christian-Marxist" dialogue, I do not refer to the question of the ultimate truth of Marx's critique of religion and society. Fruther, within that debate, my thesis does not shed any light on whether traditional Christianity is intrinsically incompatible with Marxism. Nor does it touch on developments within Marxism which only be labelled revisionism. My only concern in the body of this thesis is looking at Marx himself--his own understanding of atheism as it formed the structure of his early writings. In the conclusion to this thesis, however, I do sketch briefly some general areas of concern which this study presents to the "Christian-Marxist" dialogue.

CHAPTER I

THE INFLUENCE OF BRUNO BAUER AND LUDWIG FEUERBACH ON KARL MARX'S ATHEISM

I. Introduction

This chapter seeks to determine the precise nature of Karl Marx's atheism by delineating the extent to which he draws from Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach for his own quite distinctive critique of religion. It focuses on this large question in a number of different ways. The crux of the discussion, however, concerns the diametrically opposed descriptions of religion found in the writings of Bauer and Feuerbach. While both deny any supernatural content of religion, each still sees Christianity as the height of religious development. Here, however, the similarity ends. Feuerbach views Christianity as the apex of religion, because the essence of man made up its content; Bauer views Christianity as the apogee of religious alienation, because man had no content. In other words, Bauer sees in religion an expression of the worst in man, while Feuerbach finds an expression of the best in man. One finds man's inhumanity and the other finds the essence of humanity. Consequently, Bauer wants religion abolished and Feuerbach wants it humanized. Marx, like Bauer,

also finds hell in heaven. Likewise, both Marx and Bauer assail heaven, loudly denouncing its inhumanity. Whereas the essential humanity of religion results in Feuerbach's denial of atheism, its essential inhumanity determines Bauer's and Marx's emphatic repudiation of religion. Feuerbach's atheism earned the epithet "pious", while Bauer and Marx could only be described as uncompromising, militant atheists.

Feuerbach's impact on Marx comes after his break with Bauer. It does not date from Feuerbach's Essence of Christianity, his well-known critique of religion, but rather from Feuerbach's later works, his lesser-known critique of Hegelian speculation. His Essence was published in 1841, but not until 1843, after the publication of Preliminary Theses for a Reform of Philosophy and Principles of the Philosophy of the Future, does Marx assimilate some of Feuerbach's ideas. In the main, Marx absorbs the idea of Hegelian philosophy as the final transformation of theology. By 1846, Marx's critique of religion expands into a full-blown theory of ideology which includes not simply theology but all forms of religiosity, i.e., philosophy, ethics, political economy, etc.

This chapter goes on to elaborate these themes in some detail. I will draw out the distinctiveness of Marx's own critique of religion in the conclusion to this chapter.

II. Clarification of the Issue

While there is no doubt that Karl Marx was an atheist, there is some question about the nature of Marx's atheism and confusion concerning whether or not Marx's views on religion underwent a considerable shift from his early to later works. Was Marx actually a militant atheist and, if so, how does one account for his brusque dismissal of religion at the writing of the Manifesto of the Communist Party:

> The charges against Communism made from a religious, a philosophical, and generally, from an ideological standpoint, are not deserving of serious examination.[1]

Nicholas Lobkowicz interprets this and other passages to mean that Marx was not a militant atheist, that "[a]ny direct struggle against religion . . . appeared to Marx as useless and misplaced. . . ."[2] As will be shown, however, this statement is somewhat misleading, because Lobkowicz does not reckon with the decisive influence of Bruno Bauer on the young Marx. David McLellan correctly sees it was Bauer who proved formative for Marx's essentially macabre understanding of religion and for his militant atheism.[3]

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1 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Manifesto of the Communist Party, trans. Samuel Moore (Moscow, 1952), p. 72. Hereafter this will be referred to as Manifesto.

2 Nicholas Lobkowicz, "Marx's Attitude toward Religion", in Marx and the Western World, ed. Nicholas Lobkowicz (Notre Dame, 1967), p. 304.

3 See David McLellan, The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx (New York, 1969), p. 79. Hereafter this will be referred to as Young Hegelians.

It has been a common fault of not too recent Marxian scholarship to see the Young Hegelians as second-rate thinkers who wrote fuzzy polemics and not much else. In the particular case of Bruno Bauer, these scholars have concentrated on the so-called period of "pure criticism",[4] seeing in this period Bauer's primary work and neglecting his earlier writings which had a profound influence on Marx's thinking about religion.[5] In addition, Ludwig Feuerbach has often tacitly been included in the rank and file of Young Hegelians and Löwith says of Feuerbach's works:

> Measured by the standard of Hegel's history of the "spirit", Feuerbach's massive sensualism must seem as a step backward in comparison to Hegel's conceptually organized idea, as a barbarization of thought which replaces content by bombast and sentiment.[6]

Finally, it has been claimed that from this assorted "bombast and sentiment", Marx drew his critique of religion, but with

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[4] Between 1840-1843, Bauer designed his critiques to effect immediate political change in Germany. However, after the failures of radicalism, Bauer did shift in 1844 to a more theoretical critique, "pure criticism", devoid of immediate political impact.

[5] See Sidney Hook, From Hegel to Marx: Studies in the Intellectual Development of Karl Marx (2nd. ed.; Ann Arbor, 1962).

[6] Karl Löwith, From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought, trans. David Green (3rd ed.; New York, 1967), p. 80.

this difference:

> Feuerbach starts out from the fact of religious self-alienation, the duplication of the world into a religious and secular world. His work consists in resolving the religious world into its secular basis. But the fact that the secular basis becomes separate from itself and establishes an independent realm in the clouds can only be explained by the cleavage and self-contradictoriness of the secular basis. Thus the latter must itself be both understood in its contradiction and revolutionized in practice.[7]

In short, according to this school of thought, Marx accepted the basic features of Feuerbach's critique of religion, but moved from it to the radical critique of society. Undeniably, Feuerbach exerted a direct influence on Marx, but this influence actually was confined more to Marx's understanding of Hegel and his later conception of ideology than to what Marx discerned as the very content of religion. Thus, while Marx occasionally did talk like a Feuerbachian about how religion functioned, it was still from Bruno Bauer that Marx gathered the substance of his critique of religion.

It may seem pedantic to haggle over Marx's intellectual debts. Marx himself, however, was an extremely eclectic thinker and it is of utmost importance to this discussion to locate the primary sources of his atheism. To explicate: there is a differentiation, frequently obscured by students of Marx, that

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[7] Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach", in Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, trans. Lloyd Easton and Kurt Guddat (New York, 1967), p. 401. Hereafter this will be referred to as "Theses". I am going on to show this passage should not be interpreted in this way.

must be made between what Marx saw as the actual content of religion and what he asserted about the historical demise of Christianity.[8] In the first case, Marx acknowledged that Feuerbach discovered in religion an earthly kernel, but he averred this earthly kernel was not what Feuerbach had designated as the human essence. Rather, "[t]his state, this society, produce religion which is an inverted world consciousness, because they are an inverted world."[9] Here, Marx sided with Bauer although he substituted the cleavages and self-contradictions in society for those in Bauer's self-consciousness. According to Bauer, religion was the illusory, distorted, and deformed creation of man's consciousness divided against itself. For Marx, similarly, religion idealized the contradictions in society. For both, therefore, the content of religion was man's inhumanity. In the second instance concerning the historical demise of Christianity, let it suffice for now to note that Marx saw Christianity as an ideology peculiar to feudalism, but not to capitalism. Seen from the historical perspective taken by Marx, Christianity was theoretically demolished by the Enlightenment and practically by the French Revolution. The Marxian conception of ideology, however, is too difficult a subject to take up en passant: it

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[8] According to Marx, Christianity was the apex of religious development, the most extreme form of religious alienation. The variety of Christianity which Marx was most familiar with was a very other-worldly Lutheranism, predominant in Germany during the 1840's.

[9] Karl Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right': Introduction", in Early Writings, trans. T. B. Bottomore (New York, 1964), p. 43. Hereafter this will be referred to as "Introduction".

will require a detailed discussion of Marx's historicized version of Feuerbach's theory of projection.[10]

III. Marx's Concept of Religion Per Se

(a) Affinity to and Divergence from Bruno Bauer

To return, then, to the question of the content and militancy of Marx's atheism: as previously suggested, it is necessary to make a close examination of the relationship of Marx to Bruno Bauer to deal with this topic. Like the other Young Hegelians, Bauer's studies of theology took place within the Hegelian edifice. The Young Hegelians, Lobkowicz observes, ". . . were Christians insofar as, and because, they were Hegelians."[11] Bauer himself studied theology for three years under Hegel and he commenced his academic career as an orthodox Hegelian with a lectureship in theology at Berlin. By 1839, however, Bauer began to have doubts about the Hegelian reconciliation between philosophy and theology. At this time, he wrote a pamphlet attacking Hengstenberg, head of the orthodox-pietistic party at Berlin; Bauer claimed in this article there was no ground for similarity between the Hegelian and orthodox

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[10] See ahead pp. 36-39, and pp. 104-113.

[11] Lobkowicz, p. 322.

party's approach to the Bible. This pamphlet precipitated Bauer's removal to Bonn; the move was made by the Minister of Culture, Altenstein, to protect Bauer from the wrath of the powerful pietistic party. In his next works, Kritik des Johannes (1840) and Kritik der Synoptiker (1841-1842), Bauer broke entirely with Christianity, conceiving ". . . his works as an exposé of the irrationality of Christianity when compared to the present stage of self-consciousness."[12] In consequence, Bauer was dismissed from Bonn. He spent the next two years writing and from that period came his article, Die Judenfrage, and an extremely vitriolic attack on Christianity, Das entdeckte Christentum. Finally, in 1844, Bauer collaborated with his brother Edgar to produce the Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung. It is only in this review that Bauer resorted to "pure criticism", disregarding immediate political goals.[13]

Marx's acquaintance with Bruno Bauer dated from his student days at Berlin and extended well into the latter part of 1842. It is of special interest to this discussion that "Marx's period of study of religion and philosophy corresponds precisely to the period of his friendship with Bruno Bauer. . . ."[14] Marx knew

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[12] Young Hegelians, pp. 49-50.

[13] See ibid., pp. 48-50.

[14] Ibid., pp. 69-70.

Bauer through the Doctor's Club at Berlin and he attended Bauer's lectures at the university. Later, when Bauer was removed to Bonn, the two kept up a close correspondence. Marx, in fact, hoped to obtain a university post at Bonn through Bauer's influence.

The major work of Marx which survived this period was his doctoral dissertation, The Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature. Clearly, this work was inspired by Bauer. In the foreword to the dissertation, Marx referred to the Middle Ages as "the period of consummate unreason".[15] In this characterization, Marx remained true to Bauer: Christianity was irrational; it was the very expression of irrationality. Hence, any attempt to reconcile theology with philosophy demeaned philosophy, insulted reason. Marx was quite vehement on this point and made not the slightest concession to theology:

> Philosophy does not make a secret of it. The profession of Prometheus: "In simple words, I hate the pack of gods," is its own profession, its own aphorism against all divine and earthly gods who do not acknowledge human self-consciousness as the highest divinity. It allows no rivals.[16]

This was hardly the profession of a passionless atheist.

Indeed, from Bauer's letters to Marx, it appears the latter was spending a great deal of time studying religion. Marx

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15 Karl Marx, The Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature, trans. Norman Livergood (The Hague, 1967), p. 61. Hereafter this will be referred to as Dissertation.

16 Dissertation, p. 62.

was preparing a review of a book by K. P. Fischer entitled Die Idee der Gottheit as well as a critique of Hegel's Religionsphilosophie. But more important, he and Bauer actually planned to edit a journal called Archiv des Atheismus. Finally, Marx probably collaborated with Bauer to produce Die Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts über Hegel den Atheisten und Antichristen. This tract was written from the standpoint of an archpietist and intended to show that Hegel was a revolutionary and an atheist. In addition, Bauer and Marx planned a sequel to the Posaune and for his part, Marx delved into the study of Christian art.[17]

This biographical information has been marshalled to illustrate two points. First, while Marx's knowledge of religion was couched in Hegelianism, he seems to have had a fairly wide knowledge of the subject. Second, it should be evident by now that Marx was not a "Sunday-atheist." One does not make open proclamations of atheism, intend a journal called Archiv des Atheismus, and defy any union of philosophy with theology unless one is a passionate, that is, militant atheist. To argue, as Lobkowicz does, that militant atheism is contingent upon a prior religious experience, a Christian not a rationalistic father, coupled with an abrupt throwing off of Christianity after great

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[17] See David McLellan, Marx Before Marxism (New York, 1971), pp. 68-70. Also, Young Hegelians, p. 71.

inner turmoil, resulting, finally, in a life-long passion for writing atheistic books, simply excludes the militancy of Marx's atheism through arbitrary definition.[18]

A more serious objection to my thesis could be raised by arguing that Marx began as a militant atheist, but made a turnabout in his more mature works. Certainly, by 1848, religion did not seem a pressing problem and even in November 1842 in a letter to Arnold Ruge, referring to the contributions of the Freien to the Rheinische Zeitung, Marx did say:

> I then asked that religion should be criticized more within a critique of the political situation than the political situation within a critique of religion. . . .[19]

Perhaps, then, it would be well to conceive Marx's attitude toward religion on a continuum, spanning the course of his works from 1841-1846. At one end of the continuum, we find the militant and at the other extreme, the mellowed atheist. Although convenient, this schema is also inadequate.

A more satisfactory explanation of Marx's attitude toward religion, however, can be found through an analysis of the following well-known passage of 1843:

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[18] See Lobkowicz, pp. 303-335.

[19] Karl Marx, Early Texts, trans. David McLellan (New York, 1971), p. 53.

> For Germany, the criticism of religion has been largely completed; and the criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism.[20]

Briefly, what Marx meant here was this: the theoretical critique of religion was necessary and crucial, since man cannot change the world until he rids himself of his illusions about it. In this sense, the religious critique was of vital importance both in itself and as a model for secular illusions. It was the project of the Enlightenment to outline the theoretical critique of religion and the achievement of the Young Hegelians, especially Bruno Bauer, to complete that task. Under Bauer's tutorship, Marx had studied religion, deemed it both inhuman and irrational, and attacked it theoretically. By 1843, Marx considered there was little left to say about religion per se, therefore, he did not write additional, exclusively atheistic reviews. However, this did not lessen the intensity of his atheism, but rather it directed his attack to the inverted world "whose spiritual aroma is religion".[21] In other words, religion had been attacked directly and exposed as inhuman, now the task at hand was to expose the contradictions in society and to revolutionize it. Unlike Bauer, Marx thought only when society was revolutionized would religion ultimately disappear.

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[20] "Introduction", p. 43.

[21] Ibid.

At first glance, this last statement seems to contradict what was said earlier, namely, that Christianity expired on the eve of the French Revolution with the arrival of the bourgeoisie. This seeming contradiction can be resolved in two main ways. First, Marx was in the habit of talking as if the future, or better, what he saw the future to be, was the present. For example, Marx talked as if there was a full-grown proletariat in Germany during the 1840's when, in fact, the first rumblings of the proletariat barely could be heard. Likewise with religion: as Marx saw it, the very existence of the bourgeoisie would eliminate Christianity, since the bourgeoisie would leave ". . . remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment'."[22] In short, the bourgeoisie were in the process of replacing religious alienation, Christianity, with the final and most complete alienation of man, man as merely Kapital. Second, in his article on the question of the Jews, Marx claimed that religion was now the spirit of civil society:

> It has become what it was at the beginning, an expression of the fact that man is separated from the community, from himself and from other men.[23]

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[22] Manifesto, p. 44.

[23] Karl Marx, "On the Jewish Question", in Early Writings, p. 15. Hereafter this will be referred to as "Jewish Question".

According to Marx, the real essence of Christianity was nothing other than egoism and selfish need and this was precisely the spirit of civil society, the sphere of self-interest. In this sense, it could be said that the bourgeoisie inaugurated practical Christianity. Thus, Marx could argue that the spirit of religion would persist in its various guises until society was finally revolutionized.

In sum: the militancy of Marx's atheism has often been played down, overlooked, or misinterpreted. Some Marxist scholars, for example Roger Garaudy, have played down Marx's atheism in order to make Marxism more palatable to those Christians involved in the "Christian-Marxist" dialogue.[24] Another reason for this tendency has been the paucity of reliable scholarship on the Young Hegelian movement, particularly on the most prominent member, Bruno Bauer. On this account, until recently it was easy to overlook Bauer's influence on Marx, especially if one took Marx at his word and evaluated Bauer's works from what Marx and Engels said about them in The Holy Family and The German Ideology. The following passage from The Holy Family is indicative:

> And despite all its invectives against dogmatism, it condemns itself to dogmatism and even to feminine dogmatism. It is and remains an old woman, faded, widowed Hegelian philosophy, which paints and adorns her wrinkled and repugnant abstraction of a body and

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[24] See Roger Garaudy, From Anathema to Dialogue: A Marxist Challenge to the Christian Churches, trans. Luke O'Neill (New York, 1966).

ogles all over Germany in search of a wooer.[25]

Lastly, and strangely enough, Marx's famous line in The German Ideology, "[l]ife is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life",[26] has been taken to mean man's consciousness is of little importance. Here, Marx has been grossly misinterpreted by his mechanistic followers. For the author of Das Kapital, it was very important that men saw the world for what it was and religious consciousness was a false way of looking at the world.

(b) Place Reserved for Atheism Within Marx's System

This last topic, that is, Marx's designation of religion as an important form of false consciousness brings us to a consideration of Ludwig Feuerbach's influence on Marx. Before turning directly to Feuerbach, however, a final word should be said about the place of atheism within the Marxian system. While it is beyond the scope of the present work to evaluate in what sense Marx's philosophy must be perforce atheistic, we can

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[25] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The Holy Family, trans. R. Dixon (Moscow, 1956), p. 30. Hereafter this will be referred to as Holy Family.

[26] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, The German Ideology, trans. S. Ryazanskaya (Moscow, 1964), p. 38. Hereafter this will be referred to as German Ideology.

ask where Marx himself placed atheism within his system. In The Holy Family, Marx lauded Pierre Bayle for seeing an atheistic society is both possible and on one level, desirable: it is possible, because atheists can be respectable men and desirable, since not atheism, but religion debases man.[27] This is not to imply, however, that Marx sympathasized with the attempt to make atheism into an end in itself. Atheism, rather, is just a step in the right direction; it is both a prerequisite for communism and later an essential element of communist society. To quote Marx: "Communism begins where atheism begins . . . , but atheism is at the outset still far from being communism. . . ."[28] Put in another way and this exemplifies Marx's dialectical understanding of history: communism is the negation of capitalism and atheism, the negation of religion. Both complement each other and represent, for Marx, the next stage of history, that is, communist society. Neither, however, witness the final stage of human development, the classless society. In the Third of the "Paris Manuscripts", Marx made this point quite explicitly:

> Once the essence of man and of nature, man as a natural being and nature as a human reality, has become evident in the practical life, in sense experience, the quest for an alien being, a being above man and nature (a quest

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27 Holy Family, p. 171.

28 Karl Marx, "Paris Manuscripts", in Early Writings, p. 156.

> which is an avowal of the unreality of man and nature) becomes impossible in practice. Atheism, as a denial of this unreality, is no longer meaningful, for atheism is a negation of God and seeks to assert by this negation the existence of man. Socialism no longer requires such a roundabout method; it begins from the theoretical and practical sense perception of man and nature as essential beings. It is positive human self-consciousness, no longer a self-consciousness attained through the negation of religion; just as the real life of man is positive and no longer attained through the negation of private property, through communism.[29]

In other words, atheism, which asserts the existence of man through the negation of God, becomes an impossibility in the classless society, because that society is the realization of man as a social being.[30] In sum (following Marx's dictum in The German Ideology that repetitio est mater studiorum), we have seen that Marx was a militant atheist and that he consciously reserved a place for atheism within his system, that is, communism and atheism go hand in hand.

IV. Influence of Ludwig Feuerbach and Wider Implications for Marx's Critique of Religion

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[29] "Paris Manuscripts", pp. 166-167. This passage has been quoted at length, because Nicholas Lobkowicz cites this same passage out of context and implies that atheism is not a consciously integral part of the Marxian system. See Lobkowicz, p. 304.

[30] See "Excerpt-Notes of 1844", in Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, pp. 271-272, where Marx elaborates on the term "communal being", das Gemeinwesen.

(a) Outline of the Influence of Feuerbach

To turn, then, to Marx's debt to Ludwig Feuerbach: Marx had read The Essence of Christianity as early as 1841, but apparently he was not taken by it. Certainly, one does not detect a strong Feuerbachian influence on Marx's dissertation. Not until January 1842 in a short piece, "Luther as Arbiter between Strauss and Feuerbach", do we find an explicit statement of Marx's attachment to Feuerbach. There, Marx agreed with him that ". . . miracle is the realization of a natural or human wish in a supranaturalistic way".[31] Citing Luther's commentary on Luke 7, Marx maintained that that commentary could be interpreted as an apology for Feuerbach's Essence. On another level, though, Marx's essay was meant less as a panegyric for Feuerbach's book than as a lunge at the speculative theologian, D. F. Strauss. In other words, Marx could not theoretically accept Feuerbach's complex reduction of the "divine" to the human essence, but he could and did use Feuerbach polemically to refute Strauss. This refutation was based on Marx's acceptance of Feuerbach's characterization of Hegel as a speculative theologian. To explicate further: Feuerbach distinguished between religion and theology, and between ordinary theology and speculative theology or philosophy. For Feuerbach, religion represented the highest aspirations of man;

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[31] Karl Marx, "Luther as Arbiter between Strauss and Feuerbach", in Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, p. 94.

consequently, theology, which confounded the fact that religion was man-made, must be considered an aberration of religion which reached the height of its deviancy in what Feuerbach termed the speculative theology of Hegel's idealism. While Marx never could make this distinction, he did herald Feuerbach's seeing that speculative philosophy was nothing other than the last cover for theology. van Leeuwen perceptively remarks that Marx took ". . . religion, in its philosophical guise, in deadly earnest."[32]

Nevertheless, there is a major reason why Marx could never totally accept Feuerbach's distinction: obviously for Marx, religion could never represent the highest aspirations of mankind. This point is crucial to my argument. For Marx, like Bauer, religion represented the worst in mankind. Feuerbach's primary concern, on the contrary and in contrast to Marx, was always with religion. He did not, however attempt to prove that there was no God, because this was the task and the accomplishment of the Enlightenment. Besides, Feuerbach stated, practically speaking, the existence of God had been denied since the Reformation, that is to say, Luther's God was a God for man. Yet, Feuerbach did react vehemently against those critics (whether Hegelian or Christian) of his Essence of Christianity who labelled him an atheist. Those who have read him as an atheist, he

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[32] van Leeuwen, p. 185.

asserted in the preface of the second edition of his Essence, have entirely misunderstood the intention of his book. Those who negated religion also negated man. In fact, Feuerbach first selected the title "Know Thyself" for The Essence of Christianity.[33] This kind of self-understanding, doubtless, was not found congenial by the maker of Promethean declarations of atheism.

Thus, Feuerbach's influence on Marx came not so much from The Essence of Christianity, but really from Feuerbach's later works, Preliminary Theses for a Reform of Philosophy and Principles of the Philosophy of the Future. It was only after Marx broke with Bauer that he grabbed hold of Feuerbach, but this was the Feuerbach of the Thesen and Grundsätze.[34] In short, what Marx admired in Feuerbach was not his critique of religion, but his method of getting at Hegel. As Marx saw it, the other Young Hegelians had attacked Hegel from the outside, but only Feuerbach, via what Shlomo Avineri terms his "transformative method",[35] has dealt with Hegel in terms of his own system. Feuerbach

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[33] Hook, p. 234.

[34] See "Paris Manuscripts", p. 196.

[35] Shlomo Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx (Cambridge, 1968), p. 13.

observed that the concrete in Hegel was always alienated; from this observation, Feuerbach specified alienation as the epistemological inversion of the subject-object relationship.[36] Put differently: according to Feuerbach, Hegel abstracted thought out of time and space and made it into a subject, and then made being into a predicate of thought. Hegel, in a word, ignored the real human subject.[37] One result of this inversion was the mystification of the actual subject-object relation and this very mystification expressed,both for Feuerbach and Marx, the alienation of the human subject.

In the Third of the "Paris Manuscripts", Marx, paraphrasing Feuerbach, said much the same thing of Hegel's Phenomenology:

> . . . this process must have a bearer, a subject; but the subject first emerges as a result. This result, the subject knowing itself as absolute self-consciousness, is therefore God, absolute spirit, the self-knowing and self-manifesting idea. Real man and real nature become mere predicates, symbols of this concealed unreal man and unreal nature. Subject and predicate have, therefore, an inverted relation to each other. . . .[38]

In simple language, here, Marx agreed with Feuerbach in three important respects. First, Marx concurred that being precedes

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[36] Ibid., p. 103.

[37] It will be seen later that Marx disagreed with Feuerbach's definition of this real human subject.

[38] "Paris Manuscripts", p. 214.

thought; it is man who thinks, not man the thinker. Against Hegel, Marx asserted, secondly, that nature and man are not two distinct entities. Rather, following Feuerbach, Marx saw man as a part of nature. Third (and this is the main reason for the preceding digression on Hegel), when Marx talked about real man and nature as mere predicates within the Hegelian system, this statement is equivalent to saying that the actual alienation of man and nature is expressed ideally within the Hegelian edifice.

Both Feuerbach and Marx, to repeat, thought speculative idealism was merely a thinly disguised theology. Indeed, speculative idealism as set forth by Hegel and his followers was the final transformation of theology, the last theoretical bastion of religion. Both, moreover, saw a distinct relationship between theology and the alienation of man. Feuerbach, in fact, saw the alienation of man exclusively, and here he differed radically from Marx, in terms of religion and theology.

According to Feuerbach, religion is a human product, the result of human activity, or to use his own terminology, the result of human projections. The true essence of religion, he reasoned in his later writings, is grounded in human experience, specifically in man's feelings of helplessness, and dependence on other men and nature, as well as in man's fear of death.

Given the tenuous state of his existence, man projects his God, which Feuerbach referred to as the "divine", in order to cope with the human situation. Seen from this perspective, "[r]eligion is the dream of the human mind",[39] or again, it is "the childlike condition of humanity".[40] Hence, religion is a dream, a fantasy of the imagination - a fantasy, however, in a very practical rather than a theoretical sense. Religion is the creation of man in emotional response to real human needs. It is wish-fulfillment.

(b) Feuerbach on Religion - Positive and Negative Critique

In The Essence of Christianity, Feuerbach's critique of religion took place on two levels: the first was "The True or Anthropological Essence of Religion", and the second, "The False or Theological Essence of Religion". We will summarize his argument and discuss what Feuerbach meant by religion as alienation in order to demonstrate to what extent Marx could have borrowed from Feuerbach for his own understanding of religious alienation. For Feuerbach, the true, anthropological essence of religion is the human essence stripped of all limitations. He deduced this anthropological source of religion through an analysis of the content of the divine being, the Christian God.

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[39] Ludwig Feuerbach, The Essence of Christianity, trans. George Eliot (New York, 1957), p. xxxix.

[40] Ibid., p. 13.

His argument was simply this: the predicates of the divine nature are identical to the predicates of human nature. The only difference is that the divine predicates are stripped of all human limitations; consequently, religion is nothing else than the "antithesis between human nature in general and the human individual".[41] The difference between the subject and predicates, moreover, is solely the distinction between existence and essence. The predicates, however, are the truth of the subject. From this, Feuerbach concluded:

> Now, when it is shown that what the subject is lies entirely in the attributes of the subject; that is, the predicate is the true subject; it is also proved that if the divine predicates are attributes of the human nature, the subject of those predicates is also the human nature. But the divine predicates are partly general, partly personal. The general predicates are the metaphysical but these serve only as external points of support to religion; they are not the characteristic definitions of religion. It is the personal predicates alone which constitute the essence of religion - in which the Divine Being is the object of religion.[42]

In his treatment of the metaphysical and personal predicates of the divine, Feuerbach recognized two roots of religion. Nearly in the same breath, however, he dismissed the metaphysical predicates and affirmed the personal predicates; Feuerbach identified

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[41] Ibid., p. 14.

[42] Ibid., p. 25.

the subjective essence of religion with feeling. Yet, the ontological attributes, such as omnipotence, omniscience, infinity, and perfection of the divine remained problematic throughout his works. One way he attempted to resolve the problem was to attribute the personal predicates of the divine to individual man and the ontological predicates of the divine nature to generic man.

At other times, and this takes us to Feuerbach's negative critique of religion, he identified the ontological predicates of the divine with man's reason, stripped of all human limitations. It is ordinary theology and speculative philosophy which posit the ontological attributes of the divine. While religion is the projection of man's will and emotions, theology is the projection of man's reason.[43] It is theology (used in Feuerbach's sense to include speculative philosophy), whose primary concern is with the existence of the divine, that obscures the true, anthropological essence of religion.

Given this outline of Feuerbach's critique of religion, we can now summarize the salient features of his conception of religion as alienation. First, Feuerbach characterized religion as false consciousness:

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[43] Feuerbach viewed man traditionally. Thus, the three faculties of man are cognition, conation, and affection.

> But when religion - consciousness of God - is designated as the self-consciousness of man, this is not to be understood as affirming that the religious man is directly aware of this identity; for on the contrary, ignorance of it is fundamental to the peculiar nature of religion.[44]

Second, since the predicates of the divine and human natures are identical, "[t]o enrich God, man must become poor; that God may be all, man must be nothing."[45] For example,

> [t]he Virgin represents the love the monk denies himself in this world. The nun becomes the bride of Christ, i.e., substitutes an unearthly love for real earthly love. God is given the personality and dignity that man denies to himself.[46]

Third, not only is religion a form of false consciousness which functions to impoverish man, even the divine predicates are distorted in God.[47] Just as in the Incarnation "love conquers God", Feuerbach stated so also should man reject God:

> As God has renounced himself out of love, so we, out of love should renounce God; for if we do not sacrifice God to love, we sacrifice love to God, and, in spite of the predicate of love, we have the God, the evil being of religious fanaticism.[48]

Lastly, because theology seeks to acquire a theoretical basis for the distinction between God and man, alienation increases proportionately with theological development. By setting God over and

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44 Feuerbach, p. 13.

45 Ibid., p. 26.

46 Eugene Kamenka, The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach (New York, 1970), pp. 51-52.

47 Feuerbach, p. 53.

48 Ibid.

against man, however, theology contradicts itself in that it sets itself up over and against the spirit of religion.

(c) What Marx did and did not Take from Feuerbach

It should be evident by now that Marx, following his former teacher Bruno Bauer, could not accept the last two features of Feuerbach's notion of alienation. What Marx could not accept in Feuerbach was his distinction between religion and theology. He could not accept this distinction because he rejected the very idea of a true, anthropological essence of religion. He could never say with Feuerbach that those who negate religion also negate man. Rather, for Marx, the negation of religion, atheism, was preliminary to the affirmation of man, communism. On the other hand, what Marx could accept and did amplify were the first two elements of Feuerbach's concept of alienation. For Marx, religion was an important form of false consciousness, an ideology; it was also a human product which functioned to impoverish and debase man.

This last statement, however, deserves some qualification. According to Marx, religion both impoverished and debased man. At times, even Feuerbach was willing to admit that religion debased man, but for the most part, he concentrated on its positive aspects. In the main, Feuerbach wanted not to abolish, but only to purify religion. Feuerbach simply wanted man to reclaim his alienated

attributes and to return to himself. Marx, on the contrary, never granted any dignity to religion and rarely admitted that religion had any positive function at all. Concerning the latter point, with the exception of one line in the "Introduction" to his Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right': "[r]eligious suffering is at the same time an expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering",[49] Marx never again mentioned any other positive role religion might play in history. Thus, in the context of Marx's system, it made no sense whatsoever to talk about the purification of religion.

What did make sense to Marx was the central place Feuerbach reserved for man, for anthropology, in his writings. Through his transformative method, Feuerbach had reinstated the human subject. With regard to his life-long interest, Feuerbach repeatedly stressed it was man who was the beginning, centre, and end of religion. Louis Dupré correctly sees Marx and Feuerbach agreed, ". . . that the real alienation is not the alienation of consciousness but the alienation of man".[50] Feuerbach never tired of insisting that religion was a human product, the result of human creativity. Both Feuerbach and Marx, however, observed that religion appeared to

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[49] "Introduction", p. 43.

[50] Louis Dupré, The Philosophical Foundations of Marxism (New York, 1966), p. 108.

man as independent of his own productivity. Man's own product, his god, confronted him as an alien and hostile being. The more man attributed to this alien being, furthermore, the less he had to himself.[51] It is this description of Feuerbach's which Marx took over and employed in the well-known section on "Alienated Labour" in the "Paris Manuscripts".

Yet, the question arises, then, as to how Marx could reject the thrust of Feuerbach's critique of religion and still retain this particular description of religious alienation.[52] In the sixth, seventh, and ninth of his "Theses on Feuerbach", Marx implicitly justified his usage of this interpretation. In the sixth thesis, Marx contended that because Feuerbach did not grasp the human essence as "the ensemble of social relationships",[53] he was compelled "to abstract from the historical process and to establish religious feeling as something self-contained, and to presuppose an abstract-isolated-individual".[54] Marx reasoned in

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[51] See "Paris Manuscripts", p. 122.

[52] It is perhaps worth noting that Marx employed this description in his discussion of the worker's alienation from nature. It was Feuerbach who emphasized that man was a part of nature. However, Feuerbach saw man's relation to nature as passive, while Marx saw it as active.

[53] "Theses", p. 402.

[54] Ibid.

the seventh and ninth theses that this isolated individual belonged to a definite form of society, that is, civil society. From this, Marx appears to conclude that Feuerbach's discussion of this aspect of religious alienation was applicable insofar as it did approximate a description of the worker's alienation from nature. That is, his idea of man's impoverishment by an alien being was an adequate conceptualization of the worker's situation in civil society. This alien being, however, was not God, claimed Marx, but the commodity.

Nevertheless, by drawing the analogy between religious and secular alienation, Marx parted company with Feuerbach. By using religious alienation as a paradigm to analyze secular alienation, Marx made a marked return to Bruno Bauer. The extent to which Bauer permanently influenced the structure of Marx's thought can be seen by the frequency which Marx discussed secular alienation in terms of religious alienation. Bauer's influence on Marx in this regard cannot be over-estimated. The very fact that Marx could call the spirit of bureaucracy "theological"[55] or the members of the political state "religious"[56] derived from Bauer, not Feuerbach. Similar examples of Marx's paradigmatic use of religious alienation, moreover, abound in his writings. In The Poverty of

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[55] Karl Marx, Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right', trans. Annette Jolin and Joseph O'Malley (Cambridge, 1970), p. 46. Hereafter this will be referred to as Critique.

[56] "Jewish Question", p. 20.

Philosophy, to use a third illustration, Marx compared economists to theologians: the economist sees bourgeois institutions as natural and feudal ones as artificial just as the theologian sees his religion as true and any other religion as false.[57] Thus, while Feuerbach made an illuminating suggestion about the functioning of an alien being, it was Bauer who taught Marx how to make practical use of this description:

> Thus the criticism of heaven is transformed into the criticism of earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics.[58]

This is not meant to belittle the impact of some of Feuerbach's insights on Marx. As previously mentioned, Marx adopted Feuerbach's transformative method and took up the theme of the impoverishment of man by an alien being. But more important and in our view, to conclude this section, the most important borrowing by Marx from Feuerbach was this: Marx took up and elaborated a theory of ideology to a large extent from Feuerbach's theory of projection and evasion. Feuerbach, it should not be forgotten, thought religion was a human product, the result of human projections. After man projected the divine, however, the latter, he observed, confronted man as if it existed from time

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[57] Karl Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy, eds. C. P. Dutt and V. Chattopadhyaya (London, n.d.), p. 102.

[58] "Introduction", p. 44.

immemorial. It is this view of the divine as independent of human productivity that Feuerbach termed "false consciousness".

Marx absorbed Feuerbach's theory of projection and his notion of false consciousness with two qualifications. First, not man in pristine nature, not man in isolation, but man in society produces religion so that it is a social product. Second, Marx historicized Feuerbach's theory of projection and turned it into a full-blown, if imprecise, theory of ideology. Concerning the second point, Marx frequently equated ideology with false consciousness, but did not limit false consciousness to strictly religious consciousness. According to Marx, every epoch had its own ideologies, representing the ideas of the dominant class:

> For instance, in an age and in a country where royal power, aristocracy and bourgeoisie are contending for mastery and where, therefore, mastery is shared, the doctrine of the separation of powers proves to be the dominant idea and is expressed as an "eternal law".[59]

Here, he implied that only societies with classes could have ideologies. Yet, Marx called religion an "ideology" ". . . and did not deny that there are religions in primitive and classless societies."[60] Thus, for Marx, it would seem religion is an ideology no matter whether it emerges in a primitive or class society, because religion is the classic form of false consciousness.

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[59] German Ideology, pp. 60-61.

[60] John Plamenatz, Ideology (London, 1971), p. 26.

More specifically, in the "Introduction" to his Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right', Marx characterized religious consciousness as "false", because it is an "inverted world consciousness".[61]

In The German Ideology, moreover, he applied this same description to ideology in general and discussed its genesis:

> If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a camera obscura, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of the objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.[62]

While it is clear from this passage that ideology arises because society itself is in some sense inverted, it is not so clear exactly what Marx meant by an ideological "inversion". Is an ideology merely an ideal reflection of a topsy-turvey world? Although he did not take up this question per se, it would appear from his writings that Marx considered the reflectional theory of ideology too simple. It is too simple because the prime function of an ideology is to legitimate the status quo and it does this basically by presenting the status quo as natural and in most epochs, preordained. Hence, ideologies function to conceal the true state of affairs, namely, that world history is the creation of man through human labour, that all mature societies have been dominated by class interests, and that all class societies are transitory.

Feudal society, for example, gave way to civil society; the feudal nobility and clergy lost their priviledged position to the

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61 "Introduction", p. 43.

62 German Ideology, p. 37.

bourgeoisie. When the medieval period came to an end, it follows from what just has been said, its ideologies also ceased to exist. Using this reasoning, Marx could say that the bourgeoisie did away with Christianity. According to Marx, if the proletariat ". . . ever had any theoretical notions, e.g., religion, etc., these have now long been dissolved by circumstances."[63] These circumstances are the bourgeois conditions of production. The bourgeoisie have substituted naked and brutal exploitation ". . . for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions. . . ."[64] However, Marx implied elsewhere in The German Ideology and the Manifesto that the bourgeoisie have not been entirely successful in getting rid of religion. Marx stated, for instance, that "[the bourgeoisie] destroyed as far as possible ideology, religion, morality, etc., and where it could not do this, made them into a palpable lie."[65] If pressed, Marx would most likely account for this inconsistency by arguing that Christianity still persisted, because the bourgeoisie had not developed to their full potential. Anyway, Marx suggested there was a qualitative difference between feudal and bourgeois Christianity. For the bourgeoisie, religion is a "palpable lie",

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63 Ibid., p. 52.

64 Manifesto, pp. 44-45.

65 German Ideology, p. 75.

a "brougeois prejudice",[66] and the priest is its "paid wage-labourer".[67] Thus, where the bourgeoisie have not yet destroyed religion, they use religion to suit their own purposes and ignore it when it does not.

(d) Summary of the Real Direction of Feuerbach's Influence on the Marxian Critique of Religion

In sum: a great deal of attention has been devoted to Ludwig Feuerbach in order to clear up two misconceptions about his influence on Marx. First, it is incorrect to say that Marx took Feuerbach's critique of religion and applied it to politics. What Marx took from Feuerbach and this was taken from his later works, was his transformative method; he applied this method to Hegel's political philosophy. Second, as emphasized in my discussion of The Essence of Christianity, Marx did not accept the thrust of Feuerbach's analysis of religion, namely, Feuerbach's effort to humanize religion. Marx's intellectual debt to Feuerbach, rather, lies more in the descriptive features of Feuerbach's specification of religion as alienation. Feuerbach described the workings of an alien being and presented Marx with the outline for a theory of ideology.

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[66] Manifesto, p. 58.

[67] Ibid., p. 45.

V. Conclusion

Essentially, what sets Marx's critique of religion apart from those of both Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach is his novel understanding of religion as ideology. Although he did not use the actual term 'ideology' until 1845-46, the concept was seminal in articles written as early as 1842. By 1846, Marx pulled together all the strands of his theory in the work entitled The German Ideology.

Because Marx understood religion as ideology, he thought both Bauer and Feuerbach overestimated the impact that their critiques of religion would have on effecting radical change in society. If religion was simply a symptom of man's alienation in society, Marx reasoned that the theoretical critique of religion could not eradicate man's real alienation--his socio-economic alienation. Fruthermore, since Christianity was the distorted reflection of the feudal relations of production, Marx saw that it would soon be out-moded anyway, when the bourgeoisie wrested complete control from the feudal nobility. The bourgeoisie would eliminate Christianity by substituting bourgeois in its place; that is, by replacing theology with political economy. Unlike both Bauer and Feuerbach, Marx reasoned that ideologies would persist as long as classes persisted. Just as theology

legitimated the domination of the feudal nobility and clergy, political economy would legitimate the domination of the bourgeoisie. In the end, Marx argued that only the radical critique of society could complete the critique of ideology which includes not only religion, but also all forms of secular illusion.

CHAPTER II

THE MARXIAN CRITIQUE OF RELIGION: 1841-1846

I. Introduction

In this chapter, I will closely follow Karl Marx's critique of religion through his writings from 1841-1846. The following works are considered in some detail: Marx's doctoral dissertation, The Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature (1841); two articles written during 1842, "Comments on the Latest Prussian Censorship Instruction" and "The Leading Article in No. 179 of the Kölnische Zeitung: Religion, Free Press, and Philosophy"; Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right' (1843); "On the Jewish Question" (1843); "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right': Introduction" (1843); "Paris Manuscripts", especially the sections on "Alienated Labour" and "Critique of Hegel's Dialectic and General Philosophy" (1844); The Holy Family (1844); and finally, The German Ideology (1845-1846). I have not included Marx's essay, "Luther as Arbiter Between Strauss and Feuerbach" and his "Theses on Feuerbach", because the importance of these writings for Marx's critique of religion has been discussed sufficiently in Chapter I.

The purpose of this chapter is to elaborate a number of

major themes of Marx's critique of religion. Very briefly, they can be summarized as follows. Beginning with his doctoral dissertation, Marx dismisses religion and sees theology and philosophy as utterly incompatible. This rejection of theology eventually results in his repudiation of Hegelian speculation as is shown most clearly in the "Introduction" and the Critique of 'Hegel's Philosophy of Right' and also the concluding section of the "Paris Manuscripts". A second major theme in Marx's early writings centers on his view of the Christian state. This polemic against the Christian state originates in his two articles and culminates in the "Jewish Question". Another strand in his critique of religion revolves around the perverse effects it has on man. Although he never has a good word to say for religion, The Holy Family is the most striking illustration of Marx's invective. The "Paris Manuscripts" and The German Ideology, finally, are the best examples of Marx's use of religious alienation as a paradigm to attack secular alienation.

I would underline that these themes are not isolated, but rather run throughout his early works. Because Marx does not consider religion at great length in any of his works, it will be necessary in dealing with these sources to move constantly among them while trying to analyze each one in turn. This procedure also allows me to show both the development as well as the continuity

of Marx's critique of religion. Furthermore, in light of what was said in Chapter I, I will be careful to point out the specific influence of Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach on Marx's thinking in this area.

II. Marx's Doctoral Dissertation - The Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature

Marx's doctoral dissertation, submitted in April 1841, is the only extant work which remains from his earliest studies. This dissertation and the notes prepared for it are the best source for information about Marx's ideas from late 1838 to 1841. Appended to the dissertation was a critical analysis of Plutarch's attack on Epicurus' theology; only the first paragraph of the appendix survives. The dissertation itself, as its title suggests, is a detailed consideration of the differences between the philosophies of nature of Democritus and Epicurus. The dissertation is important for our study on two counts. First, this work clearly shows the influence of Bruno Bauer on Marx, especially on his thought about the origins of Christianity. Second, through his discussion of Epicurus' philosophy, Marx tackles the perennial question of the relationship between philosophy and theology. The result is his decisive rejection of theology, but more importantly, he questions speculative philosophy and this anticipates his later

rejection of Hegelian speculation.

In the foreword to the dissertation, Marx explains his reasons for choosing this particular topic. Hegel, Marx thinks, sketched correctly the general aspects of Greek speculation, but failed to go into the necessary detail. Hegel failed to supply this information, in part, because of the immensity of his philosophical task, but also, Marx argues, because Hegel underestimated the importance of the Epicurean, Stoic, and Sceptical systems for the whole of Greek philosophy. Marx intends his thesis to fill partially this gap in Hegel's system by examining the essential difference between Democritean and Epicurean physics, and thereby to clear up the commonly held prejudice that Epicurus borrowed his philosophy of nature from Democritus. He relegates to a later work

> . . . a more exhaustive discussion . . . of Epicurean, Stoic and Sceptical philosophy in their totality and in their total relationship to earlier and later Greek philosophy.[1]

Marx's choice of topic, it seems certain, was motivated by Bruno Bauer. The Epicurean, Stoic, and Sceptical systems which Marx planned to consider in their entirety fell under the heading of "self-consciousness" in Hegel's Phenomenology. At this time, B. Bauer was elaborating a philosophy of self-consciousness and, doubtless, suggested this period of Greek philosophy to Marx

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[1] Dissertation, p. 61.

for that reason. Bauer's philosophical position at this time can be summarized roughly as follows: man's self-consciousness develops dialectically in history by negating those forces initially thought of as separate and distinct from human self-consciousness; presently the progress of self-consciousness is aided by philosophical criticism (not to be confused with Bauer's "pure criticism" of 1844) whose task is to transform objects into self-consciousness.[2] Thus, to use an example, after religion is shown through criticism to be a human product, self-consciousness is no longer subject to its own creation and, therefore, no longer restrained by the religious sphere from its free, human development. In his dissertation, Marx, following Bauer, argues that post-Aristotelian philosophy formed the complete structure of self-consciousness and states that these systems were actually "the key to the true history of Greek philosophy"[3] - a key, it is worth noting, which Hegel missed. This statement closely ties Marx to the philosophy of self-consciousness which increasingly was becoming the philosophy which united the Young Hegelian movement and also indicates the intimate collaboration between Marx and Bauer during this period.

There is a second reason why Bauer directed Marx to this

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[2] See Young Hegelians, pp. 59-61.

[3] Dissertation, p. 62.

particular period of Greek philosophy: Bauer traced the origins of Christianity to post-Aristotelian philosophy. His Biblical studies led him to deny the historicity of the Gospel accounts and to locate the real roots of Christianity in the philosophies of self-consciousness. With the breakdown of the Greek world, Bauer claimed the philosophies of self-consciousness did manage to retain individual freedom. Later, Christianity absorbed this idea of individual freedom, but as Marx in agreement with Bauer, observes, it transmuted freedom into "the blue mist of heaven".[4] Christian freedom was really slavery to the divine Sovereign, the heavenly counterpart to the emperor in Rome. Only after Christianity became the religion of the exploiters rather than the exploited, Bauer argued, did it turn back to the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle.[5]

To return to the work itself: in the conclusion of his dissertation, Marx calls Epicurus the "greatest Greek representative of the Enlightenment"[6] and cites a laudatory passage from Lucretius about Epicurus' practical atheism. Marx's admiration for Epicurus seems to stem from his practical atheism, that is, Epicurus' denial of the eternity of the celestial bodies, "[b]ecause the eternity of the heavenly bodies would disturb the ataraxia of self-consciousness. . . ."[7]

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[4] Karl Marx, "Letter to Arnold Ruge", in Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, p. 206.

[5] See van Leeuwen, pp. 72-73.

[6] Dissertation, p. 109.

[7] Ibid., p. 106.

While Aristotle did reproach the ancients for the belief that the heavens require the support of Atlas, Epicurus goes much further and

> . . . criticizes those who believe that man needs the heavens, and Atlas himself, upon whom the heavens are supported, [Epicurus] finds to possess human stupidity and superstition.[8]

Epicurus attributes "all the fear and confusion of human beings"[9] to the eternity of the heavenly bodies. For this reason, he rejects Aristotle's idea that the heavenly bodies are immortal and eternal. Rather Epicurus contends

> . . . that everything happens in [the heavenly bodies] multitudinously and ungoverned, that everything in them is to be explained by numerous and inexact, large numbers of reasons.[10]

In this way the ataraxia of individual self-consciousness is preserved, ". . . everything collapses which behaves transcendentally over and against human consciousness, i.e. belongs to the imaginative intellect."[11]

Marx sees Epicurus' assertion that the heavenly bodies are not eternal as a radical departure from the whole history of Greek speculation. Epicurus, in other words, rejected the religious tradition of previous Greek philosophy; he endeavoured to free

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[8] Ibid., p. 102.

[9] Ibid., p. 107.

[10] Ibid., p. 105.

[11] Ibid., p. 108.

philosophy from theology. This, according to Marx, was his great achievement. Epicurus' advance over previous Greek speculation has been overlooked by the entire philosophical tradition, culminating in Hegel, Marx says, because that tradition concentrated exclusively on the metaphysical pronouncements of post-Aristotelian philosophy, rather than its subjective basis. The metaphysical character of western philosophy obscured Epicurus' importance. Because of the speculative trend of Hegel's philosophy, Marx concludes, he missed the key to Greek philosophy.

In a note appended to the dissertation, Marx adds an explicit condemnation of Hegel's presentation of the ontological proofs for the existence of God. Marx says Hegel inverted the ontological argument so that he could refute it in order to reaffirm it. Marx queries: "[w]hat kind of clients have to be killed by their own attorney so that he can spare them from sentence?"[12] For Marx, the ontological proofs, including Hegel's, reduce to "empty tautologies". They are an example of the essential irrationality of religion, the utter incompatibility of theology and philosophy.

In the next two articles, Marx launches a full-scale attack against the Christian state. Building on the argument from this dissertation, the young Marx contrasts the irrationality

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[12] Karl Marx, "Reason and the Proof of God", in Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, pp. 64-65.

of religion with the rationality of the state.

III. Marx's Journalism

(a) "Comments on the Latest Prussian Censorship Instruction"

This article, completed in February of 1842, originally was meant for the Deutsche Jahrbücher, but it was suppressed, fittingly enough, by the censorship. It first appeared in February of the next year in Arnold Ruge's Anekdota. The subject of Marx's article concerns the December, 1841 censorship instruction enacted by Frederick William IV. With the accession of Frederick William IV, there were renewed hopes, shared alike by the Young Hegelians and the ascendent bourgeoisie, for a loosening of the press from the Prussian censorship. Since 1819, a censorship edict, initially designed to expire in five years, had been in effect. The outcome was a press restrained on all sides by the censors and, in consequence, newspapers merely reflected the political and religious sentiments of the Prussian government. The instruction was meant to liberalize the 1819 edict. It is Marx's contention, however, the instruction intensified rather than relaxed the repression of the old edict. Increased repression, Marx argues, was due to the self-contradictory nature of the purported Christian state.

Marx claims that one merit of the old edict in contrast to

the new instruction was its rationalism. Because Marx in 1842 thinks the state should be based on "free reason", he finds the shallow rationalism of the edict infinitely preferable to the pseudo-liberalism of the instruction. According to the 1819 edict, since religion was reasonable, its fundamental principles could not be attacked; however, particular religions in the state could be criticized. While Marx does appreciate the overall rationalistic viewpoint of the edict, he points out, nevertheless, it was:

> . . . so illogical as to take an irreligious point of view while it aims to protect religion. It is contradictory to the fundamental principles of religion to separate those principles from its positive content and specific quality, for every religion believes it is different from other illusory religions by virtue of its particular nature, and is the true religion by virtue of its specific quality.[13]

Marx proceeds to maintain the new censorship instruction not only did not clear up the contradictions in the edict, but by proposing a Christian state, it compounded them. While the 1819 edict did not even mention the Christian religion, the implicit purpose of the instruction was to protect the Christian state through arbitrary censorship. Thus, the instruction specifically forbade the critique of the Christian religion as well as the critique of

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13 Karl Marx, "Comments on the Latest Prussian Censorship Instruction", in Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, p. 75.

particular doctrine if it was done in a frivolous or hostile manner. In effect, Marx says, the actual purpose of the instruction was to shield the Christian state from the press by eliminating any type of religious critique: "[r]eligion is not to be attacked at all, neither in a hostile nor frivolous manner, not in general or in particular."[14]

A second stated purpose of the censorship instruction was ". . . to oppose the fanatical injection of religious convictions into politics and the ensuing intellectual confusion".[15] Incredulous at the naivete of the instruction, Marx points to the existence of more than one denomination in the state. Once it is admitted, Marx argues, there are both Catholics and Protestants in the state, how is the censor to prevent one denomination from becoming the norm of the state. That is, according to the instruction, since particular doctrines are exempt from examination, how is the censor to decide what is and what is not a "fanatical injection of religious convictions into politics". Furthermore, if the state is founded upon Protestant Christian principles,

> . . . it becomes for the Catholic a church to which he does not belong, which he must reject as heretical, and whose essence he finds obnoxious. The reverse would be true if the state were Catholic.[16]

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[14] Ibid., p. 76.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., p. 77.

If the state is founded only on general Christian principles, moreover, who is to decide those principles and how can those principles be abstracted from the positive content of the specific denominations?

Having said this, Marx suggests either religion be kept out of politics or rather facetiously, religion be allowed to operate in its own way in the political sphere:

> You should forbid that religion be drawn into politics-but you do not want to do that-because you wish to base the state on faith rather than on free reason, with religion constituting for you the general sanction of the positive. Or you should permit the fanatical injection of religion into politics. Religion might be politically active in its own way, but you do not want that either. For religion is to support secular matters without the latter's being subject to religion. Once religion is drawn into politics, it becomes an insufferable, indeed an irreligious presumption to want to determine on secular grounds how religion has to operate within politics. If one allies himself with religion from religiosity, one must give religion the decisive voice in all matters. Or do you perhaps understand by religion the cult of your own sovereignty and governmental wisdom?[17]

At this point, three conclusions can be drawn concerning Marx's views on the Christian state. First, for the young Marx, the state should be the embodiment of "free reason" and as such, the state is utterly incompatible with religion. Here he reiterates what he said earlier in his doctoral dissertation, namely, that religion is irrational. Religion is just as diametrically opposed to the state as it is to philosophy. Second, the basic and false assumption underlying both

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17 Ibid., pp. 77-78.

the edict and the instruction is that fundamental Christian principles can be abstracted from the different denominations. But how can this be so, Marx asks, when Catholics and Protestants themselves do not view each other as Christians, but as heretics. In other words, there is no general form of Christianity. For these two reasons, then, Marx sees the Christian state as a contradiction in terms and throughout his career he views with apprehension any attempt to establish such a hybrid. Third, in his discussion of the censorship instruction, he suggests what is wanted is not so much a Christian state, but religious sanctions for the status quo. This is Marx's earliest recorded statement of the fact that religion can be politically exploited, a theme recurrent in his early writings. In his first contribution to the Rheinische Zeitung, published in May of 1842 and entitled "The Proceedings of the Sixth Rhenish Parliament", Marx takes up this issue again:

> . . . [I]n their hands [the parliament] religion requires a polemical bitterness impregnated with political tendencies and becomes, in a more or less conscious manner, simply a sacred cloak to hide desires that are both very secular and at the same time very imaginary.[18]

In this review and his subsequent works, it should be noted that Marx shifts his emphasis from criticizing the irrationality of religion to concentrating more on its capacity for political exploitation. What here is called a "sacred cloak" will later

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[18] Karl Marx, "The Proceedings of the Sixth Rhenish Parliament", in Early Texts, p. 35.

become an "ideology", and religion will be used as the paradigm for all other ideologies.

Thus far in his discussion of the censorship instruction, Marx has argued against the compatibility of religion and the state; now he proceeds to vindicate the autonomy of morality from religion. Once again, Marx begins his analysis by admiring the rationalism of the old edict which, he claims, rightly separated morality from religion. Following the philosophers of the Enlightenment, the young Marx also sees morality as an autonomous and rational sphere with its own universal laws and principles. Contrary to the rationalist spirit of the old edict, the new instruction, Marx maintains does not admit morality per se, but only allows an official morality, the morality of the Prussian government. An official morality is the inevitable outcome in a so-called Christian state, Marx argues, because specifically Christian legislators cannot allow morality in its own right, but must see it as an outgrowth of religion:

> Independent morality offends the basic principles of religion, and particular concepts of religion are opposed to morality. Morality recognizes only its own universal and rational religion, and religion only its own particular and positive morality.[19]

In The German Ideology, however, Marx will lump morality with the rest of ideology.

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[19] Marx, "Comments on the Latest Prussian Censorship Instruction", p. 78.

(b) "The Leading Article in No. 179 of the Kölnische Zeitung: Religion, Free Press, and Philosophy"

This article, published in July of 1842 in the Rheinische Zeitung, was written in reply to Karl Hermes, editor of the Kölnische Zeitung. In his lead editorial, Hermes objected to the use of newspapers as a forum to air philosophical and religious views, criticized the atheism of the Rheinische Zeitung, and advocated stricter censorship to control the offending members of the press. Marx's reply, to be sure, was highly critical of Hermes' "ailing" editorial. In his own article, Marx once again discusses his positions regarding religion, philosophy, and the relation of church to state.

Marx begins with Hermes' assertion that religion is the foundation of the state and that even fetishism, admittedly the crudest form of religion, elevates man above the beast by freeing him from the domination of his sensuous appetites. Yet Marx replies, according to scientific research, fetishism ranks below animal worship as a form of religion. And animal worship itself degrades man below the beast by making an animal man's god. Thus, "[f]etishism is so far from raising man above the appetites that it is on the contrary 'the religion of sensuous appetites'".[20]

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[20] Karl Marx, "The Leading Article in No. 179 of the Kölnische Zeitung: Religion, Free Press, and Philosophy", in Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society, p. 115.

Hermes further maintained that, on one hand, all historically important nations at their zenith had highly developed and sophisticated forms of religion, and that, on the other hand, the decline of these nations coincided with the decline of their religious culture. In this matter, Marx accuses Hermes not only of "turning history upside down",[21] but also of confusing cause and effect. The historical zeniths of Greece and Rome, to illustrate, came after the supersession of religion by philosophy and coincided with their philosophical achievements:

> Greece's highest internal development came at the time of Pericles, its highest external peak, with Alexander. In Pericles' time the sophists and Socrates, who may be called philosophy incarnate, had supplanted religion with art and rhetoric. Alexander's time was the time of Aristotle who rejected the eternity of the "individual" spirit and the God of positive religions. And then Rome! Read Cicero! Epicurean, stoic, or sceptical philosophy was the religion of cultured Romans when Rome reached the zenith of its history.[22]

The decline of the ancient religions with their states, moreover, can be explained quite simply since

> . . . the "true religion" of the ancients was the cult of "their nationality", of their "state". It was not the decline of the ancient religions that brought the downfall of the ancient states but the decline of the ancient states that brought the downfall of the old religions.[23]

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21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., p. 116.

Hermes, in contrast, accounted for the decadence of the ancient religions by declaring the ancient religions had come into conflict with scientific inquiry; scientific research by the ancients had demonstrated the errors of the old religions. Following Hermes' argumentation to the extent of subjecting it to a reductio ad absurdum, Marx concludes ". . . the whole ancient world perished [according to Hermes' logic] because scientific inquiry revealed the errors of the old religions",[24] and conversely, if Lucretius and Lucian had not written or had not been read by the Roman authorities, the ancient world would not have declined.

Hermes also claimed the best of scientific research justified the truths of the Christian religion. If this were the case, Marx asks, why has every philosophy been accused of heresy by theology; were not Malebranche, Jakob Böhme, and Leibniz philosophers and were they not accused of apostasy by the theologians. Moreover, the best Protestant theologians consistently have maintained Christianity" . . . cannot be consonant with reason because 'secular' and 'spiritual' reason contradict each other. . . ."[25] Or perhaps do you mean by scientific research, Marx questions Hermes, only research which beforehand concurs with dogma,

> . . . but then what advantage does your assertion have over that of the Indian Brahmin who proves the holiness of the Vedas by reserving for himself alone the right to read them![26]

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[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid., p. 117.

[26] Ibid.

Even accepting for the moment that Christianity is consonant with scientific research and, therefore, the possibility of its decline is precluded, why is it then, Marx inquires finally, that ". . . the police must keep watch that philosophizing newspaper writers do not bring on a decline. . . ."[27]

The difference between philosophical and theological inquiry, Marx continues, is that the former searches for truth whereas the latter rejects a priori as error whatever contradicts its faith. Philosophy, moreover, relies on reason for its justification while theology relies on the police to enforce its judgments. Marx proceeds to raise the thorny question of

> . . . what is there to distinguish your claims [for truth] from those of the Mohammedans, from the claims of any other religion? . . . Must [philosophy] believe that in one country 3 X 1 = 1, in another that women have no souls, in a third that beer is drunk in heaven?[28]

Philosophy's concern, on the contrary, is with universal truths, not with variable cultural specifications of truth and it does not ". . . confuse the illusory horizon of particular world and natural outlooks with the true horizon of the human mind".[29] Genuine philosophy has become worldly and has entered the arena of the press, Marx explains further, because ". . . for six years German papers have been drumming against the religious party [D. F. Strauss and

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27 Ibid.

28 Ibid., p. 118.

29 Ibid.

followers] in philosophy, calumniating, distorting, and bowdlerizing it".[30] For six years, a theologizing press has been noteworthy only for its ignorant polemics against Hegel and Schelling, Feuerbach and Bauer, Deutsche Jahrbücher, etc. Now a philosophizing press, Marx proclaims, will bring forth truth and its appeal is exclusively to reason.

Hermes saw the philosophizing press as an additional threat to the state since publically to attack Christianity was also to attack the very foundation of the state. He chided the censorship for its slackness in allowing the press to philosophize on religious matters, and reminded the censors that Christianity is not only the foundation of all the European states, but also it is the basis of the states' laws and public institutions. Marx finds a double-fault in Hermes' argument. In the first place, the French Constitution and the Prussian Civil Code do not even mention the Christian religion: "[The Prussian Civil Code] does not say that the primary duty of the state is the suppression of heretical error for salvation in another world".[31] In the second place, Marx declares there is no evidence in the Prussian Civil Code to indicate its laws and public institutions are based on the Christian religion. The Prussian Civil Code, for example, does not state that a marriage

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[30] Ibid., p. 123.

[31] Ibid., p. 119.

is invalid unless it takes place before the ministrations of a pastor. Nor does it mention that Prussian educational institutions rest solely on Christianity; surely, Marx says, education is based more on the classics and science than on the catechism.

It is appropriate, Marx goes on, that this whole subject of the Christian state be aired in the papers, because it is the business of the press to discuss political affairs. Since religion has become political, it falls within the domain of the press. As for the Christian state itself, Marx admonishes Hermes to

> [r]ead St. Augustine's De civiate Dei, study the church fathers and the spirit of Christianity, and then tell us whether the church or the state is the "Christian State"![32]

Indeed the Christian state is not only contrary to the opinions of the church fathers, but more importantly, it is contrary to the spirit of the Gospels. The Gospels draw a sharp distinction between state and church, between the realm of Caesar and the realm of God:

> Does not every moment of your practical life give the lie to your theory? Do you consider it wrong to go to court if you are cheated? But the apostle writes that this is wrong.[33]

Even the pope, Marx declares, rightly refused to join the Holy Alliance because the Church and not diplomacy must be the bond among nations. The pope realized a truly Christian Europe or Christian state must be theocratic:

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[32] Ibid., p. 126.

[33] Ibid.

> The prince of such states must be either the God of religion, Jehovah himself as in the Jewish states, the representative of God, the Dalai Lama as in Tibet, or finally, as Görres rightly demands of Christian states in his most recent work, they must be completely submitted to a church which is "infallible". For if there is no supreme head of the church as in Protestantism, the domination of religion is nothing but the religion of domination, the cult of the government's will.[34]

Furthermore, Marx maintains that theocratic states, like the Byzantine state, are, in fact, the worst states. Later, in the "Jewish Question", Marx will measure the political maturity of a particular state by the extent to which it has politically emancipated itself from religion.

Marx finishes this discussion by posing the following dilemma for the spokesman of the Christian state:

> Either the Christian state corresponds to the concept of the state as the actualization of rational freedom, and then nothing else can be demanded for it to be Christian than that it be rational; then it suffices to develop the state from reason in human relations, a task philosophy accomplishes. Or, the state of rational freedom cannot be developed out of Christianity; then you will yourselves concede that this development does not lie in the tendency of Christianity, since Christianity does not want a bad state and any state is a bad state which is not the actualization of rational freedom.[35]

In other words, the state as the "actualization of rational freedom" cannot be developed out of religion because religion is irrational.

A year later, Marx finishes his attack on the Christian state in his essay, "On the Jewish Question".

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[34] Ibid., p. 127.

[35] Ibid., p. 128.

IV. Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'

This manuscript, written during the summer of 1843, is the first of numerous works which Marx entitled "Critique" and it is typical of the way which Marx will develop, clarify, and formulate his own ideas in opposition to those of his opponents.[36] In his first critique, Marx felt obliged to come to terms with Hegel in general and his political philosophy in particular. The Young Hegelian attack on the master centered on his treatment of religion and the Prussian state and it is not unexpected, therefore, to find Marx dealing with both subjects in his earliest critique of Hegel. The work itself is a painstaking analysis of paragraphs 261-313 of Hegel's Rechtsphilosophie.[37]

If for no other reason than Hegel's proclamations about the end of Sophia and the perfection of reality, his left-wing disciples saw an imperative need to come to terms with his all-encompassing and monumental edifice. For his part, Marx was less than satisfied with the Hegelian claim concerning the perfection of reality, that is, the Hegelians integration of man's private and public existence in the state. Then too, Marx realized that to call into question the

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[36] This work was not published until 1927.

[37] The first four pages of Marx's manuscript no longer survive, but probably dealt with paragraphs 257-260 of Hegel's work.

Hegelian state was not only to jeopardize the entire Hegelian system, but also to call into question the whole project of speculative philosophy, since Hegel himself had proclaimed the end of Sophia.

Considering the scope of his aims, it comes as no surprise the Kritik is probably the most complex of Marx's earliest writings. On one level, Marx judged Hegel by the standards of his own system, pointing out the contradictions and the historical inconsistencies in Hegel's justification of the state. On still another level, Marx attacked the contemporary Prussian state. Here Marx accepted Hegel's postulate that philosophy comprehends reality in thought, and concluded that any discussion of Hegel's philosophy implies a simultaneous critique of reality, in this case the Prussian state. On a third and most significant level, Marx was confident he could deal a fatal blow to Hegel's speculation by utilizing Feuerbach's transformative method which he applied throughout the Kritik to Hegel's political philosophy.

In early 1843, Ludwig Feuerbach published his Preliminary Theses for a Reform of Philosophy. Feuerbach viewed his Thesen as a final chapter to The Essence of Christianity. In his magnum opus, to repeat, Feuerbach argued man's essence was alienated in a God he himself created. Feuerbach viewed man's alienation in religion as primary, reasoning since there was only one reality, there could

be only one alienation from reality. Alienation would be done away with when man realized the predicates of God, an illusory being, were actually those of man. Through this realization, man would reclaim his alienated attributes and thereby restore the proper relationship of the subject to its predicates. In his Thesen, Feuerbach continued his attack on theology and indicted the Hegelian system for being the last rational support of religion. Had not Hegel himself said that philosophy comprehends in thought what religion represents in symbol, that the content of philosophy and religion were identical? Like theology, Hegelian speculation, Feuerbach declared, was a systematic reversal of the proper relationship between subject and predicates. Thus, just as in theology, what properly belonged to real, corporeal man in relation to nature was attributed to God, in Hegel's speculation, it was ascribed to the Absolute Spirit, a figment of Hegel's imagination.[38]

Marx was quite enthusiastic about Feuerbach's Thesen which he read prior to the composition of his Kritik. The Kritik itself bears witness to Marx's whole-hearted adoption of Feuerbach's method.

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[38] Later, in a characteristically Feuerbachian manner, Marx maintained the only difference between Christian theology and speculative philosophy was while the former had only one incarnation, the latter had as many incarnations as there were "things". See Holy Family, p. 80.

What Feuerbach outlined generally in his Thesen here is applied specifically in Marx's careful analysis of Hegel's political philosophy. From 1843 until 1845, it is certain Feuerbach had a pronounced influence on Marx's thinking. It seems necessary, however, to stress once again where this influence lies.

On one hand, as just mentioned, what excited Marx was Feuerbach's method of internally analyzing Hegel, clearly set forth in the Thesen of 1843. Both Feuerbach and Marx, in his turn, labelled Hegel a "speculative theologian" whose system could be summed up best in the word, "Mysticism". Marx used this term constantly in the Kritik and later he applied it to Bruno Bauer's philosophy in The Holy Family, Max Stirner's in The German Ideology, and P. J. Proudhon's political economics in The Poverty of Philosophy. According to Marx, mysticism was ". . . the mystery of Hegelian philosophy, especially the Philosophy of Right and the Philosophy of Religion".[39] Hegel's system was mystifying because he ascribed to the Absolute Spirit what properly belonged to the human subject and, then, made the latter into an emanation of an imaginary entity. When Marx subjected Hegel's political philosophy to Feuerbach's transformative method, however, he discovered it was possible to rid the Philosophy of Right of its mystical form and still retain its empirical content; he considered this empirical data to be an accurate description of the contradictions

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[39] Critique, p. 84.

involved in the existing political order. Therefore, it was possible for Marx to criticize simultaneously the contradictions in Hegel's justification of the state as well as the irrationality of the Prussian state itself. Marx, to be sure, was pleased with the results of his Kritik, so pleased in fact, his subsequent works of 1843-1845 were written as a direct outgrowth of this Feuerbachian analysis of Hegel:[40]

> Feuerbach was the first to complete and criticize Hegel from Hegel's point of view, by resolving the Metaphysical Absolute Spirit into "real man on the basis of nature" and to complete the Criticism of religion by drafting in a masterly manner the general basic features of the Criticism of Hegel's speculation and hence of every kind of metaphysics.[41]

On the other hand, it was not Feuerbach's early work on religion, per se, which invoked Marx's enthusiasm. If this were the case, one would expect to see a strong Feuerbachian influence on Marx's ideas prior to 1843. Also one would not expect to find Marx frequently using religious analogies to describe the separation of man from his public existence in the Hegelian state. To explicate: for Feuerbach, religion is presently the sole cause of man's alienation and the only barrier to realizing a truly human community, consistent with man's species-being, Gattungswesen.[42] For Marx, religion is

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[40] See "Paris Manuscripts", pp. 63-64.

[41] Holy Family, pp. 186-187.

[42] The term "species-being" originated in the writings of Ludwig Feuerbach. He used the term to designate what was specifically human in man, that is, an individual's consciousness of being a member of a species.

simply a symptom of a more primary alienation, socio-economic in character, and, as such, religion is basically unassailable through a theoretical critique alone; however, religion can be dealt with indirectly through a radical critique of the political order which engendered it and on which it depends. Ultimately, ideologies will persist until a social complex is created which is a truly human expression of all the individuals that compose it, das Gemeinwesen.[43] There is, in sum, a fundamental difference between Feuerbach and Marx's understanding of religion: for Feuerbach, religion is the cause of man's present alienation and the final obstacle in the way of man's humanization; for Marx, religion is a symptom of man's alienation and dehumanization under the existing political order.

Thus Marx, following Bruno Bauer, does what Feuerbach would not consider to do; he uses religion as an apt analogy to describe man's alienation in the Hegelian state and consequently, he is able to criticize pari passu religion and the Prussian state. In the Kritik, to illustrate, Marx draws an analogy between the political constitution and heaven:

> The political constitution was until now the religious sphere, the religion of popular life, the heaven of its universality in opposition to the earthly existence of its actuality.[44]

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[43] See footnote 30, p. 21.

[44] Critique, pp. 31-32.

Just as all men are equal in heaven but unequal on earth, so too all men are equal before the constitution but unequal in civil society, the sphere of self-interest. In both cases, Marx is pointing out there is an illusion of equality, one religious and the other political, but in actual fact there is only gross social inequality. Marx finds in the Prussian bureaucracy, moreover, a second instance of this practical illusion of equality and once again he draws a comparison with religion. In this instance, he argues that just because every citizen has the opportunity to become a civil servant does not do away with the separation between bureaucrat and ordinary citizen any more than just because every Catholic (male) has the opportunity of becoming a priest does away with the distinction between cleric and layman.[45] Marx further calls the bureaucrats "the Jesuits and theologians of the state",[46] describes the civil service examination as "the bureaucratic baptism of knowledge, the official recognition of the transubstantiation of profane into holy knowledge",[47] and concludes his treatment of the bureaucracy by saying:

> The monarch distributes and entrusts the particular state activities as functions to the officials, i.e., he distributes the state among the bureaucrats, entrusts it like the holy Roman Church entrusts consecrations.[48]

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45 Ibid., p. 50.

46 Ibid., p. 46.

47 Ibid., p. 51.

48 Ibid., pp. 51-52.

While it is superfluous to this discussion to multiply illustrations, two final examples of Marx's paradigmatic use of religious alienation need detain us in the Kritik.

In an oft quoted passage, Marx compares "true democracy" to Christianity:

> Just as it is not religion that creates man but man who creates religion, so it is not the constitution that creates the people but the people which creates the constitution. In a certain respect democracy is to all other forms of the state what Christianity is to all other religions. Christianity is the religion par excellence, the essence of religion, deified man under the form of a particular religion.
> In the same way democracy is the essence of every political constitution, socialized man under the form of a particular constitution of the state.[49]

Frequently, this passage has been cited to demonstrate an early and unqualified acceptance by Marx of Feuerbach's critique of religion. And one certainly does find Marx following Feuerbach to the extent of insisting on the primacy of the human subject as the source of religion. Against this school of thought, however, it should be pointed out that the notion of Christianity as the apex of religion was a current one in Hegelian circles and hardly peculiar to Feuerbach. Hegel, Bruno Bauer, and Marx, for example were all of this view. B. Bauer, Feuerbach, and Marx all held that Christianity was the apex of religion because man in some sense made up its content. Thus, the essence of religion qua religion was realized in

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[49] Ibid., p. 30.

Christianity and consequently, for B. Bauer, Feuerbach and Marx, religious alienation was complete. A second notion common to all three thinkers was that religion could not be abolished until it was realized, until it had reached its final form and in this sense, Christianity could be seen as self-destroying. In the Kritik, Marx compares "true democracy" to Christianity because in the political sphere, democracy is the final form, the essence of the political constitution. As such, and herein lies the crucial importance of the comparison with Christianity, it is self-destroying. Thus, through an analogy with Christianity, Marx formulates one of the basic tenets of his system, the disappearance of the state.

The last subject in the Kritik deserving our attention concerns Marx's discussion of primogeniture which is considered an early formulation of "the fetishism of commodities", fully elaborated in the first volume of Das Kapital. Since the eldest son is accorded the exclusive right of inheriting landed-property under a system of primogeniture, the land, therefore cannot be equally distributed among the children by the landowner. Hence, Marx describes primogeniture as ". . . private property which has become a religion for itself, which has become absorbed in itself, enchanted with its autonomy and nobility".[50] In other words, since entailed property

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[50] Ibid., p. 102.

is inalienable even by its owner, "[i]t ceases actually to be property at all: its owners are themselves transformed into the property of property".[51] Just as in religion man is degraded to the status of being an object of his own creation, in primogeniture, man is degraded to being an object of his own property. Property ceases to be an object and becomes a virtual subject. In the Paris Manuscripts, Marx pursues this line of reasoning by comparing the alien character of the commodity-form of human labour to religion.

V. "On the Jewish Question"

Marx's discussion of the question of the Jews is one of the better known of his early works. Until recently, however, the reason for its notoriety chiefly was due to critics of Marxism who used this review to present Marx as thoroughly anti-semitic. While it is fallacious to label "Zur Judenfrage" an anti-semitic work, it is certainly a forceful statement of Marx's appraisal of both Judaism and Christianity. In addition, this article contains Marx's most sustained and lengthy consideration of religion in general. Together with his essay entitled "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction", it is, moreover, the best source for information about Marx's seminal ideas on religion.

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[51] Avineri, p. 30.

Both articles were written during the latter part of 1843 and published in February of 1844 in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher.

"Zur Judenfrage" itself was written in two parts and reviews two articles by Bruno Bauer on the same topic. Marx begins by summarizing the results of Bauer's argument which, he says with rare praise, was done ". . . with dash, clarity, wit and profundity, in a style which is as precise as it is pithy and vigorous".[52] Nevertheless, Marx declares that Bauer's analysis of the question of the Jews in itself is insufficient: Bauer halted his analysis with the Christian state and did not subject the state as such to examination. In other words, Bauer framed the question of the Jews in theological form: the focus of his examination was the relationship between church and state. Consequently, Bauer did not perceive the fundamental question, namely, the relation between political and human emancipation.[53] Bauer's critique remained theological and stumbled into contradictions at the very point it should have become a political critique.

To illustrate his point, Marx examines the question of Jewish emancipation as it varied from Germany to France, and finally, to the North American states. In the Christian state of Germany, Marx says that Bauer is perfectly correct; the question of the Jews is a

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[52] "Jewish Question", p. 4.

[53] Marx's style here is polemical. Thus, the position he imputes to Bauer should not be taken as a correct representation of Bauer's own views.

theological question. The Jew, in fact, does stand in religious opposition to the state since he is denied political rights because of his religion. In France, however, the state, although it recognizes the religion of the majority, is not Christian but constitutional; there the question of the Jews is not theological, then, but a question of incomplete political emancipation. The Jew stands in religious opposition to the state only insofar as the state still recognizes the religion of the majority. While in the North American states, finally, the question of Jewish emancipation no longer retains even a theological semblance. It is at this stage where Bauer's critique falters. In most of North America, the state adopts a political attitude toward religion, this is, it banishes religion from the state. Yet, contrary to Bauer's conclusion, religion not only persists, but flourishes in North America.

Given the political reality of North American society, Marx insists that Bauer's formulation of the question of the Jews must be rejected and the problem restated to read: ". . . what is the relation between complete political emancipation and religion"?[54] In answer to his own question, Marx declares that

> . . . since the existence of religion is the existence of a defect, the source of this defect must be sought in the nature of the state itself. Religion no longer appears as the basis but as the manifestation of secular narrowness.[55]

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[54] "Jewish Question", p. 9.

[55] Ibid., pp. 9-10.

Without fail, Marx holds to this position throughout his career: religion is not the cause, but simply one manifestation, primarily pre-bourgeois in character,[56] of man's alienation in society. In this, as I have shown, he differs from both Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach. A few years later, to use another example, Marx writes in The German Ideology:

> Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking.[57]

Since religion itself has no real history, Marx's approach to it, therefore, always consists in locating its profane basis in society: "History has for long enough been resolved into superstition; but now we resolve superstition into history".[58] Thus, Marx looks to the political state in its secular form to discover the source of religion.

Returning, then, to the example of the states in North America, Marx discusses at greater length the actual relation between political and human emancipation. In essence, Marx's argument is this: the state can emancipate itself only from state religion; it cannot emancipate men from religion. While the state emancipates

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[56] See pp. 37-39.

[57] German Ideology, p. 38.

[58] "Jewish Question", p. 10.

itself from religion when it no longer recognizes any religion, political emancipation is not complete human emancipation. As discussed earlier, Marx's position should not be misconstrued at this juncture. Marx does not oppose political emancipation from religion: he measures the political maturity of a state by the degree to which it has emancipated itself from religion. Avineri rightly sees that Marx

> . . . conceives the emergence of the modern state as a corollary of secularization, expressed by 'political emancipation', i.e. the separation of politics from religious and theological considerations and the relegation of institutional religion to a separate and limited sphere.[59]

Viewed from Marx's perspective, to illustrate concretely, Germany could not even be considered a state, and France would be less politically mature than the North American states.

Yet, there are severe limitations to all political measures. Even though the state declares itself atheistic, as in North America, this declaration virtually has no impact on the members of the state itself. The atheism of the state, in other words, does not preclude the religiosity of the private individual. Indeed, it presupposes it just as the state presupposes property when it abolishes the property qualification for voting as in North America. Moreover, since the state is an expression of the members which compose it, an additional

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[59] Avineri, p. 43.

problem arises in that the state's atheism stands in direct contradiction to individual religiosity. Private practice of religion contradicts the theoretical atheism of the state. The result is that an individual stands in profound contradiction to himself. Marx uses the terms bourgeois and citoyen to express this radical division between an individual's life in civil society and the political state. The question of the Jews, Marx concludes, is but one manifestation of the secular opposition between the private and general interest.

There is still another inherent limitation of political freedom from religion. Because man frees himself from religion through the state as an intermediary, Marx continues, man's freedom perforce is abstract and partial:

> . . . even when he proclaims himself an atheist through the intermediary of the state, that is, when he declares the state to be an atheist, he is still engrossed in religion, because he only recognizes himself as an atheist in a roundabout way, through an intermediary. Religion is simply the recognition of man in a roundabout fashion; that is, through an intermediary. The state is the intermediary between man and human liberty. Just as Christ is the intermediary to whom man attributes all his own divinity and all his religious bonds, so the state is the intermediary to which man confides all his non-divinity and all his human freedom.[60]

This comparison between Christ and the state as intermediaries between man and his real, social life deserves careful examination. A hasty reading might suggest a pronounced Feuerbachian influence at this point on Marx's thinking. Under closer scrutiny, however, this

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60 "Jewish Question", p. 11.

passage is reminiscent of Marx's comparison of Christianity to "true democracy" in his Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'.[61] The point of the analogy, it should be remembered, was to show the state as self-destroying. In this case, since the perfected political state cannot ensure human emancipation, the state must be abolished. In other words, just as Christianity cannot be purified, the modern state cannot be reformed. Both must disappear.

The perfected political state, furthermore, abolishes religion after its own fashion, that is, it actually can do no more than relegate it to the realm of private opinion:

> Religion is no longer the spirit of the state. . . . It has become the spirit of civil society, of the sphere of egoism and of the bellum omnium contra omnes. It is no longer the essence of differentiation. It has become what it was at the beginning, an expression of the fact that man is separated from the community, from himself and from other men. It is now only the abstract avowal of an individual folly, a private whim or caprice.[62]

From this excerpt, it is important to note that Marx locates the origin of religious consciousness in the contradiction between the individual and general interest. Thus, for Marx, the different forms of religion are but ideal expressions of this conflict as it appeared in divers societies.[63] Since Christianity is the apex of religion, it also follows that it is the most acute religious expression of the clash between the private and public interest. Christianity postulates

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61 This is not to imply that Marx equated "true democracy" with the modern state.

62 "Jewish Question", p. 15.

63 See McLellan, Marx Before Marxism, p. 135.

an illusory equality in heaven and legitimates gross social inequality on earth. As Marx writes in 1847, "[t]he social principles of Christianity justified the slavery of Antiquity, glorified the serfdom of the Middle Ages and equally know, when necessary, how to defend the oppression of the proletariat. . . ."[64]

In the abstract political state, Marx goes on, the human basis of Christianity has been realized:

> Man, in his most intimate reality in civil society, is a profane being. Here, where he appears both to himself and to others as a real individual he is an illusory phenomenon. In the state, on the contrary, where he is regarded as a species-being, man is the imaginary member of an imaginary sovereignty, divested of his real, individual life, and infused with an unreal universality.[65]

The human core of Christianity has been realized, in other words, in the dual and contradictory existence man leads in the perfected political state. Alluding once again to North American society, Marx points to the infinite variety of denominations and sects which exist under the aegis of the democratic state:

> Christianity here attains the practical expression of its universal religious significance, because the most varied views are brought together in the form of Christianity, and still more because Christianity does not ask that anyone should profess Christianity, but simply that he should have some kind of religion. . . .[66]

The most conflicting beliefs and practices are classed as Christian

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64 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, On Religion (New York, 1964), p. 83.

65 "Jewish Question", pp. 13-14.

66 Ibid., p. 21.

and "[t]he religious consciousness runs riot in a wealth of contradictions and diversity."[67]

From the preceding discussion, Marx reaches a conclusion in line with Bauer's method: according to Marx, not the Christian but the atheistic state is, in fact, the religious state. For Marx, the Christian state is a non-state, an imperfect state; it needs religion for its political consummation. As such, the Christian state is involved in a painful contradiction. Here Marx repeats many of the arguments which he used to refute Hermes' defense of the Christian-Germanic state. And again, Marx does support Bauer's effort to force

> . . . the state, which supports itself upon the Bible, into a total disorder of thought in which it no longer knows whether it is illusion or reality.[68]

However, explains Marx, since the Christian state accepts the imaginary form of Christianity which is incapable of development, it cannot, for this reason, be the practical realization of Christianity. In contrast, the atheistic state is the real state, the perfected state; it does not need religion for its political completion. Since the human basis of Christianity has been realized in its profane form, the modern state can dispense with religion. As Marx says later in The Holy Family,

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67 Ibid.

68 Ibid., p. 19.

> [t]he state declares that religion, like the other elements of civil life, only begins to exist in its full scope when the state declares it to be non-political and thus leaves it to itself. To the dissolution of the political existence of these elements, for example, the dissolution of property by the abolition of the property qualification for electors, the dissolution of religion by the abolition of the state church, to this very proclamation of their civil death corresponds their most vigorous life, which henceforth obeys its own laws undisturbed and develops to its full scope.[69]

Thus, the modern state witnesses the practical realization of Christianity. In civil society, every man is considered a sovereign, albeit unsocial, being.

In the second half of "Zur Judenfrage", Marx examines Bruno Bauer's article, "The Capacity of the Present-day Jews and Christians to become free". Marx begins his review by saying Bauer had once again incorrectly formulated the problem in a theological perspective. According to Marx, Bauer claimed that Christians had to renounce their Christianity, but that Jews not only had to renounce their Judaism, but also had to accept Christianity in dissolution to become fully free. The emancipation of the Jew, in other words, had to take place in two stages. Marx counters by declaring Bauer had obscured the real issue by making it a religious, rather than social question. For Marx, the real question is: "what specific social element is it necessary to overcome in order

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[69] Holy Family, p. 158.

to abolish Judaism?"[70] The profane basis of Judaism, Marx answers, is self-interest and practical need, the Jew's cult is huckstering, and God, money. To abolish Judaism, therefore, means to abolish the material preconditions which make the Jew possible. Eliminate huckstering and the Jew's". . . religious consciousness would evaporate like some insipid vapour in the real, life-giving air of society."[71]

The Jew, Marx goes on, already has emancipated himself in a Jewish manner. The Jew not only has acquired vast sums of money, but also has been instrumental in making money the world power. The practical Jewish spirit has made Christian nations into Jewish converts. Historically, however, this situation could arise only because of the perfection of civil society in the Christian world:[72]

> Only under the sway of Christianity, which objectifies all national, natural, moral and theoretical relationships, could civil society separate itself completely from the life of the state, sever all the species-bonds of man, establish egoism and selfish need in their place, and dissolve the human world into a world of atomistic, antagonistic individuals.[73]

The theoretical life of Judaism, based as it was on practical need and self-interest, had a limited development; the practical life of

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70 "Jewish Question", p. 34.

71 Ibid.

72 See Young Hegelians, p. 76. McLellan quotes a passage from Das entdeckte Christentum to show that Bauer also held Christianity responsible for the egoism of civil society.

73 Ibid., p. 38.

Judaism, commerce, had to await the perfection of civil society in the Christian world before it could reabsorb Christianity into itself. Marx concludes that "[f]rom the beginning, the Christian was the theorizing Jew; consequently, the Jew is the practical Christian. And the practical Christian has become a Jew again."[74]

VI. "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right': Introduction"

Marx composed this essay shortly after "Zur Judenfrage" and it too was published in the Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher in February of 1844. Marx intended it as an introduction to his Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right' which he planned to re-write for a more general audience. Like other of Marx's projects, however, the popularized Kritik never materialized. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study, the first few pages of the Einleitung comprise a succinct, if in some places, cryptic summary of the essential features of the Marxian critique of religion. It is from the Einleitung, moreover, that the famous and frequently misunderstood phrase, "[religion] is the opium of the people",[75] derives - a phrase, it should be noted, which also can be found in one form or another in the writings of Hegel, B. Bauer, and Feuerbach.

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[74] Ibid., p. 39.

[75] "Introduction", p. 44.

Marx begins the Einleitung with the proclamation: "[f]or Germany, the criticism of religion has been largely completed; and the criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism".[76] The first half of Marx's proclamation echoes statements made by both B. Bauer and Feuerbach about the Enlightenment critique of religion. Both thinkers, it should be remembered, agreed that the Enlightenment had adumbrated the definitive critique of religion and each saw in his own work the completion of the eighteenth-century critique. Here Marx acknowledges his own debt to both scholars: in the main, to Bauer, Marx owed his understanding of the historical content of religion, while to Feuerbach, he owed the notion of speculative philosophy as theology and its consequent implications for Hegel's system. The second half of the proclamation, "the criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism", underlines the pivotal place of the religious critique in the Marxian system. On one hand, Marx is referring to his (and Bauer's) critique of the Christian-Germanic state which occupied him during 1842-1843. This critique of the Christian state, Marx claims, was the necessary preliminary and a crucial element of the critique of the German situation. On the other hand, Marx is saying the critique of religion also has a wider significance which is not delimited by national boundaries. Religious consciousness as the classic form

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[76] Ibid., p. 43.

of false consciousness serves Marx as the paradigm for all other forms of false consciousness. Seen from this broader perspective, the religious critique is of immense importance to Marx because man cannot change the world until he rids himself of all his illusions about it.

Once religious consciousness has been unmasked, the Einleitung continues, man is forced to question the material preconditions which engendered it:

> The profane existence of error is compromised once its celestial oratio pro aris et focis has been refuted. Man, who has found in the fantastic reality of heaven, where he sought a supernatural being, only his own reflection, will no longer be tempted to find only the semblance of himself--a non-human being--where he seeks and must seek his true reality.[77]

Following Bauer, here, Marx declares that what man found in heaven was not a Divine Being nor even a human being; rather what man discovered was a non-human being, his own reflection. In the fantastic reality of heaven, man unearthed the inhumanity of society.

Now, Marx proceeds to agree with Feuerbach that: "[t]he basis of irreligious criticism is this: man makes religion; religion does not make man".[78] With Feuerbach, Marx insists on the primacy of the human subject as the source of religion. Unlike Feuerbach, though, Marx still maintains religious alienation is not man's primary alienation. Marx goes on to clarify further his divergence

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77 Ibid.

78 Ibid.

from Feuerbach:

> . . . man is not an abstract being squatting outside the world. Man is the human world, the state, society. This state, this society, produce religion which is an inverted world consciousness, because they are an inverted world.[79]

Even at this early date, before his own concept of man crystallized, Marx repudiates the Feuerbachian man as "an abstract being squatting outside the world". Two years later, in his sixth thesis on Feuerbach, Marx explicitly contrasts his own position with Feuerbach's:

> Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human essence. But the essence of man is no abstraction inhering in each single individual. In its actuality it is the ensemble of social relationships.
>
> Feuerbach, who does not go into the criticism of this actual essence is hence compelled
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> 1. to abstract from the historical process and to establish religious feeling as something self-contained, and to presuppose an abstract-isolated-human individual'
> 2. to view the essence of man merely as "species", as the inner, dumb generality which unites the many individuals naturally.[80]

In 1843, Marx conceives man as "the human world, the state, society", and in 1845, as the "ensemble of the social relations". At no time, therefore, could Marx conceive of religion like Feuerbach, that is, religion as the psychological projection of an isolated individual. Not man's faculties, not man in isolation, not man in pristine nature, but society, the inverted world, engenders religion, the inverted world consciousness. In The German Ideology, Marx will term this

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[79] Ibid.

[80] "Theses", p. 402.

inverted world consciousness, an "ideology".

Having said this, Marx now describes religion as "the general theory of this world, its encyclopedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point d'honneur",[81] etc. van Leeuwen sees this first string of characteristics as a direct reference to Hegel's system:

> Hegel's philosophy claims to be the summary, the comprehension of the world. His Logic, far from being merely an analysis of the laws of human reason, is the logic of the world, just as his Encyclopaedia is the encyclopaedic compendium of that world.[82]

According to Marx, Hegelian speculation is the most extreme form of religious alienation. The popular logic of religion is enshrined in the Hegelian Absolute. Thus, "[r]eligious man can find in Hegel his ultimate confirmation".[83]

Marx continues to enumerate a second list of characteristics: religion is the perverted world's "enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, its general basis of consolation and justification".[84] This second list concentrates on the moral and emotional aspects of religion. With reference to the former, Marx once again recalls his critique of the Christian state where he pointed out the unique capacity of religion for political exploitation. Earlier, in his refutation of the Christian state, Marx frequently referred

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81 "Introduction", p. 43.

82 van Leeuwen, p. 191.

83 Ibid., p. 194.

84 "Introduction", p. 43.

to religion as a "sacred cloak"; now he calls it a "moral sanction, a solemn complement". Religion, Marx repeats, has been used to legitimate the status quo. Concerning the latter, it is of some importance to recognize this as Marx's first mention of the consoling qualities of religion. In his previous writings, Marx has not dwelt at all on this capacity of religion. While he does develop this theme in the next few paragraphs, one should be careful not to fall into the common prejudice that this is either the central or only issue which Marx takes with religion. As Kamenka aptly observes:

> . . . in his theory of ideologies generally Marx seems to vacillate between treating ideologies as expressions of social interests on the one hand, and as compensations, fantasy-supplementations of social reality, on the other.[85]

Marx proceeds to elaborate on how religion consoles man. He says "[r]eligious suffering is at the same time an expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering".[86] The perversion of the world, in other words, entails very real suffering and religion is one response to this suffering. It is the "sigh of the oppressed creature, the sentiment of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people".[87] Without a doubt, this last sentence is the best known of any of Marx's sayings. Marx uses the word "opium" to describe the intoxicated,

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85 Eugene Kamenka, Marxism and Ethics (London, 1969), p. 42.

86 "Introduction", p. 43.

87 Ibid., pp. 43-44.

imaginary, and distorted consolation which religion provides for man's insufferable social existence.

The critique of religion, the Einleitung goes on, disillusions man and he is forced to face his real situation with sober senses. The critique of religion, Marx explains, is not meant to exacerbate the harshness of man's condition. Rather

> [c]riticism has plucked the imaginary flowers from the chain, not in order that man shall bear the chain without caprice or consolation but so that he shall cast off the chain and pluck the living flower. . . . Religion is only the illusory sun about which man revolves so long as he does not revolve about himself.[88]

Thus, the call to give up religious illusions is a call to throw off a condition which requires illusions. "The criticism of religion is, therefore, the embryonic criticism of this vale of tears of which religion is the halo."[89]

Marx finishes this section by proclaiming:

> The immediate task of philosophy, which is in the service of history, is to unmask human self-alienation in its secular form now that it has been unmasked in its sacred form. Thus the criticism of heaven is transformed into the criticism earth, the criticism of religion into the criticism of law, and the criticism of theology into the criticism of politics.[90]

This passage explains why Marx would include a summary of his

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88 Ibid., p. 44.

89 Ibid.

90 Ibid.

critique of religion in the introduction to his Critique of Hegel's 'Philosophy of Right'. Löwith correctly remarks that the traditional meaning of atheism changes for Marx: ". . . it is no longer a theological problem, i.e., a fight against heathen and Christian gods, but a fight against earthly idols".[91] In the Paris Manuscripts, the commodity-form of human labour will emerge as chief among these earthly idols. Yet, by calling the commodity an idol - indeed a fetish, the crudest form of religion - Marx's works evidence the extent to which Bauer's method permanently influenced the structure of his thought. It was on Bauer's suggestion that Marx made the transition from theoretical to practical atheism, that he changed theological questions into secular ones and crucially, that Marx saw religious alienation embodied in secular institutions.[92]

Toward the middle of the Einleitung, Marx resumes his discussion of religion:

> What proves beyond doubt the radicalism of [German] theory, and thus its practical energy, is that it begins from the resolute positive abolition of religion. The criticism of religion ends with the doctrine that man is the supreme being for man. It ends, therefore, with the categorical imperative

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91 Löwith, Meaning in History (Chicago, 1949), p. 49.

92 See Young Hegelians, pp. 78-79. McLellan argues that most of the metaphors which Marx used to describe religion in the Einleitung actually were borrowed from B. Bauer's works.

> to overthrow all those conditions in which man is an abased, enslaved, abandoned, contemptible being. . . .[93]

In the next few lines, Marx likens the revolutionary quality of the theoretical critique of religion to the Reformation. Luther emancipated man from external religiosity by making "religiosity the innermost essence of man".[94] Thus, while Protestantism was not the real liberation of man, at least Marx states, the question of emancipation was presented in its proper perspective, that is, as the struggle against man's inner religiosity. It is worth quoting from the Third of the "Paris Manuscripts," entitled "Private Property and Labour", to show how Marx makes the transition from theology to political economy by comparing the achievements of Luther to Adam Smith:

> Engels is right . . . in calling Adam Smith the Luther of political economy. Just as Luther recognized religion and faith as the essence of the real world, and for that reason took up a position against Catholic paganism; just as he annulled external religiosity while making religiosity the inner essence of man; just as he negated the distinction between priest and layman because he transferred the priest into the heart of the layman; so wealth external to man and independent of him (and thus only to be acquired and conserved from outside) is annulled. That is to say, its external and mindless objectivity is annulled by the fact that private property is incorporated in man himself, and man himself is recognized as its essence. But as a result, man himself is brought into the sphere of private property, just as with Luther, he is brought into the sphere of religion.[95]

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[93] "Introduction", p. 52. Löwith comments: "Only the atheism of man with faith in himself must also see to the creation of the world". Löwith, From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought, p. 95.

[94] "Introduction", p. 53.

[95] "Paris Manuscripts", pp. 147-148.

In this manner, Marx moves from theology to political economy and from political economy to alienation, both in theory and in reality.

VII. "Paris Manuscripts"

The "Paris Manuscripts", commonly known as the "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844", were first published under that title in 1932. Since then, a diverse body of interpretive literature has sprung up around them. For example, the "Paris Manuscripts" have been used to demonstrate the "humanism" of the young Marx and in addition, from Marx's analysis of alienation, French existentialism drew inspiration. The work itself was written between autumn of 1843 and January of 1844 and it is comprised of four manuscripts. For our study, however, only two of the manuscripts, the last section of the First Manuscript entitled, "Alienated Labour", and the final part of the Third Manuscript called "Critique of Hegel's Dialectic and General Philosophy", warrant detailed consideration.

(a) "Alienated Labour"

The best known part of the "Paris Manuscripts" is this section which Marx devoted to alienated labour. In it, Marx amplifies what he means by the alienation of the worker. Marx claims to derive the concept of alienated labour from political economy itself. Much like his approach to Hegel, Marx accepts

the presuppositions and laws of political economy to show that ". . . the worker sinks to the level of a commodity, and to a most miserable commodity".[96]

It is, moreover, primarily this essay which has given rise to the mistaken view that Marx applied Feuerbach's critique of religion to politics. Actually, as previously discussed at some length,[97] what Marx does do is take one aspect of the Feuerbachian critique of religion, namely, his description of an alien being, and he then draws a comparison between it and the commodity-form of human labour. Marx invokes a comparison with religion, in other words, to describe the worker's alienation from nature.

Having said this, we can now return to the essay itself. Political economy, Marx states, presupposes private property, while it should explain it. It is the same way with theology which ". . . explains the origin of evil by the fall of man; that is, it asserts as a historical fact what it should explain".[98] Rather than resort to this kind of hypostasis, Marx asserts

> [w]e shall begin from a contemporary economic fact. The worker becomes poorer the more wealth he produces and the more his production increases in power and extent. . . . The devaluation of the human world increases in direct relation with the increase in value

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[96] Ibid., p. 120.

[97] See pp. 33-34 where I argue that Marx could reject the thrust of Feuerbach's critique of religion while still retaining Feuerbach's description of an alien being.

[98] "Paris Manuscripts", p. 121.

> of the world of things. Labour does not only create goods; it also produces itself and the worker as a commodity, and indeed in the same proportion as it produces goods.[99]

The object of production, in short, stands opposed to the worker as an alien being, as an independent power distinct from the producer. As the world of objects increases, the worker is progressively impoverished. Now, Marx does make a comparison with religion which is distinctively Feuerbachian:

> It is just the same as in religion. The more of himself man attributes to God the less he has left in himself. The worker puts his life into the object, and his life then belongs no longer to himself but to the object. . . . The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, assumes an external existence, but that it exists independently, outside himself, and alien to him, and that it stands opposed to him as an autonomous power. The life which he has given to the object sets itself against him as an alien and hostile force.[100]

Marx summarizes the alien character of the commodity by saying the worker is alienated from nature. Basically, Marx sees two aspects of the worker's alienation from nature: first, the totality of nature is diminished by the worker's production of objects, and second, the worker's physical means of existence also diminishes as his production increases.

Since the worker is alienated from the product of labour, Marx deduces that the process of production itself must be active

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[99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid., pp. 122-123.

alienation. Marx sees three facets of alienated labour: Labour is external, forced, and merely a means for satisfying other needs. Marx writes: "[i]ts alien character is clearly shown by the fact that as soon as there is no physical or other compulsion it is avoided like the plague".[101] Marx once more draws a parallel with religion:

> Just as in religion the spontaneous activity of human fantasy, of the human brain and heart, reacts independently as an alien activity of gods or devils upon the individual, so the activity of the worker is not his own spontaneous activity. It is another's activity and a loss of his own spontaneity.[102]

Like the gods, the commodity-form of human labour exacts servitude from the worker. It stifles the worker's creative activity, his very life.

Not only is the worker alienated from the product and process of production, Marx continues, the worker also is alienated from the species. Marx infers this characteristic of alienated labour from his equation of productive life with species-life, Gattungsleben. Consequently, because the worker's productive life is merely a means for subsistence, his real universal and free life, his species-life, is degraded to a means. Following Feuerbach but also going beyond him, Marx distinguishes man from the animals by

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101 Ibid., p. 125.

102 Ibid.

his consciousness of himself as a member of the species. As a species-being, Gattungswesen, man's productive life expresses the freedom and creativity of the entire species. When productive life is degraded to a means, conversely, it expresses the alienation of the worker from the species: "Alienated labour reverses the relationship, in that man because he is a self-conscious being makes his life activity, his being, only a means for his existence".[103]

The final result of the worker's alienation from the species is his alienation from other men, both workers and non-workers. Marx asks, if the product of labour does not belong to the worker, to whom does it belong? "Not the gods, nor nature, [Marx answers] but only man himself can be this alien power over men."[104] The worker creates the non-worker as the lord of production. Once again, Marx illustrates his point through an analogy with religion:

> Every self-alienation of man, from himself and from nature, appears in the relation which he postulates between other men and nature. Thus religious self-alienation is necessarily exemplified in the relation between laity and priest, or, since it is here a question of the spiritual world, between the laity and a mediator.[105]

Just as the laity creates the priest, the worker creates the capitalist over and against himself.

Having analyzed the four characteristics of alienated labour, namely the worker's alienation from nature, himself, the species, and from other men, Marx concludes that private property is not the

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[103] Ibid., p. 127.

[104] Ibid., p. 130.

[105] Ibid.

cause, but rather the result and means of alienated labour. While political economy assumes private property as the cause of alienated labour, Marx asserts the reverse is true:

> But the analysis of this concept shows that although private property appears to be the basis and cause of alienated labour, it is rather a consequence of the latter, just as the gods are fundamentally not the cause but the product of confusions of human reason. At a later stage, however, there is a reciprocal influence.[106]

Marx finishes this section, in other words, by saying it is alienated man who creates both the gods and private property.

(b) "Critique of Hegel's Dialectic and General Philosophy"

The so-entitled "Critique of Hegel's Dialectic and General Philosophy" forms the final section of the Third Manuscript. In it, Marx attempts the difficult task of clarifying his own relationship to Hegel's dialectic as well as to speculative philosophy. Perhaps because of the subject matter, Marx's ideas often seem obscure in this work. Even so, this essay is significant because it further develops the notion, broached in both the Kritik and the Einleitung, of Hegelian philosophy as the final transformation of theology.

As usual, Marx starts by attacking the Young Hegelians, especially Strauss and B. Bauer, for not having come to terms with the Hegelian dialectic. Only Feuerbach's works are exempted and

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106 Ibid., p. 131.

he is praised for his "serious and critical relation to Hegel's dialectic".[107] Marx elucidates Feuerbach's advance in the following three points:

> 1. to have shown that philosophy is nothing more than religion brought into thought and developed by thought, and that it is equally to be condemned as another form and mode of existence of human alienation;
> 2. to have founded genuine materialism and positive science by making the social relationship of "man to man" the basic principle of theory;
> 3. to have opposed to the negation of the negation which claims to be the absolute positive, a self-subsistent principle positively founded on itself.[108]

When Marx says, "philosophy is nothing more than religion brought into thought", he is referring, on one hand, to the inverted point of departure of both religion and Hegelian speculation: theology begins with God and philosophy with the Spirit. Thus, both ignore the real human subject, namely, real corporeal man in relation to nature. Following Feuerbach, Marx does not see nature and history as two distinct entities. Rather man is a part of nature. Marx conceives of man's relation to nature, however, quite differently than Feuerbach:

> But man is not merely a natural being; he is a human natural being. . . . Consequently, human objects are not natural objects as they present themselves directly, nor is human sense, as it is immediately and objectively given, human sensibility and human objectivity. Neither objective nor subjective nature is directly presented in a form adequate to the human being.[109]

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[107] Ibid., p. 197.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Ibid., p. 208.

For Marx, there is only an historical nature, that is to say, a nature subdued and recreated by man in his own image. To return to Hegel: since Hegel began with an abstraction, the dialectic is a divine process which ". . . man's abstract, pure, absolute being, as distinguished from himself, traverses".[110]

On the other hand, Marx declares with Feuerbach that the root of Hegel's false positivism can be found in the negation of negation:

> Hegel's dialectic begins from the infinite, the absolute and fixed abstraction, which is to say in ordinary language, from religion and theology. Secondly, he supersedes the infinite and posits the real, the perceptible, the finite and the particular; in other words, philosophy is posited as the supersession of religion and theology. Thirdly, he then supersedes the positive and re-establishes the abstraction, the infinite; in other words, the re-establishment of religion and theology.[111]

Thus, after recognizing religion as a product of self-alienation, self-conscious man confirms himself in religion qua religion. Hegel, in short, reaffirms illusory being - reaffirms alienated life as real human life. This prompts Marx to comment that the philosopher of religion is the truly religious man, since following Hegel, the philosophy of religion is the true existence of religion.

Nevertheless, Marx says Hegel's concept of "supersession"

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110 Ibid., p. 214.

111 van Leeuwen, p. 192.

does contain an insight into man's appropriation of the objective world through the supersession of its alien character. Marx clarifies his statement through an illustration: atheism as the abolition of God and communism as the abolition of private property result in practical humanism. According to Marx, atheism and communism are ". . . the first real emergence, the genuine actualization, of man's nature as something real".[112] Thus, Marx concludes, Hegel did grasp, although in an alienated form, ". . . man's self-estrangement, alienation of being, loss of objectivity and reality, as self-discovery, change of nature, objectification and realization".[113] That is, Hegel saw man's self-creation through labour.

VIII. The Holy Family or Critique of Critical Critique Against Bruno Bauer and Company

The Holy Family was the first fruit of Marx and Engels' long collaboration. It was written during the latter part of 1844 and published in February of 1845. In the foreword, Marx says the intent of Die heilige Familie is to enlighten the general public on the illusions of speculative philosophy. Actually, like The German Ideology, much of this book is an extended polemic

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[112] "Paris Manuscripts", p. 213.

[113] Ibid.

against the Young Hegelian School, represented in this work by the authors of the journal, Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung. Marx makes Bruno Bauer his chief antagonist in Die heilige Familie. He accuses Bauer of twisting Hegelian speculation into a theological caricature and he, therefore, subject Bauer's Critical Critique to Feuerbach's transformative method: ". . . Critical Criticism makes out of criticism, as a predicate and activity of man, a subject apart, criticism referring itself to itself and therefore Critical Criticism".[114] However, as mentioned earlier, it is important not to forget that Marx is attacking the stance Bauer took in 1844, the period of "pure criticism", and not Bauer's earlier position. Disenchanted by the failure of radicalism and perhaps also by the permanent loss of his university post, Bauer had increasingly lost hope for immediate political change in Germany. Thus, in 1844 with the launching of the Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung, Bauer did shift from a radical critique to a critique without immediate political significance. While many of Marx's arguments are peripheral to my specific enquiry, Die heilige Familie itself is an invaluable source for illustrating how Marx pictures the effect of religion upon man.

For Marx, it should be kept in mind, religion is primarily

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[114] Holy Family, pp. 31-32.

an alienation of man's consciousness. Religion is not the essential alienation of man, man's socio-economic alienation; it is a manifestation of that basic alienation on the level of consciousness. It is the idealisation of the divisions of society: "Religious alienation as such occurs only in the sphere of consciousness, in the inner life of man, but economic alienation is that of real life and its supersession, therefore, affects both aspects".[115] While religion is primarily false consciousness, religion also acts back upon man. For Marx, the way religion, particularly Christianity, acts back upon man is macabre.

In Die heilige Familie, Marx comments on Szeliga's review, published in No. VII of Allgemeine Literatur-Zeitung, of Eugène Sue's novel, Mystères de Paris. Marx relates how a robust tavern maid, Marie, comes under the fatal thrall of a priest. The priest, Marx begins, initiates Marie's conversion by distorting her naive love of nature into "religious fascination":

> For her, nature has already become a devout, christianized nature, debased to creation. The transparent sea of space is desecrated and turned into a dark symbol of stagnant eternity.[116]

Holding out the promise of baptism, the priest now transforms Marie into a sinner:

> The priest must soil her in her own eyes, he must trample underfoot her moral capacities and gifts to

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115 "Paris Manuscripts", p. 156.

116 Holy Family, p. 230.

> make her receptive to the supernatural grace he promises her, baptism.[117]

Marie's awareness of sin, in turn, affects her relations with other men. No longer does she see other men in relation to herself, but only in relation to God:

> She is already caught in religious hypocrisy which takes away from another man what he has deserved in respect of me in order to give it to God and which considers anything and everything human in man as alien to God and everything inhuman in him as really God's own.[118]

This last line repeats Marx's statement in the Einleitung about unearthing the inhumanity of society in the celestial realm of heaven. God, far from being superhuman, is found out as subhuman. Deluded by the priest, Marie enters a convent and gives herself entirely to God. She relinquishes intercourse with man for intercourse with God, changes worldly love into heavenly love, and trades earthly happiness for eternal bliss. However,

> [c]onvent life does not suit Marie's individuality - she dies. Christianity consoles her only in imagination, or rather her Christian consolation is precisely the annihilation of her real life and essence-her death.[119]

So ends the story of Marie, a tale which recounts how a robust tavern maid was transformed into a nun and from nun to corpse.

Marie's story is rather instructive for grasping Marx's views on the practical effects of religion. From this tale, it

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117 Ibid.

118 Ibid., p. 231.

119 Ibid., p. 234.

is obvious Marx wants religion abolished; it is not a matter of compromise with religion or purification of it. He describes faith as "coarse" and "repulsive" and argues religion debases and dehumanizes man.[120] Elsewhere in Die heilige Familie, to use a few more examples, Marx links Christian consciousness of sin with insanity[121] and reduces Christian sexuality to mere propagation.[122] In sum, for Marx, like Bauer, religion further mutilates human existence. Thus, his rejection of religion is absolute.

IX. The German Ideology

The German Ideology completes the project begun in Die heilige Familie to "debunk and discredit"[123] Young Hegelian philosophy and as such, it is the last of Marx's early works which directly pertains to our specific enquiry.[124] In Die Deutsche Ideologie, Marx emphatically rejects the Feuerbachian critique of religion. His rejection evolves out of his understanding of history, clearly developed in his first chapter entitled "Feuerbach". The bulk of the remainder of the book deals with Max Stirner's critique of communism. Nearly four hundred pages of bellicose prose are devoted to Stirner's book, Der Einzige und sein Eigentum. This, of course, creates a problem

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120 Ibid., p. 171.

121 Ibid., p. 245.

122 Ibid., p. 89.

123 German Ideology, p. 23.

124 The full text of Die Deutsche Ideologie was not printed until 1932.

in that much of this section is a closely reasoned critique of Stirner, rather than a systematic exposition of Marx's own thought. Moreover, references to religion are scattered throughout the book, and, therefore, I must piece together Marx's theory of ideology in the context of his discussion of history.

As early as March, 1843 in a letter to Arnold Ruge, Marx had doubts about the historical validity of Feuerbach's approach: "Feuerbach's aphorisms [Preliminary Theses on the Reform of Philosophy] only seem to be amiss in one point in that he refers too much to nature and not enough to politics".[125] Later, as I traced this theme through the Einleitung and his Thesen, I saw Marx repudiating the Feuerbachian "Man" as an abstraction. In the "Paris Manuscripts", furthermore, he went on to reject Feuerbachian "nature". Now, in Die Deutsche Ideologie, we see Marx attempting to completely disassociate himself from Feuerbach's thought. He complains that Feuerbach's materialism excludes history and, therefore, it is actually abstract and not real materialism.

> . . . [Feuerbach] merely substituted an abstract earth for an abstract heaven. The real critique of heaven had not been completed by Feuerbach at all; it had still to be accomplished, not by replacing heaven with earth, but by criticizing heaven in its earthly manifestations or,

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[125] Karl Marx, "Letter to Arnold Ruge", in Early Texts, p. 60.

> to put it the other way around, by criticizing the earth in its heavenly manifestations.[126]

Marx concludes once and for all the essence of religion is to be found in ". . . neither the 'essence of Man', nor in the predicates of God, but in the material world which any stage of religious development finds already in existence".[127] For example, following B. Bauer, Marx states the appearance of Christianity can be traced to the decomposition of the ancient world which eventually resulted in the vast concentration of wealth in the Roman world. Thus, because the early Christians were for the most part slaves, the ancient Christian was

> . . . satisfied with his imaginary heavenly property and his divine right to ownership. Instead of making the world the possession of the people, he proclaimed himself and his ragged fraternity to be 'God's own possession".[128]

Only when the secular authority appropriated Christianity, Marx goes on, ". . . could Christianity imagine itself to be the owner of the world".[129]

Thus, Marx once more insists that religion, like the rest of ideology, has no independent history. For Marx, the real basis of

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126 van Leeuwen, p. 186.

127 German Ideology, p. 168.

128 Ibid., p. 201.

129 Ibid., p. 202.

history is grounded in man's practical relation to nature in the actual production of life. After satisfying his basic material needs (food, clothing, and shelter) and acquiring the means or instruments of this satisfaction, man's first historical act, claims Marx in Die Ideologie, is the creation of new needs.

> Because there is no limit to the needs he can create, or to the means of satisfying them, man continually transcends himself. Through this transcendence he becomes more and more human. The production process then is at once man's self-expression and his self-creation.[130]

In other words, man creates himself through his own activity, that is, through both material and cultural production in history.

At this point in his discussion of the real versus ideal premises of history, Marx introduces the social factor into the production process. He sees a definite mode of cooperation or social stage (itself a productive force) that accompanies each particular mode of production or industrial stage. Initially, this mode of cooperation is the family; the family is the first social unit. In the act of procreation and then in the family, Marx finds, moreover, the beginnings of the division of labour. Real division of labour, however, is not accomplished until physical labour is separated from mental labour.

These then, according to Marx, are the four aspects of the primary historical relationships: the production of means of

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130 Dupré, p. 148.

subsistence, the creation of new needs, the family as the first social unit, and the division of labour stretching beyond the family with increased production. Marx refers to these four aspects of the real ground of history as "moments" to impress upon the Young Hegelians that these aspects are not four different temporal stages. These moments, on the contrary, ". . . have existed simultaneously since the dawn of history and the first men, and which still assert themselves in history today".[131]

Only now does Marx mention "consciousness". Consciousness, however, is not an independent factor like the other four premises of actual history. Language is practical consciousness and like language, consciousness arises out of social relations, out of the need for intercourse with other men. Consciousness is always a social product and it remains so despite the efforts of the Young Hegelians to make it the driving force of history. Consciousness, finally, is always consciousness of nature because man's relation to nature determines his social relations. Conversely, man's consciousness of himself as a social being confirms his active rather than passive relation to nature.

With the bifurcation of labour into physical and mental labour as exclusive spheres of activity, consciousness, Marx continues, does appear to gain a kind of independence vis-à-vis the world. In

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[131] German Ideology, p. 41.

other words, the division of labour engenders ideologists as the conceptualizers of the ruling class[es]. Marx includes philosophers, theologians, moralists, political theorists, and lawyers among others in the category of ideologists. In reality, Marx says, the task of the ideologist is to systematize the illusions of the ruling class. However, because the ideologist divorces nature from history, he falsely views his own work as both the motive force and the culmination of previous history. Thus Hegel, the speculative theologian, saw philosophy as the driving force of history and saw his own philosophy as the culmination of all previous philosophy. Marx concludes the ideologists invert reality and ". . . regard their ideology both as the creative force and as the aim of all social relations, whereas it is only an expression and symptom of these relations".[132]

The practical effect of ideology, Marx explains, is to legitimate the domination of the ruling class. Ideology accomplishes this end in two main ways. On one hand, the ideologists present the ruling interest as the common interest, as the norm of society. On the other hand, ideology serves as a supplement of social reality, as a compensation for the inhumanity of society. In the Middle Ages, to use one illustration, Christianity not only justified the feudal hierarchy by proclaiming it ordained by God,

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[132] Ibid., p. 461.

but also consoled the serfs for their degraded position within that hierarchy by promising them greater rewards in heaven.

It is true, Marx admits, that ideologies sometimes clash with one another. This is so, he explains, because of the nature of alienated labour, referred to in Die Ideologie as the division of labour. Writing two years earlier in the "Paris Manuscripts", Marx indicated the effect of alienated labour on the theoretical life of man:

> The nature of alienation implies that each sphere applies a different and contradictory norm, that morality does not apply the same norm as political economy, etc., because each of them is a particular alienation of man; each is concentrated upon a specific area of alienated activity and is itself alienated from the other.[133]

On this account, it is to be expected that ideologies will contradict one another. In the case of political economy versus morality, though, the norm of political economy will ultimately take preference over the norm of morality, because political economy satisfies real needs, while morality only soothes the conscience.

There is a second reason why ideologies come into conflict and this brings us to a more general consideration of the movement of history - a movement, according to Marx, which is both genetic and dialectical. In 1844, Marx saw history as genesis:

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133 "Paris Manuscripts", p. 173.

> And as everything natural must have its origin so man has his process of genesis, history, which is for him, however, a conscious process and thus one which is consciously self-transcending.[134]

Marx sees man owes his very physical existence, his individual origin, to man and not to any superterrestial being, since the coitus of two human beings has produced the human being. Just so, world history is the creation of man through human labour. Hence, for Marx, world history is the definitive proof of man's self-creation, proof of his own origins.[135]

History itself, Marx proceeds, is the process of the emergence of nature for man. So apprehended, "[h]istory . . . is a real part of natural history, or the development of nature into man".[136] In other words, society, at any given industrial stage, is the result of an intricate dialectic of human praxis: the productive forces create social relations which, in turn, shape the productive forces. At every stage in human history, there exists a definite mode of production which corresponds to particular relations of production and also a particular state of consciousness, particular ideologies. Simultaneously, demand, or the creation of new needs, in society begins to outgrow the capacity of the existing productive forces and results in the eventual

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134 Ibid., p. 208.

135 Ibid., p. 166.

136 Ibid., p. 164.

creation of new means of production.[137] When in the course of time, however, the new productive forces outgrow the relations of production, the old relations of production and with them the whole relations of society, including its ideologies, must break apart, must dissolve. Marx asks:

> [d]oes it require deep intuition to comprehend that man's ideas, views and conceptions, in one word, man's consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life?[138]

Accordingly, when the revolutionary bourgeoisie wrested power from the feudal nobility and clergy ". . . Christian ideas succumbed in the 18th century to rationalist ideas. . . ."[139] This argument repeats what was said in Chapter I that Marx thinks the bourgeoisie eliminated Christianity, a position explicable in the context of his dialectical understanding of history.

To conclude: while Marx's theory of ideology never reaches any great precision, certain things are clear. First, Marx constantly stresses that ideology has no independent history and is completely dependent upon the interests of the ruling class. This allows Marx to make the somewhat startling statement that the bourgeoisie did away with Christianity. Second, Marx equates ideology with false consciousness in a two-fold sense: an ideology is false consciousness because society is false, but also because

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[137] In the capitalist era, however, supply dominates demand, causing an anarchy of production.

[138] Manifesto, p. 72.

[139] Ibid., p. 73.

ideology legitimates the perversion of society. Third, and this follows from what just has been said, there will be no ideologies in the classless society. There will be no religion in the classless society.

X. Conclusion

From this detailed examination of Marx's somewhat scattered comments on religion throughout his writings from 1841-1846, it seems obvious his thought on the subject was neither systematic nor self-contained. This observation, however, in no way implies his position regarding religion was not well thought out and basically consistent. Quite the contrary, it would appear that he fully realized the import of his rejection of religion. These particular works, moreover, evidence the extent to which his critique of religion played an important part within the framework of his whole thought. The question of religion was not merely the pastime of a young man, but it structured the way in which he thought through the most basic questions. Even though he thought the theoretical critique of religion was finished, he did not think it was irrelevant. In the first place, he saw parallels in the secular sphere which could be explained by analogies with the religious sphere. Secondly, but more important, while the theoretical critique

was completed, ideology still persisted. Marx's final stance on religion was that its critique would not be completely accomplished until the world was righted.

IMPLICATIONS OF THIS WORK

Apart from the academic exercise of tracing a single theme through certain writings of a major thinker, this thesis is of contemporary interest to the "Christian-Marxist" dialogue. It is beyond the scope of the present study to enter into the debate itself. Such an undertaking would require a second preliminary study of how the modern Christians involved see themselves and their faith. For example, how much traditional theology do they see as wrong or open to reinterpretation? Or what is the proper relationship between faith and works in the technological society? Only when these kinds of questions have been answered could the debate proper begin. From my analysis of Marx's critique of religion, I can only point to some general questions on which the debate should focus and indicate the areas in which there is a danger of false accord.

Starting with his doctoral dissertation, there is no doubt Marx was a thorough-going, militant atheist. The fact that Marx did not recommend the extermination of Christians does not mitigate against the vehemence of his atheism. Unlike Feuerbach, Marx did not think religion could be humanized, since it, by definition, solely expressed the inhumanity of society. Therefore, if Christians and Marxists find their theoretical affinity in

Feuerbach, their alleged agreement is at least a deviation from Marx.

Perhaps of even greater significance for this particular discussion is the further point that Marx's atheism was not simply an accident of his own personality. Since he himself stated ". . . the criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism",[1] it is untenable to argue that he saw his critique of religion as peripheral to the rest of his system. For him, that critique was absolutely necessary and he drew heavily on Bruno Bauer for it. Unlike Bauer, though, Marx thought the critique of religion would atrophy unless it resulted in a radical critique of society. According to Marx, Bauer's error lay in over-estimating the impact his critique of religion would have on transforming society. In contrast, Marx thought only the transformation of society would complete the critique of religion. Often in "Christian-Marxist" dialogue, the question of Marx's atheism is bracketed in the expectation of finding grounds for agreement in the shared belief that society must be transformed. Christians, ironically, seem to take a position at this stage very similar to Bauer's. Of course, they start from the opposite assumption that Christianity is good, but they would assert with Bauer that Christianity properly understood

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[1] "Introduction", p. 43.

would lead to the transformation of society. For Bauer, significant change would result from the end of Christianity, while for the Christians, it would come from the application of Christianity. In spite of obvious differences, the Christians, like Bauer, do not seem to have assimilated Marx's description of the movement of history. Until they come to grips with the theory of ideology, they are as far removed from him as was Bauer. While it is important to look at Feuerbach's and Bauer's influence on Marx's critique of religion, for a proper understanding of Marx, it is equally crucial to see why he diverged from them.

In short, if the "Christian-Marxist" dialogue wants to maintain serious discussion, it must be willing to recognize grave difficulties with the man himself. Marx certainly saw himself as an atheist. He digested the theoretical critique of religion and produced polemics against theology, the Christian state, and the other forms of ideology. His writings are literally riddled with his critique of religion in such a consistent way that there is no doubt he reserved a definite place for atheism within his system. Therefore, those who desire to find a common theoretical basis for Christianity and Marxism must deflect Marx's own account. In order to do this, they must make an explicit methodological assumption, namely, that they are able to understand what Marx said or should have said better than he did. Specifically, they

must prove that Marx erred about the nature of religion and the centrality of atheism. In doing so, they disregard the cornerstone of Marx's entire theory of ideology. This approach raises the question of how much one can tamper with Marx's integrated system and still remain Marxist. It is possible Marx anticipated and rejected this very discussion with Christians when he wrote in the Manifesto of the Communist Party:

> Nothing is easier than to give Christian asceticism a Socialist tinge. Has not Christianity declaimed against private property, against marriage, against the State? Has it not preached in the place of these, charity and poverty, celibacy and mortification of the flesh, monastic life and Mother Church? Christian Socialism is but the holy water with which the priest consecrates the heart-burnings of the aristocrat.[2]

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[2] Manifesto, pp. 79-80.

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