Religious Tones and Overtones in the Human Sufficiency Arguments of Marx and Nietzsche

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Abstract

It is often assumed that since Marx and Nietzsche were both anti-religious thinkers, religion played no part in the formulation of their philosophical outlooks. With this assumption, the influence of historical religions on rhetoric has received a subordinate role, if at all, in the discourse on 19th century German critiques of those very religions. Although differing fundamentally in the debate on inclusiveness versus individuality, this essay asserts that Marx and Nietzsche, both from families of religious scholars, broke with previous philosophical tradition and utilized a religious form of rhetoric in their writings to combat doctrines of human deficiency inherent in previous European thought. Through an analysis of passages of Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral* and *Also sprach Zarathustra* and of *Das Kapital*, the *Manifest der kommunistischen Partei*, and other writings, this paper will demonstrate the appropriation of religious rhetoric of human sufficiency in such works. Secondly, this essay posits the necessity of "slave morality," as described by Nietzsche, to the awakening of the proletariat in Marxist political theory, and characterizes Marx as the final "priest" figure who redirects *ressentiment* back onto oppressors. This analysis ultimately shows the effectiveness of the tradition of religious rhetoric of oppression/liberation, in spite of its simultaneous harsh critiques, and the emotional power of persuasion inherent and *necessary* in such language to restore human sufficiency. This essay further displays the intersections of the works of Nietzsche and Marx as products of 19th century German cultural criticism.

Table of Contents

Chapter I: Introduction.....1

Chapter II: The Lives of Marx and Nietzsche within the German Religious Landscape.....7

Chapter III: Friedrich Nietzsche.....13

Chapter IV: Karl Marx.....34

Chapter V: A Marx-Nietzsche Dialogue: The Rhetoric of Slavery……...……..53

Chapter VI: Conclusion…….....…….....62

Bibliography…….....……66

Vita…….....……..72

I. Introduction

In 2014 in the Montenegrin city of Podgorica, the Serbian Orthodox Church consecrated the Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ, which, amid New Testament scenes of Jesus Christ, features a fresco depicting scenes of eternal punishment of wrongdoers in hell. Among those represented in the fresco is the Croatian-born communist Yugoslavian leader Josip Broz Tito. Such a depiction is understandable considering the country's recent collective memory of Montenegro as part of Yugoslavia with Tito ruling autocratically as first president and of the collapse of communism in Serbia and Montenegro in 1991. More curious, however, are the depictions of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, which appear next to Tito's likeness, all viewing a hellish creature consuming others as punishment.[1] While it is understandable why Tito appears in the fresco, the painter curiously represents Marx and Engels as the philosophical "representatives" of multiple ideologies which shaped Eastern Europe in the 20th century, mixing religious imagery with recent history. Much of the controversy at the time, however, lay in how new Eastern European regimes suppressed religious authorities to make way for such ideologies: the anonymous painter thus depicts Marx, Engels, and Tito as representatives of these ideologies which deserve eternal punishment, as conflicts had long persisted between European communist regimes in the 20th century and suppressed religious authorities. Therefore, it may even seem natural that Marx and Engels are depicted alongside Tito, considering how such an anti-religious movement shaped the last century in Eastern Europe. However, considering the status of Marx and Engels as "atheist" thinkers who disliked and discouraged religious practices as contrary to progress, it is possible that

[1] "Montenegro church depicts Tito, Marx and Engels in hell," *BBC News*, January 31, 2014, accessed April 4, 2015, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-25993584.

a Judeo-Christian framework of thought shaped the ideology of Marxism, considering the less-than-glorious reputation it has left behind in Europe.

Although Marx and Nietzsche criticized religion as the primary detriment to humankind and professed their own personal atheistic beliefs, both thinkers ultimately drew upon the rhetoric and framework of the very religious institutions they criticized to call their readers to action against religious doctrines of human deficiency and effect new conditions of thought in which human beings could act as their own "gods." It is not only necessary to examine the theological debate within which Marx and Nietzsche developed their ideas about human sufficiency. I believe it also necessary to examine the religious-based rhetoric of Marx and Nietzsche to re-examine the way in which we categorize thinkers both as "atheists" and as existing in a "post-Christian" era. Such an analysis will also examine the complicated yet underrated relationship between the influence of the actual religious institutions of Europe and the philosophical break with such religions in the 19th century in the German context in the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche. The analyses of the functions of the "religious" in Marx's and Nietzsche's writings also imply the possibility that a specifically religious feeling can exist and aid human beings outside and unbound by contemporary religious institutions *per se*; I define "religion" and "religious" here as ritual rather than belief-based; not only is the "religious" a tool of self-actualization, it is a framework of molding the world to increase the satisfaction of humankind.

Writing in an albeit rhetorical tone, the German-American theologian and Existentialist philosopher Paul Tillich once made the bold claim that "no philosopher living within Western Christian culture can deny his dependence on [historical Christianity], as no Greek philosopher could have hidden his dependence on an Apollonian-Dionysian culture, even if he was a radical

critic of the gods of Homer."[2] One such "critic of the gods of Homer" was Friedrich Nietzsche, whose openly vehement statements against Christianity still add to his reputation as perhaps *the* atheist thinker of the 19th century. Nietzsche, a classical philologist, never fully rejected the power and *uses* of God and the gods (particularly the Greek pantheon). Tillich's claim is indeed controversial and politicizes the history of Europe to fit Christian theology, considering the plethora of "atheist" German philosophers appearing in 19th-century Europe, in particular Feuerbach, Schopenhauer, Marx, and Nietzsche. In the centuries preceding Marx and Nietzsche, however, philosophy was largely a discipline which reinforced the belief in God and, in a material sense, reinforced the reigning religious body in Europe, the Roman Catholic Church. European philosophy, therefore, did not exist within a vacuum but was rather an appendage and "handmaiden" to the Church in which philosophers contemplated God's nature and humankind's relation to him. Nevertheless, as thinkers gradually secularized the discipline of philosophy, it led many, including Marx and Nietzsche, to an atheistic *Weltanschauung*; that is, it was an outlook which did not acknowledge the existence of a deity. However, their own personal atheistic views do not necessarily mean that once the idea of "God" was absent from European philosophy that the religious framework and rhetoric which had influenced European thought had disappeared.

The target of Marx and Nietzsche consisted of the human structures which reinforce the idea of man's deficiency, not solely the concrete social and religious institutions of their day in Germany, but rather how such doctrines became systematic within apparatuses of thought in European history, such as religious institutions. I adopt here the language used by Daniel W. Conway in his essay "Solving the Problem of Socrates: Nietzsche's Zarathustra as Political Irony," in which he classifies Socratic philosophers as engaging with a presupposed notion of a deficient

[2] Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1967), 27.

human nature; the terms deficiency and sufficiency thus denote how philosophers describe human nature.[3] The classical precedent of such "doctrines" of deficiency in the Christian sense is the idea of the "Fall" of humankind recorded in the book of Genesis, in which God deemed human beings undeserving of the paradise he had provided them. It is *human beings* in the Christian tradition who inherit and create the own conditions of their deficiency; that is, that human beings are not "complete" beings, and the Christian doctrine of original sin enforces such a belief. While the Roman Catholic tradition characterizes original sin as a deficiency which humans can reconcile with God, Protestant thinkers such as John Calvin placed an even greater emphasis on the idea of deficiency, describing it even as *total depravity* from God. Marx and Nietzsche, contemplating this question, considered such doctrines of human deficiency to be detrimental to human beings, in that these doctrines splinter human nature and separate humans from their core "powers." Marx deemed such a splintering "alienation" (*Entfremdung*), and Nietzsche explored this idea of alienation through religion in his polemical text, *Zur Genealogie der Moral.* In Marx's own development as a thinker, investigating religious alienation was the precedent for his later concept of *alienated labor*, and I hold that the idea of alienation influenced how Nietzsche later formulated the ways in which to break the chain of original sin and deficiency among human beings in societies shaped by Christianity.

Nevertheless, one cannot assert that both men fully gave up the idea of religion as a tool and framework to call others to self-reflect and act in the political arena. I argue that the Judeo-Christian tradition of thought, as Tillich stated, "haunted" the thought of Marx and Nietzsche, and their philosophical analyses cannot be understood outside such a framework. Whereas one may

[3] Daniel W. Conway, "Solving the Problem of Socrates: Nietzsche's Zarathustra as Political Irony" in *Political Theory* 16 (1988).

consider Marx and Nietzsche "atheist" philosophers, one may not consider them philosophers fully without religion or the religious idea, i.e. a metaphysical framework in which human beings understand their existence and a framework which functions as a tool of self-actualization. For Marx, the teleology of scientific socialism suited the process of history, in which human beings could one day realize their full potential. If such socialism is scientific ("scientific" here meaning "occurring inevitably"), Marx's career as a revolutionary seems trivial. Nietzsche, on the other hand, although by no means egalitarian in his vision, utilized the language of the Lutheran pulpit and the Platonic dialogue to frame his *Zarathustra*, both his attempt to criticize Christianity's effects and to propose a new type of fully-encapsulated *human* being, the *Übermensch.* Nietzsche himself even suggests our own possible divinity as a remedy for the tragic death of God in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*: "Ist nicht die Größe dieser Tat [killing God] zu groß für uns? Müssen wir nicht selber zu Göttern werden, um nur ihrer würdig zu erscheinen?"[4]

I will first argue that Nietzsche, as an opponent of nihilistic trends in the philosophy of his day, proposed a pathway to a religious feeling inherent in his texts and his description of the godless "void" in the modern world by advocating the reunification of the *otherworldly* with the *worldly*. Then, I will examine to what degree Marx utilized pre-existing eschatological views of history to shape his philosophy of the future and argue how Marx uses religiously influenced rhetoric to effect social change. I will concentrate mostly on the younger Marx, as he engaged with religion primarily at the beginning of his academic career, as he owed his idea of alienated labor to the alienation in religion described by contemporary German philosophers in the early 19th century. Finally, I will examine to what extent Nietzsche's description of traditional Christian

[4] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft* in *Nietzsches Werke: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe. Electronic Edition*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Charlottesville, VA: InteLex, 1995), V-2: 159.

morality in *Zur Genealogie der Moral* can illuminate the religious aspects of Marxism and how *ressentiment* as described by Nietzsche provided the basis for Marxism as a social movement.

II. The Lives of Marx and Nietzsche within the German Religious Landscape

Marx was born into a Jewish family in Trier and raised in the Protestant faith, although Marx's paternal and maternal lines had both supplied rabbis for several European cities in the past.[5] McLellan has stated in his classic text on Marx's early life, *Marx before Marxism*: "It would be difficult to find anyone who had a more Jewish ancestry than Karl Marx. . . It would be quite mistaken to dismiss the influence of this immense tradition on Karl Marx. To assert that 'it is impossible to say that his Jewish origin had any influence on any part of his life' betrays a facile disregard for both Marx's heredity and his environment."[6] Marx's grandfather, Marx Levy Mordechai, was the Rabbi of Trier until 1804, and Marx's father officially adopted the surname *Marx* following Napoleon's imperial edict in 1808. Moreover, Marx's uncle, Samuel Marx, was Chief Rabbi of Trier after the death of Karl's grandfather and remained so until his death in 1827; this uncle lived in the city's synagogue with his family during his tenure as chief rabbi. Marx nevertheless grew up in a Protestant milieu and was born directly after a tumult of ever-changing political systems in the Rhineland. Due to this increasing pressure, Marx's father publicly converted to the Lutheran faith around 1818, and he further had all of his children baptized around 1825. Although a seemingly singular family history, the Marx family's story comprises the wider movement of German Jews who converted to Christianity to gain entry into professions and social life of the time. Considering the role of *Christendom* as a geopolitical concept (i.e. Europe as political stronghold of Christianity), the practice of nominal conversion was not uncommon among European Jews. Considering the waves of anti-Semitism characterizing Europe in the 19th century,

[5] David McLellan, *Karl Marx: A Biography* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 2.
[6] David McLellan, *Marx before Marxism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 26-27.

it was also a less desired after-effect that many Jews, including Marx, appropriated a form of Jewish self-hatred.[7]

Nevertheless, as Marx expressed his philosophy in systematic, scientific terms, his philosophy contrasted greatly with the insights in the philosophical writings of his contemporary, Nietzsche, who was born into a Protestant family in Saxony. Friedrich's father, Carl Ludwig Nietzsche, was a Lutheran pastor, and the majority of Nietzsche's male relatives consisted of pastors. Although his father died when Friedrich was five years old, there is evidence that he spent a significant amount of time with his maternal grandfather, a pastor as well. After graduating from the *Schulpforta*, Nietzsche commenced studies in theology in 1864 at the University of Bonn. Thomas H. Brobjer describes the earliest portion of Nietzsche's life until 1866 as his most religious phase, in which Nietzsche included evidence of a belief in God in several letters. He asserts that although Nietzsche later became a vitriolic opponent to Christianity, his early pious devotion to the Protestant faith is noticeable and surprising in light of his later criticisms of Christianity *per se*: "…the almost complete absence of discussion or critique of Christianity for the first ten years after his rejection of it…coupled with his occasional positive statements about Christianity, clearly imply that it was not just a question of accommodating to external pleasures. In spite of Nietzsche's later claims, the truth is that at this time Nietzsche did not view Christianity as a major philosophical or cultural problem or opponent."[8] The danger in such analyses of early religious piety is the tendency to assert modern or religious beliefs onto a historical figure like Nietzsche to frame him as a "Christian" philosopher in early life, which he certainly was not. This type of

[7] Such self-hatred appears blatantly in Marx's depiction of Jews as representatives of capitalism and huckstering in his text *Zur Judenfrage*, a depiction which scholars still cannot agree is or is not anti-Semitic.

[8] Thomas H. Brobjer, "Nietzsche's Changing Relation with Christianity: Nietzsche as Christian, Atheist, and Antichrist," in *Nietzsche and the Gods*, ed. Weaver Santaniello (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 147-148.

exegesis of Nietzsche's texts may thus lead to an intentional fallacy within criticism. Nevertheless, Nietzsche remained preoccupied with Christianity all the way up to the publication of *Der Antichrist*; Nietzsche's preoccupation with Christianity did not stem from the reality that Christianity was the majority contemporary religion of Europe but rather the inner mechanisms of Christian thought and how Christian dogma affects its adherents *psychologically*.

However, after 1866, according to Brobjer, Nietzsche was engaged in a life ultimately of indifference toward religion until around 1874. Writing to his friends Pinder and Krug in 1872, Nietzsche seems to have solidified his doubts about Christianity enough to put to paper and provides a foretaste of his later exploration of the psychological effects of Christianity. Nietzsche writes: "daß Gott Mensch geworden ist, weist nur darauf hin, daß der Mensch nicht im Unendlichen seine Seligkeit suchen soll, sondern auf der Erde seinen Himmel gründe; der Wahn einer überirdischen Welt hatte die Menschengeister in eine falsche Stellung zu der irdischen Welt gebracht: er war das Erzeugniß einer Kindheit der Völker."[9] Despite the manifest disinterest in religious doctrine, here Nietzsche makes a bold statement about man's relation to God: not only does he in some ways parrot Feuerbach's earlier work on humankind and God, but he also indirectly engages with the ideas of human deficiency present in Christian dogma, in that he addresses church doctrines which insist on denying the present life in the hope for the better, eternal life (an issue Nietzsche takes up later in the *Genealogie der Moral*). For Nietzsche, the religious background of Protestantism informed his earliest thought, as he in some ways echoed the effects of Martin Luther's reforms on Germany. Luther's public questioning of Catholic religious authority signified a substantial break with the centralized authoritarian belief system of

[9] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Brief an G. Krug und W. Pinder in Naumburg (Fragment)" in *Friedrich Nietzsche: Briefe, Juni 1850-September 1864*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (New York: De Gruyter, 1975), 201.

the Church that condemned all dissent, and this environment of Protestant dissent essentially provided the basis for Nietzsche to develop an openly skeptical standpoint against Christian dogma.

In the context of Marxian and Nietzschean arguments against humans as deficient beings, the Protestant Reformation catalyzed the increasing weakening of ecclesiastical power which led to the dearth of Protestant religious opinions and denominations still present today in the West, particularly in the United States.[10] Jacob Bronowski and Bruce Mazlish write that Luther's "doctrine of justification by faith alone transformed most of the sacramental system into an unnecessary apparatus and broke the church's hold on the individual."[11] Addressing the issue of penance in Catholic tradition, for example, George Anastaplo writes that "it can be said [that] Luther revived something that had been lost (or muted) in Christianity by the Roman Catholic Church, the importance of justification by grace."[12] On the geopolitical level, Luther's doctrine of *sola fide* indeed dealt a blow to the power apparatus of the Church and its monopoly on salvation and European spirituality; because no human deed was sufficient enough for God according to Luther, the Church's insistence on the priest as proxy and good works as penance seemed insignificant to salvation. Luther believed that the priest and ecclesiastical authorities *separated* the people from God.

Average German-speaking Christians, after Luther, were able to read the Bible in their own tongue, directly confess their sins to God, and justify themselves *solely* by their belief in God.

[10] Consider as an example the Congregationalist movement, mainly an Anglo-American phenomenon, in which each church congregation exists and is governed autonomously – in stark contrast to the traditional hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church subsumed under a singular human authority, the Pope.
[11] Jacob Bronowski and Bruce Mazlish, *The Western Intellectual Tradition: From Leonardo to Hegel* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 90.
[12] George Anastaplo, *The Christian Heritage: Problems and Prospects* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2010), 93.

Many religious and political authorities (practically the same power apparatus at the time) considered Luther a heretic because he transferred religious power into the hands of the common believer which led to the redundancy of ecclesiastical authorities. John H. Smith writes on Nietzsche's complex view of Luther, stating that Nietzsche believed "that the Italian Renaissance was leading to a kind of self-cancellation of Christianity since the Catholic church had internalized the 'will to power' of rediscovered Roman antiquity, and that it was Luther's critique of the papacy that allowed for a resurgence of religious sentiment and faith."[13] Thus, according to Smith's assessment, Nietzsche recognized great moving power in the preaching of Martin Luther beginning at the start of the 16th century. Even Marx wrote about Luther's groundbreaking break with papal authority in his *Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie*: "[Luther] hat den Glauben an die Autorität gebrochen, weil er die Autorität des Glaubens restaurirt hat. Er hat die Pfaffen in Laien verwandelt, weil er die Laien in Pfaffen verwandelt hat. Er hat den Menschen von der äussern Religiosität befreit, weil er die Religiosität zum innern Menschen gemacht hat. Er hat den Leib von der Kette emancipirt, weil er das Herz in Ketten gelegt."[14] Stathis Kouvelakis writes of Marx's understanding of Germany's religious past: "Marx maintains that Luther and the Reformation set the stage, theoretically and practically, for the moment of German philosophy, and puts the whole of this movement under the banner of the revolution. The historical significance of the Reformation lies in its internalization of the question of faith and religious authority; this was the first step in a secularizing movement that paved the way for a philosophical critique of religion which traced it back to its human roots and freed the people from the bonds of servitude."[15] I hold that Luther's

[13] John H. Smith, "Nietzsche: *Logos* against Itself and the Death of God" in *Dialogues between Faith and Reason: The Death and Return of God in Modern German Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2011), 155.
[14] Karl Marx, "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie. Einleitung" in *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels: Werke.* (Berlin: Dietz, 1974), 3: 386.
[15] Stathis Kouvelakis, "Marx: Public Sphere to Revolutionary Democracy" in *Philosophy and Revolution: From Kant to Marx* (New York: Verso, 2003), 323.

efforts not only (perhaps unintentionally) led later European thinkers to defy earthly religious authorities but that they ultimately paved the way for later German philosophers to challenge the authority of *religion itself* as a category of human thought; it was the systematic dismantling of the power apparatus of the Church which broke down the concept of the "heretical" in the critiques of politico-religious authorities.

III. Friedrich Nietzsche

` Friedrich Nietzsche devoted so much of his later writings to analyzing the ways in which Christianity affected its adherents and the collective psyche of the Western world that one may have considered him pre-occupied with Christianity. He criticized Christianity the most vehemently in *Der Antichrist* (1888, rendered in English as both *The Antichrist* and *The Anti-Christian*). Perhaps recalling Marx's "Opium des Volkes" claim, he writes: "Was nehmen jetzt wilde Völkerschaften zuerst von den Europäern an? Branntwein und Christenthum, die europäischen Narcotica."[16] He ultimately rejected Christianity because of the belief in humans as deficient beings which must be perpetuated to necessitate the existence of God. Christianity, according to Nietzsche, was a form of self-imposed self-abnegation which subdued the hidden "powers" and strengths of human beings. Nietzsche, descending from a family of clergymen, was familiar with such doctrines, including the essential Christian doctrine of original sin. In addition, Nietzsche appeared as a cultural critic in Europe at the apex of German theorists who had already made controversial claims about Christianity which involved the dismantling of the concept of "God."

The German theologian of the Tübingen circle, David Friedrich Strauss, for example, had controversially denied the divinity of Christ in his 1835 text *Das Leben Jesu* (although he was certainly not to the first to do so). Later, the materialist philosopher and former student of Hegel, Ludwig Feuerbach, had posited in his book *Das Wesen des Christenthums* (1841) that this "essence" of Christianity (and all *theism*) was the self-estrangement which occurs when humans perpetuate the existence and belief in "God," who is actually the sum of all the positive qualities

[16] Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 170.

desired by human beings which complement their inadequacies. Brobjer, in analyzing Nietzsche's apostasy, points out that Nietzsche wished for Feuerbach's book for his birthday in 1861 and that in 1865, Nietzsche also read Strauss's *Das Leben Jesu.*[17] Feuerbach, opposing his former teacher Hegel – who stated that man was God in his self-alienation – instead claimed the opposite, that God is man in his self-alienation. Therefore, religion requires that human beings self-deprecate to uphold the existence of a deity: humans *must* create the idea of a perfect God to counter the reiterated imperfections manifest in Christianity's view of human nature. The believer's relationship to God, Jesus Christ, and the Church all depend upon a self-proclaimed insufficiency to obtain salvation.

Emerging from this discourse, Nietzsche first publicly described this human necessity to create God in his pessimistic text on Ancient Greek culture, *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* (1871): "Um leben zu können, mußten die Griechen diese Götter, aus tiefster Nötigung, schaffen . . . Wie anders hätte jenes so reizbar empfindende, so ungestüm begehrende, zum *Leiden* so einzig befähigte Volk das Dasein ertragen können, wenn ihm nicht dasselbe, von einer höheren Glorie umflossen, in seinen Göttern gezeigt worden wäre."[18] We already see here that Nietzsche, although grappling with the reason *why* the Greeks created gods, nonetheless acknowledges the power and influence of the religious beliefs which the Greeks created. According to his controversial pessimistic view of the Greeks, their coping with their existence produced their capacity to suffer, and the Greeks transposed the inadequacies of human existence into the concept of gods. Minute traces of Feuerbachian thought can be found here, in that Nietzsche – by way of his example of the Greeks – essentially states that human beings, and not

[17] Brobjer, 140-141.
[18] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik* in *Nietzsches Werke: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe. Electronic Edition*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Charlottesville, VA: InteLex, 1995), III-1: 32.

merely the Christians of his day, have a tendency to displace and fracture their human nature by consolidating their own desired qualities in the qualities of a god: omniscient, omnipresent, all-loving, all good (at least in the Christian context).

Nietzsche later confronts these doctrines of deficiency directly in his later work, *Zur Genealogie der Moral: Eine Streitschrift* (1887). Investigating the origins of Judeo-Christian morality, Nietzsche describes the ways in which guilt historically has functioned as a form of control. In traditional Christian doctrine, the Christian believer must thank God for the saving grace of Jesus Christ – a salvation from deficiencies and dire shortcomings ("sin"), the guilt of which adherents of Christianity impose on themselves through dogma and self-deprecating speech-acts. Nietzsche addresses this self-imposed sin later in *Der Antichrist*, claiming that Buddhism is more practical and more reflective of reality than Christianity, in that it describes the struggles of life as "suffering" rather than as "sin."[19] Stephen Mulhall writes on this self-imposed burden of sin which Nietzsche describes in *Zur Genealogie der Moral*: "But when our ultimate father is God, then our debt becomes crushingly beyond measurement; and when God's Son gratuitously takes the burden of that debt upon himself, He only intensifies the burden. The religious narrative of original sinfulness and its overcoming thus intensifies the sadomasochism of bad conscience to the point at which human existence appears cursed rather than promising."[20] According to Mulhall, the relationship of *guilt* between humans and God only increases the necessity for humans to reiterate their "inborn" deficiency. On the one hand, the doctrine of original sin inescapably imposes a guilt on the Christian from birth onward: Christ died for all human beings, and thus all

[19] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Der Antichrist: Fluch auf das Christenthum* in *Nietzsches Werke: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe. Electronic Edition*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Charlottesville, VA: InteLex, 1995), VI-3: 184.
[20] Stephen Mulhall, "The promising animal: the art of reading *On the Genealogy of Morality* as testimony" in *Nietzsche's* On the Genealogy of Morality: *A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011), 259.

humans owe him for the sacrifice, according to the theology. The Christian version of faith thus presupposes this intrinsic deficiency and need to rely on Jesus Christ's sacrifice for salvation. However, according to Nietzsche, such a belief in human deficiency and weakness affect the psyche of the adherents themselves, even if reliance on God can lead the Christian adherent to something positive, such as supposed eternal salvation.

One of Nietzsche's insights in his genealogy, combining historiographic and philological methods, is the way in which he dissects the Christian version of guilt, which the German language expresses as *Schuld,* a word which simultaneously means *guilt* and *debt.* I hold this insight to be the core facet of Nietzsche's whole criticism of Christianity; one's relationship to Christ in Christianity persists on the fact that one *needs* this relationship. Approaching the issue as a philologist, he proposes in *Zur Genealogie der Moral* that Christianity is based on what he describes as a "creditor-debtor" relationship, and he does not illuminate the relationship between *guilt* and *debt* intrinsic in the German term *Schuld* as a mere afterthought: for Nietzsche, "guilt" *is* debt – an *owing something* to God. Writing on the historical equivalence of damages/pain (both translated as *Schaden* in German), Nietzsche asks: "Woher diese uralte, tiefgewurzelte, vielleicht jetzt nicht mehr ausrottbare Idee ihre Macht genommen hat, die Idee einer Äquivalenz von Schaden und Schmerz? Ich habe es bereits verraten: in dem Vertragsverhältnis zwischen *Gläubiger* und *Schuldner*, das so alt ist, als es überhaupt 'Rechtssubjekte' gibt, und seinerseits wieder auf die Grundformen von Kauf, Verkauf, Tausch, Handel und Wandel zurückweist."[21] Analyzing the Christian's relationship to God philologically, Nietzsche hints at the nature of this relationship to God as originally being expressed in *economic* rather than metaphysical terms. He

[21] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral: Eine Streitschrift* in *Nietzsches Werke: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe. Electronic Edition*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Charlottesville, VA: InteLex, 1995), VI-2: 314.
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depicts religion as a contract (*Vertragsverhältnis*), but it is not necessarily a contract on which any human being agrees from birth. Thus the Christian tradition, for Nietzsche, is based on the hereditary *debt* to God. He writes further:

> Das Bewußtsein, Schulden gegen die Gottheit zu haben, ist, wie die Geschichte lehrt, auch nach dem Niedergang der blutverwandtschaftlichen Organisationsform der 'Gemeinschaft' keineswegs zum Abschluß gekommen; die Menschheit hat, in gleicher Weise, wie sie die Begriffe ‚gut und schlecht' von dem Geschlechts-Adel...geerbt hat, mit der Erbschaft der Geschlechts- und Stammgottheiten auch die des Drucks von noch unbezahlten Schulden und des Verlangens nach Ablösung derselben hinzubekommen. . . Das Schuldgefühl gegen die Gottheit hat mehrere Jahrtausende nicht aufgehört zu wachsen, und zwar immerfort im gleichen Verhältnisse, wie der Gottesbegriff und das Gottesgefühl auf Erden gewachsen und in die Höhe getragen worden ist. . . Die Heraufkunft des christlichen Gottes, als des Maximal-Gottes, der bisher erreicht worden ist, hat deshalb auch das Maximum des Schuldgefühls auf Erden zur Erscheinung gebracht.[22]

He thus characterizes the Christian God as the height of the feeling of *Schuld* in human history, as he represents the "ultimate god" (*Maximal-Gott*). Nietzsche here equates the feeling of "guilt" developing with the idea of God, both developing in history concurrently. The word *Gottesbegriff* indicates Nietzsche's deep cynicism about God as being and again reiterates Feuerbach's irrevocable early influence on Nietzsche. Nietzsche seems to depict Christianity as the religion characteristic in the way in which it imposes "innate" guilt on human beings – human beings are

[22] Ibid., 345-346.

born with original sin, and this original sin presupposes the entire idea of Christianity. Earthly life in the Christian worldview indicates *automatic* debt owed to God.

Nietzsche here in the *Genealogie der Moral* rejects the idea of human deficiency on which Christianity thrives.[23] It had, according to Nietzsche, negatively shaped the cultures it influenced by denying its adherents the full embracing of their "powers" which were for so long bound up in the concept of God. Christianity functions as a target of Nietzsche's critique not only because it shaped his own spiritual development, but also largely because of its necessary relationship of guilty party to Jesus Christ as a prerequisite to salvation. Such indebtedness to a deity splinters the human's nature and detaches the inner spirituality from the physical body and displaces it. Christianity has even more dire effects on the psyche of human beings, an indebtedness which creditors originally expressed in the form of physical punishment, according to Nietzsche.[24] He explains that the primeval relationship between creditor and debtor allowed violence to occur to ensure that the debtor paid: "Namentlich aber konnte der Gläubiger dem Leibe des Schuldners alle Arten Schmach und Folter antun, zum Beispiel so viel davon herunterschneiden, als der Größe der Schuld angemessen schien."[25] This historical example presented by Nietzsche reinforces what Stephen Mulhall describes as the "sadomasochism of bad conscience" of Christ's relation to human beings. Nietzsche even attributes this primeval form of payment as the basis for the terms of Christianity: "In *dieser* Sphäre, im Obligationen-Rechte also, hat die moralische Begriffswelt 'Schuld', 'Gewissen', 'Pflicht', 'Heiligkeit der Pflicht' ihren Entstehungsherd – ihr Anfang ist, wie der Anfang alles Großen auf Erden, gründlich und lange mit Blut begossen worden."[26] Bernard

[23] This idea of human deficiency is not limited to Christianity, as all worldviews which posit the existence of a god or gods – in a Feuerbachian sense – relies on the presupposition that the god is greater than the human beings who serve it.
[24] Ibid., 315.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid., 316.

Reginster has interpreted Nietzsche's account of Christian guilt as an expression of the perversion of normal guilt – that according to Nietzsche, "the Christian representation of guilt is not an account of the ordinary feeing of guilt…but a perversion of it, which results from its exploitation as an instrument of self-directed cruelty."[27]

Considering such antipathy toward Christianity, it seems unlikely that Nietzsche would have been able to build a new religious feeling or religious idea into his philosophy of the future. I hold that Nietzsche's philosophy contains fundamentally *metaphysical* – perhaps not yet fully religious – elements in its affirming answer to nihilism, which features Nietzsche's vision of a post-Christian future and the development of the *Übermensch.* On the one hand, it is thoroughly reductionist to limit Nietzsche solely to arguments against all religion, as Nietzsche in some passages even lauds its effects. In *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886), for example, Nietzsche writes: "Für die Starken, Unabhängigen, zum Befehlen Vorbereiteten und Vorbestimmten, in denen die Vernunft und Kunst einer regierenden Rasse leibhaft wird, ist Religion ein Mittel mehr, um Widerstände zu überwinden, um herrschen zu können."[28] Of course, this view of religion fit into Nietzsche's aristocratic, almost Darwinian view of human life (especially as he had already stated that life is the will to power[29]). Nietzsche goes on to write:

> Asketismus und Puritanismus sind fast unentbehrliche Erziehungs- und Veredelungsmittel, wenn eine Rasse über ihre Herkunft aus dem Pöbel Herr werden will und sich zur einstmaligen Herrschaft emporarbeitet. Den gewöhnlichen Menschen endlich, den

[27] Bernard Reginster, "The genealogy of guilt" in *Nietzsche's* On the Genealogy of Morality: *A Critical Guide* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011), 57.
[28] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse: Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft* in *Nietzsches Werke: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe. Electronic Edition*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Charlottesville, VA: InteLex, 1995), VI-2: 77.
[29] Ibid., 21.

> Allermeisten, welche zum Dienen und zum allgemeinen Nutzen dasind und nur insofern dasein *dürfen*, giebt die Religion eine unschätzbare Genügsamkeit mit ihrer Lage und Art, vielfachen Frieden des Herzens, eine Veredlung des Gehorsams, ein Glück und Leid mehr mit Ihres-Gleichen und Etwas von Verklärung und Verschönerung, Etwas von Rechtfertigung des ganzen Alltags, der ganzen Niedrigkeit, der ganzen Halbthier-Armuth ihrer Seele. Religion und religiöse Bedeutsamkeit des Lebens legt Sonnenglanz auf solche immer geplagte Menschen und macht ihnen selbst den eigenen Anblick erträglich. . . Vielleicht ist am Christenthum und Buddhismus nichts so ehrwürdig als ihre Kunst, noch den Niedrigsten anzulehren, sich durch Frömmigkeit in eine höhere Schein-Ordnung der Dinge zu stellen und damit das Genügen an der wirklichen Ordnung, innerhalb deren sie hart genug leben, – und gerade diese Härte thut Noth! – bei sich festzuhalten.[30]

Although Nietzsche here retains a somewhat supercilious tone concerning religious adherents, he nonetheless praises religion for providing the common people meaning for their everyday lives. This view of religion, however, is not religion *proper*, but rather a somewhat self-serving view of religion which eliminates the purpose of worshiping a god. Although asceticism and Puritanism may bring a certain "race" out of the depths of the rabble, each system of thought causes its adherents to deny their bodies and the Earth as any sources of meaning. It is primarily by *negating* the Earth and the body and projecting all energies onto an otherworldly realm – an "afterlife" – that ascetics find meaning.

Although ascetics are typically associated with a specific religious tradition, Nietzsche rejects all asceticism as another form of splintering human nature. Nietzsche identified the problem

[30] Ibid., 78-79.

of modern human self-perception as human beings displacing life, and the latent religious aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy may be found in the spiritual *void* he describes in several of his works. The fledgling form of this void appears as early as *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, in which he asserts that a Greek tragic culture must replace the void of spirituality created by the human quest for knowledge through science. Arguably the most famous iteration of this idea is Nietzsche's *God is dead* assertion. Nietzsche writes in *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* in the aphorism entitled "Neue Kämpfe": "Nachdem Buddha todt war, zeigte man noch Jahrhunderte lang seinen Schatten in einer Höhle, — einen ungeheuren schauerlichen Schatten. Gott ist todt: aber so wie die Art der Menschen ist, wird es vielleicht noch Jahrtausende lang Höhlen geben, in denen man seinen Schatten zeigt. — Und wir — wir müssen auch noch seinen Schatten besiegen!"[31]

He then writes: "Gott ist todt! Gott bleibt todt! Und wir haben ihn getödtet! Wie trösten wir uns, die Mörder aller Mörder? Das Heiligste und Mächtigste, was die Welt bisher besass, es ist unter unseren Messern verblutet, — wer wischt diess Blut von uns ab? Mit welchem Wasser könnten wir uns reinigen? Welche Sühnfeiern, welche heiligen Spiele werden wir erfinden müssen? Ist nicht die Grösse dieser That zu gross für uns? Müssen wir nicht selber zu Göttern werden, um nur ihrer würdig zu erscheinen?"[32] Although Nietzsche's claim appears to be controversial, he asserts that God is no longer a reliable source of meaning or value for human beings, but that the effects of God may last for centuries after his death. Numerous pop versions of Nietzsche's claim abound which erroneously perpetuate the idea that "God is dead" must be understood to mean "God does not exist and never did exist." A recent popular example is Harold Cronk's 2014 Christian drama *God's Not Dead* – the title a play on Nietzsche's infamous

[31] Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 143.
[32] Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 159.

announcement[33] – perpetuates the idea that Nietzsche was solely a villainous atheist, as it depicts a philosophy professor – an atheist – who challenges a college student's Christian faith. The de-politicized Nietzsche, however, was grappling with the void of godlessness in Western culture and the spiritual void it would leave once this void left human beings on their own to create values for themselves.

Nietzsche's belief that human beings must fill the void and escape the shadow left by God is a belief colored by the supersensual idea of a type of ontology, that is, a way in which humans explain and justify their existence. This new Nietzschean "ontology," however, fills the void left by God in an anti-egalitarian way, although "ontology" may be too strong and systematic of a term to apply to how Nietzsche perceived his philosophical task. I believe that Nietzsche's view of new "religions," if it owes anything to Luther and the Reformation, relies on the gradual dismantling of traditional unified and exclusive versions of religious doctrine, which the Catholic Church exhibited in Luther's Germany and which in Nietzsche's life manifested itself most physically in the later Christian-based works of Richard Wagner.[34] Didier Franck states that "the death of God is henceforth the impossibility of a new god; it is the now finished past of any god to come, and to think, as Heidegger did, that only 'one' god could save us now is, at the very least, as much to misunderstand the meaning of God as it is that of his death."[35] I disagree with Franck in the sense that one may interpret the death of God as "the impossibility of a new god," as theorists such as Steven Aschheim, in his essay "After the Death of God: Varieties of Nietzschean Religion," have examined the tendency post-Nietzsche to glorify his philosophical texts into religion. Franck

[33] The film is based on the book *God's Not Dead: Evidence for God in an Age of Uncertainty* (2013) by Rice Broocks, and its theatrical poster depicts a man grafting the word *NOT* onto a graffiti version of the phrase *GOD'S DEAD*.
[34] See, for example, Wagner's *Parsifal* (1882) and Nietzsche's essay "Nietzsche contra Wagner."
[35] Didier Franck, *Nietzsche and the Shadow of God*, trans. Bettina Bergo and Philippe Farah (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2012), 66.

fittingly asserts that "the death of the Christian god [according to Nietzsche] means the collapse of our world, which for two millennia never ceased revolving around him."[36] Lawrence J. Hatab writes: "The Christian God – conceived as a unified, eternal, rational, benevolent creator – represented the metaphysical foundation of a stable origin and guarantee of truth that it had operated in all areas of Western intellectual culture, in morality, politics, philosophy, even science (consider philosophers such as Descartes, Bacon, Leibniz, Locke, Kant, and Hegel)."[37] Humans must thus develop in the wake of God's death to derive their own individual meaning out of life, which is a Nietzschean "doctrine" commonly referred to as *life affirmation.* Such life affirmation, however, need not be religious – in the sense of a collective movement – but it nonetheless suggests a meaning-seeking process taken on by those who strive for the *Übermensch*.

Franck points out how Martin Heidegger interpreted Nietzsche's statement that God is dead: "As an *ontology*, even Nietzsche's metaphysics is *at the same time* theology. . . Such metaphysical theology is of course a negative theology of a peculiar kind. Its negativity is revealed in the expression 'God is dead.' That is an expression not of atheism but of onto-theo-logy, in that metaphysics in which nihilism proper is fulfilled."[38] Heidegger therefore interprets Nietzsche's assertion of the death of God as the fulfillment of nihilism, and for Heidegger nihilism cannot be represented as a form of atheistic expression. Although Nietzsche's writings present a somewhat complicated relationship to nihilism, Nietzsche ultimately considers a nihilistic outlook as particularly disastrous for human beings. Nietzsche expressed this in its earliest form in defending the Dionysian aspect of human life in *Die Geburt der Tragödie*, describing how the Apollonian

[36] Ibid.
[37] Lawrence J. Hatab, "Apollo and Dionysus: Nietzschean Expressions of the Sacred," in *Nietzsche and the Gods*, 45.
[38] Martin Heidegger, "Nihilism and History of Being" in *Nietzsche*, vol. IV, pt. 2, p. 210, quoted in Didier Franck, *Nietzsche and the Shadow of God*, trans. Bettina Bergo and Philippe Farah (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2012), 27.

drive had led humanity too far in the direction of scientific inquiry and devalued art as the way to interpret the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. Nietzsche's philosophy of the future hinges largely upon the previous place filled that Christianity occupied in the European psyche, as this is later reflected in the *death of God*; Nietzsche expresses this philosophy of the future only in post-Christian terms, and such hinging on Christianity echoes Paul Tillich's assertion of the spiritual place it has held in the Western spiritual and religious thought.

Here the somewhat complicated difference between atheism and nihilism must be noted. It is a reductionist argument to assert that atheism can be equated with nihilism, in that they both involve rejecting popular human sources of meaning within a specific cultural context, and Nietzsche primarily grappled with nihilism, the complete rejection of any meaning to human life. Considering that Nietzsche in the end places himself and his vision of the future against existential nihilism, it is unlikely that Nietzsche's version of atheism is completely devoid of any residual metaphysical elements, although such elements may not at all be *religious* in content or style. In other words, the atheism Nietzsche expounds in his texts is not nihilistic; that is, it does not assert that life is without meaning. Again, I hold this rejection of nihilism as a fundamentally metaphysically driven feeling, because it requires that human beings assign meaning to life through a particular narrative, and Nietzsche establishes this narrative through the *Übermensch*. In my opinion, the primarily religious framework within Nietzsche worked consisted of the eventual transferring of the religious, metaphysical, and heavenly down to the realm of human beings – echoed by the beginning of his *Zarathustra*, as Zarathustra descends to the people – since, according to Nietzsche and many of his predecessors, religion is the displacing of the human spirit or "alienation." Nietzsche's primarily "religious" task was to re-consolidate the metaphysical capabilities of human contemplation and the Western psyche.

It was possible, however, for Nietzsche to construct a kind of pseudo-religious outlook which also asserted the sufficiency of human beings. A particularly stylistically "religious" text written by Nietzsche was arguably his *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für alle und keinen* (1883). The manifest quality of Nietzsche's writing rests partially upon a Christian rhetorical tradition: Nietzsche fashioned the text in the language of Luther's translation of the Christian Bible, and Nietzsche intentionally published his work in verses to match such a biblical style. One may also view this as Nietzsche constructing a sarcastic homage to the power inherent in the rhetoric of the Christian New Testament and the style of the written sermons of Jesus Christ. In Zarathustra's prologue, Zarathustra sets the tone for his mission among the human beings to whom he is descending the mountain to "preach" (ironically, considering that his first encounter on the mountainside results in Zarathustra's shock than an elderly religious man has not yet realized that God is dead[39]). Zarathustra states in his last spoken verse in the first chapter of the prologue: "Siehe! Dieser Becher will wieder leer werden, und Zarathustra will wieder Mensch werden."[40] This "wieder Mensch werden" is curious in the context of alienation, in that Zarathustra, a "religious" mystic, must reconnect with his human nature in order to teach humanity below him; he must "go down" or "set" (*untergehen*) just as the sun does at the end of each day.

Zarathustra, descending from his mountain as *anti*-preacher, describes humans as a bridge: "Was gross ist am Menschen, das ist, dass er eine Brücke und kein Zweck ist: was geliebt werden kann am Menschen, das ist, dass er ein *Uebergang* und ein *Untergang* ist [emphasis in original]."[41] Nietzsche – or rather, Zarathustra – takes the Darwinian evolutionary rhetoric of the 19th century

[39] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen* in *Nietzsches Werke: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe. Electronic Edition*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Charlottesville, VA: InteLex, 1995), VI-1: 8.
[40] Ibid., 6.
[41] Ibid., 10-11.

and creates thereby a heightened form of spiritual rhetoric. Such a rhetoric of ascending from low to high as a natural process appears concretely as Zarathustra transitions from the heights of the mountains to the people below to spread his message of the *Übermensch*. Furthermore, Nietzsche's Zarathustra takes on a particularly pessimistic perspective of the prevailing contemporary view (Zarathustra's contemporaries) of human nature. The underlying Nietzschean idea of the affirmation of life props up Zarathustra as he criticizes the opponents of life in his speech "Von den Predigern des Todes." Zarathustra here disparages the way in which the "preachers of death" displace the spiritual powers of humans, almost viewing life as somewhat of a gift to be cherished by those living it. Zarathustra's residual tone is, in my opinion, optimistic, although the language he employs simultaneously suggests a deep cynicism. His tone is optimistic in that he recognizes the underlying value of those to whom he speaks and takes a stance against what can only be deemed a *suicidal* outlook on life: the greatest problem Zarathustra finds in the preachers of death is their insistence on disparaging human life.

Zarathustra describes these preachers of death in the following way: "Sie sind noch nicht einmal Menschen geworden, diese Fürchterlichen: mögen sie Abkehr predigen vom Leben und selber dahinfahren! / Da sind die Schwindsüchtigen der Seele: kaum sind sie geboren, so fangen sie schon an zu sterben und sehnen sich nach Lehren der Müdigkeit und Entsagung."[42] The view of humans as naturally deficient latently informs in these preachers' doctrines. Zarathustra slyly never directly engages with one religious tradition (perhaps to retain the mythical tone of the text), only mentioning Jesus of Nazareth once – calling him "der Hebräer Jesus."[43] One may view Zarathustra's endorsement of the affirmation of life as Nietzsche's literary response to Western

[42] Ibid., 51.
[43] Ibid., 91.

doctrines of deficiency. The Christian doctrine of original sin, for example, emphasizes above all the *birth* of a human being as the beginning of a sin – a debt – to God. Birth as simultaneously the beginning of life and the beginning of sin thus present a paradox to Nietzsche's Zarathustra: The preaching of death – this inherently suicidal purpose of life – casts human life in the ultimate pessimistic light, and death as a goal displaces those opportunities to discover meaning in life. Zarathustra pronounces the goal of these preachers as *Abkehr* ("renunciation," "turning away"), and in doing this, he touches on the feelings of resignation to life in the preachers' doctrine of "Abkehr vom Leben," but also announces their ironic death due to the very same destructive perspective on life.

Nietzsche describes the doctrine of the denial of life – which is essential to the framework of the existing world religions – as "Abkehr vom Leben," a foretaste of the way in which he later criticizes asceticism in his *Genealogie der Moral*. Reginster characterizes Nietzsche's view on this "withdrawal" from life and ascetic outlook which Zarathustra addresses: "Just as cruelty was seeking the suffering of others not as a means but an end in itself, asceticism is seeking one's own suffering not as means but as an end in itself. There is nothing paradoxical in depriving oneself of something as a means to get to something else; but there is something 'paradoxical to the highest degree' in depriving oneself for the sake of deprivation."[44] Nietzsche later states that the driving force behind asceticism is due to the fact that ascetics actually recognize a great force within themselves which they must overcome: their will to power drives their asceticism, but to no discernible end. Paul S. Loeb draws a connection between Zarathustra's speech on the preachers of death and the earlier speech entitled "Von den Taranteln": "Thus, according to Zarathustra, it is because the will feels impotent against time and the past that it aims to increase its feeling of power

[44] Reginster, 146.

by making others suffer as it does. In particular, Zarathustra says, the will takes revenge upon all that can suffer. . . In this way, Zarathustra reiterates the psychological lesson of his earlier 'Tarantulas' speech – namely, that what is impotent secretly plots revenge against everything that has power."[45]

Conway has also explored a second notable homage-parody in Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, that of a Socratic dialogue – most particularly, Plato's *Republic*. Conway not only draws comparisons between Plato's Socrates in *The Republic* and Nietzsche's Zarathustra but also points out Nietzsche's characterization of Socratic morality as "improvement-morality" [*Besserungs-Moral*].[46] In this improvement-morality there is an intrinsic hierarchy of the speaker (in Nietzsche's case, Zarathusta) above the "auditors." Conway compares Zarathustra's descent to the people to the *katabasis* of the Socratic philosopher: in both cases the speakers intend to raise those listening to a higher morality. Conway writes: "According to Nietzsche, the *absurdum practicum* of the Socratic *katabasis* is actually endemic to the Socratic moral tradition as a whole, which, because it presupposes the deficiency of human nature, he calls the improvement-morality."[47] Although Christianity may seem to fit the criteria of such a morality, Nietzsche's thoughts in the *Genealogie der Moral* would later prove otherwise, due to the figure of the ascetic priest. The ascetic priest, to reproduce the hierarchy of speaker and auditor, necessarily perpetuates the perceived deficiency of his followers.

He later writes that "Socrates' campaign to improve mankind failed, as must all incarnations of the improvement-morality, because his commitment to the inherent deficiency of

[45] Paul S. Loeb, *The Death of Nietzsche's Zarathustra* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010), 176.
[46] Conway, 263.
[47] Ibid.

human nature is incompatible with any genuine enhancement of mankind's political situation."[48] Conway here touches upon a method of address inherently Nietzschean, which again shows the aristocratic hue of Nietzsche's thought. In Nietzsche's Zarathustra, he discovers the frustration and the dilemma of the Socratic philosopher. He writes that "although Zarathustra officially promotes the sufficiency of his auditors, he does so in such a way that implies their deficiency. Hence, whereas Zarathustra's *discourse* ostensibly challenges the Socratic improvement-morality, his actual *practices* in the world reinforce it instead."[49] Conway points out a great irony in Zarathustra – one that plagues the "elevated" Socratic philosophers who assert human sufficiency against doctrines of deficiency. He points out that Nietzsche is able to "enlist Zarathustra as both protagonist and foil."[50] This is partially the lot of Nietzsche himself as philosopher in asserting human sufficiency. Although attempting to moralize his "auditors," Nietzsche does not sway from his aristocratic view of the attainment of a higher morality and higher moral purpose. In other words, the Socratic philosopher must convince his auditors of what exists outside the "cave" in order to help them out of the cave; in this form of address, the philosopher must recognize the auditor's deficiency. "Socrates' philosophers are consequently obliged to inhabit the cave, despite their official contention that the cave represents a deficient way of life."[51] Nevertheless, there is a significant break with moralizing philosophers and those writing in the field of ethics preceding Nietzsche. For Nietzsche, the form of address to his readers does not presuppose that the speaker considers his auditors to possess a deficient human nature. Nietzsche as speaker instead addresses the real, historical institutions which have solidified and internalized the doctrines of human deficiency in the West, in particular Christianity. According to Zarathustra, it is in the "preachers

[48] Ibid., 264.
[49] Ibid., 266.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 263.

of death" where his auditors take refuge, in that they continue to displace themselves in the experience of death, which the "preachers of death" reiterate as the purpose of life. I hold that there is *less* irony in the fact that Nietzsche considers the power of such religious institutions (such as Christianity) to have a stranglehold on the psyche of human beings.

Moving from the biblical and Socratic tones which Nietzsche possessed and employed in his framing of Zarathustra, the way in which Nietzsche's interpreters reacted to his philosophy sheds much light on the uses of a religious framework which perhaps left somewhat free rein. The Christian theologians in Germany after Nietzsche's death were primarily Protestants, and as Steven Aschheim mentions, the fact that Protestants attempted to incorporate Nietzsche into their theologies owes much to the Reformation and what it was by definition: all Protestant denominations essentially break from the Catholic Church by absorbing external intellectual and religious elements to form an ultimately decentralized body of religious knowledge. Aschheim notes how the German writer Ernst Bertram described Nietzsche as "the last and quintessential expression of Protestantism."[52] Aschheim writes further that "Protestantism, itself the product of a break with a powerful normative tradition, had always been especially receptive to external, modern influences."[53] Historically, the distinguishing feature of all "protests" in the Protestant sense was the dismantling of a religious apparatus. However, here Aschheim points out how particular Protestant theologians wished to absorb and incorporate Nietzschean elements into traditional German Protestantism, rather than to dismantle Protestantism itself.[54]

[52] Steven Aschheim, "After the Death of God: Varieties of Nietzschean Religion" in *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 211.
[53] Ibid., 204.
[54] Ibid., 202.

A gendered approach to the attempt to incorporate Nietzsche's philosophy into Protestant Christianity echoed in the move from what was deemed an "effeminate" to a more "masculine" Christianity, which only the ideas of Nietzsche could foster. Among the theologians Aschheim mentions, the German theologian Hans Gallwitz attempted, above all, to reframe Christianity and "rediscover" the original Christianity, which was based on a morality which predated the slave revolt in morality (to use Nietzsche's terminology). Ironically, Aschheim also mentions how the Catholic Church interpreted the Protestant appropriation of Nietzsche as a sign of weakness within the German Protestant church, mainly due to the Protestants' lack of centralized religious authority.[55] Aschheim also ascribes the rising nationalism in Europe to the need to express Christianity in Nietzschean terms of *warrior values* and the *Übermensch*. Within the context of doctrines which reiterate the supposed deficiency of human beings by birth, Aschheim's article has an undertone which suggests that several German theologians subtly exploited the philosophy of Nietzsche. The characteristic feature of this appropriation by Protestants fits into a complicated portion of European history – the turn of the century, when European nationalism was not only a growing phenomenon before the First World War, but also served as a tool for opportunists to gain mass support for religious and political movements. In many ways, several Protestant churches utilized the image of Friedrich Nietzsche to conform their doctrines into a relatively esteemed view of human beings as opposed to how traditional Christian doctrines consider humans – inadequate and sinful.

A revealing commentator of early 20th century on Nietzsche in the context of human sufficiency arguments, as Aschheim describes, was Paul Schulze-Berghof. Working within a field of German mysticism, Schulze-Berghof grouped Nietzsche as "mystic" with previous German

[55] Ibid., 205.

mystics including Meister Eckhart and Jakob Böhme. Aschheim describes how Schulze-Berghof considered Meister Eckhart to have "located divine creativity in humanity,"[56] which suggests a rather religious characteristic of human nature in the view of Eckhart. The idea of "divine creativity" fit in well with the clean philosophical slate which Nietzsche's texts suggested after criticizing Christianity as an institution. This "action" to create and have an effect against nihilistic worldviews, although individualistic and aristocratic for Nietzsche, was necessarily for human beings following Nietzsche's legacy to interpret the world outside of a Christian outlook and, ultimately, to affirm their sufficiency. Aschheim writes: "German Christian mysticism, Schulze-Berghof wrote, unlike biblical religion, recognized that human powers constituted the basis of redemption."[57] Human powers must lead to "redemption" – a religious concept which Nietzsche perhaps would have expressed in terms of *debt* and *exchange*. Aschheim also writes: "Nietzsche had to be understood as the apotheosis of this tradition. His ideal of the *Übermensch* was an expression of this emphasis on the godly humanity."[58] Here the theme of consolidating the otherworldly with the worldly comes into play – the reconciliation of the estranged nature of humans with the bodies of the humans themselves.

Considering Nietzsche's vehemence toward the religions of his day (especially Christianity), it is nevertheless possible to build a Nietzschean religion which still retains a religious framework and simultaneously works again the doctrines of deficiency purported by the world's major religions. Aschheim points out many of the self-serving theologians and social activists who utilized Nietzsche's ideas for political gain on all points of the political spectrum. As with the theory of religious alienation, Nietzsche desired that future humans would reconnect the

[56] Ibid., 211.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

splintered self with the body and that the "preachers of death" would be eradicated to leave room for those who would affirm life. Nevertheless, Nietzsche never advocated any one faith or path to a new type of redemption, although the message inherent in his philosophical works left a legacy that Protestant theologians interpreted and molded into a 20th-century type of self-affirmation. Nietzsche's insights, particularly the way he describes religious sin as "debt," present religion in purely economic, pre-Christian terms. If there be any limitation to the creation of a Nietzschean religion, it is that the earliest interpreters of Nietzsche in the early 20th century were caught up on the religious atmosphere and language used by Nietzsche, although there existed no set guidelines – outside the *Übermensch* – to take humanity higher than face value.

IV. Karl Marx

The later Marx writing *Das Kapital* approached the issue of doctrines of human deficiency by describing the ways in which the idea of alienation (*Entfremdung*) plays a role in human relationships under capitalism, describing how the conditions of 19th-century capitalism transformed the laborer into the cog of a machine. Although primarily known for analyzing and criticizing the dehumanizing mechanisms of capitalism, Marx's later theory of alienation owed its philosophical basis to the preconditions in which the younger Marx developed, particularly revolving around the intellectual circle between Berlin and Tübingen. Feuerbach's theory of religious alienation provided the framework by which Marx developed his own theory, and he followed – and ultimately commented on – the German debate on and investigation into the nature of God. Although living outside of the German-speaking lands for over half of his life, Marx's theories irrevocably exhibit the influences of the German philosophical milieu in which he developed as a student. Contrary to Nietzsche, Marx engaged with religion *per se* and not specifically Christianity, whereas Nietzsche displayed specific affinities for aspects of Christianity and, specifically in *Der Antichrist*, Buddhism. Marx and his contemporaries considered the critique of religion as the key to discovering all existing forms of alienation in human society. Marx states quite straightforwardly in the *Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie*: "Die Kritik der Religion ist die Voraussetzung aller Kritik."[59]

By the time Nietzsche had published *Die Geburt der Tragödie* in 1871, Marx had already been living for over twenty years as a revolutionary socialist and writer in exile in London. The young Marx had transferred his studies from Bonn to the University of Berlin, where Hegel's

[59] Marx, "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie," 378.

philosophical theories and the whole of German Idealism cast a shadow over the university's intellectual environment. In the wake of Hegel's presence at the university, the young Marx became involved with the group known as the Young or "Left" Hegelians, who adhered to the views of Feuerbach and Bruno Bauer, both former students of Hegel. The Young Hegelians, although taking on Hegel's name, took primarily a radically Leftist view of his dialectical method, as they perceived his political attitudes toward the contemporary Prussian state as too conservative. The young Marx found Feuerbach to be a profound influence through his theory of alienation presented in *Das Wesen des Christenthums*, through which Marx appropriated said theory and applied it to his early sociological thought on religion.

Perhaps the seminal English text on the environment of religious criticism in Germany is Robert Tucker's *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx* (1961). Tucker traces the influence on Marx to the way in which Hegel analyzed the relationship between humans and God and argues how Hegel's Idealist outlook provided the framework for the philosophy of the Young Hegelians and, eventually, for the Marxist hybrid model of history, dialectical materialism. It is vital to examine the development of the religious overtones in Marx through Tucker's characterization of the Young Hegelian goal of humans to realize themselves as "godlike" beings to properly assess the basis on which Marxist pseudo-religious ideas were constructed. This form of pseudo-religious rhetoric does not, on the concrete level, eliminate the words "God" or "godlike" from the rhetoric, and on the abstract level, does not deny the power of such a concept in rhetorical representations of the Young Hegelians' views. Whether intentional or not, the majority of the German rhetoric on religion at the time existed in relation to the Christian framework out of which it originated, whether for this framework, borrowing from it, or against it. Tucker describes the varying contemporary German viewpoints on human beings' relationship to God and how such viewpoints

radically changed the Young Hegelians' view of human nature. Because Hegel described human beings as God alienated, Tucker argues that the agenda of the Young Hegelians was – as precursors to Marx's own method – to invert Hegel's theory and suggest instead that God expresses the self-alienation of human beings.[60] Tucker writes: "The movement of thought from Kant to Hegel revolved in a fundamental sense around the idea of man's self-realization as a godlike being or, alternatively, as God. . . It is hardly surprising that out of such a revolution of religion there issued, among other things, a religion of revolution."[61] The idea of "God," which was at this point no longer a Christian deity in the eyes of the Young Hegelians, had never left their philosophical framework; it had merely taken an alternative form. Although Bauer and Feuerbach were professed atheists, they nonetheless held to the *category* of God and that it fully embodies human alienation.

This "being godlike," however, did not reflect the way in which the Young Hegelians could follow a particular Christian doctrine but rather how human beings would be able to recombine their splintered nature. Thornhill writes that Hegel's philosophy of religion and its connection with human freedom "gave a foundation on which the Young Hegelians were able to construe religious concepts as moments in a course of human formation and self-liberation, to convert religious narratives into signifiers of reason's own freedom and, most importantly, to divert religious and political thinking away from monadically substantial or pure-metaphysical accounts of truth as divine essence or personality."[62] By converting religious narratives into plausible paths to human freedom (*menschliche Emanzipation*), the Young Hegelians did not omit the category of the "religious" altogether but utilized its inherently emotional power in their rhetoric. Rolf Hosfeld

[60] Robert Tucker, *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1972), 85.
[61] Ibid., 31.
[62] Chris Thornhill, "The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx" in *German Political Philosophy: The Metaphysics of Law* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 162.

writes that "Marx would never escape from the influence exerted by this intellectual concept of an inverted theology. For him, capital in the modern economic process would remain a general, self-created demiurge that confronts and rules over the person as an alien force. It was a grandiose vision of a world without gods, in which the person was the true source of every society, all politics, the world of ideas, and history."[63] The "inverted" theology nevertheless remains a theology, a way in which human beings could realize themselves in the future, and, ultimately, act as their own gods; therefore, Marx's vision was necessarily a "world without gods," since the young Marx and the Young Hegelians did not reject the power of the god-concept. Their vision simply provided that the qualities of the gods be transferred back to their source – humans. In retrospect, Marx and the Young Hegelians acknowledged Hegel's vision of God as the tool of humans' self-realization and inverted the relationship to place human beings at the center of historical processes. The rhetoric of "being godlike" as described by Tucker, played a vital role in the "selling" of Young Hegelian ideas which criticized religion *per se*.

The concept of combining the displaced elements of human nature with the physical, material lives of human beings takes a manifest form in the works of Marx. One may visualize such a transfer in terms of "pulling" or "dragging down" the religious elements of humans to the Earth.[64] Marx writes in his *Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie*: "Es ist zunächst die *Aufgabe der Philosophie*, die im Dienste der Geschichte steht, nachdem die *Heiligengestalt* der menschlichen Selbstentfremdung entlarvt ist, die Selbstentfremdung in ihren *unheiligen Gestalten* zu entlarven. Die Kritik des Himmels verwandelt sich damit in die Kritik der Erde, die *Kritik der Religion* in die *Kritik des Rechts*, die *Kritik der Theologie* in die *Kritik der Politik*

[63] Rolf Hosfeld, *Karl Marx: An Intellectual Biography* (New York: Berghahn, 2013), 10.
[64] *Himmel* in German means both *sky* and *heaven*.

[emphasis in original]."[65] In the same year (1843), Marx wrote the following words in his formal response to Bruno Bauer, *Zur Judenfrage*: "Wir verwandeln nicht die weltlichen Fragen in theologische. Wir verwandeln die theologischen Fragen in weltliche. Nachdem die Geschichte lange genug in Aberglauben aufgelöst worden ist, lösen wir den Aberglauben in Geschichte auf."[66]

Again, the idea of being godlike reappears in Marx's assertion that superstition becomes history, in contrast to its inverted historical example. Marx, in contrast to the more static metaphysical interpretations of preceding philosophers, viewed the intellectual task of his day with a hue of social justice: the task of philosophy ought to serve humans by encouraging the criticism of earthly categories. He continues this rhetoric: "Selbst historisch hat die theoretische Emanzipation eine spezifisch praktische Bedeutung für Deutschland. Deutschlands r*evolutionäre* Vergangenheit ist nämlich theoretisch, es ist die *Reformation*. Wie damals der *Mönch*, so ist es jetzt der *Philosoph*, in dessen Hirn die Revolution beginnt [emphasis in original]."[67] Inherent in this statement is Marx's belief that the philosopher as the new "monk" – the new Luther – must begin a revolution in order to assert the sufficiency of human beings. Whether or not cynically stated by Marx in his criticism of Hegel, the former schema of displaced human nature – heaven, religion, theology – was now left for philosophers to interpret in terms closer to the realm of true human activity – earth, law, politics. In any case, Marx as theorist and heir of the Young Hegelians never altogether eliminates or ignores the "religious" and the history of its discourse as a tool for his own further discourse.

Although Marx was an unwavering materialist and ultimately took a scientific approach to the study of society, there is a latent metaphysical content in Marx's own brand of the theory of

[65] Marx, "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie," 379.
[66] Karl Marx, *Zur Judenfrage* in *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels: Werke* (Berlin: Dietz, 1974), 352.
[67] Marx, "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie," 385.

alienation and in the ethical solution to such alienation, as he views the reconstituted *Gattungswesen* only as a step on the path of human self-realization. By asserting the devalued *Gattungswesen*, Marx's philosophical outlook presupposes some sort of change – social, material, or both. The "metaphysical" dimension of Marx's theory is contained in the move from the "is" to the "ought to be," and in this "ought to be" lies the intent of changing the way human beings view themselves beginning in capitalism. Following this intent logically, the tone of Marxist rhetoric throughout the 19th century (and still today) is driven by the underlying task to redeem those most disadvantaged by the economic conditions in which they live. The idea of *Gattungswesen* (translated both as "species-being" and "species-essence") implies not only a scientific aspect of Marx's thinking on human nature but also an assumption of human nature *per se*: it assumes a collective, communal nature of human beings, as opposed to the image of the individual, "self-made man" in societies characterized by capitalism. In any case, the *Gattungswesen* according to Marx has a collective quality not present in Feuerbach. Marx writes in his *Thesen über Feuerbach*: "Feuerbach löst das religiöse Wesen in das menschliche Wesen auf. Aber das menschliche Wesen ist kein, dem einzelnen Individuum innewohnendes Abstraktum. In seiner Wirklichkeit ist es das Ensemble der gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse."[68] Marx corrects Feuerbach's theory in his *Theses* pre-dating Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory and insists on a social (*gesellschaftlich* – characterized by *society*) human nature. The word *Gattung* is also curiously biological, although in this thesis, Marx essentially breaks with any Enlightenment theory of individual agency or natural state of freedom. The belief that human beings should embrace their *Gattungswesen* suggests a unifying, collective type of human nature, not a nature limited to each individual.

[68] Karl Marx, "Thesen über Feuerbach" in *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels: Werke.* (Berlin: Dietz, 1973), 3: 6.

Marx elaborates a critique of the idea of human deficiency in his 1843 response to the Jewish question by analyzing how the Enlightenment-influenced movement of history transformed European nations into civil societies and the "splitting" or splintering of the individual's place within the group. The concept of "deficiency" implies a lack, and in this context, many Marxist theorists after Marx, specifically Louis Althusser, have commonly interpreted such a lack as a tool by which those in power had reinforced *relations of exploitation* in historical societies.[69] One may interpret Europe's split into a secularized, civil society – in the Marxian context – as an example of the way in which the newest alienating institution, civil society, could even alienate religious institutions themselves. Again calling upon the concept of *Gattungswesen*, Marx describes how the Enlightenment and political emancipation of the 18th century changed even *religion* as an institution of identification for humans: "[Die Religion] ist nicht mehr der Geist des Staats, wo der Mensch - wenn auch in beschränkter Weise, unter besonderer Form und in einer besondern Sphäre - sich als Gattungswesen verhält, in Gemeinschaft mit andern Menschen, sie ist zum Geist der *bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* geworden, der Sphäre des Egoismus. . . Sie ist nicht mehr das Wesen der *Gemeinschaft*, sondern das Wesen des *Unterschieds*. Sie ist zum Ausdruck der *Trennung* des Menschen von seinem *Gemeinwesen*, von sich und den andern Menschen geworden - was sie ursprünglich war [emphasis in original]."[70] Once again, the splintering of a constructed, previously unified form of human identification underlies the text as the standard by which one should have judged Marx's contemporary society. Marx describes a civil society as trivializing religion into a

[69] For instance, Althusser in his 1970 essay "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" suggests that apparatuses of state power reinforce the ideology of capitalism by keeping the laborer in a state of wage slavery and reducing the laborer to a mechanism of a social exploitation machine.
[70] Marx, *Zur Judenfrage*, 356.

mere source of identity for disparate peoples, similar to the situation in North America (as Marx described it).[71]

Artemy Magun describes Marx's position in his response to the *Judenfrage*, analyzing how the modern secularized state affects religious individuals spiritually, according to Marx: "[Emancipation of religions from the state] is just a question of the liberty of man as an isolated monad, withdrawn into himself. Analogously, the separation of the state from religion leads, not to freedom from religion, but to freedom for (one's particular) religion. Thus, the 'human rights' sanctify the 'civil society' of atomized individuals who live their own particular life and are united at the top by the state, in an external way only."[72] The secular state influences religious individuals externally in that their inner *Gattungswesen*, which opposes what Magun describes as "isolated monads," is still divided and alienated from such religious adherents. As Marx states, *religion* was even an apparatus through which human beings identified with each other as social creatures, through their *Gemeinwesen*. In other words, although Marx recognized the *good intentions* of the Enlightenment concept of the separation of church and state, he nonetheless also acknowledged the impotence of such a doctrine, in that human beings do not emancipate themselves from religion *per se*; by separating state from church, religious institutions possess the opportunity to now become even more influential and relevant than before, as they are not bound by a religious monopoly of the state (e.g. state-endorsed Protestantism in 18th-century Prussia). Whether or not intentional, by asserting that religion in a civil society is a tool of differentiation instead of common heritage, Marx indirectly suggests not only that civil society has trivialized religion but also that

[71] Ibid.
[72] Artemy Mugan, "Karl Marx and Hannah Arendt on the Jewish question: political theology as a critique," *Continental Philosophy Review* 45 (2012): 551.

religion (or a form thereof) may be considered part of the schema of a reconstituted *Gattungswesen* or *Gemeinwesen* once a future material change in society occurred.

In the writings of Marx there is also a specific rhetoric of freedom – again, arguing for sufficiency – which differs from the "liberty" rhetoric of the Enlightenment, in that the new rhetoric advances the idea of political emancipation even further as far as *human* emancipation (a concept which was already present in Marx's thought by the time he wrote his response to the *Judenfrage*). Thornhill writes that Marx "argued that the critical analysis of alienation is a precondition of human freedom and self-realization, and that human freedom is obtained through a recuperation of the conditions allowing the elaboration of species-being. . . In contrast to the Young Hegelians, however, Marx clearly saw capitalism, not religion, as the source of human alienation, and he interpreted alienation as a primarily material, not spiritual, condition."[73] Marx's position requires a "recuperation," action as opposed to a static analysis of reality. Thornhill goes on to write: "In Marx's analysis, capitalism takes the place of metaphysics as the cause of human impoverishment. However, this does not mean that Marx did not see capitalism as obtaining metaphysical features or as possessing the nihilistic consequences originally imputed to metaphysics. On the contrary, his work might be seen to hinge on the intimation that the adequately modern critique of metaphysics must either be a critique of capitalism or it must resign itself to remain metaphysical."[74] Thornhill does not easily dismiss the foretaste of Marx's insight into the psychological effects of capitalism on the laborer, or on humanity in general.

However, that Marx "clearly" viewed capitalism as the ultimate source of alienation is debatable, for Marx considered religion and capitalism to differ in organization but be similar in

[73] Thornhill, 177.
[74] Ibid., 179.

their effects on the lowest socioeconomic group. Both institutions limit self-determination, reinforcing the inherent inadequacies of humans (in religion) and dehumanizing social conditions (in capitalism). Although capitalism remained Marx's final object of criticism after the publication of *Das Kapital*, I reiterate that this criticism owes much to the foundational criticism of religion in which Marx engaged as a student in Berlin.[75] The splintering of human nature occurred first and foremost, according the younger Marx, through religion – particularly since capitalism in Marx's time was a fairly recent phenomenon in the whole of recorded European history – and the analysis of this "splintering" and alienation emerged from a specifically German theological discourse. Marx later came to view religion as part of a greater economic superstructure, stating that the ruling ideas of any time period are always the ideas of the ruling class.[76] Tucker even admits that Marx played with the categories of religion and capitalism in his thought, writing that for Marx, capitalism "is that which he has always considered it to be: the theology of the worldly god. *Capital* treats of capitalism as a quasi-religious phenomenon."[77] Conversely, even Marx's own political theory and ethical project retained religious aspects in order to attract those most disenfranchised by the modern, (religious or capitalistic) splintering way of life.

Marx responded to the idea of human deficiency and attempted to reinstate human sufficiency using religious tones. Ola Sigurdson suggests that"…I would suggest that theology and Marxism have always shared an interest in what I would call hope: a mutual expectation, beyond mere wishful thinking, that something new is possible, a better society than the current alienated and social existence of humankind. Theology and Marxism are both expressions of human

[75] For a more deliberate Marxist elaboration of the relationship between capitalism and religion, see Walter Benjamin's fragment "Kapitalismus als Religion" (1921).
[76] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifest der kommunistischen Partei* in *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Werke. Band 4* (Berlin: Dietz, 1974), 480.
[77] Tucker, 203.

dissatisfaction with contemporary conditions."[78] Most of Marx's intellectual work was devoted to analyzing the mechanisms of capitalism, but there nonetheless appeared an ethical component to what came to be known as Marxism. Cyril Smith defines Marx's task as the following: "Marx's problem was to discover the possibility for humanity, individually and collectively, to take conscious charge of its own life, and to find this possibility within bourgeois society. Communism would mean that humans would cease to be prisoners of their social relations, and begin purposively to make their own history. In other words, we should cease to be mere objects and start to live as subjects."[79] Here it is necessary to point out that it is far too simplistic an interpretation to simply equate Marxism with a Christian or Judaic worldview, since Marxism in the political sense necessitates that religious institutions, as institutions which perpetuate alienation and exercise control through clerics, must no longer exist. Still, we know that as Marx viewed history, the processes of history would resolve in the future into a world of justice through the dialectic. Justice entails the resolution of conflict, and at the core of Marx's theory of class conflict, the contradictions within capitalism would resolve themselves into a classless society, in which no exploitation ever occurs.

> As early as 1954, Protestant writers John Dillenberger and Claude Welch passed the following judgment on Marx's theories:
>
> …the Marxist vision of a perfect society corresponded to (and had its roots in) the Christian hope for the kingdom of God on earth. In this respect particularly, Marxism has often been called a 'Christian heresy.' Like the idea of progress, the Marxist view of history as moving toward the final climax of judgment and fulfillment was ultimately derived from the

[78] Ola Sigurdson, *Theology and Marxism in Eagleton and Žižek: A Conspiracy of Hope* (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 5.
[79] Cyril Smith, "The Communist Manifesto after 150 Years" in *Karl Marx and the Future of the Human* (New York: Lexington, 2005), 33.

> Christian theology of history. In Marxism, this hope was stripped of its religious foundation, historical necessity was substituted for the will of God, and judgment and fulfillment were translated into economic terms. But even this version of the hope for the kingdom symbolized clarity in the recognition of social evil, confidence that the movement of history was toward the establishment of justice, and a prophetic denunciation of the idols of free enterprise.[80]

Dillenberger and Welch describe the eschatological aspects of Marxism from a Christian perspective, claiming that Marxism acted as a substitution for the promise of future justice assured by the Christian faith (theologically, by the Last Judgment). Dillenberger and Welch had a stake in arguing that Marx utilized a Christian framework, as both writers were theologians. However, by escalating their theological critique and reiterating Marxism as a "Christian heresy," they touch upon the latent optimism in Marx's theories. The view of history in *scientific* socialism, as opposed to utopian socialism, asserts that the processes of history will not only lead to the "end of history" but that they will also lead to an age of victory for the laborer.

There are countless theorist who have depicted Marx's view of the future as a type of secularized theology.[81] Roland Boer takes a stance against such theorists who, according to him, attempt to reduce Marx's theories to an eschatological framework. First, Boer describes the ambiguous collective German attitude concerning religion, as communist movements in Germany were not nearly as anti-religious as those in France and Anglophone nations.[82] He describes how the Bible became a tool of public debate on all topics, which sheds light on the fact that Bruno

[80] John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, *Protestant Christianity: Interpreted through Its Development* (New York: Scribner, 1945), 241.
[81] See, for example, John Boli, "Marxism as World Religion," *Social Problems*, 28 (1981): 510-513.
[82] Roland Boer, "Marxism and Eschatology Reconsidered," *Meditations*, 25 (2010): 43.

Bauer, for example, began his career as a professor of theology, albeit that he was a self-proclaimed atheist. Boer, in effect, argues that Marx and Engels did not intentionally or unintentionally appropriate a Christian eschatological framework for their theories, but rather that Moses Hess and other communists of their day convoluted Marx's theories into such. He also points out the particularly Christian nature of utopian socialism that emanated from France at the time of Marx's early criticism, particularly that of Saint-Simon.[83] Boer finally writes: "In fact, those who charge Marx and Engels with a secularized apocalyptic framework have the wrong target in their sights. The charge applies not to Marx and Engels, but to the likes of Moses Hess and other early communists to whom Marx and Engels were opposed."[84]

I propose, however, that Marx and Engels *did* unconsciously draw from a type of reformed eschatology, and I assert this within the framework of the action of re-consolidating the contents of "heaven" and "earth" (*Himmel*/*Erde*). Anna Glazova and Paul North write:

> When Marx reformulated human history as the progress of productive forces, he denied even the theological cliché to which Feuerbach had still been committed, the transcendental subject. Human beings are not the subjects of but subjected to history; their fate is decided by the productive forces that develop through them but nonetheless also, until the revolution at least, stand largely outside their control. This idea makes Marx's model of history appear at times more rather than less messianic; class society lives toward an event in the history of productive forces that it cannot foresee. At most moments Marx believed this event to be the proletarian revolution and its driving force the class with nothing to lose – i.e., the one free of possessions. In some respects this class can seem like Marx's

[83] Ibid., 52.
[84] Ibid.

> messiah, the one that does not act at all in history except to bring it to an end. Antitheological as it was, Marx's model of history nevertheless at times relies on and often seems to prefer an extra-historical, eschatological force.[85]

Rosfeld even writes in his biography of Marx: "Paradoxically, the museum curators who kept the eschatological flame in the secular 19th century were not so much the great theologians but the worldly-pious atheists like Marx – and Nietzsche."[86] Boer, however, resists a reductionist, theological, eschatological version of Marxism which theologians have expounded, in my opinion, so that he may resist the theologians' reductionist labeling of a whole school of thought. What he touches upon is the tendency and danger within 20th-century historiography to reframe Marxism as a politicized source of knowledge for theologians – an attempt to claim that theological currents lie at the basis of all philosophy and political movements.[87]

Boer nevertheless admits the limitations of anti-eschatological analyses of Marxian theories, writing that "it may well be objected that even though Marx and Engels obviously do not appropriate an eschatological perception of history from Judaism or Christianity, they may have absorbed it through a process resembling osmosis, unaware that this was taking place."[88] We cannot know the exact intention of Marx or Engels, nor would it aid us in analyzing the theories and texts as they present themselves. If anything, Marx unknowingly appropriated elements of

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[85] Anna Glazova and Paul North, "Saving Hope, the Wager of Messianism" in *Messianic Thought Outside Theology* (New York: Fordham UP, 2014), 7.
[86] Rosfeld, 49.
[87] However, even if there was not an explicit or implicit eschatological facet to the theories of Marx and Engels in the 19th century, I believe a more recent, telling example to be the mixing of Christian and Marxist elements visible in the American Civil Rights Movement, even permeating popular songs of the movement, including "We Shall Overcome," "People Get Ready," and "A Change Is Gonna Come." I do not believe that these connections can enter into the critique of eschatology in Marx or be read backwards onto Marx, but keeping in mind Aschheim's chapter on Nietzschean religions, I do not hold these Christian and Marxist associations in the 1960s to be accidental. Martin Luther King, Jr. himself paraphrased Theodore Parker, stating, in a sermon in 1965 and again at the 1967 Southern Christian Leadership Conference, that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice."
[88] Rosfeld, 51.

such an eschatological framework to further his rhetoric of heaven and earth. Boer claims that the true targets of an accusation of eschatology is Moses Hess and early communists, but I believe that this unspoken eschatology was necessary to fuel the way in which Marxist theory functioned as a tool of mobilization. The unspoken intention of mobilizing the masses through socialist rhetoric was precisely overcoming not only the ultimately ineffective political emancipation of the Enlightenment but also the belief of deficiency of human beings to capture their *menschliche Emanzipation*. Whether or not there is an inherent eschatology, the "career" of Marx's worldview in his lifetime as a means of mobilization presents a curious problem between theory and practice.

The "religious" appears in Marx's ethical imperatives in terms of *action*. His answer to the way in which mankind should redeem themselves presents somewhat of a contradiction in terms of how adherents should act to achieve such a goal of redemption. It must be said here, however, that Marx came to oppose those activists known as utopian socialists, the most prominent being Charles Fourier and Robert Owen. David Leopold prefers to highlight how Marx often viewed utopian socialism optimistically, writing that "Marx is more approving of [the utopian socialists'] 'criticism' than of their 'systems'."[89] Leopold also points out that whereas Marx criticized later utopian socialists, he did not exclusively place blame on earlier utopian socialists: "The intellectual formation of this first generation of utopian socialists, Marx maintains, took place at a time when both the material conditions were underdeveloped and not yet readily apparent."[90] The material conditions for intellectual formation of socialists was vital for Marx, who did not believe that humans were totally at the mercy of historical processes but rather that the economic base asserts itself in the end. The efforts of utopian socialists preceding them were well-intentioned, but Marx

[89] David Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx: German Philosophy, Modern Politics, and Human Flourishing* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2007), 288.
[90] Ibid.

and Engels objected to utopian socialism in viewing it as another pathway to reinforce the supremacy of the bourgeoisie, as the majority of these movements resulted in communes organized by wealthy bourgeois. Marx's addition to the social "gospel" of the 19th-century was imbued with a particular intellectualism and certainly an intellectual hue that was not as significant in other strains of the labor movement.

Marx's career as a constant writer and revolutionary socialist within the framework of scientific socialism present issues in intention as well as identity. Engels distanced Marx's theory of history from utopian socialists by describing his socialism as "scientific," in that the method of analysis could predict the processes of history by applying the dialectic to historical events.[91] Considering this, we know contrarily, through over 150 years of Marxist rhetoric, that Marxism as a political movement is not one of resignation or religious displacing, but of action. Again, there appears to be a disconnect between the theory and Marx's career as a revolutionary, such as his membership in the First International. To the question of authorial intent in Marx's texts, I believe one must take a historical-critical approach to the text, due to the fact that Marx's texts specifically functioned as tools for the furthering of a specific political movement – socialism. Although suggesting that socialism is "scientific" and that the advent of a revolution is "inevitable," Marx himself did not suggest an attitude of resignation. He writes as early as the *Thesen über Feuerbach*: "Die materialistische Lehre, dass die Menschen Produkte der Umstände und der Erziehung, veränderte Menschen also Produkte anderer Umstände und geänderter Erziehung sind, vergisst, dass die Umstände eben von den Menschen verändert werden. . . Das Zusammenfallen des

[91] Engels elaborated this in his 1880 text *Die Entwicklung des Sozialismus von der Utopie zur Wissenschaft*.

Aenderns der Umstände und der menschlichen Thätigkeit kann nur als umwälzende Praxis gefasst und rationell verstanden werden."[92]

On a theoretical level, Marx claims the *ultimate* agency of human beings (once the economic base had asserted itself in a specific period of history) as part of his anthropological analysis of human existence. There is also a great rhetorical weight behind the words "dass die Umstände eben von den Menschen verändert werden": although this is the early Marx (approximately 27 years of age), he prepares the beginnings of the Marxian ethical project of redeeming the downtrodden laborer, in the suggestion that human beings can change their material circumstances. Marx criticizes Feuerbach throughout his theses in observing how Feuerbach forgets the power of practical, sensuous human activity. He then writes as his eleventh thesis a concise summary of his idea of ethical action: "Die Philosophen haben die Welt nur verschieden *interpretirt*; es kommt aber darauf an, sie zu *verändern* [emphasis in original]."[93] This call to action had finally came to a head by the 1848 revolutions in Europe, when Marx wrote the final commandment and now-famous slogan of Marxist ideology at the end of the *Manifest der kommunistischen Partei*: "Proletarier aller Länder, vereinigt euch!"[94] Inherent in this statement is the fact that Marx considered the processes of history not to be final in the implementation of socialism throughout the world – it is the proletarian who must give the final push to start the process toward a classless society. The statement also expresses the "dissatisfaction" with the current state appearing both in Christianity and Marxism, as described by Sigurdson. At once this is not a totally religious commandment, in the sense that an unseen force drives human beings

[92] Marx, "Thesen über Feuerbach," 5.
[93] Ibid., 7.
[94] Marx and Engels, 493.

through history. The commandment, however, does promise a *telos*, an end to revolution as a means.

It is difficult whether or not to describe Marx as a moralist, although some theorists have posited that Marx-as-writer and Marx-as-man had opposing views of the just nature of capitalism, particularly Cohen.[95] The "religious" in the actual, present class struggle of the 19th century lay in resisting the dehumanizing conditions of capitalism. Sigurdson writes: "Rather than being optimistic, then, Marxism should be considered to have a tragic sense of history. Again, this does not necessarily mean that history will end badly but rather that whatever end there will be, this is achieved through an excruciatingly high cost for humanity."[96] Marx does describe revolutionary activities to achieve proletarian goals in violent terms – "[Die Kommunisten] erklären es offen, dass ihre Zwecke nur erreicht werden können durch den gewaltsamen Umsturz aller bisherigen Gesellschaftsordnung. Mögen die herrschenden Klassen vor einer kommunistischen Revolution zittern"[97] – but there is still an inherent *Christian* optimism in the theory that history necessarily results in justice and that proletarians are in fact able to change their lot, and such an optimism does not exist within an intellectual or religious vacuum. I also believe that attempts to resist a teleological or eschatological interpretation of Marxism are based on the idea that Marx himself predicted no "perfect" society or conditions after the ultimate communist revolution. I assert contrarily that the goal of the end of history was not for Marx to describe a "how it will be," but rather to create a society in which human beings could assert their *sufficiency* to direct the path of their own existence as subjects. The "powers" inherent in human beings, oppressed and denied by

[95] G.A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001).
[96] Sigurdson, 171.
[97] Marx and Engels, *Manifest der kommunistischen Partei*, 493.

the mechanisms of capitalism, will have a chance to flourish in a "society" (truly a classless existence) without economic restraints.[98]

[98] The idealized image of such a society devoid of economic restraints is inherent in the statement/slogan by Marx in his *Kritik des Gothaer Programms*: "Jeder nach seinen Fähigkeiten, jedem nach seinen Bedürfnissen!"

V. A Marx-Nietzsche Dialogue: The Rhetoric of Slavery

At the core of the philosophies of both Marx and Nietzsche, the principal task is to recover and redeem man from all the doctrines and apparatuses which reinforce the supposed inborn and imposed deficiency of the human being. Each philosopher depicts the false deficiency in varying styles; Marx presents doctrines of deficiency as part of the entire exterior structure of society, relying on a Materialist approach. Nietzsche, on the other hand, seeks the inner – perhaps *psychological* – effects of the spiritual state of the West and how traditional Christian morality views humans (as incomplete beings). A somewhat neglected aspect of the rhetoric used by Marx and Engels is that of framing the situation of the common laborer as "slavery." This slavery rhetoric appears in several works of Marx and Engels and functions almost as a "shaming" force in the sphere of political action; Marx and Engels were, in fact, familiar with the harsh labor conditions of their day, although there is a deeper emotional aspect to this rhetoric of slavery which may have been unknown to the authors themselves. I hold that the psychological methodology of Nietzsche intersects with the external motivation of Marxist doctrines of political action. At the time Marx published the first volume of *Das Kapital* in 1867, chattel slavery had disappeared from the United States and still existed in several colonies around the world.[99] However, the slavery which Marx and Engels address in their texts is a rhetorical, psychological form of slavery, a form of slavery by default in the situation of the worker. "Slavery" in its rhetorical form in Marx and Engels serves as an extreme type of description of the laborer's state to emphasize the laborer's

[99] Marx wrote about slavery in the United States, for example, in his 1861 text *Der Bürgerkrieg in den Vereinigten Staaten.* The International Working Men's Association also sent a letter to U.S. President Abraham Lincoln dated January 28, 1865, with Karl Marx as one of the signatories, describing their stance against slavery and solidarity with Lincoln.

own helplessness, and the intersection of the abstract, philosophical aspects of Marxism and how to apply it in practical, human activity necessitate such a rhetoric of slavery.

The theme of slavery, a brutal reality of the 19th century, did not ultimately reflect the way in which power apparatuses affected the European mentality psychologically. Nietzsche's mixing of historical, philological, and theological methods of analysis in his *Genealogie der Moral* led him to describe, in his own terminology, the *slave revolt in morality*. This slave revolt in morality, according to Nietzsche, was the way in which ancient "weaker" peoples, especially Jews, re-determined the West's original values and, through this process, created the new moral category of "evil."[100] Nietzsche describes the Jewish people as having been particularly refined in creating a non-physical mode of regulating actions: "die Juden, jenes priesterliche Volk, das sich an seinen Feinden und Überwältigern zuletzt nur durch eine radikale Umwerthung von deren Werthen, also durch einen Akt der geistigsten Rache Genugthuung zu schaffen wusste."[101] This insight of Nietzsche's displays his profoundly aristocratic mode of thinking: through the slave revolt in morality, primitive weaker peoples asserted their power against a Darwinian-like sense of competition between the strong and the weak, although Nietzsche remains, in the end, with a resounding *why*. With the power to brand the strong as "evil," the weak set up an egalitarian mode of guilt against a type of individualistic, self-centered (not in the sense of "selfish" but rather the self as center) morality. In addition, Nietzsche admits that the slave revolt in morality has remain with the West and influence our morality because of its triumph.[102]

In the majority of the texts of Marx and Engels which describe slaves and slavery, the word "slave" defines those persons who are deficient as products of the particular material circumstances

[100] Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 281, 288.
[101] Ibid., 281.
[102] Ibid., 282.

in which they live. The biblical precedent seems to be the story of the Hebrew slaves' exodus from Egypt, led by Moses, the Hebrew Testament's most prominent messianic figure. It is nevertheless too simplistic of a genealogy to claim any authority of this tale on the social movements of the 19th century, but the narrative of "messiah who delivers slaves out of bondage" figures most prominently in the Western, Judeo-Christian tradition, and in many ways, the Christian New Testament doctrine of Christ-as-savior cannot be understood outside this Mosaic context. Again, Marx himself must have found value in his perpetual labors as a revolutionary, as he devoted the majority of his life the cause of the worker, living in poverty in London whilst researching for *Das Kapital*. Marx uses the word "slave" at the end of the first section of the *Manifest*, "Bourgeois und Proletarier": "Es tritt hiermit offen hervor, dass die Bourgeoisie unfähig ist, noch länger die herrschende Klasse der Gesellschaft zu bleiben und die Lebensbedingungen ihrer Klasse der Gesellschaft als regelndes Gesetz aufzuzwingen. Sie ist unfähig zu herrschen, weil sie unfähig ist, ihrem Sklaven die Existenz selbst innerhalb seiner Sklaverei zu sichern, weil sie gezwungen ist, ihn in eine Lage herabsinken zu lassen, wo sie ihn ernähren muss, statt von ihm ernährt zu werden."[103] Finally, there is the optimistic "prophecy" at the manifesto's finale: "Die Proletarier haben nichts in [einer kommunistischen Revolution] zu verlieren als ihre Ketten. Sie haben eine Welt zu gewinnen."[104] One can certainly interpret such statements within a religious framework of *promise*. Behind the lofty rhetoric of Marx and Engels here, there lies a certainty in the processes of history and an optimism in the continuous dissatisfaction of the common laborer. Regardless of how history played out after Marx's death, "Sie haben eine Welt zu gewinnen" implies that the contemporary world belong to the capitalist, but only for a limited time.

[103] Marx and Engels, *Manifest der kommunistischen Partei*, 473.
[104] Ibid., 493.

Four years before Marx published the *Manifest* in London, the young Engels, himself stemming from a German family of textile manufacturers, had observed and recording the labor conditions of the British working class, particularly in Liverpool and Manchester, while on business for his father's cotton mill in Manchester in 1844; his observations became his text which influenced the ethical vision of Marxist theories, *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England.* What Engels observes through his first-hand experience in English factories is not wholly divorced from the emotionally driven rhetoric he utilizes: "Die Sklaverei, in der die Bourgeoisie das Proletariat gefesselt hält, kommt nirgends deutlicher ans Tageslicht als im Fabriksystem. Hier hört alle Freiheit rechtlich und faktisch auf. Der Arbeiter muß morgens um halb sechs in der Fabrik sein - kommt er ein paar Minuten zu spät, so wird er gestraft, kommt er zehn Minuten zu spät, so wird er gar nicht hineingelassen, bis das Frühstück vorüber ist, und verliert einen Vierteltag am Lohn."[105] Engels starkly differentiates himself and his ethical perspectives from any Nietzschean emphasis on the good as strong.

Engels then states bluntly: "Der Proletarier ist also rechtlich und tatsächlich der Sklave der Bourgeoisie; sie kann über sein Leben und seinen Tod verfügen."[106] Later, he writes a similar sentiment: "Der Arbeiter ist rechtlich und faktisch Sklave der besitzenden Klasse, der Bourgeoisie, so sehr ihr Sklave, daß er wie eine Ware verkauft wird, wie eine Ware im Preise steigt und fällt."[107] In the same section, Engels pinpoints the contemporary issue with rhetorical straightforwardness: "Der ganze Unterschied gegen die alte, offenherzige Sklaverei ist nur der, daß der heutige Arbeiter frei zu sein scheint, weil er nicht auf einmal verkauft wird, sondern stückweise, pro Tag, pro

[105] Friedrich Engels, *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England* in *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels: Werke.* (Berlin: Dietz, 1974), 2: 398-399.
[106] Ibid., 307.
[107] Ibid., 310.

Woche, pro Jahr, und weil nicht ein Eigentümer ihn dem andern verkauft, sondern er sich selbst auf diese Weise verkaufen muß, da er ja nicht der Sklave eines einzelnen, sondern der ganzen besitzenden Klasse ist."[108] Engels therefore acknowledges that, while the modern laborer may appear to have more agency in determining a course of employment, the laborer is ultimately bound to the capitalist as an object which the capitalist may exploit; the laborer lives as a slave.

Marx also employs such rhetoric of slavery most explicitly in the first volume of *Das Kapital.* He writes the following on the situation of the common worker under capitalism:

> Wenn der Arbeiter ursprünglich seine Arbeitskraft an das Kapital verkauft, weil ihm die materiellen Mittel zur Produktion einer Ware fehlen, versagt jetzt seine individuelle Arbeitskraft selbst ihren Dienst, sobald sie nicht an das Kapital verkauft wird. Sie funktioniert nur noch in einem Zusammenhang, der erst nach ihrem Verkauf existiert, in der Werkstatt des Kapitalisten. Seiner natürlichen Beschaffenheit nach verunfähigt, etwas Selbständiges zu machen, entwickelt der Manufakturarbeiter produktive Tätigkeit nur noch als Zubehör zur Werkstatt des Kapitalisten. Wie dem auserwählten Volk auf der Stirn geschrieben stand, daß es das Eigentum Jehovas, so drückt die Teilung der Arbeit dem Manufakturarbeiter einen Stempel auf, der ihn zum Eigentum des Kapitals brandmarkt.[109]

If any person be deficient – in the sense of missing essential components of their human essence – it is the laborer, in that the capitalist mode of production splinters his labor gradually. The laborer, being splintered and alienated from his labor, becomes a mechanism of the machine of the factory.

[108] Ibid.
[109] Karl Marx, *Das Kapital: Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* in *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels: Werke.* (Berlin: Dietz, 1973), 23: 382.

Marx, oscillating between economic theory and social criticism, describes in dire terms the pressure driving the modern laborer: "[Die Maschinerie] revolutioniert ebenso von Grund aus die formelle Vermittlung des Kapitalverhältnisses, den Kontrakt zwischen Arbeiter und Kapitalist. Auf Grundlage des Warenaustausches war es erste Voraussetzung, daß sich Kapitalist und Arbeiter als freie Personen, als unabhängige Warenbesitzer, der eine Besitzer von Geld und Produktionsmitteln, der andre Besitzer von Arbeitskraft, gegenübertraten. Aber jetzt kauft das Kapital Unmündige oder Halbmündige. Der Arbeiter verkaufte früher seine eigne Arbeitskraft, worüber er als formell freie Person verfügte. Er verkauft jetzt Weib und Kind. Er wird Sklavenhändler."[110] Marx's methodology of comparing historical precedents with contemporary conditions reflects Engels' earlier methodology while observing working conditions in England. Here, however, Marx invokes the affective aftertaste of *sacrifice* – the laborer, himself a slave, must now commodify his own family members for capitalist producers. There must nonetheless be an underlying emotional force which transfers the identification of the incongruities under capitalism to a state in which the exploited laborer may publicly object to such undesirable conditions.

Marx's task in *Das Kapital* was to describe how the capitalist mode of production functions, although he also latently analyzes how such conditions of capitalism affect the worker's inner, psychological state. Nietzsche identifies the driving force of the slave revolt in morality to be *ressentiment*. Nietzsche does not only describe *ressentiment* as a static state of dissatisfaction. He states: "Der Sklavenaufstand in der Moral beginnt damit, dass das *Ressentiment* selbst schöpferisch wird und Werthe gebiert."[111] The feeling of helplessness in the "weaker' peoples of

[110] Ibid., 417-418.
[111] Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 284.

antiquity now had the power, according to Nietzsche, to change the spectrum of values in the West and create a new standard of morality based on a psychological measuring of human actions. The slave revolt in morality transposed any claim to rule through physical force into the power to rule psychologically through a guilt-based morality. R. Lanier Anderson writes: "Even more important in Nietzsche's eyes, of course, the slave morality also promotes a spirit of righteous indignation against the happy and fortunate world, simultaneously encouraging and giving vent to *ressentiment* in the weak. Thus, the slave morality is justly so called because it answers to the '*needs'* of the slave type, and these selling points promote its spread and institutional consolidation."[112] Marx and Engels considered the contemporary factory worker to be such a "slave type," one who requires liberation from the shackles of the capitalist system. Above all, Marx and Engels fundamentally wished to redirect the feelings of *ressentiment*, albeit that they rested such a belief on the idea of the infallibility of the proletariat in its intentions: Marx ultimately fashions the proletariat into a *holy* body of human beings, equipped with the tools to recognize their own deficiency and to prepare to assert their own sufficiency as subjects after the "end of history."

What separates Marx as a figure of the 19th century from preceding "priests" was the *location* of the predicted outcome of history. Nietzsche criticizes the agenda of the "ascetic priest" in the *Genealogie der Moral* in its third treatise, "Was bedeuten asketische Ideale?" He writes, for instance, that the ascetic priest "ist der fleischgewordne Wunsch nach einem Anders-sein, Anderswo-sein, und zwar der höchste Grad dieses Wunsches, dessen eigentliche Inbrunst und Leidenschaft: aber eben die *Macht* seines Wünschens ist die Fessel, die ihn hier anbindet, eben damit wird er zum Werkzeug, das daran arbeiten muss, günstigere Bedingungen für das Hiersein

[112] R. Lanier Anderson, "On the nobility of Nietzsche's priests" in *Nietzsche's* On the Genealogy of Morality*: A Critical Guide*, ed. Simon May (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2011), 49-50.

und Mensch-sein zu schaffen."[113] This *Anders-sein* and *Anderswo-sein* lies at the foundation of traditionally religious answers to the question of toil and production in human life: one must place his or her hope in an afterlife in order to be content with earthly life. Marx abhorred such a mentality and viewed it as pure alienation from the *Gattungswesen.* It cannot be said, however, that the alternative to labor conditions under capitalism, although certainly not the promise of a heaven, does not inform the entire Marxist prediction of the future.

Nietzsche also describes the ascetic priest explicitly, stating: "Der asketische Priester muss uns als der vorherbestimmte Heiland, Hirt und Anwalt der kranken Heerde gelten: damit erst verstehen wir seine ungeheure historische Mission. . . der Priester ist der *Richtungs-Veränderer* des Ressentiment."[114] The ascetic priest, instead of directing the *ressentiment* onto the oppressors themselves, instructs his followers to direct *ressentiment* onto themselves – in the Christian context through the concept of "sin." The ascetic priest's power, according to Nietzsche, derives not from brute force, but psychologically from the very convincing of others of their own weakness. Peter Poellner, in an attempt to capture Nietzsche's disdain for *ressentiment*, writes that "in *ressentiment*, the subject enacts a disposition in which a pain believed to have been caused by a 'not-self' is a *sufficient* motive to negate that Other (to hate him, as Nietzsche puts it more bluntly). But this negation, as we have seen, takes a very distinctive form. . . In *ressentiment*, a deficiency experienced in relation to another subject is thus implicitly taken as sufficient to reject the values in terms of which that Other understands himself."[115] Applying this to the social criticism of Marx and Engels in the 19th century, any observer of dehumanizing labor conditions would have had

[113] Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 384.
[114] Ibid., 390-391.
[115] Peter Poellner, "*Ressentiment* and morality" in *Nietzsche's* On the Genealogy of Morality*: A Critical Guide*, ed. Simon May (Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2011), 141.

sufficient reason to reject the values of the class of capitalists. Marx viewed priests and clerics as those who exploit the poorest in society to reinforce their status as part of the ideological superstructure: by promising the worker the paradise of an afterlife, such a hope in an afterlife and displacing of energies leave open the door for members of the superstructure to exploit those underneath.

Nietzsche finally asks, "Ist er aber eigentlich ein *Arzt*, dieser asketische Priester?. . . Nur das Leiden selbst, die Unlust des Leidenden wird von ihm bekämpft, nicht deren Ursache, nicht das eigentliche Kranksein."[116] According to the way in which Nietzsche defines the ascetic priest, Marx cannot be such a "priest." Nevertheless, the whole of the Marxist push to furnish ameliorated living conditions for the working class combined with a Materialist worldview presents a specific 19th-century break with preceding traditional forms of eschatological and psychological displacements of *ressentiment* as a means of alleviating the feelings of inadequacy or pain, as described by Nietzsche. Marx and Engels necessarily had to address the working class for which they labored in the tone of one who addresses slaves, as characterizing them as slaves was essential to their ethical project; otherwise, no specific social movement for change could have taken place. Marx, in the last analysis, served to redirect the feelings of *ressentiment* present in the proletariat of his day, in that he suggested that it finally redirect such feelings back onto the true, original source of oppression and feelings of deficiency – the bourgeoisie.

[116] Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 395.

VI. Conclusion

Marx and Nietzsche, of all German philosophers, represent even today some of the most systematically anti-religious viewpoints ever expounded in the history of Western thought, and their reputations ultimately do not and cannot escape such phrases as "Religion is the opium of the people" or "God is dead." Yet, conversely, their pedigrees of religious piety present a dilemma in understanding both figures in a context of such developed and systematic atheism. This irony characterizes not only the German philosophical field in which both philosophers wrote, but also the irony inherent in how we search for meaning after abandoning the central feature of Western culture and source of meaning for thousands of years, reflected in the death of God. Considering the less-than-positive way in which modern observers have depicted Nietzsche and Marx in popular and religious settings, it can nevertheless not be stated that both philosophers were fully devoid of religion in their intentions and the stylistic nuances of their writings. Marx's complex relationship to the idea of the "religious" presents a moral dilemma when depicting him in infernal scenes of suffering. After all, the young Marx and his fellow Young Hegelians drew the idea of "becoming godlike" from a kind of inverted theology of Hegel's own depiction of God. I newly interpret Marx *as well as Nietzsche* in the wake of the ideas of religious alienation of Feuerbach, who set the tone for a further flourishing of German philosophy in the study of religion *per se* and its effects on human beings. Both Nietzsche and Marx grappled with the way in which humans could affirm their own sufficiency as subjects in history and as creators of meaning for themselves in a post-religious era. However, it cannot be ignored that there are deep religious implications in both thinkers' writings and cultural criticism of the German intellectual environment throughout the 19th century.

Analysis of the mechanisms of religious language and rhetoric in the texts of Nietzsche and Marx exposes the term "atheist" as somewhat ambiguous and deceptive, in that such a label is fraught with political and social implications that exist outside the theorizing of German thinkers in the early 19th century. Nietzsche's reputation as the "atheist" philosopher who announced the death of God becomes a convoluted issue when considering his preoccupation with Christianity and his admiration for the gods of Ancient Greece. Not only this, but Nietzsche also grappled with the nihilistic philosophical views of his day, asserting that there must be *something* rather nothing to human life: the void described by Nietzsche left a wide spiritual gap for Europe entering the 20th century. Nietzsche naturally had no control over the legacy of his work, and as Steven Aschheim points out, the tendency to interpret Nietzschean doctrines religiously and assimilate such doctrines into German Protestant theology occurred commonly in such circles in the early 20th century. Inherent in the idea that "God is dead" is not that God never existed but that God *did live* and died.

Several scholars have also depicted Marx's theories as eschatological and teleological, although there is a temptation in framing Marx as a prophetic voice to play into the critiques of theologians, particularly those with a Marxism *post*-Marx in mind. Regardless of the historical tainting of an ideology, Marxism contains an inherent religious hope, as Sigurdson states, in the belief that justice is a reliable force in history and that history will result in the resolving of conflicts, or *justice*. Nevertheless, I believe there to be a break or "change" in the 19th century German philosophical context with previous modes of philosophical thought which one must consider. It is within this break with previous philosophical thought that thinkers such as Marx and Nietzsche formulated ways in which the deficiency of those they addressed is not recycled. In other words, Marx and Nietzsche may be considered examples of the *anti*-Socratic philosopher.

Such an anti-Socratic philosopher is not stuck within the cycle of perpetuating the supposed deficiency of those he or she addresses, but rather such a philosopher (as Marx and Nietzsche attempted in the 19th century) strives to dismantle the power apparatuses and frameworks of thought which reproduce anew the supposed deficiency of the "auditors."

The search for the "religious" in the texts of Marx and Nietzsche leads to the rhetoric of slaves and slavery, and such a rhetoric functioned ultimately to describe, historically, the conditions which both philosophers witnessed in contemporary Europe. Through the frame of Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, Marx appears as the final priest and director of *ressentiment* – Marx's task historically and philosophically heightened the necessity to redirect *ressentiment* onto the oppressors as the signal for the modern age, breaking with traditional internalizations of *ressentiment*. Undeniable now is the way in which such feelings of *ressentiment* played directly into the social engagement of socialists in Marx's day, and how the feelings of *ressentiment*, as a powerful emotional force in human history, may still shape the way in which we view ourselves as a species today. The break with German Protestant and general theological traditions is palpable in the writings of Marx and Nietzsche, yet there is still a carryover from what I consider the "religious" – the framework of action within which Luther led the Reformation and within which Marx and Nietzsche worked to form the conditions, intellectually and materially, for human beings to assert their sufficiency and wholeness as rational humans.

The "religious," I suggest, deserves further investigation as a category of religious thought outside the historical religions with which Marx and Nietzsche engaged. In light of this carryover from the institutions of religion into political and philosophical thought of the 19th century, we thus must not conclude that the modern Western world can ignore the impact of religious thought within its development. Reflecting Conway, we also gain a sense of the irony within the works of

Marx and Nietzsche. Although against the religions of their day, the theories of both thinkers suggest a reliance upon previously existing religious frameworks to build further philosophical thought, especially in the German philosophical scene of the 19th century. By examining the eschatological aspects of Marx and the homage-parodies of Nietzsche in *Also sprach Zarathustra*, I point out the nuances of the term "atheist" and how and why it, again, is a problematic label. Considering that the course of German philosophy led by Marx and Nietzsche took a particularly anti-religious turn in the 19th century, there is still necessarily a reliance to old religious forms, whether parodying them or defining philosophical movements in opposition to them (for instance, Marx's goal to transform criticism). In a Feuerbachian sense, one may further question whether or not such an anthropological drive to create religious belief systems can be shaken from the processes of thought in the Western world. Whether or not explicitly stated, such religious categories of thought as a tool of self-actualization are apparent, even in opposition, in the "improvement-moralities" of Marx and Nietzsche. We should ultimately resist the labels of "atheist" for both thinkers – or at least explore the nuance of such a term when applied to either thinker – and instead investigate the further the uses of the religious aspects inherent in their texts and the social and intellectual movements which succeeded them. This reevaluation of atheism and the effectiveness of religious rhetoric can lead to a more scholarly, demystified way in which to discover the "divine creativity" in humankind.

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Vita

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