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OF BRUNO BAUER

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## INTRODUCTION: “THE FRIEND OF FREEDOM”

To understand Bauer, one must understand our time.  
What is our time? It is revolutionary.<sup>1</sup>  
Edgar Bauer, October 1842

Bruno Bauer has provoked intense controversies since the 1830s, yet his work remains inaccessible, his meaning elusive.<sup>2</sup> He is most familiar as the object of Marx’s sharp polemical attacks in *The Holy Family* and *The German Ideology*,<sup>3</sup> though Albert Schweitzer, in his widely noted *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, gives him a receptive and sensitive reading.<sup>4</sup> He is far more complex a figure than the caricature that Marx’s denunciations make of him. In the decisive political circumstances of the German *Vormärz*, the prelude to the revolutions of March 1848, Bauer’s is the voice of an original republicanism, inspired by Hegel. He is a theorist of revolution, of its causes and its failures. Analysing the emergent tendencies of modern society, he criticises both the old order and new ideological currents in the interests of a profound, republican liberation.

The literature on the Hegelian Left has depicted in diverse ways the revolution that Bauer theorises: as abstract-utopian posturing,<sup>5</sup> as a religious crisis,<sup>6</sup> or as a cultural degradation or mutation.<sup>7</sup> Recent commentators stress the political dimensions of the crisis and the interest of the Left Hegelians, Bauer foremost among them, in developing a theory of popular sovereignty and citizenship.<sup>8</sup> Important studies have linked them to the literary and political currents of their time<sup>9</sup> and traced the changing patterns of their relationships with early French socialism.<sup>10</sup> Others have demonstrated the affinity of their thought with Hellenistic theories of self-consciousness,<sup>11</sup> opening comparative perspectives on modern republican appropriations of Roman or neo-Roman themes.<sup>12</sup> These readings broaden the Left-Hegelian attack on religious estrangement to encompass the institutional and ideological expressions of the old regime.

Bauer himself sees the revolution that he theorizes as bearing epochal significance. It is a fundamental political, social, and cultural transformation, the completion of the unfinished tasks of the French Revolution, but also the pursuit of unprecedented challenges posed by the emergence of modern civil society. Its aim is the creation of a republican league of equal right, eliminating irrational privileges, refashioning social relations, and eradicating religious and political alienation. As the culmination of the emancipatory strivings of modernity, it fulfils the promise of the transcendental project, initiated by Kant and perfected, almost, by Hegel. It is this post-Kantian philosophical context that shapes Bauer's understanding of the political struggle.

In conditions of the Restoration and political reaction, Bauer defends the necessity of a political and social revolution based on a new conception of freedom. His republicanism is a theory of positive liberty or self-transcendence that combines ethical and aesthetic motifs derived from Hegel and particularly from the critique of Kant. Though rooted in political action, this transformation is to have consequences far beyond the political sphere. Bauer's work is a campaign waged on three fronts<sup>13</sup>: first, against the old order, the Restoration state, its social and juridical base, and its orthodox religious justification; then against liberalism as a defence of private interest, and as a warrant for subordinating the state to economic power; and, finally, against socialism, as another variant of particularity and heteronomy. The originality of Bauer's republicanism in the *Vormärz* is the Hegelian argumentation he deploys against both Restoration conservatism and liberalism. The longstanding antagonism of republicanism to these adversaries receives an innovative theoretical grounding in Bauer's work. A new opposition also appears, in the rupture between the republican and socialist camps, whose theoretical differences now attain sharpened formulation.

Before we examine these forms of critique, some preliminary problems of sources and interpretation require our attention. These are especially acute in the present case. Bauer was an enormously prolific writer. Approximately eighty published texts, totalling several thousands of pages, have been attributed to him in the decade after 1838 alone. Of these, more than a dozen are lengthy and significant books, covering interpretations and critiques of Hegel, the Old Testament, the gospels, modern theological currents, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the contemporary German and European situation. Unlike the Feuerbachian corpus, for example, no critical edition of these works exists.<sup>14</sup> Marx alleges that Bauer could spin out a weighty tome from the thinnest spindle of a thought, but his writing is always provocative, often profound, and sometimes strikingly witty. One memorable image describes Hegel's berserk rage against all existing statutes<sup>15</sup>; this is Bauer assuming and relishing a pietistic pose, the better to celebrate his own revolutionary

doctrine under the strictures of censorship. The writing is powerful, and vast in its sweep.

Beyond difficulties of range and extent, the interpretation of Bauer's work is fraught with additional problems of textual analysis. A daunting array of these uncertainties is described by Ernst Barnikol, the major contributor to the field.<sup>16</sup> In two cases, the anonymous *Posaune des jüngsten Gerichts* (*Trumpet of the Last Judgement*, 1841) and *Hegels Lehre von der Religion und Kunst* (*Hegel's Doctrine of Religion and Art*, 1842), which figure among Bauer's most important texts, the author adopts the ironic posture of a conservative critic of Hegel in order to defend the progressive character of the Hegelian system, but in doing so he also attributes to Hegel his own revolutionary views. Other sources show that he does not believe that Hegel actually held these positions, but he thinks that they are necessary consequences of Hegel's fundamental doctrines. In two other important books, *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte des Johannes* (*Critique of the Gospel of John*, 1840) and *Die evangelische Landeskirche Preussens und die Wissenschaft* (*The Evangelical State Church of Prussia and Science*, 1840), Bauer expresses in the text central theses that are at odds with his statements in other contemporary communications. In these cases, the published texts are more cautious or more conservative than the private utterances, as recorded in his subsequently published correspondence, or in his unpublished letters to his fellow Left Hegelian Arnold Ruge.<sup>17</sup> A further complication arises from anonymous publications and the use of pseudonyms, largely too under the pressure of censorship.<sup>18</sup> It is not certain that all of Bauer's texts (at least the journalistic articles) are catalogued for the *Vormärz* period, and some attributions are disputed.<sup>19</sup> Because of the anonymity of important pieces published in Bauer's journals, the reconstruction of certain of his views on social and economic problems must remain tentative. Bauer's sometimes sketchy or ambiguous expositions of key topics are responsible for other intractable problems in deciphering his meaning. Even in the central category of mass society, for example, it is not always clear which adversaries specifically fall under this rubric.<sup>20</sup>

The critical literature on Bauer offers additional difficulties. In many instances, no secondary sources could be discovered. We are exploring virgin territory. This is the case for many of Bauer's articles from the period 1842–43, and for his studies of the French Revolution, the social question, and the German oppositional movement in 1843–49.<sup>21</sup> On other issues, such as Bauer's political critique in 1840–41, much of the literature represents views that appear indefensible in light of the evidence presented here. Finally, Bauer's career has frequently been broken into various, often incompatible phases.<sup>22</sup> The perception of radical changes of position during the *Vormärz* has led to widely divergent explanations of his aims and significance.

We can identify two schools of interpretation of Bauer's writings. The first maintains that Bauer's thinking sacrifices the relational polarities, mediations, and dialectical transitions of the Hegelian system, in favour of sharp antithetical oppositions. The Dutch theologian G. A. van den Bergh van Eysinga represents this view. He contends that "Bauer's error is not, as Marx thinks, that he was dependent on Hegel – so too was Marx! – but rather that he substituted self-consciousness for the Idea."<sup>23</sup> By this claim, van den Bergh van Eysinga means that Bauer surrenders the terrain of Hegelian objective and absolute spirit to the arrogation of subjective spirit, as if the latter could be self-grounding in the absence of the higher determinations of the system. From this standpoint, the abstract understanding, with its unmediated oppositions, takes the place of Hegelian reason in Bauer's thinking. He concludes of Bauer that "His rationalism was of Enlightenment, not of Hegelian origin."<sup>24</sup> Hans-Martin Sass, too, maintains that Bauer abandons dialectical transitions in favour of antithetical ruptures; but Sass locates the sources of this attitude in the Christian apocalyptic tradition rather than in the Enlightenment.<sup>25</sup> The antithetical character of Bauer's work has also been stressed by Daniel Brudney, who argues that the invocation of history by Bauer is a merely contingent feature of his thought. Brudney finds that Bauer's texts offer no consistent or satisfactory explanation of how the knowledge of history contributes to attaining the standpoint of universal self-consciousness; nor is it clear whether such knowledge is necessary to the critical perspective.<sup>26</sup> The dominant model of antithetics that Bauer employs in the 1840s implies, in Brudney's reading, that the past is simply to be repudiated and not dialectically assimilated: Devoid of positive content, history cannot orient consciousness or action in the present, which represents a radically new beginning.

As an example of a second line of interpretation, Ingrid Pepperle identifies a complex dialectic of history as self-production in Bauer's work, at least in the early 1840s. She follows an interpretative tradition initiated by Max Stirner and other contemporaries, however, which claims that a fundamental break in continuity occurs in Bauer's writing after 1843, when a vacuous social critique supervenes upon a highly acclaimed and rigorous criticism of religion.<sup>27</sup> Pepperle adopts her periodisation under the influence of Marx's critiques, concluding that Bauer's 1843–49 texts are of diminished theoretical value.<sup>28</sup> A similar judgement is expressed by Mario Rossi, who documents polemics and conceptual oppositions within the Hegelian school, and with various rival currents, and who offers careful analyses of specific Bauertian texts; but he too restricts his attention to the pre-1843 writings. Echoing Marx in the *Holy Family*, he sees Bauer's political position, even in this critical period, as largely theologically conditioned.<sup>29</sup> Pepperle differs in her recognition of the clearly political motivations of Bauer's early work but shares the discontinuity thesis.



Neither of these two types of interpretation is without merit. Each will find a partial vindication in the present account. But each reading, pressed too insistently, is inadequate to grasp the complexity of Bauer’s understanding of history and freedom, and each distorts his genuine accomplishments. There are markedly antithetical elements in Bauer’s thinking, and these become increasingly evident in his characterisation of the revolutionary situation in Germany after 1843. To this extent the critics are correct. The first approach, however, overlooks a centrally important dimension of Bauer’s thinking in the 1840s, a specific model of judgement or of immanent critique that, in its approach to history, differs from the antinomic Enlightenment formulations to which Bauer’s have often been compared. It differs, as well, from Kantian morality and equally from the more deterministic variant of critique developed in parallel by the young Marx. The second approach misses the continuity of Bauer’s thought, especially his republican commitment, which he continues to defend in important texts long after 1843. It is certain that the focus of Bauer’s thinking changes as he confronts different adversaries. We can, however, identify a consistent core in his work throughout the 1840s, in the Hegelian idea of the unity of thought and being. This idea is the basis of his republicanism.

As Bauer already states in his first writing, the prize manuscript of 1829, the unity of concept and objectivity is the central idea of Hegel’s idealism.<sup>30</sup> This unity is not static but represents a process of change, development, and progress, as objective reality is remodelled through the experience of rational freedom. Hegel expresses this dynamism through his concept of *Wirklichkeit*, the actuality of reason.<sup>31</sup> This concept translates Aristotle’s idea of *energeia*, the presence or activity of form and end in matter.<sup>32</sup> In passages that Bauer draws upon to sustain a revolutionary reading of his meaning, Hegel describes the dynamism of reason as its ability to transform given objectivity into the vehicle of spirit, and to surpass the limits of its previous achievements.

[S]pirit likewise has the property of dissolving every determinate content it encounters. For it is the universal, unlimited, innermost and infinite form itself, and it overcomes all that is limited. Even if the objective content does not appear finite and limited in content, it does at least appear as something given, immediate and authoritative in nature, so that it is not in a position to impose restrictions on thought or to set itself up as a permanent obstacle to the thinking subject and to infinite internal reflection.<sup>33</sup>

History has to do with reality, in which the universal must in any case assume a determinate form. And no limited form can establish itself permanently in the face of thought or the concept. If there were something which the concept could not digest or resolve, it would certainly represent the highest degree of fragmentation (*Zerrissenheit*) and unhappiness (*Unseligkeit*). But

if something of this kind did exist it could be nothing other than thought itself in its function of self-comprehension. For thought alone is inherently unlimited, and all reality is determined within it. In consequence, the fragmentation would cease to exist, and thought would be satisfied with itself. This, then, would be the ultimate purpose of the world. . . . [P]rogress, therefore, is not an indeterminate advance *ad infinitum*, for it has a definite aim, namely that of returning upon itself.<sup>34</sup>

The process of realisation of reason is not for Hegel a movement without closure, or what he calls a spurious infinite,<sup>35</sup> constantly reproducing the rift between concept and objectivity. The history of spirit possesses in comprehending reason a point of repose, or of reflection back into unity. Hegel describes the movement of reason as a system of syllogisms, based on the mutual relations and changing functions of universality, particularity, and singularity.<sup>36</sup> The universal stands in different ways for the rational concept; the particular is the medium in which the concept is to be embodied; the singular is the achieved embodiment of the concept, though subject to revision and reformulation. In the unfolding of the syllogisms, the universal acquires objectivity and concreteness by incorporating the particular as an aspect of itself, while the particular elevates itself to universality, stripping off its contingent nature to become the expression of a higher principle. The conclusion of the syllogism contains these two intersecting movements and also a further movement that crystallises the result as a new determinate principle.<sup>37</sup> Following up this argumentation, Bauer contends that the historic process is doubled, as an open-ended objective striving, and as a subjective completion or return to unity within the rational self. His concept of infinite self-consciousness maintains these two sides. Hegel himself takes the dynamism or *Wirklichkeit* of reason to be a hallmark of freedom. In this respect, too, Bauer's thought follows his lead.

Spirit endures contradiction because it knows that it contains no determination that it has not posited itself, and consequently that it cannot in turn get rid of. This power over every content present in it forms the basis of the freedom of spirit. . . . [A]ctual freedom does not therefore belong to spirit in its immediacy but has to be brought into being by spirit's own activity. It is thus as the creator of its freedom that we have to consider spirit in philosophy. The entire development of the concept of spirit represents only spirit's freeing of itself from all existential forms which do not accord with its concept; a liberation which is brought about by the transformation of these forms into an actuality perfectly adequate to the concept of spirit.<sup>38</sup>

The realisation of reason can be traced in a sequence of stages, wherein the mediation of universal and particular is achieved in different forms. For Hegel, the philosophy of antiquity depicts a moral substance of which particular members are manifestations, properties, or accidents, not fully

individuated by the possession of an autonomous moral conscience. The classical Greek doctrine of virtue aims to produce what Hegel calls the beautiful individual, an exemplar of a predetermined set of values that integrate the person into the substance of the community.<sup>39</sup> The dissolution of this consciousness, in Stoicism and Epicureanism, represents a withdrawal from the engulfing moral substance of the *polis* into subjective interiority or self-limitation. Despite the seeming radicality of the Epicurean programme, its principal ethical injunction not to exceed limits – to seek to minimise pain and not to maximise pleasure – is consistent with the requirements of classical thought, and antagonistic to unbounded modern self-assertion.

In Hegel’s account, to which Bauer remains faithful, the modern emphasis on freedom overthrows the classical fixity of limits and the naturalness or givenness of values and relations. In the modern conception, autonomous subjects, possessing instrumental reason, confront and dominate the objective world, extracting new forms from the operation of discoverable causal patterns but also being subject to these patterns in the shaping of their own teleological projects.<sup>40</sup> The liberalism typical of modernity renders community not as the moral substance of individuals but as the instrumental context for the pursuit of private ends. Its positive achievement is to emancipate the individual from previous collective bonds, but it has simultaneously obscured the creation of new forms of community, distinct from the substantial communities of the past. Liberalism is thus one-sided and does not offer an adequate account of the forms of modern solidarity. The ancients, in contrast, neglected the essential moment of personal independence. Hegel’s theory of objective spirit proposes to overcome the defects of both schools, while retaining their positive achievements. Following Fichte,<sup>41</sup> Hegel maintains that other subjects are not to be treated merely as obstacles or instruments to individual purposes but can act as conditions of an enlarged personal freedom.<sup>42</sup> The legitimacy of social institutions can be determined according to this criterion. Though mutual limitation remains a permissible figure, occupying a specific place within a larger continuum (one that Hegel designates as abstract right), it is not the exclusive form of reciprocity<sup>43</sup> but must be completed and transcended in political relations. Community no longer depends on given substantial ends or determinations, as in antiquity, but is engendered and sustained in freedom. Modernity allows particular subjects to emerge from a universe of abstract possibilities through their choice of determinate projects. Their particularity is not merely given but evolves within reciprocal relations, sanctioned by shared normative schemes that are robust enough to accommodate diversity and opposition, and do not demand uniformity, conformism, or thoughtless acquiescence. Unlike classical substantiality, modern particularity requires recognition of the free choice that it exerts

within its range of possible options. Particulars thus crystallise, in distinction from all others, yet connected to them in manifold relations. Logically, Hegel analyses this process in the dialectic of the one and the many<sup>44</sup> and traces out its elaborations through the levels of objective spirit. To anticipate the argument of later chapters, the point of Bauer's critique of the masses can best be appreciated in respect to Hegel's characterisation of modern freedom. Mass society suppresses the emancipatory prospects of modernity in favour of a rigid conformity, and rests on particular, private interests that militate against rational and conscious adherence to a universal end, the promoting of freedom in all aspects of social life. Bauer will propose republicanism as a doctrine of transcendence of restrictive private interest.

Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is the theory of the free and infinite personality as the highest political accomplishment of modernity.<sup>45</sup> Modern subjects live with and integrate a diversity of roles and demands, and they generate a high degree of social differentiation, and yet they can formulate and participate in a general interest and practise autonomy in its most robust sense. The substance of what subjects will is made rational and intersubjectively valid in modernity through participation in ethical institutions, the family, civil society, and the state. For Hegel, the state is an institution of ethical life, charged with realising the fundamental values of the community and concretising its understanding of freedom. The principle of political autonomy complements and perfects the more elementary form of freedom as the capacity of choice – that is, the inability of any cause to determine the will without the will's own compliance. It is that basic form which is worked out in abstract right; but it must be supplemented by the more conscious forms of freedom lying beyond this sphere. Abstract right, the right of property or of giving oneself an objective presence in the world, is the beginning of the intersubjective process through which particularity is elevated to universality. In carrying out their projects, subjects produce a new universal, a complex society that is inwardly differentiated and that is sustained through mutual recognition. The universal becomes concrete by containing and giving voice within itself to the particular, the principle of distinction; likewise, the particular is integrated into a new and more articulated universality that does not suppress its freedom, as classical societies did, nor exist as a mere instrumental context for private purposes, as liberals typically believe. Hegel follows this intersubjective process through the spheres of inner morality, receiving its confession of its own inadequacy: it needs to draw the criteria of its judgements not from an abstract interiority but from the network of existing social ties.<sup>46</sup> Only in *Sittlichkeit* or objective ethical life can the contradictions in social relations be dissolved and the unity of concept and objectivity be secured. The unity of universal and particular attains initial concrete reality through the activity

of appropriation, production, and exchange in civil society. This entails reciprocal social relations, rather than isolated acts of will, as originally appears to be the case in abstract right. Finally, in the state the synthesis of particular and universal acquires conscious expression as a real, rather than merely formal, unity.

After Hegel's death, the increasingly conservative political climate of the Restoration proved inimical to the hopes of his school for further progress in rational freedom. For his republican disciples, important elements of his original project required rethinking. In light of political and social developments, Hegel's defence of constitutional monarchy<sup>47</sup> was unwarranted, and his pessimism about the solution of the social question unfounded.<sup>48</sup> To address these deficiencies in Hegel, their conceptual sources within his theory must be identified. The system of objective spirit was to be thoroughly recast, though, for Bauer at least, this can be done consistently with Hegel's own principles.<sup>49</sup> Elaborating upon a suggestion made in print by Arnold Ruge, though it may not originate with him, Bauer envisages a public morality to complement the private morality that Hegel describes in the *Philosophy of Right*. It is the absence of such a public account, his republican followers claim, that is responsible for Hegel's hypostasis of the universal as a separate sphere, as a state that does not explicitly acknowledge its foundation in popular sovereignty. Hegel has thus not succeeded in synthesising universality and particularity. The former is divorced from its basis in subjective action; the latter is too narrowly conceived to open to genuine self-transcendence or autonomy. The figure of the republican citizen is underdeveloped. Bauer's own republicanism, the basis of his political reflections in the *Vormärz*, emerges on this terrain.

For Bauer, the unity of thought and being, the true and central idea of all philosophy, attains its most adequate expression in Hegel, despite the limits of his institutional descriptions. But Hegel's formulation is not yet perfected; there remain in the synthesis of concept and objectivity other theoretical deficiencies beyond the political and institutional, which also stand in need of revision. From this assessment follows Bauer's conviction that Hegel's account of the present can be rectified by an inner engagement and conceptual development, a correction and not an abandonment of the Hegelian system. In this he differs from the Feuerbach of 1839, or the Marx of 1843.<sup>50</sup> Hegel maintains that we can grasp the rationality of history only retrospectively, but we cannot anticipate it. Bauer transforms this claim into a prospective, ethical idealism, though one that takes its bearings from reflection on the historical process. We determine our maxims by reference to history, analysing its current configuration and its inner contradictions, and thus knowing how to act in accord with its objective requirements. It is a Hegelian theory of history as the becoming of freedom that gives access to universality, that allows subjects

to judge what is demanded by the universal end, concretely promoting emancipation from irrational institutions and practices. The invocation of history provides Bauer with a solution to the abstract subjectivism he finds in Kant, and to the mere negativity he finds in Enlightenment criticism, which breaks with history. A further problem that Bauer identifies in Hegel's account of Absolute Spirit is the retention of apparently transcendent elements, with inadequate reference to their subjective origin; consistently with Hegel's fundamental principles, these must now be purged away.

In addressing these problems, Bauer uses his central concept of infinite self-consciousness, a term taken from Hegel's theory of subjective spirit, to reconfigure the Hegelian absolute. One effect of the change that Bauer effects is to bring art and philosophy into close proximity, and to exclude religion henceforth as a form of alienated reason, while recognising its historical necessity. Bauer's divorce of religion and philosophy within Absolute Spirit has been frequently investigated in the literature, though his political motivations have not been clear, and his republicanism obscured. The defining trait of Bauer's project is his insistence on the immanence of the universal in history. History is the becoming of freedom and self-awareness, the record of our struggles for liberation, but also the saga of failed attempts, of alienation, which are necessary if we are to discover the meaning of our rational autonomy. Bauer's account entails the repudiation of all doctrines of freedom based on the assertion of particularism, whether religious, economic, or political. It is simultaneously the critique of hypostatised or false universals, transcending the power of individuals. These include the absolutist state and the fetishistic objects of religious belief. Bauer contends that all attempts to assert freedom on the basis of particular interest are doomed to failure by virtue of their irrationality; and all abasement of human powers before transcendent forces is to be overcome. These are the objects of his republicanism.

Objectively, the unity of thought and being as a process is never complete; it is an infinite striving to secure the always elusive accord between relations, institutions, and understandings of freedom. Subjectively, however, the movement is perfected in individual self-consciousness, through self-transcendence and internalising of the lessons of history. The process thus contains two dimensions, an objective exertion extending into infinity, and a subjective consummation or conscious return to self from otherness. It is the unity of the sublime struggle for freedom and the beautiful self, a self that differs from the beautiful individuality of the classics because it is achieved through surmounting contradictions, and not because its contradictions are yet undeveloped. Here Bauer's resolute modernism is apparent. The process of history is not chaotic or anarchic, but is governed by reason and its dialectical unfolding. Freedom entails a permanent process of transformation. "All that is solid melts

into air,"<sup>51</sup> but the results of our actions do not disappear. The fluidity of reason leaves behind a result that can be rationally apprehended, and that continues to orient our activity. Theory is the identification of contradictions in reality that require resolution; it is accompanied by an ethical commitment to act to overcome them. In the absence of such actions, historical solutions are postponed or distorted. The revolutionary transformation of the present is directed by insight into the past, as the history of alienation and its overcoming. Bauer's ethical idealism differs from the Kantian form by admitting history into a defining role. The new concept of autonomy does not depend on an atemporal sense of duty, but is closer to what Kant calls perfectionism, where action is validated by its contribution to historical progress. Bauer takes this to mean an uncompromising commitment to remodel political and social relations and institutions. The knowledge of our freedom is not simply a moral postulate, as in Kant. Its conditions are theoretical: the understanding of history as a rational process, and of the present as marked by specific obstacles that must be overcome for progress to continue. In free self-determination, subjects transcend their previous self-understandings and renew the opposition between themselves and their products, whose finitude stands an inadequate embodiment of evolving subjective creativity. Freedom is the endless reshaping of the particular in light of the universal, itself in constant motion. Existing relations have no permanent validity, but constitute matter to be transformed. They are not simply a given object, however, external and indifferent to us, but are the product of anterior subjective activity. Hegel had characterised such a stance as practical Jacobinism. This is exactly the political sense it assumes in Bauer's work.

Bauer's historical idealism and his republicanism are mutually reinforcing. Each with its subjective and objective dimensions, his idealism contains two components, one deriving from aesthetic concepts, the other from an ethical reading of history. Objectively, the ethics of historical perfectionism coalesce with an aesthetic image of the sublime, the infinite struggle for freedom that Bauer invites his contemporaries to share. Only the rational and autonomous subject can participate in this labour, as a freely self-determined task. Here, subjectively, the reflexively integrated, beautiful self, acting from motives of disinterestedness and universality, sustains the republican attitude. This revolutionary subject applies an ethical, critical judgement against the old order and against all claims to emancipation, in order to assess their validity and their right. This critique, differing from the moral adjudication of Kant and from Enlightenment forms, is clarified within Hegel's logic as the apodeictic judgement.<sup>52</sup> Its necessity lies in its claim to follow the real movement of history, but this necessity is one that rational subjects freely embrace. There is no predefined subject of the revolutionary act. All must inscribe

themselves as actors in the drama of transformation. If we are to orient ourselves in the expression of autonomy, there must be universals, but these universals must not be treated as transcendent. They arise instead from the historical process itself as a process of emancipation, and the free self-identification of the particular with this universal. Subjective understandings of freedom, based on critical historical judgements, must pass into objectivity, and not remain in self-enclosed inner certainty. They must furnish maxims of practical activity, directive of political and social engagement. But in giving voice to what they perceive as universal interests, political actors must also confront their own limited subjectivity. They must not simply bracket their particular interests and identities, or refrain from expressing them, or reformulate them in politically acceptable discourse as public reasons. They must instead radically transform them. This is what Bauer means by the self-transcendence of particularity. This requirement emerges for him from the duality of the historical process, the unity of concept and objectivity secured through permanent struggle and conscious return to self. The reflexive remodelling of the subject as a vehicle of infinite self-consciousness is a central claim of his ethical and aesthetic idealism. For freedom to be real, for reason to be effective, heteronomous impulses and characteristics may not be simply concealed from public inspection, but thoroughly eradicated. Bauer's republican rigorism fuses claims of right with those of morality. He cannot admit that the criteria of legitimate external action may be less stringent than those governing inner ethical motivation, or that the juridical sphere can rightly have only the former in its purview. His radical doctrine of autonomy, and his republicanism, require the harmonisation of inner and outer aspects of subjective behaviour.

The first front on which Bauer opens his critical campaign is against the *ancien régime*, and its Restoration surrogates. Bauer denounces feudalism as a system of tutelage and of irrational privilege, monopoly, and exemptions. The universal is dispersed into multiple points, at which predatory private interests, both individual and corporate, cluster and oppose each other in order to secure additional advantages. Arrogating universality to itself, the authoritarian state that arises over these rigidly exclusive particulars thwarts and denies the self-activity of its people, and conceals the source of its authority behind a veil of religious sanctification. The state makes use of religion to bolster its authority, and, struggling against the emergent principles of freedom, seeks to halt its own development in historically retrograde forms. Private interest and progress are diametrically opposed.

Bauer maintains that it is the state, and not religion, that is the principal adversary of freedom, but his critique of religion itself is also far-reaching. It is integral to his account of the historical process as alienation and self-overcoming. He insists that his position differs fundamentally from



Enlightenment criticism, which, though offering superficial similarities, is based on a shallowly rationalistic explanation of religious manipulation, and on a restrictive idea of the subject and of freedom.<sup>53</sup> Bauer's critique in the *Vormärz* derives from the theoretical antagonism of faith and intellect, and from considerations of practical reason, the incompatibility of religious orthodoxy with the ethics of the republic. Religion posits a false or transcendent universal, which results in and sustains a narrow practical particularism. He excoriates the privatism and egoism of the religious attitude, and the sectarianism of the cult, seeking corporate privilege for itself. Even within the religious consciousness as alienated spirit, however, Bauer finds creativity at work in the original shaping of the material of sentiment and representation to the new form and determinateness of doctrine, while beneath this aesthetic activity lurks a mass of indeterminate feeling or unthinking acquiescence. The question of the genesis of religious doctrines takes up the problematic of artistic creativity that Bauer addresses in his first text of 1829. Against this order of alienated spirit, Bauer insists that the decisive political question is the source of the state's authority, whether in tradition and religious sanction, or in the popular will. This issue, the true meaning of 1848, is to be posed and fought out in utmost clarity, without mediation or compromise. Here is a genuine and unavoidable historical antinomy, to which only republicanism provides the solution. Though it might appear to be an ally in the republican revolution, liberalism is incapable of such a sustained combat against the old order.

Thus Bauer opens his campaign on its second front, as a critique of liberal possessive individualism and the constitutionalist state. Previous revolutions, the English and especially the French, must also be critically assessed. Their failings are instructive, both in their theoretical bases and in their tactical implications. The break between liberalism and republicanism is not an original feature of 1848, but Bauer imparts a new turn to the debate, criticising civil society, the dominance of economic interest, and the mass tendencies of modern society, a process accelerated by the French Revolution, and unconsciously reflected in the liberalism (as well as the socialisms) of 1848. He revives the classical republican themes of the opposition of commerce and virtue, but gives them a new shape, consistent with his Hegelianism. He develops a critique of constitutionalism as the political translation of private interest, and as a vacillating, compromising opposition to the feudal regime. Even in its most advanced form, that endorsed by Hegel, constitutionalism merely juxtaposes two diametrically opposed principles of sovereignty, popular and princely, and is unable to resolve the essential contention between them.

On its third front, Bauer wages a campaign against a new adversary, the emergent schools of socialism. The revolutions of 1848 fracture the Jacobin tradition, as each group in the popular alliance attains a clearer

consciousness of its own specificity, and defines itself, in part, against its former ally. Bauer's work contributes to this process, and reflects the emergence of new forms of poverty and social organisation. He asserts that the objective of his new republicanism is not merely political, but social emancipation. The social question can be resolved, and the proletariat liberated, not by direct appeals to the particular interests of one class, but by a common struggle against privilege in all its forms, a struggle animated by republican convictions. The result of this combat, waged unremittingly, will be the attainment of equality and its inexorable generalisation throughout the spheres of social life.

As the revolutionary outbreak approaches and collisions intensify, Bauer's thought shows signs of strain. It is not yet that his aesthetic and ethical models separate and come into opposition with each other, as they do after 1848, but rather that the subjective and objective dimensions within each model reveal their potential incompatibility. The importance of the subjective moment, both of motivation and of inward fulfilment, is highlighted to the detriment of the objective process. A narrowness and sectarianism in Bauer's own outlook on questions of the purity of the revolutionary commitment can be understood from this perspective; we can thus offer an alternative explanation of Bauer's polemics against liberals and socialists, distinct from charges of renegadism or theoretical discontinuities. His account of liberation conflates right and morality, spheres that Kant, Fichte, and Hegel had succeeded in keeping distinct. The consequences are apparent in Bauer's texts on the Jewish question, for example. For Bauer, the possibility of full mutual recognition among citizens depends upon the subjective adoption of a republican attitude. Such recognition, and with it access to the sphere of right, therefore reposes upon a certain bearing in the sphere of morality. Bauer is not prepared to admit as legitimate any claim for the elimination of juridical inequality, wherein the potential beneficiaries of this equality act from particular religious interests, or are not imbued with fully republican sentiments. Only with difficulty can he admit a common front against mutual adversaries, and his adamance helps to foreclose the possibility of progress. This is a major weakness, and leads to his faulty diagnosis of the current situation, as well as to the diminution of his public status within the opposition movement after 1844. These problems beset many of his criticisms of the insufficiencies of the progressive forces in general. His theory requires that revolutionary subjects act freely, undetermined by particular interest, but few subjects in 1848 prove capable of the stringent demands that Bauer's critical judgement imposes. That there must be a point of rest or return to self from externalisation is necessary to avoid or mitigate the false universal or the passage to infinity, from which Bauer wishes to distinguish both his ethics of perfectionism and his aesthetics of the sublime. But this point of rest, the subjective side of the ethical and

aesthetic programme, sometimes appears as an alternative rather than a complement to the objective process, a retreat, secured against the forces of historic decay, rather than a bridgehead from which new advances can be made. The subjective and objective dimensions remain harmonised in 1839–44, but increasingly they are under tension. Bauer criticises Hegel for his incomplete synthesis of concept and objectivity, but he does not himself resolve the problem.

The book is divided into four parts. The first establishes the foundations of Bauer’s political thought, tracing the emergence of his model of aesthetic and ethical criticism, and discussing his reading of Hegel and Kant, wherein he formulates an idealism rooted in a Hegelian concept of history. The second part examines the critique of religion and the Restoration state. The third explores more fully the republican programme and the understanding of history in Bauer’s texts of 1841–42. The fourth deals with the unfolding revolutionary situation and the emergence of the social question, addressing the critique of the liberal political movement, the repudiation of socialist alternatives, and the limits of Bauer’s republicanism. A brief epilogue outlines his post-revolutionary thought. The 1829 Latin prize manuscript on Kant’s aesthetics, published here in English translation for the first time, appears as an appendix to the work.

In interpreting Bauer, I have attempted, wherever possible, to take his own programmatic pronouncements to guide the initial approach to his texts. His sympathetic rendering of the thought of forgotten Enlightenment figures like Edelmann<sup>54</sup> provides a model for such interpretation. His insistence on the unity of thought and being and his invocation of social struggle are examples of these guiding ideas. The first supplies the general interpretative framework for this study; the second reveals the directive intention for Bauer’s specific criticisms both of the old order in *Vormärz* Germany and of the oppositional currents emerging from liberalism and socialism. The exposition of Bauer’s ethical and aesthetic idealism, of his republicanism, and of his recognition of the social question are, I hope, the major contributions of this text.

In approaching these issues, the heterogeneity and volume of Bauer’s literary output during the pre-revolutionary period impose distinct methods of analysis. Some texts are fundamental theoretical statements. These include his 1829 manuscript on Kant, and, as I believe, the *Posaune*, despite its peculiar form.<sup>55</sup> The theoretical content of these texts is here discussed at length. In other cases, the philosophical import is relatively slight, but the text makes a significant political point. These texts are typically grouped thematically, except where it is necessary to distinguish shifts in emphasis among them. After establishing the general contours of Bauer’s thinking in part one, the treatment is both chronological and thematic, tracing his development and his engagement with different adversaries, though frequently his encounters with various opponents

merge, and it is impossible to unravel completely the three strands of his critique.

Some restrictions of scope must also be noted. This account is not a comprehensive intellectual biography of Bauer, but an examination of republican themes in his work before 1848. This limitation is imposed by the very diffuseness of his writing. Thus I have retained what I take to be strictly necessary to my subject, the relation between Bauer's republican politics and his aesthetic and ethical idealism, derived from a specific reading of Hegel. While I do not offer an extensive reconstruction of Bauer's religious theory in the mid-1830s, I suggest that the key to these texts is the fundamental idea of the unity of thought and being, and that they can be understood as experiments that Bauer undertakes to display this accord. In Bauer's critique of religion after 1839, I address the themes that are pertinent to his republicanism, especially the links among religion, possessive individualism, and the absolutist state. Further, I stress the central distinction between Bauer's critique of religion and that of the Enlightenment, to support my claim that there is a distinctive (Hegelian) kind of judgement at work in Bauer's texts. A subsequent detailed exploration of Bauer's theory of religion and its evolution would be most welcome, but I do not venture it here.

Except for the epilogue, the present account limits itself to Bauer's work prior to 1850. In the vast corpus of Bauer's writings, these texts form a relatively cohesive whole, dedicated to republicanism, the ethics and aesthetics of self-determination, and the forms of concrete political struggle. They are inspired by a particular and relatively consistent reading of Hegel, and they bear directly on the revolutionary experience of 1848–49. Even his later work is still conditioned by the contradictions of the revolutionary movement, which Bauer now assesses as a failure, but the political landscape has changed decisively. It is only after 1848 that the ethical and aesthetic models decisively diverge in Bauer's thought, and the aesthetic is reconfigured at the expense of the sublime. He abandons his historical perfectionism and the sublimity of the struggle for liberation. The correct practical stance is now, Bauer thinks, a disinterested aesthetic withdrawal from active ethical engagement while new social forces prepare themselves, under disciplinary duress if not by insightful personal exertion.<sup>56</sup> After 1848, Bauer looks particularly to Russia as a revivifying force for an exhausted and impotent Europe. Russia's is a cohesive society, not yet prey to the diremptions of modern egoistic individualism, but characterised by an all-encompassing unity of church and state. The unity of thought and being is now taken to be an attribute of a premodern social formation. Some of the roots of his later position can be identified in his *Vormärz* writings, but Bauer's later thought falls outside the scope of the Hegelian, ethical, and aesthetic republicanism that is our object.