INTRODUCTION

> It is now a question, so to speak, of founding a Kingdom, the Kingdom of the Idea, of thought which contemplates itself in all that exists and is conscious of itself. The founder of *this* Kingdom will naturally bear no name, will not be an individual, or will be this individual which alone *is*, the World Spirit. Further, it is a question of overthrowing from its throne the ego, the *self* in general, which, especially since the beginning of Christianity, has dominated the world, which has conceived itself as the only spirit to exist. (Ludwig Feuerbach to Hegel, 1828)

When the communist regimes of the European East Bloc recently toppled in an inverted version of the domino theory, a feature of political thought that had largely escaped notice among western political theorists in the 1970s and 1980s abruptly moved into the foreground. That is, the dissidents of central and eastern Europe contributed greatly to the recovery of "civil society" as a descriptive and normative political concept. An idea rooted in the high age of bourgeois political self-assertion against absolutist and feudalist ideals of social order, civil society had all but fallen from use in the twentieth century. Revived by dissidents like Vaclav Havel and Adam Michnik as a weapon against the oppressive regimes of the Soviet Bloc, the ideal of civil society pitted society against the state, association against sovereignty, plurality against unity, civility against force, persuasion against coercion. A parallel "return to civil society" among political theorists in the West was motivated partly by eastern European examples, but it was also prompted by a

desire to revitalize the civic life of the western liberal democracies in the face of the perceived dilemmas of bureaucratization and statism.[1] Although the traumas of democratization and liberalization in central and eastern Europe during the 1990s have undoubtedly revealed ambiguities and difficulties in the concept of civil society, this social and political ideal has proven remarkably appealing across the political spectrum in the West.

In thus resurrecting civil society as a normative ideal and, frequently, as a polemical weapon, eastern European dissidents and western political theorists have had recourse to a rich discursive tradition embracing a range of figures from John Locke to Tom Paine, Montesquieu to Tocqueville, Kant to Hegel. Not surprisingly, given the breadth of this lineage, the notion of a "revival of civil society" can and has meant almost anything to its present advocates, depending on the orientation of the speaker. One finds neo-liberals who associate civil society narrowly with a free market economy, communitarians who regard civil society as a sphere for the construction and expansion of social solidarity, or social democrats who regard civil society as the strategic site of a democratizing process that should encompass the political state, the economy, the workplace, and the formal and informal institutions of society.

Within this extraordinarily heterogeneous discourse, the one major area of agreement is that Karl Marx's total rejection of the concept of civil society is inadequate to the project of expanding democratic life within complex societies. Here, it is the consensus that is new, not the insight itself. For the shortcomings of Marx's critique of civil society are now openly acknowledged even by those who remain sympathetic to some conception of socialism, retain elements of a Marxian critique of capitalism, or, minimally, as in the case of Jacques Derrida, "take inspiration from a certain spirit of Marxism."[2] One of the crucial problems lies in Marx's critical stance not

1 The most thorough discussion of this issue is found in Andrew Arato and Jean L. Cohen, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992). See in addition the discussions in John Keane, *Democracy and Civil Society,* (London, 1988), John Keane, ed., *Civil Society and the State. New European Perspectives* (London, 1988), and the essays in *Eastern Europe . . . Central Europe . . . Europe,* a special issue of *Daedalus* (Winter 1990). Hegel's categories of civil society and the state also gained importance in the 1980s in Anglo-American reevaluations of Marxism. See, for example, Jean L. Cohen, *Class and Civil Society: The Limits of Marxian Critical Theory* (Amherst, 1982); Z. A. Pelczynski, ed., *The State and Civil Society: Studies in Hegel's Political Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1984); and Richard Dien Winfield, *The Just Economy* (New York, 1988). A good example of the American liberal appropriation of the theme of civil society is found in Michael Walzer, "The Idea of Civil Society: A Path to Social Reconstruction," *Dissent* (Spring 1991), pp. 293–304.

2 Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx. The State of Debt, the Work of Mourning & the New International,* trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York, 1994), p. 88.

only toward capitalist economies, but toward the "civil" dimension of civil society, the conceptual and legal recognition of the spheres of voluntary association, personal autonomy, and the institutional expression and protection of individual rights. With good reason, Jean Cohen and Andrew Arato characterize the current debate about civil society as "post-Marxist" because it proceeds from a chastened skepticism toward Marx's totalizing critique of the modern forms of state and society.[3] Nonetheless, if the present debate takes for granted the need to go beyond Marxism, one of its characteristic moves has been to look behind Marx for inspiration and theoretical guidance.

This post-Marxist interest in pre-Marxist social theory has significantly enhanced the fortunes and relevance of Hegel, the master thinker whom the young Marx triumphantly claimed to have overcome. The contemporary discussion has posed anew questions about the gains and losses incurred by Marx's radical rejection of the categories of Hegelian political philosophy. It has renewed interest in Hegel's account of the historical emergence of modern selfhood and his complex analyses of the dynamics of modern civil society, not only its economic interactions but also the formal and informal institutions that struggle to secure society's ends: personal liberty as well as social welfare. Whereas Hegel exploited the dual meaning of the German term *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* in order thus to describe civil society as *both* the "bourgeois" sphere of market relations and the "civic" sphere of institutionalized individual and communal rights, Marx identified "civil society" narrowly with "bourgeois society" – that is, with the capitalist economy. Of course, Marx did not thereby renounce the struggle for individual freedom or fulfillment, but he fundamentally redefined the terms of that struggle. For, in his reconceptualization of political philosophy and economic science, individualism became "bourgeois individualism," while the "civic" dimension of civil society, particularly western liberalism's commitment to individual civil rights, became an ideological appendage or veil of economic relations. The current discussion of civil society reminds us of what was at stake in the conflict between Hegel and his radical follower, and it invites us to revisit and rethink this earlier debate about civil society, the seminal moment in the 1840s when Hegel's political philosophy yielded to Marx's thoroughgoing critique.

Marx's critical reworking of Hegel's political philosophy has been the subject of many studies, yet for all the attention paid to this crucial dimension of Marx's intellectual development, explanations for both his departure

3 Arato and Cohen, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, p. 70.

from Hegel and his deep ambivalence toward individualism remain unsatisfying. Accounts of Marx's defection from Hegel remain inadequate so long as they treat Marx's critical engagement with Hegel's *Rechtsphilosophie* in relative isolation. Of course, many studies have linked Marx to the Young Hegelians' repudiation of Hegel's theological and metaphysical aspirations. However, insofar as scholars have assumed a more or less strong contrast between the theological and philosophical preoccupations of Young Hegelians like David Friedrich Strauss and Ludwig Feuerbach and the political concerns of Marx, much of the literature on Marx and early German socialist theory has shed little light on the broader reception and transformation of Hegelian political philosophy in the 1830s and early 1840s. A central contention of the present work is that a longer view of the radical Hegelian engagement with Hegel's political philosophy will greatly illuminate not only Marx's theoretical break from Hegel but also the political dimension of Young Hegelianism as a whole and its relationship to the political currents of *vormärz* Germany.

Our understanding of Marx's critique of individualism has likewise been hampered by a tendency to treat this vital aspect of his thought in isolation from the context within which it was articulated. It is another of my basic contentions that historians and theorists alike have been too quick in assuming that an adequate source for Marx's attitude lies in his opposition to the private property regime of capitalism and the doctrine that underpins classical political economy and liberal bourgeois society, namely what C. B. Macpherson once called "possessive individualism." Evident as Marx's problematic views on the individual in society and the nature of civil rights may be, the sources of these views and the process whereby Marx arrived at them remain obscure unless we recognize the extent to which his thought was influenced by contemporaneous German debates about civil society and politics. Attending to those debates about the conditions of civil society will restore Marx's early theoretical peregrinations, as well as the target of his critique, to their appropriate intellectual context, which was not, in the first instance, a context of cosmopolitan discourse about modern liberalism.

Selfhood in Politics and Religion

In resolving to follow these debates of the 1830s and early 1840s, the historian immediately encounters a challenging complication. For the discussion of civil society in the early nineteenth century cannot be disengaged from the theologico-philosophical discussion of the period. Or, to put it simply, the constellation of concerns involved in the question of civil society – the

relationship between society and the state, individual and community, economics and politics, the private person and the public citizen, self-interest and altruism – were intimately tied to religious questions. This is true not only because Hegel himself explicitly linked his description of civil society to his account of the rise of *Christian* or, more specifically, *Protestant* personhood. Nor is it true merely because the Protestant and Catholic polities of early-nineteenth-century Germany insisted on an intimate relationship between the church and state. It is true because the question of civil society was, as it still is today, essentially related to the question of the nature of sovereignty; and this question in turn devolved upon a more basic question about the nature of the self in its manifold roles as "sovereign," "citizen," and "subject." In the context of Christian Germany in the early nineteenth century, this most basic *political* question was posed in the theologico-philosophical disputes of the day.

A proper recognition of the overlapping domains of theology, philosophy, and politics in the discourse of civil society in the 1830s and early 1840s will enable us better to understand Marx's critique of individualism and liberalism. It also promises to bring the political dimension of Young Hegelianism into bolder relief. Marx himself has been partly responsible for associating the Young Hegelians with an essentially *apolitical* critique of theology and metaphysics. Take, for example, Marx's comments on Ludwig Feuerbach, the most significant philosopher among the Young Hegelians. Even at the height of his admiration for Feuerbach, Marx complained that he "referred too much to nature and too little to politics."[4] However radical Feuerbach may have been in certain spheres, Marx contended that his political intentions were exhausted in vague evocations of "Love" as the bond of humanity. Throughout the 1840s, Marx repeatedly criticized Feuerbach for his neglect of politics and continuing fascination with religion and theology, a complaint that Engels canonized in his 1886 work on Feuerbach.[5] By posing his judgment of Feuerbach in dualistic terms – "nature" *or* "politics," "theology" *or* "politics" – Marx implied that these discourses are dichotomous. He was surely aware of their overlapping significance, as shown in his famous remark that "criticism of religion is the premise of all criticism." Yet the point is too easily forgotten that in the 1840s, Marx's efforts to shift critical attention decisively from metaphysics and theology to society, politics

4 Marx to Arnold Ruge, 13 March 1843, in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, vol. 1 (New York, 1975), p. 400.

5 Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy* (Moscow, 1976).

and economics, as well as his desire to distance himself from his Hegelian predecessors, virtually demanded that he speak in terms of sharply opposed discourses. Hence, presenting his own socioeconomic critique as the real supercession of the preoccupations of the anti-theological Hegelians, he could pronounce the criticism of religion "completed."[6] Time to move on to politics and society.

Followers and students of Marx and Engels have widely accepted this self-representation of their formative early years, and so in the scholarly literature it has become standard to argue that in the major works of Marx's early years he translated Feuerbach's methodology and outlook from "theology" into "politics." More generally, it remains a commonplace among scholars that a shift occurred within the radical Hegelianism of the early 1840s from the critique of religion and philosophy to the critique of politics. This narrative has a long lineage, traceable not only to Marx and Engels but also to the influential nineteenth-century historian of philosophy J. E. Erdmann.[7] Erdmann treated the disintegration of Hegelianism as a reversal of the process whereby Hegel had integrated the diverse philosophical sciences: As Hegel had progressed from logic and metaphysics, to the philosophy of religion, to the philosophy of the state, so his critical disciples moved from a critique of logic and philosophy of religion to criticism of the other branches of the Hegelian synthesis. Influential as Erdmann's account has been, one searches in vain for these three stages in Hegel's own development or that of his followers. In arriving at this rather schematic narrative, it seems, Erdmann imposed his own assumptions about the foundational status of logic and ontology on both Hegel and his critics, instead of remaining open to the complexities of Hegelianism's breakdown and radicalization.

The historical account of the Hegelian School has, of course, grown more complex and nuanced in the many decades since Erdmann, as has sensitivity to the political aspects of early Hegelianism. John Toews's important work has studied in detail the *political* Hegelians of the 1820s and 1830s, an inquiry that has been extended in the more recent study by Wolfgang Eßbach.[8] Despite this salutary attention to Hegelian political writings, however, more must be done to demonstrate the interpenetration of the differ-

6 Marx, "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction," *Collected Works*, vol. 3, p. 175.

7 J. E. Erdmann, *Die deutsche Philosophie seit Hegels Tode* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt, 1964; originally published 1866).

8 John Toews, *Hegelianism. The Path Toward Dialectical Humanism, 1805–1841* (Cambridge, 1980), and Wolfgang Eßbach, *Die Junghegelianer. Soziologie einer Intellektuellengruppe* (München, 1988).

ent aspects of Hegelian debate. Moreover, despite welcome exceptions such as those of Toews, Eßbach, Walter Jaeschke, and Marilyn Chapin Massey, the tendency persists to view the history of Hegelianism in terms of a progression from the religious concerns of radical Hegelians in the 1830s to the political and social preoccupations of Left Hegelianism in the 1840s.[9] Scholars have varied over precisely when the Hegelian School turned from "religion" to "politics," or when Hegelians turned from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* to his *Philosophy of Right* as the locus of their orientation, but the attempt to identify such a "moment" has figured in much of the scholarship on the Hegelian movement.[10] Even the astute question that Shlomo Avineri directed toward students of Feuerbach still assumes a progression from one discourse to another: "Was it an immanent consequence in Feuerbach's critique of religion to pass over to a critique of politics and the existing state?"[11] The terms often used to distinguish the radical Hegelianism of the 1830s from that of the 1840s further entrench the assumption of a sharp break. Hence, Hegelian critics of religion like David Friedrich Strauss and Feuerbach in the 1830s are routinely designated as "Young Hegelians," while radical critics of society and politics in the 1840s like Moses Hess, Arnold Ruge, or the young Marx are called "Left Hegelians," as if the radicalism of the 1830s has no right to a political epithet. This is curious, because it was Strauss who coined the phrase "Left Hegelian" to describe himself in 1837. Although he clearly meant to refer to theological divisions within the Hegelian School, his choice of terms placed him metaphorically within the political topography of postrevolutionary Europe.[12]

Against this scholarly pattern, we have Feuerbach declaring in 1843 that

9 The works of Jaeschke and Chapin Massey have been particularly important to the approach adopted in the present study. See Jaeschke, "Urmenschheit und Christologie. Eine politische Christologie der Hegelschen rechten," *Hegel-Studien,* 14(1979), pp. 73–107, and Chapin Massey, *Christ Unmasked. The Meaning of the "Life of Jesus" in German Politics* (Chapel Hill, 1983).

10 See Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietszche. The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought,* trans. David E. Green (New York, 1964), esp. p. 333. More recently, see Harold Mah, *The End of Philosophy, The Origin of "Ideology." Karl Marx and the Crisis of the Young Hegelians* (Berkeley, 1987). For other examples, see André Liebich, *Between Ideology and Utopia. The Politics and Philosophy of August Cieszkowski* (Boston, 1979), p. 20; and William Brazill, *The Young Hegelians* (New Haven, 1970), p. 8.

11 Avineri in "Diskussion zu Feuerbach und die Theologie," *Atheismus in der Diskussion. Kontroversen um Ludwig Feuerbach,* ed. Hermann Lübbe and Hans-Martin Sass (Grünewald, 1975), p. 67.

12 On the contemporary reception of Strauss's use of political epithets, see Eßbach, *Die Junghegelianer,* pp. 138–40.

"theology is for Germany the single practical and effective vehicle of politics, at least at present."[13] How are we to assess this remark? Certainly, Feuerbach too foresaw a secular future when political discussion would be just that. Does that mean that the discussion of theology in 1843 was just a way of scoring indirect political points against a regime that used religion to legitimize its rule? By 1843, Feuerbach may have been willing to distinguish between the critique of religion and its indirect political consequences. But with growing stridency throughout the 1830s and early 1840s, he had insisted on the *practical* importance of his philosophical work. Nor was Feuerbach alone in making such an assertion during the 1830s. Indeed, it was a claim common to numerous Hegelians who challenged the religious and political *status quo* in the 1830s. How should we understand such claims to practical significance?

The difficulty in answering this question lies in the persistent tendency of scholars to posit a more or less abrupt transition from theologico-philosophical to political argument within the Hegelian Left. Scholars have essentially projected the categories of the self-consciously politicized 1840s back into the 1830s and found them absent. From this standpoint, the political meanings of Hegelian radicalism in the 1830s are easily missed or not fully understood. I believe that in the 1830s, religious, political, and social themes constituted a unity, or a thematic constellation, even if at different moments one or another issue took prominence over others. Little can be gained by imposing upon the 1830s the definitions of the 1840s, when this unity had already begun to break into what we readily recognize as relatively autonomous discourses of politics, society, theology, and philosophy. Instead of proposing a break between the "theological" 1830s and the "political" 1840s, then, I hope to shed light on the development of Hegelian radicalism by taking seriously the unity of religious, social, and political issues in the thought of critical Hegelians during the 1830s. In fact, this unity itself was a major *political* issue for early left-wing Hegelians like Feuerbach, and its breakup into more discrete discourses must, therefore, become a problem for the historian. From this perspective, the concerns of the nascent Hegelian Left during the 1830s emerge as deeply political, though in a manner that is appropriate to the overlapping theological and political concerns of the time.

To underscore something already said, for intellectuals operating in the Christian culture of early-nineteenth-century Germany, fundamental issues

13 Feuerbach to Arnold Ruge, 10 March 1843, *Feuerbach. Briefwechsel, vol. 2 (1840–1844)*, ed. Werner Schuffenhauer and E. Voigt (Berlin, 1988).

of politics and religion were intimately tied to basic questions about the nature of selfhood. Major Hegelians like Feuerbach and Eduard Gans, or Hegelian "fellow travelers" like Heinrich Heine, August Cieszkowski, and Moses Hess, were centrally concerned with the problem of the self, and this preoccupation was not strictly limited to theological or philosophical inquiry. They also explored the status of the self in contemporary society and politics, as well as the social and political conditions within which the qualities of the person might be most fully actualized. In this way, their thought intersected with the wider contemporary discussion of sovereignty, the state, and civil society, insofar as that discussion centered on the self in its role as sovereign, citizen, and subject.

The Controversy over Personality

For German intellectuals in the 1830s and 1840s, these questions about selfhood crystallized in a wide-ranging debate over the nature of *Persönlichkeit* or personality. Even at the time this was an esoteric debate, and it has remained a relatively obscure theme in the intellectual history of early-nineteenth-century Germany. Such neglect is surprising, however, because it directly contradicts the importance of the question of personality for the theologians and philosophers of the age. I aim in this book to recapture the force of that original debate about personality and to demonstrate its significance for the development of radical political and social theory in the nineteenth century. My approach is motivated by the conviction that moving the theme of personality from the periphery to the center of our awareness illuminates the political and social concerns of Hegelians from Feuerbach to Marx, thereby recasting our understanding of the theoretical conflicts and the transformation of German philosophical and political discourse in the crucial years from 1830 to 1848.

The controversy over personality warrants our serious attention because it marked the most important point of intersection for the discussion of theological, social, and political issues in the 1830s. As the moderate Hegelian Carl Ludwig Michelet noted in 1841, the discussion of "the personality of God has dominated the history of philosophy in the last ten years."[14] The idea of personality was also a central issue among political theorists. Karl Schubarth, who gained considerable notoriety in the 1830s for his broadside attacks on Hegel, called personality nothing less than the highest principle

14 Michelet, *Vorlesungen über die Persönlichkeit Gottes und Unsterblichkeit der Seele* (Berlin, 1841), p. 7.

of the Prussian state, an opinion that the Prussian crown prince was happy to second.[15] By 1841, another moderate Hegelian could declare personality to be a life-and-death issue for Prussian politics.[16] Indeed, for Hegelians and non-Hegelians alike, the theological idea of personality was inseparable from its political and social meanings.

In the context of a society attempting to reestablish political, social, and religious order after decades of revolutionary turmoil, conservatives readily moved from theology to political theology, discovering in the idea of the personal God an exemplar of the monarch's personal sovereignty over the state. Even further, the notion of personality underpinned the discussion of civil society, because personhood stood at the center of contemporary conceptions of property. German political theology in the era of Restoration represented a particularly forceful articulation of the tripartite homology recently described by Jean Bethke Elshtain as "sovereign God, sovereign state, sovereign self."[17] Whatever unity the Hegelian School had enjoyed in the 1820s was to shatter on this pyramidal rock in the course of the 1830s. Conservative Hegelians reaffirmed the links between God, monarch, and property owner, while radical Hegelians came gradually to embrace the full consequences of the dissolution of the Christian idea of personality. The Young Hegelians' rejection of Christian personalism thus furnishes us with a key to understanding their revolt against religion, monarchy, and bourgeois civil society.

In the chapters that follow, much more will be said about the meaning of personality within the context of debate in the 1820s, '30s, and '40s. However, because the modern familiarity with the term immediately poses risks of misunderstanding, some clarifications are in order. First, it must be said that the concept of personality remained somewhat vague even for its champions. Far from reducing the usefulness of the concept, however, this lack of clarity actually enhances its utility for our purposes. Our interest, after all, is not really in establishing a valid or workable notion of personhood but rather in tracing the vagaries of an idea and its impact upon a specific historical moment. What Lovejoy once called the "metaphysical pathos" of the

15 Schubarth, "Über die Unvereinbarkeit der Hegelschen Staatslehre mit dem obersten Lebens- und Entwicklungsprinzip des Preußischen Staats" (1839), *Materialien zu Hegels Rechtsphilosophie, vol. 1*, ed. Manfred Riedel (Frankfurt, 1975), pp. 249–66.

16 [F. W. Carové], "*Hegel, Schubarth und die Idee der Persönlichkeit in ihrem Verhältniss zur preußischen Monarchie*, von Dr. Immanuel Ogienski," *Hallische Jahrbücher*, nos. 68–73 (März, 1841), p. 269.

17 Jean Bethke Elshtain, "Sovereign God, Sovereign State, Sovereign Self," *Notre Dame Law Review*, vol. 66, no. 5 (1991), pp. 1355–84.