CHAPTER 5

Schopenhauer's Polemics
Kant, Hegel, and the Young Hegelians

Schopenhauer on Kant, Hegel, and the Young Hegelians

Schopenhauer did not present an elaborate political theory and never published a book-length treatise on the topic. Yet he had a defined conception of politics, and it became quite visible in his critical engagements with the dominant philosophers of his time, especially Kant and Hegel. Many of his thoughts on politics, one could say, emerged in his polemics. In his critique of Kant's ethics, Schopenhauer claimed that the Kantian moral theory, with its emphasis on rationality, was in fact a concealed political theory. In his critique of Hegel's political philosophy, Schopenhauer claimed that the Hegelian philosophy of right confused politics, religion, and morality for the purpose of satisfying the demands of the Prussian state. Schopenhauer may have a reputation as an apolitical thinker, but some of his major criticisms of two of the most influential philosophers of his age were deeply and unmistakably informed by his conception of politics.

It is not surprising that Schopenhauer's understanding of politics emerges in texts written *against* the philosophies of other thinkers. As mentioned before, Schopenhauer wished to develop a critical delimitation of politics by defining it clearly and narrowly as a particular kind of activity with a bounded area of legitimacy. According to him, political action was synonymous with rational strategies for self-preservation and mutual protection in societies of aggressively egoistic individuals. Politics had no other aim, no higher dignity, no deeper significance than to mitigate the effects of inevitable strife among "individuated centers of relentless craving."[1] The purpose of politics was to reduce the degree of manifest conflict in the spatiotemporal world of representation, but political efforts were typically grounded in egoism, not in metaphysical insight about this world's constitution. Politics did not address the fundamental pathology of existence; it imposed constraints on a defective condition but

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

did nothing to sedate the metaphysical will. Against this backdrop, one can see why Schopenhauer's thoughts on politics frequently assumed a negative form. He thought that the modest and bounded character of politics was being ignored in the philosophies of this time, or rather, inflated and manipulated, and he wanted to return to a properly minimal definition.

Yet the study of Schopenhauer's polemics also reveals how the confrontation with influential thinkers whom he initially considered disingenuous or deceptive nonetheless prompted him to admit that his minimalistic conception of politics remained unpersuasive to many. Amid sometimes bitter assaults, Schopenhauer conceded that the spurious metaphysical and theological elements mixed into politics were in fact useful for the state. His diatribes contained a learning process through which he came to accept (but not fully embrace) the role of ideology in extracting norm compliance from individuals.

Yet this is not the end of the story. There is a final twist, which involves the so-called Young Hegelians. This was a group of thinkers who, much like Schopenhauer, had experienced the hegemony of Hegelian thought in the first decades of the nineteenth century but had begun to break out of Hegel's school in ways that Schopenhauer noticed and to some degree even endorsed. When Schopenhauer publicly shared his reckoning with conservative, regime-supported Hegelianism, philosophically disappointed and academically disenfranchised students of Hegel had already distanced themselves from orthodox and government-endorsed readings of their former teacher. However, these critical Hegelians took aim at precisely the purely strategic conception of politics for which Schopenhauer stood, and they did so in the name of a future society of communal cooperation. In his engagements with Kant, Hegel, and the Hegelian school, Schopenhauer set out to debunk bombastic rhetoric and quasi-theological ideas of politics in the name of greater sobriety and realism. Yet at the same time, his own minimalist conception of politics as strategic schemes of mutual protection in a world of latent war was exposed as a bourgeois ideology with a theological dimension.

Schopenhauer against Kant: The Politics of Pseudo-Theological Morality

Schopenhauer's critique of Kant's moral thought takes up a large section of his 1840 work *On the Basis of Morals*. It has clear implications for a reconstruction of his conception of politics. Simply put, Schopenhauer argued that Kant's ethics was at bottom a political theory, not a moral one.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

Specifically, he identified in Kant's characterization of moral action the structure of strategic and hence political action, which he had already discussed in his major work, *The World as Will and Representation*. As discussed in Chapter 2, Schopenhauer understood politics as the regulation of human strife by means of human reason. In the realm of representation, individuals are particles of a fragmented metaphysical will pitted against one another in endless battles over resources for self-perpetuation. Insofar as the world *appears*, it appears as a war among egoists oblivious to their distorted metaphysical unity. But reason, construed by Schopenhauer as an instrumental faculty in the service of the will, allows for a coordinated exit out of the war of all against all. The rational egoists can weigh the likely suffering that they will experience at the hands of others against the pleasure that they might win by doing others harm and conclude that an arrangement of mutual restraint would be in their own interest. The reciprocal restraint is guaranteed by the contractual establishment of a state with the power to legislate and impose punishments. The incentive to enter a pact of mutual restraint with others and the incentive to abide by the law of the once-established state are one and the same: anticipation of suffering at the hands of someone else. The individuals undergo no alchemical change in this narrative of state formation; they are at all times deterred from taking violent, egoistic action against others because they grasp the consequences for themselves. Fearful anticipation of suffering first leads them to grant a monopoly of violence to a centralized body, a state, and fearful anticipation of punishment by this state makes them comply with its laws. Rational thinking in the service of the will thus enables coordinated action that culminates in the erection of a state as well as orderly and enduring subordination under this political authority.

Schopenhauer approached Kant's ethics equipped with this conception of strategic collective action, formulated well before his treatise on morality, which was his entry in the prize contest of the Danish Royal Society in 1840. In the text on ethics, he reinterpreted Kant's account of morality with his own account of rational collective behavior in mind. The political reinterpretation of Kant is exemplified by Schopenhauer's construal of the first principle of morality in the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), which reads: "Act only in accordance with that maxim, of which you *can* at the same time *will* that it should become valid as a universal law for all rational beings" (BM: 155). For Schopenhauer, Kant's requirement that rational subjects act in accordance with noncontradictory maxims hid a mechanism of mutuality ultimately rooted in egoism. Individuals are

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

indeed willing to act in accordance with maxims that can be elevated to universal laws, Schopenhauer conceded, but this is because they are perfectly capable of imagining *themselves* as the future beneficiaries of the consistent, law-bound actions of others. They may recognize that they should not steal from others, but their ultimate motivation is that they do not want *others* to steal from *them* and believe that stealing can be curbed if every member of a large society adheres to the same standard of action. Rational humans, in other words, will follow basic rules that meet Kant's criterion of noncontradiction, but they will tend to do so out of self-interest; in these cases, Schopenhauer established, it is "really egoism that sits in the judge's chair" (BM: 156–7). For Schopenhauer, Kant's principle serves to inform self-interested individuals about the kind of action that will most likely safeguard their own well-being *over time*. According to his critique, the Kantian moral principle is a means to an end for the individual, and Kantian moral actions – performed in accordance with maxims that can be elevated to universal laws – are in fact "prudently" strategic actions based on "presupposed *reciprocity*" and carried out with future interactions in mind (BM: 157).[2]

By exposing what he took to be the concealed strategic core of Kantian moral action, Schopenhauer relegated Kant's theory of morality to the domain of politics. Kant's account of "moral obligation," he wrote, rested on assumed mutuality and even rational cooperation, on people treating each other as they wished to be treated, and hence it ultimately involved forecasting the behavior of calculating and future-oriented individuals, all driven by a concern with safety. It was, in other words, "thoroughly egoistic" (BM: 157). The principle of reciprocity spelled out by Kant in the philosophical form of noncontradiction, Schopenhauer continued, was eminently suitable for the establishment of a state, since state construction depends on everyone committing themselves to act a certain way on condition that everyone else does the same. For Schopenhauer, then, Kant's supposed principle of morality was primarily a principle of rational political action in a large, impersonal society that depended on "coordinating mechanisms."[3] Kant's moral theory was a political theory.

In his critique, Schopenhauer also took aim at the "legislatory-imperative form" of Kant's morality (BM: 125). A large part of his examination of Kantian ethics consists of a closer look at the key words of Kant's moral philosophy – law, ought, duty, respect – and an analysis of their theological derivation. Sensitive to literary style, Schopenhauer was partly making a linguistic point. He noted that the concepts of law and obligation had a religious source, namely, "the Mosaic Decalogue" (BM: 127),

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

and that this could be gleaned from Kant's occasionally antiquated orthography, which tellingly adhered to the German biblical spelling of a command "*thou shalt*" (BM: 126). Yet Schopenhauer's broader claim was that Kant presented his morality as if it was rooted solely in reason, although its strict imperative character nonetheless retained its form from Christian theology and hence remained "theological morals" (BM: 127). Above all, Kant's reliance on the form of laws and commandments presupposed an authoritative source or a "commanding voice" (BM: 128), and ultimately a divine being that would legislate, demand obedience, and punish transgressions and violations. It was impossible, Schopenhauer asserted, to isolate the vocabulary of law, command, and duty from the theological context in which the vocabulary had originated: "Separated from the theological presuppositions from which they issued, these concepts [of commanding and obeying, law and duty] really lose all meaning" (BM: 127). In Schopenhauer's unmasking of Kantian morality, the dictatorial style of promulgated duties and commands betrayed that deontological ethics remained tethered to theology through a continued reliance on the now elided existence of a supremely powerful being, a being that could demand obedience.

The theological style of Kantian ethics, Schopenhauer further implied, was itself derived from unmistakably legal and political contexts. This, too, becomes clear in Schopenhauer's conceptual analyses, which traced the meaning of key words of morality back to sociohistorical settings and human arrangements. The primary and original meaning of law, Schopenhauer first remarked, was that of a "human institution, resting on human choice" for the regulation of human actions, and all other uses of the concept must be tropological or metaphorical (BM: 126). In support of this view, Schopenhauer cited Locke as saying that the concept of law is intrinsically connected to some notion of a punishment for lawbreakers: "we must," Locke wrote, "where-ever we suppose law, suppose also some reward or punishment annexed to that law" (BM: 128). Law does not meaningfully exist in the absence of an institution with means to enforce legal rules through imposing costs on violators, which is to say in the absence of some rudimentary communal structure with the means to deter self-interested subjects. Prescriptions qualify as laws by virtue of their link to sanctions that charge the prescriptions with a real "power to oblige."[4] When Kant posited moral laws, Schopenhauer implied, he relied on a hidden political context in which laws are made and enforced by human beings to keep order and peace among people prone to conflict and aggression.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

Schopenhauer likewise scrutinized the concept of duty. Here again Schopenhauer first claimed that Kant's view of morality as a doctrine of duty with an imperative form "undeniably stems" from "theological morals," and specifically from the decalogue (BM: 129). Then he added that the concept of duty ultimately made sense only in the context of hierarchical relationships, such as those between "master and servant, superior and subordinate, regime and subject" (BM: 129), in which the lower-rung party has defined obligations as well as rights. The notion of duty, Schopenhauer argued, had entered Kantian morality through theology, but theology in turn mirrored political relationships of subordination. In the case of law and the case of duty, then, Schopenhauer sought to expose the ultimately political frame of Kantian concepts by supplementing Kant's purified moral vocabulary with a concealed human-political context. Law made no sense without the threat of a punishment meted out *by* someone; duty made no sense without the assignation of a particular obligation *to* someone; and respect made no sense without obedience *to* someone.

Schopenhauer's critique of Kant thus assumed the form of something like a critical genealogy. First, he revealed that the terms of Kantian morality had their source in theology. Second, he revealed that these theological terms were in turn derived from rudimentary political arrangements. In the course of this double exposure, Schopenhauer disputed that Kant was able develop a genuine moral philosophy. Behind the Kantian principle of reasoning as a guide to ethically sound action, Schopenhauer discerned prudentially motivated subjects able to prognosticate that reciprocity among humans would most likely keep them safe over the long term. And behind the imperative form of Kantian moral discourse, Schopenhauer detected a typology of human hierarchies (lord and servant, regime and subject) in which individuals gave and received commands, declared and adhered to rules, fulfilled duties and claimed rights, and did so strategically, that is, out of concern for their own well-being in the face of likely sanctions. Ultimately, Schopenhauer took Kantian morality to be dependent on the notion of a sovereign, construed as a singular being authorized to make law and impose punishment in a society of egoists. The secret core of Kant's ethics of law, imperative, duty, and respect was, according to Schopenhauer, the "commanding voice" to which self-interested but "prudent" subjects respond with calculated "obedience" (BM: 128).[5]

Schopenhauer has the reputation of an utterly apolitical thinker, and his set of assumptions about politics is admittedly slender. As his

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

reinterpretation of Kantian morality shows, however, he made ample critical use of his conception of politics. He mobilized his understanding of strategically acting individuals to read Kant suspiciously, and to see in the rhetoric of pure duty the prudential techniques of self-preservation. When turning to the polemical sections of Schopenhauer's philosophy, then, one discovers how his allegedly narrow political imagination proved highly generative. In the confrontation with Kant, he even developed something like a political hermeneutic by which he could reconstruct the human dynamics of strategic negotiation under the cover of a prescriptive ethics.

Schopenhauer's 1840 tract on morality even stands as the culmination point of the theory of politics and the state that he first formulated in *The World as Will and Representation* about two decades earlier. It is no coincidence that one finds the most succinct statements on statehood in all of Schopenhauer's oeuvre in the 1840 essay submission on Kantian morality. Returning to his early ideas about politics, he pithily lauded the state as the "masterpiece of the self-comprehending, rational, accumulated egoism of all" (BM: 188) and explained, in no more than two sentences, how individuals could escape the "disadvantageous consequences of universal egoism" by constructing, out of "mutual fear of mutual force," a state with the means to keep peace (BM: 192).

On the Basis of Morals also constitutes something of a turning point in Schopenhauer's thinking about politics in relation to theology and religion. Schopenhauer still deemed a powerful state indispensable to human order and explicitly stated that religious norms alone could not discipline natural egoists intent on ensuring their survival and satisfying their acquisitive desires – "the effect of all religions on morality is really very slight" (BM: 222). If religious convictions restrained individuals from committing harmful acts to others, Schopenhauer argued, this was only because these individuals feared God in the same ways as they feared the state: they would act morally because they sought to avoid some (heavenly) "punishment" and want to obtain some (heavenly) "reward" (BM: 223). Yet in the 1840 text Schopenhauer also recognized a universal human metaphysical need, called religion a "metaphysics of the people" (BM: 195), and observed that governments typically seek to pacify their populations by satisfying the popular need for metaphysical clarification. In *On the Basis of Morals*, Schopenhauer thus acknowledged an ideologically supportive role for religious creeds in state affairs, a position that passages in the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation* (1844) and *Parerga and Paralipomena* (1851) would elaborate further. It is in these later works that Schopenhauer more explicitly conceded that a

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

state, with its monopoly of violence, might still want to consolidate its authority over a population by annexing the religious "monopoly of metaphysical cognition" (WWR II: 195).

On the Basis of Morals thus represents a kind of pivot. Its first part contains a political demasking of the dominant philosophical ethics of Schopenhauer's lifetime, namely, Kantian ethics. It is here that Schopenhauer exposed how the imperative-legalistic form of Kantian moral thought betrayed a continued dependence on a theological conception of a "commanding voice," which in turn was modeled on political relationships of subjection. But in the passages on the state in the tract's second part, the part devoted to an alternative to Kantian ethics, Schopenhauer hinted at the potential political use value of religion. When dealing with fickle populations capable of mayhem, he wrote in reference to Roman political prudence, few means of pacification were better than soothing superstitions and "religious delusion" (BM: 208).

In his polemical engagement with Hegel, however, Schopenhauer addressed more openly how a deified political system might come to exercise a more complete control over an otherwise restive population. And as his often-desperate attacks on Hegel indicate, this vision of a more openly theologized state provoked in him both dread and admiration, fury and resignation. To Schopenhauer, Hegel's system was simultaneously philosophically oppressive and politically clever.

Schopenhauer in the Epoch of Hegel

Schopenhauer's relationships to Kant and Hegel were different in character. It was not simply the case that he revered Kant and loathed Hegel, or considered Kant a great thinker and Hegel a charlatan, although that is superficially true. Instead, he related to Kant as one of history's most important philosophers and took great care to reconstruct, elucidate, and criticize his thought, and he related to Hegel partly as an institutional-political phenomenon, an intricate, well-structured complex of discursive domination that should be analyzed as a large-scale attempt to maintain influence and power. Kant was a name for a body of thought of which Schopenhauer was a legatee, whereas Hegel was ultimately a name for a social and political collective that conspired to suppress the insights of his own post-Kantian philosophy. In short, he treated Kant as a towering predecessor and Hegel as a lethally successful rival in the crucial post-Kantian "attention space."[6] According to Schopenhauer, Kant's philosophical achievement

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

must be closely understood and constructively corrected, whereas Hegel's massive sociopolitical influence must be aggressively rejected.

Schopenhauer's analytical and critical treatment of Kant is evident. In the 1840 tract on the morality, Schopenhauer justified his turn to Kant with the argument that the Kantian philosophy of practical reason had been the dominant philosophical ethics of the "last sixty years" and that no alternative ethical thought could be constructed without a sustained critical engagement with Kant's major works (BM: 121). The first part of *On the Basis of Morals* consists precisely of such a critical engagement, primarily with *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785), and to a lesser extent with the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788). Throughout the work, Schopenhauer's mode of engagement is interpretive and argumentative. In contrast, philosophical analysis is almost absent from his treatment of Hegel, and his attacks are still notorious for their bitter and invective-filled diatribes against "corrupt views," "hollow phrases," "vacuous drivel," and "repulsive" jargon (PP I: 149). Although Schopenhauer encountered Hegel already in 1813, his philosophy did not influence him: Hegel meant next to nothing for his "path of development" as a thinker.[7] When he did analyze Hegel philosophically later in life, Schopenhauer did not stage a systematic examination of an argument, but instead assembled what he considered a handful of egregious errors, sufficiently damning to justify non-engagement. In the 1840 preface to the first edition of *Two Fundamental Problems of Morality*, of which *On the Basis of Morals* forms one part, Schopenhauer reacted to the Danish Royal Academy's rebuke of his Hegel critique by selecting three passages from the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, which he termed a "students' compendium," to then point to logical errors, a lack of common human understanding, and a disastrously poor grasp of natural science (FW: 16). Schopenhauer's aim was never to reconstruct and critically examine Hegel's argumentative edifice, but to expose "nonsensical gibberish" as efficiently as possible with a few quick illustrations (FW: 19).

It would not be quite right, however, to claim that the main target of Schopenhauer's criticism was Hegel. It was, rather, Hegelianism in the sense that Schopenhauer understood Hegel as inseparable from his formidable and sustained influence on the field of philosophy and the larger culture. Schopenhauer even thought that Hegel's philosophy consisted in *nothing but* the goal of amassing influence and recruiting devotees. Its content and style were designed for the purpose of becoming the "dominant philosophy" of its time (PP I: 155). Hegelianism must, he thought, primarily be treated as a phenomenon of hegemony that rested on a

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

self-reinforcing alliance between philosophical doctrines and political rule, university teaching and bureaucratic government. When Schopenhauer provided brief summaries of Hegelian philosophy rather than attacking isolated examples of "stupidity" (FW: 17), he argued that it was eminently suitable to the purpose of maintaining state rule in Prussia and noted that this quality naturally endeared it to the state bureaucracy. In Schopenhauer's eyes, Hegelianism was a label for a system in which an inauthentic, blatantly state-friendly philosophy supported the established regime and was rewarded for its service with disciplinary-institutional dominance at state-funded universities. For Schopenhauer, Hegel, or Hegelianism, was characterized by a will to dominance, a cartel-like character, and a near-monopoly on official philosophical production. His analysis of Hegel thus assumed the form of a quasi-sociological analysis of the content and function of an ideology in a particular political setting. According to Schopenhauer, Kant's philosophy had to be carefully analyzed to break its enduring hold over ethical thought, whereas Hegel's philosophy had to be contextualized in terms of its material appeal to various constituencies that propped it up.

It is easy to feel that Schopenhauer was consumed by resentment against a much more successfully established philosophical rival. It seems that he tended to blame failures that had other causes, such as his unpleasant personality and flawed career strategy, on the supposedly undeserved popularity of another philosophy. But Schopenhauer's time in Berlin, and his series of attempts to gain a position in academia, really did coincide with the two-decade period of the most extensive Hegelian influence. A comparison between the key dates of the two philosophers' professional biographies shows that Hegel was always several steps ahead of Schopenhauer, and typically occupied positions that the younger philosopher coveted. A middle-aged man when Schopenhauer was in his early twenties, Hegel was, one could say, always one whole academic career ahead of his younger colleague.

Schopenhauer was born in February 1788, about eighteen years after Hegel (1770–1831). When Schopenhauer finished his dissertation, in 1813, Hegel had already published the first and most famous of his major works, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). When the first edition of *The World as Will and Representation* appeared late in 1818, finished the same year by the then thirty-year-old Schopenhauer, the nearly fifty-year-old Hegel had completed all his major philosophical contributions except the *Philosophy of Right*, which came out in 1821. The career lag and resulting asymmetry of influence between Hegel and Schopenhauer became

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

painfully clear in a particular place – Berlin. Hegel, who understood that he would not exercise any influence without obtaining a chair in philosophy at a major university,[8] accepted a professorship in Heidelberg in 1816 and then moved to Berlin in 1818, to assume Fichte's old chair in philosophy, unfilled since 1814. Hegel remained in this position until his death in 1831. Schopenhauer had already lived in Berlin as a student for about two years, between the fall of 1811 and spring 1813, when Hegel was a rector in Nuremberg, but at the end of that decade, in 1819, he returned to Berlin and effectively chose the Prussian capital as the setting in which to try to launch an academic career. Schopenhauer and Hegel were thus both in Berlin throughout the 1820s. While Hegel steadily offered well-visited lecture series in the city, gained a greater audience among students, and recruited a larger number of devoted disciples, Schopenhauer's career never took off. His lectures were listed in the Berlin university prospectus for no less than three different periods during the decade,[9] but he never experienced success, left the city several times for trips to Italy, moved around and stayed in other German towns for a few years, and occasionally made inquiries about academic posts elsewhere, none of which materialized. By the time Hegel eventually passed away in 1831, Schopenhauer was approaching his mid-forties, had no career prospects, and left Berlin for good, fleeing the cholera epidemic that took Hegel's life. When Schopenhauer decided where to live next, in Mannheim or in Frankfurt, the presence or absence of a university made no difference to him. Instead, he decided where to live based on other concerns, such as climate, crime levels, good restaurants, cultural establishments, and entertainment venues.[10]

Hegel was thus a published philosopher before Schopenhauer was a published philosopher. He obtained a prestigious post as a professor of philosophy in Berlin before Schopenhauer held his first test lecture to qualify as an unsalaried academic employee in the same city. And finally, Hegel attracted a cohort of loyal students and colleagues during a decade in which Schopenhauer remained isolated at the same university. All in all, Schopenhauer's long decade of serious academic ambition coincided quite neatly with Hegel's period of greatest academic influence.

Schopenhauer was not entirely wrong when he claimed in the 1840s that Hegel's influence was nearly "incalculable" among his contemporaries, and that he had touched – and according to Schopenhauer paralyzed – an entire "generation of scholars" (PP I: 156). As a professor in Berlin, Hegel did set out to build a school, and even tried to establish his philosophy as the very frame of a collective worldview at the university. He also believed

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

that this system of thought could provide a secure foundation for a satisfying and self-comprehending but much wider, extramural communal life. Hegel ambitiously aimed to provide his time with an academic philosophy, a collective program of university study, and a broader social ethos. To achieve this comprehensive influence, Hegel tried to guide appointments at the university and the gymnasiums, as well as shape the curricula of study that would in turn shape the education of whole cohorts of pupils.[11] In line with the key Hegelian idea that extant social and governmental structures could be made transparent to rational thought and reformed to deserve the ratification of the modern citizens integrated into them, Hegel also actively encouraged his students to seek employment in vocations outside the university, in bureaucracy and the professions.[12] He believed that they should seek to break the isolation of philosophical study, enter the larger world, and find satisfaction in practical and administrative activities connected to the state. Schopenhauer was thus not exaggerating wildly when he asserted that Hegelianism had become the philosophy of a whole social universe of "barristers, lawyers, doctors, candidates, and teachers" (PP I: 132). For Schopenhauer, the educated groups of society were suffused with a rival philosophy; he found himself in a Hegelian world.

At the very least, Schopenhauer had been kept out of serious academic employment by a Hegel-dominated university philosophy. During the decade that he sought to establish himself as a significant post-Kantian philosopher, a thinker who returned to Kantian epistemology and yet vitally broke new ground with a philosophy of the will that disclosed the thing-in-itself,[13] Hegel became the increasingly dominant Idealist after Kant and Fichte thanks to an extensive network of well-placed allies and followers. Since Hegel and Schopenhauer were both devoted to developing a post-Kantian philosophy and sought the attention of the same university-educated stratum, the older philosopher's great influence really did make Schopenhauer a peripheral (and predictably bitter) supernumerary.[14]

Hegelian dominance was supported by an impressive network of supporters. In Berlin in the 1820s, Hegel had sympathetic colleagues in adjacent disciplines such as the theologian Philip Marheineke (1780–1846). Marheineke had been recruited to a professorship in Berlin the same year as Hegel and adapted Hegelian thought to claim that philosophical reason was not corrosive of the Christian faith but rather confirmed it.[15] Among academics a little closer to Schopenhauer's age, Hegel also found devoted younger defenders such as Leopold Henning (1791–1866), whom Hegel introduced to an academic career around

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

1820 and who was eventually appointed associate or "extraordinary" professor of philosophy in Berlin in 1825. Henning used the position to give lecture series that conveyed Hegel's thought in more comprehensible but also more rigid form.[16] A similar but less dogmatic and epigonal figure was Eduard Gans (1797–1839), a Jewish student whom Hegel favored but whose career prospects were blocked until he converted to the Evangelical Church in 1825. In the latter half of the 1820s, Gans advanced to a professor of law in Berlin and then assumed responsibility for Hegel's lecture course on the philosophy of right.[17] He also organized a general academic defense of Hegelian legal thought in academia against the rival Historical school. Both Henning and Gans thus taught Hegel's philosophy,[18] and they also served Hegelian thought in organizational capacities, for instance, as editors of the Hegelian philosophical journal that began to appear toward the end of the 1820s.[19]

In addition, Hegel's disciples came to occupy positions of cultural importance outside academia. For instance, the Hegel student Friedrich Förster (1791–1868), a military historian, worked as a journalist in the service of the Prussian regime and the director of a few Berlin museums, such as the royal art cabinet and the ethnological museum. The most important of these academy-adjacent followers was probably the energetic Johannes Schulze (1786–1869), a civil servant in the Prussian bureaucracy who conscientiously followed Hegel's early lecture series in 1819–21. As a good friend to Hegel, Schulze helped shape the Prussian educational landscape as a high official in the recently founded ministry of education, or Kultusministerium, during four decades, from 1818 to his retirement in 1858, working directly under its minister, Baron von Altenstein (1770–1840), for about twenty years.[20] Altenstein rarely reversed Schulze's suggestions for appointments and promotions.[21] The close collaboration and mutual assistance between Hegelian philosophy and the regime that Schopenhauer resentfully attacked did in fact exist, at least in the form of the "personal friendship, practical cooperation, and intellectual agreement" between Hegel and Schulze, the chair of philosophy at the Berlin university and the influential bureaucrat in the Prussian ministry of education.[22] Although he was likely without a very detailed familiarity with the various people who constituted a Hegelian network in Berlin, Schopenhauer was certain of the existence of an alliance between university philosophy and the Prussian regime.

Hegel did have something along the lines of what Schopenhauer called a "great army" around him (PP I: 130). From the 1820s on, he enjoyed the support of established colleagues in the professoriate (e.g., Marheineke),

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

popularizers and enforcers in a younger academic generation (e.g., Henning and Gans), sympathizers in the wider cultural scene (e.g., Förster), and key figures in the state administration (e.g., Schulze). Schopenhauer also noticed the emergence of Hegelian historiographers, academics such as Karl Ludwig Michelet (1801–93) and Karl Theodor Bayrhoffer (1812–88), who in the late 1830s produced histories that pointed to Hegel as the culmination of philosophy, as the "peak and perfection" of 2,000 years of human thought.[23] Hegelian philosophy was not only popularized, defended, or applied to more fields (such as art history or literary history) by his followers,[24] but also historically contextualized and canonized.

As early as the mid-1820s, adopting Hegelianism as an attitude and worldview could seem a wise career move for a student born in the last years of the eighteenth and first years of the nineteenth century. This was quite apparent to Schopenhauer himself. In 1823, the classical philologist and Jena professor Friedrich Osann (1794–1858) wrote to Schopenhauer in Italy saying that Hegel was "the great God" who saved everyone who "worshipped" him and made sure they received academic appointments.[25] As Schopenhauer's comments indicate, he was acutely aware of the fact that the reception of his philosophy was delayed or denied not simply because of timeless obtuseness, but because of Hegel's dominance in a specific, delimited period – because of the "great army" of Hegelians. In the 1840 preface to the first edition of *The Two Fundamental Problems of Morality*, Schopenhauer noted that the absurd circulation of nonsense that was "Hegelry" had gone on for two decades, that is, from about 1820 to 1840 (FW: 23). He thus dated the beginning of the period of Hegelian influence to Hegel's very first years in Berlin, which of course were also his own early years in the same city after his time as a student. A few years later, Schopenhauer offered a slightly different starting date for the epoch of Hegelian dominance. In *Parerga and Paralipomena*, published in 1851 but written earlier, he claimed that the "repulsive and nonsensical gibberish" of "Hegelian pseudo-wisdom" dominated for about "twenty years" (PP I: 130), but this claim put the starting date of Hegelian dominance somewhere in the mid-1820s. This might be a more accurate dating since the Hegelian school did not coalesce immediately upon Hegel's arrival at the Prussian capital but grew stronger over the first years of the 1820s. In the same preface, Schopenhauer also noted the incipient dissolution of Hegelianism, an observation that indicates that his own efforts at gaining an academic position happened to take place during the apex of Hegel's influence. Gleefully, the almost sixty-year-old

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

Schopenhauer could point out that the mass of Hegel followers had scattered into small groups of "stragglers" and radical "marauders," and that Hegelianism had lived on for a while under the banner *Hallische Jahrbücher* (1838–45), the organ of the Young Hegelians under the editorial leadership of Arnold Ruge (1802–80) (PP I: 130). Schopenhauer also discerned another sign of waning Hegelian influence in the recruitment of the elderly "Herr von Schelling" (1775–1854) to Berlin from Munich in 1841, approved by the pious Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV (1795–1861) in the second year of his reign (PP I: 131). In the mid-1840s, then, Schopenhauer saw the Hegelianism that blocked his career disintegrate into sect-like formations with communist tendencies – the Young Hegelians[26] – and be replaced at the university by a more mystically inclined Prussian regime under a new king. He clearly understood both these movements, one more radical than Hegel and one more conservative, to be sequels to the "Hegel-farce" (PP I: 131). But even if the successors made no significant improvement on the idiocies of Hegel, he thought German philosophy had entered a new phase.

Schopenhauer declared the definite end of Hegelianism one final time, in the second preface of *Two Fundamental Problems of Morality* (1860). From 1840 to 1860, wrote the over seventy-year-old Schopenhauer in the year of his death, Hegel's reputation had become much deflated. The charlatan philosopher had at last taken "strong strides towards the contempt that awaits him in posterity" (FW: 29). Schopenhauer lived to see his own reputation rise in a post-Hegelian moment,[27] thanks to factors such as internal Hegelian dissension and monarchical regime change, but also to the efforts of a growing number of nonacademic devotees and disappointed Hegelians such as Julius Frauenstädt.[28] Schopenhauer's post-Kantian philosophy finally received the attention previously claimed by older, more established post-Kantians. In his own estimation, Schopenhauer happily managed to survive the exceptionally well-organized and yet limited epoch of Hegelian dominance.

Schopenhauer against Hegel: The Politics of State Deification

When Schopenhauer examined the Hegelian epoch and tried to make sense of Hegel's dominance during the key years of his adulthood, his thirties and forties, he did not focus on the complex argumentative moves of Hegel's philosophy. Shaped by his own experience of the great Hegelian influence discussed above, he instead examined what one could call the institutional base of a mutually supportive academic and political

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

hegemony. Needless to say, Schopenhauer did not take Hegel's public importance as a straightforward verification of the truth content of Hegelian philosophy. Rather, he pointed to its ideological appeal to two interlocking constituencies, the ministerial elite in the Prussian state and the larger mass of professionals who served it. In Schopenhauer's view, Hegelian thought mobilized vaguely religious rhetoric to deify statehood in a way that endeared it to the Prussian regime but also managed to enhance the self-image of all the people who occupied the regime's various administrative branches and adjacent institutions.

In his most sustained reckoning with Hegelianism as a hegemonic formation, "On University Philosophy," Schopenhauer noted that all political regimes, or at least all German states he knew, demanded that philosophy must harmonize with the teachings of the established church. From the perspective of a government, a philosopher at a state-funded university should not contradict or question the pronouncements made by thousands of ministers and teachers of religion across the land. The state always wanted all the didactic institutions of the land – the local schools, local churches, and universities – to transmit a uniform message to the population, one that was both morally edifying and politically useful. As the most sophisticated form of rational analysis available, university philosophy must therefore be prepared to serve the political regime by supplying an "apology," a systematic argumentative defense of church doctrine (PP I: 126). Schopenhauer also believed that philosophers would be punished by the state for any hint of dissidence. He recounted how, in the late 1790s, Fichte had insisted on seeing philosophy as an autonomous exercise of thinking to then be dismissed from his professorship in Jena in 1799 by Duke Carl August of Saxe-Weimar. Fichte had not even actively argued against the church and for atheism, Schopenhauer observed, but had merely chosen to "omit" church teaching from his argument (PP I: 127). Schopenhauer noted, however, that Fichte changed his tune once he was forced to rescue his own career. As an independent scholar-writer and later professor in Prussian Berlin, Fichte obligingly provided his philosophical arguments with a "Christian coating" in books such as *Guide to a Blessed Life* from 1806 (PP I: 127). Philosophers interested in continued state employment, Schopenhauer stated with great conviction, must make sure that their philosophical works fit smoothly with the dominant religious doctrine.

According to Schopenhauer, Hegel had learned the lesson from his predecessor Fichte extremely well. In Hegelianism, Schopenhauer argued, philosophy fused with religion, which protected it from regime

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

penalization. In Schopenhauer's telling, Hegel made sure to integrate religion into his philosophy of the absolute in a way captured by the Hegelian coinage "absolute religion" (PP I: 128). The large numbers of Hegelians then followed suit by teaching not only that religion neatly coheres with philosophy but that they "really are the same" (PP I: 128). As an example of obviously tendentious philosophizing, Schopenhauer mentioned a programmatic text entitled *On the Piety of True Philosophy as Compared with Religion*, by Georg Andreas Gabler (1786–1853), and added that the title could serve as a fitting inscription over a "philosophical sheep stall" (PP I: 129). Gabler was an unremarkable but reliably dogmatic Hegel student from Hegel's Jena period (1801–7)[29] whom the Prussian ministry awarded with Hegel's chair in philosophy in 1835;[30] he has been called the least original and dullest of all Hegelians.[31] To Schopenhauer, the merger of philosophy and religion was a case of politically desirable piety so absurd that it hardly warranted serious philosophical examination. Instead, Schopenhauer spoke of the Hegelian "philosophy of religion" as nothing but a fantastical hybrid – the "centaur" of academic philosophy (PP I: 128).

In a move that pleased the regime even more, and seemed more troubling to Schopenhauer, Hegel's philosophy also pointed to a fusion of religion and the state. Hegel did not seek to consecrate kingship or argue for some form of theocracy, but Schopenhauer identified in Hegel's political thought a deification of the impersonal structure of the state. He called it an "apotheosis of the state" (PP I: 131). According to Schopenhauer, this Hegelian deification rested on the notion that the state constitutes "the absolutely perfected ethical organism" and that the state, as such an organism, represents the realization of the "whole purpose of human existence" (PP I: 132). Schopenhauer took it as a given that this idea in Hegelianism served to procure it an "unprecedented ministerial favour," for a government was likely to welcome the sanctification of the existence and stability of its apparatus (PP I: 132). In the (rather tendentious) summary of the Viennese Hegel-critic and Schopenhauer-champion Karl Popper (1902–94), Schopenhauer exposed Hegel as a "paid agent of the Prussian government," recruited to Berlin in 1818 during a particularly reactionary period of the reign of Friedrich Wilhelm III (1797–1840).[32] In Popper's Schopenhauer-inspired story, the Prussian king demanded that philosophy be strictly subordinated to the welfare of the state and liberals and reformers purged from government.[33]

At the same time, Schopenhauer noted that the Hegelian idea of the state as the highest purpose of humankind might be quite attractive to all

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

those who work for it in some capacity. To the "future barristers and soon-to-be civil servants" who populated the branches of government, there was no better philosophical preparation than a doctrine that declared specialized bureaucratic tasks to be sacred acts (PP I: 133). When the individual bureaucrat could view himself as fulfilling the highest, even religiously ordained purpose of humanity during his regular hours at his desk, he was allowed to achieve a sense of existential fulfilment through drudgery. In view of this sanctification of the state and the concomitant glorification of routine acts of administration carried out in its departments, Schopenhauer saw the "apotheosis of the state" as tantamount to an "apotheosis of philistinism" (PP I: 133). By convincing civil servants that they participated in the divine simply by being "efficient wheels," Hegelian state idolatry exploited narrow-minded overidentification with the division of bureaucratic labor in a "great machine" to the fullest degree (PP I: 133). The Marxist Georg Lukács considered this attack on Hegel's philosophy of right to be entirely accurate.[34]

There are many reasons that Schopenhauer was preoccupied with the Hegelian vision of the state, and that he approached it with both revulsion and some measure of grudging respect. He considered the "apotheosis of the state" an obvious piece of ideology, designed for maximum appeal to the Prussian state ministries and the population of "junior barristers" (PP I: 132). But his critical concerns were more extensive. In Hegel, Schopenhauer discerned a state-employed philosopher infusing the state, a construction tasked with keeping order and peace, with ethical and existential meanings that manipulated and distorted the character of several areas and activities: philosophy, of course, but also religion, politics, and ethics. For Schopenhauer, politics meant the protection of egoistic human beings from one another, an indispensable task but one that nonetheless had a mitigatory character rather than a salvific one. As a convenient construction of rationality, the state could discipline and deter will-driven individuals, but it could not dissolve the metaphysical will, the energies of which would always exceed and always trouble the "domain of reason."[35] Ethical behavior, by contrast, consisted in compassionate acts by human beings in tune with the suffering of others, and emphatically not in salaried labor for the state. Religion, further, contained stories and symbols that answered questions of a metaphysical nature, and did so in a way that was comprehensible for the philosophically unqualified majority. Philosophy, finally, was the rigorous pursuit of truth, regardless of its comprehensibility to the many, compatibility with established religion, or usefulness for states.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

With this set of definitions and clear demarcations in mind, Hegelianism appeared to Schopenhauer as a maddening mush of philosophy, theology, politics, and ethics. In his mind, Hegelian philosophy fraudulently declared the pseudo-divine character of the state and slyly suggested that subservience to this state constituted an ethical condition. Philosophy thus performed a service to the state by providing it with a religious aura, which then also allowed it to suggest that demands of morality were satisfied through state subjection. From Schopenhauer's perspective, this left philosophy corrupted, popular religion instrumentalized, ethics eclipsed, and politics grotesquely inflated. In their Hegelian combination, each dimension of human life lost its specificity, orientation, and meaning. In light of his characterization of Hegelianism, it becomes evident how Schopenhauer stood for a sharp re-differentiation of fields and institutions in the era of their Hegelian blending.

Hegel's vision of the state as a perfected organism was anathema to Schopenhauer. It suggested that all individual wills could be genuinely reconciled with one another within one coherent structure rather than merely disciplined by a coercive agent. This was indeed Hegel's idea: that freedom could be adequately exercised by subjects within a complex institutional architecture ultimately guaranteed and grounded by the modern constitutional state, which citizens would come to recognize as an objective manifestation of their own interdependence and unity. For Hegel, individuals did construe themselves as particles of will who asserted themselves and claimed dominion over and made use of things for their own satisfaction.[36] But these individuals could also, Hegel argued, come to understand and endorse how the state with its laws and activities facilitated rather than simply curbed their freedom.[37] The autonomous individual could thus begin to will the will of the collective through a rational consensus much more profoundly unifying and more stably institutionalized than in Schopenhauer's Hobbesian account of statehood.

Hegel's philosophy of right argued that the figure of the sovereign individual was "compatible with the demands of a social life," and that individual autonomy was supported and indeed *enabled by* institutional structures that culminated in a constitutionalized and bureaucratized government.[38] Individuals, Hegel taught in the 1820s, could feel fully at home in modern society. They could come to appreciate how the state managed and legitimately embodied their rational and cohesive coexistence. Social life thus appeared as a system of mutually supportive interlocking parts, the whole of which allowed its members to enjoy free and ethical lives. Even when individuals seem to act myopically, whether by

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

pursuing their own interests in the market, by engaging in specialized activities, by carrying out their prescribed administrative tasks, or simply by adhering to the rules of socially conventional morality,[39] they nonetheless participated in a well-articulated and self-sustaining collective whole. In fact, advanced society, with its legal and administrative structures, did away with the need for exceptional individuals since ethical life had assumed the form of an objective structure in which everyone was enjoined to carry out their everyday duties rather than perform heroic deeds.[40]

From the perspective of Schopenhauer's philosophy of will and representation, the mature Hegelian picture of the entirety of society was deeply suspicious. In the domain of representation, in which the unitary will is dispersed, a permanent state of hostility among individuals is unavoidable. In this realm, the state can only control manifest conflicts, not end the perennially latent strife. This condition of a muted but never eliminated war of all against all, Schopenhauer implied, could not be the ground for a perfected ethical organism, in which the actions of all were reconciled through cooperation in and mutual identification with statehood. To Schopenhauer, Hegel posited that the realm of representation, which for him was the realm of brokenness and fragmentation, was effectively self-healing and that human social life under the state could overcome its disunited and conflictual nature. Such a collective human restoration of wholeness in the domain of representation Schopenhauer held to be impossible. He believed that the state, constructed by egoistic individuals themselves out of pure self-interest, could reduce criminal violence among humans, but denied that it could redeem the metaphysically fallen nature of humanity by transforming ruthless egoism into a perfectly balanced system of mutual recognition and a collective ratification of unity. The Hegelian apotheosis of the state promised too much.

Schopenhauer's critique of philistinism is something of a key to his critique of Hegel. Inspired by Romantic thought, the young Schopenhauer had identified the philistine with complacent satisfaction.[41] The true philosopher finds life profoundly "inadequate," whereas the philistine accepts it without reservation.[42] Indeed, the philistine feels entirely "at home in life [*zu Hause im Leben*]" and thus enjoys it.[43] Contrary to the rare genius, nothing strikes him as alien or a cause for radical change or "struggle."[44] The figure of the philistine, the young Schopenhauer wrote in his notes, was well captured by the Romantic author Ludwig Tieck (1773–1853), whose works he read repeatedly.[45] In Tieck's writings, the philistine was the man at peace in the world, completely satisfied when reading a well-respected newspaper while surrounded by his well-behaved

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

family.[46] The philistine never felt an urgent desire for knowledge or for profound aesthetic experiences,[47] but preferred the comforts of the familiar.

As the Tieck reference indicates, the early Schopenhauer leaned on existing satirical portraits of snug contentment and may not have added much to the semantics of philistinism.[48] Yet, directing Romanticist ridicule of mediocrity and complacency toward abstract philosophical systems, he also spotted a general "philistinism" in the German Idealist faith in the supremacy of reason.[49] For Schopenhauer, Kant as well as his legatees were guilty of philistinism in their failure to reckon with the irrepressible passion of life – German idealists downplayed the wild, irrepressibly sensual nature of human beings and mistakenly identified rationality as the true and abiding source of moral action. For Schopenhauer, human beings are never guided by reason alone, neither in their everyday haste from want to want or urge to urge, nor in their moments of ethical nobility. As John Oxenford pointed out in his 1853 portrait of the philosopher, Schopenhauer believed that truly moral people do more than pay their "taxes" and their "church-rates."[50] They are instead capable of almost incomprehensible and seemingly nonrational acts of sacrifice, in saintly compassion with others and holy renunciation of the world. It was not, the young Schopenhauer wrote in an extended note on philistinism, "very reasonable [*höchst vernünftig*]" of Jesus to let himself be crucified.[51] Thanks to sound prudential reasoning, people can certainly restrain themselves and coordinate with one another in the construction and maintenance of a state – for Schopenhauer, too, politics consisted in the application of rationality to a volatile condition. Yet he did not think that the contractual agreement that constitutes statehood could permanently domesticate the desirous, will-driven nature of humans or that it embodied authentic human goodness. To posit the rational structure of civilized statehood as the complete reconciliation of all with all and the highest human ethical achievement, Schopenhauer implied, meant to forget or deny the unceasing will at work in each egoistic individual and the purely instrumental character of statehood but also the exceptional character of moral sacrifice.

The Hegelian view of the state as a genuine reconciliation of all with all was a form of philistinism, that is, of spurious satisfaction in this world. The "apotheosis of the state" entailed the "apotheosis of philistinism" in a simple sense, namely, by elevating narrow administrative work to the status of sacrality, of turning the bureaucrat into a quasi-moral figure. But Schopenhauer also resisted the very idea of a Hegelian philosophical

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

affirmation of statehood as a form of unwarranted contentment with the world as it is. Against this philosophy of conclusive and "total satisfaction,"[52] Schopenhauer labeled the genre of tragedy the "authentic antithesis to all philistinism,"[53] since it put a fractured world of irreconcilable conflicts on display and revealed the inescapable dissension of the will with itself.[54] In a sense, Schopenhauer felt that Hegelian state philosophy was insufficiently tragic. The Hegelian deification of the state was in the end only the most theoretically complex version of the creed of the average bourgeois family man, obtusely unaware of the never-ending violence of a world resistant to the gaze and grasp of human rationality. The social reality of strife would always "elude the powers of reason."[55] Contrary to philistine assumptions even in their most sophisticated (i.e., Hegelian) form, the world was not a cozy home.

For all his scathing criticism of Hegel's account of the state, Schopenhauer nonetheless acknowledged not just its popularity but also its political utility. Amid his diatribe, he recognized that the apotheosis of the state and its clerks could work well as a piece of ideology offered to future civil servants during their formative university years. Schopenhauer did not use the term "ideology" but considered the Hegelian political philosophy as a "measure of the state" (PP I: 132), deployed to instill loyalty and self-satisfaction in new generations of state employees. Hegelian philosophy possessed instrumental value for the monarchical regime, something that Schopenhauer conceded out of "fairness" (PP I: 132). Once the true purpose of Hegelian philosophy was recognized, namely, preparation for administrative careers, it even ceased to be quite as infuriating. Schopenhauer added with apparent calm that he had "no objection" to the state's attempt to inculcate students with work-appropriate convictions (PP I: 132).

As we know, however, Schopenhauer did have philosophical objections to the dominance of the absolute nonsense of Hegelianism, and thus his political acceptance of its creed was accompanied by bitter complaints. A few pages after demonstrating "fairness" to the Hegelian doctrine of the state by recognizing its pragmatic purpose, he again called it "scandalous," since it proclaimed that the "destiny" of humanity merged with that of the state (PP I: 138). In one and the same text, Schopenhauer first supported a state that could "maintain law, order, peace and quiet" and thus "protect the few who have been given some property" (PP I: 132), and then raged against the state-supported promotion of falsehoods and absurd gibberish as well as the consequent marginalization of his own achievements. Despite moments of cool consideration of the functional

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

value of state-friendly philosophy, Schopenhauer was not able to make lasting peace with the idea of state-supported thought. In a sense, the term for Schopenhauer's ambivalence toward the state was "Hegel." His critique of the individual philosopher Hegel was ultimately a critique of the socio-political phenomenon of Hegelianism, which in turn was a critique of the institutional interconnection between the state and university philosophy. For Schopenhauer, Kant was the name of a great but flawed thinker, whereas Hegel was the name of a core problem for Schopenhauer: the state's ideological needs.

Philosophy, Religion, and Rule: Schopenhauer and the Young Hegelians

Despite the fresh-seeming venom that oozed out of Schopenhauer's writings on Hegel, his public criticisms possessed a retrospective character. He did not publish his rants against Hegelianism until *after* giving up his hopes for an academic career.[56] And as he repeatedly lashed out at Hegelianism over the course of the late 1830s, the 1840s, and the 1850s,[57] he also acknowledged that he was increasingly dealing with a phenomenon of the past. In his writings from the early 1850s, he noted that Hegelianism's influence dissipated quickly during the conservative-Romantic Christian reign of Friedrich Wilhelm IV. He knew, too, that this decline happened by design and not by accident: the new Prussian king had brought to Berlin the aging Schelling (1775–1854) as well as the Christian political philosopher Friedrich Julius Stahl (1802–61), who in 1840 replaced the deceased Hegel student Eduard Gans as professor of law.[58] Stahl was even encouraged to use this position to combat Hegel's legacy at the university. Schopenhauer recognized that such programmatic Prussian appointments, announced with great fanfare in the newspapers of the time, marked the politically organized "sequel" to the era of genuine Hegelian hegemony (PP I: 131).

Schopenhauer's bitter rejection of the Hegelian grip on academia during his years of academic ambition survived its object of attack by at least two decades. This means that it also persisted after Hegelianism itself had split into opposing camps of conservatives and radicals in the mid-1830s. Even before Schopenhauer released his first public attack on Hegelian "mystification" in 1837 (WN: 327), in the introduction to *On Will in Nature*, Hegelianism had fractured.[59] By the time he railed openly against the "most monstrous notions" of Hegel in the later 1854 preface to the same book (WN: 314), the splintering of Hegelianism into left-wing and right-wing groups was itself part of history.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

The timeline of departures and defections of Hegelians from Hegelianism during the 1830s and 1840s is of interest here because Schopenhauer's critique of "Hegelry" from the outside was paralleled by the internal frustration of young Hegel-inspired scholars. Hegelian intellectuals such as Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–72), David Friedrich Strauß (1808–74), and Bruno Bauer (1809–82) questioned government-sanctioned philosophy's close relationship with the Christian faith and then also found themselves denied university appointments. Unlike Schopenhauer, these so-called Young Hegelians were shaped by Hegelian thought, socialized and educated as they were within the Hegelianism of the late 1820s and early 1830s. But as members of a younger generation, they were skeptical of its established philosophical-political tenets and progressively alienated from the state-funded university apparatus, and both of these positions put them closer to the Schopenhauer, the older anti-Hegelian. As exiles from the university systems and outsiders to the regimes in German states of the so-called *Vormärz* period (roughly 1830–48), they began to share some of Schopenhauer's sense of exclusion. Their philosophical works and political positions, although deeply influenced by Hegel, can therefore not be easily categorized as examples of regime-friendly "university philosophy." In terms of their socially autonomous but financially precarious position outside the institutions of the state, these young Hegelians shared more with Schopenhauer than with Hegel.[60]

To be clear, the Young Hegelians never became allies of the older, cantankerous philosopher, and only quite late and very marginally took note of him. Schopenhauer himself mostly dismissed the Young Hegelians with whose works he came into contact, except David Friedrich Strauß, whom he declared a hero of scrupulous rational inquiry. Since they all had to contend with the dominance of a certain kind of orthodox, institutionally successful Hegelianism at decisive points in their careers, however, there are nonetheless a few structural similarities between these disparate figures. Importantly, the radical Hegelians rejected the alliance between established Church teachings and university-based philosophy and broke with the notion that faith and reason could be harmonized within one system of thought. Like the mature Schopenhauer, then, the Young Hegelians repudiated the unity of official Christianity, state rule, and state-funded academic philosophy that was cultivated by high officials of the Prussian state and ratified by salaried professors. In fact, their published critical analyses of the relationship between religious faith and philosophical reason, established Christianity and the monarchical state, to some extent preceded

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

Schopenhauer's own fully articulated account of the interconnection between religion, philosophy, and rule in his critique of Hegelian philosophy. The Young Hegelians were pushed out of the university after Schopenhauer had given up on an academic career, but as we shall see, they published their criticisms of the early nineteenth-century German nexus of religion, state, and philosophy earlier than he did.

Feuerbach, Strauß, and Bauer were all born in the first decade of the nineteenth century and were thus about two decades younger than Schopenhauer. They were quite young, only children or teenagers, when Hegel was recruited to the professorship in Berlin, but they became university students during the 1820s, the era of growing Hegelian influence. Feuerbach first studied theology in Heidelberg with Hegel's friend Karl Daub (1765–1836) and then transferred, in 1824, to Berlin to study with Hegel, which he did for two years.[61] Strauß was a Swabian like Hegel, even a pupil at Hegel's old school Tübinger Stift, where he was eventually introduced to Hegel's philosophy around 1828.[62] Like Feuerbach, he traveled to Berlin to attend Hegel's lectures but arrived in the fall of 1831 and met Hegel only briefly before the philosopher's death. Instead of studying with Hegel, he then attended lectures of Hegelians such as Philip Marheineke, Leopold Henning, Eduard Gans, and Karl Ludwig Michelet.[63] Bruno Bauer was younger than both Feuerbach and Strauß but started his studies in Berlin in 1828 and could follow Hegel's lectures for a few years. Hegel even recognized him as an especially bright student, and an essay of Bauer's on aesthetics won a royal Prussian prize on Hegel's recommendation.[64] In sum, Feuerbach, Strauß, and Bauer all started reading Hegel when they were around twenty years old, and all gravitated toward Berlin, the center of Hegelian philosophy.

Over the course of the late 1830s and early 1840s, however, these young philosophers began to question the configuration of religion, philosophy, and statehood embodied in institutionalized Hegelianism. With various means and arguments, they attacked the authority of revealed religion, contested the alignment of established Christianity and systematic (Hegelian) philosophy, and ultimately demanded a secular state and a politics purified of authoritarian theological contents and forms of "orthodox religious justification."[65] The organized identity between Protestant faith, Prussian statehood, and Hegelian university philosophy,[66] recognized from the outside by Schopenhauer, ceased to be appealing to (academically unemployed) disciples of Hegel.

Strauß was the first of the group to publish a scholarly work that implied a critique of the unity of faith, reason, and statehood. He was also the first

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

to meet resistance from established academics. In his painstaking work of historical criticism, *The Life of Jesus*, the twenty-seven-year-old Strauss argued that the gospel narratives were imaginative emanations of a distinct collective culture rather than historical accounts of either natural or supernatural occurrences.[67] Following in the footsteps of earlier theologians such as Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752–1827), Johann Philipp Gabler (1753–1826), and Georg Lorenz Bauer (1755–1806),[68] he argued that narratives of marvelous and spiritual events that emerged out of an exclusively oral tradition were mythical rather than simply true or false; they should be seen neither as reliable reports nor as "premeditated fictions" but rather a "necessary vehicle of expression" for ancient communities animated by certain religious ideas.[69] Although it was a scholarly, exegetical work of hundreds of pages, this examination of the truth claims ascribed by the church to the core Christian scriptures made conservative Hegelians nervous. Committed to the idea that philosophy and conventional Christian dogmas were compatible, they attacked Strauß' work, and did so with the behind-the-scenes backing of key members of the Prussian regime such as Karl von Altenstein, the minister responsible for religious and educational affairs.[70]

Strauß' work provoked this political rather than merely theological reaction because his critical-historical reexamination of Jesus' life unsettled established analogies between the divine person of Christ as the actual incarnation of God, on the one hand, and the royal sovereign as God's singular personal representative in the body politic, on the other.[71] The figure of Jesus who appeared in the gospels, *The Life of Jesus* suggested, was a projection of a community's messianic ideals rather than God assuming human form.[72] This ultimately meant that the ideal that Jesus embodied really belonged to members of a human collective.[73] Strauß even held that divinity manifested itself in the totality of the human community, which told itself symbolic stories of itself.[74] Likewise, the figure of the king was not uniquely vested with permanent exclusive authority over lowly subjects. In the political arena, too, the majestic status of the sovereign could be translated back into the collective power of a self-legislating community.[75] In this way, Strauß' work suggested to politically aware contemporary readers that modern people should not accept the authority of the Bible[76] and that a still-favored paradigm of royal political sovereignty had no secure religious-scriptural foundation. Strauß himself understood well that his book alienated him from conservative Hegelians, and would have been irritating to Hegel himself, who he felt did not approve when "critical doubt" was applied to any "heroic figures of antiquity."[77] Unsurprisingly,

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

Strauß ran into career trouble. A council at the Tübinger Stift, where Strauß lectured, dismissed him in 1835 and transferred him to a post as classics instructor at a school in Ludwigsburg.[78] A later professorial appointment in Zürich in 1839 provoked so much controversy that it was retracted; Strauß never became a university professor.

Ludwig Feuerbach's academic career ended about the same time as that of David Friedrich Strauß: he held his last cycle of lectures at the conservative university in Bavarian Erlangen in 1835–6. After that, he stopped trying to obtain an academic post and withdrew into a life as an independent scholar. Friedrich Julius Stahl, the conservative professor who would later move to Berlin to fight Hegelians on their own turf, was a senior colleague in Erlangen, and a negative report from him snuffed out Feuerbach's chances.[79] A series of works on the history of philosophy published in 1833, 1837, and 1838 did earn Feuerbach attention from professorial members of the Hegelian establishment in Berlin, among them Eduard Gans and Leopold Henning.[80] Yet invitations to publish his work in Hegelian journals did not break his academic isolation. *The Essence of Christianity*, the book for which Feuerbach became famous, appeared in 1841, after his exclusion from academia. More overtly philosophical and more vehemently critical of religion than Strauß' historical-philological analysis of scripture, Feuerbach advanced an anthropologically grounded interpretation of religious faith. The qualities ascribed to a transcendent being in organized religion, Feuerbach argued, were in fact entirely human: "all the attributes of the divine nature are . . . attributes of the human nature."[81] Humans found these capabilities in themselves, but involuntarily transferred them to a God by means of projection, and then perversely understood themselves as subjected to that God. In this way, human beings separated themselves from their own natural constitution, and even debased themselves before their own essence as it was concentrated in an objectivized external being.[82] Given this background, philosophy should not validate religion, as in Hegelianism, but rather expose it as an institutionalized form of human self-alienation, self-impoverishment, and self-suppression.[83] Humanity could only advance, Feuerbach held, if humans could recognize the distortions of religion and begin to recuperate the predicates projected upon a fictitious divinity. This liberating self-realization in the medium of critical philosophy also supplied a model of future political emancipation. Instead of construing themselves as solitary individuals, who were all equally subjected to an awesome legislator and ruler, the human collective should recover its own collective agency. In Feuerbach, too, the philosophical assault on religious authority

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

extended into politics as the realm of a derivative form of tyranny over human beings. Feuerbach's combination of philosophical exposure of religious distortions with jubilant sermonizing about future human progress became a source of inspiration for a generation of radicals; in their early twenties, both Karl Marx (born 1818) and Friedrich Engels (born 1820) were dedicated "Feuerbachians."[84]

In his private notes from the 1830s and then his published works from the following decades, Schopenhauer observed that university-employed professors taught a philosophy in conformity with Church doctrine, which served to soothe the population under monarchical government. He also argued that the deification of the state was meant to flatter the educated civil servant class. In both cases, the Hegelian reconciliation of faith and reason helped steady and fortify the rule of the Prussian state administration. As the review of the interventions of Strauß and Feuerbach's seminal works shows, however, academically exiled Young Hegelians had already directed a critical, Hegel-inspired philosophy against religion and against the state in the mid-1830s. And Schopenhauer did take notice of them, but in a way that did not compel him to revise his own anti-Hegelian understanding of the contemporary intellectual field. Put briefly, Schopenhauer identified Feuerbach solely as a thinker in the tradition of Fichte and Hegel and dismissed him, and he identified Strauß solely as a rigorous critical scholar of Christianity and embraced him. To Schopenhauer, then, Strauß was in no way associated with Hegel's method and served as a reputable point of reference.

Commentators have pointed to similarities between Feuerbach and Schopenhauer. For instance, Alfred Schmidt has argued that Schopenhauer's anti-Hegelian emphasis on the empirical basis of concepts aligns with the mature Feuerbach's attempt to trace grandiosely hypostatized abstractions (such as God) back to their anthropological roots – to thinking and acting human beings.[85] Schopenhauer himself saw no such parallels. He read Feuerbach's work *The Essence of Christianity* and had mixed judgments.[86] There were "good parts," he admitted in conversation with an acquaintance, the composer Robert von Hornstein (1833–91), but in his own copy of the book he scribbled more than once in the margin that Feuerbach was "drunk."[87] In his published works, the negative judgment of the young Feuerbach was more pronounced. In *On the Basis of Morals*, a work that appeared before *The Essence of Christianity* but after Feuerbach's first series of contributions to the history of philosophy, Schopenhauer cited a Feuerbach comment on Fichte's "sublime [*erhaben*]" ideas as an example of the ridiculously inflated reputation of

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

his old Berlin teacher. Contrary to Feuerbach, Schopenhauer did not think Fichte's philosophy was particularly sublime, nor that he deserved to be mentioned in the same breath as Kant (BM: 180). But then the young Feuerbach, Schopenhauer noted, was "a Hegelian," to which he quickly added "*c'est tout dire*"; nothing was more immediately revealing and damning than to be a Hegelian (BM: 180). Perhaps it is not surprising that Schopenhauer dismissed a thinker who celebrated life: "To exist," Feuerbach stated in *The Essence of Christianity*, "is a good."[88] Needless to say, Schopenhauer did not agree.

In contrast to his quick and contemptuous judgment of Feuerbach, Schopenhauer had a very high estimation of Strauß. He referred to *Life of Jesus* repeatedly throughout his works in the 1840s and 1850s. On a couple of occasions, Schopenhauer cited Strauß as a contemporary authority on the history of Christianity, a scholar with an especially keen insight into the "*ascetic principles*" in its religious practices (WWR II: 632) and the "cleansing and sanctifying" effect of "suffering" (WWR II: 648). More broadly, he endorsed without much reservation Strauß' central contention that the gospel narratives were mythical stories, collectively generated and sustained cultural fantasies and fables projected on to some figure who did appear historically but whose actual life was far from accurately represented. To corroborate the "mythical principle advanced by Strauß," Schopenhauer even suggested a parallel to the gospels in the legends of King Arthur (PP II: 346). A minor chieftain with the name Arthur had lived in Wales at some point, but his entirely "trivial deeds," Schopenhauer wrote, had been forgotten and replaced by wondrous narratives about a "shining figure" woven by numerous poets and storytellers since that time (PP II: 347). In another comment that more clearly expressed his appreciation of Strauß' work, Schopenhauer said that someone ought to travel to Great Britain, according to him a bastion of religious bigotry, on a much-needed mission of rational enlightenment, with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in one hand and "Strauß' Bible criticism" in the other (PP I: 235). Fichte did not deserve to be mentioned in the same context as Kant, Schopenhauer declared in his comment on Feuerbach, but David Friedrich Strauß did.

It is clear, however, that Schopenhauer saw Strauß as an exemplary philological scholar, not a philosopher or metaphysician. Schopenhauer even registered the Hegelian resistance to Strauß' critique of scriptural authority without seeming to view Strauß himself as a former participant in Hegelianism. For instance, Schopenhauer presented the above-mentioned Georg Andreas Gabler's 1836 inaugural Berlin lecture on

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

the piety of philosophy as a blatant example of the biased Hegelian attempt to chain philosophy to religion. Gabler's tract contained several censorious remarks directed at Strauß' then recently published work.[89] Schopenhauer thus took notice of the right-wing Hegelians' escalating efforts to maintain the identity of reason and faith but did not see Strauß as a member of an opposing Hegelian camp that wanted to break apart the forced unity of philosophical consciousness and traditional Christianity.[90] In his published writings in the late 1840s and early 1850s, Schopenhauer declared his contempt for the orthodox Hegelianism that he knew had held sway in academic circles in Berlin and elsewhere but seemed unaware of his partial agreement with the radical, transformed Hegelianism that had emerged from the fringes of academic philosophy.

Schopenhauer did not agree with Young Hegelians *as* Hegelians. He concurred with aspects of their critical analyses of religion, including its ideological use by the state, but rejected their political conclusions. For Feuerbach, for instance, the critique of Christianity was aimed at humanity's reintegration of qualities and capacities falsely attributed to a transcendent higher being, and the moment of human collective self-recognition was for him linked to a radical political breakthrough.[91] Once humanity would come to understand divinity anthropologically, as an emanation of its own communal being,[92] the human community would also be able to dethrone quasi-transcendent sovereigns and replace the theologically justified hierarchies of command and obedience, rule and subjection, with egalitarian and democratic forms of collective self-determination.[93] Over the course of the 1830s and 1840s, Feuerbach became increasingly influenced by French and German political radicalism and saw a connection between his demystifying philosophy and the emerging socialist movement.[94] Even though he never became a champion of proletarian revolution, Feuerbach identified as a republican and argued for the active participation of all in the affairs of the state.[95]

Schopenhauer of course developed no such emancipatory political vision. He resented the governmentally supervised conformity of philosophy with established church doctrines. Yet he did so because it damaged the integrity of philosophical inquiry and led to his own professional exclusion, not because it helped prop up a political regime that disempowered the human collective. While he himself recognized the ministry control of philosophy as nervously reactionary, he nonetheless took it to be politically expedient. Schopenhauer would never have held that the critique of the alienating and atomizing effects of institutional

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

religion could prefigure a political reappropriation of collective agency. The alternative to firm monarchical rule was not a general state of political-republican and social-egalitarian cooperation, as Feuerbach anticipated, but a war of all against all. In his notebook in the revolutionary year of 1848, Schopenhauer wrote that anarchy was far worse – more volatile, more violent, more costly to a great number of people – than despotism.[96] A repressive regime, he felt, is better than an unleashed chaos in which everyone fights everyone else.[97] Despotic rule is not commendable, but it typically uses violence only in isolated cases, whereas anarchy unfetters violence completely and allows it to pervade society, a disaster that uncontrollably multiplies suffering. In line with this assessment, Schopenhauer believed that every constitution should tilt more toward the condition of despotism than toward the condition of anarchy and should integrate despotic government as a "possibility [*Möglichkeit*]."[98]

When the Young Hegelians called for a completely secular state, a state worthy of a self-recognizing, self-creating, fully immanent human community, Schopenhauer leaned more toward a tutelary government. He could agree with former radicalized Hegelians about the popular and mythic character of religion, the lack of literal truth in the scriptures, and the weaker epistemic status of religious claims as compared with philosophical arguments. In a private note from the late 1830s, he even praised the satirist and poet Heinrich Heine's (1797–1858) *The Romantic School* (1836) for its critique of German "state philosophers [*Staatsphilosophen*]" as suspect "justifiers [*Justifikatoren*]" of the existing order;[99] Marx-inspired critical theorists have at times noted that Schopenhauer could sound like a young radical of the 1830s.[100] Of course, Schopenhauer also diagnosed the ideological function of religion in the political system, including public demonstrations of piety by princes, theological claims about the divine authorization of sovereign power, or even the Hegelian deification of the state. In the end, however, he was more inclined to accept political uses of religion rather than to call for their public demystification and elimination. Schopenhauer was, one could say, epistemically and philosophically on the side of the radicals but politically on the side of the reactionaries. He shared the Young Hegelians' sense of exclusion from the academic establishment, but, as his lasting appreciation for monarchy suggests, academic failure never radicalized him. The Young Hegelians attacked orthodox philosophy, theology, *and* the monarchical state; Schopenhauer attacked state-supported university philosophy but still preferred authoritarian sovereignty. He shared a lot with the academically disenfranchised Young Hegelians but did not want to undermine the throne.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

Philosophies of Egoism and Critiques of the Christian State: Schopenhauer and Marx

Not all young Hegelians were equally radical. The tumultuous year of 1848 made Schopenhauer nervous, and likely strengthened his belief that despotism was preferable over anarchy. Interestingly, David Friedrich Strauß also turned to political matters in 1848 and articulated a position quite close to Schopenhauer's. In an article on the role of theology in politics, the critical scholar of the gospels now argued that the king was best seen as an infallible source of authority.[101] Only when the king was insulated from corrosive questioning could society enjoy a permanent and "certain source of sovereignty" as a guarantee of order.[102] Much like Schopenhauer, Strauß did not want the truth-oriented critique of religious mythologies to be systematically and publicly applied to political institutions. In the revolutionary year of 1848, Strauß even served as a recognizably moderate delegate in the Stuttgart parliament, to the disappointment of some of his radical supporters.

At a time when former radical Hegelians began to assume moderate political positions and even tried to curb the political implications of their own critical arguments against religious authorities, however, younger Hegelians emerged as political revolutionaries. They did not support the usual liberal causes, such as constitutionally codified rights or more parliamentary influence within existing European hereditary monarchies. Instead, they called for a complete reorganization of society, including the abolition of private property. In 1848, the radical Hegelian Bruno Bauer's former student, Karl Marx (1818–83), and Marx's friend and benefactor, Friedrich Engels (1820–95), famously authored the *Communist Manifesto*. Schopenhauer's nightmare vision of an assault on the "few who have been given some property" by the myriad of those who have "nothing but their bodily strength" had become the central political cause of an organized movement (PP I: 132). Schopenhauer was likely unaware of the young Karl Marx,[103] but he was well-acquainted with the name of the political movement for which Marx and Engels wrote a manifesto: "communism" (WWR I: 611). And he associated it, quite rightly, with a radical critique of private property.

In his screed on university philosophy, Schopenhauer briefly noted the roots of this new revolutionary movement in his gradually fading enemy, Hegelianism. Scattered into groups of "stragglers and marauders" over the course of the 1840s (PP I: 130), Hegelianism had lost its former grip on the university but was now, Schopenhauer explained, "pursued further

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

into communism" (PP I: 131). Specifically, the notion of a perfected ethical organism continued to corrupt young minds, but it had been transferred from the Hegelian-Prussian state to a vision of a completely egalitarian society of solidarity and cooperation. The basic error remained the same: the failure to admit that human society consisted only of obstinately egoistic individuals who must be kept in check by deterrent force. But whereas the Hegelian vision of an ethical organism had once sought to make future civil servants worship the Prussian state and embrace tedious work as charged with ethical meaning, communism attacked the very institution that the state was meant to protect, namely, (unequally distributed) private property. Communism thus represented both the continuation and the reversal of the Hegelian ideal, for the notion of a perfected ethical organism was being preserved in communism but was now directed against the core mission of the state. In Schopenhauer's account, Hegel had set out to strengthen the Prussian state, and for this he could even be accorded some limited respect, but released from its original context, his deification of the human collective had begun to generate anarchic effects. Hegelianism had stifled philosophy and perverted the reasoning skills of entire generations but had not unsettled society at large; communism, by contrast, would unleash mayhem and threaten Schopenhauer's own existence.

In his brief discussion of communism, Schopenhauer mentioned no names. He clearly had read Feuerbach and Strauß, but perhaps not Ruge and Bauer, although, as mentioned above, he did register the existence of the *Hallische Jahrbücher*, the organ of the radical Hegelians in the late 1830s and early 1840s. Marx and Engels do not make an appearance in Schopenhauer's text; communism emerged as a group or movement in his world, not as a critical philosophy developed by specific thinkers. Schopenhauer certainly grasped the political menace of communism but did not to the same degree discern communism's critique of tenets of bourgeois society, tenets to which he was committed. In the radical thought of the early Marx, one can add, Schopenhauer would have perceived not just a danger to the organization of his socioeconomic world, but also an opponent who challenged his core assumptions, such as the naturally boundless egoism of individuals, the inherently conflictual character of society, and the need for a repressive state.

Inspired by Feuerbach's and Bauer's critiques of theology, Marx identified the naturalization of individual egoism in bourgeois society as essentially Christian in character and declared that the state ruling over those antagonistic egoists was an essentially Christian state. From the perspective

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

of Marx's early writings, then, Schopenhauer would not have escaped the charge that his thinking, too, was fundamentally theological. When contrasting Schopenhauer's thoughts on communism and Marx's critique of bourgeois society, one can even say that they both put forward critiques of opposing forms of unacknowledged political religiosity. Schopenhauer understood communism as a quasi-religious movement that continued the Hegelian state deification in its utopian vision of a perfectly solidaric humankind. Marx, by contrast, construed the bourgeois idea of individual egoism and the necessarily repressive state as residually Christian notions.

Schopenhauer's critique of other thinkers often took the form of deflationary realism: the grandiose visions of morality and society, Schopenhauer suggested, failed to reckon with deeply, even metaphysically rooted human motivations and desires. Behind Kant's formulation of the principle of moral action he discerned the strategic reflexes of self-interested individuals intent on avoiding harm, and behind the Hegelian picture of the state as a complex ethical structure and destiny of humankind he found the petty vanity and smug existential contentment of the bourgeois philistine. Both were examples, Schopenhauer thought, of an unfortunate German preference for obfuscation and pomposity. Professors at German universities, many of them schooled by Kantian morality and Hegelian philosophy of right, simply could not address politics and the law without losing themselves in bombastic rhetoric about the moral fate of humankind. A more sober and accurate account of politics must instead begin with the recognition of ineradicable self-interest and mutual hostility among competing individuals. Schopenhauer stood for a kind of minimalism in contemporary political philosophy, based on the idea that human egoism should be the obvious starting point for an account of the state.

Building on the insights of the Young Hegelians, however, the young Marx of the early 1840s questioned this seemingly natural character of egoism. The supposedly realist notion of egoism was in fact completely ideological. A first historical and historicizing account of the genealogy of egoism was developed by the young Feuerbach in the early 1830s. It was Feuerbach who identified the origins of a modern atomistic ideal of personhood in ancient Christianity, a religion that was uniquely fixated on the isolated individual as the bearer of an infinitely valuable immortal soul.[104] In his early work, he argued that the dissolution of the Greek *polis* and the Roman republic left individuals without a communal political realm as an arena of achievement and recognition, and that Christianity emerged as a faith that offered people assurances of meaning and self-worth even when they found themselves deprived of traditional forms of

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

community. Adapted to its historical circumstances of emergence, Christianity sacralized the individual as the fundamental element of the common world, endlessly cherished by God as a particular self that exists prior to communal interaction and endures beyond the temporal horizon of any society.[105] With modern, post-reformation Christianity, the remaining communal dimension of traditional medieval and Catholic Christianity withered away, leaving a rigid focus on the isolated person in their relationship with God.[106] This Protestant era, Feuerbach assumed along with many other philosophers such as the Romantics and indeed Hegel, was essentially identical with the modern period, which celebrated the rights of the autonomous individual.[107] An obvious example of this pattern for Feuerbach was, incidentally, the social contract theory of Hobbes. For Feuerbach, then, modern civil society preserved, and rendered more extreme, an initially Christian conception of contoured individuality. In this situation, a critical-historical account of the gradual erosion of community during the long reign of Christianity functioned as a prelude to a critique of the self-interested, acquisitive subjects of contemporary modern bourgeois society.[108] For Feuerbach, egoism was not an indisputably natural feature of humans; it was a symptom of a fragmented modern society with a long Christian prehistory.

Writing in the early 1840s, the young Karl Marx advanced a similar critique of bourgeois society. Much like Feuerbach, he put pressure on this society's entrenched commitment to the notion that individual human beings were isolated "monads."[109] In his discussion of the bourgeois society in his 1844 text "On the Jewish Question," Marx argued that the figure of the egoist was not the indisputably primary unit of society.[110] Instead, the individual "egoistic human being" was the product of the dissolution of estates, guilds, and local and religious communities of a prior "feudal society."[111] Individuals seemed so fundamental in modernity only because they had been released from the bonds and obligations that had structured collective life during the medieval period. These fiercely egoistic persons were not an invariant anthropological reality but the outcome of a momentous historical transformation.

The sphere of interaction for these individual egoists was, Marx continued, bourgeois society, in which people related to one another as competitors. Marx even used the phrase *bellum omnium contra omnes* to characterize the underlying pathology of this social formation.[112] The war of all against all, he argued, was not the menace that individual subjects had successfully escaped by establishing a contractual agreement, but instead the impoverished way that bourgeois subjects conceptualized their

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

interactions with each other after the disintegration of feudal communal ties and hierarchical relations. The bourgeois subject defined itself through its atomistic separation from all others and could only conceive of humanity as a configuration of mutually alien subjects prone to strife.

The "egoistic human being," Marx further emphasized, was not just a cultural principle in post-feudal society, but a legal-institutional reality.[113] As he pointed out in a review of late eighteenth-century constitutions from the United States and France, modern human beings were defined as possessors of rights, and those were centrally rights of private property. Rights were thus always rights *against* others: the right to a sphere of noninterference, the right to sovereign control over one's resources within a policed boundary. This legal codification of egoism culminated in the right to "security," which Marx regarded as the "highest social concept of bourgeois society [*der höchste sociale Begriff der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*]."[114] The paramount purpose of bourgeois society was to guarantee the safety and integrity of property-owning individuals in their isolation from others, who could then only appear as potential threats.

In a sense, Schopenhauer agreed with this account in Marx's essay. He, too, saw each individual as continually accosted by "a thousand accidents and a thousand enemies" and as desperately craving some measure of "security" (WWR I: 339). And, for Schopenhauer, the purpose of the state was precisely to prevent harm to individual egoists and punish disruptions to "public security" (WWR I: 376). Morally speaking, Schopenhauer considered this pursuit of security a dead end since it fell short of compassion with others and insight into the identity of all. Yet he dismissed, or did not even entertain, the idea of universal deindividuation as a meaningful *political* project.

To Marx, constitutional rights of the bourgeois epoch did not straightforwardly spell out the freedom of individual human beings but instead enshrined the historical fragmentation of the human collective. The state, Marx added, did still embody collective coordination and cooperation, but in the bourgeois world, it was narrowly defined as a special, sublime institution hovering above a conflictual society. The very existence of a state even concentrated and removed the experience and sense of unity from everyday social interactions, causing subjects to view themselves as split; they were citizens who enjoyed a common membership in the state, on the one hand, and private subjects pursuing their own projects in an arena of ruthless competition, on the other.

In a final argumentative move in his 1844 text, Marx deemed the "double" subject – both citizen and bourgeois subject – a distinctly

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

Christian-theological phenomenon.[115] The bourgeois sphere of competition and property accumulation was the "profane" world of daily toil, whereas the state appeared as a remote, heavenly realm, in which all disunity could dissolve into oneness.[116] Marx even claimed that the neutral, non-confessional modern state, which set itself apart from the religious, cultural, and socioeconomic life of its individual subjects, paradoxically reintroduced a quasi-religious way of conceiving of human collective life. The distant state hovering above all subjects suggested that peace and wholeness existed as a human possibility, but one that could be realized only in a remote, pseudo-heavenly realm. In Marx, the Young Hegelian critique of religion as an alienated image of humankind's abilities and values reappeared in the form of a critique of the modern state as an externalized and estranged bearer of genuine social community.

As the critique of religion turned into a critique of modern bourgeois society in the transition from Feuerbach and Bauer to Marx, the critical post-Hegelian discourse diverged sharply from the concerns of Schopenhauer. Indeed, the new critique of bourgeois society, advanced by the young Marx, implied an opposition to Schopenhauer's entire approach to political philosophy. In the 1840s and 1850s, Schopenhauer understood his examination of the German Idealist philosophy of moral duty and political statehood as a critical exposure of grandiloquent rhetoric and concealed theological commitments. In these efforts, he partially agreed with and even explicitly drew upon the Young Hegelian scrutiny of religious authority. With his characterization of religion as "metaphysics for the people" coupled with his nontheistic philosophy and interest in posing fundamental questions about the value of existence, Schopenhauer even became a key figure in the "de-Christianization" of intellectual and artistic circles in nineteenth-century Germany after Feuerbach.[117] Yet he would hardly have been willing to agree with Marx, a younger and more radicalized Hegelian, that the notion of egoistic subjects kept in check by a state represented yet another mystified and mystifying conception of society and politics. On the contrary, his minimalist, neo-Hobbesian language of war and statehood was, he contended in opposition to Kant and Hegel, more realistic, useful, and parsimonious than the Idealist vocabulary for morality and politics, duties and rights. His recognition of viciously pursued self-interest as the basic premise of the political world was antithetical to obfuscation. He, Schopenhauer, saw the irredeemably nonideal world for what it really is and rejected all bombastic rhetoric. Yet the young Marx's 1844 critique of modern bourgeois society's focus on property rights and coercive security suggested that egoism represents yet

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

another quasi-theological fiction, generated by historical conditions subject to change.

Marx and Schopenhauer both focused on the figure of the (bourgeois) egoist,[118] and both contributed to the "de-idealization [*Entidealisierung*]" or critical exposure of bourgeois society with its values of individual liberty and dignity.[119] The two thinkers even strangely shared a conviction that egoism was rooted in a stubborn illusion that must ultimately be done away with. But for Marx, the egoist was the "result of the dissolved society [*Resultat der aufgelösten Gesellschaft*]"[120] that must be overcome through a reorganization of economic and political relations, whereas for Schopenhauer, egoism was the symptom of the human perceptual fragmentation of a unitary metaphysical substrate. Correspondingly, the Schopenhauerian alternative to a society of egoists involved forms of complete deindividuation, not widespread solidarity *among* individuals.

From a Marxian perspective, Schopenhauer's philosophy turned a social and historical condition that was to be surmounted through collective self-emancipation into an invariant state of fallenness that was to be pierced through by metaphysical insight into the oneness of all as well as spontaneous but rare individual acts of compassion in which this oneness became manifest. Schopenhauer ontologized the conception of society as a mere aggregate of egoistic individuals.[121] At a time when Schopenhauer continued to speak of individuals as "unjust, unfair, dishonest, envious, malicious[,] ... parochial and wrong-headed" but above all "boundlessly egoistic" and hence in need of a repressive state (PP I: 132), Marx presented egoism as the supreme bourgeois ideology, a justification for a state whose only aim was to guarantee the security of private property.

Schopenhauer critiqued Kant and Hegel as crypto-theologians unwilling to look at politics honestly as a matter of self-interested strategy; to him, both of them conflated the different domains of politics and morality, or politics and religion. Judging by his sociohistorical analysis of egoism as the ideology of bourgeois society, however, Marx would have seen Schopenhauer's supposedly realistic approach to politics as another crypto-theology, one in which the state is declared to be transcendent vis-à-vis property-owning monads isolated from one another. Engels even called Schopenhauer's philosophy a set of "vapid reflections" that became appealing to bourgeois "philistines" after 1848, when Germans turned their backs on classical German philosophy and threw themselves into modern industry and natural science.[122] In the eyes of Marx's friend and

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

collaborator, Schopenhauer's philosophy was "fashioned to fit" bourgeois society, not to understand it.[123]

Notes

1 Wellbery, "Schopenhauer," 336.
2 David Cartwright stresses that Schopenhauer viewed Kant's "moral laws," if they motivate action, as "hypothetical imperatives of prudence." See Cartwright, "Schopenhauer's Narrower Sense of Morality," in *The Cambridge Companion to Schopenhauer*, ed. Christopher Janaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 252–92; 257. See also Herrmann Schweppenhäuser, "Schopenhauers Kritik der Kantischen Moraphilosophie," *Schopenhauer Jahrbuch* 69 (1988): 409–16; 412.
3 On Kantian ethics as a morality for impersonal modern societies, see J. M. Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 47.
4 Stephen Puryear, "Schopenhauer's Rejection of the Moral *Ought*," in *Schopenhauer's Moral Philosophy*, ed. Patrick Hassan (New York: Routledge, 2022), 12–30; 15.
5 For a careful philosophical reconstruction of Schopenhauer's argument, see Puryear, "Schopenhauer's Rejection of the Moral *Ought,*" 24.
6 Randall Collins, "On the Acrimoniousness of Intellectual Disputes," *Common Knowledge* 8.1 (2002): 47–70; 53.
7 Hübscher, *Denker gegen den Strom*, 186. My translation.
8 John Edward Toews, *Hegelianism: The Path toward Dialectical Humanism, 1805–1841* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 75.
9 Cartwright, *Schopenhauer*, xxi.
10 Cartwright, *Schopenhauer*, 465.
11 Toews, *Hegelianism*, 73.
12 Toews, *Hegelianism*, 74.
13 Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies*, 637.
14 Collins, "Intellectual Disputes," 53.
15 Toews, *Hegelianism*, 147; George Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 157–8.
16 Toews, *Hegelianism*, 119.
17 Toews, *Hegelianism*, 131.
18 Klaus Vieweg, *Hegel: Der Philosoph der Freiheit* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2019), 572.
19 Toews, *Hegelianism*, 131.
20 Martin Hertz, "Schulze, Johannes," in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (1891), www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd118860283.html#adbcontent.
21 Toews, *Hegelianism*, 113. On the importance of Hegel's and Schulze's connection, see also Wolfgang Eßbach, *Die Junghegelianer: Soziologie einer Intellektuellengruppe* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1988), 103.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

22 Toews, *Hegelianism*, 113.
23 Schopenhauer quoted in Frauenstädt, *Memorabilien*, 399. My translation.
24 Norbert Waszek, "Philosophie: Hegel'sche Schule, Links- und Rechtshegelianer, Jung- und Althegelianer," in *Vormärz-Handbuch*, ed. Norbert Otto Eke (Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag, 2020), 372–80; 373–5.
25 Gwinner, *Schopenhauers Leben*, 296. My translation.
26 On the term "Young Hegelians," coined by Heinrich Leo (1799–1878), see Waszek, "Hegel'sche Schule," 377.
27 Collins, "Intellectual Disputes," 54.
28 Beiser, *Weltschmerz*, 68.
29 Vieweg, *Hegel*, 435.
30 Carl von Prantl, "Gabler, Georg Andreas," in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (1878), www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd11632662X.html#adbcontent.
31 Lübbe, *Politische Philosophie*, 41.
32 Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies II: The High Tide of Prophecy: Hegel, Marx, and the Aftermath*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 33.
33 Popper, *The Open Society*, 35.
34 Alfred Schmidt, *Idee und Weltwille: Schopenhauer als Kritiker Hegels* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1988), 97.
35 Günter Zöller, "German Realism: The Self-Limitation of Idealist Thinking in Fichte, Schelling, and Schopenhauer," in *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, 2nd edition, ed. Karl Ameriks (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 292–313; 304.
36 Thornhill, *German Political Philosophy*, 119.
37 Thornhill, *German Political Philosophy*, 121.
38 Frederick Neuhouser, "The Idea of a Hegelian 'Science' of Society," in *A Companion to Hegel*, ed. Stephen Houlgate and Michael Baur (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 281–96; 283.
39 Alan Ryan, *On Politics: A History of Political Thought from Herodotus to the Present*, vol. 2 (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012), 671.
40 Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts*, 298–300.
41 Wilhelm Dilthey, "Zur Philosophie Arthur Schopenhauers," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 16, ed. Ulrich Herrmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), 356–70; 360; Haym, "Arthur Schopenhauer," 103.
42 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, vol. 1, 391. My translation.
43 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, vol. 1, 108. My translation.
44 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, vol. 1, 108. My translation.
45 On Schopenhauer's reception of Tieck, see Michael Gillespie, *Nihilism before Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 196, and Hübscher, *Denker gegen den Strom*, 44 and 91.
46 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, vol. 1, 44.
47 Geitner, "Betrachtungen des Philisters," 125.
48 Remigius Bunia, Till Dembeck, and Georg Stanitzek, "Elemente einer Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte des Philisters," in *Philister: Problemgeschichte*

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

einer Sozialfigur der neueren deutschen Literatur, ed. Remigius Bunia, Till Dembeck, and Georg Stanitzek (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2011), 13–51.
49 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, vol. 1, 45. My translation.
50 Oxenford, "Iconoclasm," 405.
51 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, vol. 1, 44. My translation.
52 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, vol. 1, 44. My translation.
53 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, vol. 1, 45. My translation.
54 Wellbery, "Schopenhauer," 344.
55 Zöller, "German Realism," 293.
56 Zimmer, "Akademische Karriere," 16–17.
57 Cartwright, *Schopenhauer*, 366.
58 Toews, *Hegelianism*, 306.
59 On the fracturing of Hegelianism between 1835 and 1841, see Toews, *Hegelianism*, 356.
60 Nicholas Boyle, *German Literature: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 81. See also Löwith, *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche*, 82.
61 Todd Gooch, "Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2020), ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/ludwig-feuerbach/.
62 Beiser, *David Friedrich Strauß*, 27.
63 Beiser, *David Friedrich Strauß*, 38; Waszek, "Hegel'sche Schule," 373.
64 Douglas Moggach, "Bruno Bauer," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2022), ed. Edward N. Zalta, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/bauer/.
65 Douglas Moggach, *The Philosophy and Politics of Bruno Bauer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 2.
66 Breckmann, *Radical Social Theory*, 227.
67 Beiser, *David Friedrich Strauß*, 6 and 66–72; Williamson, *The Longing for Myth*, 161–2; Waszek, "Hegel'sche Schule," 378.
68 Erik Linstrum, "Strauss's 'Life of Jesus': Publication and the Politics of the German Public Sphere," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 71.4 (2010): 593–616; 593.
69 David Friedrich Strauß, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 4th ed., trans. George Eliot (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1902), 52.
70 Breckmann, *Radical Social Theory*, 136.
71 Beiser, *David Friedrich Strauß*, 11; Breckmann, *Radical Social Theory*, 137.
72 Williamson, *The Longing for Myth*, 162–3.
73 Thornhill, *German Political Philosophy*, 167.
74 Williamson, *The Longing for Myth*, 164.
75 Beiser, *David Friedrich Strauß*, 12; Thornhill, *German Political Philosophy*, 167.
76 Beiser, *David Friedrich Strauß*, 9.
77 David Friedrich Strauß quoted in Williamson, *The Longing for Myth*, 159.
78 Beiser, *David Friedrich Strauß*, 75.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

79 Gareth Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx: Greatness and Illusion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 76.
80 Gooch, "Ludwig Feuerbach."
81 Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 14.
82 Thornhill, *German Political Philosophy*, 167–8.
83 Gooch, "Ludwig Feuerbach."
84 Thomas Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte 1800–1866: Bürgerwelt und starker Staat* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1983), 443–5.
85 Alfred Schmidt, *Schopenhauer als Kritiker Hegels*, 52, 60, 69.
86 Hübscher, *Denker gegen den Strom*, 22.
87 Schopenhauer quoted in Michael Jeske, "Ludwig Feuerbach," 268. My translation.
88 Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 7.
89 Carl von Prantl, "Gabler, Georg Andreas."
90 Toews, *Hegelianism*, 288.
91 Breckmann, *Radical Social Theory*, 200.
92 Toews, *Hegelianism*, 361.
93 Breckmann, *Radical Social Theory*, 206.
94 Breckmann, *Radical Social Theory*, 203.
95 Breckmann, *Radical Social Theory*, 214.
96 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, vol. 4.1, 303.
97 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, vol. 4.1, 303.
98 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, vol. 4.1, 303. My translation.
99 Schopenhauer, *Der handschriftliche Nachlaß*, vol. 4.1, 217. My translation.
100 Alfred Schmidt, *Schopenhauer als Kritiker Hegels*, 94.
101 Beiser, *David Friedrich Strauß*, 188.
102 Beiser, *David Friedrich Strauß*, 188.
103 Hübscher, *Denker gegen den Strom*, 212.
104 Breckmann, *Radical Social Theory*, 102–3.
105 Breckmann, *Radical Social Theory*, 105.
106 Breckmann, *Radical Social Theory*, 105.
107 Breckmann, *Radical Social Theory*, 107.
108 Breckmann, *Radical Social Theory*, 113.
109 Marx, "Zur Judenfrage," 201. My translation.
110 For a discussion of the question of Jewish emancipation in Marx's essay against the backdrop of debates about legal discrimination in Prussia of the 1840s, see Yoav Peled, "From Theology to Sociology: Bruno Bauer and Karl Marx on the Question of Jewish Emancipation," *History of Political Thought* 13.3 (1992): 463–85.
111 Marx, "Zur Judenfrage," 206. My translation.
112 Marx, "Zur Judenfrage," 192–3.
113 Marx, "Zur Judenfrage," 202. My translation.
114 Marx, "Zur Judenfrage," 202. My translation.
115 Marx, "Zur Judenfrage," 191. My translation.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006

116 Marx, "Zur Judenfrage," 191. My translation.
117 Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte*, 448. My translation.
118 Wellbery, "Schopenhauer," 342. Against the vilifications of egoism, one contemporary philosopher defended and even celebrated egoistic behavior, namely, Max Stirner, another Feuerbach-inspired thinker. See Stirner, *The Ego and Its Own*, trans. Steven Byington, ed. David Leopold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). The egoist should pursue his own desires, Stirner declared, and not submit to the quasi-sacred norms pronounced in the name of various abstractions such as God, humanity, society, the nation, the party, or the family.
119 Heinz Maus, "Die Traumhölle des Justemilieu," in *Schopenhauer und Marx: Philosophie des Elends – Elend der Philosophie?*, ed. Hans Ebeling and Ludget Lütkehaus (Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat, 1985), 43–59; 47. My translation.
120 Marx, "Zur Judenfrage," 206. My translation.
121 Reinhard Kühnl, "Die großen Fragen der Epoche und die Antwort Schopenhauers," in *Schopenhauer im Denken der Gegenwart: 23 Beiträge zu seiner Aktualität*, ed. Volker Sperling (Munich: Piper, 1987), 197–216; 211.
122 Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring: Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science*, trans. Emile Burns (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1977), 402.
123 Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, 402.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 15 Nov 2026 at 18:01:45, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009491501.006