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Marx's 'Bonn Notebooks' in Context

Reconsidering the Relationship between Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx between 1839 and 1842

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Abstract

The following is a critical reconstruction of the collaboration between Bauer and Marx between 1839 and 1842. The turbulences in the period in question reveal themselves in Marx's thought as well as in his relationship with Bruno Bauer. Correspondingly, Marx's detours, false paths, dead ends and abandoned work are therefore made the focus of this study. The ambivalent initial relations between the two of them, which both made their collaboration possible and hindered it, clearly go back further than 1841, when Bauer was not yet an atheist and was still a proponent of church doctrine. This was the Bruno Bauer that Marx had come to know in the Doctor's Club. We then meet Bauer the atheist at the end of 1839 or perhaps the beginning of 1840, as he was planning a comprehensive attack on orthodox theology and wanted Marx to fight on his side. This attack continued in Bauer's *Trumpet* and in *Hegel's Doctrine*.

Keywords

Bonn Notebooks – Bruno Bauer – young Marx – fetishism – idolatry – Young Hegelians

In¹ November 1837 the young Marx wrote to his father that he had 'made a habit of the practice of excerpting passages from out of all the books that I read [...]

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and at the same time scribbled down my own reflections.² This habit was not just a relic of his student years: it is something he retained over his entire life. It was clear to David Riazanov, the editor of the MEGA¹, that Marx's notebooks of excerpts were 'a very important source for the study of Marxism on the whole and for the critical history of individual works by Marx in particular'.³ Indeed, they form, as Richard Sperl writes, the 'key' to Marx's 'intellectual workshop' and function as a 'basis of sources' that provides deep insight into the phases of his work, research methods and orientation towards the subject of study.⁴ They testify to the way in which Marx learned his subjects of study and concisely summarised theoretical problems in order to marshal the necessary material before his own thinking had ripened. 'Marx was a passionate reader', as Riazanov noted, 'not only in the sense that he read an enormous amount, but also in the sense that he read in an unusually intense and impulsive way. This impulsiveness is reflected in his constant underlining, margin markings, exclamation and question marks and marginal notes on the one hand, and, on the other hand, in the habit he retained his whole life of always making excerpts'.⁵

This also applies to the period of 1841–2, after the young Marx had completed his doctoral thesis and was working with his friend and philosophical fellow-traveller Bruno Bauer on an atheistic philosophy of religion. Marx's 'Bonn Notebooks'⁶ are closely linked with this shared endeavour. In early 1841 Marx and Bauer had initially wanted to found an atheistic journal, as they considered the *Hallische Jahrbücher* published by Arnold Ruge to be insufficiently radical in its critique of religion.⁷ This project, however, was abandoned.⁸ Instead, they came up with the idea of developing the atheistic potential and revolutionary character of Hegel's philosophy and writing a book together on the subject. Bauer's anonymous text *Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts über Hegel den Atheisten und Antichristen. Ein Ultimatum* (or *Trumpet of the Last Judgement*), which appeared in November 1841, is a product of this

improvement, and Zachary Murphy King for his meticulous translation. Another draft of this paper (forthcoming in *Marx-Engels-Forschung. Neue Folge*, 2021), presented at the colloquium *Between Marx's and Engels's 200th Birthdays* in Berlin in November 2019, was awarded the 2019 David Riazanov Prize.

2 Marx 1975e, p. 15; Marx 2006, p. 77.

3 Rjazanov 1929, p. xvii.

4 Sperl 2004, pp. 70–1.

5 Rjazanov 1929, p. xvii.

6 Ibid.

7 Bauer 1975b, p. 353; Bauer 1975a, p. 358; Ruge 2010a, p. 852.

8 Bauer and Bauer 1844, p. 160.

collaboration.⁹ In December 1841,¹⁰ the *Trumpet* was banned and a second part of the *Trumpet* planned for 1842 appeared in May of that year under the title *Hegel's Lehre von der Religion und Kunst von dem Standpunkte des Glaubens aus beurtheilt* (*Hegel's Doctrine of Religion and Art Judged from the Standpoint of Faith*).¹¹

For this second part, Marx wanted to write a treatise on religious art. The correspondence between Bauer, Ruge and Marx shows that Marx was already working on his section in December 1841.¹² When the publication of *Hegel's Doctrine* became uncertain due to the banning of the *Trumpet*, Marx planned to publish his treatise on his own in Ruge's journal *Anekdotia*.¹³ Within a few weeks, however, he found himself forced to rework his treatise entirely.¹⁴ A short time later he reported to Ruge that 'the work has steadily grown into almost book-length dimensions' and that he had 'been drawn into all kinds of investigations' that 'will still take a rather long time'.¹⁵ This planned work was never finished. In May 1842, Bauer's *Hegel's Doctrine* appeared without Marx's contribution.¹⁶

9 Jung 2010, p. 886. It a matter of debate whether the authorship of the *Trumpet* belongs to Bauer alone or partially to Marx as well. It has been said, for example, that Bauer and Marx worked on the *Trumpet* together (Mader 1975, p. 68); that Marx's involvement in the *Trumpet* is 'doubtful' (Arndt 2012, pp. 23–4) or 'very unlikely' (van Eysinga 1935, p. 375); that Marx 'certainly had an intellectual part' in the writing of the *Trumpet* (Thom 1986, p. 164); that Marx's co-authorship is unlikely (Tucker 1972, p. 75); that Marx helped Bauer in the writing of it (McLellan 1985, p. 42; Finelli 2015, p. 114); that Marx helped Bauer to publish the text (Lukács 1953, p. 295); that Bauer wrote it 'with only limited involvement on Marx's part' (Lapin 1974, p. 148); that 'Marx had collaborated on Bauer's *Trumpet*' (von Kempster 1992, p. 152; Treptow 1971, p. 130; Schöncke 2003, pp. 281–3). Zvi Rosen writes of Bauer's sole authorship (Rosen 1977, p. 62). Rosen's approach unfortunately does not take Marx's *Bonn Notebooks* into account. While Lawrence Stepelevich refers to Bauer as the sole author of the *Trumpet* in his English translation (1989), Marx is named as co-author in a French edition (Bauer and Marx 2016). In that publication, Marx's close collaboration with Bauer seems to be the reason why his co-authorship of the *Trumpet* is assumed, even if the editor does not provide evidence for this.

10 Mayer 1916, p. 339.

11 Ruge 2010b, p. 1063.

12 Bauer 2010a, p. 890.

13 Marx 1975b, p. 22; Marx 19750, p. 382.

14 Marx 1975d, p. 24; Marx 19755, p. 385.

15 Marx 1975a, p. 26; Marx 1975n, p. 387.

16 On July 9, Ruge asked again about the status of Marx's promised essay (Ruge 1975, p. 375). Marx responded on the same day that he had been 'unable to develop' his essay 'On Art and Religion' as 'thoroughly as the material demands' (Marx 1975x, p. 28). Co-authorship of *Hegel's Doctrine* to Marx has only rarely been considered as a possibility (Mayer). That thesis has generally been rejected (since Nettlau). Mayer speculates that Marx could have sent the old version of his treatise to the publisher, since his plan for its internal structure

One can, writes Riazanov, 'say with near total certainty that these excerpts stand in a direct relationship with the treatise which Marx planned to write on "Christian art" or "religious art"'.¹⁷ This hypothesis follows from the parallels between the notebooks and Marx's plans for the publication in the *Trumpet*. In the volume that appeared in 1841, Bauer claims that the *Trumpet* shows how 'Hegel wanted to demonstrate the determinations of the religious consciousness as the inner determinateness of self-consciousness, or that he dissolved the heavenly world of the religious spirit in self-consciousness'. *Hegel's Doctrine* takes up the question of 'how Hegel from the outset saw religion as a special phenomenon that emerged out of the inner dialectic and development of self-consciousness'. This 'development will continue in a section of this work which will also show Hegel's hatred of religious and Christian art and his dissolution of all positive state laws'.¹⁸

The seven notebooks which Marx furnished with the title 'Bonn 1842' included seven monographs that concern themselves with questions related to the theory of art and religion. They contain excerpts from Carl Friedrich von Rumohr's *Italienische Forschungen*, Johann Jakob Grund's *Die Malerey der Griechen*, Charles de Brosses's *Über den Dienst der Fetischengötter*, Karl August Böttiger's *Ideen zur Kunst-Mythologie*, Christoph Meiner's *Allgemeine kritische Geschichte der Religionen*, Benjamin Constant's *De la religion* and Jean Barbeyrac's *Traité de la morale de pères de l'église*. Drawing on Marx's title, it is assumed that the excerpt notebooks must have been composed between approximately the 'beginning of April to about the end of May 1842', that is, after his arrival in Bonn and before his departure for Trier.¹⁹ Marx stayed there for six weeks and returned to Bonn after July 9. The hypothesis that he had completed a small part of his excerpts between July and September is suggested by the contents of the newspaper articles he wrote from the end of June 1842 and which make direct reference to the excerpted works.

The editors of the MEGA² used these findings to derive a three-step model that is supposed to underlie the composition of Marx's treatise on religious

and content corresponded to *Hegel's Philosophy*, which had already then been published. The division of labour mentioned in the foreword to *Hegel's Doctrine* is given in support of this thesis. See Mayer 1916, pp. 343, 340–1; Nettleau 1919, pp. 389–91; [Bauer] 1842, p. 2.

17 Rjazanov 1929, p. XXII.

18 [Bauer] 1841, p. 163.

19 [Editorial] 1975–6, p. 825. In contrast, Riazanov dates their composition to between 'the middle of April and the end of May' (Rjazanov 1929, p. XXIII). Also see Cornu 1954, pp. 257–8. The earliest evidence for Marx's arrival in Bonn in 1842 is Bruno Bauer's letter to his brother Edgar, which is dated 'Bonn, mid April. 1842.' There he writes: 'M. has now arrived here again'. See: Bauer and Bauer 1844, p. 192.

art, according to which the excerpt notebooks are supposed to have resulted from Marx's last stage of work on the project. The first stage in this account encompasses the period between the publication of the *Trumpet* in November 1841, or the first indication of Marx's work on the treatise on 6 December 1841, and mid-March 1842, when he came to the realisation that the treatise would need to be reworked.²⁰ When Marx reported to Ruge that he wanted to break free of Bauer's 'Trumpet tone' and planned to offer a more thorough critique of religion – this is when 'the third phase began'.²¹ According to the MEGA² editors, this included Marx's planned book project and his later references to the excerpted works up through October 1842.²² His failure to bring his plan to fruition is attributed to his collaboration at the *Rheinische Zeitung*, his 'familial duties' and illness. To this must also be added his 'political journalism and further studies' that 'led Marx to new realisations and discoveries and which kept him from publishing the manuscript'.²³

1 Provisional Hypotheses

In the MEGA² commentary, the editors do not analyse Marx's reasons for taking up Bauer's topic. It creates the impression that Marx was in complete agreement with Bauer's 'Trumpet tone' in 1841. A formal rift occurred only in March 1842, when Marx took the Prussian censorship of Bauer's *Trumpet* as an opportunity 'to cease collaboration with Bruno Bauer and to offer the work to the *Deutsche Jahrbücher* in a modified form'. By the end of March 1842, this modification became a total revision. Precisely at this time, 'he began to check the sources which Hegel had relied upon, and was thus drawn into ever deeper and more detailed investigations'. Precisely thinking through Hegel's philosophy of religion led him 'to the conclusion to change not only the form of the account, but also to regard the subject itself from a new *point de vue*'.²⁴ In addition, his 'experiences in practical political work led to new realisations',²⁵ causing him to have doubts about his work with Bruno Bauer with respect to the dissemination and propagation of the critique of religion. Marx subsequently turned

20 Cf. [Editorial] 1975–6, pp. 825–6.

21 [Editorial] 1975–6, p. 826. When precisely the second phase begins and ends has not been made clear by the editors.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

24 [Editorial] 1975–6, p. 23*. In Marx's letter from March 5 (Marx 1975b, p. 22; Marx 1975o, p. 382.), he offers his treatise to *Anekdotia*. Cf. Hundt (ed.) 2010a, p. 46.

25 [Editorial] 1975–6, p. 24*.

to political journalism and the academic 'study of the specific historical and ethnographic material and checked the more or less abstract theses of Hegel or the Young Hegelians against it'.²⁶ From this we are expected to conclude that Marx was an adherent of Young Hegelianism and a follower of Bruno Bauer right until the end of 1841, but that he began to break with the Young Hegelian discourse of the philosophy of religion within a few months in the beginning of 1842. Accordingly, the first sign of this break can be seen in Marx's desire to make revisions. In the editors' view, therefore, the main reasons for the transformation of Marx's thought is his academic study of the sources and his political journalism.

In the following I will raise several objections to this account that relate to four aspects of the MEGA² commentary:

1) The reasons for Marx's occupation with the subject of the *Trumpet* and *Hegel's Doctrine*; 2) the reasons for the change in Marx's plans; 3) the stages of Marx's work on his treatise on religious art; 4) when and where Marx wrote the notebooks. The theses of the present investigation can be summarised as follows:

- 1) There are clearly recognisable similarities, but also serious differences, between Bauer and Marx, without which both their collaboration and their falling out cannot be understood. Alongside theoretical grounds for their collaboration, it is also important to keep Marx's practical justifications in mind. After all, at this point he had already been engaged to Jenny von Westphalen for years and wanted to marry her as soon as possible. The couple was counting on the position at the University of Bonn promised to Marx by Bauer in order to free themselves from poor family relations. By the time Marx arrived in Bonn, Bauer had already been suspended. This is when the first signs of a rupture showed themselves in connection to the *Trumpet*. It is therefore necessary to once more ask how Bauer's project and Marx's *Bonn Manuscripts* stood in relation to one another.
- 2) It is apparent from the correspondence between Marx, Ruge and Bauer that Marx first tried to break free from the formal limitations of the *Trumpet* in early 1842 before finally breaking with the project entirely. He therefore made efforts in March 1842 to publish his treatise on its own. Within a few weeks, however, he recognised that Bauer had put him on the wrong track. And just one month later in April he would speak of a separate book project. The claim that a single break occurred in Marx's research for his collaboration on the *Trumpet* is therefore not convincing.

²⁶ Ibid.

Marx's detours and 'wrong tracks' lead directly back to the conditions that his collaboration with Bauer had made possible and even paved the way for their break.

- 3) In regard to Marx's as-yet-to-be-discovered treatise on religious art, one can distinguish not three but five stages of writing. The changes in Marx's plans do not leave much room for interpretation: His original plan initially led him to take a detour on 5 March 1842, then, on March 20, he took the 'false' path. The announcement of his book project on April 27 signalled a radical departure from his original plan. Marx occupied himself with this subject not from the beginning of 1842 but possibly as early as summer/autumn 1841. The period in which this lost work was written should therefore also include the time preceding the period when the *Trumpet* was printed.
- 4) It cannot be considered certain that the title of 'Bonn 1842' given to the notebooks by Marx must be identical with the date and place when the excerpts were written out. We cannot rule out the possibility that Marx might have prepared sections of these excerpts well before his arrival in Bonn in April. A new dating of his activity suggests that Marx did not always stay in Bonn between April and May. It is uncertain whether he would have occupied himself with religious art, which in the period from April to May was no longer of primary interest, alongside the three newspaper articles he published at this time. In any case, the title could also be read to mean that Marx prepared at least some sections of the excerpts not *in* but *for* his time in Bonn.

The following is an alternative reconstruction of the collaboration between Bauer and Marx. The turbulences in the period in question reveal themselves in Marx's thought as well as in his relationship with Bruno Bauer. Correspondingly, Marx's detours, false paths, dead ends and abandoned work are therefore made the focus of this study. The ambivalent initial relations between the two, which both made their collaboration possible and hindered it, clearly go back further than 1841, when Bauer was not yet an atheist and was still a proponent of church doctrine. This was the Bruno Bauer that Marx had come to know in the Doctor's Club. We then meet Bauer the atheist at the end of 1839 or perhaps the beginning of 1840, as he was planning a comprehensive attack on orthodox theology and wanted Marx to fight on his side. This attack continued in his *Trumpet* and in *Hegel's Doctrine*.

What might Bauer have expected from Marx at that time? To what extent was Marx convinced by Bauer's goals? What are the reasons for Marx's break with Bauer? How should one understand the writing of the *Bonn Notebooks* in the context of the *Trumpet* or *Hegel's Doctrine*? To answer these questions

we first need to examine Bauer's theological atheist background. This will be followed by an investigation of Marx's relationship with Bauer. In the third section, Bauer's plan will be compared and contrasted with the aims of Marx's *Bonn Notebooks*. The basic idea of the present study is: Bauer and Marx's short-lived adventure might have proceeded differently than has so far been assumed. Finally, we will document the epilogue of the break between Bauer and Marx in *The Jewish Question*.

2 Bruno Bauer's Transition from Theology to Atheism

Bauer studied philosophy and theology at the University of Berlin, and attended lectures by Hegel, Marheineke, Hengstenberg and Schleiermacher. In 1834 he began to teach as a lecturer (*Privatdozent*) in the Department of Theology. He gave lectures on the Old and New Testament, on the history of the church and the philosophy of religion, and edited the *Zeitschrift für spekulative Theologie*. In addition to these activities he was also a member of the circle of contributors to Hegel's texts on the philosophy of religion. He became known in particular as a critic of the Christology of David Friedrich Strauß.

In his reviews of the latter's book, *Das Leben Jesu (The Life of Jesus)*, Bauer emerged as an opponent of Strauß's theory of myths and a proponent of church teaching. In Strauß's view, church teaching attributed supernatural qualities to Christ and declared him in his person to be a complete incarnation of God. This is 'indeed not the mode in which Idea realizes itself; it is not wont to lavish all its fullness on one exemplar, and be niggardly towards all others; it rather loves to distribute its riches among a multiplicity of exemplars which reciprocally complete each other – in the alternate positing and sublating of individuals.'²⁷ The miraculous stories of Christ's birth, resurrection and ascension have always been considered 'historical facts'. However, they prove to be myths that reflect the symbolic imagination of the religious community.²⁸

Bauer rejects Strauß's criticism that, in the person of Christ, the individual man is 'eliminated and the whole of humanity is excluded'. The opposite is rather the case, that 'humanity is sublating in the reality of the idea and thus the exclusivity of every individuality and the incarnation [*Menschwerdung*] of God as eternal' becomes immanent.²⁹ Strauß did not succeed, Bauer writes, in distinguishing the Christian community as the bearer of a lower

27 Strauss 1836, p. 48.

28 Strauss 1835, p. VII.

29 Bauer 1836, p. 704.

consciousness from the prophet as the 'bearer of a higher consciousness', and in again classifying the former in the speculative course of the history of man's self-consciousness.³⁰ Prophets, Bauer argues, are individuals that emerge from the community and simultaneously sunder themselves from the community as exceptional world-historical persons. The prophetic consciousness is ultimately the medium in which the divine spirit reveals itself.³¹ Without this medium the spirit would be unable to reflect itself or to return to itself.

Bauer later expanded on this argument in his speculative history and combined it with a negative dialectics. Thus for example he understood the Old and New Testaments as successive and contradictory stages in the appearance (*Erscheinungsstufen*) of absolute spirit that correspond to a lower and higher phase in the development of self-consciousness. The preceding one functioned as a limit for the subsequent one, and sublated itself into the higher stage.³² He accordingly accused the Berlin theology professor Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg of failing to comprehend the dynamic of negative dialectics in the history of religion, and it was owing to this failure that Hengstenberg was unable to explain how a given religious form of the appearance (*Erscheinungsform*) of the divine spirit could issue from another. The principle of history, Bauer argued, was not based on continuity, but rather on antithesis and contradiction.³³

Bauer knew very well that with this critique he was issuing a challenge to an authority of the Berlin school of theology. He still had hopes, however, of becoming a full professor. He did not give up his plans and pushed ahead with a strategy of conflict whereby he would provoke his opponents to attack him so that he, in turn, could then react to these attacks. In the process of Bauer's radicalisation, of which he provided no previous explicit statement and which is not apparent in his early writings, his isolation and displacement had a catalysing effect.³⁴ In Bonn he continued his attacks on orthodox theology with his *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte des Johannes* (1840), *Die evangelische Landeskirche Preußens und die Wissenschaft* (1840), *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker* (1841/2), and, finally, the *Trumpet and Hegel's Doctrine* (1841/2).

30 Bauer 1838b, p. 45. Cf. Bauer 1835, p. 884.

31 Cf. Waser 1994, p. 10.

32 Bauer 1838a, p. XXIIIf.

33 Bauer 1839, pp. 13, 68. Cf. Tomba 2005, pp. 53–4; Heinrich 2018, pp. 313–5; Heinrich 2018, pp. 278–81.

34 Cf. Kanda 2003, p. 116; Waser 1994, p. 12.

3 Bauer in Bonn

In his Bonn period, Bauer initially concurred with Strauß that the gospels presented not historical facts but myths.³⁵ Shortly thereafter he held that 'a gospel could have a purely literary origin'.³⁶ One year later, the question as to whether 'Jesus was the historical Christ' was 'nullified forever', because everything said by him had nothing to do with the 'real world'.³⁷ He therefore implicitly countered Strauß in claiming that the gospels corresponded not to the religious ideas of the community, but rather to the individual work of the authors. Bauer tied this individual work to the creative activity of a historical *I (Ich)* that, over the course of all human history, strives toward perfect self-realisation and free self-determination.³⁸

'Self-consciousness is the only force in the world and in history, and history has no other meaning but that of the coming-to-be and the development of self-consciousness'.³⁹ On the path of its forward-marching creation, humanity passes through the epoch of self-alienation where its own power appears as that of a slave (*Knecht*) that subjects human beings to his rule.⁴⁰ Bauer views the epoch of self-alienation as a prehistory that prepares the way for the epoch of freedom, perfection and reason. Bauer ascribes to his own philosophy, which represents the turning point between these two epochs in world history,⁴¹ the role of consummating the previous epochs in world history and opening the path of self-consciousness to the future.⁴² Everything that limits and inhibits the full realisation of self-consciousness must therefore be liquidated. That includes the sublation (*Aufhebung*) of religion. Philosophy, as the motor of the movement of history, must unveil the 'Vampire' in Christianity that sucks the 'energy and strength, the blood and life' of humanity 'to the last drop'.⁴³

It becomes clear from the correspondence with his brother Edgar, and with Marx and Ruge, that Bruno Bauer wanted to be known as the exceptional person that plays the decisive emancipatory role in the experience of world history.⁴⁴ At the end of 1839 he wrote to Marx that his 'lectures announced for

35 See Bauer 1840a, pp. 404–5.

36 Bauer 1841, p. xiv.

37 Bauer 1842, p. 308.

38 Cf. Bauer 1841, p. xxiv; Stuke 1963, p. 138.

39 [Bauer] 1841, p. 70.

40 [Bauer] 1842, pp. 162–3.

41 [Bauer] 1841, p. 166.

42 Cf. Stuke 1963, p. 138.

43 Bauer 1842, p. 196f.

44 Cf. Treptow 1971, p. 134.

the summer (The Life of Jesus and a Critique of the Fourth Gospel) had aroused a holy terror among the local professors'. His 'critique' had a 'scandalous' effect. Many students wanted to 'have nothing to do with me *a priori*'.⁴⁵ In November 1839 he reported to Edgar that his forced 'isolation' had 'accelerated' his 'scientific development' and brought him 'to an inner decisiveness in his position'.⁴⁶ Edgar, in the meanwhile, abandoned his theological studies because he had 'lost all faith'.⁴⁷ Bruno wished him luck. 'I am stuck in this and the fight has eaten into me too deeply for me to break away from it. I will only be able to put an end to it when I have gone through every twist'.⁴⁸ In March he saw his 'purpose forming more and more clearly'. 'Theology is right to make me suffer, as I know I will soon come to the point where it will be shown even more that they knew where they stand with me'.⁴⁹ Philosophy will finally emancipate itself 'in this Chinese repression' and 'lead the fight'.⁵⁰ 'I see it coming that I will decisively face the entire theological world'.⁵¹ The triumph was soon certain. 'The catastrophe will be terrible, radical'. 'The enemy forces are approaching so near now that one strike will be decisive'.⁵² Bauer's fight continued in the summer of 1840. By now he had 'worked and worked' and he had been 'delivered into the hands of new opponents'. 'Whatever science I have in me, I cannot allow it to be made into a spectacle and scandal before these people: I must save it. They want to trample down science along with me'.⁵³

4 *The Trumpet*

In 1840 Bauer still celebrated the memory of Friedrich Wilhelm III, and hoped that his philosophy would be positively received by the Prussian state. Instead,

45 Bauer 1975c, p. 335.

46 Bauer and Bauer 1844, pp. 11–12.

47 Bauer and Bauer 1844, p. 40.

48 Bauer and Bauer 1844, p. 30. Cf. Heinrich 2018, p. 318; Heinrich 2019, p. 281. The correspondence shows that Edgar had encouraged his brother on the road to atheism. Marx may have also had an influence on him. On 3 June 1841 Karl Friedrich Köppen wrote that Bauer's few ideas came from 'Schützenstraße' (Marx's address in Berlin at the time) (Köppen 1975, p. 360). 'Don't you see, you are a warehouse of ideas, a workhouse or, to put it as they would in Berlin, an ox head of ideas [*Ochsenkopf von Ideen*]'. Cf. Waser 1994, p. 93; Heinrich 2018, pp. 318, 329–30; Heinrich 2019, pp. 281, 291–2.

49 Bauer 1975d, p. 344.

50 Bauer 1975e, p. 341.

51 Bauer and Bauer 1844, p. 60.

52 Bauer 1975f, p. 346.

53 Bauer and Bauer 1844, p. 88.

he was declared to be a pathological case by his colleagues in Berlin.⁵⁴ Bauer had made himself a broad target for attacks, and he even asked Ruge to initiate the denunciations against him, with the intention of provoking a conflict in which the Prussian state would be forced to accept Bauer's philosophy and take it up as its own.⁵⁵ This venture failed – not because Bauer was dismissed from the academy, but because his opponents did not take him seriously. Bauer's *Trumpet* and *Hegel's Doctrine* were supposed to escalate the conflict between philosophy and the state. This is also why Bauer wanted Marx on his side. And in 1841 Marx was willing to play second fiddle in this plan.

Donning the literary mask of a pietist abundantly armed with Bible verses and quotes from Hegel, Bauer presented the spectacle of a religious–philosophical dispute in which he challenged 'the younger' and 'older' Hegelians.⁵⁶ He staged a match of shadow boxing in which he placed the atheist ramifications which he himself drew from Hegel's philosophy in Hegel's own mouth. The pietist was thus supposed to expose the atheist kernel of Hegel's philosophy and vividly prove that it was not the Young Hegelians but Hegel himself who 'has cast aside and destroyed religion'.⁵⁷ Hegel is called 'a greater revolutionary than all his disciples taken together'.⁵⁸ Hegel's 'philosophy wants revolution'.⁵⁹ He not only is 'set against the state, the Church and religion, but opposes everything firm and established...'⁶⁰ The purpose of Hegel's 'infernal system' (*Höllensystem*), this 'infernal machine' (*Höllmaschine*) is to 'blast the Christian state into the sky'.⁶¹ The pseudo-author promises that a 'second part of this work' will also show 'Hegel's hatred of religious and Christian art and his casting aside of all positive state laws'.⁶² In this second denunciation, Bauer planned to reverse the hierarchy of absolute spirit in Hegel's system, where religion and philosophy follow art, and further planned to abolish religion and art and to free the one from the other. Bauer saw comedy as the proper form for the representation of the self-destructive contradictions of the divine and the human. 'Comedy is the dissolution of art, therefore also of religion'.⁶³

54 Eßbach 1988, p. 122; see Bauer 1840b, p. 2.

55 See Bauer 2010a, p. 889.

56 [Bauer] 1841, p. 13; cf. Bauer 1983, p. 178.

57 [Bauer] 1841, p. 47; Bauer 1983, p. 180.

58 [Bauer] 1841, p. 82; Bauer 1983, p. 183; translation modified.

59 [Bauer] 1841, p. 167.

60 [Bauer] 1841, p. 84; Bauer 1983, p. 185.

61 [Bauer] 1841, p. 13.

62 [Bauer] 1841, p. 163.

63 [Bauer] 1842, p. 225; cf. Müller 2010, p. 174; Barck 1993, p. 230.

5 Marx's Relationship to Bruno Bauer

In a letter to his father in 1837, Marx wrote that he had studied Hegel 'from beginning to end' during his 'period of poor health'.

Through several meetings with friends in Stralow I got into a Doctor's Club, which includes several instructors and my most intimate of Berlin friends, Dr Rutenberg. In argument here many conflicting views were pronounced, and I became even more firmly bound to the contemporary world philosophy...

Marx was also struck by the 'aesthetic notables of the Hegelian school' who had 'promised their collaboration through the mediation of university lecturer Bauer, who plays a large role in the group'.⁶⁴ In the summer semester of 1839, Marx attended Bauer's lecture on the prophet Isaiah. By the end of the year Bauer expected Marx to be 'finished with that miserable exam' and to give his own lectures in Bonn. In the same letter, Bauer made reference to Marx's 'logical lucubrations', his nocturnal work by candlelight. Bauer wanted Marx to be able to 'dedicate himself entirely unimpeded' to his 'logical studies', 'especially if you can work out essence with a completely fresh start!'.⁶⁵ In 1840, Marx wanted to write a critique of anti-Hegelianism in theology,⁶⁶ compose a review of Hegel's lectures on the philosophy of religion recently edited by Bauer,⁶⁷ and, finally, publish a pamphlet on Hermesianism.⁶⁸

When Marx completed his doctoral dissertation in March 1841, publishing the atheist journal was on his agenda. Not long before this, Bauer had written a text on Hegel and sent it to Marx for editing.⁶⁹ He informed Marx about his *Habilitation* process in Bonn and asked him to prepare for the coming battle: 'The terrorism of true theory must clear the field'.⁷⁰ It is possible that Marx was already having doubts about Bauer's hopes to make his philosophy the doctrine of the Prussian state. Marx, after all, wanted to apply himself to a 'practical career'. But this, in Bauer's view, was 'nonsense'. 'Now theory is

64 Marx 1975e, p. 17; Marx 2006, pp. 80–1.

65 Bauer 1975g, p. 336. 'Essence' (*Wesen*) probably refers to Hegel's *Wesenslogik*. The 'logical energies of confrontation' (*ibid.*) is a reference to Hegel's theory of contradiction. Also see Bauer 1975e, p. 341.

66 MEGA III/1, p. 743.

67 Bauer 1975d, p. 343.

68 Bauer 1975h, p. 349; Meyen 2010a, p. 693.

69 Bauer 1975b, p. 353.

70 Bauer 1975b, pp. 352–3.

the strongest praxis, and we cannot in any way predict how greatly practical it will come to be.⁷¹ 'When you come to Bonn this nest might soon become the object of universal attention, and soon we can bring the crisis to its most decisive moments. The fight with the local department of theology may also become more serious.'⁷² He also simultaneously attempted to curb Marx's process of radicalisation. Marx should not include anything in the dissertation, wrote Bauer, that went beyond the philosophical development of the present.⁷³ 'Once you are on the faculty and have made a contribution to philosophical progress, you can say whatever you please.'⁷⁴ He also wanted Marx to abandon his planned critique of Feuerbach. If he did not, Feuerbach might be scared off as a potential collaborator on the planned journal.⁷⁵ Surprised by Marx's frustration with this,⁷⁶ Bauer writes: 'What's pestering and bothering you! [...] What's got your hackles up again [...] What is the matter with you! Put an end to this business and tear yourself free!'⁷⁷ This taunting is symptomatic of their turbulent friendship.

6 Bauer and Marx: Commonalities and Differences

There are, on the one hand, clear parallels between Marx's dissertation (and preliminary work for that dissertation) and Bauer's subjective idealism,⁷⁸ while on the other Marx's philosophical orientation diverged from Bauer's as early as 1839. In Marx, for example, the philosophically wise person represented the 'ought of substantiality' (*das Sollen der Substantialität*) vis-à-vis the world, who changes reality through his 'theory' as a subject of history.⁷⁹ Philosophers

71 Bauer 1975i, p. 355.

72 Bauer 1975i, p. 354. In the same letter it is clear that Marx also planned to write a critique of Trendelenburg.

73 Bauer refers to the phrase: 'In one word, I hate all and every god'. See Marx 1975f, pp. 14, 933; Marx 1975u, p. 30; translation modified.

74 Bauer 1975a, p. 358.

75 Ibid.

76 The letter from Marx that Bauer responds to here has not been found.

77 Bauer 1975a, p. 357.

78 In the full project of the dissertation contrasting tendencies coexist, such as, for example, a subjectivist and an objectivist view of religion. In regard to the latter, it should be recalled that Marx, in contrast to Bauer, never denies religion its objective character. Cf. Arndt 2012, p. 20.

79 Marx 1976a, p. 43; Marx 1975z, p. 438; translation modified. Cf. [Bauer] 1841, p. 82; Bauer 1983, p. 183 (translation modified): 'But only the ought is the true and justified, and must be brought to power, dominion and force'.

are 'bearers' of 'progress' and 'the embodied knowledge of substance'.⁸⁰ 'This embodiment of the ideal substance occurs in the philosophers themselves who proclaim it; not only their expression is plastic and poetic – their reality is this person, and their reality is their own appearance [*Erscheinung*]; they themselves are the living images, the living works of art that the people sees emerge from itself in sculptural scale'.⁸¹ The affirmation of 'human self-consciousness' as 'the highest divinity' shows his debt to Bauer.⁸²

The difference is that Bauer came to this position by means of his critique of the gospels in his polemic against Strauß. For Marx there is no such theological subtext. Bauer's affirmative objectivation of reason in the state, too, is not to be found in Marx. Marx agrees with Bauer that church and state need to be separate, but he did not arrive at this position by engaging in a fight with Christianity over life and death.

In 1839 it was still characteristic for Marx to draw a link between the philosophical 'making of the world' (*Schaffung der Welt*)⁸³ and the theological 'creation of the world' (*Schöpfung der Welt*).⁸⁴ Marx's position is also characterised by the fact that 'its [philosophy's] heart is strengthened by the making of a world'. Like 'Prometheus, who stole fire from heaven in order to build houses and begin settling in the world, so too philosophy, which has widened its own scope to that of the world, opposes the manifest world'.⁸⁵ There are more 'battles of the Titans' waiting for Prometheus. 'These times, however, are Titan-like, and follow a philosophy that is total in itself and its subjective forms of development'.⁸⁶ The immediate consequence of this earthly battle is that philosophy encloses 'a complete, total world', in which its theoretical relation changes into a practical relation to reality'.⁸⁷ Marx's influence upon Bauer can be seen in the *Trumpet* when the latter writes: 'It therefore must come to action, to practical opposition, and not only after the fact or through a detour: it must rather become a direct theoretical principle of practice and action [...] Philosophy must therefore affect the political as well and openly attack and shake the prevailing relations if they contradict its self-consciousness'.⁸⁸

80 Marx 1976a, p. 41; Marx 1975z, p. 436; translation modified.

81 Ibid.

82 Marx 1975f, p. 14; Marx 1975u, p. 30.

83 Marx 1976a, p. 30; Marx 1975z, p. 424; translation modified.

84 Marx 1976b, p. 148. Cf. Hillmann 1966, pp. 154–5.

85 Marx 1976a, p. 99; Marx 1975z, p. 491; translation modified.

86 Marx 1976a, p. 101; Marx 1975z, p. 492; translation modified.

87 Marx 1976a, p. 100; Marx 1975z, p. 491; translation modified.

88 [Bauer] 1841, pp. 82–3; Bauer 1983, p. 184; translation modified.

7 Marx in Bonn

Marx's first skirmish in Bonn took place in July 1841, when Bauer had organised a meeting with Bonn professors. Bauer reported on this meeting in his letter to Ruge from August 17. 'One would think Marx was an emissary sent to mete out the Last Judgement'.⁸⁹ Overshadowed by a much younger man, Bauer clearly felt threatened.⁹⁰ His colleagues from the department certainly noticed as well, 'like dogs that feel the thunderstorm coming. These rotten nests must be eradicated'.⁹¹ The extent of the terror which Marx provoked is shown in a letter by the Bonn philosopher Immanuel Hermann Fichte: 'Imagine that a certain Dr Marx, a contributor at Ruge's journal [*Deutsche Jahrbücher*] wants to establish himself here as a university lecturer with the intention of founding a similar journal here [*Journal des Atheismus*] and, at the same time, the expressly stated intention of opposing me and overthrowing me. He is very close to Bauer, who, through this and also through the bad literary company he keeps, is doing unbelievable harm. This Marx plans, so he says, to publish a book in Leipzig (probably with O. Wigand), whose conclusion is supposed to be: "From the preceding it follows that it is absurd to still believe in a God!!! Haec hactenus".'⁹²

Marx travelled back to Trier in mid-July at the request of his mother to sign an agreement that would subtract his previous student expenses from his inheritance.⁹³ Bauer was occupied with the book manuscript for the second volume of his *Synoptiker* until the end of July.⁹⁴ On August 16 he wrote to his brother Edgar that he would depart for Frankfurt in ten days. 'I am finishing a long denunciation of Hegel before I depart; it is a bit trumpet-like.'⁹⁵ 'It only took me ten days', he reported later, 'to draw up the denunciation against the atheists.'⁹⁶ It emerges from these letters that Bauer wrote the *Trumpet* on his own. When Marx's friend from Cologne, Georg Jung, wrote to Ruge that

89 Bauer 2010b, p. 802.

90 This interpretation is based on Bauer's self-estimation as a philosophical prophet and world-historical personality of the newest science, in which Marx would be assigned, at most, a secondary role.

91 Ibid.

92 Fichte 2003, p. 282. It remains an open question as to whether this 'book' is the planned critique of Hermesiansism or another text.

93 Schöncke 2003, p. 280. Michael Heinrich suggests that this information contradicts other information from Heinz Monz. According to the latter, Marx had already signed this contract on July 23. See Monz 1973, pp. 284–5.

94 Bauer and Bauer 1844, p. 151.

95 Bauer and Bauer 1844, pp. 154–5.

96 Bauer 2010a, p. 890.

the *Trumpet* was 'by Bauer and Marx', it should be understood that he means Marx's participation in the intellectual groundwork in the full project of the *Trumpet*.⁹⁷ The *Trumpet* already included the statement that 'Hegel's hatred of religious and Christian art' would be exposed 'in a second part'.⁹⁸ Based on Jung's report, it is likely that Marx's contribution for *Hegel's Doctrine* was discussed in July, when he was still staying in Bonn. Bauer's letter to Ruge from 6 December 1841 makes it explicitly clear that Marx had been occupied with the subject for some time. 'My fellow prisoner Marx is still working on the *Trumpet* [...] It should be very thorough'.⁹⁹ On the same day he wrote to Edgar: 'This thing will show people that this wasn't all meant as fun and games'.¹⁰⁰ It is quite possible, in terms of the first stages of development of Marx's treatise, that his contribution had already been discussed before the *Trumpet* went to press. The second stage of development would then coincide with the beginning of his actual composition of the text. At the end of December Bauer had finished his section. 'Marx will now need to make a clean copy of his part ... The foreword ... will be ready in January'.¹⁰¹ By the beginning of January he wrote that Marx was also 'finished with his treatise'.¹⁰² In February Marx promised that 'my manuscript will arrive in a few days' at 'Wigand's'. 'Bauer's letter in which he demands that it should be sent off *at last*, came when I was very ill in bed and therefore was handed to me only a few days ago. Being busy on the enclosed article, I was not able to make the necessary connections'.¹⁰³ That is, Marx *still had not* sent the manuscript to Wigand.

8 Marx's Break with Bauer's Project

Marx's break with Bauer's project began at the beginning of March. This is where the third stage begins. The denunciation strategy that Bauer had been working up for years suddenly collapsed. He was suspended.¹⁰⁴ For him this meant that his philosophy had not been accepted by the state. Marx had not shared Bauer's delusions about the end goal of this strategy since March 1841.

97 Jung 2010, p. 886.

98 [Bauer] 1841, p. 163.

99 Bauer 2010a, p. 890.

100 Bauer and Bauer 1844, p. 160.

101 Bauer 2010c, p. 910. Cf. Ruge 2010c, p. 914.

102 Bauer 2010d, p. 934.

103 Marx 1975g, p. 21; Marx 1975s, pp. 381–2.

104 Marx 1975b, p. 22; Marx 1975o, p. 382. At the end of March Bauer's *licentia docendi* was revoked.

He had, however, hoped to get a university position in Bonn to secure himself financially and be able to marry Jenny von Westphalen.¹⁰⁵ Hardly moved by Bauer's defeat, Marx took the new instructions from the censor as an opportunity to cease his work with Bauer. Marx wrote to Ruge, proposing to publish his "Treatise on *Christian Art*", which should have appeared as the second part of the *Posaune [Trumpet]*, in Ruge's *Anekdoten*. With the 'sudden revival of the Saxon censorship it is obvious from the outset that it will be quite impossible to print' his work.¹⁰⁶ This manoeuvre by Marx is noteworthy for a variety of reasons. First: Bauer had already informed Marx on January 26 that the *Trumpet* would be banned from mid-December. *Hegel's Doctrine* would therefore have to be given a different title. 'I have written: *Hegel's Philosophy of Religion and Art Judged from the Standpoint of the Faithful by b.m.*'¹⁰⁷ Marx therefore knew about Bauer's tactic for evading the censor. And yet despite this, he used the censor's policy to justify his withdrawal from the publishing project and made efforts toward publishing his text independently. Second: Only Ruge's journal had difficulties with the censor. Books from Wigand's publishing house remained almost untouched by the prohibition.¹⁰⁸ By the end of May, Ruge was able to inform Feuerbach that *Hegel's Doctrine* had been published through Wigand.¹⁰⁹ Third: We do not have any indication that Marx informed Bauer of his decision in advance. Fourth: Marx no longer wanted to publish his texts anonymously, but rather wanted them to appear before the public under his own name.¹¹⁰ This suggests that Marx was attempting to free himself from Bauer's chains.

Two weeks later, Marx informed Ruge he had decided that 'the article "On Christian Art", which has now been transformed into "On Religion and Art with Special Reference to Christian Art", must be entirely redone, because the tone of the *Posaune [Trumpet]* [...] and the irksome constraint of the Hegelian exposition should now be replaced by a freer, and therefore more thorough exposition.'¹¹¹ With this the fourth stage begins. When Marx began to rewrite

105 What I mean by this remark is that financial questions seem to have influenced the relationship between Bauer and Marx and Marx's rift with Bauer's project. It is an open question whether their relationship might have developed differently if Marx had not hoped for a position in Bonn.

106 Marx 1975b, p. 22; Marx 19750, p. 382.

107 Bauer 1975j, p. 369. Otto Wigand reported that the *Trumpet* was 'permitted in Vienna' (Wigand 2010, p. 943).

108 Ruge 2010d, p. 978.

109 Ruge 2010e, p. 1063.

110 In his words: 'I would prefer it if you would include *my name*'. Marx 1975b, p. 22; Marx 19750, p. 382; translation modified.

111 Marx 1975d, p. 25; Marx 1975i, p. 385.

his treatise for *Anekdoten*, he had decided on a new title.¹¹² The reason for this revision is likely owing to the fact that Marx found it necessary to ‘speak about the general essence [*Wesen*] of religion.’¹¹³ By freeing himself from Bauer’s pietist masquerade, he clearly discovered several points of common ground with Feuerbach. Marx wrote of finding himself in a ‘collision’ with his fellow critic of religion. This was not so much a matter of ‘the principle, so much as his approach’.¹¹⁴ It is obvious here that Marx is identifying himself with Feuerbach rather than Bauer.

9 Marx Returns to Bonn

At the beginning of April, Marx finally moved back to Bonn,¹¹⁵ where he stayed until the beginning of May.¹¹⁶ On May 2 he travelled through Cologne to Trier. He stayed there for two weeks. Following this, he travelled back to Cologne on May 16, where he lodged at the *Mainzer Hof* inn. It is not known whether he travelled back to Bonn at the end of May. In any case, he stayed once again at the *Mainzer Hof* inn before he went to Trier on June 4, where he remained until mid-July. He travelled back to Cologne in September. There he joined the editorial staff of the *Rheinische Zeitung* on October 15.¹¹⁷ In the period between the beginning of April and the end of May, Marx wrote three newspaper articles.¹¹⁸ On April 27, he wrote to Ruge about ‘how this month has made it almost impossible for me to work due to all kinds of extraneous turmoil’. Nevertheless, he had almost completed four articles for *Anekdoten*. He promised the essay on religious art for a later date, since ‘the work has steadily grown into almost

112 This therefore concerns a revised version of *the same* essay. This view is not shared in all interpretations. See Böhme 2012, p. 24.

113 Marx 1975d, p. 25; Marx 1975r, p. 386.

114 Ibid. Marx is referring here to Feuerbach’s review of the *Trumpet*. Authorship of the *Trumpet* was initially attributed to Feuerbach and he was accused of propagating atheism covertly. Feuerbach, in contrast, advocated the principle of criticising religion not with, but against Hegel.

115 Bauer and Bauer 1844, p. 192.

116 Kiehnbaum 1987, p. 318. The MEGA timeline dates Marx’s stay from the beginning of April to the end of May, and his trip to Trier to the beginning of June. See: [Editorial] 1975–6, p. 826.

117 Kiehnbaum 1987, pp. 318–9.

118 These are ‘Die Verhandlungen des 6. Rheinischen Landtags. Erster Artikel’ (written between the end of March and the end of April), ‘Die Zentralisationsfrage’ (written after May 17) and ‘Die Verhandlungen des 6. Rheinischen Landtags. Zweiter Artikel’ (written between the beginning of May and the end of June).

book-length dimensions' and that he had 'been drawn into all kinds of investigations' that 'will still take a rather long time'.¹¹⁹ This brings us to the fifth stage. On July 9, Marx complained to Ruge that since April he had 'been able to work for a total of perhaps only four weeks at most, and that not without interruption. I had to spend six weeks in Trier in connection with another death. The rest of the time was split up and poisoned by the most unpleasant family controversies. My family laid obstacles in my way, which, despite the prosperity of the family, put me for the moment in very serious straits.' During this time he had not been 'able to elaborate in particular the article "On Art and Religion" as thoroughly as the subject requires', and instead he had written the articles for the *Rheinische Zeitung*.¹²⁰ Marx never finished the book project.

10 Conditions for the Break

It is obvious why Marx abandoned his original plan. While art and religion still interested him, he no longer believed that he could and had to examine these objects in the way he had imagined a year earlier in the context of the *Trumpet* and Bauer's objectives. This turning point had already been prepared by the programmatic theory drafted in his dissertation. There, Marx had problematised the contradictions inherent in the communication of theory and practice or of reason and reality, which find their explicit expression in the '*immediate realisation of philosophy*'.¹²¹ The theoretical 'practice of philosophy' is the critique that 'measures the particular reality of the idea'.¹²² The one-sided claim of being able to translate philosophy directly into political reality, without having to construct philosophical universality from the political reality of the particularity, produces (in Marx's view) the illusion that reality is totally dependent on the rational Idea (*vernünftige Idee*) and that political action can be derived from an abstract ought.¹²³ This was an indirect criticism of Bauer's theoretical approach.

For Marx in the period of 1841/2, the direct relationship between philosophy and reality was broken by a mediating relationship of double reflection. Philosophy can only be realised by simultaneously turning inwards in the field of theory and 'turning-towards-the-outside of philosophy' in the field of practical

119 Marx 1975a, p. 26; Marx 1975n, p. 387.

120 Marx 1975c, p. 28; Marx 1975p, p. 389.

121 Marx 1975f, p. 68; Marx 1975u, p. 85.

122 Ibid.

123 Cf. Holz 2011, p. 324.

reality. He clearly considered Bauer's criticism of religion useful insofar as it claimed to free philosophy from its theological preconditions, so that philosophy could finally be brought to the point of its mediated realisation.¹²⁴ The 'result' of this realisation is necessarily 'its loss', since it can no longer determine itself 'only internally by its content', but 'outwardly through its appearance as it comes into contact and interaction with the real world of its time'.¹²⁵ Thus the primary determination of philosophy is no longer itself but its opposite, in other words, reality.¹²⁶

Marx's political journalism became the vehicle for this mediation. Philosophy became 'newspaper correspondent'.¹²⁷ 'True theory' had to be 'made clear and developed within concrete relations and in existing circumstances'.¹²⁸ It was no longer a matter of '*critique* that measures the individual existence by the essence, the particular reality by the Idea';¹²⁹ rather, '[w]e must ... measure the essence of the inner idea against the existence of things'.¹³⁰ Political reality was no longer, as with Bauer, to be constructed 'from the reason of the [philosophising] individual', but 'from the reason of society' and 'human relations'.¹³¹ It is not the religion of the hereafter but the philosophy of this world that can actually accomplish this task. If theory wants to grasp reality, it must start from its internal determinations. The keywords that summarise political reality for Marx now become the 'material struggles', 'material means', 'material, intellectual and religious states of affairs', 'material needs', 'material local interests' and 'private interests', *inter alia*.¹³²

By April 1842 Marx had already left Bauer's critique of religion behind. For Marx, religion became not a theological but a social and political question. At this time Bauer was still trying to cover up his defeats. He could not admit that his theory was powerless. However, a whole world had already collapsed in front of him. His disappointments¹³³ led him to found a Young Hegelian sect in

124 Marx 1975f, p. 69; Marx 1975u, p. 86.

125 Marx 1975f, p. 68; Marx 1975u, p. 86; Marx 1975h, p. 183; Marx 1975x, p. 195; translation modified.

126 Cf. Schefold 1970, pp. 9–10.

127 Marx 1975h, p. 184; Marx 1975x, p. 197.

128 Marx 1975i, p. 31; Marx 1975t, p. 392; translation modified.

129 Marx 1975f, p. 68; Marx 1975u, p. 85.

130 Marx 1975j, p. 142; Marx 1975y, p. 154; translation modified.

131 Marx 1975h, pp. 189, 188; Marx 1975x, pp. 202, 200.

132 Marx 1975j, pp. 153, 163, 166; Marx 1975y, pp. 165, 167, 175, 178; Marx 1975h, p. 184; Marx 1975x, p. 196; Marx 1975k, p. 357; Marx 1975w, p. 368; Marx 1975l, p. 216; Marx 1975v, p. 236.

133 Bauer 2003, p. 199; Bauer 1980, p. 301: 'Really I am still in no mood to write very much [...] I am angry about Berlin, I am neither at home too much nor away from home, I can neither work very much nor do I visit anyone.'

Berlin. Bauer's last letter to Marx in December 1842, in which he accused Marx of taking sides against the Berlin 'clique', was only the aftermath of a relationship that had already broken down.¹³⁴

11 Bauer's *Hegel's Philosophy* and Marx's *Bonn Notebooks*

The findings presented above indicate that Marx did not work intensively on the art–religion topic during his stay in Bonn in 1842. The period in which he dealt with the subject directly covers the summer/autumn period from 1841 to April 1842. With regard to the place where the notebooks were written, it should be noted that it was already known in Young Hegelian circles that Marx, after being pressed by Bauer at length, planned to lecture in Bonn.¹³⁵ For Ruge, Marx was already considered the philosopher 'in Bonn' in January 1842.¹³⁶ Marx also understood his participation in Bauer's *Trumpet* as a preparation for the coming second battle in Bonn, and he stuck to his research plan for the *Trumpet* up until Bauer's defeat in March. After Bauer's dismissal made it clear that Marx could no longer habilitate in Bonn, Bauer's critique of religion became neither compulsory nor binding for Marx. This was the beginning of the multi-stage breakdown in their relationship. The letters of March 5, March 20 and April 27 make the stages of this breakdown clear.

Marx's report from July 9 states that he had not been able to work on his treatise since April: If this report also includes the month of April, it can be assumed that religious art would still have been Marx's primary object of research until the middle or end of April at the latest. It can be concluded from this that his *Bonn Notebooks*, which are closely related to *Hegel's Doctrine's* planned critique, were written between summer/autumn 1841 and the middle or end of April 1842. It seems plausible that some parts of the notebooks would have been written before Marx arrived in Bonn. Read in this way, the title 'Bonn 1842' would mean that Marx may have written some parts of his excerpts not *in* but *for* Bonn.

For *Hegel's Doctrine*, Marx took on the task of collecting empirical material from the history of religious art that would correspond to Bauer's montage of quotations and support the speciously pietistic distortion of Hegel. Marx's preparatory work was intended to make Bauer's subjectivist philosophy of

134 Bauer 1975k, p. 386. Cf. Heinrich 2018, pp. 328–9; Heinrich 2019, pp. 291–2.

135 Meyen 2010b, p. 654; Hess 1959, pp. 79–80.

136 Ruge 2010f, p. 931.

self-consciousness appear to be the natural consequence of his atheistic interpretation of Hegel.

The desire expressed by Marx in his letter of March 20 to elaborate the relationship between art and religion more thoroughly and no longer to restrict himself to Christian art alone indicates that he had decided, at the beginning or middle of March at the latest, to include the topic of tribal art in non-European cultures in his research, something that went far beyond the research framework of the *Trumpet*. This subject was dealt with in detail in the excerpted works of Grund, de Brosses, Böttiger, Meiners and Constant.

Marx's meticulous studies went beyond Bauer's goals for *Hegel's Doctrine*. Rather, Marx was supposed to use his findings to support the thesis that Hegel wanted to 'overthrow religion' and to this end attacked religious art. Bauer formulated his intention quite openly: 'We will show how he [that is, Hegel] attacks religion, holy history, holy scripture and historiography from the aesthetic point of view and, after he has accused religion of "immorality", tries to make its defence more difficult by burdening it with the new crime of being the opponent of art and beauty.'¹³⁷

Behind this pseudo-argument was the thought that one could use Hegel to show that art and religion were not different moments of the spirit, but that religion was a kind of art. In other words, religious ideas and reports about the life events of the saints are nothing more than 'free creations' of artistic activity. Bauer understood the sacred history books as 'literary, intentional, i.e. fraudulent works by individuals'.¹³⁸ Art should not be conceived as a preliminary stage of religion, as in Hegel's case, but *vice versa* as a general genus that encompasses religion as its species.

What may have disturbed Marx in this masquerade and finally led him to break with the *Trumpet* lay in the theoretical premises from which Bauer proceeded. For Bauer, the objectivity of art was synonymous with the decline into subjective self-consciousness, which coincided with the negation of religion. Man had to abolish the religion that he had created. But by destroying the transcendent content of faith, Bauer took away the objective character of religion. In his dissertation Marx had already contradicted this line of thought when he wrote: To the extent that religious ideas exercise a real influence upon us, they have the character of reality. In this sense '*all gods*, both pagan and Christian,

137 [Bauer] 1842, p. 70.

138 [Bauer] 1842, p. 204.

have possessed a real existence. Did not the ancient Moloch actually rule? Was not the Delphic Apollo a real power in the life of the Greeks?'¹³⁹

12 Marx contra Bauer in *The Jewish Question*

While up to the end of 1842 it had been a turbulent friendship which, despite serious differences of opinion between the two thinkers, produced the appearance of a fruitful collaboration, the period from the beginning of 1843 onwards was characterised by Marx's bitter and even sarcastic attacks on his former friend and philosophical contemporary. In this turn of events, Marx was certainly motivated not least or not simply by the fact that he wanted to deal directly with the contradictions of Bauer's thought that previously had remained hidden to him, and which Bauer did not want to learn to correct despite repeated disappointments. Rather, the point of departure of Marx's dispute with Bauer was that Bauer's continuing deification of self-consciousness against the earthly world not only did not allow any room for an immanent critique of the current political and material relations, but even had it that any political organisation and action in the sense of a materially embodied critique of the state and bourgeois society by his own consciousness effort would be harmful. For Marx, Bauer became a conservative thinker who began to act as a mouthpiece for the retrograde forces of German politics, with whom Marx no longer needed anything to reconcile. As early as 1842, Marx's motto was to secularise philosophy by taking the existing political relations as the measure of theory. In Marx's eyes, however, Bauer was determined to oppose all reality with his (i.e. Bauer's) philosophy of consciousness. Marx's new positioning began in *On the Jewish Question*, which he then continued consistently in *The Holy Family*.

Marx wrote *On the Jewish Question* in the second half of 1843, and it was published in early 1844 in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*. There he subjected two of Bauer's writings from 1843 to sharp criticism: *The Jewish Question*, which was originally published in the *Deutsche Jahrbücher* in 1842 as an essay, then in the following year in a greatly expanded version as a book; and *The Ability of Today's Jews and Christians to Be Free* (*Die Fähigkeit der heutigen Juden und Christen, frei zu werden*), which Herwegh published in 1843 in *Twenty One Sheets from Switzerland* (*Einundzwanzig Bogen aus der Schweiz*). It was not until *The Holy Family* that Marx mocked Bauer's *Christianity Exposed* (1843),

¹³⁹ Marx 1975f, p. 90; Marx 1975u, p. 104; translation modified; also see Müller 2004, pp. 260–1.

looking back on Bauer's other major works such as *Synoptiker* (1841/2) and *The Good Cause of Freedom* (*Die gute Sache der Freiheit*) (1842).

There was apparently still some respect on the part of Marx when he wrote in *On the Jewish Question* that Bauer posed 'the question of the emancipation of the Jews' anew, 'with dash, perception, wit and thoroughness in a style as precise as it is pithy and trenchant'.¹⁴⁰ Marx probably did not know what else Bauer intended to do in *Christianity Exposed*, since he broke off all communication with Bauer by the end of 1842.

The question of Bauer's *The Jewish Question* was not that of 'freedom, rights of mankind, emancipation'¹⁴¹ as such, but whether there were 'universal rights' or 'only special privileges', i.e. special rights 'which are a right only for one and a non-right for another' in 'a Christian state' such as Prussia.¹⁴² The dilemma that Jews want to become *citoyen* in a Christian state could not be solved if the state did not strive 'to become a universal affair'.¹⁴³ Bauer attributed the responsibility for the inequality of citizenship rights to the Jewish and Christian citizens of the state. These were called upon to overcome their 'discouragement' by 'admitting to themselves'¹⁴⁴ that they were above all human beings and as such had to 'recognise the universal nature of man'.¹⁴⁵ But in order for Jews to be able to exercise their religious rights as civic 'human rights' at all, they would also have to free themselves from their religious identity and overcome the religious opposition between Jews and Christians. Bauer admits that Jews do not get their rights as a gift, but have to acquire them by 'struggle'.¹⁴⁶ What is subject to this struggle is not so much political action as a theoretical enlightenment in the medium of self-critical critique. The contrast between Jews and Christians is no longer to be treated as a religious one, but as a scientific one, which can only be solved in the 'form of critique'.¹⁴⁷

The full realisation of Bauer's critique promises not only to abolish the religious antagonism between Jews and Christians, but to emancipate human beings from religion altogether. In this sense, Bauer's critique wanted to perform a mediating function between an infinite self-enlightenment of human beings and a state raised up as an ideal that would guarantee man's emancipa-

140 Marx 1982, p. 142; Marx 1992b, p. 213.

141 Bauer 1843a, p. 1.

142 Bauer 1843a, p. 20.

143 Bauer 1843a, p. 88.

144 Bauer 1843a, p. 74.

145 Bauer 1843a, p. 19.

146 Ibid.

147 Bauer 1843a, p. 22.

tion from religion.¹⁴⁸ Thus Bauer attributed to his critique of religion, believers and the state an independent superiority that can defeat all potentially opposing forces, if it is practised by any individual minds at all in a specifically Bau-erian orientation.

Marx agreed with Bauer's theoretical approach insofar as he believed that the challenge was not that secular questions should be transformed into theo-logical ones, but that theological questions needed to be transformed into secular ones. But unlike Bauer, Marx managed to explain 'the religious bias of free citizens through their secular bias'. Religion was not regarded as reason but as a consequence of 'secular limitation' (*weltliche Beschränktheit*). Like Bauer, Marx thought that 'the question of *the relation of political emancipation to religion*' became a 'question of the *relation of political emancipation to human emancipation*'.¹⁴⁹ In contrast to Bauer, Marx denied that the theory of critique had become independent of the individual minds who became aware of their own self-alienation and bondage through Bauer's variety of philosophy of self-consciousness.

In a letter to Ruge in September 1843, Marx articulated precisely this position. He wrote there that 'our critique must be linked to the critique of politics, to partisanship in politics, that is, to *real* struggles and be identified with them'. 'We don't then dogmatically confront the world with a new principle: Here is the truth, kneel down before us! We develop new principles for the world from the principles of the world. We do not tell it: let go of your fights, this is foolish nonsense; we want to cry out to you with the real slogan of the fight. We will just show [the world] why it is fighting, and that consciousness is something it *must* acquire, even if it doesn't want to.'¹⁵⁰ This 'we' used by Marx here excluded Bauer. What Marx said about the dogmatists in the following could probably also apply to Bauer's case: 'We must try to help the dogmatists make their sentences clear.'¹⁵¹

The discrepancy between Bauer and Marx is perhaps best shown in their respective attitudes to the '*theological* significance' of the transformation of theology into politics. While Marx believed that the relationship of the religious person to the political state leads it to lose its theological significance and 'becomes a truly *secular* question', Bauer wanted to maintain this theological significance of politics or, as it were, political theology.¹⁵² Marx contextualised

148 Bauer 1843a, p. 67.

149 Marx 1982, p. 146; Marx 1992b, p. 217; translation modified.

150 Marx 1975m, p. 56; Marx 1992a, p. 208; translation modified.

151 Marx 1975m, p. 55; Marx 1992a, p. 207; translation modified.

152 Marx 1982, p. 145; Marx 1992b, p. 216.

this abstraction with a reference to religious politics in North America. “In the United States there is neither a state religion nor an officially proclaimed religion of the majority” ... And yet North America is the land of religiosity *par excellence*.¹⁵³ In analogy to the fact that a state can ‘be a *free state*’ without thereby ‘man himself being a *free man*’, the free state could free itself from religion without critically, i.e. in accordance with the theory of self-consciousness, subsuming it.¹⁵⁴ Bauer’s demand that Jews emancipate themselves from Judaism in order to be able to free themselves politically in any way would therefore be in vain. “Therefore we do not tell the Jews that they cannot be emancipated politically without radically emancipating themselves from Judaism, which is what Bauer tells them. We say instead: the fact that you can be politically emancipated without completely and absolutely renouncing Judaism shows that *political emancipation* by itself is not *human* emancipation.”¹⁵⁵

Marx expanded his rejection of Bauer’s sublation (*Aufhebung*) of religious alienation by including his reversal of the state–religion relation in a diagnosis of the non-religious sphere of bourgeois society. The contradiction presented by Bauer as a split between Judaism and the Christian state was, according to Marx, reduced to an internal division within society, namely ‘between the *political* state and *bourgeois society*’. ‘The difference between the religious man and the citizen is the difference between the tradesman and the citizen, between the day-labourer and the citizen, between the landowner and the citizen.’¹⁵⁶ Thus, a criticism of religion in Bauer’s terms was not only pushed aside, but its marginality and foreignness vis-à-vis interconnected social relations was exposed.

Marx, however, took another step further and brought in the problem of alienation, which he saw embodied in a social medium of exchange: money. Even if Marx does not yet provide us here with his first reading of a critique of political economy, his confrontation with Bauer already seems to have prompted his introduction to economic relations in this early period. ‘Money is the estranged essence of man’s work and existence; this alien essence dominates him and he worships it.’¹⁵⁷ The subject matter of the second part of this sentence, which Marx first describes in *Capital* as the fetish character of the commodity, originates from his project in the *Bonn Notebooks*, which at the time were still not at too much of a temporal remove from him.

153 Marx 1982, p. 146; Marx 1992b, p. 217.

154 Marx 1982, p. 147; Marx 1992b, p. 218.

155 Marx 1982, p. 155; Marx 1992b, p. 226.

156 Marx 1982, p. 149; Marx 1992b, pp. 220–1.

157 Marx 1982, p. 166; Marx 1992b, p. 239.

We know that as early as 1842, the terms 'fetish' and 'idolatry' were already cropping up in Marx's newspaper articles. In his 'On Freedom of the Press' (*Debatten über die Preßfreiheit*) he ironically remarked: 'Of course, the province has the right, under prescribed conditions, to create these gods for itself, but as soon as they are created, it must, like a fetish worshipper, forget that these gods are its own handiwork.'¹⁵⁸ In the same essay, he combined his critique of censorship with the idolatry of the representatives of privileged classes who idolise or 'canonise' themselves. 'They draw a horrifying picture of human nature and at the same time demand that we should bow down before the holy image of certain privileged individuals.'¹⁵⁹

In 'Leading Article in No. 179 of the *Kölnische Zeitung*' Marx takes issue with the editor of the *Kölnische Zeitung*, Karl Hermes, who demanded Prussian censorship against the Young Hegelians and defended Christianity as the basis of the Prussian state. The concept of the fetish becomes a preliminary subject of discussion here as Marx uses the theocratic idea of the state against Hermes' line of argument. Hermes, Marx writes, assigns fetishism the historical function of elevating man 'above sensual desires'. But if man is completely dominated by a religious fetish, Hermes believed, he is degraded 'to an animal'. Hermes indirectly admitted, Marx continued, that 'the "*animal worship*" is a *higher* form of religion than fetishism', 'the animal worship' degrades man 'below the animal' and makes 'the animal man's god'.¹⁶⁰

In 'Debates on the Law on Thefts of Wood', Marx criticised the law restricting the parcelling of land ownership in the Prussian Rhine province. Dispossessed masses who collected products from the forest were severely punished. In this respect, Marx made an analogy between the gold fetish of Spanish settlers in Cuba and the wood fetish of landowners in the Rhine province. 'The *savages of Cuba* regarded gold as a *fetish of the Spaniards*. They celebrated a feast in its honour, sang in a circle around it and then threw it into the sea. If the Cuban savages had been present at the sitting of the Rhine Province Assembly, would they not have regarded *wood* as the *Rhinelanders' fetish*? But a subsequent sitting would have taught them that the worship of animals is connected with this fetishism, and they would have thrown the *hares* into the sea in order to save the *human beings*.'¹⁶¹

The application of fetish and idolatry figures to relations at the time was certainly not entirely new. Immanuel Kant, for example, depicted all

158 Marx 1975j, p. 135; Marx 1975y, p. 147.

159 Marx 1975j, p. 157; Marx 1975y, p. 169. See also Boer 2012, p. 180.

160 Marx 1975h, p. 176; Marx 1975x, p. 189.

161 Marx 1975h, p. 236; Marx 1975x, pp. 262–3.

ecclesiastical image worship and the related relationship of bondage or servitude between God and man as contrary to the basic ideals of the Enlightenment. He reproached the church for ‘transforming the service of God into a mere fetish’, which ‘undoes all work towards true religion.’¹⁶² Fetish or idolatry, he argued, not only displaces religion, but also morality and human freedom: ‘so it is always a fetish belief by which the crowd rules, and by obedience to a church (not religion) is robbed of its moral freedom.’¹⁶³

The Eurocentric way of thinking that directly originated from foreign images of European settlers in Africa and ascribed the religious practices of foreign cultures to an archaic mindlessness, Kant thus turned into its opposite by drawing attention to echoes of the same pattern of thought in the heart of Europe. He was able to connect archaic elements of foreign cultures, which were originally attributed to distant lands, with church religious practices, thus showing resonances of archaic cultures in the European context, albeit in a pejorative way.

Marx too connected colonialist foreign constructs back to Europe’s own self-image. In contrast to Kant, however, Marx applied the fetish concept not only to *religion*, but also to *social* and *political relations* in Europe. From Hegel’s point of view, this would be pure anachronism: After all, the ‘rational Idea’, which for him is supposed to have left fetish and idolatry far behind in history, resists the rebirth of archaic cults. Marx, however, would not need to provide a subjectivist reinterpretation of the course of history in order for fetish to become relevant again in the modern context. In his confrontation with religious positions in Prussia, which sought to legitimise land ownership to the detriment of the people’s material interests, Marx identified structural similarities between the fetishistic practices of worship among ancient peoples and Prussian relations of power.¹⁶⁴

13 Conclusion

The contrast between the content of the *Bonn Notebooks* and Bauer’s *Trumpet* indicates that Marx’s focus went beyond the scope of Bauer’s pseudonymous pietism; art, religion and religious art took on a life of their own in Marx’s work

162 Kant 2016, p. 851 (B 275/A 259).

163 Kant 2016, p. 853 (B 278/A 259).

164 This brute fact can hardly be reconciled with the view that, until the 1850s, Marx ‘neither had a differentiated, non-Eurocentric view of colonialism, nor did he have the sources appropriate for developing an adequate understanding of pre-colonial societies at his disposal.’ See: Lindner 2011, p. 105.

beginning in March 1842. His primary undertaking, which he first discussed with Bauer probably in the summer of 1841 in Bonn (first stage), was thus abandoned in the spring of 1842. This preliminary discussion was followed by the writing of his treatise towards the end of 1841 (second stage).

There are both theoretical and practical reasons for Marx's multi-stage rupture with Bauer from early March to mid or late April. In contrast to Bauer, Marx's critique of religion did not operate on the assumption of examining the internal contradictions and scientific consistency of Protestant accounts in order to negate religion. For Bauer, religion was never a social question but rather a theological-philosophical one. Bauer put his own atheist theses into Hegel's mouth and forced the conflict between right- and left-wing Hegelian philosophies of religion. The fact that religion claims a social power and is to be understood in a socio-political context was out of the question for Bruno Bauer. Marx, for his part, had already taken issue with this subjectivist position in his dissertation.

When Marx wanted to publish his contribution for *Hegel's Doctrine* in Ruge's *Anekdotia* as an independent text at the beginning of March, he thus gave the first sign of breaking with Bauer's project (third stage). His work on the *Bonn Notebooks* deepened Marx's theoretical differences with Bauer, and accelerated the process that led Marx to depart from the *Trumpet* project. The more quotidian context – that Marx could no longer habilitate and financially secure himself in Bonn as a result of Bauer's dismissal – certainly played a role in this, and provided Marx with a reason to end their collaboration. On March 20, Marx made it clear that he wanted to take his critique of religion further and replace the account originally intended for the *Trumpet* project with a more thorough approach to the subject (fourth stage). The fetish and idolatry theme in non-European and syncretic Christian cultures with pagan practices, which went far beyond Bauer's plans for the *Trumpet* project, may already have preoccupied Marx at this time. By the end of April, Marx would speak of 'all kinds of investigations' into which he was drawn in his studies of religious art (fifth stage).

It seems plausible that Marx would have made a considerable number of his excerpts before arriving in Bonn in early April. From the beginning of May at the latest, it cannot be said for certain whether he continued with the topic of art and religion. His newspaper articles were on the agenda and possibly he no longer had the ability to continue working on the topic of religious art. As for the assumption that the place and date of writing the notebooks must conform with the title 'Bonn 1842', it should be remarked that it was previously assumed that Marx stayed in Bonn from the beginning of April to the end of May. Erhard Kiehbaum's reconstruction of the chronology shows that Marx hardly ever

stayed in Bonn in May. If Marx did indeed write his Bonn notebooks during his stay in Bonn in the spring of 1842, he would have succeeded in doing so within four weeks while he was also working for the *Rheinische Zeitung*. According to Marx's letters to Ruge, however, this possibility is not very convincing, as he states there that from April he only worked on the religious-art essay with interruptions, and even then hardly at all.

Marx broke new ground with his studies on the history of religious art. In his critical examination of contemporary religious politics, he became aware of clear parallels between archaic pagan worship practices and contemporary strategies for the legitimation of social policy in Prussia: Fetish objects and personality cults were still present in nineteenth-century social life. Accordingly, Hegel's view of history, which did not allow for any return of earlier manifestations of spirit in the present, could not, in Marx's view, offer any explanation for current religious questions. Bauer's strategy of using Hegel to surpass him in the criticism of religion would therefore have to come to nothing. Feuerbach's alternative of defending atheism against Hegel therefore seemed more appropriate to Marx. He openly expressed this change of position in his letter to Ruge on March 20. Marx only worked out a systematic critique of Hegel and Bauer, however, in the period of 1843 to 1847. At that time he also parted company with Feuerbach as well.

Translated by Zachary Murphy King

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