Berlin cobweb. The late Heine: Jewish wisdom, Hegelianism

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CHAPTER IV. REVOLUTIONISM

In 1831, Heine left for France in search of a sanctuary where he would be free from ‘German miseries’. He was particularly upset about the Jew-hunt of September 1830 in Hamburg, where he had vainly tried to become ‘properly’ integrated into burgher life. Heine resolved to expatriate himself. Paris saluted the achievement of the 1830 July Revolution, which seemed like a promising reprise of 1793. He emphatically hailed the city as a Foyer of Freedom, a New Jerusalem, the cradle of revolutionism. The present chapter discusses Heine’s Parisian writings in the 1830s and early 1840s inasmuch as they refer to Hegelianism and Jewish wisdom.

We first turn to the 1830s, when Heine was inclined to acknowledge that society was ready for revolutionary change. For that reason, he began to adapt Hegelian philosophy to Saint-Simonism. From the 1830s on, radicalizing Hegelians had covered a wide range of religious, social, and political issues, items Heine recognized in Saint-Simonism, which was unveiled to widespread acclaim in a series of public lectures at a hall in Paris, rue Tarenne, in 1829 and 1830. It was the blend of social criticism and pantheism found in Saint-Simonism which gave him new resources for reconsidering his interest in Hegel’s heritage. To him, pantheism was conducive to human happiness for its capacity to further revolutionism in terms of a post-Christian, Joachimite millenarianism. The political revolution must form an alliance with pantheism if it is truly to liberate humanity in its spiritual and material totality. We therefore focus on Heine’s attitude towards revolutionary change; it will bring us to the poet’s prophetic vocation for teaching the people in order to further the coming of the Third Age. The posture of the warning prophet who knows the signs of the times across in Heine’s On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany (1834), which will be discussed further below.

For all its dazzling features, Heine’s revolutionism yet marks a crude attempt to immunize himself from doubts over the efficacy of the zeal of 1830. The hoped-for freedom, however, is overshadowed by stagnation and isolation.

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1 Cf. Höhn, 33, and, for the impact of the row, Klaus Briegleb, Bei den Wassern Bab. Heinrich Heine, jüdische Schriftsteller in der Moderne, 189-204.
2 In a letter to Varnhagen, dated 26 June 1831, Heine spoke of ‘la force des choses’, HSA XXI, 20.
once more. In his *Ludwig Börne. A Memorial* (1839-40), Heine looks lucidly into revolutionary failure. *Börne* shows the clear signs of scepticism and disillusionment, not simply because Heine could no longer ignore those aspects of Saint-Simonism which contradicted his own antipathy towards its New Christianity, but *Börne* eventually reveals that the revolutionism Heine pursued in his campaign for Saint-Simonism had not done away with the misery of exile. In the second half of the 1830s, then, Saint-Simonism was abandoned; in the early 1840s, Heine turns to a ‘new doctrine’ in order to save the revolutionary vista. Now Heine’s pantheism is deeply coloured by his acquaintance with the critique of the ‘godless self-gods’ Arnold Ruge, Karl Marx, and ‘Messrs’ Ludwig Feuerbach, Georg Friedrich Daumer, and Bruno Bauer, all of whom had shifted to social and political critique. We will focus mainly on what they had in common, which was, generally speaking, the notion that the entire system of speculation was to become history; thought was to be converted into a form of praxis, and intellectual ferment was supposed to produce a new society.

In this revolutionary climate Feuerbach had a pivotal role. Significantly, he had dissociated himself from Hegel publicly in the late 1830s, but it must be noted that his loyalty had always been to the immanent destiny of humanity which he still equated with the philosophy of the Idea. Feuerbach established what quickly became one of the central tropes in the radicalizing Hegelians’ effort to overcome what they considered their erstwhile master’s hypostazation of Christian values in Absolute Philosophy. Feuerbach’s 1839 essay ‘Towards a Critique of Hegelian Philosophy’ published in Ruge’s *Halle Year-Books* proved seminal to the increasingly critical turn the ‘godless self-gods’ took against Hegel. This critical atmosphere, as we will see below, had provided Heine with a context to go further to the emancipatory possibilities of his commitment to the actualization of civic and social revolutionism. In order to analyse this shift to ‘critique’, we must first concentrate on Heine’s Saint-Simonian interests in the 1830s.

1. Saint-Simonism

From the early 1820s onward, Saint-Simonistic thought spread in Germany. Any traces of complacent dismissal quickly vanished once conservatives realized that Saint-Simonism had found ardent acolytes among German intellectuals. Around 1830, the denunciations swung rapidly against the pantheism of the Young Germans. The radicalizing Hegelians became swiftly included in the same category as the Young Germans and the Saint-Simonians,

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5 In *Marx, the Young Hegelians*, Breckman ignores Heine’s ‘exilic awareness’ in discussing his objection to Saint-Simonism by 1836, 178.


8 Cf. Thomas Petermann, *Der Saint-Simonismus in Deutschland*, Bern 1983
all of whom, it was contended, divinize the life of man in not only its spiritual, but also its material side. A vigorous campaign was launched against the exiled Heine by the circle round Hengstenberg's Evangelical Church Review. Still in Germany, Heine had showed himself sensitive indeed to this form of early socialism, initiated by the Count Henri de Saint-Simon, and, after his death in 1825, developed by a small band of devout followers, among whom Prosper Enfantin was to become the charismatic leader. The July Revolution kindled Heine's interests in Saint-Simonistic topics. Still in Hamburg, February 1831, he got acquainted with Saint-Amand Bazard's Saint-Simon's Doctrine.

We know that soon after his arrival in Paris in May 1831 he attended some Saint-Simonian meetings, and that he socialized with several leading Saint-Simonians, including Michel Chevalier and Prosper Enfantin, to whom he dedicated the French edition of his writings on Germany in 1835. Heine's dedication points at a common ground for literary and philosophical opposition, rooted in pantheistic sentiments which call for prophetic skill. He particularly approved of the Saint-Simonians' critical stance towards the deep relationship between modern bourgeois society and post-Reformation individualism. Luther's insurrection had rightly resulted in the preponderance of particularity, but the corresponding neglect of universality had produced an almost universal egoism. It seemed that Saint-Simonism developed a comprehensive philosophical basis for a new religiosity which centered upon an analysis of a fundamental dualism in orthodox Christianity between Spirit and Matter. This dualism, it was maintained, lies at the heart of Christianity's indifference to the happiness of people on this earth because it encourages people to mortify the body and to sanctify the spirit. The most striking task of general progress, consequently, consists in a revolutionary rehabilitation of matter or 'flesh'. In the 1830s, Heine tended to acknowledge that reality was heading for such 'carnal' revolution.

It was clear that Saint-Simonism propagated a utopian remedy for the rift between spirit and flesh, and the corresponding division in human society

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9 For a brief few years in the 1830s the Young Germany movement formed the literary vanguard in Germany. Its members were a group of authors in thrall to a desperate ideology of revolutionism, voicing their moral imperatives in what each of them took to be apt political terms.

10 A detailed analysis of Saint-Simonism is clearly beyond the scope of this study. Secondary literature is immense. A balanced survey, including Heine's commitment, in Breckman, Marx, the Young Hegelians, 150-220.


12 After Saint-Simon's death in 1825, Prosper Enfantin had formally set up a new church with himself as the Supreme Father heading an elaborate hierarchy. Though Heine praises the Saint-Simonians in his preface to the French edition of the Travel Pictures (1834), it is safe to assume that Heine took the doctrine more seriously than he did its doctrinaires, for in reality the Saint-Simonians were decidedly eccentric. In May 1832 he wrote to Varnhagen expressing the hope that the Saint-Simonians' doctrine might pass into wiser hands than theirs. 'As far as I am concerned,' he continues, 'I am interested only in the religious ideas, which need just to be uttered in order to be realized sooner or later,' HSA XXI, 37.
between the organic and the artificial.\textsuperscript{13} Saint-Simonism thus served Heine for a critical updating of Hegel’s philosophy of history. It led him to search for an activist principle which would make literature, like philosophy, a force of change in the world. Heine opposed himself to what he labelled the ‘elegiac indifferentism of historians and poets’, which is founded on a circular conception of history.\textsuperscript{14} Indifferentism is the inevitable corollary of the Goethean objectivism we already pointed at; the ‘poet laureate’ saw both revolution and counter-revolution as brutal interruptions of the lofty reign of reason. Contrary to the indifferentism of Goethe, Heine’s pantheism allows him to develop the argument that Progress implies the sacrifice of aesthetic quietism for the sake of a good life.\textsuperscript{15}

The key to this political project involved Hegel’s notion that God is essentially process, and in his highest manifestation as Spirit has reality in and through world history. It must be remembered that Hegel, in his 1822-3 Berlin lectures on the Philosophy of World History, had argued that freedom is the goal of history. To Hegel, history is the process of the consciousness of freedom and of its realization. Spirit realizes itself in historical phases as ‘people’s spirits’. In this actual, particular form, Hegel stipulates, it is yet integral to the concept of world history:

Above all, it must be noted that the concept of world history involves a twofold approach. First, the spiritual principle is the totality of all distinctive viewpoints. Second, this totality, which is World Spirit, is not one-dimensional, but rather a matter of the very principles which are people’s spirits. Achieving cumulative impetus of their own, these spirits culminate in World Spirit. They are yet Spirit’s offspring; and through them Spirit is culminating towards its own totality.\textsuperscript{16}

Once people conceive of history as their history in terms of a homogeneous process, they will know about their historicity. This gives them the opportunity to probe for history’s sense. This quest presents itself in one vital aspect as the reconciliation of Spirit to the world, as we already noticed in Chapter III, in discussing the role of Hegelian freedom in Heine’s formative years in Berlin. The narrator of Heine’s programmatic poem in his 1825 \textit{Harz Journey} posed in a nightly conversation as ‘a chivalrous knight of the Holy Ghost’ who pretends to know about a triadic, ‘Joachimite’ exegis of Hegel’s philosophy of Spirit.\textsuperscript{17} Having pointed at the era of the Father and the era of the Son, the ‘I’ turns to the revolutionary impetus of the Spirit:

\textsuperscript{13} Cf. Hildebrand, \textit{Emanzipation und Versöhnung}, 241-51.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Different Views}, DHA X, 302.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Welbgichte}, 15.
\textsuperscript{17} Cf. Hilderbrand, \textit{Emanzipation und Versöhnung}, 72-87.
Jetzt, da ich aufgewachsen,
Viel gelesen, viel gereist,
Schwillt mein Herz, und ganz von Herzen
Glaub ich an den heil'gen Geist.

Dieser that die größten Wunder,
Und viel größer're thut er noch;
Er zerbrach die Zwinghernburgen,
Und zerbrach des Knechtes Joch.

Alte Todeswunden heilt er,
Und erneut das alte Recht:
Alle Menschen, gleichgeboren,
Sind ein adliges Geschlecht.

(DHA VI, 109)

In the early 1830s, Heine again points at the teleological message that history is proceeding to humanity, hinting at a speculative, logical structure underlying history’s triadic manifestation. This logical structure is the core of Hegel’s philosophy; it is articulated as the fundamental trio of Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis. The revolutionary impact is obvious: if the ‘people’s spirit’ and the ‘state machinery’ become incompatible, then revolution is stirring up, as it is stated in Heine’s 1832/3 French Conditions:

When the mind’s cultivation and the ensuing blossoming of a people’s morality and vitality are no longer in accord with the old state machinery, then the people wages a life-and-death struggle against the ancient regime, resulting in a political transformation which is called a revolution. (DHA XII/1, 130)

In it, we have a modified echo of Hegel’s 1822-3 Berlin lectures:

This revolution commenced originally in thought, for it is the cultivated mind which has posited itself recently more firmly, articulating basic formulae for judging real existing circumstances. Because these were in flagrant conflict with those principles, the mind came to revolt. Thought’s highest principle in this regard is the freedom of will. Whereas principles like the state’s wealth and prosperity are more or less indefinite, the freedom of the will is definite per se, for it is but self-defining. And the articulation of the freedom of the will in thought has now become the ultimate comprehension of reality. 

Revolutionism

Compared to Hegel, however, Heine stresses that progress is depending on man’s own willingness to engage in a social sensualism which he thought to be represented by the pantheistic godhead. Heine’s advocacy of sensualism is thus a coloured version of Hegelianism, as is shown in a 1832 sketch for the Romantic School:

God is not only in substance, as the Ancients would think him, God is ‘in process’, as Hegel had it. Saint-Simonians are of the same opinion. Their God does not just steer progress, he is progress itself. He thus differs as much from the heathen God incarcerated in substance, as from the Christian *Dieu-pur-esprit* who rules the world from heaven with silvery notes. Pantheism turns this *Dieu-progrès* into a vision of life which by no means leads to indifference, but to totally selfless dedication. (DHA VIII/1, 467)

History’s meaning is progress; but only poets, prophets, and eminent leaders may be fully aware of that meaning. Heine demands to be recognized as one of them; in the 1832 Preface to *French Conditions* he publicly charges himself with the responsibility of informing the people about their revolutionary potential:

When we succeed in informing the masses about their present state, people will no longer lend themselves to being filled with hatred and belligerence by the aristocracy’s pen pushers. Then the great People’s League, the Holy Alliance of Nations, will come off, and we will be exempted from feeding standing armies of hundreds of thousands of murderers out of mutual suspicion. With their swords and horses we will plough, and we will live in peace, prosperity, and freedom. To that task I devote myself; it is my lifelong vocation. (DHA XII/1, 65)

The interlinking of Hegelianism and Saint-Simonism is most evident in Heine’s programmatic writings *The Romantic School* (1833) and *History* (1834). Their keynote was the pantheistic manifestation of God in Nature; in his *Romantic School*, the prelude to *History*, Heine had stated:

It is not the case that all is God, but rather that God is all; God does not manifest himself in equal measure in all kinds of everything, he rather manifests himself differently in various things, each of them straining to reach a higher level of godliness. This is the great law of progress in nature. (DHA VIII/1, 154)

Heine is of the opinion that the Saint-Simonians best understand the essence of progress. Hence, he continues,
The recognition of this law, most profoundly revealed by the Saint-Simonians, transforms pantheism into a philosophy of life which certainly does not lead to indifferentism but to forging ahead by means of the most passionate self-sacrifice. No, God does not manifest himself in equal measure in all kinds of everything, as was thought by Wolfgang Goethe, who therefore became indifferent to Man’s highest values, and devoted himself instead completely to fancies like anatomy, colour, botany, and the observation of the clouds. God manifests himself in things to different degrees and in different ways, God is the living manifestation, he is in motion, in action, in time, his holy breath wafts through the leaves of history, the latter being his book proper. (ibidem)

To the Heine of the 1830s and early 1840s, the functional notion of pantheism is evident; it sanctions faith in history’s meaningfulness, so as to overcome the conditions of exile we pointed at in the introductory remarks to this chapter. The transition to a revolutionary, interpretation of Hegel’s philosophy was an inevitable corollary of Saint-Simonian theory of history. Its driving force is sensualism, as it furthers the cause of man’s emancipation through literature, industry and philosophy. The emancipatory role of sensualism deserves closer attention.

2. Excessiveness

In spite of all the real existing restraints on emancipation, to Heine, from the 1830s on, Hegelianism remained closely affiliated with an account of the progressive movement of human consciousness toward recognition of its identity with God. Freedom and emancipation refer to the same experience. To Heine, in the early 1830s, they are dreamlike images of the past French Revolution, but they are still ambivalent, mystifying and yet containing sparks of hope. The revolution has still to be born, and out of it would grow a universal renewal, but the utopia it would usher in is understood in terms of a pantheism, in which sensualism and spiritualism would merge together. A future of abundance and pleasure would bring a definitive end of the repressive regimes which had until now regulated populations whose material needs could not be met by the low levels of current industrial development. Demonstratively, in History, Heine breaks ranks with the austerity of past revolutionaries:

The great word of the Revolution pronounced by Saint-Just, “Bread is the right of the people,” is translated by us, “Bread is the divine right of man.” We are fighting not for the human rights of the people, but for the divine rights of humanity. In this and in much else we differ from the men of the Revolution. We do not wish to be sans-culottists, nor frugal citizens, nor modest presidents; we are founding a democracy of gods,

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equal in glory, in blessedness, and in sanctity. You demand simple modes of dress, austere morals, and unspiced pleasures; we, on the contrary, desire nectar and ambrosia, purple mantles, costly perfumes, luxury and splendour, dances of laughing nymphs, music and comedies. Be not therefore angry with us, ye virtuous republicans! (DHA VIII/1, 61)

Here we have a solemn *deification hominum*, formulated not so much in terms of a hymn, as Höhn argues, as rather in terms of a sensualist platform. Heine makes pantheism the theo-political foundation of democracy. From now on literature must attempt to fuse social criticism and heavenly bliss. In anticipation of a new, non-Goethean art, there will be an interregnum of subjectivity, as it is formulated in Heine's 1831 *French Painters*:

A new era will give birth to a new art as well. Art will passionately accord with modern times, as it refrains from borrowing its symbols from a fading past, and what is more, as it sets itself to develop into techniques which are until now completely unheard of. May subjectivity reign up to that time, flared with colour and frenzied with joy, for unbridled individuality and godless sensuality are yet far more favourable than the anaemic rehashes of old art forms. (DHA XII/1, 47)

Heine is asking for festive fury in order to shake off the bonds put upon by the obsolete world of the *ancien régime*. Law and order are to be questioned, as sin and repentance are to be repudiated.

From the beginning, many Parisian texts had this intoxicating effect. The never-to-come hereafter, Heine stresses in *History*, must be overthrown by the ever-to-come here and now:

For I believe in Progress, I think that mankind is destined for righteousness, and therefore I value the deity higher than the devotees who say that God created man for suffering only. Here on earth already, thanks to the blessings of free political and industrial institutions, I wish to establish the blissful kingdom the devout believe to come only after Doomsday in Heaven. (DHA VIII/1, 17)

The subject of historical knowledge is the struggling 'people' endowed with a power, of which the poet is aware. He knows that to some history may appear as exile, a catastrophe, a hellish cyclical repetition of barbarism and oppression, but resignation without hope is absent from his voice; therefore he speaks of a revolutionary demand for 'spiced pleasures'. They merge nine years later in the famous twelfth strophe from the 1844 epos *Germany. A Winter Tale*:

*Es wächst hienieden Brod genug*

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21 Höhn, 354. Sensualism surpasses 'stoic frugality', see Chapter III, 117-9, on Markus Brutus / Robbespierre.
Für alle Menschenkinder,
Auch Rosen und Myrten, Schönheit und Lust,
Und Zuckererbsen nicht minder.
(DHA IV, 92)

Contemporary currents must be reduced to the basic conflict of spiritualism and sensualism, in which, according to Heine, the Dieu Progrès is of decisive importance for the course of history. They make Heine reflective about the advent of a revolutionary millennium; then, according to the belief of the Saint-Simonians, the Third Testament would rule on earth. To sketch this perspective more precisely, we must focus on the prophetic dimension of Heine’s 1834 History.

3. Prophecies

In History, Heine endeavoured to pursue the rise of pantheism in German religion and philosophy, so as to divulge their esoteric teachings to a larger audience.22 Thus literature would contribute to the replacement of ‘theory’ by ‘praxis’. Its pantheistic tenor made Heine intent on settling up with Schelling. To him, Schelling could have been a ‘little Prometheus in philosophy’, for in his early years he had positioned Spinozistic pantheism against the transcendental claims of Fichte. Later on, however, Schelling fell back on mysticism and Christian spiritualism. Equally rejecting orthodoxy’s anthropomorphic God as well as Idealism’s absolute subject, Schelling conceived of God’s personality as pure will and free creativity.

Heine’s reduction of Schelling’s philosophy of identity to Spinozistic pantheism is obviously myopic, but it enables him to resume the sensualistic programme abandoned by the later Schelling. In History, Heine states that Schelling has betrayed his own pantheistic principles:

The man who once advocated most daringly in Germany the religion of pantheism, who proclaimed the most loudly Nature’s sanctification and the reinstatement of man in his divine rights, this man has become apostate to his own creeds. He has deserted the altar which he himself had consecrated. He slunk back to the pigsty of the old faith; he is a devout catholic now, and preaches a God extra-mundane, a personal God “who

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has had the folly to create the world." The old believers may, if they like, ring their bells and chant their Kyrie eleison in honour of such a conversion. This proves nothing for their doctrine; it proves only that man turns to Catholicism when he is old and weary, when his physical and spiritual forces abandon him, when he is unable to enjoy life. So many freethinkers were converted on their deathbeds. But, please, no boasting of that! At best, this proselytizing pertains to pathology, and furnishes but a sorry testimony to your cause. After all, they only prove that it was impossible for you to convert these thinkers while they were sound in body and mind under God's free skies. (DHA VIII/1, 113-4)

It must be noted that although Schelling had published almost nothing after his 1809 *Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom*, the intellectual public learned of his evolving Positive Philosophy in the 1830s, away from the Idealism he had pursued between 1798 and 1804, from reports of his lectures at Erlangen in the early 1820s and, more specifically, from his lectures on the history of modern philosophy in Munich in the winter semester of 1827-8 and his Preface to a study by the French philosopher Victor Cousin.23

What makes Schelling's development so abject to Heine is his willingness to sacrifice the real world for the sake of the ideal reconciliation of being and thinking; his 'mythological tour de force' reduces present life to nothingness; instead of critique it is religion which becomes philosophy's 'organon'. Thus, Schelling suggests, Divine Being remains an undisclosed and irrational principle behind and detached from all revelation, and therefore also contrary to the world. This conception of divine personality stands in sharp contrast to Hegel. Against Hegel, Schelling argued for God as the epitome of a voluntarist metaphysics which resists 'placid thinking' and rational explication: God reveals Himself in and through the world yet remains eternally separate from it, whereas man takes his rise from the depths and thus contains a principle relatively independent of God. God's indissoluble unity refers to the ordering of the ground of Being and Being itself. God cannot act other than to transform the longing to give birth to himself into the light of all creation; the progression of being is broken, now and forever. Schelling expresses this poignantly in what is obviously the best-known passage from his *On Human Freedom*:

Man has been placed on that summit where he contains within him the source of self-propulsion towards good and evil in equal measure; the link between the principles within him is not necessary but free. He stands at a crossroads, yet he cannot remain in indecision, because God

must reveal himself necessarily, and creation is at odds with ambiguity.24

Contrary to Schelling, Heine’s *History* is emphatically vindicating God’s immediate presence in this world of ours. Hence his efforts to bring about a capital change from philosophical theory to social praxis by means of literature. By closing his intellectual history of Germany with Hegel and ranking him higher than Schelling, Heine implied that it was Hegel’s philosophy which prepared Germany for the coming revolution in religion, politics, and society.

Since philosophy had completed a pantheistic revolution, Heine stated, the time had come to realize its hidden potential: the French revolutionism is about to be overshadowed by a German one. A German revolution will achieve a liberation of the human spirit which would be transformed into social harmony. Prophesying is a characteristic mode of this writing. The author considers himself to be a seer and a prophet, as is clearly shown at the ending of the *History* where Heine adopts the equivocal style of prophecy in order to hint at the portents of the German revolution to come:

Do not ridicule the dreamer, who is expecting the revolution in the phenomenal world to happen the same as it had occurred in the realm of thought. Thinking precedes acting, like lightning a clap of thunder. Certainly, German thundering is patently German in its slow advance, but it will roar without fail, and on hearing it crashing as nothing ever in world history, you will know that the German thunder has finally reached its destination. At this signal the eagles will fall dead straight down from the air, and the lions in Africa’s furthest deserts will slink away to their royal dens. Germany will set the stage for a performance against which the French Revolution might look but harmlessly idyllic. (...) This very hour will arrive. Nations will gather round Germany as in the rows of an amphitheatre, to watch the arena. (DHA VIII/1, 118-9)

Heine’s prophesying interprets the signs of the day as constellations in which characters, actions and sceneries are pregnant with indications referring to an ‘infrastructure’ of Promise, Longing and Fulfilment. It leads to close-readings of history, all hinting at true Progress and actual Essence, to be deciphered like rebuses. Prophetical skills presuppose a knowledge which gnaws away at the poet like an all-consuming fire. Its political purport is grasped by another persona of Heine: his posture of the warning prophet often interacts with that of the energetic tribune. The sacred calling of this ‘prophetic tribune’ resonates with the poet’s vocation for teaching the people for whom he is acting. His teachings may be vigorous or even an appeal to avenge oneself for suffering, and thus they are supposed to have an emancipatory effect on those addressed to.25 Heine

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is demonstrating the main principles of these teachings in *History* by focussing on a pantheistic divinity, ‘who dwells on earth in man’ (DHA IV, 301). In the 1852 Preface to *History* Heine overtly confessed that

all in this book that is referring to the major question of God particularly, is just as erroneous as reckless. Equally reckless and erroneous is the assertion I parroted the school in asseverating that deism, already being ruined in theory, apparently manages to linger on in paltry phenomena only. (DHA VIII/1, 497)

The ‘major question of God’ highlights the emphasis *History* had put on the philosophy of religion. In order to measure its value, attention must be focussed on the godhead ‘this book is referring to’.

4. God

Heine formulated the strengthening of pantheism in parallel with the rejection of deism. Owing to its explicit denial of a personal, Godly Ruler, pantheism revealed the secret meaning of German philosophy: the justification of emancipation. One only has to scan the recent history of German philosophy from Kant to Hegel, Heine implied, to see its anti-deistic, pro-pantheistic, and hence pro-democratic trend. At present, Saint-Simonism is most conducive to progress. It is the sophisticated articulation of a philosophy of history which sees in human history the key to the understanding of mankind. It claims that history follows a meaningful and recognizable pattern of progression and rests its argument on the assumption that God constitutes the pattern itself.

Through Saint-Simonism, Heine is aiming for the philosophical liberation from what he advances deistic suppression, in order to point at the revolutionary setting of emancipation the coda of *History* is prophesying. A pantheistic critique of positive religion is therefore a prerequisite condition of emancipation going along. Whereas the deistic dogma had legitimized the authority of the nobility and the clergy, pantheism runs counter to these anti-revolutionary forces by criticizing the authoritarian impact of positive religion. Pantheism is rendering man conscious of his own inalienable divinity; it inaugurates a democracy of divine peers. Heine does not weary of stressing that, in his view, philosophy has liquidated positive religion, so as to proclaim a pantheistic idea of divinity which could bridge the gap between nature and history, in order to point at the revolutionary setting of emancipation the coda of *History* is prophesying. To him, therefore, a pantheistic critique of positive religion is a prerequisite condition of emancipation going along. Philosophy, then, is intimately bound up with the evolution of religion. In *History* German philosophy appears to be a means to campaign to get realized the

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intellectual liberties the Reformation had promised. By virtue of its mission, pantheism demonstrates a close affinity between religion and philosophy, revealing that God and world are one:

God is identical with the world. He manifests himself in plants, which lead a cosmic-magnetic life. He manifests himself in animals, which lead a rather dull existence in the sensuous realm of dreams. But he manifests himself most gloriously in man, who can feel as well as reflect, knowing how to differ as an individual from objective nature, and whose reason contains already the ideas which make themselves recognize to him in the phenomenal world. In man the deity comes to self-consciousness, and it is again through man that the deity is revealing this self-consciousness. (DHA VIII/1, 60)

From the vantage point of this Hegelian Saint-Simonism, Heine argues that God’s manifestation ‘in nature’ transforms the pantheistic doctrine into anti-indifferentism. The pantheistic-Hegelian tenor of History was an incantation to the divine principle in man. In the aftermath of the 1830 July-Revolution, it assumed the revolutionary expression of teleology post-Reformation philosophy in Germany had articulated:

German philosophy is a momentous affair to all mankind, and only descendants still to come will field the question as to whether or not we are to be praised for having elaborated our philosophy prior to our revolution. It seems to me that a methodical people such as we had to commence the Reformation ere we could concern ourselves with philosophy, and not until after its completion we had the right to pass on to our revolution. I deem this quite reasonable. The geniuses philosophy has utilized for thinking may be cut off at will by revolution afterwards, while it stands to reason that philosophy could never have utilized these geniuses in case an anterior revolution had cut them off previously. Nevertheless, there is nothing to worry about, ye German republicans; the German revolution is not going to turn out milder and gentler, since it was preceded by Kant’s Critiques, Fichte’s Transcendental Idealism or even by Natural Philosophy. Through these doctrines revolutionary forces have evolved which are waiting for the day to burst forth, filling the world with fright and admiration. (DHA VIII/1, 154)

Heine’s Saint-Simonian wordings were felt to be a blow on Christian orthodoxy and moral sense in Germany. Saint-Simonism, however, would not last. In fact, to Heine it was a matrix which gradually made an even more provocative doctrine sensible. 29 Under the social conditions of the July-monarchy, Heine’s pantheistic ‘doctrines’ were eventually remodelled into the form of the ‘new

doctrine’ of the 1840s, which will be discussed later on. By that time, Heine had long since broken off his association with the Saint-Simonians. For it must be stressed once more that the prosaic reality of the July-Revolution was yet bound to dampen Heine’s spirits. It offered a juste milieu between reactionary royalism and petty republicanism, a scene of political paralysis which Saint-Simonism could not remedy. What made Heine reconsider his fight for the social-utopian idea of a revolution in the late 1830s?

5. Börne’s Shadow

In his Ludwig Börne: A Memorial, written in 1839 and 1840, Heine reflected over the abortive attempts to implement the revolutionary zeal of 1830. This work contains the Letters from Heligoland, the fictional correspondence or diary entries written in 1830 before and after the July Revolution, which remind of how different things had been nine years ago. Even the entry to the first of August 1830, when Heine’s enthusiasm had come to a head, cannot do away with all doubts, as the image of ebb and flood introduces feelings of insecurity about progress and freedom.30 Börne is a confirmation of previous suspicions: in fact, the ambit of Paris had already turned out equivocal in the early 1830s, when ‘Paris-Jerusalem’ became interchangeable with ‘Paris-Babylon’. The ‘Babylonian Captivity’ was prolonged through intrigue and discord, as was indicated in the first draft of the ninth Article of Heine’s 1832/3 French Conditions:

Lady Babylon knows very well that she can only reign because of Babylonian Confusion. She is simply too successful in disuniting us into petty factions. We are faced with hair-splitting distinctions without knowing what about; we have to fight each other without knowing why, and all that through Lady Babylon’s dastardly verbiage. [...] This happens above all, when best friends disagree about the government which should guarantee the principle of democracy to thrive unrestrainedly. Thus government, which is just a medium, becomes the most important thing, while our actual purpose must be the principle of democracy. The original concepts are confused due to stupidity and malevolence as Lady Babylon butts in; she is telling lies, she is courting, she is doing a bit of hocus-pocus, and she is intervening till the dispute about principles degenerates into a sterile fight over forms. (DHA XII/1, 468-9)

This seismographic text is dated 16 June 1832; in it we have a censured record of the abortive revolts of 5 and 6 June 1832 in the streets of Paris. The ninth Article is of vital importance to Heine’s understanding of revolutionism in the 1830s. It was not published in the Augsburg General Gazette, but only afterwards, in the 1832/3-book edition. Even then there are striking discrepancies between the draft and the printed text. The sketch is an obvious indication of

30 DHA XI, 47.
Heine's objective to smuggle a radical, anti-aristocratic notion of democracy into Germany. 31

Against resignation, Heine set out to put back the story of revolutionary freedom to the experience of exile in history. It made him searching for clues; the writer must grasp the true sense of what people had been telling him in secret, so as to prompt even his German readership into revolutionary spheres in the aftermath of the July Revolution, as it is formulated in the printed text of the ninth Article:

Is it really true that even our tranquil dreamland has started to move? Who could have imagined that before July 1830! Germany was fast asleep thanks to Goethe's hush baby, the Pietists' boring litanies, and the mystics' magnetizing. Far and wide, people were recumbent, nobody stirred, and slumber had seized them all. And yet, only their bodies had fallen prey to sleep; their souls, incarcerated therein, had kept a peculiar awareness of the outside world. In those days, this correspondent, in his youth, wandered through the German land, scrutinizing the people in sleep. I saw sorrow on their faces, I studied their physiognomies, I put my hand on their hearts, and on that they began to speak in trance, somnambulistic speech in queer staccato, unveiling their innermost thoughts. This people's watchmen had pulled their golden nightcaps deep over their ears, and they had wrapped themselves comfortably in ermine robes. They were sitting on red armchairs in slumber as well. They even snored! As I went wandering around with knapsack and stick, I would speak up or sing up to myself what I had espied on the sleepers' faces or what I had overheard from their aching hearts. It was very still around me, and I would catch but the echo of my own voice. (DHA XII/1, 177)

Nightmares, clairvoyance, and somnambulism provided evidence that 'the heart' generated its own political potential. It shaped apparitional plots which were less substantial, yet more lucid and rich, than the philistinism of an inert society. If the writer succeeds in imaging the unseen on his voyage within the mind, whether woven of filmy residues of living memories or new and cryptic conceptions, he will reveal himself as a sensible mentor for others. 32

32 The voyage within the mind is an obviously Romantic item. In Heine's days, it externalized mental wandering from phantasm to phantasm, like in Grandville's imaginary adventures 'to where one pleased,' which transposed the emotion-leaden dream of life into a subliminal cartography. See Jean-Ignace Isidore Gérard Grandville, Un autre monde. Transformations, visions, incarnations, ascensions, locomotions, explorations, pérégrinations, excursions, stations, cosmogonies, fantasmasnagories, rêveries, folâries, facéties, lubies, métamorphoses, zoomorphoses, lithomorphoses, métémpsychoses, apothéoses, et autres choses, Paris 1844. For a lucid discussion of early nineteenth-century explorations of the dream-world, see Barbara Maria Stafford, Body Criticism. Imagining the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine, Cambridge (Ma) and London 1993, 437-50.
True writers lead ‘their people’ back to the future which history had promised them. For it is the poet who knows of the people’s condition better than they do themselves. This revolutionary elitism, as we will see in due course, is characteristic of the years up to 1848. Here it must be noted that to Heine, the German émigrés in Paris became emblematic of grotesque republican movements throughout Europe after July 1830. It brought him to look with unmistakable contempt at the exalted patriotism the numerous splinter groups of German political exiles around him were cultivating. Contrary to their political aspirations, Heine refuses to accept their insistence on a precipitate reactualization of the revolutionary past. Against their agenda Heine appropriated the language of republicanism but redirected it in crucial ways, in evocating the ‘divine right’ grounded in a ‘democracy of terrestrial gods’. He would recollect about the republican people who inaugurated the year I of the French Revolution in 1793. Yet they failed for lack of leadership. Hence the republicanism Heine opted for is always associated by him with patriarchal notions.

Allusions to the Old Testament are obvious: the ‘genuine republicans’ had been scattered, the people was dispersed like the Jews once had their Diaspora. They were carried away captive, spread far beyond their dwellings in the absence of righteous leaders who could have prevented their people from inappropriate acting. Heine traces a striking after-image of the true 1793 republican taken captive in his *French Conditions*. In the ninth Article he pictures a group of prisoners being escorted to a court martial, after the premature republican insurrection of 5 and 6 June 1832 had been crushed by Louis-Philippe.

Among them he spotted

the countenance of an old man being taken to the Conciergerie along with some students of the Polytechnic. The latter went with bowed head, distressed and bewildered, their hearts torn like their garments. But the old man went still dressed like a poor yet neat Franconian of yore. His threadbare straw-coloured frock had been tailored after the latest fashion of 1793. Waistcoat and trousers ditto. He had a big triangular hat on his wrinkled, powdered little head, and his face shone with lightheartedness, nay, excitement, as if it were for a wedding. He was followed by an old woman with in her hand an umbrella she seemed to bring for him. I could tell from the deep furrows on her face that she was scared to death, which is not surprising when one sees one’s beloved being court-martialled and facing certainty of execution within twenty-four hours.

(DHA XII/1, 168)

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33 DHA XII/1, 182.
34 According to Heine, Lafayette, Saint Just, and, above all, Napoleon sought to play the role of the new Father of the Nation. For valuable information about Heine’s Bonapartism see Höhn, 214-18, 491-2.
And yet, by virtue of this writing’s commemorative dynamics, that doomed representative of a vanquished people is granted a shelter in a ‘Holy History’, as it is pictured in Heine’s 1833 *French Painters*:

On one painting we may see how history is tumbling crazily in blood and mud; it could have been stagnant for centuries, wholly numb, before it clumsily jumped up again in haste, zigzagging onwards. This is what we call World History. On another painting we may yet recognize an even greater history, which nevertheless requires no more space than a lumbering cart, pulled by bullocks; this is a history without origin and end, repeating itself forever, as simple as the see, the skies, and the seasons, a Holy History written by poets, whose archive is to be found in every human heart, the History of Mankind. (DHA XII/1, 44)

Here, the individual human heart is rated above all world history, that is, above the immanent dynamics of Hegelian philosophy. In an atmosphere of ‘blood and mud’, the tone is set for the ‘Börnean crisis’.

It must be noted that in Börne, the tension between Nazarenism and Hellenism is at first prolonged. As indicated above, Heine had presented his pantheistic-sensualistic programme as a response to the demands for modernization and social change in the 1830s. Its function was to bring the people up, to rehabilitate the ‘Genius’ and ‘Beauteous’ of man. Jewish emancipation is now seen as part of a universal struggle for human liberty. Especially Börne’s ‘Nazarene’ republicanism was to Heine fully-fledged trivia.36 Insipid republicans like Börne were to yield to much greater minds, whose pantheistic sensualism would supersede asceticism because they were seeing the kernel of things in the midst of what was going on; their visionary bias is pointed at in an unprinted sketch for Börne:

It may be a requisite transience, and we are only inclined to condone this poorly shaped chrysalis in the hope that in days to come we shall watch the butterfly bursting out the more iridescent, unfolding its wings for a frisky flight in the sweet air, over all the blossoming flowers of life. (DHA XI, 217)

Though sensualism enabled Heine to distance himself from what he dislikes in Börne, it must yet be stressed that Börne is Heine’s alter ego in many respects; they share their experience of exile. In the late 1830s, it crystallizes an ambivalent attitude towards the present, for positive signs are hardly anymore to detect. Even in moments of utter bliss despair is looming; it alerts Heine to the fact that writing requires constant fight. To him, Börne’s pathography speaks volumes: today’s literature is badly afflicted with the incongruities of the world. The poet is suffering from the circumstances he lives in:

Most blessed might be the dead in their graves at Père-Lachaise, like you, poor Börne! Yea, blessed are they which are imprisoned at home, blessed are the weak and the sick in their garrets, blessed are the mad in the madhouse, most blessed the dead! As for me, the writer of these leaves, I have no reason to lament in the end, for in a way I will have my share of all their blessings thanks to this wondrous susceptibility, this inborn compassion, this mental disturbance, which is common among poets, though we lack a proper name for it. (DHA XI, 115-6)

For all his pantheism, then, Heine does not recapture the optimism of History in his Börne. On the contrary, Börne reveals that the bright Hellenism he determinedly pursued in his campaign for Saint-Simonism has not done away with Babylonian misery, as the passage continues:

However comfortably and cheerfully I promenade through the narrow streets of Babylon by day, believe me, as soon as the sky darkens, my heart will ring with the sound of melancholic harps, and at night my head reverberates with all the world’s torments turned into the rolling kettledrums and clashing cymbals of a janissary band; and the mum-mery, screaming in terror, moves upwards... (ibid.)

The melancholic harps, contrasting sharply with the ‘goyishe’ kettledrums and the cymbals, are again reminiscent of the ‘Lord’s song in a strange land’ from Psalm 137. Its sounding is evocatively displayed earlier, in a passage depicting Heine wandering with Börne through the Frankfurt ghetto, where they hear the nasal chant of an old rabbi:

As it seemed, the cracked voice was an old man’s, the melody swayed softly on mellow laments, rising higher and higher into violent outbursts of anger. (DHA XI, 22)

Through Börne the rabbi’s chant is skilfully interwoven in Heine’s own text. For when Heine asked him about it, Börne commented on its contents in a way so characteristic of his own style that he becomes Heine’s spokesman:

‘It is a fine song,’ he said, smiling dourly, ‘a lyrical masterpiece which has no equal in the Muses’ Almanac of this year. You may recognize it in translation: “By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, we hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof”, and so forth. A splendid poem! Old Rabbi Chayim knows very well how to recite it, his frail voice going on tremulous yet determined.’ (ibid.)

About suffering, he was never wrong, Heine’s informant. The Jewish experience of exile lies behind the ‘splendid poem’, and when it first caught his attention in the ghetto it would have had an atavistic air about it. There is the affront of the subject matter, the flirtation with the ‘ghastly’, and the ‘lack of culture’.

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Yet it is cited, and the shock of the citation is that while it may remain strange to the cultured reader, it still manages to keep faith with whoever shares the eternal reciprocity of tears.37

Heine makes his spokesman talking on ingeniously about Biblical accounts. Starting from the first destruction of Jerusalem, he concentrates on how the wicked devices of the Jews’ enemies had returned upon their own heads. The story culminates in an updated reading of the vengeful tones from the last lines of Psalm 137:

Subsequent evildoers, enemies of the Jews, had better watch their step... But what is the use? The awful example does not frighten them off. The other day I set my eyes again on a pamphlet against the Jews, written by some professor of philosophy signing with magis amica. Sooner or later, he will have to eat grass, for an ox he is already by nature... (DHA XI, 23)

Before their common enemy, the anti-Semite, Börne and Heine are the same. Mistrusts had proven justified in 1840 Damascus affair. For that year saw an alarming revival of the medieval blood-libel against Syrian Jews, which the ‘modern West’ found hardly opportune to worry at. The French government did not protest vigorously about the accusations; Thiers remained faltering.38

The shock of the affair set Heine back to his Rabbi of Böcherach (which he had never completed).39 Moreover, the fundamental political disinterest in anti-Semitism made him envisaging that emancipation would not come without curing society as drastically as possible. No wonder, then, that Heine’s commemorative pathography tends to identify his lot with that of Börne. His portrayal of Börne owes at least as much to a poet’s self-analysis as to the featuring of a fellow exile whose Jewish experience almost matched his own. For what Heine is recognizing in Börne obviously bears witness to a common experience of Jewishness, and once we look closer at it, it appears that it retains a version of what may be called ‘Messianic expectancy’, which, for its political implications, requires an extra digression.

6. Messianic Expectancy

Heine knows of a reactualized version of Messianic expectancy at the end of the fourth Book in Börne, where he suggests that a Jewish Messiah will outdo the legendary Barbarossa in liberating Germany:

No, it is not Emperor Barbarossa who will liberate Germany, as the people believes, the German people, this slumbering, dreaming people who can conceive of its Messiah but in the stature of an old sleeper! The

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38 Prawer, Jewish Comedy, 297-340.
39 Höhn, 436-45.
Jews, for their part, form a far better idea of their Messiah, and years ago, when I was in Poland and visited the house of the great Rabbi Manasse in Cracow, my heart was delighted as I heard him speak of the Messiah... I no longer know in which Book of the Talmud the details the great rabbi faithfully gave me are to be found. What I do remember are only the basic, essential features of his description of the Messiah. He told me that the Messiah was born the day Jerusalem was destroyed by the wicked Titus Vespasianus; and since that day he dwells in the fairest palace in heaven, surrounded by bliss and joy, and, at that, he has a crown on his head, just like a king... but his hands are manacled with golden chains! ‘What’, I asked with astonishment, ‘is the meaning of these golden chains?’ ‘They are necessary’, the great rabbi replied, with a foxy glance and a deep sigh; ‘for without these fetters the Messiah would all of a sudden rush down to earth every time he loses patience, and undertake the task of deliverance untimely. He is far from a restful sleeper. He is a noble, slender yet immensely strong man, blooming with youth. The life he leads is nevertheless very monotonous. The greater part of the mornings he spends saying the usual prayers or laughing and joking with his servants, who are angels in disguise, sing prettily, and play the flute. Then he has his long hair combed, and he is anointed with nard and dressed in royal purple. The whole afternoon he spends studying Kabbalah. Towards evening he calls for his old chancellor, another angel in disguise, as are the four mighty privy counsellors accompanying him. It is the duty of the chancellor to read to his master from a huge book what happened every day... There are all sorts of stories which cause the Messiah to smile cheerfully or to shake his head discontentedly. But when he hears how down below on earth his people is brutalized, he flows into the most terrible rage and howls with such anger that all the heavens tremble... Then the four mighty counsellors must hold back this raging Messiah lest he rush down to earth, and they would probably not be able to overpower him if his hands were not manacled with those golden chains. .. They quieten him with gentle words, telling him that the time is not yet ripe, the hour of deliverance not yet come, and in the end he sinks down on his couch, covers his face, and weeps...’ This is approximately what Manasse ben Naphtali told me in Krakow. He vouched for his trustworthiness with references to the Talmud. I have often mused about his narratives, especially in the most recent times, in the aftermath of the July Revolution. Yeah, on bad days I sometimes seem to hear with my own ears the sound of rattles as of golden chains, and then desperate sobbing... Oh, waver not, thou noble Messiah, who delivers not only Israel, as the superstitious Jew would assert, but all miserable mankind! Will not break, ye golden chains! Keep him fettered for yet another time, lest he might arrive untimely, the King and Saviour of the world! (DHA XI, 110-11)
I have cited this passage at length, because of its paradigmatic character. Despite a tone of mockery at the 'superstitious Jew', even this noble, almost athletic Messiah refers to a tradition of expectancy which conceives of man's liberation as a catastrophic event on the public stage of world history, since the advent of a better age is something to be desired as well as feared. Hence the golden chains, which are, as Heine tells us on behalf of Rabbi Manasse, preventing the Messiah from advancing precipitately.

Such Messianism joins recoverable knowledge of primordial wisdom with utopian components of wonders at the end of the days; it is firmly rooted in the notion of *tikkun*, encompassing at once destruction and reconstruction of things, operating between the dream of paradisiacal origins and unimaginable vistas. The coming of the Messiah will be, in the Biblical words of Daniel, a time of trouble 'such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time' (Dan. 12:1). Indeed, not progress but catastrophe anticipates redemption, which is an intrusion in which history itself perishes. Heine's imagery is hardly less drastic, and the effect is still far-reaching: a focus on the eschatological tradition serves the purpose of suggesting more intensely that secular modernity is utterly devoid of utopian vistas.

The 'eccentric' character of that tradition is accentuated by Heine's alluding to Kabbalistic study. In one of his reference books for his 1834 *History*, Tennemann's *History of Philosophy*, the 'fantastic occult strangeness' of 'Kabbalistic philosophy' is fully expounded:

This Kabbalistic philosophy, if we may term it 'philosophy' indeed (because it represents more fiction than critical thought), is shrouded in darkness, owing to its origins and its sources. The Jews regarded it as revelation, and therefore they cloaked its real beginnings. They attach great importance to it. Thus they seek to keep it secret, by hiding it from glances of the non-initiated. It is also made of exotic concepts and ideas, which are nevertheless revered as divine wisdom. Since Kabbalistic philosophy is lacking in clarity and synthesis, and as reason is steered by fantasy, both its origins and its contents are obscure. Jewish scribes recount its origins and tradition with fabulous wit: now it has been given to Adam, then to Abraham (who is told to have it transmitted orally or in writing). Or else they say that it has been revealed to Moses simul-

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40 For the central importance of this text see Briegleb, *Bei den Wassern Babels*, 179-85.
41 It must be noted that Heine, before his German readership, is not altogether true to the *Aleluia* prayer which looks forward to the day on which not only Israel, but 'all the children of the flesh' will call on the Lord's name and, as Prawer rightly stipulates, thus have equal share in the deliverance, *Jewish Comedy*, 366.
43 Scholem, *The Messianic Idea*, 24-33, where he states that Jewish scholars had traced a direct, gradual progression from the rationalist orientation of medieval Rabbinic thought through the Enlightenment to the positivistic rationalism of modern society; at the same time they took the revolutionary sting out of the Messianic idea, bringing it into line with the bourgeois progressive doctrine of history.
taneous with the Commandments, so as to serve as highest knowledge and a key to interpreting written law, which is kept by the rulers of the congregation.44

Tennemann, well versed in Kantian criticism, approaches Kabbala with clearly condescending tones; to him, this tradition lies beyond scholarly judgement. That is yet the side where Heine takes his interest; the Messianic splendour in the rabbi’s account is a reminder of ḥiw, the term with which the Kabbalists named the brightness of the shekhina, that is, the divine manifestation. In order to intensify the strangeness of this non-secular perspective, he confronts his German, i.e. basically non-Jewish audience with a Jewish Messiah who is in particular introduced as their liberator as well. In doing so, he denied a kind of mystical and retrogressive nationalism which promoted the idea that ‘a new world’ would emerge under the leadership of Barbarossa, who was destined to return and lead Germany to greatness in the putative new era.

The explosiveness of Heine’s denial is intensified in the introductory lines to the just cited Messianic fragment from Heine’s Börne, by exhibiting this strongly splendidiferous Messianism as a vulgarity to decent society; and yet, Heine shows that, to him, precisely this crudity is an inevitable corollary of Hegel’s philosophy, for he starts his tale with a noteworthy reference:

‘Nature,’ Hegel told me once, ‘is very wondrous indeed; things she uses for most lofty goals are serving her for utter crudities as well, e.g. the member entrusted with the supreme mission of human procreation is serviceable enough for...’ Those who complain about Hegel’s obscurity will now understand him; for though he did not apply these lines directly to Israel, they can yet be related to this subject. (DHA XI, 109-10)

Obviously, Heine refers to Hegel’s Phenomenology. At the end of the second section on phrenology, Hegel makes use of a phallic metaphor in order to clarify the interrelationship between two possible readings of the sentence ‘the Spirit is a bone’; one is the ordinary, that is the one which is bound up with the level of the ‘representation’, and the other one is the speculative:

Spirit drives depth out from within, But it puts it forth only to its representational consciousness; there it is kept. This consciousness is ignorant about what it is what it actually expresses. Here we have the same nexus of high and low which is to be found in Life, where Nature is demonstrating it naively in the organ which serves as well for reproduction as for urinating. The infinite judgement qua infinitum would imply the completion of Life’s comprehending itself; but the conscious-ness qua representation is like urinating.45

44 Tennemann, Geschichte der Philosophie, vol. 9, 169-70.
To Hegel, the crux of the matter does not lie in the genuinely speculative attitude, which settles on the reproductive function, where the vulgar, empirical understanding recognizes only urinating. On the contrary, the crux lies in the paradoxical claim that the option for the reproductive function is definitively secondary; it is impossible to opt instantaneously for the ‘true meaning’ of the organ. We must start with the wrong option (the urinating), so that the deeper, i.e. true meaning will emerge only as the after-effect of ‘wrong’ reading.\(^46\) Heine’s Messianic interpretation, one can say, exploits the paradox to full advantage: to non-Jews foolishness, but qua foolishness wiser than secular wisdom.

In order to strengthen his Messianic case, Heine calls Karl Rosenkranz (1805-79) to witness. Heine maintained contact with Rosenkranz in Berlin in 1822-3. Rosenkranz served as professor of philosophy in Halle and Königsberg. He wrote not only a series of books of a philosophical-historical character but also systematic studies, among them the one concerning the aesthetics of ugliness. In Börne, Heine speaks of Rosenkranz as ‘the great sage’, who had contrasted the potential of the Jews with that of the legendary giant Antaeus.\(^47\) Just before the play on Hegel’s *Phenomenology*, significantly, Heine quotes Rosenkranz in the context of his statement that the Jews are the Spirit’s people:

> Indeed, Jews are kneaded from dough meant for gods. They, who are trampled upon today, will be besought tomorrow. Whereas the one is toiling away in shabbiest haggling, the other rises to the zenith of humanity; yea, Golgotha is not the only mountain on which a Jewish God shed his blood for mankind. The Jews are the people of the Spirit, and each time they return to their principles they are great and majestic, and put to shame and overcome their heinous oppressors. Rosenkranz, the great sage, compared them to the giant Antaeus, only that Antaeus gained strength on touching the ground, whereas the Jews gathered new forces once they came in contact with the sky again. A peculiar sign of how harsh extremes can be! (DHA XI, 109)

It must be noted that Rosenkranz is Hegel’s biographer, satirist, and interpreter, but also a perceptive researcher on Jewish religiosity.\(^48\) We may infer that Heine’s appraisal echoes discussions in the Berlin *Association*, and that, in the late 1830s, the reference still sufficed to make his Messianic case.\(^49\)


\(^{48}\) Towards 1848, Rosenkranz takes an anti-revolutionary attitude in opting for ‘Christian-social reform’, as he indicates it in his preface to *Die Pädagogik als System. Ein Grundriß*, Königsberg 1848, xiv.

\(^{49}\) In Chapter V, we will see that Rosenkranz analyses Jewish religiosity from an allegedly superior position of Christianity.
If we relate Heine’s Messianism to the revolutionism of the programmatic writings discussed above, then it presents a documented case of Heine’s reaction to the threat of resignation, after the immediate replacement of ‘theory’ by ‘praxis’ had proven idle hope in the late 1830s. The more the realization of the Saint-Simonian Third Age was postponed, the stronger disillusionment had grown. Was the emancipation from ‘Nazarenism’ destined to end in a state of suspended animation? Such could have been, indeed, the outcome of the ambitious attempt to bear the responsibility for all the world’s potentials to grow to the full. For that purpose the poet had to rely on the prophetic, ‘supranaturalistic’ skills mentioned above. His aim was obviously pursued at the expense of ‘sanity’; hence the physical and mental misfortune pointed at in Chapter II, referring to the ‘illness of the time’.

Now, in the early 1840s, Messianic expectancy is a resistance to inertia and even paralysis; it is reworked into an up to date view on society. Not only against Börne’s ‘Nazarenism’ but also against his own Saint-Simonism, a reorientation is required in order to clear up the drab monotony of every-day life in the Juste milieu. In the 1840s, then, Saint-Simonism gave way to a ‘new doctrine’; via Messianic expectancy, a revised revolutionism came to the fore. Heine’s faith in a splendid Messianic millennium made him receptive to the revolutionary vistas the radicalizing Hegelians opened up in the 1840s, which sharpened the opposition between those who sought to radicalize Hegel’s philosophy and those who saw it as the possibility of a genuine restoration of Christendom. What was Heine’s attitude towards the ‘new doctrine’ radicalizing Hegelians like Arnold Ruge, Karl Marx, and ‘Messrs’ Ludwig Feuerbach, Georg Friedrich Daumer, and Bruno Bauer were determined to herald?

7. New Doctrine

Whereas Hegel had hoped that the French Revolution would be the last great cataclysm of European society, his disciples and critics in the 1840s saw that its ideas and examples would result in an age of ever increasing turmoil. For the radicalizing Hegelians on the left wing, this suggested the possibility of a revolution which would eventually introduce men to the peace and security of lasting freedom and justice, a society which could look back to the past as a long nightmare of ‘pre-history’. For others, on the right wing, these revolutions were the direct result of atheism, the sign of man’s delusion that he was a godless god in himself, capable of determining his own fate without reference to a transcendent divine will. As the radicals suggested to substitute ‘praxis’ for ‘theory’, to them, Heine was a name to conjure with; he was seen as a key figure who had pointed at the transience of the status quo. Heine offered not so much an elaborative impression of metaphysical essentials as an intricate interweaving of reflections on philosophy, history, and politics, condensed in

50 The struggles between radicalizing and conservative factions are satirized in Rosenkranz’s philosophical comedy Das Centrum der Speculation, Königsberg 1840.
superior literature, which exhibited two important features of the actual intellectual climate: first, an unsatisfactory bias towards scholastic squabbling, and, second, the philosophical vindication of social change. Here Heine proposed far more original and conclusive arguments than Börne and the Young German writers.51

What the radicalizing critics of the 1840s had at least in common was their determination to challenge Hegel by insisting that his own philosophy had failed to do justice to the discontinuities between a given social ethos and moral ideals, between religion and community, social action and politics.52 As we saw in our third chapter, the development of Hegel’s system had been motivated by the need to come to terms with the contradictory inheritance of Christianity on the one hand and notions of human self-determination on the other. This contradiction was expressed politically by the opposition between the ideas and institutions of the French Revolution and those of the Holy Roman Empire, and culturally in the antipathy of German Romanticism to the rationalism and universalism of the Enlightenment. Hegel’s philosophy treated these problems in a way which his radicalizing critics accepted only as the starting-point for their own analyses; through vehement opposition they attempted to come to terms with the problem of the relationship between religion and the Enlightenment, and all its political and cultural consequences. In the early 1840s, they developed intellectual preferences for eschatological language and utopian solutions which answered to the crucial problem of the self-conscious participation in the self-determining process of secular history. In the years leading up to the revolutions of 1848, they rejected Hegel’s synthesis in favour of the assertion of atheistic humanism or religious otherworldliness. On what they considered the right emphasis in this matter, divergent views were harboured. In the light of these conceptual diversity, it would clearly be mistaken to apply more excessively firm labels than ‘radicalizing’ to the broad spectrum before 1848.

In this setting Heine recognized as latent in the proletariat the power which should carry philosophy into practice; in his 1843 *Communism, Philosophy, and Clericalism* he regarded the proletarian revolution as necessary and inevitable (though for the moment lying in the indefinite future), and he believed that he saw communism actually coming into being before his eyes.53 It must be noted, however, that in this uncertain atmosphere Heine held that poets could register the pulse of the present without engaging in daily politics.54 He sets himself to stress this tenor by projecting the image of a thoughtful prophet and drum major, insisting once more on the translation of philosophical

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53 DHA XIV/1, 99-100.

into actual revolutionism. The poet can act as a judge who decides about how Hegelianism should be revolutionized, as in ‘Doctrine’, the famous opening poem from the ‘Poems of Our Time’ in the 1844 New Poems:

Schlage die Trommel und fürchte dich nicht,
Und küsse die Marketenderinn!
Das ist die ganze Wissenschaft,
Das ist der Bücher tiefster Sinn.

Trommle die Leute aus dem Schlaf,
Trommle Reveilje mit Jugendkraft,
Marschire trommelnd immer voran,
Das ist die ganze Wissenschaft.

Das ist der Hegelsche Philosophie,
Das ist der Bücher tiefster Sinn!
Ich hab’ sie begriffen, weil ich gescheidt,
Und weil ich ein guter Tambour bin.
(DHA II, 109)

To Heine, this vista is a rejuvenation of the fragile presumption that Progress points to real phenomena in society. The ‘books’ innermost meaning’ was a motif which saw remedies to the ‘Börnean crisis’ Heine experienced in the late 1830s, when his revolutionism had fallen prey to scepticism about the realization of the ‘Idea’, echoing the reservations from the early 1820s.

Heine’s revolutionism in the early 1840s is a tentative answer to those insecurities. Against inborn suspicion, he now endeavoured to adopt a positive attitude towards the self-determination of man:

The masses no longer bear their earthly misery with Christian patience; they languish for bliss here below. Communism is the natural consequence of this change in attitude; it is spreading all over Germany. Just as natural is the phenomenon that the proletarians’ assault on the status quo is spearheaded by the most learned experts from the greatest school of philosophy. They know how to switch from doctrine to acting, the ultimate aim of all thinking, and they formulate the strategy to be adopted. (DHA XV, 170)

This radical passage, from the Letters on Germany, could not be published during Heine’s lifetime for reasons of censure. In articulating the primary role of the proletarians in history, it gives a revaluation of philosophy as well. In the early 1840s, philosophy is reinstated as an indispensable means to attain ‘bliss’.

56 Cf. Höhn, 448-51 for the coherence of the drafts from Heine’s literary bequest.
We must note that the word ‘doctrine’, which gives the just cited poem its title, is obviously borrowed from religious discourse; in other words, Heine, like Feuerbach and Ruge could not contemplate the possibility of radical democracy without reappropriating a sense of religion as a secular political ‘faith’ which is conceived as exteriorized and demystified, but with its zealous core intact and ready to be self-consciously directed towards its true object, Man. The fact that Heine uses ‘doctrinal language’ when he envisions a politics of revolutionism ties him to the pervasive theme of the intersection of politics and religion the ‘godless self-gods’ embarked on in the early 1840s. First of all, his arguments parallel Bruno Bauer’s philosophy of self-consciousness, which are revealed as the only power of the world and history in Bauer’s influential 1841 *Trumpet of the Last Judgement Against Hegel the Atheist and Antichrist.*

Bauer insisted that self-consciousness is not arbitrary, for it develops in a succession of antithetical stages towards recognition of its agency:

> In short, on taking stock of itself, self-consciousness is the omnipotent sorcerer who calls forth the universe with all its distinctions. In this one act of self-communication self-consciousness ejects its universality as the Good and the Idea; it posits man as a finite and natural being, and it confines man’s consciousness to a really finite and natural world.\(^{58}\)

Bauer’s influence is evident in the strident claim with which Ruge prefaced the first issue of the *German Year-Books* in 1841, stating that the awakening to self-consciousness characterizes the present in terms of freedom:

> The inevitable corollary of this consequence is a genuine *Monism of Spirit*, resting on the knowledge that the process of history is identical with the process of self-consciousness. The ‘I’ of Fichte’s and Kant’s autonomous Ought, the categorical imperative, are thus re-established in a higher form, for whereas the spiritual crises in the sphere of self-consciousness are all based on themselves, self-critique is yet a new creation of free acting. This is *Freedom*.\(^{59}\)

This text is in parallel with Feuerbach’s 1841 *Essence of Christianity*, in which we have an eloquent condensation of self-consciousness:

> Consciousness of God is man’s self-consciousness; knowledge of God is man’s self-knowledge. By his God you know the man, and, conversely, by the man you know his God. The two are one. What God is to a man, that too is his spirit, his soul; and what his spirit, his soul, his heart are to a man, that is his God. God is the revealed and explicit inner self of

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\(^{58}\) Ibid., 360.

\(^{59}\) Ibid., 222-35, here 227.
man; religion is the ceremonial unveiling of man’s hidden treasures, the
collection of his innermost thoughts, the public avowal of his secret
longings.  

The impact of Feuerbach’s work was tremendous, as it represented a major
break with the whole dominant tradition of German idealist philosophy. While
it promised to be the key to a complete representation of both theology and
metaphysics, it introduced an empiricist and materialist-oriented humanism into
philosophical tradition in which this emphasis had been alien.  

Feuerbach’s critique is fundamental in that it rejects Hegelian idealism
not so much in its details as in its underlying assumptions. One could say that
where Hegel represents the ‘consciousness of self-consciousness’, Feuerbach
represents a further awareness, namely that this very process of coming to
awareness of thought is not a transcendental, ‘spiritual’ process in itself, but is a
process of distinctively human existence. To Feuerbach, Hegel’s philosophy is
rational mystics. He therefore exhorted people to think in ‘natural’ terms only:

Philosophy is the science of reality, in its truth and its totality; but the
essence of reality is nature (in the most universal sense of the word).
The greatest mysteries lie in the simplest things, which the speculative
daydreamer who yearns for the beyond is trampling underfoot. The
return to nature is the only source of salvation. It is wrong to put nature
in contradiction to moral freedom. Nature built not only the mean work­
shop of the stomach, but also the temple of the brain. 

In the 1853/4 French version of Heine’s Confe ssi ons, Feuerbach is pictured as
an atheist agitator, when Heine reflected on what he had done twenty years
before in the way of expounding German philosophy to the French:

Yeah, with regard to German philosophy, I blabbed out frankly the se­
cret of the school; enveloped in scholastic formulas, it was known only
by the initiated of the highest class. My revelations excited the utmost
astonishment in France, and I recollect that the most eminent thinkers of
this country avowed me naively that they had always fancied that Ger­
man philosophy was a sort of mystical haze in which the deity was
hidden as in a sanctuary of clouds, and that German philosophers were
ecstatic visionaries, breathing only piety and the fear of God. It is not
my fault that this has never been the case, and that German philosophy
is exactly the opposite of what we have hitherto been accustomed to call
piety and the fear of God. The most steadfast of these philosophical

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60 Das Wesen des Christenthums, in Sämtliche Werke, vol. 6, Stuttgart and Bad Canstatt 1960, 15.
62 See Wartofsky, Feuerbach, 168-96.
64 Ibid., 203.
agitators, our modern Porphyrius, who actually bears the name of Feuerbach, proclaimed, in concert with his friends, the most radical atheism as the ultimate conclusion of our metaphysics. With a frenzy of bacchantes these impious zealots tore the azure veil from heaven, shouting: “See, all the divinities have fled, and on high there dwells but an old maid with leaden hands and woebegone heart – Necessity.” (DHA XV, 139-40)

Feuerbach’s ‘most radical atheism’ points back to Heine’s own ‘self-godliness’ of the 1840s. By then, Feuerbach and company came to associate Hegel with the coterie of orthodox Lutherans, Restorationists, and Positive Philosophers who had been Hegel’s staunchest critics.

Once the synthetical force of the Hegelian system had dissolved, the radicalizing Hegelians focussed on the problem of the reconciliation between species and individual, between the concept of man and the man of flesh and blood. The mediation of the individual and the genus was of particular interest to them because, by reconstituting man’s universality on a concrete basis, it would offer at the same time a solution to the problem of the unity of spirit and nature, of man as natural being an man as human and historical being. Thus they came to put self-consciousness in place of Absolute Spirit.

In associating liberalism with Protestantism, Feuerbach, Ruge, and Bauer developed a theologizing mode of critique which reached its consummation in Marx’s writings in mid-1843, when he extended the structure of radical Hegelian politico-theological thought into the secular domain of society and politics. But on this common ground yet further shifts were brought about once the radicalizing Hegelians began to conjure with the panoply of religious analogies and metaphors which a Christian culture makes so omni-presently actual. In the years immediately before 1848, Feuerbach moved away from the universalizing idea of humanity which had permeated his 1841 Essence of Christianity, while Marx developed a more strictly secular criticism of civil society since the ‘critique of religion’ was ‘completed,’ as he put it. Marx’s reproach to Feuerbach in the sixth thesis of his Theses on Feuerbach was precisely that he had failed to reconcile the sensuous individual with universality in general, and thus that he had thought both abstractly, conceiving being only as genus, that is, as internal, mute generality which connects naturally many individuals.65

Within this context, Daumer (1800-1875) takes his own routes as an orientalist and Hafis-translator.66 In the 1840s, however, he became known for his anti-Christian polemics. Radicalizing Hegelians like Ruge and Feuerbach took an active interest in his critique. Daumer’s intent was an empirical way of thinking, as he indicated in a letter to Feuerbach, dated April 1842:

65 MEW/2, Berlin 1969, 6.
Whereas you are the type of person who thrives on philosophical intricacies, I confine myself to a completely external and bluntly empirical way of thinking. To my opinion, the cudgel will finish off what the poison had left intact. The assaulted yet seek to dodge the blows through ignorance, and I am sorry to say that I stand all alone. But if we succeed in collaborating more effectively, we will play a dominant role, and our opponents will tremble with apprehension about their future. They are going to perish, whatever bias they may have against us. In case we do not feel moved to work together for inner reasons, we can draw inspiration from outside, from our enemies' policies, which is actually a contributory cause to the unity of the liberals abroad.67

Daumer’s anti-Christian polemics culminated in his 1847 *On Christianity*; here he defines Christianity in terms of spirit, characterizing spirit as that which stands in glaring contradiction with Nature, with real life, with all features this religion is negating fiercely as non-existent, with all values this religion is decrying and labelling as *Flesh, World, Sin,* and *Devil.* This spirit is basically the abrogation and the perversion of all that is objective and naturally self-evident into sheer subjectivity. It thus results in absolute stupidity, since it presents itself as the hypostazation and divinazition of man’s most private ego, whereas it ignores the organic concreteness of man and world as a whole. Instead, it takes refuge in innermost feelings, a sombre void haunted by chimeras and spectres, and therein lies the most negative, hostile, damaging, and hence the most evil thing we can think of.68

After 1848 Daumer took great pains to distantiate himself from the radicalizing Hegelians. Now he became a propagandist for a religious turn; his new activities eventually led him into Catholicism.69

If we look back to the early 1840s, the radicalizing Hegelians enabled Heine to move further away from ‘Börmean misery’ into theories about the uplift of the people. His growing interest in their emancipatory views coincided with the general reorientation of the radicalizing Hegelians toward French political and social thought. On the basis of pantheistic views developed in his *History,* Heine again started to reconsider how the inheritance of the Great Revolution should be kept intact. At the core of this examination lies a pantheism which is inextricably intertwined with the concern for the fulfilment of the most elementary necessities of man. The needs of the body are spiritualized as integral to the whole person, a holistic impulse which can be associated with the concluding passage of Feuerbach’s *Essence of Christianity:*

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Hunger and thirst have devastating effects not only on our physical condition, but also on our moral and spiritual constitution. Oh! in case you must suffer such shameful privations, you will laud the natural blessings of bread and wine, which we feel will restore us to reasonable human beings. One interruption of daily practice suffices to make us aware of the importance of the barest essentials. So worship our bread, our wine, and no less our water! Amen.  

Feuerbach was as reluctant as Heine to separate the spiritual from the material needs of humanity. This is the prerequisite for a non-fantastic utopia, built upon the foundation of the emancipatory capacities of the earth. Whereas Hegel believed that the individual could identify himself with the totality only in a mediated manner, Heine grew impatient with the Hegelian project. His impatience expressed a general conviction among the radicalizing Hegelians of the early 1840s that Hegelian philosophy could no longer respond to revolutionary demands. This composite compound rapidly grew into militancy when the ‘radicals’ met the heavy fronts of political repression and worsening social conditions.

In the writings of Arnold Ruge, significantly, the theo-political preoccupations of Feuerbach were transmuted into directly political and social terms, while Ruge insisted that only the self-conscious sovereignty of the people is compatible with freedom. This radicalism vindicated many of the worst fears of conservatives like Stahl, who, in the 1845 edition of his Philosophy of Right in Historical Perspective held that Hegel’s philosophy bore indeed responsibility for the development of communism in Germany. Ruge, of course, did not hold on to this view, because he ended up an opponent of communism and a supporter of Bismarck after 1848. But during the period of his most intense and significant activity, the years from 1838 to 1843, when he edited the Halle Year-Books and its successor the German Year-Books, Ruge developed a thoroughgoing radicalism which mixed classical democratic republicanism with a collectivist social dimension. Marx made a moral commitment to communism in the summer of 1843. At the end of that year, he began to elaborate his Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, to be published in the 1844 German-French Year Books. Now he pointed at the revolutionary potential of the proletariat, in answer to the question how Germany could emancipate. At the same time, virtually every radicalizing Hegelian, from Heine and Gans to Hess, Feuerbach, and Marx, registered the impact of the con-

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70 Sämtliche Werke, vol. 6, 335.
71 Anekdoten zur neuesten deutschen Philosophie und Publizistik, Zürich 1843, 96: ‘The people’s voice is the voice of God.’
74 Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie, MEW/1, Berlin 1977, 390.
vergence of Hegelian and French socialist ideas. In Marx’s wordings, they were all waiting for the ‘Gaulish Cock to crow’ for Germany’s resurrection.75

Between Feuerbach and Marx, Heine’s revolutionism evolves. As we turn to the mid 1840s, he supposes communists to be the major contributing factor to the future realization of true democracy. Since a future with only simple pleasures would hardly be something to celebrate, however, Heine transforms the symbolic bread from a basic need into a divine right. This prerogative, usually associated with kings, will be usurped by the plebeians. In view of the deleterious aspects of Restoration Europe in the mid-1840s, Heine’s utopia, in which bliss and joy are universal values, is eminently political.76 At the same time, it must be stipulated that his ‘frivolity’ sets him apart from thinkers like Ruge, whose preference for overtly political art over aesthetic autonomy shows a mix of revolutionary earnestness and bourgeois priggishness, which is completely alien to Heine’s writing. I think that the ‘plebeian usurpation’ is demonstrating Heine’s contempt for Ruge-like snobbery rather than an unconditional devotion to the cause of the people. Heine’s attitude towards the people is ambivalent.77 Though he dedicated himself to the people’s nascent liberty, he was careful to keep his distance from the plebs. The underlying theme of Heine’s caution is the awareness that, for all the revivified missionary zeal of the early 1840s, the poet is evidently speaking on behalf of a social stratum he considers basically vulgar. As we will see presently, this attitude is indicative of Heine’s Jewishness.

8. Avant-garde

The people’s vulgarity had already been stressed in Heine’s Börne. In the third Book Heine had stated that he

would wash his hands if the people had squeezed them. In times of revolution, just feast your eyes on the people, just smell them, just hear this illustrious pack rat squeaking, and you may know what Mirabeau meant when he said that revolutions are not carried out with spikenard. (DHA XI, 71)

This ‘caste of untouchables’ recurs in the 1854 Confessions:

We are quite prepared to sacrifice ourselves for the people; self-sacrifice, after all, is one of our most exquisite pleasures. Besides, the people’s emancipation was our greatest mission in life, we have struggled for it, and it has brought us unbearable sufferings, at home as well as in exile. But the poet’s pure and sensitive nature is very reluctant to actually touching the people, and the idea of being caressed by them is wholly repugnant to us. Heaven forbid! A great democrat said once to

75 Ibidem, 391; cf. Heine’s Kahldorf, cited Chapter III, 125.
77 Cf. Introduction, footnote 75.
me that he would put his hand in the fire to purify it, if a king had shaken hands with him. As for me, I would answer likewise that if the sovereign people grants me the honour of a handshake, I would wash mine. Oh this people, this poor king in rags has found sycophants who struck the incensory against his head more brazenly than ever dared the courtiers of Byzantium and Versailles. These lackeys do not get tired of flattering the people, going into ecstasies over its perfections and virtues. They bawl: ‘Ah, how beautiful are the people! How good is the people! How intelligent is the people!’ No, you are telling lies. The poor people is not beautiful; on the contrary, it is ugly. But its ugliness is owing to its dirt, and will disappear as soon as public baths have been erected where his majesty, the people, can bathe for free. A bar of soap would not come amiss. Then, as they have washed themselves, a neat and proper people will turn up. (DHA XV, 30-1)

This people is embodied in the person of Wilhelm Weitling, tailor and early socialist, well known for his 1842 book Pledges of Harmony and Freedom, whom Heine met in 1844.\(^{78}\) Weitling was pushing to a rhetoric supporting the individual right of voluntary association for the purposes of advancing the collective right of the working class to defend their common rights in civil society. The encounter struck Heine dumb with embarrassment. Uncivilized people cannot liberate themselves, he conjectured; they need avant-garde therapists. Art, the expression of society, manifests, in its highest soaring, the most advanced social tendencies; it is the forerunner and revealer. To know whether writing worthily fulfills its proper mission as initiator, whether the poet is truly of the avant-garde, one must know where humanity is going, what the destiny of Man is.

With respect to Weitling cum suis, Heine makes no secret of his dread that these ‘coarse sujets’ would seize power without proper guidance.\(^{79}\) This aversion of the secularizing Jewish intellectual to the vulgarity of the people is equivalent to his disdain for the vulgarity of the unassimilated Jewish communities in modern Diaspora. One thinks again of Heine’s ambivalence about Polish Jewry.\(^{80}\) To him, their problem in its most crucial essence is the way how to show up: is Jewry (the people) fit for the salon, is Jewry (the people) ready for its first introduction to the very concept of literature as such? The ‘People’s Question’, then, owes much to Heine’s interpretation of the ‘Jewish Question’. There is an obvious connection between these cultural pariahs. They are not admissible into the civil society unless they submit to social censorship, disguising their untruly importance in socially acceptable ways. It is the complex fate of the acculturated Jew to feel the embarrassment


\(^{79}\) Cf. Hildebrand, Emancipation und Versöhnung, 271-74.

\(^{80}\) Introduction, 19.
Revolutionism

ordinary, ‘unashamed’ Jewry (people) were not feeling, and to perform on an intellectual-aesthetic level remedial steps.  

Heine’s remedy to vulgarity is clear: in his 1840s conception of the avant-garde, it is the special responsibility of the educated to guide the development of the lower classes. It is they who set the classical goals of sensualism, as they insist on nectar and ambrosia for the people. This we-group of demanding intellectuals considers themselves to be the philanthropic vanguard of the struggle against ancien régime injustice. Heine ranges himself on their side. His concept of the avant-garde as demonstrated in the writings of the 1840s is similar to the previous phase of pantheism in that it preserves the essential identification, simply on a higher, more advanced level of a pedagogical elite. The relationship between poet and people is still coloured by the poet’s unremitting urge for a charismatic, righteous leader who will do justice to everyone but is yet fated not to be esteemed by the crude people. For it is the poet who may rely on the sensualistic theories about man’s divine rights the people is ignorant about. This coded elitism adopts a critical attitude towards the present. The avant-garde position allows him to play on prejudices and fear which cannot be made explicit for reasons of censure. For Heine knows that the demand for ‘poetic leadership’ entails paradigms of mental culture and how its celebration of the fantastic functions as an important corrective to plain purpose-verse. Social critique therefore calls for all his skill as a writer of committed poems, which yet differ from pure propaganda in that they take the poet’s inalienable creativity for, granted.

Ciphered messages form the basic structure of Heine’s ‘Poems of Our Time’ in his 1844 cycle New Poems. The poet is able to rearrange his motifs so that things come not in factual order but where they will make most impact in juxtaposition. Such structuring gains thematic and aesthetic benefits in return for the sacrifice of a linear form in which religious, historical, and individual truths are supposed to justify the status quo. Linking features, which are elsewhere un- or otherwise, related, this writing sensitizes an adept readership to signals of repression. Instead of accommodation we are asked to keep constant vigil, listen more attentively to the many voices of history, and break the stringent modes of perception and its respective discourse indexing the oppressed as non-members of a community. Philosophy, prophesying, Messianic expectations, and critique are skilfully interwoven in an esoteric pattern which would outsmart censorship. At the same time, Heine’s ciphered messages reduce competent interpreters to a minimum. One must read them as an ensemble full of references to Heine’s other writings to grasp their meaning.

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82 In contrast to the ‘we-group’ I will discuss in Chapter V, 182-5.
A clear indication of veiled information is given in the ninth poem, ‘Heinrich’ from the ‘Poems of Our Time’, where the poet makes his subject, the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, speak about a battle-axe which would put an end to his miseries:

Auf dem Schloßhof zu Canossa  
Steht der deutsche Kaiser Heinrich,  
Baarfuß und im Büsserhemde,  
Und die Nacht ist kalt und regnigt.

Droben aus dem Fenster lugen  
Zwo Gestalten, und der Mondschein  
Ueberflimmert Gregors Kahlkopf  
Und die Brüste der Mathildis.

Heinrich, mit den blassen Lippen,  
Murmelt fromme Paternoster;  
Doch im tiefsten Kaiserherzen  
Heimlich knirscht er, heimlich spricht er:

“Fern in meinen deutschen Landen  
Heben sich die starken Berge,  
Und im stillen Bergesschachte  
Wächst das Eisen für die Streitaxt.

Fern in meinen deutschen Landen  
Heben sich die Eichenwälder,  
Und im Stamm der höchsten Eiche  
Wächst der Holzstiel für die Streitaxt.

Du, mein liebes treues Deutschland,  
Du wirst auch den Mann gebären,  
Der die Schlange meiner Qualen  
Niederschmettert mit der Streitaxt.”

(DHA II, 116)

This poem operates on at least three levels. First there is the present. The serpent (line 23), which will be crushed, refers to the Papal Court. This is a challenge to the ultramontane faction in Germany, whose influence had increased after the 1841 agreement between the Pope and the Prussian King. Second there is history. The battle-axe (lines 16, 20, 24) refers to Luther. In his 1822-3 lectures on the Philosophy of World History, Hegel had stated that Germany had seen the rise of a simple monk who knew that the principle of spiritual freedom was to be found in the deepest sepulchre of the heart, in the absolute identity of
our inmost soul. He had a clear understanding of his days; he knew that
the heart was hurt by the distortion of the truth. He was the person who
recognized the manipulations of the church, which he denounced and
smashed. 

As we saw above, in discussing Heine’s 1834 History, Luther’s teachings were
the prelude to the revolutionary liberties to be fostered in German philosophy,
which all would culminate in Hegel. Third there are the Messianic expectations.
Responsive liberators like Luther refer to a more forceful alternative for
popular, romantic imperial cult figures like Barbarossa, as indicated in the
passage from Heine’s Börne cited above. The ciphered message of the battle­
axe, then, reminds us again of the catastrophic undertones of Heine’s Mess­
ianism which rules dreamy quietism out.

9. Contraband

The intricate patterning of the 1844 ‘Poems of Our Time’ clarifies the fact that
Heine’s opting for a ‘new doctrine’ is articulated under the circumstances of the
educated class in civil society. His ciphered messages are aimed at potential
allies among the cultured. The aim is achieved by literary stealth.

To Heine, the importance of communism is beyond dispute. It will make
short work of nationalism, breeding ground ‘for racism, jingoism, and pre­
judice’, as it is stressed in a censured passage from the 1844 Eulogy on Ludwig
Markus (DHA XIV/1, 276). But his readership is inveigled into reconsidering
its significance ‘through counterpoint’. With studied concern Heine trifles with
bourgeois anguish over the hostilities the masses are showing towards the dis­
play of luxury in the Parisian arcades:

Their faces are so hideously grave and suffering, so impatient and
threatening; that they present a sinister contrast with the goods they are
gaping at. We are suddenly assailed by fears that some day these people
might use their clenched fists to smash the showcases, and shatter all
these fashionable playthings of the well-to-do together with the rank and
fashion! (DHA XIII, 139)

Passages on communism are thematized provocations. In these texts Heine skil­
fully portrays the ambivalence of a bourgeois artist about the rise of a prolet­
arian order, such as in Article XLVI from Lutezia, dated 12 July 1842:

Perhaps there will then be only one shepherd and one flock, a free shep­
herd with an iron staff and a human flock all shorn equally and all
bleating in unison! A lurid and sinister era is looming, and a prophet

85 Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Weltgeschichte, 499.
keit im 19. Jahrhundert, 121-42.
going to write another Apocalypse would have to invent a novel bestiary, such terrible beasts that St John’s old animal symbolism would be only gentle doves and amoretti in comparison. The gods hide their faces out of pity for man, their nurseling for so long, and perhaps also in concern over their own fate! The future reeks of Russian leather, blood, godlessness and many beatings indeed. I recommend our grandchildren to be born with extremely thick skin on their backs. (DHA XIV/1, 20)

At first sight, these lines seem to equate the communism with sheer barbarism; they also seem to identify Heine as the consummate aesthete. But it is worth bearing in mind that Heine’s allusions to ‘a lurid and sinister era’ are made at a moment when revolutionary prospects were remoter as ever. The struggle between the haves and the have-nots is as uncertain as the interdependence of republicans, communists, and ‘doctrine’. Against this background, a New Apocalypse is at least a far from comforting alternative to injustice. Wandering rats are the poet’s answer to those who fortify the status quo with morality and religiosity. Fear is a container for contraband. The careful manipulation of anxious feelings prepares the way for smuggling revolutionism into the juste milieu. The counterpoint effect is heightened through Heine’s artful elitism. Nonetheless it is clear that Heine accepted a break with the existing order; his pose as the champion of the educated was based upon the presupposition that for a poet there is indeed something to educate; in the 1840s Hegel’s conspirational revolutionism still opened up incomparable teleological vistas, though it had to be reworked into the critique of his radicalizing followers.

Whereas the 1844 Heine harboured status-oriented and aesthetic reservations towards unbridled revolutionism, the failed revolution of 1848 shows him that the people had gained nothing at all. It makes Heine reconsider his role as a German poet. He no longer opts for the educational scope of literature. Whereas he had supposed pantheism to provide the rationale for revolutionary progress in the 1830s and 1840s, doubts over the efficacy of revolutionary zeal grow insurmountable. Instead of sensualism, the awful prevails. Traces of embarrassment are reworked into bodily conscience. A painful reminder of revolutionary hubris, radicalizing Hegelians are criticized for being ‘godless self-gods’ after 1848.

10. Godless Selfgodliness

In general, the thinking of the ‘godless selfgods’ evolved from the domain of theology and speculative philosophy into the sphere of political philosophy. Whereas Feuerbach had argued that Christianity concealed the true subject of religion, man, by making God an absolute substance, Marx, in his ‘Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law’, claimed that Hegel mystified the true relationship between the state and civil society by making the state a logically prior embodiment to the Idea that then produces the life of civil society and family
out of itself as determination of its concept. Marx's analysis of civil society is an almost perfect distillation of the radicalizing Hegelians' objections to the social effects of (Christian) religion, as is shown in his 'Jewish Question':

Religion is no longer the spirit of the *state*, in which man (albeit in a restricted way, under specific circumstances, and at given moments) acts as a species-being in community with other humans, it has become the spirit of *civil society*, of the sphere of egoism, of *bellum omnium contra omnes*. Religion is no longer the essence of *community*, but the essence of *difference*. It has become the expression of man's *separation* from his *common being*, from himself and from other men – in contrast with its origins. 

Secularizing zeal and hostility toward the intrusion of theology into human affairs lived on in Marx's equation of political and social emancipation with human emancipation from all religious illusions.

With respect to Heine's final position, it is useful to stress two aspects of the debate in the years before 1848. Marx's stance, on the one hand, is expressive of the radicalizing Hegelians' struggle against the political theology of Restoration in Germany, with its insistence on the transcendence of a sovereign decision maker over any and all rational constraint, which was based upon a model of the sovereign subject, as in Friedrich Julius Stahl's example. In Stahl's view, the fatal consequence of Hegel's philosophy was the destruction of the 'personality of sovereignty', as he formulated it in the 1845 edition of his *Philosophy of Law*. Stahl's stance, on the other hand, gives us an indication as to how radicalizing Hegelianism became exteriorized religion. We now may recognize the target of Heine's post-48 critique: what Heine clearly saw afterwards is that its 'godless self-godliness' is yet another form of remystified religion, with its devotional core intact.

After 48, Heine acknowledges that the radicalizing Hegelians had lapsed into quasi-religious discourse when they envisioned a politics of Man. In this respect, the godless self-godliness is tied up with Feuerbach's and Marx's conception of species-being in the early 1840s, which was ultimately a vestigial theological abstraction, as was shown in Max Stirner's objections to Feuerbach's 1841 *Essence of Christianity*. Marx, obviously, came to break with the

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89 In 1840 Stahl assumed the chair in the Berlin Law Faculty left vacant by the death of Eduard Gans. His political philosophy served as a metaphysical basis for historical legal studies. He embraced most of the conservative trends of the age, but it was only with the publication of his *Das monarchische Prinzip. Eine staatsrechtlich-politische Abhandlung*, Heidelberg 1845, that he really won a preeminent place among Prussian conservatives.
90 *Philosophie des Rechts*, 16.
radicalizing Hegelians by insisting that their theological mode of thinking failed to identify the main causes of 'German misery'. He relegated religion more and more to an ideological form which has no history of its own but is subjected to the conditions of a historically determined shape of society. Having identified Christian personhood with all forms of personality outside the one conception of social personality, Marx came to regard the nonsocialized self as theological, that is, as an anti-social individual deriving his respectability from the metaphor of divine personality. That individuality was to be overcome through a radically secularizing critique. To him, the problem of the individual person thus became subject to derision.

For the late Heine it is impossible to go back to a Hegel not affected by the devastating critique his radicalizing followers developed in the 1830s and 1840s. He now traces his aversion back to the Berlin years, so as to show his superiority for his direct contact with the master. Hegel's notion of God is hopelessly spun in the Berlin cobweb of dialectics. After 48, insecurity leads to a conception of breaking with history's continuum, which is now experienced as the momentum of impersonal power against which Heine is wrestling. The dogma of a personal God rehabilitates a personal experience as the initial measure of things, placing Jewish wisdom above politics and memory above anonymity, reconstituting, as the focus of writing, the bearer of a wisdom in which the status quo appears under the sign of memory. Can a poet view the now discarded objectives of the people as monuments to the utopian hope of past generations, and to its betrayal? Who will teach him these truths, and in what form shall they be passed on those who come after him? Now that pantheistic-Hegelian 'godless self-godliness' has failed to pave the way for revolution, where else is a spirit of wisdom to be found?