



BRILL

# Young Marx's Treatise on Christian Art and the *Bonn Notebooks*

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## Abstract

There are episodes in Marx's life that go unnoticed or that are considered insignificant in Marxian scholarship. A case in point is that Marx wrote a treatise on Christian art between 1841 and 1842 and a group of excerpts (the *Bonn Notebooks*) on the history of religious art that resulted from it. The treatise and the accompanying notebooks are either completely absent from Marx biographies and studies on young Marx or they are mentioned only in passing; if the notebooks are considered at all, one portion is usually singled out while the rest is effectively ignored. The present piece traces Marx's motives for occupying himself with religious art as well as his interests, shifting from Christian, Greek and Egyptian arts to fetishism and idolatry. This study intends to highlight that young Marx was more involved in questions concerning the political culture of aesthetics than we usually think. The *Bonn Notebooks* provide access to a more vivid image of Marx in this regard than previous scholarship has suggested.

## Keywords

young Marx – Young Hegelianism – *Bonn Notebooks* – Marxist aesthetics – fetishism

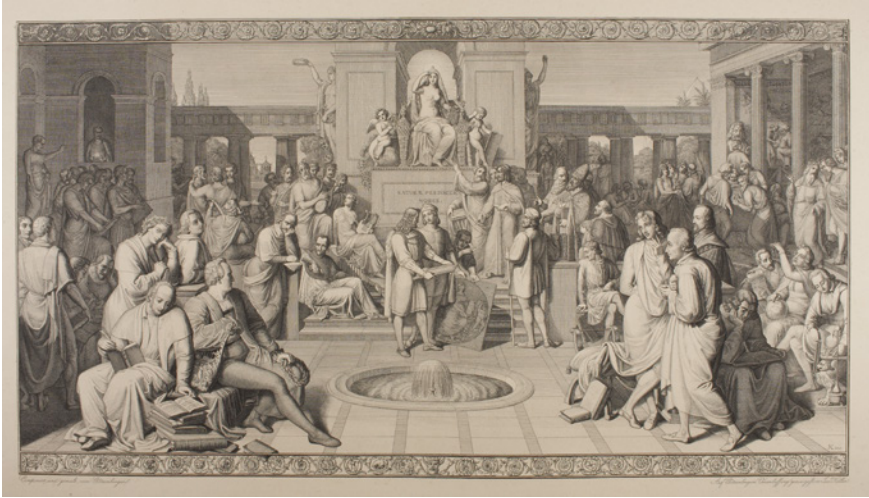


FIGURE 1 *Philosophie* by Jakob Götzenberger; engraving by Joseph von Keller  
 PHOTOGRAPHER: HELLE NANNY BRENDSTRUP; THE ARCHIVE OF  
 THORVALDSEN MUSEUM, COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

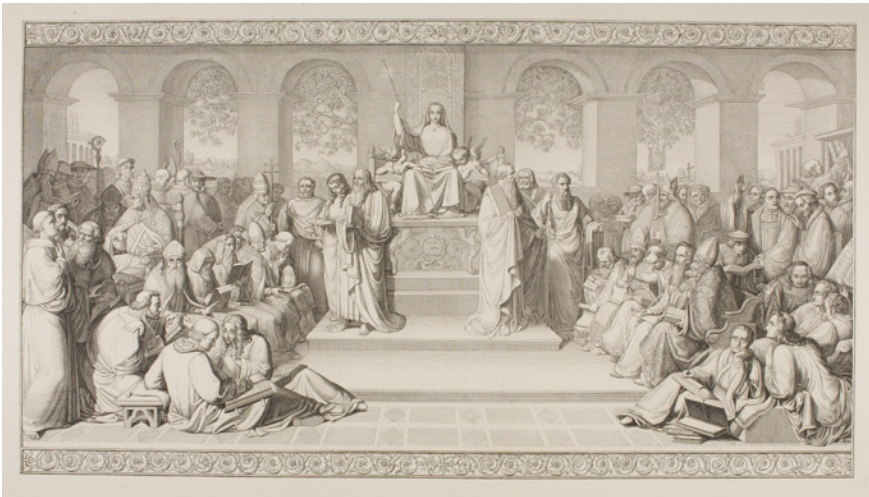


FIGURE 2 *Theologie* by Jakob Götzenberger; engraving by Joseph von Keller  
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other 'sins' he may have committed. As part of Bauer's rhetorical strategy, this fabricated binary is probably related to his attempt to create a fully concentrated, hostile image of Hegel. In the Old Testament, Satan appears as Yahweh's angelic servant and hence does not necessarily have a negative connotation. By opposing him to the Jewish religion, Bauer could ensure that Hegel is not only not Semitic but also an anti-Semitic demon. Cf. Bauer 1841, pp. 107–13.