

10 Hegel on religion and philosophy

This essay addresses some of the themes that modern scholarship has identified as central to an understanding of Hegel's thoughts on religion. For a variety of pedagogic reasons, which will become evident over the course of this essay, I have chosen to approach these themes historically and contextually rather than philosophically and abstractly. To that end, my discussion of Hegel's thoughts on religion focuses primarily on the religious, philosophical, and political circumstances that conditioned, and were conditioned by, his writings during his so-called Berlin period (1818–1831).¹

During these years – from his appointment to the prestigious chair in philosophy at the University of Berlin in 1818 until his death in 1831 – Hegel's philosophy came to public prominence.² Indeed, it was in Berlin that Hegel's philosophy became an ideological factor in public debate. As we shall see, that was especially true in the realm of religion, for from about 1821 on Hegel's views on Christianity in general and on Protestantism in particular were not only publicly debated but fiercely contested as well. Thus, Hegel's Berlin period provides an important context both for measuring the ideological impact his views on religion had on public consciousness and for determining the ways in which the public opposition to his views shaped his private as well as public pronouncements on religion.

To friend and foe alike, then, Hegel was someone to be ideologically reckoned with between 1818 and 1831. It is the religious views of that Hegel, the Hegel whom modern scholarship has made familiar to us as the philosopher of the Prussian state, that I have chosen to examine here.

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT

That Hegel was deeply interested in religious issues all his life is evident from even a cursory glance at just about any of his major writings. From the 1790s, through his years in Jena, Nuremberg, and Heidelberg (1801–1818), to his Berlin period, Hegel's published and unpublished writings (including his personal correspondence) testify to his abiding concern with the world's great religions in general and with the history of Christianity in particular.³ As a young man, the so-called "young Hegel" chose to write a life of Jesus as well as several other essays on Christian themes.⁴ And as letters to and from his friends during the 1790s indicate, Hegel saw himself and was regarded by others as a thinker whose main concern was to take up "religious concepts" in order to make them philosophically understandable.⁵ Similarly, during the Berlin years, Hegel continued to exhibit unflagging interest in the religious issues that had exercised him in the 1790s. Not for nothing did the always astute Karl Löwith identify Hegel as the "last Christian philosopher".⁶

If Hegel's writings manifest a life-long involvement with Christian themes, it was not until after his appointment to the chair in Berlin in 1818 that his ideas on what it meant to be a Christian in general and a Protestant in particular drew public attention.⁷ We know, of course, that with the publication of *The Philosophy of Right* in 1821, Hegel's political views became subject to public scrutiny. Often overlooked by scholars is the fact that Hegel began his lectures on the philosophy of religion in the same year. As it happened, these lectures proved to be, and perhaps were intended to be, controversial, for in substance they challenged the religious views then being expounded in lectures by the famous University of Berlin theologian F. Schleiermacher.⁸ Thus, whereas before 1821 Hegel's philosophy could be (and was) described as one "without a label,"⁹ after that date it entered the realm of public discourse – which is to say, it became an ideological factor in the religious and political controversies of the day.¹⁰ For that reason, it is quite impossible to make any *historical* sense of the importance of Hegel's views on religion without paying proper attention to the ideological context in which those views were developed and expressed.

It is regrettable but nonetheless true that twentieth-century scholarship's understanding of Hegel's religious views has never taken proper account of this context.¹¹ Consequently, most of the scholarship on Hegel's views of religion has been governed by themes that, while certainly pertinent to the ideological debates of the 1820s, do not accurately represent Hegel's position in those debates or his view of them. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say that modern scholarship has taken more heed of what Hegel's opponents said about his religious views than of what he himself wrote about religion.¹²

This uncritical acquiescence in the say-so of Hegel's opponents has fostered much confusion about him both as a thinker and as a public figure in Berlin during his years there. And nowhere is the confusion more evident than in the claim that Hegel was the philosopher of the reactionary Prussian government during these years.¹³ In this essay, I will avoid confusions of that sort by discussing Hegel's views on religion in their proper historical context.

II. THE SOURCES: HEGEL'S VIEWS ON RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY DURING THE BERLIN PERIOD

One of the reasons scholars have failed to develop a proper historical perspective on Hegel's religious views during the Berlin period is because Hegel published no books on religious subjects during those years. Yet, during his Berlin period Hegel pronounced himself on religious subjects repeatedly and in a variety of different sources.

Between 1821 and 1831 Hegel lectured four times on the philosophy of religion. At the same time, from 1822 on, he used the format of his lectures on the philosophy of history to develop an historical framework within which many of his most-important religious views were advanced (for example, the role of Protestantism in the modern world). These lectures, and especially the latter, were extremely popular within and without the university, circulating in notebook form among students and interested parties throughout the city.¹⁴ Hegel even received requests for copies of these notebooks from foreigners who wished to gain access to his thinking.¹⁵

In addition to these lectures, Hegel had several opportunities in Berlin to deliver public addresses in which he spoke to the religious

issues of his day. Thus, in his Berlin inaugural of 1818, he not only commended governmental authorities for “the moral and religious seriousness” with which they were seeking to put philosophy at the service of the reformation of all spheres of cultural and spiritual life in Prussia, but also offered some critical remarks about the religious teachings of those who, like Schleiermacher, mistakenly thought a theology of “feeling” expressed what was most dignified about religious life.¹⁶ Likewise, in 1830, in a speech Hegel gave in his capacity as rector of the university to commemorate the three hundredth anniversary of the Augsburg Confession, he expounded on why he dated the beginning of modernity from the Reformation rather than from the French Revolution.¹⁷

Furthermore, between 1827 and 1831 Hegel used the occasion of bringing out new editions of *The Encyclopedia* (in 1827 and 1830) and *The Logic* (1831) to castigate the religious views of Protestant extremists in Berlin.¹⁸ While positioning himself relative to theological rationalists on the one hand and to evangelicals on the other, Hegel made clear how his own “speculative philosophy” avoided the theological and socioethical pitfalls of the two extremes.¹⁹

From 1826 on, moreover, Hegel and his associates – particularly Gans in the law faculty and Daub and Marheinecke in the theological faculties of Heidelberg and Berlin – had at their disposal a journal, *The Yearbook for Scientific Criticism*, in which the theological and ethical implications of speculative philosophy were explicated.²⁰ It was also in this journal that Hegel defended himself against recurrent charges of atheism and panlogism, charges that intensified after 1827.²¹

Finally, and above all else, Hegel’s letters to friends and opponents of speculative philosophy during the Berlin period are spectacularly clear where Hegel thought he stood relative to the competing theological tendencies of his day. Indeed, it would not be too much to say that Hegel’s letters contain the most precise formulations that we possess of his understanding of the relationship between speculative philosophy and religion.²² What is more interesting still is that these letters are comprehensive in scope – which is to say, they often take full account of the exact theological points that are at issue between Hegel and his opponents. As such, the letters reflect Hegel’s self-consciousness about the position of speculative philosophy in the polarized religio-political context of Restoration Prussia.

III. SPECULATIVE PHILOSOPHY: THE POLITICS OF *BILDUNG* IN THE 1820S

If we look closely at the sources in which Hegel expressed himself on religious matters during the Berlin period, it becomes obvious that even before arriving in Berlin in 1818 Hegel had inklings that any attempt on his part to apply the principles of speculative philosophy to Protestant religious issues would provoke instant opposition from religiously active groups in Berlin – from orthodox Lutherans, from theologians of feeling such as Schleiermacher, and from the neo-pietists whose dogmatic approach to questions of Protestant orthodoxy had found a receptive and enthusiastic audience among important aristocratic groups in Berlin and throughout Prussia.²³ And insofar as these religious minded groups could number among their allies romantics, conservatives, and Friesian subjectivists in philosophy, Hegel expected opposition from them, too.²⁴

Yet, what worried Hegel in the early 1820s about the opposition of these Berlin “demagogues” was how much support they would receive from Prussian authorities.²⁵ In 1818, Hegel could be confident of Altenstein’s support.²⁶ After all, as minister of culture, Altenstein (with Hardenberg’s support) had arranged to bring Hegel to Berlin, where, it was thought, he would be an advocate of the principles of liberal reform that a key group in the Prussian bureaucracy was hoping would revitalize the Prussian state after the ravages of the Wars of Liberation.

But by 1821 a reactionary religio-political coalition of Protestants was forming around the figure of the crown prince, the future Frederick William IV of Prussia.²⁷ Over the next score of years, the crown prince proved to be highly sympathetic to the cause of Pietist-orthodoxy, with the result that as the decades of the ’20s unfolded Hegel increasingly realized how precarious were the prospects of speculative philosophy both in the capital city and in the university. Indeed, with only Altenstein to protect him, Hegel knew there would be risks involved in trying to push the religious agenda of speculative philosophy too far. Thus, as early as 1819, after some of his students had been arrested for supposedly subversive political activity, Hegel confessed to Niethammer, a long-time friend, that his influence in Berlin was quite limited – by which he meant that it was confined to the rather narrow academic world of university

teaching and noncontroversial faculty appointments. All the same, he confided to Niethammer that “as a professor I have only begun. Much still remains to be achieved for me and the Cause.”²⁸ To that end, Hegel began immediately to recruit and train followers for the cause of speculative philosophy. As we shall see, it is in the context of the pedagogic need to gain an institutional base and audience for speculative philosophy that Hegel’s views on religion must initially be understood.

IV. SPECULATIVE PHILOSOPHY: RELIGIOUS METAPHYSICS AND SCIENTIFIC METHOD

Once it is realized how circumscribed Hegel’s influence in Berlin was from 1818 on, it becomes easier to understand why speculative philosophy in the Hegelian mode became an academic “school” of thought more than anything else.²⁹ Even so, it would be wrong to assume that the pedagogic thrust of Hegel’s philosophy in the 1820s was merely a reflection of frustration and sublimated political ambitions. For Hegel’s decision to give speculative philosophy a pedagogic turn dates from well before his invitation to Berlin. Thus, in 1819, when Hegel mentioned the “cause” of his philosophy to Niethammer, he was referring to the role he had set for himself early in his teaching career – at a time, in fact, when he and Niethammer were collaborators of sorts in an ambitious educational reform effort in Bavaria.³⁰

In this regard, the thoughts Hegel developed between 1811 and 1816 on how to teach speculative philosophy to students in the Nuremberg Gymnasium (where he was employed as a teacher from 1808–1816) are especially revealing. And, for us, what makes these thoughts all the more important is the role religion (that is, Christian values in the key of liberal Protestant humanism) plays in them.

During these years – in his correspondence as well as in the prefaces he wrote for *The Logic* (1812) and *The Encyclopedia* (1817) – Hegel presented speculative philosophy as a “definite methodical procedure” for making “what is of substantive value” in a “spiritual” sense both “intelligible” and “communicable” in a pedagogic sense.³¹ Embarrassed, he said, by the then-current tendency of German thinkers to organize philosophy around feeling and fantasy,

Hegel offered speculative philosophy as a method for teaching students how to think.

Hegel's strategy for attaining this end was threefold.³² First, he recommended speculative philosophy as a "critical" method of thought. As an alternative to what he described as the "intensive" method of various philosophical subjectivists (such as Fries, F. Schlegel, and F. von Baader), Hegel proposed to use the critical method to raise philosophy to the level of science. Such an elevation, he argued, entailed two things: making philosophy "teachable," and giving it a regular structure with which to facilitate its teaching. Accordingly, Hegel associated speculative philosophy with a pedagogic procedure that militated against what in *The Encyclopedia* he called the "knight-errantry" of philosophical "willfulness," a willfulness that Hegel contended had led to "the mania" of "every-one [wanting] to have his own system" of philosophy.

Second, Hegel regarded the establishment of philosophy as science as a way of giving man back the dignity of a "philosophical consciousness."³⁴ As Hegel saw it, the upheavals of the French Revolution, which in his mind had disrupted things "in the realm of science no less than in the world of politics," had compromised philosophy, turning the discipline into little more than a forum for competing forms of philosophical subjectivism.³⁵ It was Hegel's view, moreover, that were philosophy to be rescued "from the cul-de-sac" into which it had been driven since 1789,³⁶ human dignity would have to be philosophically reborn within the world. Thus, from at least 1812 on, the aim of speculative philosophy was to instill in man a sense that the achievement of philosophical consciousness constituted a crucial step in the attainment of human dignity.

Finally, Hegel's pedagogic agenda emphasized that the aim of speculative philosophy was to remind men of the religious dimension of their nature.³⁷ For Hegel, grounding human nature in religion enabled him to show men that they were spiritual beings rather than "merely" natural ones.³⁸ As such beings, so went Hegel's argument, men could "consider and grasp" what was divine about themselves. And then, by rising "above the [petty] interests of the hour," they could "come to" themselves as selves, as "persons" who, according to Hegel, were now in a position to establish "the Kingdom of God" on earth. Since "man is spirit," Hegel declared, "he should and must deem himself worthy of the highest; he cannot think highly enough

of the greatness and power of his spirit." For that reason, Hegel concluded, "faith in the power of the spirit is the first condition of philosophizing."

What Hegel is suggesting here, I think, is something that he makes clear in very abstract language in the preface to the second edition of *The Logic* (1831). There, shortly before his death, Hegel argued that man comes to himself, becomes truly free, when he knows himself as his own concept – as a person, that is. According to Hegel, teaching men to recognize and grasp themselves in those terms was a long, slow cultural process – a process of *Bildung* whereby philosophy gradually enabled "the mind" or man to come into contact with his "soul," with the deepest purpose, the *telos*, of his being.³⁹ In Hegel's speculative system, therefore, man realizes himself as *Geist* – in the double sense of mind and soul – when philosophy persuades him of both his religious nature (or potential) and his religious destiny.

From that perspective, the "methodical procedure" that raises philosophy to the level of science also triggers for Hegel a process whereby man becomes increasingly conscious of his religious *telos*. Given this convergence of religious, scientific, and philosophical considerations in Hegel's thinking, it can hardly be surprising that as early as 1811 Hegel ridiculed Fries for having attempted to ground "logic" in "anthropology."⁴⁰ As Hegel never tired of arguing, logic had to be grounded in religion – in Christian anthropology – if proper account were to be made of the spiritual dimension of human nature.⁴¹ Only on those terms, he counseled, could the dignity of man be re-established in the post-Napoleonic world.

V. CHRISTIAN CONSCIOUSNESS: CONTENT AND FORM IN HEGEL'S PHILOSOPHY

Between 1811 and 1831, then, there is much evidence to show how and why Hegel proposed to run together religious and philosophical conceptions in his understanding of scientific procedure. He is perhaps clearest about all this in the preface he wrote for the second edition of *The Encyclopedia* that was issued in 1827. There, while discussing the religious dimension of speculative philosophy, Hegel took time to situate his religious thoughts relative to those of his rationalist and evangelical opponents.

What Hegel says in this preface is consistent with the religious convictions he had held all his life. He begins by defining religion as "a mode of consciousness" that seeks to establish the truth of the relationship between man and God.⁴² That truth, Hegel implied, had expressed itself differently at different moments in human history. Speculative philosophy, he then conjectured, articulated a form of that truth that was appropriate to the advanced consciousness of the modern world. Given this conviction, he castigated Protestant demagogues in Berlin for stigmatizing speculative philosophy simply because it expressed its view of traditional religious values in nontraditional philosophical language.

Having made this general point, Hegel turned to the real issue at hand: the growing belligerence and intolerance of evangelical Protestants to every form of religion that deviated from their own dogmatic certainties.⁴³ Since at least 1821 a varied coalition of such orthodox Protestants had attacked speculative philosophy as atheistic.⁴⁴ To these Protestants, speculative philosophy had sanctioned the usurpation of the rank of God by men.⁴⁵ Rising to the challenge of the "inane priests in Berlin," Hegel assured his readers that speculative philosophy had no intention of replacing either God with man, Christianity with atheism, or Lutheranism with speculative philosophy.⁴⁶

In amplifying this, Hegel claimed that "the substance" of the Christian religion and his philosophy were "the same." What the small-minded parsons had to understand, he continued, was that the truth of the relationship between man and God – the essence of religion, as it were – could now be expressed in two different "languages," which, while possessing the same "substantiality," assumed different cognitive forms in the modern world.

Elaborating still further, Hegel argued that one of these forms operated with the language of "feeling" and piety," and registered the deep need of mankind in general for religion. By contrast, the other language of religion – that of "scientific cognition" – manifested itself in speculative philosophy. As Hegel then explained, this language sought the "scientific ascertainment of [religious] truth." But because grasping this truth in this way involved "a labor which not all but only a few" could undertake, Hegel distinguished the one language from the other, implying, as he had written earlier, that the scientific language of speculative philosophy spoke to the "educated" con-

sciousness of his age, that of faith addressed the needs of the "ordinary consciousness" of all men at all times.⁴⁷ To that end, Hegel wished to make speculative philosophy integral to Christianity so that it could then *participate* in the "intelligent expansion" of the "contents" of "modern religiosity."⁴⁸ In this, like many Christians before him, some of whom were Fathers of the Church, Hegel aimed at making philosophy the agent for expanding Christian *pistis* into Christian *gnosis*.⁴⁹

While delineating this twofold conception of Christian cognition, Hegel criticized the evangelicals for having unnecessarily "contracted" the religious core of Christianity. By implying "that religion may well exist without philosophy," Hegel alleged, they had restricted Christianity to such a "narrow" sphere of existence that it enfeebled the spirit of man and militated against spiritually inspired efforts of self-transcendence.⁵⁰ In Hegel's view, such a religious attitude encouraged men to celebrate themselves as natural rather than spiritual beings. Propagation of speculative philosophy, Hegel confidently predicted, would prevent further development of that naturalizing and spiritually demeaning religious disposition.

Even though Hegel was under considerable pressure in the 1820s to bring speculative philosophy into line with the dogmas of Pietist-orthodoxy, it would be wrong to interpret the distinction he drew between the languages of faith and knowledge as anything other than a sincere expression of his personal religious convictions. Hegel, after all, articulated the same view of things in his personal correspondence of those years. For example, as early as 1822, in a letter in which he was responding to a request for an explanation of his religious views, Hegel explained the difference between religious and philosophical approaches to Christian truth in terms of a distinction between believing and knowing, respectively.⁵¹ Similarly, two years later, in a letter to F. von Baader, he explained the distinction in terms of different forms of cognition.⁵²

Hegel's public and private writings, therefore, make it clear that, although he distinguished between religion and philosophy, he meant for the distinction to promote rather than retard the expansion of Christian consciousness. The problem, of course, was that while Hegel posited speculative philosophy as the Christian-inspired synthesis of faith and knowledge, the synthesis itself could be viewed in alternative ways.⁵³

For example, Hegel's acceptance of feeling as a core element in religion could be viewed as an attempted reconciliation with either neo-pietism, Schleiermacher, or both at once. Alternatively, the progression from the language of religion to that of philosophy could be interpreted as a movement from one discrete stage of Christian consciousness to another. If this were the case, two very different interpretations of Hegel's synthesis were possible. On the one hand, philosophy could be said to be preserving faith by raising it to the level of knowledge. On the other hand, in raising faith to knowledge, the latter could be viewed as superseding the former. Finally, speculative philosophy could be seen as trying to steer a *via media* between the subjectivity of an anti-philosophical dogmatism and the sterile abstractions of theological rationalism.

Among these various options, Hegel's writings between 1827 and 1831 indicate a marked preference for the last alternative. For as his correspondence and preface to the third edition of *The Encyclopedia* (1830) reveal, Hegel wished to free Christianity from both the subjectivity and intolerance of dogmatic evangelicals and the rational "pretensions" of "liberal" theology.⁵⁴ Between these extremes, between the views of groups he associated with reactionary German and revolutionary French principles of thought, Hegel expected to find an audience for his own views.⁵⁵ His problem, of course, was that the audience for such views was rapidly vanishing. And it was vanishing precisely because of the religio-political polarization that Hegel's philosophy was designed to arrest.⁵⁶ Thus, however much credit Hegel deserves for realistically addressing his philosophy to the crisis of his age, his idealism prevented him from associating his philosophy with either of the groups at the antipode. Small wonder that his philosophy remained only "a school" of thought until well into the 1830s.

VI. ATHEISM AND EGOCENTRIC RELIGION

If the religious polarization among Protestants in the 1820s illuminates why Hegel drew a conceptual line between the content and the form of Christian thought, it also helps to place the question of Hegel's (alleged) atheism in proper context. For some time, of course, it has been conventional wisdom to explain the polarization of the 1820s in terms of a conflict between theists and atheists.⁵⁷

Just as conventional has been the equation scholars have drawn between these polarized religious groupings, on the one hand, and the emergence, respectively, of right and left political Hegelians, on the other.⁵⁸ But if the religious situation of the '20s is approached historically, it soon becomes obvious how little justice this overly simplistic view does to the complexities of the religious situation in Prussia during those years.

The matter of Hegel's atheism was a public issue throughout the '20s. More specifically, and as Hegel himself acknowledged, it was an issue raised by the "demagogues" in Berlin against speculative philosophy from about 1821 on.⁵⁹ As we have seen, Hegel had anticipated that Schleiermacher would oppose him were he to push the "cause" of speculative philosophy too far. Despite this expectation, Hegel seems to have made a point of challenging Fries and Schleiermacher on political and religious issues almost from the beginning of his years in Berlin.

The reaction to Hegel's provocations came early in 1821, when the king issued an edict that instructed Altenstein (who opposed it) to prohibit the teaching of speculative philosophy at the University of Berlin.⁶⁰ And this was only the beginning, for from about 1823 on a series of spokesmen (such as the neo-pietist Thorluck) registered their contempt for Hegel's thought on the grounds that it was atheistic.⁶¹ Unintimidated, Hegel insisted, in a 1826 letter to his harsh critic Thorluck, that "I am a Lutheran, and through philosophy have been at once completely confirmed in Lutheranism."⁶² Similarly, in the same year, when some Catholics complained to Altenstein about a discernible Protestant bias in Hegel's lectures, Hegel responded unapologetically: "I have . . . explained and expressed Luther's teaching as true, and as recognized by philosophy as true." Adding insult to injury, he then proclaimed he had done this in "the interest of science."⁶³

Of equal interest in this context is a letter Hegel's ally, the theologian K. Daub, wrote him in 1827.⁶⁴ In that letter, Daub differentiates "dogmatic theology" – of the sort enunciated by the neo-pietists – from what he proudly called "another theology" – the "fruit" that grew from applying the principles of speculative philosophy to Christian theology.⁶⁵ In his response to Daub's letter, Hegel concurred in the distinction and, while doing so, reminded Daub that the new preface for the second edition of *The Encyclope-*

dia (1827) – the preface in which we saw Hegel distinguish between the languages of faith and knowledge – made just this point.⁶⁶ Their mutual admiration notwithstanding, neither Daub's nor Hegel's distinctions appear to have appeased the opposition to speculative philosophy, which explains why Hegel continued to be dogged by the atheism charge until his death in 1831.

Students of the history of Christianity will find much that is familiar in the general outlines of the debate between dogmatic theology and speculative philosophy in the 1820s. For, as was noted earlier, Fathers of the Church such as Clement and Origen had developed views of the relationship between faith and knowledge that were quite similar to those later propounded by Hegel. In terms of the history of Christianity, therefore, Hegel's discussion of the relationship between religion and philosophy is anything but novel. Recognizing this, of course, does not entail impugning Hegel's originality as a thinker. But acknowledgment of the perennial character of Hegel's religious views does raise an important scholarly issue for us: what standards are scholars to use to determine whether Hegel was or was not an atheist in the 1820s?

There are several ways to answer this question. First, scholars who identify Hegel as an atheist can simply acquiesce in the claim of Hegel's Pietist-orthodox opponents that he was indeed an atheist. Needless to say, there are normative grounds both for making such a charge and for several generations of scholars to have endorsed it; but since the grounds for such acquiescence are so obviously normative, it has been difficult for scholars who ascribe to this view to make a compelling case for their position without recourse to special pleading.

A more-convincing way to portray Hegel as an atheist would be to proceed along the lines A. Nygren used in *Agape and Eros* to raise questions about the orthodoxy of all those Christian thinkers who, before Hegel, had sought to turn Christianity into an ethical religion (religion of *Sittlichkeit*, as it were).⁶⁷ As Nygren argues, Christians from the Alexandrian Fathers, through Pelagius, and on to the Christian Platonists of the Renaissance, had been convinced that the teachings of Jesus Christ turned on two assumptions: that following the Incarnation men were capable of living an ethical life, and that the measure of a Christian life hinged on men voluntarily accepting responsibility for living such a life among their fellows.⁶⁸ Against

this view, which he said derived from a Hellenistic scheme of eros salvation, Nygren insisted on viewing Christianity exclusively from a theistic perspective.⁶⁹

Although Nygren's intention in *Agape and Eros* was to affirm theism – theocentric religion – as the *normative* measure of Christian orthodoxy, it is ironic that his overall argument shows why it is *historically* inappropriate to discuss Hegel's religious views in a theism-versus-atheism conceptual framework.⁷⁰ For while discussing the pervasiveness of the Hellenistic scheme of salvation in Christian theology, Nygren makes it clear that what he calls "egocentric religion" was as much a part of the history of Christianity as "theocentric religion."⁷¹

According to Nygren, egocentric religion is not Christian because it is not theistic. Rather, for him, it is a pagan-inspired religious doctrine that had been concocted in Alexandria by Clement and Origen, among recognized Church Fathers, and by Plotinus, a pagan philosopher. Under the auspices of these Alexandrian thinkers, egocentric religion was given sophisticated theological form and then, through their various works, was passed on to posterity where it frequently assumed the form of Christian Neo-platonism. Since, therefore, Nygren detects a Hellenistic scheme of salvation in all forms of egocentric religion, he has no reservations about labeling as atheistic any Christian doctrine that appears to operate with that motif. Hence, his sustained diatribe against Christian Neo-platonism in whatever form it assumed in the history of Christianity.

Any number of scholars have recently drawn attention to the pervasiveness of Christian Neo-platonism in German religious thought after 1770.⁷² Thus, there are good reasons for associating Hegel's speculative philosophy with egocentric religious motifs in general and with Christian Neo-platonism in particular. (Not for nothing was Hegel's discussion of the relationship between faith and knowledge cast in the form of what Nygren calls the Alexandrian world-scheme.) By the same token, it is not hard to see how Nygren's conceptualization of the history of Christianity might be enlisted in the effort to portray Hegel as an atheistic thinker.⁷³

The problem with this approach, however, is that, like the previous one, it too is normative. Moreover, it asks us to purge Christian thought of many of the motifs that governed its development as a religious tradition in the West. As such, Nygren's approach forces

us to choose sides in a dispute in which normative rather than historical considerations have been used to set the terms of our choices.⁷⁴

By refusing the terms of choice, however, we can historicize the problem, can allow egocentric as well as theocentric religious motifs to exist as legitimate impulses in the history of Christian thought. Peter Brown has used this kind of historicizing approach in his magnificent discussion of the relationship between Pelagianism and Augustinianism in Christian thought.⁷⁵ The same procedure, I think, should be used to assess the dispute between Hegel and his orthodox critics in the 1820s. In Brown's terms, that would mean treating speculative philosophy as a legitimate tendency within the intellectual history of Protestantism rather than as an atheistic expression of an anti-Christian tendency in German philosophy.

VII. HEGEL AND PANLOGISM: CHRISTIANITY AND THE ACTIVISM AND PROGRESSIVISM OF OLD-LEFT HEGELIANISM

If the distinction between normative and historical approaches to problems in the intellectual history of Christianity raises methodological questions about evaluating Hegel as an atheist, it also helps us to differentiate between the groups of thinkers that John Toews had identified as old-left and new-left Hegelians.⁷⁶

The place to begin such an investigation is with the allegation that Hegel's philosophy was, at bottom, panlogist. Throughout the 1820s, Hegel was hounded by the claim that the application of speculative philosophy to matters of religion led to panlogism.⁷⁷ That is to say, Hegel was constantly criticized for having cut the core – literally, the heart – out of Christianity.⁷⁸ He did this, it was alleged, by creating a religio-philosophical system in which knowledge and the mind were given priority over faith and the heart. This, Hegel's critics charged, meant that he had forsaken the real world of Christian feeling for an abstract world of concepts that had been shaped in his own, rather than God's, image and likeness.⁷⁹ To this criticism, which in the history of Christianity has been invariably leveled at thinkers of "gnostic" persuasion, Hegel had a pat reply: by raising the truth of Christianity to the level of philosophical consciousness, and by putting Christian values in a more-teachable form, he had made that

truth and those values more, rather than less, accessible to Christians in the modern world.⁸⁰

More specifically, Hegel said – and this is quite clear in two letters he wrote to Edouard-Casimir Duboc in 1822 and 1823 – that he had set two religious tasks for speculative philosophy.⁸¹ First, and as has previously been noted, Hegel wished to present Christians with scientific proof that “the Idea in the highest sense [is] God.” To do that, he argued, God had to be conceptualized so that He was “in no way entangled in the finite.” In this form, Hegel conceded, God could be viewed as an abstract truth lacking in substance. Hegel observed, however, that what his concept of God lacked in the way of historical specificity it gained in the way of philosophical comprehensiveness. As such, he declared, philosophy was now free to discuss God as a logical concept rather than just a reflection of the way people at certain times and places chose to represent God to themselves.

And yet, despite the philosophical benefits Hegel saw in an abstract conception of God, it is highly instructive that, after distinguishing between God as concept and representation, he acknowledged that his concept of God was “one-sided.” As he proceeded to admit, that conception could indeed be construed as an expression of “abstract indifference” to life and to “the content of living, actual faith.” To correct this one-sidedness – that is, to demonstrate that his philosophy was not in the final analysis panlogist – Hegel introduced the second religious task of speculative philosophy: to show how Christian truth, after having been given conceptual form in speculative philosophy, had to then be made concrete for human beings in their everyday lives.⁸²

To clarify what he termed the all-important “progression from the abstract to the concrete,” Hegel made two points.⁸³ First, he noted that in speculative philosophy “the truth is not defined as stationary or immobile . . . but rather as movement, as life itself.” Second, he held that the truth of the Idea (or concept of God) would become concrete only if it were recognized and consciously grasped by human beings who then proceeded to make that truth the measure of their lives.⁸⁴ For speculative philosophy, in short, the truth of Christianity revealed itself in a complicated twofold process of development. Christian truth first had to be given abstract form – which is to say, believing had to be translated into knowing.⁸⁵ After this was achieved, speculative philosophy had to become the pedagogic agent

through which Christian knowledge became not only the conscious possession of human beings but also the guiding principle of action in their lives.⁸⁶ As Hegel argued in *The Philosophy of Religion*, believing, knowing, and doing were the cornerstones of Christianity.⁸⁷ That this trinity of concerns also governed the movement of speculative philosophy is hardly accidental.

Given what Hegel tells us about the way the truth of Christianity is formulated first into abstract and then into concrete terms, it is easy to see why he identified human history as the framework within which Christian truth progressively manifested itself to human beings.⁸⁸ Moreover, Hegel's conception of this process explains why he deemed it necessary for this truth to register itself in human self-consciousness – in man's increasingly sophisticated conception of his relationship to God and to the role freedom played in that relationship.⁸⁹

Hegel's decision to ground the religious interplay between God and man in history also explains why he chose to invest so much intellectual capital in the conceptual distinction between the representation and conception of God. In his scheme, of course, the former was time bound in a way the latter was not. On those terms, Hegel could argue that, while God had been variously represented at different moments in Christian history, none of the particular forms of representation had ever completely expressed the nature of man's relationship to God. To that end, he separated representation and conception and, in the process, underlined the fact that the Christian God was a God of historical becoming as well as a God of abstract philosophical being.⁹⁰

Hegel's careful explanation to Duboc of why speculative philosophy should not be viewed as panlogist is of the sort that can be found in Lessing's *Education of the Human Race*, in Kant's *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, and in the work of thinkers who had created the accommodationist tradition of Christian theology.⁹¹ As a time-honored tradition of Christian discourse, in which believing, knowing, and doing were identified as the governing principles, respectively, of three successive ages in the history of Christianity, Hegel's recourse to accommodationism had the effect of alleviating the doubts that some of his critics in the 1820s had had about his religious beliefs.⁹²

In 1829, for example, K. Windischmann, who had corresponded

with Hegel for years and who had early on publicly appreciated the connection between Lessing's *Education* and Hegel's philosophy, used the occasion of a letter to congratulate Hegel for having recently shown himself to be "so definitely Christian" in his thinking.⁹³ As it happened, Windischmann's remark about Hegel's Christianity was written with specific reference to a complimentary review Hegel had written in 1829 of a book by K. F. Goschel.⁹⁴ In Goschel's book, the aim of which was to reconcile speculative philosophy with orthodox piety, some attention had been given to the possibility of a panlogist reading of Hegel's philosophy. Like Goschel, Windischmann had also been worried about the prevalence of this tendency in his friend's philosophy.⁹⁵ Thus, when Hegel assured readers in the Goschel review that speculative philosophy was not panlogist in inspiration, Windischmann's worries were relieved as well.

More specifically, what particularly moved Windischmann to congratulate Hegel for being so definitely Christian was Hegel's assurance – the same assurance he had given Duboc several years earlier – that speculative philosophy intended to sanction the kind of Christian activism that aimed more at re-divinizing the world in an ethical sense than at escaping from it in an other-worldly theological sense.⁹⁶ In the 1820s, Windischmann had committed himself to – and written to Hegel about – a program of Christian activism in which Jesus Christ was not only "the Divine Actualizer of the Idea of eternal truth" but also the substantive inspiration for Christian progressivism.⁹⁷ Windischmann's 1829 letter indicates that he thought Hegel concurred in both those judgments.

Unlike the atheism charge, which distorts rather than clarifies our understanding of the relation between philosophy and religion in Hegel's thought, the panlogism issue allows us to penetrate deeply into the religious context of the late 1820s. For while someone like Windischmann could detect an implicit theory of Christian activism and Christian progressivism in Hegel's explanation of the "progression from the abstract to the concrete," some of Hegel's other followers were drawing very different conclusions from the same progression.

Two extraordinary letters written to Hegel in 1828 and 1829 by two of his students reveals what is at issue here very well. One of these letters was written by C. H. Weisse; the other, by L. Feuerbach. The former's letter I take to be representative of the concerns of old-

left Hegelianism,⁹⁸ that of the latter, which will be discussed in the next section of this essay, as representative of the outlook of new left Hegelianism.⁹⁹

Weisse's letter to Hegel in July 1829 was prompted by the latter's review of Goschel.¹⁰⁰ Referring to Hegel as "honored teacher," Weisse focused his attention on the panlogism issue.

In terms that pre-figure much of the ideological debate among the young Hegelians in the 1830s about the meaning of Hegel's philosophy, Weisse framed the panlogism theme in terms of a tension between Hegel's method and his system – in Weisse's words, between the "fundamental principle of [Hegel's] entire philosophy" (that is, what Weisse called the principle of "unlimited dialectical progress") and Hegel's "systematic teachings." The dialectics of the former, Weisse argued, held out the promise of an "endless progress in the deepening, enrichment, and perfection" of "the logical idea." According to him, that meant that there would be "new progress and new forms of the universal spirit beyond the form of science achieved" in Hegel's system. As Weisse saw it, however, the "logical idea," as it was expressed in Hegel's system, "definitely" excluded "such a progress of the world spirit." The reason for this, he thought, was that Hegel's elevation of philosophy to the level of science made it seem as if recognition of "the abstractly logical concept" was the "highest of all conceivable forms of spiritual activity." On those terms, Weisse felt, Hegel's "science of pure thought" was panlogist, for in that abstract form philosophy not only was closed off to the world of flesh-and-blood human beings but also seemed to exempt the world from further religious reform. In the reactionary context of the 1820s, Weisse obviously thought that was an unconscionable position for a progressively minded Christian to take.¹⁰¹

To give his plea for Christian activism and progressivism more of a personal touch, Weisse recalled a conversation he and Hegel had had a few years earlier on that very subject. Weisse reminded his teacher that on that occasion Hegel had agreed that once philosophy had been given "absolute logical formation" as science, its task was to then apply itself to life, to "domains of spiritual activity" other than science. On the basis of his recollection of that conversation, Weisse then advised Hegel that "I seek to interpret your system [dialectically] so that it does not . . . exclude the possibility of such progress." As he explained, "if the science of pure thought is truly

the unconditionally highest of all conceivable forms of spiritual activity, then the creation brought forth by such thought is the final goal of every development not only of the human but also of the divine spirit." Or to put it another way, Weisse thought he was rescuing Hegel's system from the charge of panlogism by using the principle of dialectical progression to shift the focus of speculative philosophy from questions of abstract "science" to those of ethical "life."¹⁰²

Weisse's interpretation of the activist implications of the relationship between system and method (or principle) in Hegel's thinking may be taken as an expression of Hegel's own understanding of the progression from the abstract to the concrete. Indeed, as we have seen, there is much in his writings as well as in the testimony of others that confirms the view that Hegel expected the gains of philosophy to be extended through the long, slow process of *Bildung* to "all spheres of life."¹⁰³

Evidence that this was in fact Hegel's view can be found in a letter written to him by K. Daub in April 1829. There Daub expressed dismay about insinuations Weisse had made in a recently published book about the panlogist tendency in Hegel's philosophy. As Daub interpreted it, Weisse's book contained a "great misunderstanding" of speculative philosophy because it implied that Hegel's philosophy discouraged ethical activism in the world.¹⁰⁴

Be that as it may, what is remarkable about Daub's letter to Hegel is that its defense of Hegel was self-consciously framed in terms of Weisse's own self-proclaimed dialectical critique of Hegel's system. As Clark Butler has shrewdly observed, Daub's letter "represents endorsement by a committed Hegelian of Weisse's belief in further progress of the world spirit."¹⁰⁵ On those grounds, then, and in light of Weisse's own recollection of Hegel's position on the matter, it is plausible to argue that Hegel and Daub both regarded the purely theoretical aspect of Hegel's work – his system – as a step in a larger process that would eventually entail the translation of scientific theory into the ethical practice of everyday life.

In 1829, then, various thinkers, all of whom were close to Hegel, sought to vitiate the charge of panlogism by emphasizing how the ultimate end of speculative philosophy was, in Weisse's words, to translate the "abstractly logical concept" into a "demand for an unbounded progress of the world spirit in general and of the histori-

cal spirit of man in particular."¹⁰⁶ That is to say, speculative philosophy as system stood to itself as method both as science stood to life and as theory stood to practice. On those terms, on the historical terms of the late 1820s, it is easy to understand in what sense Hegel and his students thought ethical activism and Christian progressivism were implicit in speculative philosophy. And insofar as speculative philosophy's program of *Bildung* was designed to encourage both developments, the distinction between Hegel's system and his method testifies to the activism and progressivism of his and his followers thought in the late 1820s. Or to adapt Toews's terms to our purposes here, Hegelianism seems to have evolved into old-left Hegelianism as it was forced to explain why it was not a panlogist system of thought.

VIII. HEGEL AND FEUERBACH: FROM RELIGION TO ANTHROPOLOGY

From the perspective of the debate about Hegel's panlogism, the pivotal historico-ideological issues that lie behind the emerging distinction between system and method in Hegel's thought become clear. Indeed, Weisse's interpretation of Hegel's philosophy shows that as the emphasis moves from system to method, the focus of speculative philosophy not only moves from the abstract to the concrete but begins to be ideologically associated with historically progressive Christian positions as well.

At this point, what is not exactly clear is how the philosophical discussion of "the progression from the abstract to the concrete" relates to particular aspects of Hegel's understanding of Christianity. In Windischmann and Weisse, men who were not timid about their Christian convictions, the progression is interpreted in a Christian key of endless striving for ethical perfectionism (for Nygren, such striving constitutes the stuff of egocentric religion).¹⁰⁷ And Hegel, especially in his capacity as a philosopher of *Sittlichkeit*, seems to have philosophically made provisions for that kind of striving too.¹⁰⁸

But in the late 1820s, as theocentric religion re-asserted itself in Germany under the auspices of Pietist-orthodoxy, Christianity was increasingly viewed by many as a reactionary rather than a progressive historical force. For thinkers who perceived the world this way, a new reference point for progressivism had to be found, one that

would not be compromised by any association with Christianity. That many of Hegel's students – Carove, Gans, and Heine – found such a reference point in the emancipatory principles of the French Revolution is the single most important reason why new-left Hegelianism needs to be separated from old-left Hegelianism.¹⁰⁹

To make sense of this crucial development in German intellectual history, we need to look closely at L. Feuerbach, especially at the monumentally important letter he wrote to Hegel in 1828 in which he proudly announced to his former teacher that he had just completed his doctoral thesis.¹¹⁰ For in that letter Feuerbach developed a perspective on Hegel's philosophy that led directly to the atheistic values of new-left Hegelianism – to what Nygren would call an "anthropocentric" conception of religion.¹¹¹

As is well known, Feuerbach had experienced a Hegelian conversion in the early 1820s. Indeed, during those years Feuerbach had studied under Hegel in Berlin and, apparently, had some social contact with his teacher outside the classroom. It is not surprising, therefore, that in 1828, just after completing his dissertation, Feuerbach wrote to Hegel in order to explain what that work, a copy of which accompanied the letter, was all about.

Feuerbach's letter begins by expressing "veneration" and "high esteem" for Hegel as a teacher.¹¹³ Describing himself as a "disciple," Feuerbach goes on to say that his dissertation was "executed in the spirit of [his] teacher" – by which Feuerbach meant his work breathed "a speculative spirit." Then, in what surely had to be a calculated attempt to distance himself from his teacher, Feuerbach says that what he had learned from Hegel had been rather freely assimilated. As Feuerbach proceeds to explain, what was "free" about this assimilation was that it aimed at giving real "living" rather than merely "formal" expression of Hegel's ideas.¹¹⁴ In that respect, Feuerbach says in an astonishing sentence, my philosophy "could be called the actualization and secularization of the *idea*, the *ensarkosis* or incarnation of the pure logos."¹¹⁵ Feuerbach, in short, proposed to translate the spirit of "abstract ideas" (in their "colorless purity," he bluntly and boldly said) into a "world-determining intuition" that would give rise in the "immediate" present to "a new period of world history."

As Feuerbach elaborates this view, it becomes evident that the relationship between student and teacher goes well beyond self-proclaimed discipleship. True, Feuerbach depicted himself as one

who would make the teachings of Hegel's "school" available to "humanity"; and, according to Feuerbach this entailed the "translation" of "a higher literary activity" (that is, Hegel's science of the concept) into an historical force – a "universal spirit" – that would realize itself "in actuality." When this translation was achieved, Feuerbach intimated, Hegel's notion of "the Idea" of "world spirit" would "burst the bounds of a single school [and] become a general world-historical and public intuition."¹¹⁶ In that context, Feuerbach saw his work as involving the "founding of . . . the Kingdom of the Idea" on earth rather than in the "heaven" of Hegel's abstract philosophy.¹¹⁷ Thus, from Feuerbach's perspective, teacher stood to pupil as theory stood to practice and as the science of the concept stood to the new philosophy of the living intuition.

Now insofar as the latter set of terms expressed the substance of the former, Feuerbach's understanding of the "progression from the abstract to the concrete" could be interpreted as Hegelianism in the activist key of old-left Hegelianism.¹¹⁸ By that measure, Feuerbach's reference to "the actualization and secularization of the idea" would have to be understood as the realization of Christian values on earth instead of in heaven. And, as Windischmann had argued, this commitment could be expressed in terms of "faith in [Jesus Christ] as the Divine Actualizer of the Idea of eternal truth."¹¹⁹ Through secularization of "the idea," in other words, the Kingdom of God would be established on earth at the same time as the Kingdom of the Idea, which had been manifest in Christ's ministry, became progressively more realized in human life. For Hegel and old-left Hegelians, then, secularization and actualization of the idea entailed Christianization of the world in a down-to-earth ethical sense of *Sittlichkeit*. "Secular life," as Hegel said in the lectures on the philosophy of history, "is the positive and definite embodiment of the Spiritual Kingdom . . . manifesting itself in outward existence."¹²⁰

The historical importance of Feuerbach's 1828 letter arises at precisely this point. For, despite its allusions to *logos ensarkosis* and the Incarnation, Feuerbach's letter gives the "secularization of the idea" argument a completely different turn, one that is signaled by Feuerbach's phrase "pure logos" and by his conception of the new philosophy as marking the emergence of a new age in history in which Christian values would be abolished from, rather than realized in, human consciousness.¹²¹ Indeed, as Feuerbach portrays it,

his philosophy is post-Christian. Conversely, he depicts Christianity, whether in its "orthodox" theocentric or "rationalistic" egoistic form, as an oppressive system of values that prevented humanity from realizing itself as the absolute. Because of this abridgement of human freedom, Feuerbach argued, Christianity had "to be driven from its tyrannical throne" so that "the idea" of humanity, man's true religion, would become the reference point for all discussions of divinity. When that shift of focus took place, when theology became anthropology, pure logos – rather than Christian logos – would become "actual and reign" on earth.

In this framework, Feuerbach goes on to say, Christianity could be conceived neither as "the perfect and absolute religion" nor as the culmination of history. Indeed, according to Feuerbach, Christianity was only an unhappy religious phase in the history of Western philosophy, a phase that Feuerbach's philosophy rather than Hegel's crypto-theology would bring to an end. Thus, instead of asking men to measure their spiritual progress against either Christianity's theistic conception of God or Hegel's Christian-inspired conception of the ideal self, Feuerbach urged men to ground his self-conception in the intuition he had of himself as a "sensuous" and "natural" being.¹²² By so doing, Feuerbach thought, the unnatural (because dualistic) distinction Hegel had established between the natural and spiritual dimensions of the human personality would be dissolved, with the result that man would then be in a position to engage in what Feuerbach called "a second creation," a creation in which the infinite potential of natural man rather than the spiritually oppressive principles of Christian theology would determine the scope and substance of human fulfillment.¹²³

We cannot, of course, discuss in great detail all that follows from Feuerbach's analysis of the negative role Christianity played in the development of Western philosophy. Yet, we can draw attention to the decisive issues that seem to divide Hegel and Feuerbach and, ultimately, old-left and new-left Hegelians.

First, Feuerbach obviously thought his free assimilation of Hegel's philosophy involved grounding the logic of Hegel's concept in human anthropology. As was indicated earlier, however, Hegel had vehemently argued against just this kind of reduction as early as 1811.¹²⁴ At that time, he called such reductionism "twaddle" and linked it with subjectivist philosophy.¹²⁵ Later, in *The Encyclopedia*,

Hegel added that this kind of reduction made religion appear to be little more than an anthropological projection.¹²⁶ Thus, even before Feuerbach's letter of 1828, Hegel was on record as having had committed himself to a view of religion that tried not to confuse the principles of Christian thought and action with those that Feuerbach singled out as characteristic of anthropocentric religion.

Second, Feuerbach's claim that he was preparing the way for Hegel's philosophy to become a world historical principle of human emancipation is belied by his divorce of Christianity from the new philosophy. As we have seen, the question of the relationship between Hegel's system and the principles of human emancipation arises when the logic of the concept is required to become the basis of human action. In Hegel's philosophy, this translation process – which is essentially pedagogic – never claimed to be producing a new religion. Rather, for Hegel, the whole point of this *Bildung* process was to cultivate and expand Christian consciousness and to promote the philosophical comprehension of the Christian religion. That is why in *The Encyclopedia* Hegel maintains that his philosophy reveals the truth of the Incarnation in the logical form of the concept.¹²⁷ Consequently, when that truth is translated back into the life of men through the progression from the abstract to the concrete, Christian values in an *axiological* sense are being offered to men as principles of life in a *teleological* sense.¹²⁸ On those terms, human emancipation involves an expansion of consciousness but not a change in mankind's understanding of the religious value of Christianity. And, as Feuerbach well understood, it is by way of the expansion of consciousness that Hegel meant to preserve Christian values in the modern world.¹²⁹

Although Feuerbach was certainly correct to interpret Hegel as a Christian philosopher, his own conception of a world-determining intuition has nothing to do with the values of Hegel or of old-left Hegelianism. Indeed, Feuerbach's "founding . . . of the Kingdom of the Idea" on earth involves not only a rejection of Christianity and Hegelianism but also a revolution in the values that govern religious consciousness in general. That is what is meant by calling Feuerbach a post-Christian thinker whose religion of humanity promised to usher in a new age of history.

There is, to be sure, a promise of human emancipation in Feuerbach's thought. For in his mind man's finite nature included the

infinite right of the human spirit to realize itself in whatever form it willed itself to be.¹³⁰ But by collapsing the difference between spirit and nature the way he did, Feuerbach made it possible for man in an anthropological sense to become his own creator in a religious sense. From Hegel's point of view, of course, such a conception of man entailed humanity's usurpation of the rank of God for itself; and from the beginning to the end of his life Hegel opposed that usurpation. Indeed, for Hegel as well as for many Christians before him, becoming god-like was one thing; becoming God quite another.¹³¹ That means, of course, that atheism – in the form of anthropocentric religion or a post-Christian philosophy of the future – was what divided Hegel and Feuerbach in 1828. But because Hegel was not Feuerbach does not mean he was an orthodox theist. Careful use of the concept of egocentric religion allows us to avoid slipping into that either/or situation.

Finally, Feuerbach's decision to draw a sharp line between Christianity and philosophy enabled him to historicize and de-socialize Christianity in general and Hegel's Protestantism in particular.¹³² To see how Feuerbach does this, we need only recall that in his 1828 letter to Hegel, Feuerbach had relegated Christianity to a second stage of history that lay between antiquity, on the one hand, and the emerging new age of history, on the other. The tripartite periodization of history that emerges here, of course, was a pervasive motif in the thought of French and German thinkers during the 1820s,¹³³ so it is not all unusual to find Feuerbach working with it. But the scheme was used very differently in French and German circles. In the work of Lessing, Kant, Schiller, and Hegel, and among the old-left Hegelians, the three-age scheme was meant to culminate in Protestant activism and in the realization of Christian values within the ethical life of Protestant communities.¹³⁴ On those terms, Hegel's commitment to *Sittlichkeit*, to the establishment of socio-religious community among men, expressed a desire to realize the Kingdom of God on earth in terms of the values of liberal Protestant humanism.

Throughout the 1820s, and especially in the lectures on the philosophy of history, Hegel reiterated this theme time and again, and each time he associated *Sittlichkeit* with Protestantism – the religion that, for him, had become the agent of Christian freedom in the modern world.¹³⁵ Hence, in his mind "the principle of Protestant-

ism" was simultaneously the key to human emancipation, to the Christianization of social life, and to the socialization of Protestantism.¹³⁶ It is indeed that trinity of religiously grounded socio-ethical concerns that informs the criticism of orthodox Lutheranism that Hegel advanced in the lectures on the philosophy of history.¹³⁷ As those lectures make perfectly clear, there can be no doubt either about the social dimension of Hegel's Christianity or about his desire to offer *Sittlichkeit* as a socio-Protestant alternative to the various kinds of anti-social subjectivism that he thought had pervaded the modern world since 1789.¹³⁸

Feuerbach surely knew this – surely knew that Hegel's conception of Protestantism contained a sharp criticism of the kind of anti-social Protestantism that characterized orthodox Lutheranism in the 1820s and in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But when Feuerbach historicized Christianity in his letter the way he did – making it the governing principle of the second stage of history in which anti-social egoism was alleged to be triumphant¹³⁹ – he made it impossible for liberal Protestant humanism's conception of *Sittlichkeit* to become an agent of emancipation and socio-religious recollectivation in the third age of history. Indeed, in Feuerbach's three-age view of history, which is modeled along the lines of an anti-Protestant conception of Christian history that had previously been developed in France among progressive as well as reactionary political groups, the social agenda of liberal Protestantism becomes indistinguishable from the anti-social agenda of Lutheran orthodoxy.

The ideological ramifications of Feuerbach's move here are of particular importance for German intellectual history in the nineteenth century. For in Feuerbach's scheme, which later finds more concrete and comprehensive expression in the work of the new-left Hegelians, liberal German Protestants are confronted with a self-destructive choice: either embrace orthodox theism (and compromise their liberal Protestant values) or opt for Feuerbach's (French-inspired) religion of the future (and abandon Christianity all together). As Feuerbach defined the terms of ideological debate, in other words, there was no middle ground between the two positions. Once the debate between reaction and revolution was defined on those grounds – once Christianity in general and Protestantism in particular were ideologically associated with egoism, with an anti-social conception of the self, and with reactionary institutions of political oppression – it was

relatively easy for thinkers such as Heine, Cieszkowski, Hess, Engels, and Ruge (after 1840) to represent the thought of Kant and Hegel as inimical to human emancipation.¹⁴⁰ To this very day that view has dominated modern scholarship's conception of the relationship between religion and philosophy in Hegel's thinking. The germ of that mistaken conception can be found in Feuerbach's letter and in the anti-Christian conception of secularization that governs much of that letter's argument.

IX. HEGEL: THOUGHT AND ACTION IN THE CONTEXT OF SECULARIZATION

From what has just been said, it should be obvious that Feuerbach's letter to Hegel in 1828 constitutes something of a watershed in German intellectual history, for on the level of ideas it reveals exactly at what points and over what issues an emerging new-left Hegelianism can be distinguished both from Hegel's position and from that of the old-left Hegelians.

What makes Feuerbach's radical departure from Hegel so difficult to see, of course, is his self-proclaimed discipleship and the Hegelian terminology he uses to advance his case for human emancipation.¹⁴¹ As was the case with Heine in the late 1820s, Feuerbach tended to use Hegel's concept of the "idea" to explain the emergence of "the people" as a political force in European history.¹⁴² Implicit in Feuerbach's mixing of German and French discourses, of course, was the view that German philosophical and French traditions of revolutionary discourse had found an ideological point of mediation in his work.¹⁴³ If we take Feuerbach at his word, therefore, it would appear that his "secularization of the Idea" involved no more (or less) than the translation of Hegel's theory of the idea into democratic political practice.¹⁴⁴ And since other students of Hegel (for example, some of the old-left Hegelians) were engaged at roughly the same time in a very similar translation process – namely, in drawing out of Hegel's system a principle of action that promised emancipation for those who read history in the key of "progress" – it is tempting to read Feuerbach in the key of "prophetic activism" that marks the thought of the movement that, following Toews, we have identified as old-left Hegelianism.¹⁴⁵

We have seen, however, that in Feuerbach's three-age scheme of history, the third age had nothing at all to do with the realization of

Christian values in history. To be sure, activism, progressivism, and human emancipation were signal features of Feuerbach's third age; but his conception of these interrelated processes was not informed by any consideration of Christian values – either transcendent or immanent. Rather, his conception of action was contentless – value free in a substantive sense.¹⁴⁶ That, to be sure, is why he was careful to use the phrase “pure logos” to characterize what would be emancipated if the idea were ever to become secularized.¹⁴⁷

This, of course, is what made Feuerbach's activism so radical, for in the name of emancipation Feuerbach proceeded to demand the peoples' participation in the processes that governed their lives. Thus, for Feuerbach, the “actualization and secularization of the Idea” entailed liberation from, rather than the realization of Christian values.¹⁴⁸

When Feuerbach began to operate in this conceptual framework, a framework in which secularization is anti-Christian rather than Christian in inspiration, his understanding of the thought/action problem becomes profoundly unHegelian. That is because in the final analysis, Feuerbach's notion of anthropological religion is governed by a procedural commitment in which the end of human action and the substance of human emancipation emerge out of the collective decision making process itself.¹⁴⁹ According to Toews, this is the starting point of the secular humanism of new-left Hegelianism.¹⁵⁰ It is also, as the writings of Heine, Feuerbach, Cieszkowski, Hess, and Ruge make clear, the point in time when the reference point for the context of “the Idea” shifts from a German religious to a French socio-political mode of discourse.¹⁵¹ The continued use of Hegelian terminology by these thinkers conceals this radical shift of focus, but the illusion of continuity between Hegel and old-left Hegelianism, on the one hand, and new-left Hegelianism, on the other hand cannot hide the fact that the substance of the “idea” is completely different in the two cases.¹⁵² There is, as it were, no substantive ideological continuity between the activism of the old-left Hegelians and that of the secular moralists.

There is, I think, a useful way to grasp more substantively what is at issue here. As was noted previously, C. Weisse had attempted to solicit support from Hegel for his own program of Christian progressivism by distinguishing between Hegel's system and his method. According to Weisse, the latter promised “unbound progress of the

world spirit" in all domains of life. As Toews has shown, moreover, many of Hegel's other students (such as Carove and Richter) interpreted Hegel this way in the early 1830s.

At some point in the 1830s, however, the terms the old-left Hegelians used to orient themselves on the issue of the relationship between system and method in Hegel's thinking underwent a very subtle change. How this came about can be seen in the work of K. Michelet, one of Hegel's most well known and informed students of those years.¹⁵³

As Michelet saw it, the main achievement of Hegel's philosophy had been to register on the level of "principle" – on the level of value, that is – the scientific and theoretical truth of Christianity. As early as 1831, Michelet saw himself using that principle as a reference point for criticizing institutions that either impeded or did not measure up to the liberal Protestant standards of value set by Hegel's philosophy. As Michelet noted later, one could expect Hegel's "system" to change as the scope of its various undertakings expanded from one cultural sphere of action to another; but the "principle" of Hegel's philosophy, so Michelet held, should never be changed. So, while using terms with which we are already familiar, Michelet sought, in his words, to translate "science" into "life" and, by so doing, to make what was real conform to what was deemed rational in Hegel's philosophy. Thus, in 1831, when Michelet wrote that he expected the "owl of Minerva" to give way to "the cockcrow that announces the dawn of a new day," he was seeking to promote an authentic Hegelian as well as old-left Hegelian program of action, one through which Christian values would be realized in human history.¹⁵⁴

Despite the difference of terminology between what constituted principle and system in Hegel's philosophy, Weisse and Michelet seem to have agreed that Hegel's philosophy and the Christian values it embraced had to be the point of departure for progressive and rational action in the modern world. In this respect, Hegel stood to old-left Hegelianism not only as theory stood to practice but also as Christianity as axiology stood to Christianity as teleology. That is how liberal Protestant humanists from Lessing to Hegel understood mankind's relationship to Jesus Christ; and, as Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of history make clear, that is how liberal Protestants interpreted their relationship to Luther. It is hardly a coincidence

that that is how the thinkers who formed the core of old-left Hegelians interpreted their relationship to Hegel. All indeed are participants in one long continuum of Christian discourse on how to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

By contrast, Feuerbach's conception of the relationship between theory and practice redefines action so that action – action that registered the self-creation process itself – precedes theory rather than follows from it. This explains, I think, why Feuerbach saw substantive values emerging from revolutionary action rather than from Hegel's theory. Like Michelet, Feuerbach saw such action as inaugurating a new day in the history of the world. But unlike Michelet, and like Heine, the cockcrow that announced the new day for Feuerbach was a radical French political one, not a reactionary German-Christian one.¹⁵⁵

X. PROTESTANTISM AS A POLITICAL IDEOLOGY: HEGEL AS A PHILOSOPHER OF THE PRUSSIAN STATE

An understanding of the religious context in which Hegel worked during his years in Berlin enables us to make much better sense of how liberal Protestant religious values informed his philosophy. Specifically, it allows us to appreciate how the crucial system/method and thought/action conceptual distinctions figured in his very Christian and liberal Protestant conception of what the "progression from the abstract to the concrete" entailed in a value sense for human beings. As Löwith has observed, Hegel's understanding of that progression makes him a philosopher whose conception of secularization was fully Christian in character. That is why Hegel is, for Löwith, a Christian philosopher before he is anything else.

In addition to all this, the religious context tells us a great deal about how Protestantism functioned as a political ideology in Prussia during Hegel's Berlin period. For a variety of historiographical reasons, I wish to conclude this essay with a brief discussion of Hegel's Protestantism and its relationship to the Prussian state.

As we have seen, by 1829 Hegel's religious views had been challenged from at least four different vantage points. Pietist-orthodoxy inveighed against Hegel's rationalism; the theological rationalists castigated him for the provisions his philosophy made for faith in religious matters; the group that we have identified as old-left He-

gelians urged him to declare himself more openly for Christian activism and progressivism; and Feuerbach broke with Hegel over the theological characteristics of speculative philosophy.

Between 1827 and 1831, we saw, Hegel responded in detail to this array of criticism and, while so doing, assumed the posture of an old-left Hegelian himself, a position, I would argue, that had been Hegel's since the 1790s when he became a liberal Protestant and a philosopher of *Sittlichkeit* at one and the same time.¹⁵⁶ In keeping with his liberal Protestant convictions, then, Hegel dismissed Pietist-orthodoxy for promoting a narrow, dogmatic, and anti-social form of Protestant religiosity; he derided theological rationalism for encouraging a "formal, abstract, [and] nerveless" approach to religion, an approach that made it impossible to organize Christian life around the principle of *Sittlichkeit*; and, as far as we know, he would have criticized Feuerbach for having reduced theology to anthropology.¹⁵⁷

Now from Hegel's perspective – and this is fully developed in the concluding sections of his lectures on the philosophy of history – these three religious positions had reactionary and revolutionary political correlates. Accordingly, Hegel thought Pietist-orthodoxy provided religious sanction for the throne-and-altar alliance around which the Prussian state had begun to organize itself in the 1820s. Conversely, he located theological rationalism and Feuerbach's brand of secular moralism (or atheism) in the ideological camp of those who took their ideological cues from the abstractions of the French Revolution.¹⁵⁸

Given this assessment of the situation, Hegel presented his own philosophy as the *via media* between the reactionary German and the revolutionary French political tendencies of his age.¹⁵⁹ And he saw things this way because to his mind what occupied the middle ground between the two political extremes was, as W. Jaeschke was well understood, the political principles of liberal Protestantism.¹⁶⁰ As we have noted, *Sittlichkeit* constitutes a core conviction in this kind of Protestantism. It is, to be sure, the religious value that explains why Hegel acquiesced neither in the anti-social individualism of Lutheran orthodoxy nor in the economic, social, and political atomism of the Enlightenment and French Revolution. Indeed, it is precisely because Hegel tried to preserve the cooperative nexus between divinity and humanity, religion and the state, Protestantism

and Prussian politics, in his religion of *Sittlichkeit*, that his philosophy was anathema to an orthodox critic such as K. E. Schubarth and to a radical critic such as Feuerbach in 1829.

And yet, because he refused either to accommodate himself to the throne-and-altar alliance or to associate himself ideologically with the revolutionary principles of 1789, his own view of the relationship between religion and politics was constantly misrepresented in public debate. To Schubarth, for example, there was little to choose between Hegel's position and that of someone like Feuerbach – both were atheists and, as such, were threats to the political stability of the Prussian state.¹⁶¹ To someone like K. F. F. Sietze, who in 1829 had tried to explain why Hegel was not an anti-Prussian thinker, Hegel's philosophy, especially his philosophy of history, recognized and perhaps even celebrated the Prussian state as the agent of Protestant values in the modern world.¹⁶² And to someone like Feuerbach, Hegel's reservations about the political trajectory of the French Revolution made him an apologist for the political status quo.¹⁶³

The upshot of this is that as early as 1829, Hegel's thought was being used as a religio-philosophical foil for advancing the political agenda of the revolutionary and reactionary forces of his day. In the context of the ever-shifting contours of that debate, it proved quite difficult for Hegel's contemporaries to grasp exactly where he stood on any number of issues. Hence the great confusion about his relationship to Prussia, a Protestant state which, from Hegel's liberal perspective, was on the verge of forsaking Protestantism.

There was, to be sure, a moment in 1838 when A. Ruge tried to explain to the readers of the *Hallische Jahrbucher* how Hegel's understanding of the relationship between Protestantism and Prussianism fit together.¹⁶⁴ At the time Ruge, who was the spokesman for the young Hegelian movement, regarded himself as a "Hegelian Christian" and as political liberal who would support the Prussian state as long as it pursued the political ends of liberal Protestant humanism. In this, I would argue, Ruge was very much an old-left Hegelian in 1838, an advocate of Hegel's religion of *Sittlichkeit*, as it were.¹⁶⁵

Ruge implied, however, that, if Prussian authorities chose to pursue an illiberal religio-political agenda, he would endeavor to create a Protestant political alternative to the throne-altar alliance. No more than Hegel, though, did Ruge find an audience for his political views. This explains why between 1838 and 1843 we see Ruge,

under the direct ideological influence of Cieszkowski, Feuerbach, and Hess, gradually abandoning the position of old-left Hegelianism for the political radicalism of new-left Hegelianism.

Given this political trajectory, it is hardly surprising that during this five-year period Ruge played a crucial role in blurring the ideological differences between orthodox and liberal Protestantism as well as between political liberals and reactionaries. Not coincidentally, as Ruge did this the inspiration of his thinking and the focus of his discourse became increasingly French. And, as that happened, Protestantism and Prussianism become increasingly associated in his mind with a retrograde religio-political movement that aimed at thwarting the realization of the democratic political principles of the French Revolution. And so it was that between 1838 and 1843, the religio-political debate in Prussia was once again defined in either/or terms: either reactionary German religio-political ones or revolutionary socio-political French ones.¹⁶⁶

For a complicated set of reasons, then, Ruge's development between 1838 and 1843 reflects the larger ideological shift in German intellectual history from old-left to new-left Hegelianism. Students of German intellectual history are just beginning to straighten out the role (or non-role) of Hegel's philosophy in that ideological movement. But the more we know about the religious context of the 1820s and about Hegel's position in it, the easier it will be to make progress in that vital research area.

NOTES

- 1 Some recent Hegel scholarship has made this sort of scholarly endeavor much easier to conduct. As my citations throughout reveal, I am deeply indebted to the work of C. Butler, P. Hodgson, and J. Toews for key aspects of what I have to say about Hegel during his Berlin period. After completing the text of this essay, I had the opportunity to read W. Jaeschke's *Reason in Religion* (henceforth *Reason*), trans. J. Steward and P. Hodgson (Berkeley, Calif: 1990). I was pleased to discover that several of the interpretations I advance here have been elaborated in Jaeschke's important book.
- 2 Throughout this essay, I take the view that Hegel's actual influence in Berlin – at least outside the small world of the university – has been greatly exaggerated. For example, to speak as K. Barth does in *Protestant Theology in the Nineteenth Century*, trans. B. Cozens and J. Bowden

- (London, 1972), 387, of "the age of Hegel" is to misrepresent the influence as well as staying power of his thought. Being the focus of an ideological debate is not the same as exercising influence.
- 3 As Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of religion reveal, the range of his interest in religion expanded and deepened as he grew older.
 - 4 On the religious thought of the young Hegel, see my *Hegel: Religion, Economics, and the Politics of Spirit, 1770–1807* (New York, 1987).
 - 5 See, for example, Hölderlin's letter to Hegel (11/26/1795) in *Hegel: The Letters* (henceforth *Letters*), trans. C. Butler and C. Seiler (Bloomington, Ind., 1984), 33–34.
 - 6 Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche* (henceforth *From Hegel*), trans. D. Green (Garden City, N.Y., 1964), 47.
 - 7 In his editorial comments on Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* (henceforth *Religion*), ed. P. Hodgson, (Berkeley, Calif., 1984), v. 1, 8 and 20, Hodgson downplays the public impact of all this. I do not quite understand that decision given the scope of the reaction against Hegel in the 1820s.
 - 8 Consult *ibid.*, pp. 4, 7, and 61, for P. Hodgson's editorial comments on Hegel's calculated move against Schleiermacher.
 - 9 *Letters*, p. 463.
 - 10 My sense of ideology here is simply that of contested thought. Such usage, I think, draws attention to the public nature of the debate in which Hegel was involved during his Berlin years.
 - 11 In addition to the literature cited in n. 1 above, I would like to acknowledge the important (and neglected) book of N. Lobkowicz: *Theory and Practice: History of a Concept from Aristotle to Marx* (London, 1967).
 - 12 A remarkable (and clever) example of this can be found in A. Kojève, "Hegel, Marx, and Christianity," *Interpretation*, (1970): 1, 1.
 - 13 Despite Toews's *Hegelianism* (New York, 1980), which confirmed in great detail views expressed earlier by S. Avineri in *Hegel's Political Philosophy*, ed. W. Kaufman (New York, 1970), 71–79, this mistaken claim still informs much that is written about Hegel and German idealism.
 - 14 In the *Letters*, such as p. 543, Hegel expressed concern about the circulation of these unauthorized notebooks. P. Hodgson (*Religion*, v. 1, p. 5) argues that Hegel did, however, find these notebooks useful when revising his lectures in the 1820s.
 - 15 See Hegel's letters to V. Cousin (7/1/1827 and 3/3/1828), *Letters*, pp. 640 and 665, respectively.
 - 16 The Berlin inaugural reiterates the theme of the 1816 Heidelberg inaugural. A translation of the latter can be found in Hegel's *Introduction to the Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. T. Knox and A. Miller (Oxford, 1895), 1–3. For the German original see *Sämtliche Werke*, ed.

- H. Glockner (Stuttgart, 1958), v. 17, 19–22). Translated excerpts from the former can be found in *Hegel's Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (henceforth *Encyclopedia*), trans., G. Mueller (New York, 1959), 57–61.
- 17 For a discussion of the contents of Hegel's lecture (6/25/1830), see J. Ritter, *Hegel and the French Revolution*, trans. R. Winfield (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), 183–191. For the Latin original see *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Glockner, v. 20, 532–44.
 - 18 There is an excellent commentary on, and excerpted translations from, the prefaces of the 1817, 1827, and 1830 editions of Hegel's *Encyclopedia* in W. Wallace's "Bibliographical Notice," *Hegel's Logic* (Oxford, 1975), xxxi–xliii (henceforth "Notice"). These prefaces can be found in *Werke*, v. 8, pp. 11–38. A translation of the preface to the second (1831) edition of *The Logic* can be found in Hegel's *Science of Logic*, trans. W. Johnston and L. Struthers (London, 1929), v. 1, 39–51. See *Werke*, v. 5, pp. 19–34.
 - 19 Modern scholarship, of course, has noted at least three divergent tendencies among the evangelical group: a neo-orthodox tendency under the leadership of E. Hengstenberg, a neo-pietist tendency under the leadership of A. Thorluck, and a theology of feeling movement that early on was associated with Schleiermacher. Toews, *Hegelianism*, p. 247, correctly identifies these tendencies as manifestations of theological anti-Hegelianism.
 - 20 Few, if any of these writings have been translated. For them, see Hegel, *Werke* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970), v. 11, 131–204. C. Butler's commentary, *Letters*, pp. 503ff, is perceptive and important to this issue.
 - 21 The year 1827 is an important date in the intellectual history of German Protestantism. For a full appreciation, see R. Bigler, *The Politics of German Protestantism* (henceforth *Protestantism*) (Berkeley, Calif., 1972), esp, 88ff.
 - 22 In this context, C. Butler's careful and informed commentary in *Letters* deserves to be commended. Read in conjunction with Jaeschke's *Reason*, esp. Chap. IV, Butler's work on the religious context of Hegel's thought gives us access to issues of great importance to the intellectual history of the 1820s. Jaeschke does not seem to have relied on Hegel's letters for much of the information he uses in his study.
 - 23 All of these groups have roots in the so-called "Awakening" (*Erweckungsbewegung*) of the 1810s. But as Toews, *Hegelianism*, and Bigler, *Protestantism*, point out, these groups begin to go their separate ways after 1817.
 - 24 The great legal scholar Savigny, for example, not only was a supporter of the neo-pietist movement (Toews, *Hegelianism*, p. 247) but also regarded Hegel's teachings as atheistic. See Savigny's letter of 1822 quoted in W. Brazill, *The Young Hegelians* (New Haven, Conn., 1970), 48.

- 25 Hegel, *Letters*, p. 467. Bigler, *Protestantism*, pp. 43ff, traces the origins of the *Demagogenverfolgen* back to 1819.
- 26 See *Letters*, p. 487, and Butler's comment, p. 441.
- 27 The importance of the crown prince in the establishment of a "throne-altar" alliance in Prussia in the 1820s has been noted by Bigler, *Protestantism*, pp. 81–84 and 137–38, as well as by many others.
- 28 Hegel to Niethammer (3/26/1819), *Letters*, p. 443.
- 29 Toews, *Hegelianism*, passim; and C. Butler, *Letters*, pp. 475ff, make the case for this quite well.
- 30 As H. S. Harris has shown in *Hegel's Development* (Oxford, 1972), xix–xxxi and 1–47, Hegel's commitment to educational reform, of the sort he would try to carry out with Niethammer later, dates from the 1790s. In *Letters*, p. 251, Hegel refers in an 1811 letter to "the cause" in the context of just this kind of educational reform.
- 31 For these quotations, see *Letters*, pp. 275–82 and 338–41.
- 32 Unless otherwise noted, all the quotations in this paragraph come from *ibid.*, pp. 339–41.
- 33 Hegel, quoted in Wallace, "Notice," p. xxxv; compare. *Werke*, v. 8, p. 12.
- 34 Hegel, quoted in Wallace, "Notice," p. xxxvi; cf. *Werke*, v. 8, p. 13.
- 35 Hegel, quoted in Wallace, "Notice,"; cf. Hegel's preface to the first edition (1812) of *The Logic* (*Werke*, v. 5, pp. 13–18. In both instances, Hegel offers the long, slow process of *Bildung* as a corrective to the impatience of subjective enthusiasm.
- 36 Hegel, "Heidelberg Inaugural," p. 2; compare *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Glockner, v. 17, p. 21.
- 37 Unless other wise noted, all the quotations in this paragraph come from the Knox and Miller translation, *Introduction to the Letters*, pp. 1–3.
- 38 Löwith, *From Hegel*, pp. 304–7 and 323–24, understands completely what is at issue in Hegel's separation of nature and spirit. Moreover, he quite correctly explains (pp. 15, 17, 33, 39) the separation in terms of Christian logos theology.
- 39 Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 45; compare pp. 40 and 44; *Werke*, v. 5, pp. 21–22.
- 40 Hegel, *Letters*, p. 257. As Löwith (*From Hegel*, p. 407n57) observes, the issue here is crucial to understanding Hegel's relationship to Feuerbach.
- 41 W. Wallace, "Notice," p. xlii, calls Hegel a "Christian philosopher." He does so because he understands the relationship between logic and religion in Hegel's thinking. Besides Löwith, Lobkowicz, *Theory and Practice*, p. 191, and Jaeschke, *Reason*, p. 419, also make this point.
- 42 Unless otherwise noted, the citations in this and the next four paragraphs come from the excerpted passages from this preface that can be found in Wallace, "Notice," pp. xxxvii–xl. Parallels to what Hegel says

- in the 1830 preface can be found throughout the 1820s in his lecture on the philosophy of religion.
- 43 As noted in n. 21 above, the ideological aggressiveness of the evangelicals intensified after 1827.
 - 44 In *Letters*, pp. 467 (to Creuzer; 5/1821) and 493 (to Duboc; 7/30/1822), Hegel offers this as an assessment of the contemporary situation.
 - 45 In the preface to the 1830 edition of *The Encyclopedia*, Hegel specifically contested this interpretation of his thinking. For the authors of some of these criticisms of Hegel, consult Jaeschke, *Reason*, pp. 357–73. esp. 358 and 368.
 - 46 Hegel, *Letters*, p. 663 (to his wife; 10/12/1827). Later V. Cousin, in his *Souvenirs d'Allemagne*, recalled that this was Hegel's stated position during their travels together in 1827. The full text of Cousin's recollection can be found in G. Nicolin. ed., *Hegel in Berichten seiner Zeitgenossen* (Homburg, 1970), 526–29). Butler provides an excerpt in *Letters*, pp. 663–64.
 - 47 See Hegel's 1824 letter to F. van Baader: *Letters*, p. 572 (1/19/1824). P. Hodgson (*Religion*, v. 1, p. 61) notes that this view was articulated in the 1821 manuscript of Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of religion.
 - 48 From at least Basil the Great on it was understood by many educated Christians that the teaching of Christian values by Christian gnostics was integral to the synergistic conception of Christian salvation.
 - 49 The Alexandrian Fathers, Clement and Origen, are the key figures here. On their relation to Hegel, see my *Hegel*, pp. 12–17.
 - 50 The nature versus spirit issue (n. 38 above) is important here, for it turns on important teased-out differences between transcendence as a form of self-conquest and as a form of self-expression.
 - 51 Hegel, *Letters*, p. 492 (to Duboc; 7/30/1822).
 - 52 *Ibid.*, p. 572 (to van Baader; 1/19/1824).
 - 53 Jaeschke, *Reason*, pp. 357–62, is most illuminating on this.
 - 54 The indictment of liberalism here, or of what Hegel (*Letters*, p. 544) calls the concept of "formal liberty," is consistent with the view he develops of French abstractionism in the lectures on the philosophy of history, which also date from these years.
 - 55 It is not insignificant that in the 1831 edition of the lectures on the philosophy of religion (see *Religion*, v. 1, pp. 451–60) Hegel grounds this kind of thinking in Catholicism.
 - 56 E. Voegelin, *From Enlightenment to Revolution* (Durham, N.C., 1975), 180, has some interesting observations to make on the context of this polarization.
 - 57 There is a fine paragraph on this in Löwith, *From Hegel*, p. 68.
 - 58 See, for instance, E. Kamenka, *The Philosophy of Ludwig Feuerbach*

- (London, 1970), p. 14. That this wisdom is incorrect has been ably demonstrated by Toews, *Hegelianism*, whose distinction between old-left Hegelians and new-left Hegelians is extremely important. More recently, Jaeschke, *Reason*, has developed an equally important distinction between right Hegelianism and speculative theism in the 1830s.
- 59 Hegel, *Letters*, p. 467 (draft to Creuzer; 5/1821).
- 60 C. Butler's account of this is useful and informed. See *Letters*, pp. 441 and 465.
- 61 Hodgson, *Religion*, v. 1, p. 8, and Jaeschke, *Reason*, pp. 362ff, discuss the situation. I discuss the pantheistic aspects of all this below n. 73.
- 62 Hegel, *Letters*, p. 520.
- 63 *Ibid.*, p. 531.
- 64 On Daub, consult Toews, *Hegelianism*, pp. 141ff, and Butler's commentary on him in *Letters*, pp. 512ff.
- 65 Daub, in *Letters*, p. 517.
- 66 Hegel, *ibid.*, pp. 518–19.
- 67 A. Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, trans. P. Watson, (New York, 1969).
- 68 I discuss much of this in my *Hegel*, pp. 12ff.
- 69 Jaeschke, *Reason*, pp. 365–73, makes an important distinction between naive and speculative theists.
- 70 The importance of this has been appreciated in *ibid.*, pp. 357–73.
- 71 Nygren, *Agape*, p. 45.
- 72 See M. H. Abrams's still remarkable *Natural Supernaturalism*, (New York, 1971), esp. 143–95.
- 73 As a general rule, Hegel's relationship to pantheism has not been adequately dealt with by modern scholarship. W. Jaeschke (*Reason*, pp. 362–63) offers the best brief discussion of the issue (it is brief because Jaeschke regards much of the matter as "trivial"). His claim is that the charge of pantheism against Hegel has two very different dimensions: one involves the charge that Hegel's philosophy leads to the "deification of everything"; the other that it sanctions the view that "God is not God without the world". Jaeschke, I think, correctly shows that the first charge – in effect, that Hegel was a Spinozist – is historically false. The second charge, I would argue, is also false, and on two grounds. First, it confuses Hegel's concept of God with his discussion of the role of God in religion. As Hegel makes clear, while the former exists independent of the world, the latter, which by definition entails a relationship between man and God, encompasses God on the one hand and man and the world on the other. Second, and this follows from the first point, Hegel's discussion of God's role in religion assumes the possibility of His "extension" into the world through revelation and education. That, of course, is precisely where accommodationism and synergism become relevant to

Hegel's thoughts on religion. On those terms, God indeed becomes dependent on the world. The question, then, is this: On what grounds is it appropriate to call Hegel a pantheist because he is an accommodationist? The question is all the more important because, as several students of the early history of Christianity have shown, much of the inspiration for accommodationism, especially among the Alexandrians, grew out of an opposition to Stoic pantheistic materialism. In *God in Patristic Thought*, for example, G. L. Prestige notes the early Christian distinction between logos-immanent and logos-expressed. As he explains, while the former is Stoic and pantheistic, the latter is, among other things, accommodationist and spiritualist. As I have detailed in my *Hegel*, much of Hegel's religious thinking derives from the latter tradition. Feuerbach knew that, yet he insisted on calling Hegel a pantheist. The result: a century and a half of confused scholarship on the issue. Were it not for Fred Beiser's criticisms of an earlier version of this essay, I would never have thought to address the pantheism issue this way.

- 74 Among Hegel scholars, R. Haym was surely one of the first to define the issue in either-or terms. See Löwith's discussion, *From Hegel*, pp. 56–57, of Haym's "ruthless historicization" of Hegel's thought. Yet, as I try to show below, it is Feuerbach who philosophically lays the foundation for this radical critique of Hegel.
- 75 P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley, Calif., 1969), esp. 345–55.
- 76 Toews develops the distinction in *Hegelianism*, p. 242. He says there that the hallmark of new-left Hegelianism is a "totally immanent" conception of human nature. I agree with that; but following N. Lobkowitz (*Theory and Practice*, pp. 183–91), I would add that this "radical immanentization" was eschatological in a lay social, rather than Christian theological, sense. This "lay eschatology," as F. Furet has argued in *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. E. Forster (Cambridge, 1981), 52–53, is the driving force behind much of the democratic politics of the post-revolutionary period in European history. My claim in this essay is that Feuerbach is the theorist both of new-left Hegelianism and of lay eschatology. What this means, in short, is that, while the circumference of what is immanent for old-left Hegelianism is defined by the Christian values and eschatological concerns of logos theology, no such connection exists for new-left Hegelianism. From the perspective of the young Hegel, that is the difference between a philosophy of "good" and "bad" infinity."
- 77 The best discussion of this issue can be found scattered through C. Butler's commentary in *Letters*. I am indebted to his scholarship for drawing the matter to my attention.
- 78 Note the quotations in Jaeschke, *Reason*, p. 358.

- 79 Ibid.
- 80 Ibid., pp. 358–59, and Lobkowicz, *Theory and Practice*, pp. 188–89. Anyone who has read Clement's theological writings will find all this quite familiar.
- 81 Unless otherwise noted, all the quotations in this and the next two paragraphs come from the *Letters*, pp. 491–94 and 498–500.
- 82 Much of the discussion in Jaeschke, *Reason*, Chap. IV, focuses on Hegel's contemporaries' misunderstanding of this. C. Butler, *Letters*, p. 538, is helpful on this, too.
- 83 That this issue needs to be understood in the context of Hegel's understanding of the absolute as both a logical and theological concept goes far to explain the complications that develop when Hegel's thought begins to be discussed in a thought-to-action sequence.
- 84 A parallel to what Hegel says to Duboc can be found in P. Hodgson's discussion of the relationship between concept and purpose in Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of religion. See *Religion*, v. 2, pp. 26, 44, and 49–50.
- 85 This, of course, is after the essence of the concept, its truth, has been revealed in Jesus Christ. Needless to say, this is precisely why Hegel, in *Encyclopedia*, pp. 283–84, says: "The revelation of the Absolute [i.e., Jesus as the incarnate logos] is not confined to religion, but can and must also be thought in the logical form of truth."
- 86 In my *Hegel*, pp. 43ff, I discuss the shift from knowing to doing in terms of the distinction between eschatology as axiology and eschatology as teleology. On these terms, it makes sense to speak both of Christian immanentization and of Hegel's philosophy as "immanent theology." But as we noted in n. 76 above, this would not be true of the lay eschatology of new-left Hegelianism.
- 87 Hegel, *Religion*, v. 1, p. 456.
- 88 A major theme in my discussion of the theology of the divine economy in *Hegel*, *passim*.
- 89 Consult the passages in n. 84 above.
- 90 The idea goes back to at least to Irenaeus.
- 91 Accommodationism is an important but sadly neglected and misunderstood discourse in the history of Christianity. K. Gründer, *Figur und Geschichte* (Freiburg, 1958), Chap. II, discusses the tradition. For a more-recent appraisal, see the always reliable A. Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton, 1986), 213–71. Also consult my *Hegel*, pp. 12–17.
- 92 Hegel operated with a three-age view of Christian history from very early on. There is a good discussion of this in Jaeschke, *Reason*, pp. 159–65. Even then – as I have shown in my book and as Jaeschke has appreciated

in his book – Hegel approached the third age of Christianity from the perspective of *Sittlichkeit*. Consult K. Löwith, *Meaning in History* (Chicago, 1949), 209–10, for how Schelling arranged the three ages of Christian history. As I show below, the designation of this third age – either as the fulfillment of Christianity in ethical practice or as the moment when Christianity is superseded as a value system – is crucial to the differences between Hegel and Feuerbach as well as between old-left and new-left Hegelians.

- 93 Windischmann, in *Letters*, p. 566.
- 94 Consult C. Butler's commentary, *Letters*, pp. 537ff.
- 95 Windischmann's worries are articulated in a letter to Hegel. See *Letters*, p. 566.
- 96 Jaeschke's observation (*Reason*, p. 351) that Hegel was not seeking "refuge in the concept" is apposite here. Cf. Löwith, *From Hegel*, p. 327.
- 97 Windischmann, *Letters*, p. 566.
- 98 Jaeschke, *Reason*, p. 363n13 and pp. 401ff, offers an extremely useful discussion of Weisse. In that connection, and in the context of the 1830s, he interprets Weisse as a "speculative theist." At the time of the 1829 letter, however, Weisse was (as Jaeschke notes, pp. 358 and 401) still "close" to Hegel.
- 99 As I shall argue, Feuerbach's break with Hegel is clearly articulated in the 1828 letter.
- 100 Unless otherwise noted, all the quotations in this and the next three paragraphs come from *Letters*, pp. 539–40.
- 101 Both Weisse's misreading of Hegel and what follows from it have been discussed by Jaeschke, *Reason*, pp. 402ff. Of decisive importance here is Jaeschke's claim (p. 410) that in Weisse's misreading of Hegel we can see how the profound differences between Hegel's Protestantism and that of his orthodox Lutheran opponents came to be obscured.
- 102 As I show below, these terms became crucial to the discussion of the progress from the absolute to the concrete in the debates of the 1830s.
- 103 See, for example, the Berlin inaugural of 1818.
- 104 Daub, quoted by C. Butler, *Letters*, pp. 540–41. The implication of the error is precisely what Jaeschke delineates in *Reason*, pp. 402ff.
- 105 Butler, *Letters*, p. 541.
- 106 The terms are Weisse's. See *Letters*, p. 540. For contrasting views as to whether these efforts were internal to Hegel's school or responses to external pressures on the school, see, respectively, Jaeschke, *Reason*, p. 353, and Toews, *Hegelianism*, p. 342.
- 107 I have a good deal to say about the eschatological dimension of this kind of "striving" in my *Hegel*, pp. 40–76.
- 108 On this reading, striving for *Sittlichkeit* becomes synonymous with

establishing the kingdom of God on earth. Or to put it another way, Hegel regards *Sittlichkeit* as the foundation of the third age of Christian history.

- 109 See n. 76 above.
- 110 Although this letter has drawn the attention of many scholars, only Jaeschke, *Reason*, pp. 384–85 and 396, strikes me as having interpreted it correctly. M. Wartofsky, *Feuerbach* (New York, 1977), 46–47, offers an uncritical reading of the letter.
- 111 Nygren, *Agape and Eros*, pp. 672ff. There Nygren correctly links this kind of religion with Feuerbach.
- 112 Toews, *Hegelianism*, pp. 175–99, presents the best discussion of Feuerbach's thinking in the 1820s.
- 113 Unless otherwise noted, all the quotations in this and the next four paragraphs come from this letter. See *Letters*, pp. 547–50.
- 114 Here Feuerbach misreads Hegel in the same way Weisse does (n. 101 above). The parallels between Feuerbach's and Weisse's views between 1828 and 1843 deserve scholarly attention, for both thinkers delegitimized Hegel with the same kind of relativizing conceptual move.
- 115 The sentence is astonishing because, as I show below, it speaks directly to the issue of what separates Hegel's concept of secularization from that of Feuerbach. For a wide-ranging account of the implications of these two conceptions of secularization, see H. Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. R. Wallace (Cambridge, Mass., 1983).
- 116 Feuerbach will use this language again in 1843 in his famous essay "Provisional Theses for the Reformation of Philosophy." A convenient translation can be found in L. Stepelevich, ed., *The Young Hegelians* (New York, 1983).
- 117 Moses Hess as well as Feuerbach will later use the heaven-versus-earth language to de-legitimize Hegel.
- 118 I show that this is not the case below. In addition, I was delighted to discover in Jaeschke, *Reason*, pp. 4–5, that he too regards Feuerbach's so-called "transformation" of Hegel as less of a transformation than a "replacement" of one system with another.
- 119 Windischmann, *Letters*, p. 566.
- 120 Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (New York, 1956), 442. Throughout Part IV Hegel reveals his penchant for viewing *Sittlichkeit* as the culmination of Christian history.
- 121 I take it here that Feuerbach's "pure logos" signals a break with logos theology in both its Christian and Hegelian forms. That is, it represents a break with a long tradition of "revelation-believing-rationalism" that starts with Philo and runs down through the ages to Lessing and Hegel.
- 122 In 1839, in his "Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy," Feuerbach

- urges a "return to nature" as the only way to salvation for modern man. Throughout this text, which is translated in L. Stepelevich (n. 116 above), Feuerbach opposes "sensuous being" to Hegel's "logical being."
- 123 This theme becomes important later when action rather than theory becomes the measure of life for many of the new-left Hegelians (for example, M. Hess and A. Cieszkowski).
- 124 See n. 40 above.
- 125 Hegel, *Letters*, p. 257
- 126 Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, p. 270.
- 127 *Ibid.*, pp. 281–84. A suggestive parallel to what Hegel says here can be found in the writings of Meister Eckhart. See Eckhart in *Library of Christian Classics*, v. 13, ed. R. Petry (Philadelphia, 1957), 197.
- 128 Hegel, *Encyclopedia*, p. 278. On the importance of the distinction between axiology and teleology in Christian thought, see my *Hegel*, pp. 40–57. My claim in this essay is that the axiology-teleology distinction enables us to conceptualize the famous thought-action problem in German thought with much more sophistication than has hitherto been the case.
- 129 See Feuerbach's often-quoted remark in "Provisional Theses" as to Protestants becoming "de jure Hegelians in order to be able to combat atheism." I quote from Feuerbach, *The Young Hegelians*, ed. Stepelevich, p. 167. Needless to say, Feuerbach's statement can be challenged on historical grounds.
- 130 *Ibid.*, p. 168.
- 131 I discuss the distinction in my *Hegel*, pp. 75, 170, and 279–80.
- 132 Although Feuerbach hints at this in his 1828 letter, it is not until 1839 that he develops a full argument for relativizing Hegel. See "Critique of Hegelian Philosophy" in *The Young Hegelians* (n. 129, above), pp. 97–9.
- 133 See M. Reeves and W. Gould, *Joachim of Fiore and the Myth of the Eternal Evangel in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1987), Chap. 2 and 3, for a recent discussion of the issue.
- 134 See notes 92 and 108 above.
- 135 Consult Jaeschke's interesting essay "Hegel's Last Year in Berlin" in *Hegel's Philosophy of Action*, ed. L. Stepelevich and D. Lamb (Atlantic Highlands, N.J., 1983), 31–48.
- 136 When Feuerbach relativizes Hegel, it is the social dimension of the latter's Protestantism that is obscured.
- 137 The best account of this triangular interplay can be found in Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, Part IV.
- 138 For Hegel's view in 1830, see the preface to the third edition of the *Encyclopedia*.
- 139 Although representing Protestantism as a form of anti-social egoism

can be found in the 1790s writings of J. de Maistre and Novalis, it was also a central motif of Saint-Simon's and Comte's writings in the early 1820s. It is from the latter, mediated through the writings of the Saint-Simonians in the late 1820s, that so many of the new-left Hegelians drew their inspiration.

- 140 See, for instance, Ruge's essays translated in *The Young Hegelians*, pp. 211–59.
- 141 As mentioned in n. 110 above, Wartofsky takes Feuerbach's claim of discipleship at face value. A. Cieszkowski was more candid, writing in 1838 that "we have described the transition [from thought to action] in Hegel's own terms and we have only altered the results thereof." See Cieszkowski in *The Young Hegelians*, p. 77.
- 142 See H. Heine, "English Fragments," in *The Works of Heinrich Heine*, trans. C. Leland (New York, 1906), v. 3, 439–40, where he claims that since the Revolution the people "sind selbst zur Idee geworden." Most of these fragments were written in 1828.
- 143 This is a common theme in the work of many new-left Hegelians.
- 144 The democratic implications of Feuerbach's philosophy (or anti-philosophy) are noted by Kamenka, *Feuerbach*, passim.
- 145 Michelet's comment (quoted in Löwith, *From Hegel*, p. 401n12), that "The goal of [Hegelian] history is the secularization of Christianity" is relevant here. For the "prophetic" activism argument, see Toews, *Hegelianism*, pp. 162–63 and 235–42.
- 146 This is precisely what Feuerbach means in 1843 when he says: the "essence" of a "human being" is "undetermined, but capable of infinite determinations." See Feuerbach, in *Young Hegelians*, p. 168. It is, of course, Feuerbach's cosmic sense of this lack of determination that makes him an atheist.
- 147 In *ibid.*, pp. 164–65, Feuerbach equates "French sensualism" with a revolutionary tradition that "believes in nothing other than its own self, . . . its essence." Moreover, he associates this "French disposition" of "unbelieving" with the "atheistic principle." What he is doing here is making democracy and atheism the respective political and religious pre-conditions of "pure logos." And since the idea of pure logos is "undetermined," it is quite wrong to speak of Feuerbach in particular and new-left Hegelianism in general as an immanent form of anything. As was T. Paine before him, Feuerbach is quite serious about the relationship between his philosophy and the idea of a "second creation."
- 148 M. Hess, "The Philosophy of Act" (1843), pp. 259, 267, and 269, speaks of the "power of negation" in precisely these terms. As he says (p. 251), "Activity is . . . self-creation, the law of which is perceived by spirit through its own act of self-creation." The Hess essay can be

- found in *Socialist Thought*, ed. A. Fried and R. Sanders (New York, 1964), 249–75.
- 149 Although Wartofsky (*Feuerbach*, p. 6) labels Feuerbach an “emergentist,” he errs (p. 10) in trying Feuerbach’s philosophy to some kind of “immanent dialectic.” As I have already insisted, a philosophy of self-creation cannot be said to be immanent theology without many qualifications.
- 150 Toews, *Hegelianism*, p. 242.
- 151 As I have noted in n. 76 above, the shift in values entails a shift in eschatology as well.
- 152 For all too long we have allowed the continuity argument to stand unchallenged. A fine example of it can be found in an 1841 essay by Hess, who at that time wrote of the young Hegelians that “the more they move from idealism to the praxis of the idea, the more they move towards the positive construction of the future.” See Hess, quoted in S. Avineri, *Moses Hess* (New York, 1985), 80–81.
- 153 Consult Toews, *Hegelianism*, pp. 230–33, for Michelet. We desperately need a modern study of him.
- 154 A. Liebich, *Between Ideology and Utopia* (London, 1979), 28–31 and 50–54, is very clear on Michelet’s attitude toward Hegel. Although Liebich calls Michelet an old Hegelian (rather than an old-left Hegelian), it is clear from Liebich’s remarks that in his view Michelet stands to his pupil Cieszkowski as I have positioned Hegel relative to Feuerbach.
- 155 See Heine’s 1831 essay “Introduction to Kahldorf” in *The Romantic School and Other Essays*, ed. J. Hermand and R. Holub (New York, 1985), 245.
- 156 For this argument, see my *Hegel*, passim.
- 157 The themes in this paragraph are specifically addressed in the preface to the 1830 edition of the *Encyclopedia*. According to student notebooks, Hegel voiced the same concern in his discussion of the relationship between religion and the state in his 1831 lectures on the philosophy of religion. See Hegel, *Religion*, v. 1, pp. 451–60, esp. 454.
- 158 The common element in all this is Hegel’s objections to “one-sidedness” of whatever subjective sort.
- 159 Of the utmost importance is the fact that as late as 1831, Hegel insisted on equating the two political extremes, respectively, with retrograde Protestant and Catholic forms of thought. See *Religion*, v. 1, pp. 454–56.
- 160 See n. 135 above.
- 161 Schubarth is discussed briefly by C. Butler, *Letters*, pp. 523–25.
- 162 For Sietze, consult Toews, *Hegelianism*, pp. 86 and 120–21, as well as Ritter, *Hegel and the French Revolution*, pp. 93 and 98.

- 163 See n. 132 above. Heine was making this claim publicly as early as 1832.
- 164 Consult Toews, *Hegelianism*, Chap. 7, for particulars.
- 165 Ruge in 1841 uses the phrase “die Religion der Sittlichkeit” to characterize Hegel’s concept of religion.
- 166 Jaeschke, *Reason*, pp. 375–81, discusses the either-or context for the religio-political developments of the years 1835–38.