theories and methodologies

Valhalla Is Burning: Theory, the Middle Ages, and Secularization

JOHN PARKER

IN 1802 THE FRANCISCAN FRIARY STANDING IN MUNICH SINCE THE LATE THIRTEENTH CENTURY WAS RAZED TO MAKE ROOM FOR THE National Theater. Many of its books found their way to the state library, where, among further spoils swept up in the waves of secularization following the French Revolution, they fed the growth of modern medievalism. Other relics fed other tastes. A profitable brewery remained in the friary's basement, operated now under secular license, while everything else detachable—furniture, copper gutters and plates, lead and iron fittings, window frames, artwork, altars, the tower clock and organ—went to the highest bidder to pay for the theater's troubled construction. Buttresses buckled and pushed through walls. When three workers raising the roof beam fell into a pit, critics divined the hand of God in retaliation for the friary's ruin. Different observers, more favorable perhaps to the cause of art, stressed the workers' survival and took it as a miraculous omen for the theater's future—God's blessing, so to speak, on historical progress. In the short term, it wasn't. In 1823 the theater caught fire and burned to the ground, as onlookers claimed to see in the rising smoke "the face of a monstrous Franciscan."[1]

The theater was rebuilt, but now the Middle Ages arose from within. On 10 June 1865, it hosted the premiere of *Tristan und Isolde*—Wagner's latest in a line of compositions inspired by the uptick in readily available medieval texts.[2] His taste for premodern storylines and his having previously insisted "so obstinately," by his own admission, "on the Christian standpoint" had already led some to believe he was among those secretly yearning for a restoration of the Catholic past (*Selected Letters* 224). "Nearly every Romantic of this type," Nietzsche would belatedly lament, "ends up under the cross" (*Sämtliche Werke* 491). By then it had become a cliché that the Romantic fascination with all things medieval carried any number of freethinkers—atheists, neo-pagans, and Protestants among them—into an unexpected embrace of the old religion, as if Christ's vicar in Rome, Heine once sneered, might "restore to health tuber-

JOHN PARKER, associate professor of English at the University of Virginia, works mainly on medieval and Renaissance drama, while also pursuing interests in pagan antiquity, scripture, Christian theology, and modern theory (especially German philosophy). He is the author of *The Aesthetics of Antichrist: From Christian Drama to Christopher Marlowe* (Cornell UP, 2007), along with several book chapters, articles, and reviews.

© 2015 JOHN PARKER
PMLA 130.3 (2015), published by the Modern Language Association of America

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.787 Published online by Cambridge University Press

cular German art" (23).[3] Exhibit A in the list of offenders was Friedrich Schlegel, a central figure from Hegel's circle in Jena who ("for art's sake," Hegel said later [*Aesthetics* 1: 606]) became a Catholic reactionary and a cautionary tale to anyone similarly captivated by the magic of medieval tradition. This was not the sort of caution, however, that could frighten Wagner. The devout and sanitized ending that he devised for *Tannhäuser* (redrafted, as it happens, while he was composing *Tristan*) came partly in response to an "extraordinarily affecting" depiction of the Madonna he glimpsed on vacation and partly in retort to what he perceived as Heine's satirical, all-too-Jewish retelling of the same medieval legend.[4] For Wagner, it was the rich hagiographic tradition of portraying "transfiguration through death" (something he would stage over and over) that accounted, in his words, for Christianity's "enthralling power" (*Opera* 159). The crucifixion provided the "archetype," he writes, "for the manifold representations of the martyrs and saints, glorified with the most terrible pain through all-engrossing bliss."[5] Or, as he put it on the eve of *Tristan*'s debut, writing to his new patron, Ludwig II, "The saint, the martyr is . . . the true mediator of salvation" ("On State" 30).

And yet *Tristan* famously combines Wagner's high regard for the premodern era with a seminal advance in modern technique, as though the future's cutting edge could only emerge by preserving the past it had rendered obsolete. His atavism was never more avant-garde. The debut in Munich markedly captures how the German Middle Ages did not so much come to an end with Bavaria's monasteries—though their dissolution coincided with the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire[6]—as provide a seedbed for the most far-reaching innovations of post-Enlightenment culture, to the point of laying the foundation for a postmodern world that would model itself on the *premodern* condition.[7] In fact, what audiences heard on the former monastic grounds at Wagner's great Munich premiers—the only performances prior to Bayreuth, according to Nietzsche, that the composer did not scold (*Briefwechsel*, pt. 1, 2: 340)—would become a familiar crisis in secularized Europe: the death of the death of God, as it were. The forced transfer of property from the church into lay hands was supposed to end the dominance of Christian superstition in its most unreconstructed forms but sometimes produced instead an uncanny lingering of the old medieval thaumaturgy, as the (frequently literal) place of modern secularity remained tied in some enigmatic way to its former sacramental office. Even when Wagner finally achieved his dream of a custom-built theater on comparatively virgin soil, those who visited "solemnly understood that they were attending a sacred rite" (Gay 264), and the young Nietzsche imagined that with further inspiration from Wagner's expository writings—"a revelation of the spirit!"—there might congregate around this new liturgy a "monastic and artistic community" (*Briefwechsel*, pt. 2, 1: 166). Secularization in this case did not so much evacuate and discredit Christianity as reoccupy its station and arrogate to art its former privileges, along with a great deal of its symbolic grammar and critical thrust—not to mention its eerie promise of deliverance.

I start with Wagner because the most consequential book of philosophy inspired by his music, Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, inspires in turn the title of Andrew Cole's new *Birth of Theory*. One of its many accomplishments is to put Nietzsche back into dialogue with the traditions from which contemporary theory has often abstracted him or wanted to think he can free us—Hegel in particular, but with him, all manner of outmoded medievalisms. Cole's writing epitomizes the virtues he attributes to Nietzsche's "'untimely dialectic'—motile, unwelcome, critical, and historical" (19). Cole isn't afraid to stake out positions that are unfashionable or even

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.787 Published online by Cambridge University Press

old-fashioned (two other ways of translating Nietzsche's *unzeitgemäß*)—for example, by using "birth" in his title. The book as a whole invokes with disarming abashment that "dirty word" *origin*, so as to restore the Middle Ages to Hegel and Hegel to Marx and Nietzsche (23). Both maneuvers return us by a new route to positions that were fairly prominent before the influence of Althusser and Deleuze became widely felt[8]—after which Hegel's name began to operate as a "code word for Stalin," and the rush was on among progressive PhDs "to escape" him.[9] Many have struggled mightily as a consequence since the late 1970s to demonstrate how little theory need owe to an explicitly theological *idealism*, that great shibboleth of their embodied no-nonsense. Cole's corrective often reminded me of a Nietzschean fit of pique that would be dear to the heart of every medievalist if every medievalist knew Nietzsche the way Cole does:

> How much naïveté, venerable, childlike, and boundlessly clumsy naïveté, lies in the scholar's faith in his superiority, in the good conscience of his tolerance, in the unsuspecting simple certainty with which his instinct treats the religious man as an inferior and lower type that he has outgrown, leaving it behind, *beneath* him—him, that presumptuous little dwarf and rabble man, the assiduous and speedy head- and handiworker of "ideas," of "modern ideas"! (*Beyond Good and Evil* 70–71)

This is not to say that the nineteenth century failed to demolish innumerable ways of living and thinking that had persisted in Germany for more than a millennium; rather, Cole urges us to treat such ends with the same dialectical subtlety he brings to beginnings. On occasion the most important encouragement comes almost in passing, as when he briefly mentions that the "secularization thesis—at times often quite straightforward seeming—is immediately complicated in its embroilment with *dialectics*, which is a veritable eddy of temporalities, histories, desires, and concepts" (102; cf. Cole and Smith, "Outside"). This turns out to be literally true of *Aufhebung*, an overworked term Cole leaves untouched, probably because he had his hands full digging Hegel out from under the caricatures that a keyword like this one too easily validates. Normally we're given to understand it can mean three things at once: cancelation (i.e., the way opposites negate each other), preservation (i.e., the way each retains its opposite within itself, finding its fullest meaning only in and through the safekeeping of what it excludes), and finally elevation (i.e., the way contradiction as such generates new assertions—of logic, power, spirit—at a different or raised level). This is textbook stuff. *Aufhebung* has a fourth meaning, however, which Cole should appreciate: it's also the everyday word for *dissolution*, specifically of a monastery in the course of its secularization. That process was of course sweeping Bavaria and on its way to Munich as a result of the Napoleonic occupation of the Rhine valley while Hegel was starting to write the *Phenomenology*. *Aufhebungskommissare* fanned out across the whole region to catalog and disperse the abbeys' material possessions, then to sell off their estates so that the land and any remaining buildings could be reoccupied (Weis, *Montgelas* 201). Their dissolution ushered in a world that literally grounded the new in what it replaced.

Hegel's dialectic reflects this revolutionary history by reflecting on history as revolution in the most paradoxical, etymological meaning of that word (cf. Habermas 121–41). The truly radical break occurs here in and through the return of a superseded origin that had somehow prefigured its own usurpation, with the result that the new as such "is the déjà vu is the perpetually not yet"—to lift a phrase from Rebecca Comay's mind-blowing work on this topic (22). Modernity's religious narcosis and secular antidotes, in other words, share the same active ingredient—namely, secularization itself. Or, as Hegel has it in a complex passage ostensibly

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.787 Published online by Cambridge University Press

on the French Revolution but applying equally well to the Bavarian *Aufhebungskommissare*, "what Enlightenment declares to be an error and a fiction is the very same thing as Enlightenment itself is. Enlightenment that wants to teach faith the new wisdom does not tell it anything new."[10] When, for example, the head of the commission tasked with stripping the monastic libraries encountered an insubordinate Pater Bibliothekarius whom he suspected of hiding valuable texts, he threatened him with "a spiritual correctional facility for recalcitrant clerics" before moving on to his next interrogation with this unwittingly Hegelian joke: "so we resumed our Inquisition" (Aretin 60, 62). His success at rooting out vast numbers of texts, including many duplicates, eventually presented his superiors with an even more Hegelian conundrum: because the state library could archive just a fraction of what they appropriated, they considered selling the rest, only to realize the market would cast the seeds of backward thinking more widely than ever before, at the very moment when they wanted to obliviate medieval benightedness. Their fear of its persistence was so strong, in fact, as to be almost superstitious: worrying that "the monkish spirit" would find a way to continue disseminating Christian false consciousness long after the monasteries were gone, they created an index of "pernicious literature" and had it pulped.[11] Their enlightenment, like every rational insight, cut through the darkness with a bonfire of vanities.

Once everything movable had been auctioned or destroyed at Benediktbeuern—home to the most famous medieval text secularized in this period, the *Carmina Burana*—a disagreement erupted between the government officials who wanted to turn the buildings into a factory and the local *Aufhebungskommissar* who feared anything less than their wholesale obliteration would leave open an invitation for the return of credulity. "So long as this hiding place of monkery stands," he warned his superiors, "its current fate resembles only a slumber, not complete death" (qtd. in Jahn 77). His anxiety turned out to be prescient, if not in quite the way he expected. When an industrialist purchased Benediktbeuern for a glass foundry to be run by Joseph von Fraunhofer (the leading crafter of precision lenses, whose theodolites had helped Montgelas and Napoleon map Bavaria in advance of its secularization), monkery did indeed return, but it returned as the one thing the Enlightenment failed to recognize in religion—namely, science. The new factory joined a time-honored Benedictine tradition of glasswork that had long supplied the monks with reading lenses and window panes. The laborers given to fueling Benediktbeuern's kilns stayed on the premises when Fraunhofer took over, as did Pater Udalricus Riesch, the mapmaker whose knowledge of surveying technology proved indispensable, and Pater Josef Maria Wagner, a professor who now taught optics, as he always had, to incoming apprentices (Jackson 78; cf. Hemmerle 572). In time Fraunhofer's lenses would lead to some of the most significant advances in geodesy and astronomy, including, by mid-century, the first glimpse of a new planet. There were conflicting ideas about what to call it, but after some initial bickering, the custom prevailed of naming heavenly bodies after the gods that science and Christ had together secularized, and it became Neptune (Jackson 3).

Cole finishes his book by turning to the stars with a plea for "dialectical wonder" (162) that mainly underscored for me how theory after Hegel finds its unsurpassable horizon in "the permanent predicament of secularization"—if I can borrow another essential axiom from Comay (118). As at the start, Cole's test case is Plotinus, the originator of medieval-modern dialectics, in his view, who also derided "the expectation that celestial beings attend to the beck and call (the prayers) of every individual on earth" (162). It's worth stressing that the same demystifying contempt for astrology appears

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.787 Published online by Cambridge University Press

throughout scripture: only by this negative means could Yahweh become the highest sky god, over and above the astral "host of heaven" (*New Oxford Annotated Bible,* Deut. 4.19, 17.3) among which he first appeared and from which, if the biblical prohibitions give any indication, he could be hard to differentiate.[12] Plotinus's high-mindedness in matters astrological would have made him easier to appropriate for sophisticated Christians (who at the same time could reassure themselves that his teacher, Ammonius Saccus, had already felt their influence).[13] In any event, even while Plotinus attacked the perennially fashionable worship of the stars, like the prophets before him and the fathers after, he too surreptitiously drew on astrology's mythological power for his most critical insights: "without the resources of astrology, which supply the cache of images, themes, symbols by which to carry out a potentially daring thought," Cole writes, "Plotinus would never have doubled back to reflect on human affairs in their most mundane sense" (163).

Such retention of a superseded mythology, its sublation into the remotest heavens where, by virtue of its retrograde alterity to the present, it can become the beacon of a new humanism, is perhaps the best reason to accept the Romantic way of dating modernity's onset with the birth of Christ—heralded, not incidentally, by the discovery of a new star. According to the fathers, this sighting signaled both the abolition and culmination of an idolatrous, astrological polytheism since it was the wise men's reverence for starry portents that led them to abandon their credulous faith in magic and bow instead before a newborn enlightenment. Thus the magus has learned to "believe *against* himself," Ambrose once preached, in an eternal reproach to the "foolish Jews" who declined to accept their own messianic forecast (63–64). The same reasoning was used to explain how the church had settled on 25 December as the date of Christ's birth in the absence of any historical warrant: because pagans were accustomed to celebrating the sun's rejuvenation at winter solstice, they were best prepared on that day to apostatize and consecrate in its place the true "light of the world."[14] As medieval Benedictines were fond of saying at Christmas—and as nineteenth-century German scholars would learn from the Nativity play in the newly secularized *Carmina Burana*—Christ "is born from a virgin, / the sun of a star!"[15]

There follows in the same manuscript a musical dramatization of the medieval legend that largely shaped the Romantic view of Christianization—namely, Christ's destruction of the idols, though here, as with the star of Bethlehem and the reoccupation of solstice, we have to understand "destruction" as the chief Christian means of preservation: to stage the play, monks would have had to fashion anew in the heart of the church the very idols that Christ had destroyed while also fashioning Christ *himself* in the same manner, out of the same materials, since his part, too, was played by a statue.[16] One answer to the resulting question—what makes Christ the true god but the others false?—is simply that Christians had had the power to overcome or sublate the pagan religions that preceded his advent. "To enrich one among many," Schiller wrote, "this world of gods had to die" (290).[17] The challenge of such negative self-enrichment, as Hegel's work everywhere elaborates, is the way it leaves the sacred forever at the mercy of what it desecrates; in this case, for the medieval church to maintain its superiority over and above the mythological superstitions it meant to supplant, it had to find ways to preserve and even reanimate the idols whose cancelation grounded the whole enterprise (cf. Camille). Christianity may have smashed the false gods and ruined their temples, but it also refashioned the leftover fragments into a proto-cubist collage—hence the *Carmina Burana*, with its raucous odes to Fortuna, Venus, Bacchus, and all the rest alongside the most elaborate liturgical drama

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.787 Published online by Cambridge University Press

that we currently possess, thanks to the nineteenth century's kindred attempt to destroy Christian myth in the name of a still-higher, more advanced enlightenment.

When Fredric Jameson defines the central trait of literary modernism as the longing "to be more than itself, more than aesthetic, trans- or anti-aesthetic . . . to acquire prophetic or sacred status in a social world in which such status no longer exists," when he declares that its utopian leanings first require "the destruction of the idols and the sweeping away of an old world in violence and pain, [as] itself the precondition for the reconstruction of something else" (*Seeds* 89), he so readily displaces onto modernity a medieval commonplace about Christ's dissolution of antiquity because his viewpoint is so thoroughly a product of German Romanticism. As A. W. Schlegel explains in a paradigmatic series of lectures, "the peculiar spirit of modern art" arises directly from medieval "*romance*—the name originally given to the languages which were formed from the mixture of the Latin and the old Teutonic dialects, in the same manner as modern civilization is the fruit of the heterogeneous union of the peculiarities of the northern nations and the fragments of antiquity" (21–22).[18] For many of the nineteenth-century German intellectuals who set the scene for what we now call theory, the demolition and reconstitution of the Roman Empire may have created the Middle Ages, but this transformation at one and the same stroke initiated the series of fissures and dislocations that characterize the modern geopolitical order—or what today we experience as the postcolonial present. According to Schelling, Hegel's friend and rival from the Tübingen seminary, the origins of modern "romantic" art lie in "that particular period of the deepest transformation," when an earlier age disappeared into the secular world we now inhabit—which is to say, into the medieval world of Christian deferment, spoliation and doubt: "the old gods lost their power, the oracles and celebrations fell silent, and a bottomless abyss full of a wild admixture of all the elements of the past world appeared to open itself up before humanity" (61).[19]

This narrative found a place in Hegel for the whole of his career: "Christianity depopulated [entvölkert] Valhalla," he wrote early on, "felled the sacred groves, extirpated the national imagery as a shameful superstition, as a devilish poison."[20] By violence and evangelism, nature as such was disenchanted or, to use a term from his later lectures, "emptied of gods [entgöttert]."[21] Only by virtue of this break could the anthropomorphizing tendencies of Greek mythology come to full fruition in the "consummate" religion that replaced them. Through Christ alone history achieves the "absolute inwardness" required of modern, subjective art—an aesthetic that therefore begins, for Hegel as for Wagner, with medieval iconography. Here at last art passes through the "absolute negation" that dissolves "all particular gods into a pure and infinite self-identity. In this Pantheon all the gods are dethroned, the flame of subjectivity has destroyed them, and instead of plastic polytheism art knows now only *one* God" (*Aesthetics* 1: 519). Only one and, more shocking still—in the Tübingen idiom Heidegger would adapt—also "the last."[22]

That is the true catastrophe of Christmas, and it counts in its way as the real birth of theory: because the Christian God is *born*, he too must die—just like all the other gods he kills off. In fact it's this view of Christianity as a morbid, emptying, fundamentally *nihilistic* force that accounts for one of the more arresting overlaps between Hegel and Nietzsche, if not also between medieval Christendom and Western (post)modernity—their equal commitment to the death of God as history's great turning point (Vattimo; Depoortere). The dying god had of course long formed a part of pre-Christian polytheism, but the whole point in that case was that there were always other gods (Frazer). Christians by contrast as-

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.787 Published online by Cambridge University Press

serted that theirs was the only god *and* that he had been shamefully executed, which among their antagonists soon won them a reputation for atheism: "How can it be that God has died? How did God die? Can God die?" Augustine asks (rhetorically, given the cross): "It is more incredible that the eternal has died than that mortal creatures will live eternally. And yet the more incredible fact is that of which we have proof already" (482). After the council of Chalcedon (431) denounced Nestorius for allegedly separating Christ's divinity from his humanity to avoid the implication that divinity itself had suffered crucifixion, it was the *denial* of God's death that became heretical. At least this is how Luther explained the ancient scandal and came to the customary Augustinian conclusion, though as suited his taste for the negative, with perhaps more than customary force: "Christ died, and Christ is God, therefore God has died" (*Von den Konziliis* 589). After a mid-seventeenth-century lyricist followed Luther's lead and composed a hymn bewailing Calvary as the place where "God himself lies dead" (Hansen 191), those words became a mainstay in the Lutheran church. That is where Hegel first learned "this hard saying," which expressed his philosophy's hardest truth—namely, that "the finite, the fragile, the weak, the negative are themselves a moment of the divine" (*Phenomenology* 476; *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* 468). Nietzsche, the son and grandson (on both sides) of Lutheran ministers, likely sang as a child the same hard saying in the same austere pews. He knew better than most whereof he spoke when he complained that "the Protestant parson is the grandfather of German philosophy," even if he tried to deflect attention from his own heritage toward that of Hegel and Schelling: "One need merely say 'Tübingen Seminary' to understand what German philosophy is at bottom—an insidious theology" (*Antichrist* 576). Has there been a profound innovation if at the beginning of the nineteenth century the death of God represents to Hegel a point on which he and the gospels are in full accord, but at its end the old Lutheran hymn in Nietzsche's rewording works to discredit Christianity? If so, persisting through that change, even *announcing* it, we hear words that are spoken from a world that the words themselves have outlived.[23]

Cole's central claim that "what makes Hegel modern is his turn to the medieval" (36) finds ample support in Hegel's writings so long as you concentrate on his aesthetics and philosophy of religion, where modernity emerges in standard Romantic fashion from the Christianization of antiquity. Given Luther's unshakable centrality to German intellectual culture, however, Hegel could also periodize the *other* way: from this perspective, modernity appears as the bright "blush of dawn" after the "long, eventful and terrible night of the Middle Ages," that desert of "infinite falsehood" filled with "superstitious customs, errors, manifold deceptions, and every possible injustice and wantonness" (*Philosophy of History* 411, 366, 441), that gothic wasteland from which Luther saved us by securing our "spiritual freedom" (Pinkard, *Hegel* 628; cf. de Grazia 23–28). Cole does not have much to say about the Protestant Hegel, but he is important. For one thing, we can see in his philosophy of history just how closely modernity replicates the peculiar eschatology of the Kingdom:[24] already here with Christ's birth and yet still on its way and therefore in need of further annunciation—first by Luther, then by Hegel. And then, as it turns out, by Feuerbach and then by Marx and then, in his own weird way, even by Nietzsche (Glasse; cf. Baeumer). For all Marx's coquetting with Hegel's modes of expression, he clearly patterned his economic diatribes on "the oldest German political economist, Dr. Martin Luther" and made a point early on to lampoon Hegel's philosophy as a throwback to the most scholastic hocus-pocus (*MEGA* 35). Being a historical materialist dedicated to practice but also, alas, a mere theoretician, Marx needed

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.787 Published online by Cambridge University Press

a historical example of someone who had materially changed the landscape of Europe through the force of mere theory, and Luther fit the bill better than anybody: "Just as it was then the *monk*, so is it now the *philosopher* in whose brain the revolution begins."[25]

It has taken a long time for scholars to turn away from the modern Luther to the confirmed Augustinian who could typify the medieval methods that he criticized—dialectics above all (Brecht 37–38). No doubt it would be possible to fold him into Cole's storyline, but in that case we would need to rectify the more serious omission of Luther's least attractive medieval baggage. For Cole, the origin of modern dialectics in the premodern invariably shows the Middle Ages to great advantage—understandably so, given that period's marginalization to most theory circles. Every tale of origins, however—especially a dialectical one—must have its dark side: "For since we are the outcome of earlier generations," writes Nietzsche, "we are also the outcome of their aberrations, passions and errors, and indeed of their crimes; it is not possible wholly to free oneself from this chain. If we condemn these aberrations and regard ourselves free of them, this does not alter the fact that we originate in them" (*Untimely Meditations* 76). Wherever spirit's sublation or "fulfillment" of native beliefs has managed wholly to co-opt or otherwise end them, it can be hard to remember centuries later just how violent and audacious the struggle for supremacy originally was and at just what cost the Christian triumph ultimately came—mercifully incomplete and deferred as portions of it may yet remain. But Luther's hugely influential viewpoint serves as a permanent reminder of the damage inflicted on Jews by spirit's indomitable march through Germany toward absolute universality (see his *On the Jews*). Ever since his late invectives, the persistence of Judaism in the face of Christian-secular enlightenment has repeatedly driven gentile German intellectuals well past the point of distraction (Rose; Mack). This is a special bequest from the Dark Ages that contemporary theory has had to wrestle with intimately, usually in the person of Heidegger or de Man or when contemplating Wagner, but it belongs equally to the dialectical tradition: witness the all-too-monastic mid-century debate among the Young Hegelians—which includes Marx together with Wagner—on the so-called Jewish Question.[26]

Only because this tradition is so poisonous does the young Hegel come out of it looking mild by comparison. Even once he revised his early opinions and softened his rhetoric, "his own theory still committed him to the view that it was in some very deep sense *irrational* to be Jewish in the modern world, much in the same way as it would be irrational to worship Pallas Athena in contemporary Europe" (Pinkard, Introd. xiii). That commitment, widespread in nineteenth-century German philosophy, does not substantially differ from the medieval position. It is on full display, for example, in the *Carmina*'s Nativity when a monk playing Augustine asserts what "reason teaches" against the obstreperous objections of a monk playing Archisynagogus—who, the manuscript tells us, should imitate "the gestures of a Jew in every way" and who, if his mannerisms failed to suffice, could probably be identified by costume, since at the time the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) required all Jews to wear a distinguishing badge.[27] They were wearing it again when Carl Orff's perversely Gregorian setting of selected, allegedly secular lyrics from the *Carmina* (including one from the longer play of the Passion) was performed in Nazi Berlin as a medieval mystery (Kater 122–33; DCamp 143–52).

Cole expresses unhappiness with Adorno's remark that "dialectics is the ontology of the wrong state of things" (xi), in the same way that he cavils with nearly every critique of Hegel, but those critiques exist for reasons that the Frankfurt school learned the

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.787 Published online by Cambridge University Press

hard way, as its members came to understand just how medieval, in the worst use of that word, dialectics and the world it described had turned out to be. I find the "unavoidably Hegelian tone" of Jameson's apology for totalizing narratives least benign in its attempt to redeem for Marxism the medieval hermeneutic technique of "rewriting the Jewish textual and cultural heritage in a form usable for Gentiles" (*Political Unconscious* 12, 29). Does theory have any option today but to accept "Jewish" resistance to the gospel of enlightenment—I put Jewish in scare quotes because I am thinking of Archisynagogus—as the most powerful utopia the Middle Ages could formulate? It is here, after all, that we see a desire by Christians to impersonate and applaud, however mockingly, the implacable refusal to join their collective. This is a hard reading to pull off, yet in my view that is why we need more than ever the version of dialectics that Adorno, with no small stake in this question, called negative. According to him, fragments of Hegel's philosophy may well be true. But as a whole it rings false.[28]

Notes

I would like to thank Noah Guynn and Margreta de Grazia for their comments on an earlier draft of this essay and Kurt Rohde for help with Wagner. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

1. Ulrich 86, quoting a contemporary account. See also 60–62 on the building of the theater; Kücker on the friary that preceded it; Arndt-Baerend on the friary's dissolution.

2. Buschinger; Müller and Müller; Westernhagen.

3. Cf. Osinski; Hellerich; Grewe 149–201.

4. Wagner, *Selected Letters* 95; Garrett 40–69; Borchmeyer 216–49; Wapnewski 19, 21, 27.

5. "Religion" 221 (trans. modified) and *Richard Wagner: Sämtliche Schriften* 220. Cf. Heine 3.

6. Hausberger and Hubensteiner 274; Schulze.

7. Holsinger; Cole and Smith, "Outside Modernity." On Wagner and postmodernity, see Deathridge.

8. For two earlier versions of Cole's thesis, see Kolakowski 9–39 (on Plotinus and medieval dialectics as precursors to Hegel and Marx); Kaufmann 235–46 (on Nietzsche as a dialectician in the mold of Hegel).

9. Jameson, *Political Unconscious* 37; Foucault 235.

10. *Phenomenology* 334. Cf. Adorno and Horkheimer.

11. Weis, "Montgelas und die Säkularisation" 187. See also Hauke 90–91; Braun and Wild on destruction (122) and the sale of books as scrap (128).

12. J. Wright 52–97; Campion 108–25; 2 Kings 23.11; Job 31.26–28; Isa. 47.13; Jer. 8.2; Ezek. 8.16; Amos 5.26, qtd. in Acts 7.43.

13. Eusebius 2: 58–59; Rist 4–6, 169–70; McEvoy 156–57; Martin 189–92, 207–225.

14. John 8.12. See also Parker, "Who's" 23–24; McCluskey 26–28; Campion 267–89.

15. Bevington 187; Vollmann 718. Cf. Damian 507C and Geoffrey of Vendôme 248A.

16. Young 2: 26; Vollmann 745–63; S. Wright. This drama is probably of a piece with the Nativity that precedes it but has been treated separately by editors (Linke).

17. See Hegel, *Aesthetics* 1: 506–08, for his comments on this poem; cf. his "Positivity" 151–52.

18. On Jameson and romance, see Cole and Smith, "Outside" 11–15.

19. On the relationship to Hölderlin and Schlegel's lectures, see Williamson 63–65.

20. "Positivity" 146 (trans. modified) and *Werke* 1: 197.

21. *Aesthetics* 1: 524 and *Werke* 14: 137.

22. Schelling 64. See also esp. Schelling 298n37 for parallels in Hölderlin; Heidegger 280–93 on Hölderlin and the last god.

23. Cf. Blumenberg: "The sphere of sacral language outlives that of the consecrated object and is anxiously conserved and used as a cover precisely where philosophically, politically, and scientifically new thinking is being done" (78). The unexpected tendency of qualifications like this one to strengthen the secularization thesis that Blumenberg opposes has been noted by him and contested (59)—unpersuasively in my view. Cf. Cole and Smith, "Outside."

24. Löwith, *From Hegel* 31–51 and *Meaning*. Cf. Davis 45–49.

25. "Contribution" 251; for further commentary, see Parker, "What" 655–60 and "God" 45–48.

26. Marx, "On the Jewish Question"; Wagner, "Judaism"; Walker 46.

27. Vollmann 710, 716 (my trans.); Bevington 183, 186; Lipton 164 on the Jewish badge.

28. *Minima Moralia* 50, reversing Hegel, *Phenomenology* 11. Cf. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* and *Hegel*.

Works Cited

Adorno, Theodor W. *Hegel: Three Studies*. Trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen. Cambridge: MIT P, 1993. Print.

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.787 Published online by Cambridge University Press

———. *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. London: Verso, 1978. Print.

———. *Negative Dialectics*. Trans. E. B. Ashton. London: Routledge, 1973. Print.

Adorno, Theodor W., and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002. Print.

Ambrose. *Exposition of the Holy Gospel According to Saint Luke, with Fragments on the Prophesy of Esaias*. Trans. Theodosia Tomkinson. 2nd ed. Etna: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2003. Print.

Aretin, Johann Christoph von. *Briefe über meine literarische Geschäftsreise in die baierischen Abteyen*. Ed. Wolf Bachmann. Munich: Langen-Müller, 1971. Print.

Arndt-Baerend, Sabine. *Die Klostersäkularisation in München, 1802/3*. Munich: UNI-Druck, 1986. Print.

Augustine. "Exposition of Psalm 148." *Expositions of the Psalms, 121–150*. Trans. Maria Boulding. Ed. John E. Rotelle. Hyde Park: New City, 2004. 476–91. Print.

Baeumer, Max L. "Nietzsche and Luther: A Testimony to Germanophilia." *Studies in Nietzsche and the Judaeo-Christian Tradition*. Ed. James C. O'Flaherty, Timothy F. Sellner, and Robert M. Helm. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1985. 143–60. Print.

Bevington, David, ed. *Medieval Drama*. Boston: Houghton, 1975. Print.

Blumenberg, Hans. *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*. Trans. Robert M. Wallace. Cambridge: MIT P, 1983. Print.

Borchmeyer, Dieter. *Richard Wagner: Theory and Theatre*. Trans. Stewart Spencer. Oxford: Clarendon, 1991. Print.

Braun, Rainer, and Joachim Wild with Monika Ruth Franz et al. *Bayern ohne Klöster? Die Säkularisation 1802/03 und die Folgen: Eine Ausstellung des Bayerischen Hauptstaatsarchivs: München, 22. Februar bis 18. Mai 2003*. Munich: Generaldirektion der Staatlichen Archive Bayerns, 2003. Print.

Brecht, Martin. *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation, 1483–1521*. Trans. James L. Schaaf. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985. Print.

Buschinger, Danielle. *Le Moyen Âge de Richard Wagner*. Amiens: P du Centre d'Études Médiévales, U de Picardie–Jules Verne, 2003. Print.

Camille, Michael. *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-Making in Medieval Art*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989. Print.

Campion, Nicholas. *The Dawn of Astrology: A Cultural History of Western Astrology*. London: Continuum, 2008. Print.

Cole, Andrew. *The Birth of Theory*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2014. Print.

Cole, Andrew, and D. Vance Smith, eds. *The Legitimacy of the Middle Ages: On the Unwritten History of Theory*. Durham: Duke UP, 2010. Print.

———. "Outside Modernity." Cole and Smith, *Legitimacy* 1–36.

Comay, Rebecca. *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution*. Stanford: Stanford UP, 2011. Print.

Damian, Peter. *Sermo Primus in Epiphania Domini* (VI Jan.). *Patrologia* 144: 505A–14B.

Davis, Kathleen. "The Sense of an Epoch: Periodization, Sovereignty, and the Limits of Secularization." Cole and Smith, *Legitimacy* 39–69.

DCamp, Richard M. "The Drama of Carl Orff: From 'Unerwünscht' to Post-modernity." Diss. U of Iowa, 1995. *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global*. Web. 10 Dec. 2014.

Deathridge, John. "Wagner and Post-modern Culture." *Cambridge Opera Journal* 4.2 (1992): 143–61. Print.

de Grazia, Margreta. *Hamlet without Hamlet*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. Print.

Depoortere, Frederiek. "'God Himself Is Dead!': Luther, Hegel, and the Death of God." *Philosophy and Theology* 19.1–2 (2007): 171–95. Print.

Eusebius. *The Ecclesiastical History*. Trans. Kirsopp Lake. 2 vols. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1965–73. Print.

Foucault, Michel. "The Discourse on Language." *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. New York: Harper, 1972. 215–37. Print.

Frazer, James George. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. 3rd ed. Vol. 4. New York: Macmillan, 1935. Print.

Garrett, Leah. *A Knight at the Opera: Heine, Wagner, Herzl, Peretz, and the Legacy of* Der Tannhäuser. West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 2011. Print.

Gay, Peter. *The Tender Passion*. New York: Oxford UP, 1986. Print.

Geoffrey of Vendôme [Goffridus Vindocinensis]. *Sermo IV in Nativitate Domini IV*. *Patrologia* 157: 248A–52A.

Glasse, John. "Why Did Feuerbach Concern Himself with Luther?" *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 26 (1972): 364–85. Print.

Grewe, Cordula. *Painting the Sacred in the Age of Romanticism*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2009. Print.

Habermas, Jürgen. *Theory and Practice*. Trans. John Viertel. Boston: Beacon, 1974. Print.

Hansen, Theodor. *Johann Rist und seine Zeit*. Halle: Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1872. Print.

Hauke, Hermann. "Die Bedeutung der Säkularisation für die bayerischen Bibliotheken." Kirmeier and Treml 87–97.

Hausberger, Karl, and Benno Hubensteiner. *Bayerische Kirchengeschichte*. Munich: Süddeutscher, 1985. Print.

Hegel, G. W. F. *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. Trans. T. M. Knox. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1975. Print.

———. *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*. Trans. A. V. Miller. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977. Print.

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.787 Published online by Cambridge University Press

———. *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: The Lectures of 1827*. Ed. Peter C. Hodgson. Berkeley: U of California P, 1988. Print.

———. *The Philosophy of History*. Trans. J. Sibree. New York: Dover, 1956. Print.

———. "The Positivity of the Christian Religion." *Early Theological Writings*. Trans. T. M. Knox. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1971. Print.

———. *Werke*. Ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel. 20 vols. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969–71. Print.

Heidegger, Martin. *Contributions to Philosophy (from Enowing)*. Trans. Parvis Emad and Kenneth May. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999. Print.

Heine, Heinrich. "The Romantic School." *"The Romantic School" and Other Essays*. Trans. Helen Mustard. Ed. Jost Hermand and Robert C. Holub. New York: Continuum, 1985. 1–127. Print.

Hellerich, Siegmar V. *Religionizing, Romanizing Romantics: The Catholico-Christian Camouflage of the Early German Romantics: Wackenroder, Tieck, Novalis, Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel*. New York: Lang, 1995. Print.

Hemmerle, Josef, ed. *Das Bistum Augsburg*. Vol. 1. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991. Print.

Holsinger, Bruce. *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005. Print.

Jackson, Miles W. *Spectrum of Belief: Joseph von Fraunhofer and the Craft of Precision Optics*. Cambridge: MIT P, 2000. Print.

Jahn, Wolfgang. "Die Aufhebung des Klosters Benediktbeuern." Kirmeier and Treml 70–77.

Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981. Print.

———. *The Seeds of Time*. New York: Columbia UP, 1994. Print.

Kater, Michael H. *Composers of the Nazi Era: Eight Portraits*. New York: Oxford UP, 2000. Print.

Kaufmann, Walter. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. 4th ed. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1974. Print.

Kirmeier, Josef, and Manfred Treml, eds. *Glanz und Ende der alten Klöster: Säkularisation im bayerischen Oberland 1803*. Munich: Süddeutscher, 1991. Print.

Kolakowski, Leszek. *Main Currents of Marxism: Its Origins, Growth and Dissolution*. Trans. P. S. Falla. Vol. 1. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1981. Print.

Kücker, Wilhelm. "Das alte Franziskanerkloster in München." *Oberbayerisches Archiv* 86 (1963): 4–149. Print.

Linke, Hansjürgen. "Der Schluss der mittellateinischen Weihnachtsspiels aus Benediktbeuern." Spec. issue of *Zeitschrift für Deutsche Philologie* 94 (1975): 1–22. Print.

Lipton, Sara. *Dark Mirror: The Medieval Origins of Anti-Jewish Iconography*. New York: Metropolitan; Holt, 2014. Print.

Löwith, Karl. *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought*. Trans. David E. Green. New York: Columbia UP, 1964. Print.

———. *Meaning in History: The Theological Implications of the Philosophy of History*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1949. Print.

Luther, Martin. *On the Jews and Their Lies. Luther's Works*. Amer. ed. Vol. 47. Ed. Franklin Sherman. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971. 121–306. Print.

———. *Von den Konziliis und Kirchen. D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Vol. 50. Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1914. 488–653. Print.

Mack, Michael. *German Idealism and the Jew: The Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003. Print.

Martin, Dale R. *Inventing Superstition: From the Hippocratics to the Christians*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2004. Print.

Marx, Karl. "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction." Marx, *Early Writings* 243–57.

———. *Early Writings*. Trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton. New York: Vintage, 1975. Print.

———. *Karl Marx–Friedrich Engels Gesamtausgabe (MEGA)*. Ed. Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim Zentralkomitee der Kommunistischen Partei der Sowjetunion et al. Pt. 2, vol. 2. Berlin: Dietz, 1980. Print.

———. "On the Jewish Question." Marx, *Early Writings* 211–41.

McCluskey, Stephen C. *Astronomies and Cultures in Early Medieval Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. Print.

McEvoy, James J. "Neoplatonism and Christianity: Influence, Syncretism or Discernment?" *The Relationship between Neoplatonism and Christianity*. Ed. Thomas Finan and Vincent Twomey. Dublin: Four Courts, 1992. 155–70. Print.

Müller, Ursula, and Ulrich Müller, eds. *Richard Wagner und sein Mittelalter*. Anif: Müller-Speiser, 1989. Print.

The New Oxford Annotated Bible. Ed. Michael D. Coogan. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001. Print.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Antichrist. The Portable Nietzsche*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Penguin, 1954. 565–656. Print.

———. *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*. Trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage, 1989. Print.

———. *Briefwechsel: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*. Ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. 24 vols. in 3 pts. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975. Print.

———. *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden*. Ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari. Vol. 11. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980. Print.

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.787 Published online by Cambridge University Press

———. *Untimely Meditations*. Trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Ed. Daniel Breazeale. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. Print.

Osinski, Jutta. *Katholizismus und deutsche Literatur im 19. Jahrhundert*. Paderborn: Schöningh, 1993. Print.

Parker, John. "God among Thieves: Marx's Christological Theory of Value and the Literature of the English Reformation." Diss. U of Pennsylvania, 1999. Print.

———. "What a Piece of Work Is Man: Shakespearean Drama as Marxian Fetish, the Fetish as Sacramental Sublime." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 34.3 (2004): 643–72. Print.

———. "Who's Afraid of Darwin? Revisiting Chambers and Hardison . . . and Nietzsche." *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 40.1 (2010): 7–35. Print.

Patrologia cursus completus, series Latina. Ed. J.-P. Migne. 221 vols. Paris, 1844–64. Print.

Pinkard, Terry. *Hegel: A Biography*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. Print.

———. Introduction. *On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany and Other Writings*. By Heinrich Heine. Ed. Pinkard. Trans. Howard Pollack-Milgate. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007. xii–xxxii. Print.

Rist, J. M. *Plotinus: The Road to Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1967. Print.

Rose, Paul Lawrence. *Revolutionary Antisemitism in Germany from Kant to Wagner*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990. Print.

Schelling, F. W. J. *The Philosophy of Art*. Ed. and trans. Douglas W. Stott. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1989. Print.

Schiller, Friedrich. "Die Götter Grieschenlands." *Gedichte*. Ed. Georg Kurscheidt. Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker, 1992. 285–91. Print.

Schlegel, August Wilhelm von. *Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature*. Trans. John Black. New York: AMS, 1973. Print.

Schulze, Winfried. "Die Säkularisation als Ende der Heiligen Römischen Reiches Deutscher Nation." *Die Säkularisation im Prozess der Säkularisierung Europas*. Ed. Peter Blickle and Rudolf Schlögl. Epfendorf: Bibliotheca Academica, 2005. 339–50. Print.

Ulrich, Claudia. *Das königliche Hof- und Nationaltheater unter Max I. Joseph von Bayern: Vorgeschichte, Entwicklung und Wirkung eines öffentlichen Theaters*. Munich: Beck, 2000. Print.

Vattimo, Gianni. "Nihilism as Postmodern Christianity." *Transcendence and Beyond: A Postmodern Inquiry*. Ed. John D. Caputo and Michael J. Scanlon. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2007. 44–48. Print.

Vollmann, Benedikt Konrad, ed. *Carmina Burana: Texte und Übersetzungen mit den Miniaturen aus der Handschrift und einem Aufsatz von Peter und Dorothee Diemer*. Berlin: Deutscher Klassiker, 2011. Print.

Wagner, Richard. "Judaism in Music." Wagner, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works* 3: 75–122.

———. "On State and Religion." Wagner, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works* 4: 3–34.

———. *Opera and Drama*. Wagner, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*, vol. 2.

———. "Religion and Art." Wagner, *Richard Wagner's Prose Works* 6: 211–52.

———. *Richard Wagner: Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen*. Volks-Ausgabe. Vol. 10. Leipzig: Breitkopf, 1911. Print.

———. *Richard Wagner's Prose Works*. Trans. William Ashton Ellis. 8 vols. London: Kegan Paul, 1892–1912. Print.

———. *Selected Letters of Richard Wagner*. Trans. and ed. Stewart Spencer and Barry Millington. London: Dent, 1987. Print.

Walker, Nicholas. "Wagner amongst the Hegelians." *Music, Theatre, and Politics in Germany: 1848 to the Third Reich*. Ed. Nikolaus Bacht. Burlington: Ashgate, 2006. 31–47. Print.

Wapnewski, Peter. "The Operas as Literary Works." Trans. Peter Palmer. *Wagner Handbook*. Ed. Ulrich Müller and Wapnewski. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1992. 3–95. Print.

Weis, Eberhard. *Montgelas: Der Architekt des modernen bayerischen Staates, 1799–1838*. Munich: Beck, 2005. Print.

———. "Montgelas und die Säkularisation der bayerischen Klöster 1802/3." *Die Säkularisation in Bayern 1803: Kulturbruch oder Modernisierung?* Ed. Alois Schmid. Munich: Beck, 2003. 152–255. Print.

Westernhagen, Curt von. *Richard Wagners Dresdener Bibliothek 1842–1849. Neue Dokumente zur Geschichte seines Schaffens. Mit 6 Abbildungen und Kunstdrucktafeln*. Wiesbaden: Brockhaus, 1966. Print.

Williamson, George S. *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2004. Print.

Wright, J. Edward. *The Early History of Heaven*. New York: Oxford UP, 2000. Print.

Wright, Stephen K. "*The Play of the King of Egypt*: An Early Thirteenth-Century Music-Drama from the *Carmina Burana* Manuscript." *Allegorica: A Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Literature* 16 (1995): 47–71. Print.

Young, Karl. *The Drama of the Medieval Church*. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1933. Print.

https://doi.org/10.1632/pmla.2015.130.3.787 Published online by Cambridge University Press