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Max Stirner's Early French Reception (1844-1892)

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I, Andrea Dimitri, confirm that the work presented in my thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

The focus of this dissertation is the French reception of German philosopher Max Stirner (1806-56) during the period spanning the release of his magnum opus, *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum*, in Germany in 1844 to the appearance of its first partial French translations in the early 1890s. This phase of Stirner's French reception has been widely overlooked by Stirner scholars, or at any rate approached in an unsystematic, somewhat dismissive manner. The prolonged lack of interest in this particular timeframe owes much to the uncritical acceptance of an old but still predominant narrative according to which, soon after the appearance of *Der Einzige*, Stirner 'fell into oblivion' and was only 'rediscovered' in the 1880s and 1890s. This study aims to show that, far from being a 'forgotten' figure, during the period 1844-1892 Stirner's name was often invoked in French literary, political, philosophical, and religious discourse where he came to personify many of the worst features of a (perceived) German cultural and even military threat.

This dissertation is conceived not only as a transnational reception history of Stirner (and, by extension, of Hegelianism) in France, but also as an intellectual history of France itself. As such, it will provide significant insights into French responses in the nineteenth century to a variety of radical philosophical ideas or traditions (such as materialism, sensualism, egoism, pantheism or atheism, and nihilism) which were commonly associated in France with German contemporary philosophy and of which Stirner became, for many, the archetype. This thesis seeks to explain why French intellectuals interpreted Stirner's thought as they did, to understand *what they were doing* by engaging with it in the way they did and the effects that they hoped to produce by doing so.

Impact statement

This thesis seeks to encourage a change in the perception of Stirner's early French (and not only French) reception by demonstrating that even though the level of familiarity and engagement with his thought was certainly greater in the period after his first so-called 'renaissance' in the 1880s or 1890s, Stirner never completely 'fell into oblivion', as a prevailing narrative suggests. Secondarily, this thesis aims to show that even an overwhelmingly negative and erratic reception, characterized by passing comments, second-hand readings, and often trivializing interpretations, can tell us much about the intellectuals who engaged with a given author, the history of that author's reception, and possibly even something about that author's thought. The initial reception of Stirner in France is not only an unjustly forgotten chapter in the history of his reception but also represents a snapshot of the country's debates on philosophy, politics, religion, and literature in the nineteenth century, particularly in relation to Germany and certain radical ideas that Stirner, in the eyes of many, came to embody more than anyone else.

Through a meticulous examination of primary sources, including books, journal articles, pamphlets, reviews, transcribed speeches, and correspondence, the present study seeks therefore to elucidate the multifaceted dimensions of Stirner's early reception in France. In doing so, this thesis also aims to provide the necessary tools for a better-informed and more historically-oriented discussion on Stirner's intellectual legacy and his place in the history of thought. Today, there is more interest in establishing whether Stirner was a nihilist, an anarchist, an existentialist, etc., than in studying his actual historical impact on these traditions, and if interest in his influence exists, it is only in certain areas (particularly, in recent years, the history of literature and art), in specific timeframes (generally excluding the period before the 1880s or 1890s), or in relation to specific individuals.

Scholars are increasingly recognizing the geographical and temporal breadth of Stirner's readership as well as his historical significance. However, a truly comprehensive history of Stirner's reception remains to be written. The present study is conceived as a first step in that direction. Its ultimate goal is to encourage the production of more systematic and wide-ranging studies on his reception in various countries, using a transnational approach more sensitive to the methods employed in intellectual history and reception studies. This may also allow one day for comparative studies on Stirner's reception in different countries.

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Note on translation

The vast majority of the sources used in this thesis, both primary and secondary, are written in French. A number of sources written in German, Italian, and other languages have also been used. Unless stated otherwise, translations into English from all these languages should be considered as my own. Specific French words have occasionally been reproduced in their original form where an English translation seemed likely to result in a more or less significant loss of meaning. A recurrent example is the French word *esprit*, which means both 'mind' and 'spirit'. In this and other similar instances, French words have been written in italics.

To my Grandparents

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Introduction

I. Rethinking our approach to Stirner's reception

Max Stirner, nom de plume of German philosopher Johann Caspar Schmidt (1806-56), can no longer be considered a forgotten figure from the peripheries of nineteenth-century German idealism or a little-known thinker in the history of political thought.[1] An exponent of Left Hegelianism, dealing mainly with the notion of alienation and self-consciousness, Stirner has often been and continues to be variously described as a forerunner of nihilism,[2] existentialism,[3] psychology,[4] individualist-anarchism,[5] and post-structuralism.[6] As Alexander Green has noted, however, 'few historians have found consensus when discussing Stirner's place in the history of philosophy […]. Scholars remain divided in determining the place that [Stirner's work] might belong in European thought, or even if it should belong at all.'[7]

Meanwhile, new editions and translations of Stirner's magnum opus, *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum* (The Unique and His/Its Property, 1844), as well as of his minor writings continue to be published. Every year, academics from a variety of countries and disciplines regularly put out new books, articles, and doctoral theses which address the significance of Stirner's philosophy or specific aspects of his reception. Stirner's

[1] An increasing number of scholars have been pointing this out over the past twenty years or so. See, for example, David Leopold, '"The State and I." Max Stirner's Anarchism', in Douglas Moggach (ed.), *The New Hegelians. Politics and Philosophy in the Hegelian School* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 176-199 (176); Frederick C. Beiser, 'Max Stirner and the End of Classical German Philosophy', in Douglas Moggach (ed.), *Politics, religion, and art: Hegelian debates* (Northwestern University Press, 2011), 281-300 (282); Wayne Bradshaw, *The Ego Made Manifest. Max Stirner, Egoism, and the Modern Manifesto* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2023), preface.

[2] R. W. K. Paterson, *The Nihilistic Egoist: Max Stirner* (Oxford University Press, 1971); David Holbrook, 'A Philosopher for Today?: Max Stirner's Egoistical Nihilism', *New Blackfriars*, Vol. 58, No. 687 (Aug. 1977), 382-90; Kenji Nishitani, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, transl. Graham Parkes and Setsuko Aihara (State University of New York Press, 1990), Chapter Six; Franco Volpi, *Il Nichilismo* (Laterza, 1996), Chapter Five. Albert Camus also painted Stirner a nihilist in his *L'Homme Révolté* (Paris: Gallimard, 1951). On the question of whether or not Stirner can reasonably be described as a nihilist, see Tim Dowdall's recent book, *Max Stirner and Nihilism: Between Two Nothings* (Rochester and New York: Camden House, 2024).

[3] According to Renato D'Ambrosio, this interpretation can be traced back to Martin Buber. In his 1936 article entitled 'Die Frage an den Einzelnen', Buber juxtaposed Stirner's name to Kierkegaard's. See Renato D'Ambrosio, *Esistenza ed indicibilità in Max Stirner*, Collana di Studi Internazionali di Scienze Filosofiche e Pedagogiche, *Studi Filosofici*, 2/2006, 1. Other existentialist readings of Stirner's philosophy can be found in Camus, *L'Homme Révolté*; Henri Arvon, *Aux Sources de l'Existentialisme: Max Stirner* (Paris: Presses Universitaire de France, 1954); Kurt Adolf Mautz, *Die Philosophie Max Stirners im Gegensatz zum Hegelschen Idealismus* (Berlin, 1936); Herbert Read, *Anarchy and Order. Essays in Politics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971 [1954]), 165; Giorgio Penzo, *Max Stirner. La rivolta esistenziale* (Turin: Marietti, 1971). For reference, see also Arno Münster, 'Die Stirner-Rezeption im französischen Existentialismus', *Der Einzige*, 2012, Vol. 5: *Max Stirner und Frankreich. Stirner et la France*, Max Stirner Archiv Leipzig. On the commonalities and contrasts between Stirner and existentialism, see, most recently, Dowdall, *Max Stirner and Nihilism*, 198-206.

[4] See, for example, Daniel Guérin, *Ni Dieu ni Maître. Histoire et anthologie de l'anarchie* (Paris: Éditions de Delphes, 1965), Chapter One; John Carroll, *Break-Out from the Crystal Palace. The anarcho-psychological critique: Stirner, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky* (1974).

[5] See, for example, Peter H. Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible. A History of Anarchism* (Harper Collins, 1992); Robert Graham (ed.) *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume One: From Anarchy to Anarchism (300 CE to 1939)* (Black Rose Books, 2005), XIII; Constantin Parvulescu, *The Individualist Anarchist Discourse of Early Interwar Germany* (Cluj University Press, 2018).

[6] Gilles Deleuze, *Logique du sens* (Éditions de Minuit, 1969); Jacques Derrida, *Spectres de Marx* (Galilée, 1993); Andrew M. Koch, 'Max Stirner: The Last Hegelian or the First Poststructuralist', *Anarchist Studies*, Vol. 5, 1997, 95-108; Saul Newman, 'Spectres of Stirner: A contemporary Critique of Ideology', *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Vol. 6, No. 3, 2001 309-330; Saul Newman; *Power and Politics in Poststructural Thought* (London: Routledge, 2005).

[7] Alexander Green, 'Max Stirner: a historiographical sketch', *Non Serviam*, Vol. 23, 1992.

ideas and their historical impact in the most diverse fields are also increasingly discussed in university modules in the UK and beyond.[8]

At the same time, though, it is important to acknowledge that there is still much work to be done, particularly with respect to the history of Stirner's reception. One of the areas of investigation that remain largely unexplored is Stirner's early French reception, which is the subject of this dissertation. More specifically, under scrutiny here is the period spanning the release of *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum* in Germany in 1844 to the appearance of its first partial French translations in 1892, a critical phase which has generally been approached in an unsystematic, somewhat dismissive manner.

The prolonged lack of interest in this particular timeframe can be attributed, in part, to the uncritical acceptance of an old but still predominant narrative according to which soon after the appearance of *Der Einzige*, or by 1848 at the latest, Stirner was already essentially forgotten. Leaving aside occasional mentions in scholarly works, such as Friedrich Albert Lange's *Geschichte des Materialismus* (1866) and Eduard von Hartmann's *Die Philosophie des Unbewussten* (1869), Stirner, so the argument goes, was 'rescued from oblivion' – to use a popular expression – by his biographer John Henry Mackay (1864-1933) towards the late 1880s and early 1890s.[9]

But there are at least two problems with this narrative. First, it tends to concentrate too much on Germany, without considering the first steps that Stirner's ideas took outside his country during his lifetime. From this perspective, France is, together with Russia,[10] one of the first countries to have 'received' Stirner soon after the publication of *Der Einzige* (and also the first country to have produced full translations of the book: one in 1899 by Robert L. Reclaire, entitled *L'Unique et sa propriété* and published by Stock, and another in 1900 by Henri Lasvignes, published by the Éditions de la *Revue Blanche* and also entitled *L'Unique et sa propriété*). Second, this narrative tends to downplay the importance of all those so-called 'minor' actors who

[8] During a talk given on 23 May 2008 in the Faculty of History of the University of Cambridge, on the occasion of Quentin Skinner's retirement from the Regius Professorship of Modern History, historian Richard Fisher has argued that thanks to the series of Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought (or the blue series), edited by Skinner among others, 'individuals like Max Stirner or Proudhon or John of Salisbury all enjoy exposure and examination at the graduate level in ways unimaginable before 1988.' See "'How to do things with books": Quentin Skinner and the dissemination of ideas', *History of European Ideas* 35 (2), 2009, 276-280. David Leopold has engaged with Stirner and other Young Hegelians in his courses at Oxford, and at University College London Stirner has been included in a module on the History of Anarchism by modern historian Peter Schröder. In the field of literature instead, Ferdâ Asya, Professor of English in the U.S., has recently documented her students' response to the incorporation of Stirner and other radical thinkers in her academic courses on Edith Wharton's work. See 'Teaching Edith Wharton's *The Children* in the Anarchist Tradition in Literature Course', in Ferdâ Asya (ed.), *Teaching Edith Wharton's Major Novels and Short Fiction* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), Chapter Sixteen.

[9] Beiser, 'Max Stirner and the End of Classical German Philosophy', 282; Alexander Stulpe, *Gesichter des Einzigen. Max Stirner und die Anatomie moderner Individualität* (Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, 2010), 23-28; Steve J. Shone, *American Anarchism* (Leiden / Boston: Brill, 2013), 209; Bradshaw, *The Ego Made Manifest*, 15. According to Lawrence S. Stepelevich, for almost forty years (1844-82), *Der Einzige* seems to have been 'totally forgotten'. See *Max Stirner on the Path of Doubt* (Lexington Books, 2020), 2. See also, most recently, Jorn Bastiaan Janssen's doctoral thesis, *Chasing Shadows: Max Stirner and Fanaticism in Political Theology* (Goldsmith, University of London, 2023), 18. The narrative according to which Stirner was soon forgotten can be traced back to Mackay himself. See John Henry Mackay, *Max Stirner. His Life and His Work*, translated from the third German edition (*Max Stirner. Sein Leben und sein Werk*, Berlin: 1914 [1898]) by Hubert Kennedy (Concord: Peremptory Publications, 2005), 201 and *passim*.

[10] References to studies that address Stirner's reception in Russia during the nineteenth century can be found in Chapter Five.

wrote about Stirner. Although their comments may not have had the same impact or arouse the same interest today as those made by prominent authors such as Hartmann and Lange, they nonetheless confirm that Stirner was known and that his ideas were discussed, even if only for reasons of denigration. In fact, as shall be seen, many of these actors were not 'minor' at all; some were renowned and influential publicists, philosophers, and clergymen who contributed to shaping a variety of debates on philosophy, politics, and religion in France, and their vast readership ensured the circulation of Stirner's ideas, or at any rate of critical synopses and interpretations of them.

Convinced that there was no significant reception of Stirner in Germany or elsewhere between 1848 and the 1870s or 1880s, numerous scholars writing about Stirner's reception in France seem to have been further discouraged by the fact that the very few known French reactions to his ideas prior to the 1890s were consistently negative, and that with a handful of noteworthy exceptions, commentaries on his work largely consisted of passing references, unoriginal summaries crafted for polemical purposes, and trivializing interpretations based on second- or third-hand accounts. Yet a negative or 'profane' reception – to borrow a term used by Jacques D'Hondt to refer to Hegel's early French reception,[11] made of allusions and passing comments – remains a form of reception, and it can often offer particularly insightful perspectives, as this thesis seeks to demonstrate.

Aside from the histories of Hegelianism and anarchism, where Stirner is regularly addressed, the vast majority of books and articles devoted specifically to Stirner are penned not by historians but by philosophers, political theorists, literary scholars, or Stirner enthusiasts from a variety of other fields. Scholars are increasingly recognizing the geographical and temporal breadth of Stirner's readership as well as his historical significance. However, most recent publications addressing Stirner's impact concentrate exclusively on the field of literature and art between the end of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth.[12] A comprehensive history of Stirner's reception remains to be written. The present study is conceived as a first step in that direction.

This thesis seeks to encourage a change in the perception of Stirner's early reception by demonstrating that even though the level of familiarity and engagement with his thought was certainly greater in the period after his first so-called 'renaissance' in the 1880s or 1890s,[13] the author of *Der Einzige*

[11] Jacques D'Hondt, 'La réception profane de Hegel en France', in Jean Quillien (ed.), *La Réception de la Philosophie Allemande en France aux XIX^e^ et XX^e^* (Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1994).

[12] David Ashford, *Autarchies: The Invention of Selfishness* (Bloomsbury, 2017); Bradshaw, *The Ego Made Manifest*, Chapter Three. Other studies that occasionally address Stirner in relation to these fields and period include Allan Antliff, *Anarchy and Art: From the Paris Commune to the Fall of the Berlin Wall* (Arsenal Pulp P., 2007), and Theresa Papanikolas, *Anarchism and the advent of Paris Dada. Art and Criticism, 1914-1924* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016 [2010]).

[13] Bernd A. Laska, *Ein heimlicher Hit. 150 Jahre Stirners 'Einziger'. Eine kurze Editionsgeschichte* (Nürnberg, LSR-Verlag, 1994, *Stirner Studien*, No. 1); Bernd A. Laska, *Ein dauerhafter Dissident. 150 Jahre Stirners 'Einziger'. Eine kurze Rezeptionsgeschichte* (Nürnberg, LSR-Verlag, 1994, *Stirner Studien*, No. 2). Stirner's second 'renaissance' in the late 1960s is generally attributed to the (very tendentious) work of the Marxist social and economic historian and experimental writer Hans Günther Helms (1932-2012) in Germany and, in smaller measure, to the publications of Germanist and historian of ideas Henri Arvon (1914-92) in France. Both

never really fell into oblivion, as the prevailing narrative suggests. This study will show that, far from being a 'forgotten' figure, during the period 1844-1892 Stirner's name was often invoked in French literary, political, philosophical, and religious discourse where he came to personify many of the worst features of a (perceived) German cultural and, somewhat later, military threat.

This thesis will also demonstrate that a more thorough examination of Stirner's early French (and not only French) reception may reveal that a number of 'traditional' interpretations of his work – for example the nihilist interpretation and the association first with nineteenth-century Germany's cult of force and then even with right-wing ideologies more generally – have important, yet overlooked, precedents or intellectual roots in France (and also, as suggested by sources consulted during the research process for this thesis, in countries like Italy, Spain, England, and the U.S., among others). By revisiting these early perspectives, scholars can gain a deeper understanding of why and how many of the now common interpretations of Stirner originally developed as well as of the wide range of oft-neglected nuances that certain conventional labels given to him may assume, thereby enriching current debates on Stirner's thought and his place in the history of ideas.

This dissertation is conceived not only as a transnational reception history of Stirner (and, by extension, of Hegelianism) in France but also as an intellectual history of France itself. As such, it will provide significant insights into French responses in the nineteenth century to a variety of radical philosophical ideas or traditions – such as materialism, sensualism, egoism, pantheism or atheism, and nihilism – which were commonly associated in France with German contemporary philosophy and of which Stirner became, for many, the archetype. By engaging with Stirner's thought, French intellectuals were implicitly or explicitly expressing their support for, or rejection of, various ideas and traditions which they considered to be domestic or foreign in debates on philosophy, religion, politics, and literature.

Through a meticulous examination of primary sources, including books, journal articles, pamphlets, reviews, transcribed speeches, and correspondence, the present study aims to elucidate the multifaceted dimensions of Stirner's early reception in France, investigating how his ideas were circulated, transformed, and subjected to critique. It seeks to explain why French intellectuals interpreted Stirner's thought as they did and to understand *what they were doing* by engaging with it in the way they did as well as the effects that they hoped to produce by doing so.

In analysing the criticisms levelled at Stirner in their broader historical context, this study also aims to demonstrate why Stirner's radical ideas could hardly find admirers in France between the 1840s and the 1880s, something that is confirmed by the fact that no evidence has emerged during the research process for this thesis of even a single positive reaction to them from a French author before 1892. The rise of anarchism in Europe in the 1880s certainly prepared the ground for a positive reception of Stirner in France,

Helms and Arvon are discussed by Laska. On Harvon, see also Laska's 'Der Stirner-Forscher Henri Arvon', *Der Einzige, Jahrbuch der Max-Stirner-Gesellschaft*, No. 4, 2011, 123-136.

however there is no trace of said positive reception before the early 1890s. The only text written in French and published in France before 1892 which contains genuinely positive remarks on Stirner was penned, in fact, by a non-French author. This text will be discussed in the appendix.

II. Existing research and known sources

Only two publications exist which are devoted specifically to Stirner's reception in France. The first is a brief article by Tanguy L'Aminot, published in *Der Einzige*, a periodical edited by the Max Stirner Archiv Leipzig, in 2000.[14] The second is the 2012 issue of the same periodical, dedicated to 'Stirner and France' and based on a symposium organized by the Max Stirner Society and the Sciences Po Nancy in collaboration with the Goethe Institut Nancy on 24 September 2011.[15] Both of these publications, however, are limited in scope and depth.

L'Aminot, the author of the first publication, suggests that the earliest allusion to Stirner in France was made in a brief report sent by an unidentified correspondent from Berlin to a collaborator of the *Gazette de France* and published by the periodical on 21 October 1846.[16] This report recounts the details of a recent 'atheist wedding in Berlin' involving a member of *Die Freien* (The Free Ones), a group of radical publicists, poets, and philosophers (including Stirner) who used to gather at Hippel's tavern in Berlin in the early 1840s.[17] According to the correspondent, the event had become the talk of the town. The rather unconventional ceremony described in the report displays obvious similarities with the one that united Stirner to his second wife, Marie Dähnhardt (1818-1902), in October 1843.[18] However, the event recounted also displays fundamental discrepancies with Stirner's wedding that neither L'Aminot nor the scholars who have referred to the report after him have addressed.[19]In his article, L'Aminot does not mention the details provided by the journal's correspondent. Assuming that the allusion is to Stirner, he describes the publication of the

[14] 'Max Stirner in Frankreich', *Der Einzige*, Vol. 9/10, 2000: *Max Stirner und das Ausland*, Max Stirner Archiv Leipzig, 8-20.
[15] *Der Einzige*, 2012, Vol. 5: *Max Stirner und Frankreich. Stirner et la France*, Max Stirner Archiv Leipzig.
[16] 'Un mariage athée à Berlin', *Gazette de France*, 21 Oct. 1846, 5.
[17] On The Free and Stirner's involvement with the group, see Mackay, *Max Stirner* (Hubert Kennedy's translation), Chapters Three and Four; Robert J. Hellman, *Berlin. The Red Room and White Beer. The "Free" Hegelian Radicals in the 1840s* (Washington D.C.: Three Continent Press, 1990).
[18] On Stirner's wedding, see Mackay, *Max Stirner* (Hubert Kennedy's translation), 115-117. Mackay's account confirms that the event did in fact create a small sensation at the time.
[19] The most striking discrepancy of course is the one between the initials of the names of the people who were at the wedding narrated by the Berlin correspondent and those of the first and last names of Stirner, his wife, the priest who officiated their wedding ceremony, and their guests: none of them match. Moreover, why would the correspondent, who was writing in 1846, present Stirner's wedding, which had taken place in 1843, as fresh news? Naturally, it is possible that the correspondent was indeed referring to the story of Stirner's wedding but strategically modified some details, including the date of the event. The reason may be quite simple. Stirner gained significant, if brief, popularity after the publication of *Der Einzige* in October 1844. The Berlin correspondent, evidently not a great admirer of Stirner and *Die Freien*, may have dusted off the bizarre story of Stirner's wedding and altered it in order to be able to present the French public with a 'recent' example of the supposedly sad state of current debates in Berlin. The focus of the story, then, does not seem to be Stirner himself, as L'Aminot implicitly suggests, but the state of the public debates in Berlin.

excerpt in the *Gazette* as an attempt by the French periodical to ridicule the philosopher without engaging with his thought and work.

Aside from this ambiguous story, L'Aminot cites a rather limited number of primary sources, especially for the period before 1892 – a year to which he refers as the moment of the 'true discovery' of Stirner by the French public. These sources are, in fact, only three: an 1847 article by journalist, historian, and expert on Germany Saint-René Taillandier, from which L'Aminot reports a couple of quotes and about which he only makes a few quick remarks; an *Histoire de la philosophie* (1875) by the spiritualist philosopher Alfred Fouillée, whose reference to Stirner L'Aminot, apparently only aware of the 1882 edition of the book, mentions in passing as an example of the echoes of the resurgence of individualism in the 1880s through figures like Nietzsche, Oscar Wilde, and Henrik Ibsen; and Théophile (sic) Funck-Brentano's book *Les Sophistes Allemands et les Nihilistes Russes* (1887).[20] All three authors, however, wrote about Stirner on multiple occasions, and their commentaries, like all the other neglected ones published by a variety of other authors before 1892, require far greater attention than has hitherto been devoted to them.

In the other publication dedicated expressly to the subject of 'Stirner and France', namely the 2012 issue of the journal *Der Einzige*, only two out of the seven articles that compose it actually focus on Stirner's reception. One of these is penned by Bernd Kast and Maurice Schuhmann, who provide a six-page general overview of French reactions to Stirner, though only two pages address the period before 1892. The other article centres instead on Stirner's twentieth-century French existentialist reception, particularly on Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, and is therefore not relevant here.[21]

In their article, Kast and Schuhmann briefly mention the same sources discussed by L'Aminot and, echoing him, they too refer to the first translations of passages from *Der Einzige* in *Les Entretiens politiques et littéraire* in 1892 (sic) as the real turning point in Stirner's reception in France. Additionally, Kast and Schuhmann provide references for a handful of other primary sources (less than ten) which they do not analyse but which will be addressed in greater detail in this dissertation. Kast is also the editor of the most complete 'Stirner bibliography' available today.[22] In it, he included all the sources mentioned above. These, however, seem to be the only primary sources to have been discussed or mentioned thus far by any scholar who ever wrote about Stirner's early French reception.

[20] L'Aminot returned to the topic of Stirner's reception a few years later in his book *Max Stirner. Le philosophe qui s'en va tout seul* (Clermont-Ferrand: L'Insomniaque, 2012)), where the reconstruction and analysis of the reactions to *Der Einzige* are no longer confined to the French context but extended worldwide. Here too, however, when dealing with Stirner's French reception L'Aminot essentially flits from the 1840s (mentioning Taillandier's 1847 article, but not the *Gazette de France*'s alleged allusion to Stirner) to the 1880s (mentioning Funck-Brentano, but not Fouillée).

[21] The remaining articles consist of interesting comparative studies between Stirner and specific individuals, namely Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Charles Fourier (whom Schuhmann discusses as an influence on Stirner), Han Ryner, and Antonin Artaud, plus a study on Stirner's concepts of 'egoist' and 'egoism'.

[22] Freely accessible online, this bibliography was last updated in 2016.

Naturally, a great deal of publications exist whose primary focus is not Stirner's (early) French reception per se but which nonetheless address the subject, concentrating on the philosopher's impact on specific thinkers or currents from various epochs. The most recent publication to engage with specific aspects of Stirner's French reception is Wayne Bradshaw's *The Ego Made Manifest. Max Stirner, Egoism, and the Modern Manifesto* (2023). The book explores Stirner's contribution to the development of broadly modernist literary trends, and more specifically to the early development of the avant-garde literary manifesto between 1880 and 1914, with a focus on Stirner's egoism in particular – a rather partial and somewhat forced approach which often results in strange distortions of, or at the very least in reductive accounts on, Stirner's actual impact in France both within and beyond the context of modernist manifestos. In the chapter devoted to the rise of literary egoism in France, Bradshaw suggests that 'there is evidence that Stirner's influence on French literature and politics began not with Reclaire's complete translation in 1899, but more than a decade earlier.'[23] However, the chapter does not offer any concrete evidence in this sense, that is to say, no references are provided for texts written by a French author before 1892 which address Stirner in a positive manner. Aside from brief references to Taillandier's article, Funck-Brentano's book, and perhaps some of the other sources mentioned above, most works addressing Stirner's early French reception unfortunately do not dig any deeper than this in terms of research and critical analysis.

III. Methodology and timeframe

This thesis draws on a number of reception histories of German culture and philosophy in France, especially the studies of Michel Espagne and Michael Werner. Their concept of 'Transferts culturels' remains an essential guiding principle for transnational reception studies.[24] For Espagne and Werner, the way in which a cultural artefact is received within another culture is determined more by the uses that the receiving culture (France) makes of it and the resistance that this receiving culture opposes to its reception rather than by the way it is regarded or used in the source culture (Germany). Accordingly, Stirner and the other German thinkers in relation to whom he was generally discussed in France (primarily Hegel and his heirs) will not be treated here as 'external forces' that created specific changes in France all by themselves. Rather, this thesis will show how French intellectuals actively engaged with German philosophers, selected parts of their work, transformed it, and used it based on their own needs and demands.

Naturally, the way in which all these operations were performed by a given author should also be understood in relation to the more or less consistent adherence of that author to wider conventions and traditions. It is in this sense that the concept of 'transferts culturels' has been integrated here with Peter

[23] Bradshaw, *The Ego Made Manifest*, 55.

[24] Michel Espagne and Michael Werner, 'La construction d'une référence culturelle allemande en France: genèse et histoire (1750-1914)', *Annales*, 42 (1987), 969-992. The numerous other works in which Espagne and Werner further develop the concept of 'transferts culturels' are referenced throughout Chapter One.

Janssen's valuable notion of 'traditionary action', which posits that individuals often engage with tradition in an actively instrumental manner rather than passively receptive.[25] By aligning themselves (or associating others) with a certain tradition, authors were trying to confer authority to themselves or to their own ideas (or to those of others). This operation could also serve critical purposes: by associating others or their ideas with traditions that were generally perceived in a negative light, some French authors tried to discredit their opponents, dissociating themselves from them while at the same time exalting their own tradition. This approach was extremely common in early commentaries on Stirner, whom French intellectuals indiscriminately associated, for polemical purposes, with multiple traditions, such as Protestantism, Hegelian panlogism and hyper-rationalism, pantheism, atheism, socialism, communism, materialism, nihilism, revolution, militarism, cult of force, and more.

From this perspective, Stirner's work, like that of the Young Hegelians more generally, may be said to have represented for several decades in France what historian Samuel Moyn has recently referred to as an 'anticanon'.[26] Borrowing the term from constitutional law expert Jamal Greene,[27] Moyn has used the concept of the 'anticanon' to describe all those 'past books, figures, or movements that are anathematized in order to define and stabilize traditions.'[28] To many French intellectuals, it remained important to cite and discuss the Young Hegelians' ideas, or even simply to reiterate and spread certain negative interpretations of them, in order to better frame their own principles and define their own traditions by way of opposition. Stirner's ideas, understood as dangerous 'errors', were consequently 'kept alive', so to speak, as examples of what should be avoided or fought.

Espagne's and Werner's work has informed the approach of a recent collective study on *Hegel and Schelling in Early Nineteenth-Century France* which has also been an important source for the present work. The author of this thesis fully embraces the principle, outlined by the editors of the book, that 'reception is inherently deformation and recreation (as well as, in some instances, the letting die of unappropriated ideas)'; that 'reception involves attitudes of aggression, puzzlement and bemusement far more often than affirmation or even fascination'; that to study French intellectuals who mutated German philosophy and culture 'is to insist on conceptual deviations *as constitutive*…'[29] Reception, the authors of the book further contend, is not a passive process in which French intellectuals are reduced to a kind of receptacle or mirror. On the contrary, French encounters with German texts are characterized by selection and hierarchization, producing what Dieter Henrich has termed philosophical 'constellations' and which the contributors to *Hegel*

[25] Peter L. Janssen, 'Political thought as traditionary action: the critical response to Skinner and Pocock', *History and Theory*, 24 (May 1985), 115-46.
[26] Samuel Moyn, *Liberalism against Itself. Cold War Intellectuals and the Making of our Times* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2023), 19.
[27] Jamal Greene, 'The Anticanon', *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 125, No. 2, Dec. 2011, 379-475 (385-387).
[28] Moyn, *Liberalism*, 19.
[29] Kirill Chepurin et al. (eds.), *Hegel and Schelling in Early Nineteenth-Century France* (Springer, 2023, 2 Vols.), Vol. 1, 10.

and Schelling in Early Nineteenth-Century France argue should be extended across national borders, so as to create what Espagne and Werner call 'a topography of transfers'.[30]

This study has also availed itself of a number of other works on the French reception of Hegelianism,[31] not only because the history of Hegel's French reception and that of Stirner and other Young Hegelians remained intimately connected until at least the 1870s, but also because of the similar methodological issues that they pose. Moreover, having already delineated the boundaries of the areas in which the reception of Hegelianism unfolded, this literature has proved useful in indicating where to look for a possible engagement with Stirner's ideas in France during the 1840s and beyond. However, as Chapter Five will show, from the 1870s Stirner's reception began to gradually shift away from its original Hegelian context, assuming new peculiar trajectories and resulting in new uses of his ideas by French commentators.

In order to explain what French intellectuals 'did' with Stirner's ideas, it is not sufficient to consider them merely as intellectuals engaged with other academics in specific contemporary debates. Their socio-political context and the way in which they understood it should also be considered when approaching their work. Equal importance is therefore given here to presenting a general overview of the relevant historical contexts and to the way in which the specific author or groups of authors under exam understood their own environment.

Espagne and Werner stress the importance of networks of individuals for the collective construction of images of the foreign cultural artefact in the context of shared religious beliefs, political positions, moral values, ideologies, etc. Certain communities, such as the clergy (who represent a large portion of Stirner's critics), share similar backgrounds, goals, professions, literary practices, and vocabulary, and these must all be taken into account. At the same time, though, generalizations based on the various features that these authors and their commentaries have in common will be made with caution. As historian Laurence Veysey once pointed out while commenting on generalizations about social aggregates, 'to be credible, generalizations must be extremely hard earned. […] A historian should not claim to be writing about a social aggregate broader than the one reflected in the evidence collected.'[32]

This thesis has also paid attention to what Michael Warner has referred to as 'constraints of circulation', namely those elements which determine how a text circulates, which readers it will reach, and the possible outcomes of its reception. For Warner, these constraints are both material and internal. Material constraints include the means of production and distribution of texts, the physical textual objects themselves, and the social conditions of access to them, whereas internal ones include the 'forms of intelligibility' which determine the kind of reader that will be able to 'understand' a given text.[33] Constraints

[30] Ibid, 11; Dieter Henrich, *Konstellationen. Probleme und Debatten am Ursprung der idealistischen Philosophie (1789–1795)* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1992); Espagne and Werner, 'La construction d'une référence culturelle allemande en France', 988.
[31] They are all referenced at the beginning of Chapter One.
[32] Laurence Veysey, 'Intellectual History and the New Social History', in John Higham and Paul Conkin (eds.), *New Directions in American Intellectual History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 23, 20.
[33] Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone, 2002), 54-55.

of circulation can often tell us much about how certain interpretations of Stirner's ideas were favoured over others or more likely to emerge than others. Limited access to specific sources often prevented French intellectuals from having a complete picture of the philosophical and political developments in Germany or from knowing essential details about Stirner's biography and his publications that may have brought about a more informed opinion. Naturally, though, no interpretation, whether positive or negative, can ever be entirely 'predictable'. Nor can any interpretation ever be considered 'inevitable'. Even if a given author had excellent knowledge of Stirner (and this was *never* the case in the period considered here), they still may have interpreted his ideas and used them in the most diverse, original ways based on their own goals and modes of understanding.

Reading is a social act as well as a process of individual interpretation. As Ika Willis argues, 'it is not the text alone […] that directs the reader's interpretation, but the set of interpretative conventions which we bring to the text. The text does not carry these conventions with it, […] they change over time and with cultural and social context, so that the "same" text may be read according to different conventions, and thus mean different things.'[34] It should be pointed out, though, that the vast majority of those who commented on Stirner before 1899 (the year when *Der Einzige* was first translated into French) had not read the original text. In fact, most of them were only able to familiarize themselves with Stirner's ideas by reading the summaries and the passages of *Der Einzige* translated by a handful French authors who seem to have actually read the book, or parts of it, in German. These authors, however, could be counted on the fingers of one hand. As shall be seen, their selections of quotes, their strategic emphases, omissions, or even manipulations shaped Stirner's reception for decades.

For all these reasons, this study cannot properly be described as 'a history of reading Stirner.' However, as Willis aptly notes, 'not reading a text is […] not the same as not knowing about it or not engaging with it. In fact, "not reading" is a complicated phenomenon which encompasses several modes of engagement with texts.'[35] Benwell, Procter, and Robinson argue that not reading is perhaps best understood as 'part of a continuum of reading rather than its opposite: partial reading, selective reading, sectional reading, readings based on extracts, reviews, and second-hand information – these activities have all been labelled "not reading" in book controversies.'[36] Building on Jonathan Gray's claim that 'we actually consume some texts through paratexts and supportive intertexts, the text itself becoming expendable',[37] Willis maintains that 'it is therefore possible to produce a reading of a text which one has never, in fact, read, if a "reading" of a text is understood to be a coherent interpretation of it, produced collectively in relation to

[34] Ika Willis, *Reception* (London and New York: Routledge, 2018), 112.
[35] Ibid, 105.
[36] Bethan Benwell, James Procter, and Gemma Robinson, 'Not Reading Brick Lane', *New Formations*, 2011, 73: 90-116 (95).
[37] Jonathan Gray, *Watching with The Simpsons: Television, Parody, and Intertextuality* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 37.

specific social and historical norms and articulated to another person.'[38] In *How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read*, Pierre Bayard contends that 'reading is first and foremost non-reading',[39] partly because reading is always mediated and ultimately only consists in constructing an image of a book through its partial appropriations. For Bayard, reading is an ambiguous phenomenon, inherently partial and provisional, not bound by rigid distinctions between true and false, and largely shaped by other readers and cultural norms, which mediate our relationship to texts more than the texts themselves do. Finally, as Willis points out, 'non-readers', 'resistant readers' and 'active audiences' collectively influence their reactions. They read partially and selectively and they mentally alter texts, using them as 'jumping-off points for social interactions and conversations to the point where, in some cases, the "meaning" of the text, or even the text itself, barely figures at all.'[40]

For the purposes of this dissertation, Stirner's French reception is understood as the totality of texts written in French *and* published in France during the period under consideration. This thesis will not usually include texts written in French but published outside France (for example in Belgium or Switzerland) unless these texts can be shown to have contributed to shaping Stirner's reception in France or unless they help shed light on it. This thesis will also occasionally engage with texts originally written in different languages that were translated into French and published in France.

Finally, a few words on the timeframe. The reason for choosing the publication date of Stirner's masterpiece (1844) as its starting point is quite simple. Up until the close of the nineteenth century, with very few exceptions, *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum* was the only text by Stirner of which the French public were aware or at least the only one with which they chose to engage. More generally, *Der Einzige* has traditionally been, and remains to this day, the main object of discussion among Stirner scholars everywhere.

The year 1892, on the other hand, has been selected as the terminal point of this thesis because it represents a watershed in the history of Stirner's French reception. Firstly, this is the year when partial translations of *Der Einzige* began to appear in France. The publication of these translations enabled the French audience to acquaint themselves with Stirner's work, though according to Diederik Dettmeijer, Lasvignes' and Reclaire's translations were 'clearly insufficient, both from a philosophical and literary point of view: the Stirnerian "style" could not be detected, so much so that a French reader who was unfamiliar with the nuances of German philosophical terms could not have truly penetrated Stirner's thought'.[41] Secondly, it is from the year 1892 onward that the first positive reactions to the German philosopher began to emerge in France,[42] signalling a departure from the predominantly hostile trends that had characterized the initial forty years of his French reception. Finally, as most of the works on Stirner's reception cited in this

[38] Willis, *Reception*, 106.
[39] Pierre Bayard, *How to Talk about Books You Haven't Read*, transl. Jeffrey Mehlman (London: Granta, 2008 [2007]), 6.
[40] Willis, *Reception*, 106.
[41] Diederik Dettmeijer, *Max Stirner ou la première confrontation entre Karl Marx et la pensée anti-autoritaire* (Lausanne: L'Age d'homme, Cahiers de Philosophie, 1979), 7.
[42] Some of the most important publications in this sense will also be briefly discussed in the conclusions of the thesis.

introduction show, Stirner's French reception after 1892 is far better known to scholars than his earlier reception, therefore deserving special attention.

IV. *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum*

Before delving into the reactions to Stirner's ideas in France, a few words on the text where Stirner articulated these ideas are in order. *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum* is generally known in English-speaking countries as *The Ego and His Own*, after the title chosen in 1907 by American individualist anarchist Benjamin R. Tucker (1854-1939).[43] The present thesis, however, while usually referring to the book simply as *Der Einzige*, adopts in principle Wolfi Landstreicher's more literal and far more accurate translation: *The Unique and Its Property*.[44] All the translated citations of *Der Einzige* in this thesis are from this recent edition.

Stirner's magnum opus has been described as 'one of the most subversive, radical and extreme texts in all of history [and] one of the most misread, misinterpreted and misunderstood books in the history of modern Western thought.'[45] In *Der Einzige*, Stirner presents a radical egoistic philosophy that emphasizes the sovereignty of the individual.[46] He argues against the dominance of institutions, ideologies, and moral principles that subjugate individuals under abstract concepts such as the State, religion, God, humanity, duty, law, right, truth, good and evil, the right cause, and social conventions. According to Stirner, these are all products of a religious mindset, a residue of the Judeo-Christian legacy. Throughout *Der Einzige*, he variously refers to these concepts and ideals as 'spooks' and 'fixed ideas'.

For Stirner, individuals should assert their own self-interest and desires without being bound by external authorities or moral codes. Each individual is urged to embrace their uniqueness and act according to their own will and power, rather than conforming to societal norms or ideologies. Stirner argues that individuals should constantly reassess and redefine their identity and desires based on their evolving interests and circumstances. In this sense, he also proposes the idea of voluntary associations or 'unions of egoists' (*Verein von Egoisten*), where individuals come together based on mutual self-interest and agreements rather than obligations or moral duties. These unions are fluid and can dissolve whenever they no longer serve the interests of the participants.

A fundamental notion discussed far more substantially in *Der Einzige* is that of *Eigenheit*, a concept which has generally been rendered as 'ownness.'[47] According to Beiser, ownness consists of three fundamental elements. The first is *selfishness*, that is, putting one's own interests first, making oneself the

[43] Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own*, transl. Steven T. Byington (New York, 1907), with prefaces by Benjamin R. Tucker and Steven T. Byington and with an introduction by James L. Walker.
[44] Max Stirner, *The Unique and Its Property*, transl. Wolfi Landstreicher (Baltimore: Underworld Amusements, 2017).
[45] Jason McQuinn, Introduction to Wolfi Landstreicher's translation of Max Stirner's *Stirner's Critics* (LBC Books and CAL Press, 2012), 5-6.
[46] Jacob Blumenfeld has recently argued against reading *Der Einzige* through the lenses of egoism. See *All Things are Nothing to Me. The Unique Philosophy of Max Stirner* (Winchester/Washington: Zero Books, 2018), esp. 17-24.
[47] *The Ego and Its Own*, edited by David Leopold, transl. Steven Byington (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

sole end of one's life and the driving force of one's actions. The second is *self-determination or autonomy*. For Stirner, selfishness does not exhaust the characteristics of ownness. He makes a distinction between 'involuntary' or 'unconscious' egoists, who he thinks do not go far enough, and 'voluntary' or 'self-conscious egoists', who voluntarily and self-consciously make their interests the goal of all their actions, that is, through self-determination or autonomy. The third element is *self-creation*. For Stirner, ownness involves making oneself who one is, so that one is only what one wills to be and not what someone else wills one to be.[48]

Additionally, Stirner differentiates ownness from the ideal of freedom. While claiming that true freedom can only arise from ownership, he also contends that ownership encompasses more than just freedom, particularly in its conventional liberal interpretation. Stirner views freedom as primarily a negative value, in that it releases individuals from restraints, constraints, and obstacles without however giving anything concrete to the individual or providing direction in life. Even if one were to achieve absolute freedom, Stirner argues, one would still be left with nothing tangible. Ownness, by contrast, entails also the power to get what one wants. As Beiser summarizes, 'What distinguishes the free man (*der Freie*) from the owner (*der Eigner*) is that the owner has power. Power takes priority over freedom, Stirner argues, because if I have power then I can become free; but if I am free, then I do not necessarily have power.'[49]

Freedom, Stirner argues, is a difficult ideal to achieve, for one is always subjected to external constraints. Ownness, on the contrary, is something that one always has and that cannot be taken away from an individual. Even in enslavement, one retains ownership of oneself. Pursuing freedom as the ultimate ideal, Stirner contends, could indeed jeopardize our sense of ownness, as we might lose sight of our true selves, our interests, and our genuine desires.

Closely connected with the concept of ownness is that of property, which appears in the very title of Stirner's book. As Beiser explains, 'To have ownness (*Eigenheit*) the owner (*der Eigner*) regards everything in the world (at least in principle) as his own or his property (*Eigentum*)… [Stirner] is saying that the self-determining or autonomous individual should see everything in the world as belonging to him because it is (at least in principle) something that he can use as means for his ends. […] My property does not consist in a thing, because a thing has some existence independent of me; rather, it is simply my power to appropriate the thing.'[50]

Der Einzige cannot be understood without reference to its historical context and the authors with whom Stirner was in conversation, that is, *Die Freien* (The Free Ones) and the Young Hegelians, particularly Feuerbach and Bruno Bauer. The Hegelian School or current, Moggach and De Ridder explain, was never a unified movement, but rather 'a loose association, with various geographical foci and publishing networks

[48] Beiser, 'Max Stirner', 293-4.
[49] Ibid, 294.
[50] Ibid, 295.

scattered throughout the German states.'[51] The Young Hegelians' political objective was to redefine political concepts of freedom, safeguarding the Enlightenment heritage of reason and emancipation while correcting the errors of Enlightenment thought, which, despite its cultural significance, had yet to eliminate the potential for irrationalist counter-movements.[52]

In this context, however, Stirner's position, as noted by Moggach and De Ridder, was significantly different, for he 'not only scorned all attempts at an immanent critique of Hegel and the Enlightenment, but renounced Young Hegelian emancipatory claims as well.'[53] Emphasizing disengagement, Stirner embraced a distinctively particularistic understanding of freedom. Rather than challenging the given as an inadequate embodiment of rationality, he proposed to consider it a mere object, an object which should not be transformed but enjoyed and consumed as one's property. This position, Moggach and De Ridder argue, clearly dissociates Stirner from the humanistic Hegelian tradition.[54]

In the introduction to his recent *Max Stirner on the Path of Doubt* (2020), Stirner scholar Lawrence S. Stepelevich, echoing historian and Hegelian Johann Erdmann and philosopher Karl Löwith, argues that 'Stirner is not simply, in a historical sense, "the last of the Hegelians," but that his philosophy is the realization of what is entailed in "being a Hegelian."'[55] Based on the premise that Stirner was from the beginning 'neither an "Old Hegelian" dedicated to the exhaustive autopsy of the Hegelian corpus nor a "Young Hegelian" bent upon employing it to a further purpose',[56] Stepelevich attempts to determine the true significance of Stirner's thought in the history of Hegel's aftermath by suggesting that it is precisely the author of *Der Einzige* who represents the natural inheritor and true fulfiller of Hegel's dialectical logic, not the other epigones of the Master.

De Ridder, on the other hand, takes a different view which emphasizes to a greater degree Stirner's originality and his 'otherness' with respect to Hegel, the Young Hegelians, and philosophy more broadly: 'Max Stirner has often been considered a Young Hegelian, or even the "last Hegelian". Such a reading implies that Stirner drew the logical conclusions of Hegel's philosophy, thereby ignoring the way his thought marks a fundamental break with the philosophical tradition as a whole. Stirner's notions of "egoism", "ownness" and "*Der Einzige*" ("the ego") were not philosophical concepts but, in a Foucauldian sense, tools to dismantle the subject-object dichotomy and its social and political bearings in the wake of modernity.'[57]

Clochec's position is somewhere in between Stepelevich's and De Ridder's. For her, Stirner's polemical relationship with the other Young Hegelians does not constitute a break with Young Hegelianism

[51] Douglas Moggach and Widukind De Ridder, 'Hegelianism in Restoration Prussia, 1841–1848: Freedom, Humanism and "Anti-Humanism" in Young Hegelian Thought', in Lisa Herzog (ed.), *Hegel's Thought in Europe Currents, Crosscurrents and Undercurrents* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 71-92 (73).
[52] Ibid, 73.
[53] Ibid, 74-5.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Lawrence Stepelevich, *Max Stirner on the Path of Doubt* (Lexington Books, 2020), 6.
[56] Ibid, 2.
[57] Widukind De Ridder, 'Max Stirner: The End of Philosophy and Political Subjectivity', in Saul Newman (ed.), *Max Stirner* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 143-164 (143).

but rather *one way of being Young Hegelian*, one which is not typical solely of Stirner but diffused among Young Hegelians around 1844 and characterized by a generalized self-criticism. The movement, she argues, came to realize that to be a Young Hegelian, to be truly critical, one needs to proclaim one's break with other Young Hegelians.[58]

Roberts has aptly noted that 'To those left cold by the bombast, internecine polemics, and melodrama of post-Hegelian German philosophy, it might seem either that Hegel's students failed to attain the height of their master, and so fell into obscure partisan squabbles, or else that the entire project of German idealism contained the germs of this debacle from the beginning, and that it serves as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole tradition.'[59] As shall be seen, both of these views were common not only among the 'post-Hegelians' themselves, as Roberts has pointed out, but also among French contemporary observers.

Unlike in Germany, however, few in France approached Stirner's work in a serious, methodical way before the turn of the nineteenth century. French commentators during this period were quick to single him out as the latest, most corrupt, and at the same time, most representative product of Hegelianism, often using their superficial interpretations of the philosopher to make broader points about German culture and its allegedly negative influence – whether direct or indirect – on France and the world. What further differentiates the initial French reception of Stirner from his German (and Russian) reception is that the French response was, as mentioned, entirely negative, whereas the German (and Russian) reception included some positive assessments. Additionally, in France, there was a considerably greater quantity and variety of instrumental uses of Stirner's thought or, rather, of the mere reference to Stirner. The dual reaction to Stirner's ideas – of repulsion and instrumentalization – highlights the complex and multifaceted impact of his thought, making it a rich subject for historical and philosophical analysis.

V. Stirner's significance and his place in the history of thought

The intensity of the reactions Stirner's work has incited since its first appearance in 1844 makes his reception a fascinating and stimulating object of study. The visceral rejection of Stirner's philosophy by French commentators and their simultaneous eagerness to mention him in passing merely for polemical and strategic purposes should not induce Stirner scholars to consider his early French reception as somehow less important but, rather, give them pause for thought. Numerous French intellectuals from all fields and backgrounds evidently felt compelled to deal with, or at a minimum respond to and take a stance against, Stirner's provocative claims and the uncomfortable perspectives outlined in *Der Einzige*, both because of the particular contents of the book – of which, however, they generally had very limited knowledge – and

[58] Pauline Clochec, 'Le jeune hégélianisme de Stirner dans *L'Unique*', in Olivier Agard and Françoise Lartillot (eds.), *Max Stirner. L'Unique et sa propriété: lectures critiques* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2017), 71-88 (86).
[59] William Clare Roberts, 'Feuerbach and the Left and Right Hegelians', in Alan D. Schrift (ed.), *The History of Continental Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), Vol. 2, 377-394 (377).

because of the broader traditions that they associated (or believed to be associated) with the German philosopher. In doing so, these authors unintentionally confirmed the intrinsic value of Stirner's ideas, revealing their extraordinary versatility, their far-reaching nature and diverse array of potential implications, their power to unsettle people and force them to take position, their somewhat maieutic effect (one may even speak of a 'Stirner effect', intended both positively and negatively), their capacity to lead readers to either revise drastically their deeply held beliefs or dismiss Stirner with nervous indignation. All this goes to show that, ultimately, Stirner's significance as a thinker lies not solely in the acceptance of his ideas or the originality and sophistication of their interpretation – traditionally the criteria scholars use to select which of Stirner's commentators are worth studying – but in their capacity to provoke thought, stimulate debate, and challenge our most fundamental principles and institutions.

For scholars interested in Stirner, this dynamic underscores the importance of engaging seriously with all forms of reception and with all kinds of Stirner's interpreters and critics, including those conventionally considered 'minor' and often overlooked due to the cursory and overwhelmingly negative nature of their commentaries about him. One of the aims of this thesis is, therefore, to demonstrate that such a change in perspective will foster a more nuanced understanding of Stirner's impact on, and place in, the history of thought, encouraging a new approach to the analysis of the inherent qualities, consequences, and merits of Stirner's ideas.

According to John Welsh, 'Stirner's most important contribution in the history of ideas is his unique description of modernity and the problems it poses to individuals and social relations.'[60] Building on Welsh's assessment, Tim Dowdall has recently stressed the importance of the radicalism of Stirner's message (amplified over time by his seemingly mischievous desire to scandalize his readers), noting that 'he dared to go where no thinker had gone before, or, arguably, has since, in proposing the complete dismantling of all sacred heteronomous abstractions which, in his opinion, enslave the individual to extraneous causes and inhibit her or his potential for egoistic self-fulfillment. This extreme proposition encourages Stirner's readers not only to question authority in all its manifestations but also to confront the validity of their own and others' convictions and beliefs.'[61] Capturing the essence of Stirner's enduring significance, Dowdall has further argued that 'In a postmodern Western world of seemingly unlimited skepticism and unbridled individualism, the issues that are raised by Stirner's philosophical undertaking, by undermining the entire ideological fabric of mankind and, however inadvertently, opening up to scrutiny the *telos* of the Enlightenment project with regard to the eradication of dogma, are arguably as crucial today as they were in Stirner's own time.'[62]

[60] John F. Welsh, *Max Stirner's Dialectical Egoism: A New Interpretation* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010), 280.
[61] Dowdall, *Max Stirner and Nihilism*, 7.
[62] Ibid.

Against R.W.K. Paterson's 'largely unchallenged' nihilist interpretation of Stirner,[63] which 'has done immeasurable damage to Stirner's standing',[64] and rejecting the association of Stirner with the 'nihilistic literature' of such individuals as Leopardi, Schopenhauer, Poe, and others, Dowdall has suggested, rather convincingly, that the author of *Der Einzige* may be more easily situated within the atomistic-Epicurean tradition, that is, the tradition which French philosopher Michel Onfray traces from Democritus, Diogenes, Protagoras, and Epicurus, via the gnostics, Gassendi, Erasmus, Montaigne, to libertines such as Saint-Evremond and Cyrano de Bergerac, followed by French materialists like Meslier, La Mettrie, and d'Holbach; Anglo-Saxon utilitarians like Bentham and Mill; Epicurean transcendentalists like Emerson and Thoreau; deconstructive genealogists like Paul Rée, Lou Salomé, and Jean-Marie Guyau; libertarian socialists; leftist Nietzschians like Deleuze and Foucault; and many other 'disciples of pleasure, matter, flesh, body, life, enjoyment, joy, and other sinful things.'[65] All of these thinkers, whom Onfray describes collectively as enemies of Plato, display an essentially hedonistic and optimistic attitude towards existence: 'They want happiness on earth, here and now, not later in some hypothetical, unattainable world…'[66] United by what Onfray calls 'the aspiration of the Epicurean project,' that is, 'the pure pleasure of existing',[67] these anti-Platonists also all share 'a formidable concern with deconstructing myths and fables, rendering this world inhabitable and desirable.'[68]

Insisting on the latter point, Dowdall has aptly pointed out that 'Stirner was the first, and is, arguably, the only thinker to deconstruct entirely man's urge to mythologize, not only in terms of extant myths like monarchy, state, and religion, but also with regard to the process of mythologization itself.'[69] Dowdall's estimation of Stirner's overall value as a thinker, based primarily on his work of demystification and demythologization, may therefore help us understand what it is, in the final analysis, that so provoked and antagonized Stirner's nineteenth-century French (though not only French) commentators and continues to do so today: 'For a species whose coherence, identity, self-belief, sense of security, and evolutionary success depend crucially on its unique capacity to create (and believe in) myths, a demythologizer appears instinctively to be an existential threat. From the point of view of the welfare of humanity, Stirner's iconoclasm is inexcusable, which is why so many writers, philosophers, and historians of ideas have never forgiven him, while simultaneously doing their level best to forget him.'[70]

Since its release in 1844, *Der Einzige* directly and fundamentally challenged all past and contemporary religions, philosophies, and ideologies. Stirner's uncompromising stance and scathing attacks

[63] See Paterson's aforementioned *The Nihilistic Egoist: Max Stirner*.
[64] Dowdall, *Max Stirner and Nihilism*, 241.
[65] Michel Onfray, *A Hedonist Manifesto. The Power to Exist*, transl. Joseph McClellan (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015 [2006]), 9.
[66] Ibid, 10.
[67] Ibid, 11.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Dowdall, *Max Stirner and Nihilism*, 242.
[70] Ibid, 238-9.

alienated him from theologians, philosophers, and ideologists who were busy developing or implementing their grand ideas, theories, and systems. The stage was thus set for 'over a century and a half of (most often successful, because most often unopposed) mystification of Stirner's intentions by his many critics from 1844 through the present,' as McQuinn writes. Even many self-proclaimed proponents of Stirner's work often contributed to the mystification through misunderstandings and uncritical oversimplifications.

Without a proper understanding of why and how these mystifications came to be, it is impossible to separate Stirner's work from the burdensome legacy of outdated and highly ideological interpretations provided by both his detractors and supporters. Most Stirner scholars only have limited awareness of the author's actual impact on major political and philosophical traditions (e.g. anarchism and nihilism) or in specific fields of the humanities (e.g. sociology, literature, and psychology). Factual mistakes and unsubstantiated generalizations remain very common in publications on Stirner, including those devoted to his reception. Claims about Stirner's place in the history of ideas should rest on careful historical reconstructions of philosophical, political, artistic, and literary traditions, not on philosophizing, politicized, aestheticized, and romanticized interpretations of historical facts, epochs, and phenomena. From this perspective, Stirner's early French reception may therefore also be understood as an instructive case study whose analysis will alert not only historians but also philosophers and political theorists interested in Stirner to the pitfalls and dangers of ahistorical, anachronistic, and ideological interpretations of his intellectual contributions.

VI. Thesis structure

The thesis is divided into five chapters organized according to both thematic and chronological criteria. Understanding Stirner's early French reception requires first and foremost an examination of French engagement with German culture and philosophy, especially Hegel and Left Hegelianism, in the first half of the nineteenth century. For this reason, Chapter One, introductory in scope, is devoted to an assessment of the level of knowledge of, interest in, and access to German philosophical works amongst intellectuals and the wider public in France, along with the cultural milieus facilitating their dissemination. The chapter also investigates the interpretative frameworks, prior assumptions, literary conventions, philosophical traditions, and ideological lenses through which French audiences viewed German philosophers in general and Hegel and the Left Hegelians in particular during the middle decades of the century. After an analysis of the early reception of Hegelianism in France, the chapter devotes particular attention to the role played by German socialists and communists in Paris during the 1830s and 1840s in consolidating the association of Hegelianism with revolution and atheism and in the creation of a negative image of the 'Hegelian' type, which Stirner came to epitomize more than any of his predecessors soon after the introduction of his ideas in France.

Chapter Two concentrates on some of the earliest and most historically significant commentaries on Stirner in France, penned by liberal journalists Alexandre Thomas and Saint-René Taillandier and featured in the influential *Revue des Deux Mondes*. From the mid-1840s, their extensive writings on the Young Hegelians and the Young Germany movement contributed to shaping Stirner's reception with negative interpretations which persisted well into the 1880s. Taillandier, in particular, was arguably the single most important figure in the history of Stirner's early French reception. His summaries and interpretations of Stirner's work informed the publications of the vast majority of Stirner's subsequent commentators.

The chapter analyses Taillandier's and Thomas' seminal works within the cultural, political, and philosophical discourses of the time, alongside the political agenda of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and in relation to the ambivalent stance toward Germany of many French contemporary Germanophile liberals. For some of these authors, the Young Hegelians and Stirner in particular came to represent everything that was wrong with contemporary Germany, and their ideas were commonly used to make broader points about German contemporary culture and philosophy as well as to extol France's traditions by way of opposition.

Chapter Three is dedicated to Stirner's spiritualist reception. In seeking to renew Victor Cousin's eclectic spiritualism, and reacting against radical democracy and positivist socialism, prominent philosophers like Émile Saisset, Elme-Marie Caro, and Paul Janet engaged in polemics against German and French materialism and Comtean positivism. Some spiritualists traced the origins of these 'evils' to Kantian skepticism and Hegelian philosophy. Against the perceived threats of materialism and positivist socialism, spiritualists defended the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and metaphysical conceptions of man's natural rights and dignity.

Despite finding Stirner's conclusions appalling, spiritualists acknowledged the logic of his arguments and even used his critique of Feuerbach to condemn both French positivists and Hegelians. Understanding Stirner's spiritualist reception, however, requires examining some of the developments that had occurred in German philosophy starting from the 1850s. For this reason, the first half of the chapter will be devoted to an overview of two phenomena in particular which had a substantial impact on Stirner's German and French reception alike: the transition, in certain German philosophical milieus, from idealism to materialism, and the rise of philosophical pessimism. The second half of the chapter will explore the immediate reactions in France, and especially among French spiritualists, to these philosophical developments and how these impacted Stirner's reception.

Chapter Four focuses on the French theologians, clergymen, and Christian apologists who wrote about Stirner between the 1840s and the late 1860s in the context of their criticism of a variety of perceived contemporary evils. Catholic polemicists represented the majority of Stirner's French commentators during this period and were the first ever to mention him in France. In their writings, Stirner soon became emblematic of pernicious German cultural influences, and associations with him were used to discredit a host of French controversial intellectuals in light of their philosophical, political, and religious views.

Drawing on Counter-Reformation, Counter-Enlightenment, and Counter-Revolution traditions, Catholic apologists interpreted and wrote about contemporary issues within the framework of a macro-narrative designed to account for society's alleged gradual deterioration through three main historical phases: Protestantism, rationalism, and pantheism. The chapter aims to understand Stirner's place in this macro-narrative. Additionally, it endeavours to show that Stirner's name was widely known among French clerical circles and was invoked for various religious, political, and ideological purposes.

Moving slightly forward in time, Chapter Five explores Stirner's reception in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71) and during the early Third Republic. Following France's devastating defeat, Germany underwent a rapid and dramatic transformation in French collective imagination. The idyllic image of Germany as a land of freedom, philosophy, and poetry described by Mme de Staël was soon replaced in the mind of French observers with that of a militaristic and barbaric Germany. This shift in the perception of Germany had a significant impact on the reception of German philosophers, including Stirner. During the 1870s, French intellectuals began to associate Stirner and other German controversial thinkers with what they believed to be Prussia's new 'national philosophy', that is, a philosophy of conquest based on the cult of force and the principle that 'might is right.'

From the early 1880s, on the other hand, another important trend emerged in Stirner's French reception. After the assassination of Russian Tsar Alexander II in 1881 by a group of revolutionaries, Stirner came to be regarded as one of the main sources of inspiration of Russian nihilism and as a nihilist himself. These charges rested on interpretations of *Der Einzige* which deliberately emphasized its alleged nature as a political manifesto purportedly conceived for militant revolutionary activists, highlighting the role of 'negation' in Stirner's philosophy. The nihilist interpretation of Stirner, like other kinds of interpretations discussed in this thesis, took several different forms over the decades and survived to this day. As shall be seen in the conclusions, however, around the 1890s the interpretations of Stirner in France (though not only) connected with Nietzsche and anarchism became predominant.

Laying the foundations for Stirner's negative reception

I. Introduction

In order to understand Stirner's early French reception and its overwhelmingly negative character, it is first and foremost necessary to provide a general overview of French engagement, during the first half of the nineteenth century, with German philosophy in general and with Hegel and Left Hegelianism in particular. What was the level of knowledge of German philosophy in France? Who showed an interest in it, and what was this interest due to? What kind of access did intellectuals and the wider public have to it? What forms of communication and what cultural milieus made its knowledge possible in France? Through which literary or philosophical traditions, prior assumptions, and ideological frameworks were German philosophers generally interpreted? In what light were they presented to the French public and why? And more generally, what role did German philosophy play in philosophical, cultural, and political debates in France before *Der Einzige* timidly began to make its appearance? Addressing these questions will help us understand the cultural context in which Hegel first, and Stirner and the Young Hegelians later, were introduced in France, and the preconditions for the often unfavourable reactions that they provoked.[1]

Equally important for this purpose, however, is an assessment of the repercussions stemming from the revolutionary and atheistic propaganda carried out in France in the forties by German socialists, communists, and radical thinkers and activists. Some of the German expatriates in Paris were themselves heirs of Hegelianism or representatives of the literary movement called Young Germany. In the French capital, they established more or less fruitful dialogues as well as personal contacts with their French counterparts. Through their incendiary publications, German radical writers and political agitators operating both in France and in their homeland encouraged an interpretation of German contemporary philosophy as a unified, coherent narrative or project which culminated, theologically and teleologically, in atheism and revolution. Partly for this reason, even those Left Hegelians who did not necessarily sojourn in France during the forties and who took no active part in the revolutions of 1848, like Stirner, Bruno Bauer, David Friedrich

[1] On Hegel and Hegelianism in nineteenth-century France, see Jacques D'Hondt, *Hegel et l'Hégélianisme* (PUF, 1982); Michael Kelly, *Hegel in France* (University of Birmingham, 1992); Jacques D'Hondt, 'La réception profane de Hegel en France', in Jean Quillien (ed.), *La Réception de la Philosophie Allemande en France aux XIX^e^ et XX^e^* (Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1994); Guido Oldrini, 'La liquidazione dell'hegelismo nella Francia bonapartista, in *Giornale Critico della Filosofia Italiana*, No. 1/2000, sixth series – Vol. XX, year LXXIX (LXXXI), Fascicolo I. Jan.-Apr., 2000; Paul Rowe, *A Mirror on the Rhine? The* Nouvelle revue germanique*, Strasbourg 1829-1837* (Peter Lang, 2000), 223-56; Guido Oldrini, *Hegel e l'Hegelismo nella Francia dell'Ottocento* (Naples: Angelo Guerini, 2001); Éric Puisais, *La Naissance de l'Hégélianisme Français, 1830-1870* (L'Harmattan, 2005); Andrea Bellantone, *Hegel en France*, 2 Vols. (Hermann, 2011 [2007]); Andrea Bellantone, *Tra Eclettismo e idealismo. Frammenti di filosofia francese dell'Ottocento* (Padua: CLEUP, 2010), Chapter Three; Éric Puisais, *L'Hégélianisme et son destin français* (L'Harmattan, 2012); Éric Puisais, 'L'anti-hégélianisme', *La Pensée*, 2014/2, No. 378, 51-63; Amaury Catel, *Le Traducteur et le démiurge. Hermann Ewerbeck, un communiste allemand à Paris (1841–1860)* (Nancy: Éditions de l'Arbre Bleu, 2019), 131–39; Éric Puisais, 'Un hégélien atypique: fiction et réception de Hegel en France au XIX^e^ siècle', in Christine Baron and Laurence Ellena (eds.), *Savoirs de la Fiction* (La Licorne, 2021), 125-134; Éric Puisais, 'L'Héritage paradoxal de Hegel dans la philosophie française du XIX^e^ siècle', in Kaveh Boveiri (ed.), *L'Héritage de Hegel - Hegel's Legacy* (Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2022), 131-144; Kirill Chepurin et al. (eds.), *Hegel and Schelling in Early Nineteenth-Century France* (Springer, 2023, 2 Vols.).

Strauss, and Ludwig Feuerbach, eventually came to be associated with revolution, or at any rate with dangerous philosophical doctrines whose concrete implications France and Europe had witnessed during the revolutionary upheavals.

Moreover, with their controversial writings and political activism, German socialists and communists in France contributed to the creation and diffusion of a fearsome, if rather ludicrous, image of the 'Hegelian type', a lasting image which Stirner soon came to embody perhaps more than anyone else. Most French intellectuals readily accepted this image as true and conveniently used it for various polemical purposes that will be discussed throughout the thesis.

In keeping with the goals and premises delineated above, the first section of this chapter will explore the reception of Hegelianism in France in relation to the role that German philosophy used to play in French public debates. This section will also examine a number of key aspects of French (philosophical) culture and its early engagement with German culture that significantly shaped French intellectuals' responses to Stirner as well as their general attitudes towards Germany over the following decades.

Subsequently, the second section will focus on the contributions of German radical thinkers and activists residing in France to the dissemination of philosophical and political ideas perceived by the majority of French intellectuals as abhorrent and detrimental to public morality, religion, and social stability. The second section will also assess the disquieting (and rather distorted) depiction of German contemporary philosophy and of the 'Hegelian type' that these authors conveyed – in large part deliberately – to the French public, thereby laying the foundations for Stirner's immediate negative reception.

II. German philosophy and Hegelianism in France

Since the times of Charles de Villers' and Germaine de Staël's influential accounts on German culture and philosophy, published between the late 1790s and the 1810s, and for the largest part of the nineteenth century, it was common opinion in France that German philosophy encapsulated the essence of German culture in its entirety and of Germanness itself, that it even represented the German nation and its people at large.[2] Moreover, as Sam Bootle has shown, German philosophy was perceived to be not merely novel or different but 'other', appearing 'as fundamentally alien, as opposed in essence to the French way of thinking, philosophical tradition, and national character.'[3]

[2] Jean-Marie Carré's *Les Écrivains français et le mirage allemand, 1800-1940* (Paris: Boivin, 1947) and Claude Digeon's classic *La Crise allemande de la pensée française, 1870-1914* (Paris: PUF, 1959) remain useful sources for examples of such opinions. For more recent studies, see the numerous relevant works by Michael Werner and Michel Espagne cited throughout this dissertation, particularly the latter's *En deçà du Rhin. L'Allemagne des philosophes français au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: CERF, 2004), 15-16 and *passim*. See also Harold Mah, *Enlightenment Phantasies. Cultural Identity in France and Germany, 1750-1914* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003).

[3] See Sam Bootle's chapter on 'The Reception of German Philosophy in Nineteenth-Century France', in *Laforgue, Philosophy, and Ideas of Otherness* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2018), 21.

As the editors of the recent book *Hegel and Schelling in Early Nineteenth-Century France* have aptly noted, at some point early on in the nineteenth century 'France began to think of recent German philosophy as an event of international significance. It came to be assumed that at the end of the eighteenth century something had happened in Germany which French intellectuals needed to come to terms with and to catch up on. To reckon with German Idealism – to "try it on for size", so to speak – was an intellectual fashion […]. Moreover, this encounter with Germany was necessarily staged under the rubric of the difficulty – and sometimes the impossibility – *of translation*.'[4]

Pierre Macherey has emphasized the relative novelty of the belief shared by early nineteenth-century French philosophers that they should use their own language, a language which was not understood by German philosophers (and vice versa). Previously, French philosophy had been seen as the language of intellectual Europe. It served as a universal means of communication, allowing philosophers from different countries to engage in dialogue and share ideas seamlessly. However, with the rise of the nation-state and the increasing importance of philosophy within national identities, there was a change in perspective. Instead of being a language of universal discourse, French philosophy became associated with a specific style of thought.[5]

Moreover, while Enlightenment philosophers had great faith in the universality of reason, early nineteenth-century French intellectuals became increasingly interested in the ways in which modes of thought were shaped by their cultural environment. In the context of Kant's early French reception, debates began to emerge regarding the problem of the 'nationality' of philosophical thought.[6] During a public discussion held at the Institut de France in 1802, Destutt de Tracy (1754-1836), one of Kant's first French commentators, placed the issue of nationality at the core of the dialogue between the French philosophical school, *idéologie*, and what clearly seemed at the time to be the prevailing German school, Kantianism.[7] According to Bellantone, 'from that moment onward, one might say, the appeal to the peculiar nature not only of German philosophy, but also of the German *nation*, would become a recurring *topos* in French philosophical historiography to explain the line of thought from Kant to Hegel.'[8] The issue of the nationality of philosophical thought continued to inform the approach of numerous French intellectuals engaged with German philosophy for much of the nineteenth century, and this, as shall be seen, had a significant impact on Stirner's reception as well.

The otherness of German philosophy took different forms. For Germanophile intellectuals such as de Staël, de Villers, and Victor Cousin, a fundamental opposition existed between French materialism and

[4] Chepurin et al., *Hegel and Schelling*, Vol. 1, 8.
[5] Pierre Macherey, 'La philosophie à la française', *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 74 (1): 7-14 (10).
[6] Bellantone, *Tra Eclettismo e Idealismo*, 132.
[7] See Antoine Destutt de Tracy, 'De la métaphysique de Kant, ou observations sur une ouvrage intitulé: Essai d'une exposition succincte de la *Critique de la raison pure*, par J. Kinker', in *Mémoires de l'Institut national des sciences et arts, Sciences morales et politiques*, Vol. IV, year XI, 1802.
[8] Bellantone, *Tra Eclettismo e Idealismo*, 132.

German transcendental idealism which reflected the larger reality of the intellectual and social life of the two countries.[9] They saw French philosophy as primarily concerned with the everyday and the down-to-earth, whereas German philosophy seemed to them to privilege spiritual matters over worldly affairs, and at least from this perspective it appeared to be superior. However, as Chapters Three and Four will demonstrate, this view was to be completely reversed in France from the 1840s – especially by spiritualist philosophers and Christian apologists – in light of the increasingly radical publications of the Left Hegelians (and somewhat later of the German scientific materialists), which promoted, or were perceived to be promoting, atheist materialism and/or revolutionary doctrines.

The early critics of German philosophy conceived the opposition with French philosophy in a different way. Unlike French philosophy, generally regarded as limpid and precise,[10] German philosophy, so they argued, was obscure and often unintelligible.[11] This perception was largely due of course to the objective difficulty of the German language as well as to the cumbersome prose and nebulous contents of the books published by most idealists. However, poor and often awkward translations were also responsible for the widespread view of German philosophy as vague or impenetrable.[12] Even de Staël, notwithstanding her general praise for German philosophical and religious thought, had little patience for the German philosophers' convoluted, inelegant style, though she partly justified the opacity of their language by arguing that their profound spirituality is necessarily alien to verbal expression.[13]

Mme de Staël's extremely popular *De l'Allemagne* (1810/13) portrayed Germany as a temple of philosophy and literature, untouched by the kind of materialism and religious dogmatism which, by contrast, she believed dominated her own country. Persuaded that Germany was the exact antithesis of Napoleonic France, she presented German philosophy as a spiritualist reaction to the French sensualism and empiricism prevalent since the eighteenth century. To be sure, *De l'Allemagne* was not considered a source of knowledge for German philosophy specifically at the time, but rather as a well-informed travel report.[14] Nonetheless, the book contributed to solidifying the idea that German philosophy was one and the same with German culture, and to encouraging the rediscovery of German thought. De Staël's very suggestion of Germany as a model for France was in itself a revolutionary reversal of the trend dominant until then, for throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it was Germany that looked to France for a cultural lead, whereas

[9] On de Staël's and de Villers' relationship with German philosophy, see Chepurin et al. (eds.), *Hegel and Schelling*, Vol. 1, 25-36. On Cousin's vision of German idealism and his early engagement with Hegelianism, see ibid, 36-71, and Vol. 2, Chapters One and Two.
[10] For the history of the view that French is the language of reason and clarity, see Daniel Mornet, *Histoire de la clarté française* (Paris, 1929); Ulrich Ricken, *Grammaire et philosophie au siècle des lumières: controversies sur l'ordre naturel et la clarté du française* (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Publications de l'Université de Lille III, 1978): Mah, *Enlightenment Phantasies*, Chapter Two.
[11] See Bootle, 'The Reception of German Philosophy'; Rowe, *A Mirror on the Rhine?*, 225.
[12] Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, 'L'introduction de la philosophie allemande en France au XIX^{e} siècle. La question des traductions', in Michel Espagne and Michaël Werner (eds.), *Transferts: les relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand (XVIII^{e} et XIX^{e} siècle)*, (Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1988), 465–76.
[13] See Bootle, 24.
[14] Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin*, 81.

France, largely ignoring German literature, had generally done little to disguise its contempt for its 'barbarian neighbour'.[15]

De l'Allemagne also described Germany as a land of relative freedom, though de Staël's celebration of the country's supposed liberty was intended largely as a critique of Napoleon's authoritarian regime. As Isbell has aptly summed up, 'Staël's talk of Germany allows a threefold polemical reading, whatever her intention, which many of her discrepancies greatly encourage: first, in defiance of Napoleon, she treats Germany as a coherent unit; second, in defiance of French tradition, she gives Germany a central position in her world of history; third, in defiance of both, she calls the Germans admirable.'[16] Furthermore, *De l'Allemagne* tended to conceal the strongly nationalistic current that existed in German thought in the early nineteenth century[17] – which had emerged to a great extent in reaction to Napoleon's occupation of the German states in 1806-1813 – and to portray the Germans as incapable of great political action. De Staël's depiction of the Germans as a people of genius and erudition, respectful of religion, morality, and the dignity of man persisted up until and even beyond France's spectacular defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, and this would have important consequences for Stirner's French reception too.[18]

In spite of its extraordinary success, a number of both French and German authors had begun to question the accuracy of de Staël's account on Germany already from the 1830s. Some considered it somewhat reductive or simplistic. The baron Auguste Barchou de Penhoën (1799-1855), for example, partially amended de Staël's generalizations in his *Histoire de la philosophie allemande depuis Leibniz jusqu'à Hegel* (1836, 2 Vols.), which was primarily an attempt to synthesize German and French traditions. Others, like the historian Edgar Quinet (1803-75), gradually came to recognize that de Staël's idyllic portrayal of German culture as uninvolved with contemporary political developments and debates on religion was anachronistic and should be modernized.[19] Heinrich Heine's *Histoire de la religion et de la philosophie en Allemagne* (1835), first published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1834 with the title *De l'Allemagne*, represented another important challenge to Mme de Staël's accounts on Germany, so much so that one scholar in recent years has gone so far as to call Heine 'the anti-Staël'.[20]

The explicit aim of Heine's book was to prepare the ground for a revolution more violent and universal than the French Revolution of 1789 through the introduction in France of Germany's most recent and subversive philosophy.[21] In it, Hegel was presented as the greatest German philosopher since Leibniz.

[15] Lilian R. Furst, 'Mme. de Staël's *De l'Allemagne*: a Misleading Intermediary', *Orbis Litterarum* 31, 1976 (43-58), 44.
[16] John Clairborne Isbell, *The Birth of European Romanticism. Truth and propaganda in Staël's 'De l'Allemagne'* (Cambridge, 1994), 15.
[17] See, for example, Johann Fichte's *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (Addresses to the German Nation) of 1808.
[18] See Chapter Five.
[19] Edgar Quinet, *De l'Allemagne et de la Révolution* (Paris: Paulin, 1832), 8-9; *Allemagne et Italie* (Paris/Leipzig: Desforges, 1839), Chapter Two.
[20] Sthathis Kouvelakis, *Philosophy and Revolution from Kant to Marx* (Verso, 2018), Chapter Two.
[21] See ibid.

Moreover, against a widespread received opinion amongst French critics, Heine described Schelling, not Hegel, as the tool of absolutism. Heine's Hegel was a progressive thinker, whose philosophy pointed towards revolution.

The publications of the Romantic poet inspired many German revolutionaries, including Hermann Ewerbeck (who like him saw the history of German culture as oriented towards a social revolution),[22] Arnold Ruge, and other Young Hegelians who resided in Paris around the 1840s and whose periodicals, discussed in the second section of this chapter, tried to legitimize revolutionary doctrines through specific theological narratives of German philosophy.

To a great extent, this approach was encouraged by the reading and the at least partial acceptance of Hegel's own history of philosophy, which was really a philosophy of history. As Beiser has concisely summarized, Hegel, in his *Geschichte der Philosophie* (1833-36), 'described the idealist tradition as a movement beginning with Kant, passing through Reinhold, Fichte, and Schelling, and then culminating in himself. Hegel saw his own system as the grand synthesis of all that came before it, leaving out nothing of philosophical merit.'[23] Indeed, Hegel treated his opponents (e.g. the romantics) superficially, and he left out completely a whole tradition that was contemporary to and competing with his, namely that of Jakob Friedrich Fries (1773–1843), Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776–1841), and Friedrich Beneke (1798–1854). Nor did Hegel ever bother to mention Schopenhauer, who was also teaching in Berlin in the same years as him. Yet as Beiser notes, Hegel's account on the idealist tradition remained highly influential long after his death. It was revived in the second half of the nineteenth century by two major philosophical historians, Johann Erdmann and Kuno Fischer (both Hegelians), and perpetuated in the twentieth century by philosophers and historians such as Richard Kroner, Frederick Copleston, and Karl Löwith, whose works, notwithstanding their merits, only offer a partial story, for the idealist tradition was carried on after Hegel's death by philosophers such as Adolf Trendelenburg (1802-72), Hermann Lotze (1816-81), and Eduard von Hartmann (1842-1906).[24] It is 'obvious', Beiser argues, that the history of idealism written by Hegel 'should not be taken seriously as history; but that is exactly what happened.'[25]

In France, a variety of commentators developed their own narratives to account for the evolution (or, in their eyes, involution) of German modern philosophy somewhat independently. The majority, however, eagerly accepted those provided by German authors as true. In part, this was due to the fact that they rarely possessed sufficient knowledge or even have access to the relevant sources necessary to corroborate the validity of these narratives. But the main reason for the ready acceptance of German

[22] On Ewerbeck, see Catel, *Le Traducteur et le démiurge*; Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin*, 278-82.
[23] Frederick C. Beiser, *After Hegel. German philosophy, 1840-1900* (Princeton University Press, 2014), 9. Beiser makes similar points on Hegel's grand synthesis in his chapter on 'Hegel and Hegelianism', in Gareth Stedman-Jones and Gregory Claeys (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (CUP, 2011), 110-11 and *passim*.
[24] On this subject, see Frederick C. Beiser, *Late German Idealism: Trendelenburg and Lotze* (Oxford University Press, 2013).
[25] Beiser, *After Hegel*, 9-10.

narratives lay in the overtly radical statements and the intellectual reconstructions put forth by certain German contemporary authors, for these allowed detractors to easily pass sweeping judgements on broad currents of thought or large cohorts of German thinkers leveraging the authors' own "self-incriminating" declarations.

Critics of German contemporary philosophy tended, in fact, to make little or no distinction between the various key thinkers who had shaped German thought since the late eighteenth century, including between Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. The notion that the systems of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling followed a linear, logical progression was commonplace. A commentator from the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, for instance, asserted in 1843 that they were essentially 'one unique system', and that each philosopher had simply pushed the principles outlined by his predecessor to the extreme consequences.[26] All these philosophies, the author added, succeed one another as different moments of a same meditation that ends in Hegel's pantheism.

Even in the writings of Germanophile intellectuals, however, German philosophers crossing the border after 1800 generally 'situate[d] themselves in a relation of logical filiation with Kant, as if the line that goes from Kant to Hegel by way of Fichte and Schelling constituted a sort of logical-deductive totality, "German idealism."'[27] The fact that German philosophers were seldom studied in and by themselves in France was both a consequence and a contributing cause of these broad conflations. Virtually all new German authors emerging during the 1840s were also approached and immediately treated by French critics as pieces of large-scale theological-philosophical (and often teleological) reconstructions of the history of German thought. What most of these histories – or, rather, stories – had in common was an underlying narrative according to which German contemporary philosophy, particularly after Hegel, had deteriorated over time, producing ever more objectionable forms of pantheism, atheism, materialism, socialism, and communism.

As new German authors made their appearance on the intellectual scene, the sequence of thinkers mentioned earlier would be updated so as to include their names. Typically, in the period from the 1840s to the 1860s, the list comprised Strauss, Bruno Bauer, and Feuerbach, and it frequently culminated in Stirner, the terminal point of what many French intellectuals perceived to be Germany's latest philosophical follies. Despite occasional, minor variations to this order,[28] and widely neglecting many other Hegelians or important German personalities, French observers addressed what they saw as key phases in Hegel's philosophical aftermath fundamentally with the same approach reserved for German idealism in previous decades, but with new concerns informing their analysis. These concerns, as mentioned, were connected with the diffusion of atheism, materialism, socialism, and communism, among other things.

[26] 'Crise actuelle de la philosophie allemande. École de Hegel, nouveau système de Schelling', new series, Vol. 1, No. 1, Jan. 1843 (5-42), 17.
[27] Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin*, 231-32.
[28] For example, some also added Arnold Ruge, Wilhelm Marr, Hermann Ewerbeck or Georg Herwegh to the group, and Feuerbach's and Bauer's positions were occasionally inverted.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, few in France were familiar with German culture and literature or could read German.[29] The German language only began to be taught around the mid-1830s thanks to the impulse given by Victor Cousin in his various academic and political capacities.[30] Before that time, German language teaching had been almost completely absent.[31] As for German philosophy specifically, Jean-Pierre Lefebvre has gone so far as to say that it was practically unknown in France around 1800.[32] Even over the following decades, the number of professional philosophers interested in Germany remained so limited as to preclude a satisfying sociological inquiry based on statistics.[33] With the exception of Cousin and a few others, German philosophy was mainly the object of study of intellectuals outside academia.

As the histories of philosophy gradually increased in number, the French wider public became more familiar with German philosophical doctrines and currents.[34] Yet as Espagne has pointed out, French histories of German philosophy were rarely the product of pure and objective curiosity; rather, they were instrumentalizations designed to showcase the superiority of specific systems or theories.[35] Alongside historiographical works, French scholars in the nineteenth century also regularly produced more far-reaching studies which attempted to understand historically the interweaving between German and French traditions.[36]

The French reception of German philosophy was also shaped by the persistent lack of French translations of the major works penned by Germany's most prominent philosophers. The first writings of

[29] For studies on the cultural exchanges (or 'transfers') between France and Germany during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, France's knowledge of Germany during these two centuries, and French professors of the German language, see the various works written or edited by Michel Espagne and Michael Werner: *Transferts: les relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand (XVIII^e et XIX^e siècle)* (Paris: Éditions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1988); *Le Paradigme de l'étranger. Les chaires de littérature étrangère au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: CERF, 1993); *Philologiques I. Contribution à l'histoire des disciplines littéraires en France et en Allemagne au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1990); *Philologiques II. Les maîtres de langues. Les premiers enseignants d'allemand en France (1830-1850)* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1991); Michel Espagne, Françoise Lagier, and Michael Werner (eds.), *Le Maître d'allemand. Les premiers enseignants d'allemand (1830-1850)* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1991); *Philologiques III. Qu'est-ce qu'une littérature nationale? Approches pour une théorie interculturelle du champ littéraire* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1994); *L'École normale supérieure et l'Allemagne* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 1996); *Les Transferts culturels franco-allemands* (Paris: PUF, 1999); *En deçà du Rhin* (2004); Michel Espagne, 'La philosophie en France et son horizon allemande (première partie du XIX^e siècle', in Christophe Charle and Jeanpierre Laurent (eds.), *La Vie intellectuelle en France*, Vol. 1, *Des lendemains de la Révolution à 1914* (Paris: Seuil, 2016), 315-20.

[30] On Cousin's prominent role within French higher education and the pervasiveness of Cousianism within society more broadly, see Patrice Vermeren, *Victor Cousin, le jeu de la philosophie et l'État* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995); Jacques Billard, *De l'école à la République; Guizot et Victor Cousin* (Paris: PUF, 1998); Jérôme Grondeux, 'Raison, politique et religion au XIXe siècle: le projet de Victor Cousin', *mémoire d'habilitation à diriger des recherches* (Paris, 2008); Jan Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self. Politics and Psyche in France, 1750-1850* (Harvard University Press, 2005), Introduction, Chapters Four and Five, and *passim*.

[31] Paul Lévy, *La Langue allemande en France. Pénétration et diffusion des origines à nos jours*, 2 Vols. (Lyon: IAC, 1950–52), Vol. 1, 77.

[32] Lefebvre, 'L'introduction de la philosophie allemande en France', 467. See also Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin*. For a general overview of Franco-German philosophical exchanges from the early nineteenth century, see also Denis Thouard, 'Courants alternatifs. Les échanges franco-allemands en philosophie 1800-2000', *Cités*, Presses Universitaires de France, 2015, No. 62, *Y a-t-il du vrai dans les religions?*, 171-89.

[33] Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin*, 14.

[34] See ibid, Chapter Three: 'L'Histoire de la philosophie'.

[35] Ibid, 113-20. See also Rowe, *A Mirror on the Rhine?*, 48-54 and *passim*.

[36] Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin*, 97-108.

Hegel to appear in France were his lectures on aesthetics (*Cours d'esthétique*), translated by Charles-Magloire Bénard and published in five volumes between 1840 and 1852.[37] However, this publication was more of an adaptation than a straightforward translation, combining elements of summary, translation, paraphrase, and commentary. Overall, few of Hegel's works were translated into French before the Second Empire (1852-70). The translations that appeared from the 1850s, many of which of 'dubious fidelity',[38] also consisted for the most part of his lectures on aesthetics rather than his arguably more famous and intimidating philosophical writings. An important work of translation was carried on, under Cousin's encouragement, by the Italian philosopher Augusto Vera (1813-85), who developed a Hegelian school in Naples.[39] Over a period of twenty years, from 1859 to 1878, Vera published the three parts of Hegel's longer *Encyclopedia* and his *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. All nine volumes were accompanied by extensive commentaries and lengthy explanatory introductions. According to Kelly, Vera's translations, which 'did less than justice to his master', remained the major primary source for the study of Hegel in France until the Second World War.[40] The next translation of Hegel would not appear before 1928,[41] that is, a half-century after the publication of Vera's final volume.

Of the most controversial publications by the Young Hegelians, Stirner's book was among the last to be translated into French (1899/1900). David Friedrich Strauss' much debated work *Life of Jesus* (*Das Leben Jesu kritisch bearbeitet*, 1835) was first translated by Émile Littré between 1839 (Vol. 1) and 1853 (Vol. 2). In 1850, Hermann Ewerbeck published at his own expense the volume *Qu'est-ce que la religion d'après la nouvelle philosophie allemande*, a collection of Feuerbach's major works (Vol. 1), followed by some other publications by Georg Friedrich Daumer, Ernst Karl Julius Lützelberger, Friedrich Wilhelm Ghillany, and Bruno Bauer (Vol. 2) united under the title *Qu'est-ce que la Bible d'après la nouvelle philosophie allemande*. The work by Bauer included in Ewerbecks' volume was his *Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte der Synoptiker* (2 Vols., 1841). Bauer's other essays, on the other hand, have only been translated in more recent years. Feuerbach's oeuvre was translated again in 1861-64 by Joseph Roy, with whom the German philosopher had been corresponding. Roy later became the translator of some of Marx's and Engels' works as well.

As Lefebvre has noted, with the possible exception of the bilingual Alsatian pedagogue and philosopher Joseph Willm (1792-1853), whom Rowe has described as 'the closest France possessed to a genuine expert on German thought',[42] the first French translators of the nineteenth century had a limited

[37] *Cours d'esthétique par W.-Fr. Hegel*, analysed and translated in part by Ch. Bénard (Paris / Nancy: Aimé André / Grimblot, 1840-1852). On Bénard's translation of Hegel and its reception, see Élisabeth Décultot, 'Hegel's Aesthetics in Nineteenth-Century France: Charles Bénard's Translation and Its Reception', in Chepurin et al. (eds.), *Hegel and Schelling*, Vol. 2, Chapter Eight.
[38] Kelly, *Hegel in France*, 6.
[39] See Fernanda Gallo (ed.), *Gli Hegeliani di Napoli: Il Risorgimento e la ricezione di Hegel in Italia (La Scuola di Pitagora,* 2020). On Vera, see also Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin*, 273-78; Bellantone, *Hegel en France*, Vol. 1; Andrea Bellantone, 'Augusto Vera's Mystical Conception of Hegelianism', in Chepurin et al. (eds.), *Hegel and Schelling*, Vol. 2, Chapter Nine.
[40] Kelly, *Hegel in France*, 6-7.
[41] G. W. F. Hegel, *La Vie de Jésus*, transl. Dumitru Roşca (Paris: J. Gamber, 1928).
[42] Rowe, *A Mirror on the Rhine?*, 223.

knowledge of the German language and had not received the kind of education necessary for this task, either in school or at university.[43] They were, in fact, pioneers, faced with several objective challenges, such as a new philosophical lexicon – a lexicon that was new not only for them but, to some extent, also for the German public.[44] Their work of translation birthed an original philosophical idiom that, in turn, shaped subsequent French philosophy.[45] At the same time, however, French translations largely contributed to cementing the reputation of German philosophy as an obscure and difficult subject.[46]

The first significant introduction of German transcendental philosophy in France, and of Hegelianism in particular, was due to the popularizing work of Victor Cousin, notably the published lectures-courses of 1816-19 and the *Fragments Philosophiques* of 1826.[47] Subsequently, as Lehmann has argued, 'the study of the great German classical philosophers from Kant to Hegel grew in volume, under the indulgent eclecticism of official philosophy after 1830. Having once made its appearance, German idealism was not easily dislodged'.[48] Many progressive French philosophers of different backgrounds turned to German philosophical theories for their political potential; for, as Rowe has put it, 'in the aftermath of the Revolution and the Terror, neither Catholicism, nor Materialism, nor the Sensationalism of the *Idéologues* could satisfy those who were searching for a philosophy able to reconcile reason and science with the existence of God and morality.'[49]

Kant seemed especially attractive to some even before the Terror, because they considered him to be both progressive and moral. His philosophy appeared to simultaneously offer an alternative to a Catholic tradition which often undermined intellectual progress and a moral framework which empiricist or sensationalist philosophies could not provide.[50] Throughout the whole century, French intellectuals never ceased to confront themselves with the question of 'the thing in itself' as it was understood by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*.[51] By contrast, the issue of Hegel's and Schelling's identity of being and nothing

[43] Lefebvre, 'L'introduction de la philosophie allemande en France', 468.
[44] For the difficulties and debates surrounding translations from the German, see Rowe, *A Mirror on the Rhine?*, 88-92.
[45] For an overview of French translations of German philosophical works during the nineteenth century, and the role that these played in shaping French philosophy, see Thouard, 'Courants alternatifs'; Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin*, Chapter IX.
[46] Lefebvre, 'L'introduction de la philosophie allemande'; Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin*, Chapter IX.
[47] On this point, most of the scholars of Hegel and Hegelianism in France mentioned in the first footnote of this chapter tend to agree. Bellantone was perhaps the most adamant from this perspective: 'asserting that it was Left Hegelianism that transmitted in France specific themes of Hegelian philosophy would be inaccurate. The displays of Hegel's philosophy in France must all be attributed to the eclectics or to the personalities that were close to the Cousinian school. The public role played by the socialists or by the German neo-Hegelians is absolutely not prominent' (*Hegel en France*, Vol. 1, 286). On Cousin's German connections, see Michel Espagne and Michel Werner, 'Les correspondants allemands de Victor Cousin', *Hegel-Studien*, Vol. 21, 1986, 65-85. See also *Lettres d'Allemagne. Victor Cousin et les hégéliens*, edited and with an introduction by Michel Espagne and Michael Werner (Tusson: Du Lérot, 1990); Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin*, Chapter One and the relevant sources on Cousin provided in previous footnotes.
[48] A. G. Lehmann, 'German idealism and French symbolism', in James Friguglietti and Emmet Kennedy (eds.), *The Shaping of Modern France. Writings on French History since 1715*, 372-379 (Macmillan, 1969), 373.
[49] Rowe, *A Mirror on the Rhine?*, 224.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin*, 11.

aroused in France an 'almost unanimous rejection', for to many 'it appeared at the same time as an error of logic and as an attack on an almost theological positivity, but most of all as an incongruous German import.'[52]

Bellantone has explained that among the main features of the historical-philosophical works that dealt with Hegel, such as Barchou de Penhoën's aforementioned *Histoire de la philosophie allemande* (1836), were a desire to retrace the path from Kant to Hegel, a search for continuity in the historical process, and 'the attempt to ground philosophical options in a broader *Stimmung* of the German nation', whose main feature was German Protestantism.[53] Moreover, he points out, these works tended to ignore the importance of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, focusing instead on a neo-Platonic and rationalist interpretation of Hegelian philosophy. They frequently understood Hegel's principle of the identity of the real and the rational as having been pronounced in an aprioristic way, disregarding the component of experience on the part of the spirit throughout its phenomenological journey that is, in fact, an important part of Hegel's system.[54] Without acknowledging this element, Hegel's thought was transformed too rapidly and too easily into a form of rationalism or innatism, into a quest for unity where dialectics is always reduced to a mere analytical deduction.

Connected with this misinterpretation of the dialectic was the widespread tendency to juxtapose Schelling and Hegel, sometimes in favour of the former over the latter, other times in the opposite direction.[55] But the most significant common trait of these works on Hegel, Bellantone maintains, was 'the distrust of the transformation imposed upon the German philosophical language after Kant,'[56] which resulted in the comparatively low amount of translations of Hegel's works discussed earlier.[57] By and large, the histories of philosophy as well as the works of popularization had a limited circulation. Nevertheless, and in spite of numerous naïve interpretations, these publications oriented French philosophical culture towards a reading of Hegelian thought that was fundamentally neo-Platonic, in keeping with Cousin's approach.[58] Moreover, in the eyes of many French commentators writing in the 1840s, the interpretation of Hegelianism as an excessively rationalist philosophy seemed to find further confirmation in the publications of the Young Hegelians, and particularly Stirner, whose extreme conclusions they often regarded as the logical outcome of Hegel's absurd theories.

According to Bellantone, the years that go from 1817 to 1836 can be considered as a period when Hegel's thought could enjoy a certain level of diffusion in France, thanks especially to Cousin's efforts. Yet even in the time dominated by Cousinianism, Espagne has pointed out, 'anyone working on German

[52] Ibid.
[53] Bellantone, *Tra Eclettismo e Idealismo*, 76.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid, 77.
[56] Ibid.
[57] On the history of Hegel's translations in France, see, in addition to the sources already mentioned, the relevant sections in Francesca Iannelli and Alain Patrick Olivier, 'En traduisant Hegel. Traducendo Hegel. Aesthetic theory and/in Translation practice', *Studi di estetica*, year L, series IV, 1/2022, 157-97.
[58] See ibid, 77-78.

philosophy needs to take precautions against the accusation of pantheism, this pantheism that Heine claims in his *Histoire de la religion et de la philosophie en Allemagne* to the attention of the Parisian public, as a secret philosophy from beyond the Rhine.'[59]

Indeed, one preponderant feature of German contemporary philosophy was biblical and religious critique. In France, biblical critique became fashionable in the 1840s, and, as Espagne has shown, the importation of contemporary German works in this field was one of the most significant aspects of the wider French reception of German thought in the nineteenth century.[60] Proof of a significant degree of interest in France about the latest theological debates taking place in Germany is offered by Stirner himself, who reports in one of his articles for the *Rheinische Zeitung*[61] as a correspondent from Berlin that the Parisian journal *Le Semeur*, on 4 May 1842, presented an accurate account on the Bruno Bauer affair, that is, the controversy originated by Bauer's determination in openly teaching rationalism as a professor of theology at Bonn's University which culminated with the Prussian government revoking his teaching license in 1842. A couple of months later, in the *Leipziger Allgemeine Zeitung*, Stirner, foreseeing the approaching explosion of the issue of religious freedom in public education, wrote: 'In our days, the issue of academic freedom, and especially of freedom in the theological chair, has gained an importance that many fail to understand properly. It is primarily the duty of the newspapers to keep the public consciousness awake and informed about it; for not only in Germany but also in France and England, the intellectual struggle, consciously or unconsciously, is beginning to coalesce around this point.'[62]

On 1st December 1838, Edgar Quinet published a critical review of Strauss' *Das Leben Jesu* (1835-36). The following year, the first volume of Strauss' work was translated into French. These publications marked the introduction of the Left Hegelian tradition in France, radically changing, for better and worse, the relations of French culture with Hegelianism.[63] In his review, Quinet had argued that Strauss's interpretation of Christianity should not be seen as an anomaly, distortion, or deviation from earlier German Idealisms; rather, it should be understood as their inevitable outcome and logical endpoint. Strauss's work, Quinet maintained, represented the culmination of Schelling's and Hegel's metaphysics.

Quinet's argument that Hegelianism fully reveals and realizes itself in Left Hegelian radicalism would become a recurrent theme in France over the following two or three decades. As has been recently noted,

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[59] Ibid, 232. It should be pointed out, however, that unlike some of his German colleagues Heine never called himself an atheist, and that towards the final years of his life he abandoned pantheism and returned to religious faith. In his autobiographical work *Geständnisse* (Confessions), which opens the first of the three volumes of his 1854 *Vermischte Schriften* (Miscellaneous Writings), Heine encouraged his friend Marx as well as Ruge, Feuerbach, Daumer, Bruno Bauer, Haengstenberg, and all 'biped gods' to read the Book of Daniel and other parts of the Scriptures for an edifying meditation. Interestingly, Stirner's name does not appear here, but it does appear in the French translation published as 'Les Aveux d'un poète' in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, second series of the new period, Vol. 7, 1854 (1.169-1.206), 1.187. It is not certain, however, whether this was Heine's own choice or that of his collaborators and translators.

[60] Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin*, 220.

[61] 'Die Sitte ist besser als das Gesetz (Im Verlage des Berliner Lesekabinets).' No. 164, 13 June 1842.

[62] 'Rosenkranz über die Lehrfreiheit', Supplement, 6 Aug. 1842, No. 218.

[63] Charles Rihs, *L'École des jeunes hegeliens et les penseurs socialistes français* (Paris: Anthropos, 1978), Chapter Three; Chepurin et al. (eds.), *Hegel and Schelling*, Vol. 1, 76-82.

this is 'one of the reasons why Left Hegelianism was experienced as such a trauma for much of liberal and conservative France: it was seen to be the natural conclusion to a position they had previously been tempted by under the name of Hegel. To combat socialism, radicalism and revolution, it was therefore necessary to now rid oneself of all remnants of absolute idealism'[64]— an operation that would bring together a variety of different thinkers from across the political and ideological spectrum.

The years that go from 1838 to 1848 represent in fact a polemical phase against Hegel's presence within French culture.[65] As Bellantone has demonstrated, French debates on Hegelianism during this latter period took place fundamentally within four kinds of intellectual milieus: spiritualist, eclectic, socialist, and Catholic.[66] The positive interest in Hegelianism, he points out, was in the main limited to socialist milieus, and here it was generally circumscribed to the theme of progress.[67] The other three intellectual milieus, by contrast, had all witnessed the emergence of anti-Hegelian currents already from the mid-1830s. As the following section will show, the most significant was arguably the one that emerged in reaction against the Young Hegelians and those German socialists and communists living in Paris who had begun to spread revolutionary theories and radical philosophical doctrines.[68]

III. German radical thinkers and political activists in Paris and the image of the 'Hegelian'

The organization of the German labour movement began to a large extent abroad during the 1830s.[69] France, with its comparatively more liberal atmosphere, was one of the most important countries for the development of the movement alongside Belgium, Switzerland, and England, and one of the most privileged destinations for European political exiles in general.[70] The repressive policies of the Austrian Empire's

[64] Chepurin et al. (eds.), *Hegel and Schelling*, Vol. 1, 77-78.
[65] Bellantone, *Hegel en France*, Vol. 1, 158.
[66] Ibid.
[67] On the relationship between Saint-Simonianism and Hegelianism, see Rihs, *L'École des jeunes hegeliens;* Michel Espagne*,* 'Le saint-simonisme est-il jeune-hégélien?', in Jean-René Derré (ed.), *Regards sur le Saint-Simonisme et les Saint-Simoniens* (Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1989); Warren Breckman, *Marx, the Young Hegelians and the Origins of Radical Social Theory* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990); Moggach (ed.), *The New Hegelians*; Hans-Christoph Schmidt am Busch *et al*. (eds.), *Hegelianismus und Saint-Simonismus* (Paderborn: Mentis, 2007); Hans-Christoph Schmidt am Busch, *Hegel et le saint-simonisme*. *Études de philosophie sociale* (Toulouse: PU du Mirail, 2012); Puisais, *La Naissance de l'Hégélianisme Français*, 149-56; Chepurin et al., *Hegel and Schelling*, Vol. 1, 72-76. For a possible connection between Hegel and the Saint-Simonians on the subject of aesthetics, see Philippe Régnier, 'Saint-Simon, les saint-simoniens et les siècles dits "classiques,"', in Delphine Antoine-Mahut and Stéphane Zékian (eds.), *Les âges classiques du dix-neuvième siècle* (Paris: Éditions des archives contemporaines, 2018), 215-39.
[68] Bellantone, *Hegel en France*, Vol. 1, 160. Bellantone writes that 'the leitmotiv of anti-Hegelian works of all this period is without doubt the fear of a revolutionary and atheist turn' (284).
[69] Wolfgang Schieder, *Anfänge der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung. Die Auslandsvereine im Jahrzehnt nach der Julirevolution von 1830* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1963); Jürgen Schmidt, *Brüder, Bürger und Genossen. Die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung zwischen Klassenkampf und Bürgergesellschaft 1830-1870* (Bonn: J. H. W. Dietz, 2018); Jürgen Schmidt, 'The German labour movement, 1830s-1840s: early efforts at political transnationalism', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 6, 2020, 1.025-1.039.
[70] Lloyd S. Kramer, *Threshold of a New World. Intellectuals and the Exile Experience in Paris, 1830-1848* (Cornell University Press, 1988); Delphine Diaz, *Un Asile pour tous les peuples? Exilés et réfugiés étrangers en France au cours du premier XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2014); Delphine Diaz, 'Paris, capitale de l'exil intellectuel européen au cours du premier XIX^e siècle', in Charle and Laurent (eds.), *La Vie intellectuelle en France*, Vol. 1, 308-14.

Chancellor and Foreign Minister, Klemens von Metternich (1773-1859), and of his allies in Germany prohibited numerous forms of political activity, including associations, meetings, liberty trees, disrespect of the flag, and the publication of pamphlets and liberal periodicals. German laws required all publications of less than 320 pages to obtain government approval before they could be distributed. For this reason, much political writing between 1830 and 1848 appeared in France first.

In 1844, the German confederation banned the sale of all German periodicals, newspapers, and books that were published abroad, which made Paris ever more appealing to those disaffected German intellectuals who wished to see their works published.[71] Under the July Monarchy (1830-48), however, political and literary refugees only represented a small part of the foreign community. Most immigrants in Paris had moved there for economic rather than political or cultural reasons.[72] The majority of the *émigrés* from Germany (but also from Spain, Belgium, and Italy) were in fact labourers, craftsmen, and artisans who generally settled near the border between France and their native country.[73] Consequently, as Kramer has pointed out, 'for most French citizens in this era, the "German immigrant" was not a writer publishing political tracts but a tailor or a shoemaker.'[74]

During the Reign of Louis Philippe, German (but also Belgian and Alsatian) workers and journeymen were not always well received by French workers and parts of the bourgeoisie, many of whom felt that German immigration had become an 'invasion'. The main grievances voiced by French workers against their German competitors between 1830 and 1848 were the damaging effects of the cheap labour they offered, their scarce overall contribution to national economy, and their rootlessness.[75] Many French intellectuals on the other hand pointed to the dangers that the political activity of German socialists and communists in Paris represented for France's social stability and public morality.

The German community of the 1840s in France was rather vast, counting between 40,000 and 60,000 inhabitants,[76] and even though the majority of these immigrants were not 'writers publishing political tracts', they were an integral part of the German socialist and communist community. In the wake of 1848, more

[71] Jacques Grandjonc, 'État sommaire des dépôts d'archives françaises sur le mouvement ouvrier et les émigrés allemands de 1830 à 1851-1852', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, Vol. 12, 1972, 492-93; Jacques Grandjonc, 'Les rapports des socialistes et néo-hégéliens allemands de l'émigration avec les socialistes français, 1840-1847', in Raymond Poidevin and Heinz-Otto Sieburg (eds.), *Aspects des relations franco-allemands, 1830-1848* (Metz, 1978), 86.

[72] Grandjonc, 'État sommaire', 492-93; Jacques Grandjonc, *Marx et les communistes allemands à Paris, 1844* (Paris, 1974), 11-13. See also Mack Walker, *Germany and the Emigration, 1816-1885* (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), esp. 1-102; Kramer, *Threshold of a New World*, 21-22.

[73] Jacques Grandjonc, 'Éléments statistiques pour une étude de l'immigration étrangère en France de 1830 à 1851', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, Vol. 15, 1975, 287. For the history of these kinds of workers in Paris, see also Sigrid Wadauer, 'Paris im Unterwegs-Sein und Schreiben von Handwerksgesellen,' in Mareike König (ed.), *Deutsche Handwerker, Arbeiter und Dienstmädchen in Paris. Eine vergessene Migration im 19. Jahrhundert* (49-67) (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2003).

[74] Kramer, *Threshold of a New World*, 22.

[75] See Pierre-Jacques Derainne, 'Migrations de travail, conflits et sociabilités: l'exemple des ouvriers allemands en France sous la monarchie de Juillet et la seconde République', in König (ed.) *Deutsche Handwerker, Arbeiter und Dienstmädchen in Paris*, 126-31, 137-38.

[76] For a comprehensive history of the German *émigrés* in France, see the collective volume *Émigrés français en Allemagne, émigrés allemands en France (1865-1945)* (Paris: Goethe Institute, 1983); Jacques Grandjonc, 'Demographische Grundlagenforshung', in Espagne and Werner (eds.), *Transferts*, 83-96.

than 13 per cent of the population of the Seine department was foreign born, and among these individuals, 62,000 came from the Germanic Confederation. That makes 35 per cent of the total, far more than the Belgians (18 per cent) or the Anglo-Irish (13 per cent). In 1851, there were 57,000 Germans living in and around Paris.[77]

German artisans in Paris formed numerous mutual aid societies and discussion groups which soon evolved into secret political societies advocating radical change in Germany and participating in the agitations organized in Paris by French socialists and communists.[78] The League of the Outlaws (Bund der Geächteten),[79] for example, was a secret organization created in 1834 in Paris by German immigrants whose ideological positions were informed by utopian socialism and revolutionary communism.[80] From 1836, the League of the Outlaws began to divide into different movements. One of the most radical branches, which counted Wilhelm Weitling, Carl Schapper, Joseph Moll, and Heinrich Bauer among its members, formed the better-known League of Justice (Bund der Gerechtigkeit, 1836-47).[81] The split caused the League of the Outlaws the loss of a conspicuous number of members, and eventually its gradual disbandment.

In 1839, the new League took part to an insurrection carried out by the Société des Saisons (1837-39), a French republican and Jacobin association guided by the communists Auguste Barbès and Auguste Blanqui. This popular political movement sought to reconcile the ideas of the Revolution and the suggestions coming from those personalities with a Hegelian formation among German intellectuals, workers, and craftsmen. The attack proved to be a complete fiasco, for the inhabitants of Paris did not support it. Once the rebellion was suppressed, the members of the League were expelled by the French government. They moved their central bureau to London in the same year. Later, under the influence of Marx and Engels, the League of Justice was eventually reorganized into the Communist League (1847-52).[82]

Contemporary accounts report that after 1848 the doctrines of the Young Hegelians were professed in Paris by the members of the *Réunion Allemande-Parisienne* (a society composed mainly by German

[77] The number increased to 106,000 in 1866 (due to the flows of exiles from Hanover), then dropped to 44,000 in 1872 following the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871). See Grandjonc, 'Demographische Grundlagenforshung'; Jacques Grandjonc, 'Les étrangers à Paris sous la monarchie de Juillet', in *Population*, special issue: *Migrations*, March 1974, 61-88; Jacques Grandjonc, *Marx et les communistes allemands à Paris* (Paris, 1974), 12.

[78] For a general overview of French secret societies since the time of the Revolution of 1789, see Gregory Claeys, 'Radicalism, republicanism and revolutionism', in Gareth Stedman-Jones and Gregory Claeys (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Political Thought* (CUP, 2011), 224-27.

[79] Also translated into English as League of the Outcasts or League of the Ostracized, and into French as Ligue des Bannis or Ligue des proscrits. See Bertel Nygaard, 'Wilhelm Weitling and Early German Socialism', in Marcel van der Linden (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Socialism*, Vol. 1, Chapter Nine (Cambridge University Press, 2022), 216-17, and the numerous sources provided there. In addition, see Stefanie Wörer, 'Der Bund der Geächteten. Über den konspirativen Charakter des Bundes und dessen politisch-sozialen Ziele im Kampf um ein geeinigtes bürgerliches Deutschland', in *historia.scribere*, No. 2 (2010), 59-81, [http://historia.scribere.at], 2009-2010.

[80] See the sources mentioned above, and also T.R. Davies, *NGOs: A New History of Transnational Civil Society* (Oxford University Press, 2014), 31; Mark A. Lause, *A Secret Society History of the Civil War* (University of Illinois Press, 2011), 11.

[81] Often referred to, somewhat misleadingly, as League of the Just (Bund der Gerechten). See Joachim Höppner and Waltraud Seidel-Höppner, 'Der Bund der Geächteten und der Bund der Gerechtigkeit', in *Jahrbuch für Forschungen zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, Vol. 3 (60-92), 2002, 63-70; Waltraud Seidel-Höppner, 'Unter falschem Namen. Der Bund der Gerechtigkeit und sein Namenswandel', *Jahrbuch für Forschungen zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, No. 1, 2013, 47-57; Waltraud Seidel-Höppner, *Wilhelm Weitling (1808–1871). Eine politische Biographie*, 2 Vols. (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2014), 94-129.

[82] Gareth Stedman Jones, *Karl Marx. Greatness and Illusion* (Harvard University Press, 2016), 213-22.

revolutionaries who had fled to France) and the Democratic Society of the 'Mulhouse tavern.'[83] Writing in 1851, Alphonse Lucas argued that in France the Germans 'tried as much as they could to establish the *new world*,[84] godless and lawless, promised by radical socialism, until the Government thought that the time had come to expel these incendiary agitators from our territories.'[85] Reinforcing and generalizing the message, he added: 'It is time, indeed, to put an end to the anarchic propaganda made in France by all the revolutionaries of Europe. That Italians, Germans, Poles, come to us to compete with our workers is fine for us; but that these foreigners foster perpetual trouble amidst our people, that they insult authority, break our laws and shoot us whenever they have the occasion, now that is too much.'[86] For Lucas – whose views, as shall be seen in the following chapter, were typical of the broader French liberal and conservative reception of the radical German intellectual emigration – authors like Feuerbach, Ruge, Maximilien Stepp, and Stirner (all of whom he quotes) were simply 'preachers of atheism and revolution.'[87]

Grandjonc has pointed out that German, Alsatian, and Russian intellectuals all arrived to France 'more or less influenced by the neo-Hegelian philosophy.'[88] It was primarily within French socialist milieus that they were able to arouse a significant degree of interest in their political and philosophical doctrines. From the 1830s, the fast-growing German colony in Paris constituted a propulsive centre for the synthesis between socialist stances and the new philosophical critique of the Young Hegelians.[89] Among the French intellectuals who established personal relationships with the Young Hegelians in Paris was the anarchist philosopher and economist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-65). His acquaintances included Karl Grün, Moses Hess, Ewerbeck (whom he mentions in his private diaries), and Marx, with whom he met regularly between October 1844 and February of the following year. In his *Cahiers de lecture*, Proudhon engages with German philosophy and discusses Hegel as well as a series of dissident Young Hegelians, but from his correspondence it appears that he had mixed feelings about German contemporary philosophy.[90]

Proudhon is at the same time the first author to have referred to himself as an anarchist and the first anarchist to ever refer to Stirner. Mentioning him in passing as early as in April 1852, he described Stirner as a 'representative of the religion of the individual self' in his *Carnets* and in his drafts for a *Course d'économie*.[91] Proudhon was likely made aware of the contents of Stirner's book around 1845 by the Young

[83] Alphonse Lucas, *Les Clubs et les Clubistes. Histoire complète critique et anecdotique des clubs et des comités électoraux fondés à Paris depuis la révolution de 1848* (E. Dentu, 1851), *passim*.
[84] Written in italics in the text.
[85] Ibid, 15.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Grandjonc, 'Les rapports des socialistes et néo-hégéliens allemands', 81.
[89] Bellantone, *Hegel en France*, Vol. 1, 284.
[90] *Correspondance de P. J. Proudhon* (Paris: Lacroix, 1875, 14 Vols.). See, for example, his letters to Bergmann (19 Jan. 1845) and Tissot (13 Dec. 1846), and his earlier letters of 10 Nov. 1840, 23 May 1842, 12 May 1844, 4 Oct. 1844.
[91] Both texts are cited by Pierre Haubtmann in his *La Philosophie sociale de P.–J. Proudhon* (Grenoble: PUG, 1980), 116-17.

Hegelian Karl Grün in Paris.[92] In addition to Grün, Proudhon could have heard about Stirner also from Bakunin and Marx.[93] However, much controversy exists around what exactly Proudhon learned and took not only from Grün but also from Marx with regards to German contemporary philosophy. An erroneous translation, or rather an omission, made by Saint-René Taillandier in his 1848 article 'L'athéisme allemande et le socialisme français'[94] suggested that Proudhon had learned about Hegel from Grün, something that has been partly disputed as early as in the mid-twentieth century.[95]

Another Young Hegelian who may have contributed to the diffusion of Stirner's ideas in Paris is the aforementioned Hermann Ewerbeck (1816-60). A German-French socialist political activist, writer and translator, Ewerbeck was an early political associate of Marx and Engels involved in Proudhonian circles, and one of the founders and leaders of the Parisian communities associated with the League of Justice. Most importantly though, he was a vulgarizer in France of the works of a number of German thinkers, including Feuerbach and Bauer. It should be pointed out, however, that most prominent German socialists and communists, whether based in France or Germany, and most Old and Young Hegelians as well, forcefully rejected the views expressed in *Der Einzige* (though in some cases after an initial or partial praise of the book or of Stirner). They rejected them on the grounds that they were either, or simultaneously, too extreme, logically or factually wrong, ineffective, or simply inapplicable.[96]

Naturally, this does not exclude the possibility that some of them may nonetheless have had various reasons for popularizing Stirner's ideas in France, or at the very least, for introducing his name to French intellectuals and political activists more specifically. However, there is little to no concrete evidence of this. As the Austrian journalist and parliamentarian Ernst Viktor Zenker (1865-1946) rightly noted as early as in 1895, 'it is characteristic that even the German followers of Proudhon, as, e.g., Marr, Grün, and others, had a very poor opinion of Stirner, and never dreamed of any connection between his views and those of Proudhon.'[97] And yet, as shall be seen later on, the Stirner-Proudhon association became commonplace in France from the 1850s especially among Catholic polemicists, regardless of Proudhon's apparent rejection of

[92] See Jean-Christophe Angaut, 'Stirner et l'anarchie', in Olivier Agard and Françoise Larillot (eds.), *Max Stirner. L'Unique et sa propriété: lectures critiques* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2017), 205-23 (206).
[93] Paul Thomas, *Karl Marx and the Anarchists* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985 [1980]), 176.
[94] See Chapter Two for the details and analysis of this work.
[95] Henri De Lubac, *Proudhon e il Cristianesimo*, Section One: *L'Uomo davanti a Dio*, Vol. 3 (Jaca Book, 1985 [1945, *Proudhon et le Christianisme*, Paris: Editions du Seuil]), 152-53.
[96] See the manuscripts written by Marx and, in smaller part, by Engels, in 1845-46, which came to be known as *Die Deutsche Ideologie* (The German Ideology). Then there are the critiques of Szeliga (Franz Zychlin von Zychlinski), Ludwig Feuerbach, and Moses Hess, followed by Stirner's replies, first published in 1845 and collected most recently in *Recensenten Stirners. Kritik und Anti-Kritik*, edited by Kurt W. Fleming, with a preface by Bernd Kast (Max-Stirner-Archiv Leipzig, 2003). This edition included Bruno Bauer's 'Charakteristik Ludwig Feuerbachs,' published anonymously in *Wigands Vierteljahrschrift*, Vol. III, 1845, 86-146. See also: Kuno Fischer's *Die Moderne Sophisten* (1847); Friedrich Sass' *Berlin in seiner neuesten Zeit Und Entwicklung* (1846), 75; Karl Rosenkranz's *Aus einem Tagebuch: Königsberg Herbst 1833 bis Frühjahr 1846* (Leipzig, 1854), 132; Georg Friedrich Daumer's *Das Chrìstentum und sein Urheber* (Magonza, 1864), 134-35; Eduard Meyen in *Trier'sche Zeitung*, No. 316, Nov. 11, 1844; Arnold Ruge's letter of 21 Dec. 1844 to Karl Nauwerck, in *Arnold Ruge's Briefwechsel und Tagesbuchblätter aus den Jahren 1825-1880*, edited by Paul Nerrlich (Berlin, 1886, I), 389; Theodor Opitz's 'Herr Max Stirner verräth den geheimsten Gedanken Br. Bauers', in *Bruno Bauer und seine Gegner: Vier Kritsche Artikel* (Breslau, 1846), 23-27; Karl Schmidt's *Das Verstandestum und das Individuum* (1846).
[97] Ernst Viktor Zenker, *Der Anarchismus* (Jena: Gustav Fischer, 1895), 88.

Stirner. More generally, French intellectuals became convinced, or tried to convince the French public, not only that the ideas articulated by Stirner in *Der Einzige* represented the logical conclusion of Hegelianism or even of Kantian idealism, but also that they reflected the very nature of the German people and had countless supporters in Germany and a few in France too.

Aside from the personal exchanges between German and French intellectuals, an important role in the diffusion in France of a number of ideas variously connected with Young Hegelianism was played by periodicals. Building on Grandjonc's numerous works on the subject, Kramer has distinguished two phases in the evolution of the German press in France. The early publications (1834-39), he argues, reflected the liberal republicanism of the first wave of German *émigrés*. The second phase (1843-47), on the other hand, was more radical, more theoretical, and more informed by various kinds of communism. This evolution reflected both the advancement of Hegelian criticism in Germany and the developments of socialism in France. Its protagonists included radical theorists such as Ruge, Marx, Engels, and Hess.[98]

Under the July Monarchy, Germans edited fifteen newspapers and journals in Paris, most of which had political objectives.[99] The majority were published in German, only a few in French. In some cases, the target audience were Germans in France, in others the people at home. A number of them sought to promote cooperation between the two countries. None of them survived for more than three years, either for lack of funds, poor sales, or censorship from the French government, which was sometimes solicited by Prussian authorities.[100]

Driven by a desire to 'build a bridge' over the Rhine to connect Germany to France and strengthen their intellectual alliance, some of the editors and contributors to German periodicals gained the sincere praise of a number of Frenchmen – generally socialists or republicans[101] – without however conquering the wider public. Several French periodicals also shared the desire of a rapprochement between Hegelianism and French socialism, or at any rate an interest in increasing the knowledge in France of German contemporary philosophy, culture, and politics. Among these, one of the most important was *Le Globe*,[102] which featured

[98] Kramer, *Threshold of a New World*, 56.

[99] For all the details about these publications, see Jacques Grandjonc, 'La presse de l'émigration allemande en France (1795-1848) et en Europe (1830-1848)', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, Vol. 10, 1970, 109-26.

[100] Examples of important but short-lived German periodicals in France include the *Vorwärts!* (Forward!, Jan.-Dec. 1844), edited by Karl Ludwig Bernays; Karl Marx's and Arnold Ruge's *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (German-French Annals), of which only one issue (a double number) was published in February 1844; Jacob Venedey's and Theodor Schuster's *Der Geæchtete* (The Outlaw, 1834-36), which was connected with the homonymous league; Ludwig Börne's *La Balance* (only three issues published in 1836); Richard Otto Spatzier's *Revue du Nord* (1835-38).

[101] For example, the republican diplomat and politician Pascal Duprat, editor of the *Revue indépendante*, praised Marx's and Ruge's *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, adding the following comments: 'Hegel shall preside over this great international contract. We do not need to discuss here whether Hegel's philosophy is sufficient for all the needs of the human mind and whether there exists a truly logical correlation between his principles and the ideas of the Revolution. Be it as it may, we cannot but applaud this generous undertaking'. See 'L'École de Hégel à Paris', *La Revue indépendante*, 25 Feb., 1844, Vol. II, Paris, 481-86 (485).

[102] On *Le Globe*, see: Nerema Zuffi, *Le Globe saint-simonien, 1831-1832: art et société* (Università degli studi di Verona, 1989); Jean-Jacques Goblot, *Le Globe, 1824-1830: documents pour servir à l'histoire de la presse littéraire* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1993); Jean-Jacques Goblot, *La jeune France libérale: Le Globe et son groupe littéraire, 1824-1830* (Paris: Plon, 1995).

articles by renowned champions of liberalism and progressist thought like Victor Cousin, Augustin Thierry, François-Auguste Mignet, Adolphe Thiers, François Guizot, and obviously its founder, Pierre Leroux. These authors held Germany in high esteem and tended to perpetuate the idyllic image of it created by Mme de Staël.[103] Other generalist reviews which provided significant amounts of information on Germany and were widely enough read to shape French perceptions of Germany included the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (discussed in greater detail in the next chapter), *La Revue indépendante*, the *Nouvelle revue germanique* (1829-37), the *Bibliothèque universelle de Genève* (founded in 1816), the *Revue encyclopédique* (1819-35), the *Catholique* (1826-29), the *Revue de Paris* (1829-45), the second *Revue Européenne* (1831-35), and the *Nouvelle revue germanique* (1829-37), which succeeded the *Bibliothèque allemande* (1826).[104]

By 1848, thanks primarily to the political activism and propaganda of German radical thinkers in France, the stereotypical image of the 'Hegelian' as a revolutionary atheist had been unreservedly accepted by the largest part of the French public.[105] In fact, it had become so diffused that in 1858 the Swiss woman of letters Valérie de Gasparin (1813-94) could publish in Paris a novella entitled and centred around 'Un Hégélien' with the certainty that the public would understand to what kind of real individual this character corresponded, and confident that her audience would grasp the references to this individual's political ideas, personal temperament, and utopian jargon. As Puisais has summarized, by this time 'the term Hegelian seemed to characterise a general polemical attitude, a revolutionary commitment, a will to struggle.'[106]

Published as part of a volume called *Les Horizons prochains*, 'Un Hégélien' is the travel report of an imaginary journey to Germany made by a French noblewoman in 1848 during which the main character meets a young 'Hegelian', a captain who claims to fight for equality and progress but is driven by what the protagonist (and, clearly, de Gasparin) considers deplorable principles. The Hegelian is presented in a caricatural way; he appears as an impious, overconfident, and ridiculous humanist utopian, a revolutionary whose fury will stop at nothing and whose faith rests on pantheism and the idea of the identity between man and God. The lines pronounced by the Hegelian are reminiscent of what many humanist Young Hegelians used to write during the 1840s, both in terms of style and content: 'I am God! My thought is a ray of divine thought, my will is a fragment of the supreme will; the great heart that flutters up there beats in me, in you, in all of us.'[107] As far as the equivalence between God and himself goes, the Hegelian depicted by de Gasparin may even remind one of Stirner.

[103] Rowe, *A Mirror on the Rhine?*, 15.
[104] For an overview of these and other periodicals and encyclopaedias dealing with German philosophy, see Rowe, *A Mirror on the Rhine?*, 13-22; Chepurin et al. (eds.), *Hegel and Schelling*, Vol. 1, 143-52. See also the rest of Chapter Five of *Hegel and Schelling* (Vol. 1) for other 'mechanisms of dissemination'.
[105] Puisas, *La Naissance de l'Hégélianisme Français*, 21; Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin*, 14. Chepurin et al. (eds.), *Hegel and Schelling*, Vol. 1, 76-82.
[106] Puisais, *La Naissance de l'Hégélianisme Français*, 21.
[107] Valérie de Gasparin, 'Un Hégélien', in *Les Horizons prochains* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1858), 125.

The book was a true best-seller. Between 1858 and 1882, at least eleven editions of it were printed. De Gasparin's account testifies both to the fairly significant penetration of Hegelian ideas in French speaking countries and to the general tendency to denaturalize them, desecrate them, trivialize them and, in many cases, dismiss them altogether. But the ultimate rejection of Left Hegelian doctrines did not mean maintaining silence about them. In fact, French intellectuals discussed their proponents in several publications and used their ideas for polemical purposes in the context of a variety of internal debates. After all, while the role of German radical thinkers in Paris was fundamental for the emergence of a strong reaction against Hegelianism and German contemporary thought more generally, the diffusion of the clichés surrounding it and the consolidation of its trivializing interpretations would not have been possible without the contribution of a number of French authors, whether they be critics or admirers of Germany.

Accordingly, the next chapter will focus on two key figures in Stirner's early French reception: Alexandre Thomas and Saint-René Taillandier. Through their publications in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Thomas and especially Taillandier provided their readers not only with essential, if partial, information about Stirner and the latest developments of German philosophy and political thought during the 1840s, but also with a set of pre-digested, strongly opinionated, and fundamentally negative interpretations which were destined to shape the French reception of Stirner and the Young Hegelians for decades to come.

Saint-René Taillandier, Alexandre Thomas, and the *Revue des Deux Mondes*

I. Introduction

Some of the earliest and most historically significant commentaries on Stirner in France were penned by two eminent journalists, historians, and chroniclers of Germany: Alexandre-Gérard Thomas (1818-57) and René Gaspard Ernest Taillandier (1817-79), known to the public as Saint-René Taillandier. From the mid-1840s onward, Thomas and especially Taillandier wrote at length about the Young Hegelians and the Young Germany movement in the influential *Revue des Deux Mondes*, the oldest and most widely read French periodical during the Second Republic (1848-52) and the Second Empire (1852-70).[1]

Taillandier's and Thomas' commentaries on Stirner hold paramount importance, not only because they were comparatively more extensive and informative than most other accounts published at the time (they provided basic information about the Young Hegelians, among other German authors, as well as summaries of their works and assorted quotes), but also because they inaugurated, formalized or systematized a number of negative, often trivializing interpretations which contributed to shaping Stirner's reception until the 1880s and beyond.[2] The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to present the seminal works of Taillandier and Thomas, analysing them in relation both to the cultural, political, and philosophical discourses within which they were situated and to the *Revue des Deux Mondes*' specific political agenda.

Between 1831 and 1848, the *Revue*, guided by the moderate liberal François Buloz (1803-77), presented itself as an elite liberal press organ with Orléanist sympathies. As Gabriel De Broglie has put it, 'its beliefs were those of the bourgeoisie that came to power: faith in progress, cult of individual freedom, and defence of social order.'[3] The *Revue* also served as a major literary rendez-vous for intellectuals such as Alexandre Dumas, Alfred de Vigny, Honoré de Balzac, Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve, George Sand, Charles Baudelaire, Alfred de Musset, Augustin Thierry, and Heinrich Heine.[4]

Since the formation of François Guizot's government on 29 October 1840 until its fall in 1848, and neglecting its earlier criticism of Guizot as Minister of Public Education between 1832 and 1837, the *Revue*

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[1] Yves Hivert-Messeca, 'Protestantisme et protestants dans la *Revue des deux-mondes* (1848-1870)', *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français*, Oct.-Nov.-Dec. 2000, Vol. 146, 773-820.

[2] Ida-Marie Frandon has shown for example that Taillandier's accounts on the Young Hegelians in general and Stirner in particular informed the publications of novelist, journalist, philosopher, and politician Maurice Barrès (1862-1923). See *Barrès Précurseur* (Paris: Fernand Lanore, 1983), Chapters Two and Three.

[3] Gabriel De Broglie, *Histoire politique de la* Revue des Deux Mondes *de 1829 à 1979* (Perrin, 1979), 26.

[4] Buloz, the editor of the *Revue*, was a close friend of Heine, who collaborated with him and often visited him and the staff at the *Revue*'s office. Heine published very radical works in the *Revue*, such as his famous *De l'Allemagne* (1835), a work which, somewhat ironically, inspired the same German socialists and communists that Taillandier and others at the *Revue* would condemn some ten years later. This confirms that the *Revue* was, at least in its initial period, fairly open-minded and relatively audacious in terms of the material that it chose to publish. Taillandier also translated Heine's *Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen* (1844) into French.

gave full support not only to the man but also to the cabinet and its actions, administration, and methods.[5] The *Revue*'s liberalism in this period was, in fact, somewhat closer to that of the doctrinaires (or the conservative party) than it had been in previous years. Reflecting the famous 'juste milieu' between the excesses of the 'revolutionary spirit' (of the Jacobin and radical kind) and the rejection of the Revolution of 1789 by *ultra* traditionalism, this 'liberalism of the *notables*', as Jaume has called it, was characterized by the attention given to governability, the primacy of the sociological over the juridical and of the group over the individual, and the preference for prevention over repression (which, in theory, violates the liberal creed). Its philosophical expression, consistent with Cousin and the eclectic school, was anti-individualism[6] – which in itself makes it easy to understand why conservative liberals would find Stirner's philosophy unappealing or, in fact, inadmissible.

The relationship with modern German politics and culture of contributors to the *Revue* such as Thomas and Taillandier was, like that of several other Germanophile liberals, ambivalent. On the one hand, many liberals looked favourably upon the development in Germany of a political liberalism based on the principles of 1789 and the sentiment of national unity, though some feared that this may be achieved specifically by Prussia and translate into a hegemony of the latter over the rest of the country. On the other hand, they displayed nostalgia for an old – and to a significant degree imagined – mystical and spiritual Germany, for the idyllic country of poets and speculators described by Mme de Staël,[7] which now seemed to authors like Taillandier and Thomas to have fallen under the spell of Young Germany and the Left Hegelians.

Liberal historian Edgar Quinet, a prominent contributor to the *Revue* and a major influence on Taillandier, had warned the French public as early as in 1832 that Germany was no longer the apolitical idyll portrayed by Mme de Staël, and that the inevitable process of unification would eventually lead Germany to claim the lost provinces of Alsace and Lorraine.[8] Similarly, Taillandier expressed fears that German unification would lead to the supremacy of Prussia and to conflict with France.[9]

The important demythologizing role of Taillandiers' contributions would be remembered for decades. The critic and journalist Émile Montégut (1825-95), for example, while commenting on his friend Taillandier's 1848 *Histoire de la Jeune Allemagne* (a collection of some of his first articles on Young Germany), wrote in 1880 that 'It was […] a real shock for many readers. The young critic ruined completely this illusion

[5] On the evolution of the *Revue*'s political positions during the July Monarchy, see De Broglie, *Histoire politique*, Chapter Two.
[6] On the various liberal currents in this period, and the one addressed here in particular, see Lucien Jaume, *L'Individu effacé* (Paris: Fayard, 1997). On Orléanist liberalism and the danger that democracy represented for liberals, see also Annelien de Dijn, *French Political Thought from Montesquieu to Tocqueville* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), Chapter Six.
[7] Lucien Calvié, *Le Renard et les Raisins. La Révolution Français et les Intellectuels Allemands, 1789-1845* (Paris: Études et Documentation Internationales, 1989), 112-17.
[8] 'De l'Allemagne et de la révolution', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Vol. 5 (12-45), 1832, also published separately in the same year and with the same title by Paulin, Place de la Bourse. On Quinet's positions with respect to Germany, see Calvié, *Le Renard et les Raisins,* 114-15.
[9] 'Situation intellectuelle de l'Allemagne. – Vienne, Munich, Berlin, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, first period, tome 4, 1. Oct. 1843, 91-132.

of a dreamy and mystical Germany' as it had previously been described to the public by Mme de Staël.[10] In more recent years, Luc Fraisse has similarly claimed that the *Histoire de la Jeune Allemagne* may be read as a *Contre 'De l'Allemagne'* and a *Contre Mme de Staël*.[11]

The first section of this chapter will therefore concentrate on the key figure of Taillandier, and specifically on the first article, published in the *Revue* in 1847, where he engaged with Stirner in a substantial way. The second section will review Taillandier's subsequent commentaries on German intellectual and political life in order to understand how his views on Stirner and the Young Hegelians evolved over the years and what kind of additional comments on, or information about, their works and thought he submitted to the French public. Finally, the third section will focus on some of Thomas' most significant travel reports on Germany, which addressed Stirner and the Young Hegelians in relation to the political, social, and intellectual developments that had taken place beyond the Rhine during the 1840s.

I. The 'crisis' of Hegelian philosophy and the 'extreme parties' in Germany. Taillandier's first approach to Stirner

Saint-René Taillandier was arguably the single most important author in the history of Stirner's French reception between 1844 and the early 1890s, and a remarkable, though little studied, French historical figure in his own right. While he was not the first to write about the Young Hegelians in general and Stirner in particular in France (his friend and colleague Thomas preceded him by a few months, and others had also already made references to Stirner before Thomas[12]), he was the first to provide such comparatively in-depth commentaries and essential background information, and one of the few in France to have read *Der Einzige*, or at least parts of it, before the 1890s. Moreover, Taillandier was the only French author to repeatedly return to the subject over such a long period of time (more than thirty years). This allowed him to remain the main influence on, and the primary source of reference for, subsequent interpreters of Stirner and other lesser-known Young Hegelians. From Taillandier's works, French readers regularly borrowed useful quotes (both his and Stirner's) as well as pre-digested, expedient interpretations that better served their diverse political, religious, or literary purposes. But before delving into Taillandier's oeuvre, a few biographical details[13] and considerations about his thought are necessary.

Born in Paris in 1817, Taillandier graduated at the *lycée* Charlemagne in 1836, with the prize of honour at the *grand concours*.[14] After obtaining a bachelor's degree in law and another in literature, he completed his higher education in Heidelberg in 1840-41. Between the 1840s and 1870s, Taillandier taught

[10] 'Esquisses littéraires. Saint-René Taillandier', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, third period, Vol. 39 (583-626), 1 June 1880, 594.
[11] Luc Fraisse, *Les Fondements de l'Histoire Littéraire. De Saint-René Taillandier à Lanson* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2002), 25.
[12] See Chapter Four.
[13] On Taillandier's life and work, see the account given by his son Georges in *Le Livre du centenaire. Cent ans de vie française à la Revue des Deux Mondes* (Paris: Hachette, 1929), 223-230; Fraisse, *Les Fondements*.
[14] *Polybiblion: revue bibliographique universelle* (Saint-Quentin: Jules Moureau, 1879), tome XXV, 1, Jan. 1879, 265-266.

courses on French Literature and Eloquence first in Strasbourg and Montpellier, then at the Sorbonne in Paris. In 1870, he was appointed General Secretary of the Ministry of Public Education and Officer of the Légion d'Honneur, and in 1873 he became a member of the Académie Française. He died in Paris in 1879.

A close friend of Alexandre Thomas,[15] with whom he shared important acquaintances such as Cousin and Édouard Laboulaye, Taillandier was a liberal conservative (or a 'staunch conservative', according to some)[16] in the Orléanist mould. He corresponded with such prominent personalities as William Gladstone and Guizot, who praised some of his publications.[17] Taillandier's admiration for Cousin in particular, and the latter's influence on him more generally, are reflected in his approach to literary history, a field that developed, consistently with Cousin's eclectic method, thanks to the convergence of the disciplines of philosophy and history.[18]

Taillandier was not just a liberal conservative, but also a *spiritualist* liberal. Spiritualist philosophy, which will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, was a 'philosophy of freedom',[19] heir of the Revolution, centred on the internal activity of the soul. Spiritualists sought transcendence, the absolute. They believed in the existence of God, in the immortality of the soul, and in the metaphysical nature of the *esprit*, which they considered to be the foundation of man's natural right. In the introduction to his *Histoire et philosophie religieuse* (1859), Taillandier wrote that 'the Christianity that should inspire our work is a spiritualist and virile Christianity, a Christianity that does not fear freedom, that loves and encourages science; which, far from stifling man's faculties, vivifies them; which, instead of proscribing thought, stimulates and warms it; finally, a Christianity that welcomes all the elevated instincts of human nature to elevate them even further…'[20]

Taillandier's two sources of inspiration, which he thought were visible in every page of his work, were 'a lively sympathy for Germany and sincere faith in the progress that only spiritualist Christianity can give the world'.[21] It was to defend this 'spiritualist Christianity' that Taillandier fought the philosophical and political excesses of recent German thinkers, convinced that Germany used to be a land of spiritualist genius, a 'Christian land'.[22] Commenting on Arnold Ruge's *Hallische Jahrbücher* (Annals of Halle) in 1853, Taillandier wrote in fact that 'in hatred of the reaction that they fight, the young defenders of freedom deny the principles that they need the most. The old Germany was spiritualist, and its excessive spiritualism, inspiring

[15] Montégut, 'Esquisses littéraires', 587.
[16] Nicolaas Rupke, 'Alexander von Humboldt and Revolution. A Geography of Reception of the Varnhagen von Ense Correspondence', in David N. Livingstone and Charles W. J. Withers (eds.), *Geography and Revolution* (University of Chicago Press, 2015), 344. Philippe Martel regards him as 'socially very conservative' ('Le professeur Saint-René Taillandier et la «nationalité provençale» des félibres', in *L'Éveil des nationalités et les revendications linguistiques en Europe (1830–1930)*, 221-240 (Paris, 2006), 222.
[17] Montégut, 'Esquisses littéraires', 623.
[18] Fraisse, *Les Fondements*, 138-142.
[19] Laurence Loeffel, *Le Spiritualisme au XIX^e siècle en France: une philosophie pour l'éducation?* (J. Vrin, 2014), Introduction.
[20] *Histoire et philosophie religieuse* (Paris: Michel Lévy, 1859), XII.
[21] *Études sur la révolution en Allemagne* (Paris: A. Franck, 1853), Vol. 1, XLIV. Taillandier's spiritualism can also be observed in his laudatory review of Saisset's book in the article entitled 'La Philosophie spiritualiste depuis Descartes jusqu'à nos jours', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, second period, tome 35, 1861 (62-95).
[22] *Études*, Vol. 1, XLIX-L.

in it the disdain for active life, made it egoistic and incapable of serious progress. They should have modernized spiritualism, associate it with new ideas of reform and freedom; in fact, what is more natural and more legitimate? But no; the *Annals of Halle* launched itself in the opposite excess' – that is, pantheism and materialism.[23]

Writing in July 1847, Taillandier argued that the most radical thinkers in Germany hindered all serious discussions of a constitution in Germany.[24] For, 'what is a constitution for those who wish the radical reformation of the world, and who have begun by dethroning God? […] Deprived of air and sun, they ended up taking pleasure, like Arnold Ruge, in the malady that afflicts them; ignoring true liberty, they invoked the monstrous freedom of which Stirner has traced the image!'[25] Taillandier therefore urged the 'Monarch of Germany' to save Germany, the spiritualist genius, and the unfortunate youths, by guiding their ardour and enthusiasms in the right direction, and by donating freedom and light to Germany.[26]

In most of his works, Taillandier repeatedly appealed to what he perceived to be the better nature of Germany, encouraging the Germans to remember the shining examples of their past, and then modernize it with freedom, following the French model. But in his mind, the 'old Germany' was also an example for contemporary France. As Philippe Régnier has argued, 'in order to better bury "revolutionary mysticism" and "democratic romanticism", [Taillandier] imagines a Germany such as France, in his view, should be; that is to say, subjected to "common sense, reason, practical philosophy, and spiritualist Christianity."'[27] In Taillandier as in Quinet before him, one may observe the political use and abuse, for French internal purposes, of the notion of the *esprit des peuples*, of the nationality not only of philosophies, as discussed in Chapter One, but also of ideologies and literatures.

Taillandier was one of the most assiduous and devout collaborators of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*,[28] where the majority of his works first appeared, including the studies that address Stirner's thought. Linking Taillandier to the *Revue* even more closely was the fact that in 1846 the journal had established its offices in an old hotel that belonged to his father.[29] Soon after joining the *Revue* in 1843, Taillandier was warned by Buloz about the possible polemics that could arise between France and Germany if he were to address the excesses of German thought, as he had done from his very first article in the *Revue*.[30] The editor advised Taillandier to work for an 'intelligent rapprochement' of the two countries by writing about Germany 'in a

[23] Ibid, 341.
[24] In an article that was subsequently published in the *Études sur la révolution en Allemagne*, Vol. 1, 398-400.
[25] Ibid, 398-9.
[26] Ibid, 399-400.
[27] Philippe Régnier, 'Littérature nationale. Littérature étrangère au XIXe siècle. La fonction de la *Revue des Deux Mondes* entre 1829 et 1870', in Espagne and Werner (eds)., *Philologiques III*, Chapter 17, 299.
[28] See Henri Blaze de Bury, 'Mes souvenirs de la *Revue des Deux Mondes*', first published in the *Revue Internationale* (10 Apr. 1888, XVIII, 9) and cited in Thomas Loué (ed.), *La* Revue des Deux Mondes *par elle-même* (*Mercure de France*, 2009), 79-240 (186-7).
[29] See Nelly Furman, *La* Revue des Deux Mondes *et le Romantisme (1831-1848)* (Geneva: Droz, 1975), 121.
[30] Taillandier, 'Situation intellectuelle de l'Allemagne.'

spirit of high justice and thoughtful benevolence'.[31] Evidently, Buloz was more than satisfied with Taillandier's subsequent submissions, since he let him work for the *Revue* until his death and gave him *carte blanche* on the topic of Germany as early as in 1845.[32] But whether Taillandier managed to write about Germany 'in a spirit of high justice and thoughtful benevolence' remains for the reader to decide.

A 'clever observer, though not always impartial',[33] Taillandier published numerous articles on history, philosophy, French and foreign contemporary literature, North- and East-European countries and, most importantly, Germany.[34] Contributing to Taillandier's thorough knowledge of Germany was his sojourn of a year and a half in Heidelberg in 1840-41 where he went at the age of twenty-two to complete his studies and where he witnessed German reactions to the Rhine crisis of the same year. It seems that on several occasions the French author was forced to curb his curiosity about German matters and maintain a more discreet approach with the Germans; as he would recall in 1875, the famous philologist and archaeologist Georg Friedrich Creuzer (1771-1858) had at some point suspected that he, Thomas, and Laboulaye (who were together with him in Heidelberg) were French agents sent by the then Prime Minister of France, Adolphe Thiers (1797-1877), to study the Germans and organize some dark conspiracy.[35] Among his other stops in Germany were Württemberg and Bavaria, where he met renowned personalities, most notably Schelling in Munich.[36]

It was during his sojourn in Germany that Taillandier began to develop a fear of the country's renovated ideas of war (sparked by the Eastern Crisis of 1839-41, which led in turn to the Rhine crisis of 1840-41), of its resentments towards France (harboured since the Napoleonic Wars), and of its struggle for a unity which, he thought, may eventually be realized at the expense of France, as the letters to his parents testify. In one of these letters, for example, he wrote: 'Who knows what strange ideas will come out from this!... I have heard Germans exclaim: "War with France! Ah! All the better, we shall take back Alsace and Lorraine!"'[37] A few years after the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), while remembering his sojourn in Germany as a young student, Taillandier claimed that what he had witnessed in Germany in the 1840s was the hatred of France and the hatred of God.[38]

The Rhine crisis of 1840-41 had produced a significant transformation among German liberals, particularly in terms of their relationship with their French counterparts. Prior to 1840, German liberals held a largely pro-French stance and were willing to prioritize political freedom over national unity (a tendency

[31] As reported by Taillandier's son in *Le Livre du centenaire*, 225.
[32] In a letter of 19 Feb. 1845, quoted in *Le Livre du centenaire*, 226.
[33] Rihs, *L'École des Jeunes Hégéliens*, 11.
[34] Gustave Vapereau, *Dictionnaire universel des contemporains: contenant toutes les personnes notables de la France et des pays étrangers* (Paris: Hachette, 1870), 1.721. The *Dictionnaire* also reports a handful of scant bibliographical details about Stirner and the title of his main work (see 'Schmidt, Gaspard', 1.584-1.585), which he translates as *Le Moi individual et ce qui lui appartient* (The individual Me/I and that which belongs to it).
[35] *Dix ans de l'histoire d'Allemagne* (Paris: Didier, 1875), II-III.
[36] Taillandier, 'Situation intellectuelle de l'Allemagne', 121; Montégut, 'Esquisses littéraires', 593.
[37] Quoted in *Le Livre du centenaire*, 224.
[38] *Dix ans de l'histoire d'Allemagne*, VII.

that would largely be reversed in the period between 1850 and 1871[39]). Many had spent time in exile in France. They looked to the French Revolution and the July Revolution as examples to be followed, and often found inspiration in the thought of French theorists and writers. The Rhine crisis deeply altered the perceptions of France. The focus shifted from its liberal parliamentary system to the militaristic and chauvinistic elements of the revolutionary spirit. Consequently, numerous German liberals turned away from France and embraced a more nationalist form of liberalism, which was to play a pivotal role in the German revolutions of 1848-49. More generally, the Rhine crisis strengthened the conservative current within German nationalism. It was, ultimately, a defeat for German liberals and Francophiles as well as for French liberals.[40]

In this context, Taillandier observed German intellectuals begin to challenge France's prominent role in the world, to promote theories and philosophies of history which established the inevitable demise of the Roman race while preaching the superiority of the Saxon race. All these changes informed Taillandier's works on Germany from the very beginning. Since 1843, he had been reporting on Germany's aspirations for unity to the French public, arguing that the project of unification would be achieved not by Austria but by Prussia[41] – and history proved him right. The spreading of revolutionary beliefs in a country that was not unified risked, in his view, to set Germany in a collision course with France.

While in his own time he was known primarily for his writings on German matters and Franco-German intellectual relations, Taillandier was also praised as a specialist of the literature and culture of various other European nations.[42] In recent years, Fraisse has stressed the importance of Taillandier's academic courses on French literature and his pioneer role in the field of literary history,[43] whereas others have discussed him in the context of linguistic nationalisms.[44] His works on the Young Hegelians, on the other

[39] Heinrich August Winkler, *Germany. The Long Road West*, Vol. 1: *1789-1933* (Oxford University Press, 2006), transl. by Alexander J. Sager, first published in German as *Der lange Weg nach Westen – Deutsche Geschichte I: Vom Ende des Alten Reiches bis zum Untergang der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: Beck, 2000), Chapter Four.

[40] Marc Thuret, 'La crise du Rhin et le malentendu franco-allemand (1839-1841)', in Gilbert Krebs (ed.), *Aspects du Vormärz* (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1984), Chapter Two; Frank Lorenz Müller, 'Der Traum von der Weltmacht. Imperialistische Ziele in der deutschen Nationalbewegung von der Rheinkrise bis zum Ende der Paulskirche', *Jahrbuch der Hambach Gesellschaft* 6 (1996/97), 99-183; P. E. Caquet, *The Orient, the Liberal Movement, and the Eastern Crisis of 1839-1841* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), Chapter Seven. On the consequences of the Rhine crisis on the relations between German and French liberals specifically, see Oscar J. Hammen's old but insightful 'The Failure of an Attempted Franco-German Liberal Rapprochement, 1830-1840', *The American Historical Review*, Oct. 1946, Vol. 52, No. 1, 54-67. On the broader crisis of German liberalism in this period, see Winkler, *Germany*, Vol. 1, Chapter Three: 'Liberalism in Crisis, 1830-1850.'

[41] Taillandier, 'Situation intellectuelle de l'Allemagne'

[42] Fraisse, *Les Fondements,* 23-6.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Martel, 'Le professeur Saint-René Taillandier'; Régnier, 'Littérature nationale', 298-300.

hand, are now widely overlooked by Stirner scholars. When they were addressed, they were generally granted only a brief paragraph or two,[45] or they were simply mentioned in the bibliography.[46]

Yet Taillandier's oeuvre constitutes a precious source for anyone who wishes to engage not only with French mid-nineteenth-century interpretations of some of the great intellectual currents of the Germany of the time but also, and most pertinently, with the history of Stirner's early reception.[47] His credentials in this regard are confirmed by several contemporary accounts. According to the French spiritualist philosopher Elme-Marie Caro (1826-87), for example, who also wrote about Stirner comparatively early,[48] 'no one is better informed about what happens beyond the Rhine than Taillandier. No one is better prepared, thanks to the specialization of his surveys and the very nature of his talent, to the work of reconstruction of schools hardly even born and already dead, of discussion about the living systems on German soil, where every idea engenders a fact, where every doctrine, almost without transition, moves from the brain that has given birth to it to the heated sphere of politics.'[49]

For the German conservative historian Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-96), Taillandier was 'one of the few Frenchmen who had a clear understanding of contemporary German happenings.'[50] Even Karl Gutzkow (1811-78), an important exponent of the Young Germany movement, agreed that Taillandier was the author 'that [knew] Germany best'.[51] On 21 February 1848, the Catholic literary scholar and journalist Frédéric Ozanam (1813-53) wrote to him that '[his] pen is the one to which the readers have recognized the right to inform them about German science, and one could not have done it with more clarity, grace, and French

[45] The Italian anarchist Alfredo Bonanno is one of these rare examples. He devoted a handful of lines to Taillandier's 1847 analysis of Stirner in his *Max Stirner* (Edizioni Anarchismo, 2004), 160-161. When discussing Stirner's French reception, however, he, like most other scholars, abruptly jumps from 1847 to the 1880s, and more specifically to 1887, when sociologist Théophile Funck-Brentano (sic) published his *Les Sophistes Allemands et les Nihilistes Russes*, a work which contains another fairly influential examination of Stirner's thought and which is discussed in Chapter Five.

[46] Wolfgang Eßbach, *Die Junghegelianer. Soziologie einer Intellektuellengruppe* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1988).

[47] Stirner's name appears in several articles published by Taillandier in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Many of these do not have much to do with contemporary German philosophy per se, therefore betraying the impression that Stirner must have exerted on Taillandier. In addition to the articles examined in this chapter, Stirner is also mentioned – though mostly in passing – in Taillandier's following articles, all published by the *Revue des Deux Mondes*: 'De la littérature politique en Allemagne. Un pamphlet du docteur Strauss', 508-526 (511 for Stirner), Vol. XXII, Year 18, Paris, 1 Apr. 1848; 'Histoire du Parlement du Francofort. Première partie. L'assemblée des notables', new period, Vol. 2, No. 5, 1 June 1849, 792-822 (795 for Stirner); 'Histoire du Parlement du Francofort. Dernière partie. La couronne impériale', new period, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1 Oct. 1849, 117-148 (here, at page 140, Stirner is described as 'the doctor of the demagogues of the North', an expression which was later borrowed by the lawyer and politician Evariste Bavoux [1809-1890] in his *Du communisme en Allemagne et du radicalisme en Suisse* [Paris: Cosme, 1851, 43]); 'Revue littéraire de l'Allemagne. Des travaux régens de critique et d'histoire', new period, Vol. 11, No. 6, 15 Sept. 1851, 1.099-1.116 (1.102 for Stirner); 'Hommes d'État et hommes de guerre dans la révolution européenne. Le général de Radowitz', 273-310 (282 for Stirner), Vol. II, Brussels, 1851; 'Le théatre contemporain en Allemagne', 519-537 (536 for Stirner), Vol. XVI, Year 22, Paris, 1852; 'La poésie catholique en Allemagne. M. Oscar de Redwitz', new period, Vol. 15, No. 4, 761-781, 15 Aug. 1852 (764 and 781 for Stirner); 'Écrivains modernes de l'Allemagne. M. Varnhagen d'Ense', Vol. 6, No. 6, second series of the new period, 15 June 1854, 1.230-1.258 (1.253 for Stirner); 'Les allemands en Russie et les russes en Allemagne', second series, new period, Vol. 7, No. 4, 15 Aug. 1854, 633-691 (637 and 690 for Stirner); 'La question religieuse en Suède et les publicistes allemands', Vol. XIII, Year 28, Paris, 1 Jan. 1858, 370-399 (here Stirner is associated with nihilism at page 395); 'Le roman et la société allemande', Vol. LXXXIV, Year 39, Paris, 1 Nov. 1869, 391-429 (409 for Stirner).

[48] See Chapter Three.

[49] Elme-Marie Caro's review of Taillandier's *Études sur la Révolution en Allemagne* (1853) in *Revue de l'instruction publique*, year 14, No. 12, 22 June 1854 (172-175), 173.

[50] *History of Germany in the nineteenth century* (AMS Press, 1968 [1879-1894, five volumes]), 296.

[51] In Rihs, *L'École des Jeunes Hégéliens*, 147.

qualities.'[52] Writing in 1864, the spiritualist philosopher Paul Janet declared that 'Taillandier was the first to introduce this curious deviation of Hegelianism in France',[53] and the German Protestant philosopher and theologian Christian Hermann Weisse (1801-66) wrote in a letter to Cousin that only Taillandier seemed to him to be lingering on the philosophy of Young Hegelians like Bruno Bauer and Stirner in France towards the end of the 1840s.[54] Taillandier's reputation as one of the most informed and able commentators on Young Hegelianism has seldom been challenged in his own time, at least in France. It was mostly after the translation of *Der Einzige* into French in 1899/1900 that commentators from various countries began to express criticism regarding the accuracy and impartiality of his commentaries on the subject, as shall be seen later on.

The first extensive analysis of Stirner's work to be written in the French language, and one of the most influential and quoted in France for decades, was Taillandier's article 'De la crise actuelle de la philosophie Hégélienne. Les partis extrêmes en Allemagne',[55] published in 1847 (a little over two years after *Der Einzige* was released in Germany). The article is, for all intents and purposes, a polemical piece on the German philosophy of the epoch, consisting in part of a review of Ruge's *Zwei Jahre in Paris* and Stirner's *Der Einzige*. In Ruge and Stirner, Taillandier argues, the 'crisis' of the Hegelian school is expressed with singular clarity: 'one irritated, passionate, sincere in his blind fervor; the other cold, haughty, a logician without compassion, certain of his sad victory, and who will reign tomorrow over the ruins of an entire school!'[56] According to Taillandier, these two authors are representative of the 'school' at large, or at any rate their works contain all the elements that allow one to explain the evolution of the Left Hegelianism.

For Taillandier, the French public knew little about the 'follies' and the 'horrifying systems' which had succeeded one another after the publication of Strauss' book *Life of Jesus* (1835).[57] It is difficult, he claims, to grasp – let alone explain – the events that have been taking place in Germany, so remote and alien to the French. How could one make such a 'hotchpotch of inconsistent and pedantic ideas' intelligible in the French language, which, by contrast, is so precise? – Taillandier wonders.[58] Similar remarks confirm once more the widespread tendency, even among Germanophiles, to praise the qualities of the French language while stressing the cryptic nature of the German language, especially as it was employed by contemporary

[52] Quoted in Louis Joubert, 'Mélanges. M. Saint-René Taillandier', *Le Correspondant*, Vol. 114 of the collection, new series, Vol. 18 (1.136-1.143), Paris, 1879, 1.140.
[53] Janet, *Le Matérialisme contemporain en Allemagne* (Paris: Germer Baillière, 1864), 5-6.
[54] Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin*, 38, referring to a letter dated 9 November 1847.
[55] In *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Vol. 19, 1 July 1847, 234-268. The article was subsequently included by Taillandier in the first of the two volumes of his *Études sur la révolution en Allemagne* (1853), which, according to Édouard Laboulaye, were very well received by the readers of the journal. See Laboulaye's review of the *Études*, in *Journal des Débats Politiques et Littéraires*, 5 Nov. 1853, 3-4. This was not, however, Taillandier's first mention of Stirner in an article. He had already referred to him, though only in passing, in 'De l'état de la poésie en Allemagne. La dernière saison poétique', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1 Feb. 1847, new series, Vol. 17, No. 3, 538-556 (549).
[56] Taillandier, 'De la crise actuelle', 240.
[57] Taillandier had already endeavoured to remedy this in 1844 with an article entitled 'De la littérature politique en Allemagne', I. Les Romanciers et les publicistes: la Jeune Allemagne et la jeune École hégélienne', in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Vol. V, 995-1.040, 15 Mar. 1844. Stirner is not mentioned here, of course, as *Der Einzige* was only published at the end of 1844.
[58] Taillandier, 'De la crise actuelle', 253.

philosophers. After all, as a later commentator wrote in 1879, 'it was for France, and with all-French qualities, that [Taillandier] studied Germany.'[59]

The way in which Taillandier intends to approach Stirner is clearly stated from the beginning: 'Mr. Stirner concludes this series of interconnected systems, and by summarizing them all, by destroying them all, he makes them better understood. Let us take advantage of this unexpected light. Let no one be alarmed; I have neither the intention nor the courage to lead the reader into the midst of this inextricable scholasticism. I will be brief and will only take the result of each system.'[60] Based on these premises, Taillandier begins by retracing the sequence of philosophical and religious doctrines propounded by the most renowned Young Hegelians, commencing with Strauss and his *Life of Jesus*, where the divinity of the Son of God is denied. Then, he moves on to Bruno Bauer and his *Critique of the Gospels*. Next, it is Feuerbach's turn, with his anthropological critique that returns divinity to mankind. Taillandier explains that for Feuerbach, 'the most subtle dialectician and one of the most intrepid innovators of German philosophy',[61] Bauer did indeed take down theology, but only to replace it with an atheism that leans towards fanaticism, bigotry, and superstition. Lastly, Taillandier arrives to Stirner and his *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum*, a book whose title, he says, is not easy to translate, but which he nonetheless translates correctly as *The Unique One and His Property*.

'Ich hab' Mein Sach' auf Nichts gestellt!' This, Taillandier writes, is 'the grim chant of victory that opens and closes this dreadful book.'[62] This crucial sentence, contained in the preface and conclusions to *Der Einzige*, is borrowed from Goethe's 1806 poem *Vanitas! Vanitatum vanitas!*, and translates as 'I have based my affair on nothing'[63] (though Taillandier renders it as 'Je ne me suis attaché à rien!').[64] As Taillandier explains, Stirner, who has based his affair on nothing, goes further than Feuerbach, rejecting the latter's 'cult of humanity'. For Stirner, Taillandier says, humanity does not exist, it is a mere abstraction, another entity postulated and placed above the individual, above the *unique*-Stirner, who is the only existing thing and the only one that matters. In Stirner's estimation, to believe in this abstraction is to fall back into transcendence, something that Taillandier calls the 'great crime' in the eyes of the Young Hegelians, for 'when the Hegelian school accuses someone of *transcendence*, it is the lightning bolt of the Vatican, it is the vengeful bull that excommunicates the heretic. Parties in '93 accused their enemies of tending towards dictatorship and sent

[59] Joubert, 'Mélanges', 1.141.
[60] Taillandier, 'De la crise actuelle', 254.
[61] Ibid, 256.
[62] Ibid, 260.
[63] Wolfi Landstreicher's translation (2017).
[64] In a collection of Goethe's poems translated for the first time into French by the Baron Henri Blaze in 1843 (*Poésies de Goethe*, Paris: Charpentier), the sentence is translated as 'Je n'ai mis mon bien nulle part' (43), which roughly means 'I have not placed/set my own good/well-being anywhere'. Since there were no other translations available at the time, Taillandier's translation, quite different from Blaze's, must therefore have been his own. In a subsequent collection of Goethe's works, published in 1861, the sentence was translated in an even more fanciful way as 'Je ne veux plus compter sur rien' (I no longer want to rely/count on anything). See *Œuvres de Goethe* (Paris: Ch. Lahure, 1861), Vol. 1, 49.

them to the gibbet; in the '93 of German philosophy, the decrees of accusation have retained all the scholastic dignity: *transcendence* is the great crime.'[65]

Taillandier agrees with Stirner about the transcendent nature of Feuerbach's and Ruge's message. Occasionally, he even praises the author of *Der Einzige*, though his laudatory comments are generally accompanied by sarcastic remarks. The true originality of Stirner's book, Taillandier argues, lies in its implacable resoluteness, in its unmerciful approach towards anything and anyone, in its underlying attempt to wipe the slate clean. Naturally though, the contents of *Der Einzige* – which offer a 'complete code of egoism' integrated with atheism[66] – and its ultimate message repel Taillandier just as much as the previous works of the Young Hegelians.

Taillandier certainly does not dissimulate his joy in seeing the Young Hegelian school finally brought to an end with Stirner's work: 'The true merit of Stirner, among all these extravagances, is that he has pronounced the final word of the Young Hegelian school. This is what makes the reading of this strange manifesto tolerable […]'.[67] In France, Taillandier was probably the first to pinpoint Stirner as the author that brought the Young Hegelian school's dissolution and ruin to completion with this 'latest folly' that was his book.[68] The majority of those who have written about Stirner since the 1850s have simply reiterated this view. A number of commentators have occasionally proposed historical or philosophical reconstructions that differed slightly from the canonical Strauss-Bauer-Feuerbach-Stirner sequence. Few, however, recognized what scholar John Edward Toews has rightly pointed out in more recent years, namely that 'the final phase of Left Hegelianism should be seen not as a developmental sequence from one thinker to another in which individual positions were *aufgehoben* [annulled] in higher syntheses, but as the contemporaneous construction of alternative positions from a common starting point: the reduction of "man" to "real existing active men."'[69]

Like many other scholars in the history of Stirner studies, Taillandier was perplexed by a number of issues posed by *Der Einzige* in terms both of its contents and style. Between the 'I' of Stirner and the reader's intelligence, Taillandier laments, every bridge is cut: 'One cannot argue with him if not through general ideas, in the name of specific principles, and he has begun by denying all principles and ideas. […] Communication is impossible.'[70] The French critic admits that he 'cannot comprehend why [Stirner] published his book. Who is he addressing? What does he want?'[71]

[65] Taillandier, 'De la crise actuelle', 259.
[66] Ibid, 259, 261.
[67] Ibid, 262.
[68] Ibid, 254.
[69] John Edward Toews, *Hegelianism. The Path toward Dialectical Humanism, 1805-1841* (Cambridge University Press, 1980), 365.
[70] Taillandier, 'De la crise actuelle', 259.
[71] Ibid. The theme of communication in Stirner's work and the nature of his philosophical enterprise have occupied numerous scholars. Mattia-Luigi Pozzi, for example, regards Stirner's work as a critical parody and a parodistic critique, an act which engenders a text and, at the same time, a text which becomes an act. For Pozzi, *The Unique* belongs entirely to the horizon of the comic,

Ettore Zoccoli (1876-?), editor of the first Italian translation of *Der Einzige* (1902), has pointed out that Taillandier's reaction, characterized as it was by surprise and discomfort, was rather common and essentially predictable, for Stirner 'transports us into the centre of a conception of life which is so absurd that it reaches, firstly (and better than anyone else before), the immediate goal of disorienting the reader's mind. Without exception, all Stirner scholars, even those who are not deliberately apologetic, betray this strange subservience to the hallucinatory attraction that propagates from his doctrines.'[72] This may well have been the case with Taillandier, who nonetheless ventures an answer to his own question, stating that, quite simply, Stirner talks to men and wants to actually persuade them. If this is true, he adds, then the German author must not consider this enterprise chimeric, which it would be if his philosophy were merely a lie.[73] But no matter how much Stirner denies all principles and reduces everything to the individual's arbitrary will, this arbitrariness that he preaches, Taillandier contends, 'becomes a principle in his hands; true or false, if he grants me one, immediately all the others rise up, and this moral world he believes ruined rebuilds itself on its own until the top. But then again, why discuss such doctrines? It is sufficient to present them.'[74]

By interpreting Stirner's work as having some kind of 'mission', it becomes easier for Taillandier to equate *Der Einzige* with the revolutionary and atheist 'manifestos'[75] of other German radical thinkers (who, however, unlike Stirner, were truly militant). This approach also allows Taillandier to dismiss the book quite effortlessly as yet another (and possibly the last) corrupt product of the Young Hegelian school, which represents in his eyes the degeneration of the great German philosophical tradition that he used to admire.

Stirner's own statements about his motivations, however, which are clearly stated in *Der Einzige*, seem to be at odds with Taillandier's interpretation. They are worth reporting here for the sake of completeness and in order to be able, in the following chapters, to confront Stirner's declared position with those that subsequent commentators, who in most or all cases had not read the book, often attributed to him for political or ideological reasons:

> Do I write out of love for human beings? No, I write because I want to give *my* thoughts an existence in the world; and even if I foresaw that these thoughts would take away your rest and peace, even if I saw the

understood not only as an interpretative paradigm, but also a heuristic and performative one, as a means to confront and even make history. See *L'Erede che Ride. Parodia ed Etica della Consumazione in Max Stirner* (Milan: Mimesis, 2014), esp. 20 and 31. For other views on the subject, see Alberto Signorini's *Sade, Stirner, Nietzsche. La Comunicazione Impossibile* (Jovene, Facoltà di Giurisprudenza della Università di Camerino, 1980); Francesco Ferrante's *Come parlò Zarathustra? Un retore per tutti e per nessuno (Nietzsche-Stirner)* and *L'Unico Giornalista. Stampa e comunicazione in Max Stirner*, published respectively in 1996 and 1998 by the Istituto Italiano per gli Studi Filosofici of Naples; Herni Arvon's aforementioned *Aux Sources de l'Existentialisme*; and the fourth volume of Fritz Mauthner's famous *Der Atheismus und seine Geschichte im Abendlande* (1923).

[72] Ettore Zoccoli in his Introduction to *L'Unico e la sua Proprietà* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca, 1902), X.

[73] Jeff Spiessens has suggested that Stirner's very understanding of philosophy is consistent with his theory of egoism, in that he views it as a primary interest of humans and as the most powerful weapon against the dominion of both the material world and the world of thoughts. See 'Des Menschen Interesse an Philosophie: Stirners Kritik an der antiken und modernen Philosophie', *Der Einzige. Jahrbuch der Max Stirner Gesellschaft*, 2009/2, 205-222.

[74] Taillandier, 'De la crise actuelle', 260-61.

[75] The term is his own. See ibid, 262.

> bloodiest wars and the destruction of many generations sprouting from this seed of thought: – still I would scatter it. Do with it what you will and can, that's your affair, and I don't care. You'll perhaps only have sorrow, struggle and death from it; a very few will draw joy from it. […] But it's not only not for your sake, but also not for the truth's sake that I express what I think. No:
>
> *I sing as the bird sings*
> *That lives up in the tree;*
> *The song that from its throat springs*
> *Pays well for any Jee.*[76]
>
> I sing because – I am a singer. But I *use* you for it, because I need ears. When the world gets in my way – and it gets in my way everywhere – then I consume it to quiet the hunger of my egoism. You are nothing for me but – my food, just as I am also fed upon and consumed by you. We have only one relationship to each other, that of *usefulness*, usability, advantage.[77]

Two additional elements in Taillandier's 1847 study need to be addressed: the comparison of Stirner and Ruge, and the author's open appeal to Germany and his French readers. The first is relevant because it communicated to the *Revue*'s audience that the doctrines of the Young Hegelians were but a confused mélange of fundamentally similar, or at any rate equally dangerous, ideas; the second because it clarifies Taillandier's broader views and goals.

According to Taillandier, Stirner's work is inseparable from Ruge's. The French critic regards Ruge as the most devout disciple of Hegel and the leader, if there ever was one, of the Young Hegelian movement. Ruge's *Zwei Jahre in Paris* (*Two Years in Paris*, 1846),[78] he says, not only attests his own 'desperate condition' but also offers useful insights regarding the widespread confusion within the philosophical school to which he belongs. For Taillandier, it is not a stretch or an artificial association; simply, he explains, Stirner is the logical continuation of Ruge – even though *Der Einzige* had appeared *before* Ruge's *Zwei Jahre in Paris* – and the landing point of the concatenation of ideas that developed in the context of the confused, delusional, extravagant school of the Young Hegelians: 'the young Hegelian school has proclaimed through the voice of Mr. Stirner the good news it promised to the world. Its Gospel is complete.'[79]

Ruge's views in *Zwei Jahre in Paris* and those expressed in *Der Einzige* seem to Taillandier to rest on a same principle, which is based on Feuerbach's atheism, and although these two works lead to different conclusions, Taillandier submits, they complement each other: 'The first one fights the sentiment of patriotism to replace it with the ill-defined love for mankind; the second, more logical, more in line with the School's thought, repudiates this vague sentiment for mankind as well, and fervently preaches the religion

[76] Stirner's quote is from the second to the last stanza of Goethe's 'Der Sänger', one of the *Harfenspieler* in *Wilhelm Meister*, Book II, Chapter 11. The translation is by Landstreicher (*The Unique*, 308-9).
[77] From Landstreicher's translation of *The Unique*, 308-9.
[78] *Zwei Jahre in Paris* (Leipzig, 1846).
[79] Taillandier, 'De la crise actuelle', 264.

of *me* […].'[80] Here, too, Taillandier seems to be deliberately exaggerating the extent to which Stirner's conclusions were 'in line with the School's thought', for few among the Young Hegelians, and in Germany more generally, truly embraced his radical individualist positions, adhering to more humanist or collectivist ones instead.[81]

Ruge, however, as Taillandier rightfully explains, did praise Stirner's work.[82] In fact, this is what makes Ruge incoherent in Taillandier's eyes, for in claiming to see in Stirner's work a 'war cry' and a positive message for the countless multitude of those who are denied their rights and freedom, he seemingly forgets that Stirner, the 'logician', has demonstrated that rights, common right, is a religious idea, a chimera, a false notion that opposes true freedom.[83] Indeed, Taillandier's criticism of Ruge in relation to Stirner's positions reveals what is perhaps the most important reason behind the French author's contempt for Stirner. When Taillandier writes: 'I challenge Mr. Ruge to find in Mr. Stirner's system a single thought that could authorize Germany's liberal movement', and when he describes Stirner as the final and most logical result of Left Hegelianism, it becomes clear that he regards Stirner's critique of liberalism as an especially damaging one (though in reality this critique was mostly addressed to Left Hegelian liberalism),[84] and that Stirner represents the exact antithesis of the liberal Germany of which he dreams.

Taillandier sends a blunt, forthright message to the Germans which is at the same time an appeal directed to the French to remember and practice their alleged inner virtues:

> Whether you preach to us, like Ruge, whatever cosmopolitan sentiment based on the hatred of the homeland, whether you wrap yourself up with Max Stirner in an idiotic egoism, you will find in France's spirit the energetic condemnation of your insane theories. Which people has loved mankind more than ours? Who has devoted themselves to the common cause more than us? But for one to devote oneself, one must know oneself first, understand and love oneself, and nowhere indeed will you see such two fecund sentiments – the love for mankind and the love for one's own country – better combined.[85]

To Stirner's 'foolish obstinacy to strip oneself', and to his rejection of humanity, of his kind, of God, and of any other idea that is above the individual, Taillandier replies with Voltaire (without however being a Voltairian himself): 'If someone in the Milky Way sees a needy cripple, if he can relieve him and he does not

[80] Ibid, 263.
[81] On the early critical reactions to Stirner in Germany, see Chapter One.
[82] On Ruge and his overall positive interpretation of Stirner, see, most recently, Helmut Reinalter, *Arnold Ruge (1802-1880). Junghegelianer, politischer Philosoph und bürgerlicher Demokrat* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2020), 115-116.
[83] Taillandier, 'De la crise actuelle', 263.
[84] On Stirner's critique of Young Hegelian liberalism, see Jeff Spiessens, *Radicalism of Departure: A Reassessment of Max Stirner's Hegelianism* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), Chapter Five.
[85] Taillandier, 'De la crise actuelle', 264.

do it, he is guilty toward all globes.'[86] Then, he invites both Stirner and Ruge to go and get some fresh air in France ('the heart of Europe'), to enjoy its purifying atmosphere, which, he says, would certainly do them good. However, he adds, 'The clarity that I ask for them, the purifying atmosphere that France would give them, it would be better […] if they could find it in their own country. That is where the evil came from, and that is where the remedy lies above all.'[87]

For Taillandier, it is Germany's fault if Stirner and Ruge, these two 'elitist' natures, came up with such 'ignoble extravagances'. Germany itself is responsible for this 'evil plague', for becoming the house of 'monstrous systems' and of a mounting atheism which is contaminating new generations with its dogmas. In fact, Taillandier argues – presumably referring again to either atheism, internationalism, or both – at the present state of affairs Germany suffers from an unescapable disease, a dangerously contagious one. Feuerbach, Ruge, and Stirner are not adventurers in search of scandal, they are not trying to pull an insolent stunt. In fact, Taillandier points out, they are not even aware of their own condition; with naïve candour, and believing to be right, they simply keep on spreading the epidemic.

This pervasive, rampant materialism which impoverishes reason, these 'tenebrous doctrines' and 'antisocial passions' that German philosophy is producing, Taillandier argues, are all only partially due to science. Rather, he explains, politics is to blame. Taillandier believes that politics and philosophy go hand in hand in Germany, and that politics is the main cause of the emergence of the sinister doctrines that have been produced by the Young Hegelians – hence his remark on 'the urgency of those political reforms constantly promised and constantly postponed'.[88] For him, German society, where far too many different movements operate, ought to be regularized and disciplined.

Already before the revolutions of 1848, Taillandier, like many other French intellectuals, was concerned with the revolutionary doctrines promoted in Germany by authors whom he considered to be dangerous speculators and dreamers, particularly because the country was not politically unified. The solution proposed by the French author was an 'honest' and 'complete' introduction of Germany to the pathway of liberal civilization. As he wrote in the preface to his *Histoire de la Jeune Allemagne* (1848), 'the France of 1830 has awakened Germany, the France of 1848 has given it what it pursued with passion, the definitive admission to the grand family of the free nations.'[89]

Taillandier's conception of liberty, however, was rather vague**,** as one of his fiercest detractors, the novelist and literary critic Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly (1808-89), did not fail to notice while reviewing his *Histoire et philosophie religieuse* (1859),[90] where Taillandier repeatedly invokes liberty in relation to religion

[86] Ibid, 265.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid, 240-41.
[89] *Histoire de la Jeune Allemagne. Études littéraires* (Paris: A. Franck, 1848), VIII. The volume, which bears the dedication 'To my friend Alexandre Thomas', is a collection of articles, most of which had appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* between 1844 and 1848. It was translated into German as *Das Neue Deutschland* (Stuttgard, 1849).
[90] D'Aurevilly, *Les Œuvres et les Hommes*, I, *Les Philosophes et les Écrivains religieux* (Amyot, 1860), 55-66. An intransigent legitimist and ultramontanist, d'Aurevilly found Taillandier's ambiguity especially troubling because by advocating a rather open kind of liberty,

consistently with the philosophy of spiritualism. Germany, Taillandier maintains, should most certainly strive to 'complete' itself, to become a true and united nation. However, in transforming itself, in reconciling thought and action, politics and philosophy, it should not denature itself, disown its traditions, or 'reject this generous spiritualism which is the core of its genius.'[91] How Taillandier believed that any of this should be accomplished in practical terms, however, remains unclear.

Taillandier's seminal article, 'De la crise actuelle de la philosophie Hégélienne', was translated into German in the same year of its first appearance in France.[92] It was published in Leipzig with an introduction by Austrian journalist and revolutionary Hermann Jellinek (1822-48), which focused on 'The meaning [or significance] of the last twelve years in Germany'. A Jewish turned atheist and a liberal radical, Jellinek briefly summarizes here some of the key works published by the Young Hegelians, rejoicing at the overall progress made over the previous twelve years but with a few reservations on some of the doctrines discussed, including those of Feuerbach and Stirner. Most importantly though, he expressed some criticism regarding Taillandier's article itself. For example, Jellinek points out that 'the Frenchman is so naïve as to pass of Bauer's critique of evangelical history as nothing other than Voltairianism. How thorough!'[93] Nonetheless, the German author maintains that Taillandier's sketch is interesting because it shows how French liberalism judges the 'free movement' of Germany, how it reacts to and is affected by its development, which in his view could no longer be arrested: 'We promise Taillandier to continue it, even if "political freedom" were to exist in Germany, as he is of the opinion that German theory is based on the fact that the Germans are not actually politically engaged, that they have no "public sphere."'[94]

As shall be seen in the following section, Taillandier's mixture of admiration and nostalgia for the old Germany on the one hand, and of distrust of Germany's younger and most radical generations on the other; his optimism regarding a future liberal and spiritualist Germany, often alternated with disillusion and bitterness, continued to animate his subsequent writings on Germany at least until the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), which seems to have finally crushed all his hopes.[95]

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he seemed to him to justify the freedom to have no religion at all. A fervent Catholic, D'Aurevilly depicts Taillandier as some kind of failed Protestant and labels him a 'false Christian' and a 'fake spiritualist' (ibid, 61-2).

[91] Taillandier, *Histoire de la Jeune Allemagne*, XV.

[92] *Die gegenwärtige Krisis der Hegel'schen Philosophie* (Leipzig: E. O. Weller, 1847).

[93] Ibid, 27.

[94] Ibid, 28.

[95] See Chapter Five.

II. Taillandier's reassessments of the historical role of the Young Hegelians after 1848

Between the publication of 'De la crise actuelle de la philosophie Hégélienne' (July 1847) and the next influential, much quoted study where Taillandier addressed Stirner, entitled 'L'Athéisme allemand et le socialisme français. M. Charles Grün et M. Proudhon' (October 1848), revolutions broke out all across Europe. Naturally, these events had a huge impact on France's intellectual life as much as on the political, economic, and social spheres.[96] The February Revolution caught the largest part of the French bourgeoisie by surprise. It was a defeat for liberals, who remained to a large extent unable to comprehend the Revolution and what followed, and a defeat for liberalism itself.[97] Fragmented, liberals often abandoned or compromised their principles to align themselves with legitimism, Bonapartism, or moderate republicanism, which they saw as bulwarks against socialism.[98]

While Buloz and his collaborators at the *Revue* had to some extent foreseen the arrival of a storm long before 1848,[99] they were nonetheless shaken by the events of February and forced to take position. After a moment of indecision and discouragement, Buloz opted for turning his periodical into a flagship of the anti-revolutionary cause and gathering around it the supporters and the nostalgic of the fallen monarchy. But the contributors of the *Revue* soon realized that a return to any form of monarchy was impossible, that France was and would remain, at least for the time being, a Republic. Although it did not hold the republican system in high esteem, the *Revue* accepted the *fait accompli*. Its collaborators, *républicains du lendemain* (latter-day republicans), even welcomed the first decisions of the new-born regime. However, in light of its concerns with social and political stability, the *Revue* changed position again after the popular insurrection of June, this time in favour of the reaction. Its contributors sang the praises of General Louis-Eugène Cavaignac for his brutal repression of the revolt (only to find him too soft on socialism just three months after his suppression of the insurrection),[100] and encouraged strict measures against political clubs.

Between 1848 and 1851, numerous issues continued to address the dangers of socialism and communism.[101] Fear of these perceived evils led many contributors to criticize the laxness of a society where the notion of punishment had seemingly been lost. Of course, the attacks on socialism and communism were

[96] See Jonathan Beecher, *Writers and Revolution. Intellectuals and the French Revolution of 1848* (Cambridge University Press, 2021); Douglas Moggach and Gareth Stedman Jones (eds.), *The 1848 Revolutions and European Political Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 2018); Dominica Chang, 'Reading and Repeating the Revolutionary Script: Revolutionary Mimicry in Nineteenth-Century France', in Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein (eds.), *Scripting Revolution. A Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutions* (Stanford University Press, 2015), 181-98.

[97] Robert Tombs, *France 1814-1914* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), 70.

[98] Ibid.

[99] *Le Livre du centenaire*, 166.

[100] Guyver reports the following passage from an issue of the 'stuffily Orléanist' *Revue des Deux Mondes* of mid-September: 'General Cavaignac is obviously too anxious not to break with the extreme sections of democratic opinion, and although he is a convinced republican, if there ever was one, one would almost believe that he imagines he needs this alliance to give himself republican credentials.' In Christopher Guyver, *The Second French Republic 1848-1852. A Political Reinterpretation* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2016), 144.

[101] Gabriel De Broglie, *Histoire politique de la* Revue des Deux Mondes *de 1829 à 1979* (Perrin, 1979), 74-75.

not limited to the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and the Orléanists. Between 1849 and 1851, anti-socialist and anti-communist discourses were revived by most of the factions that constituted the Party of Order not merely to preserve social stability but also to protect the interests of the upper classes.[102] The most resolute group in the crusade against the communists, however, were without doubt the legitimists and Catholic apologists, as Chapter Four will show.

New words were created and old ones were brushed up to refer to the communists, such as 'partageux', 'ravageurs', or 'rouges', which evoked memories of the Terror, of the sans-culottes of 1793. These terms were often used interchangeably with 'anarchists', 'socialists', 'utopians', 'Jacobin', 'democratic', 'montagnards', and 'revolutionaries'. Naturally, many democrats, republicans, socialists, and communists rejected these accusations.[103]

Consistent with the Party of Order, the *Revue* became a guardian of the businessmen, of the bourgeois and the propertied, denouncing those socialist and communist theories which suggested that 'property is theft' (as Proudhon famously claimed), that the organization of production should be planned, that resources should be apportioned. To counter the revolutionary spirit, the *Revue* urged the monarchist parties to remain united. More cautiously, it also objected to universal suffrage. Like the moderate party and the majority of the Orléanist journals, the *Revue* defended the law of 31 May 1850 which subordinated the exercise of the right to vote to more stringent conditions.

Taillandier's works too, of course, bear traces of the impact of 1848 and are consistent with the trends described above. The French author saw in the 1848 Revolution a worrying tendency to imitate the protagonists of the 1789 Revolution, or rather of 1793, and he actively worked to prevent Germany from committing the same disastrous crimes that he thought had been committed in France. As numerous scholars have pointed out, the 1848 revolutions were *not* a failure, but they were frequently perceived or tactically presented as such at the time.[104] Indeed, even those who had hoped and worked for a revolution saw 'the dream of universal fraternity, social justice, and democracy […] replaced by the nightmare of historical repetition and regression of the worst kind: return to autocratic rule under Napoleon III and the Second Empire.'[105]

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[102] Sylvie Aprile (ed.), *Comment meurt une république. Autour de 2 décembre 1851* (Paris: Créaphis, 2004), 138-144.
[103] Ibid*,* 142-43.
[104] See, most recently, Christopher Clark, *Revolutionary Spring. Fighting for a New World, 1848-1849* (Allen Lane, 2023), Introduction. In France, the Provisional Government created National Workshops on 25 February, abolished the death penalty for political offenses on 26 February, decreed universal suffrage for males on 5 March, and abolished slavery in the French colonies on 27 April. Some scholars have also pointed to the extraordinary mass mobilization and political participation of the period as remarkable aspects of the 1848 experience, viewing the revolutions as an 'apprenticeship in democracy', most notably Maurice Agulhon in *1848 ou l'apprentissage de la République (1848-1851)* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1973). Moggach and Stedman Jones consider the 1848 revolutions as a turning point in political and social thought, arguing that even where the revolutionary movements may have failed to achieve their explicit goals of transformation of the state and social relations, they nonetheless set the agenda for subsequent debates on democracy, nationhood, freedom, and social cohesion which have shaped modern politics and still help to define major ideological currents such as liberalism, republicanism, conservatism, socialism, and anarchism. See Douglas Moggach and Gareth Stedman Jones (eds.), *The 1848 Revolutions and European Political Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 2018), Introduction.
[105] Chang, 'Reading and Repeating the Revolutionary Script', 183. For the continuous importance and constant references in France to the French Revolution when dealing with the most diverse political, social, religious, or cultural changes of significant entity up to

Taillandier, for his part, did not reject the Revolutionary legacy per se. He was very attached to the fundamental principles of 1789, which he wanted to separate from Voltairianism and reconcile with Catholicism, but he was horrified by 1793, by the Terror, by the crimes of both Robespierre and Danton.[106] His position with respect to the French Revolution as well as his spiritualist liberal conservatism are perhaps best encapsulated by a passage contained in his *Les Renégats de 89*, where he states that 'All that is legitimate and lasting in the Revolution was from the start in the divine law of the Gospel.'[107]

The February Revolution, Taillandier writes at the beginning of 'L'Athéisme allemande et le socialisme français', has brought to light all the socialist schools and sects which had until then remained essentially in the dark, despite the talent that he recognizes in certain key representatives and the 'confused cries of the neophytes.'[108] Socialists and left-wing republicans were only a minority within the Provisional Government and controlled few positions of power or influence.[109] In recent years, a number of scholars have also challenged the validity of some of the fears connected with socialism during the years of the July Monarchy. William Fortescue, for example, has pointed out that despite certain notable exceptions (e.g. Blanqui, Proudhon, Fourier), many prominent socialists actually 'tended to oppose revolutionary violence, support Christian morality and be restrained in their anti-clericalism, and to believe in patriarchy and the institution of the family. They were opposed to the expropriation of property-owners, apart from a limited nationalisation programme of, for instance, banks, insurances companies, canals, railways and mines.'[110] Nonetheless, fears of socialism and communism only increased over the course of the Second Republic, and especially after the June Days these fears certainly became more justified, for socialism gradually evolved into something of a national movement.

The authors of the *Revue* too, and Taillander in particular, perceived the new state of affairs in a rather negative way, or at any rate they chose to describe it in alarming terms in their publications. Socialism, Taillandier argues, has been 'at the head of France' during the few months that have elapsed since February, holding meetings in the Palais de Luxembourg, signing dictatorial ordinances and, more recently, trying to take over the Government. Thus, Taillandier maintains, France must stay alert, it must revive the idea of right and the sentiment of justice, which he considers to be intrinsic to the national spirit. In his works, he frequently urges his colleagues and the public to remain vigilant in a time when social and political stability are threatened by democracy, socialism, and communism, and when society is declining from the point of view of education, ideas, industry, morality, as is reflected in his view by the poor quality of contemporary

1870 and beyond, see Tombs, *France*, Chapter One and 312-15; Françoit Furet and Mona Ozouf (eds.), *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture, III, The Transformation of Political Culture 1789–1848* (Oxford, 1989).

[106] *Les Renégats de 89. Souvenirs du cours d'éloquence française à la Sorbonne* (Paris: Hachette, 1877), esp. 86-7.

[107] Ibid, 56.

[108] Taillandier, 'L'Athéisme allemand', 280.

[109] William Fortescue, *France and 1848. The End of the Monarchy* (Routledge, 2005), 79-80.

[110] Fortescue, *France and 1848*, 79.

literature.[111] According to the French author, the best way to render all the 'disastrous utopias' powerless is to yield the floor to them, to let its theorists express their absurd views.[112]

Rather than sounding like the words of a man who speaks from a position of strength or from the ranks of the victorious side, these claims arguably seem to betray Taillandier's own sense of powerlessness in the face of the *fait accompli*, of the apparent triumph of 'democracy' and of republicanism, which during the July Monarchy became linked with socialism (démoc-socs),[113] and whose most visible face since the 1830s had been, as Guyver has pointed out, the barricade.[114] In fact, this was the general response of the *Revue* to the February revolution and what came afterwards. The uprising had been violent but brief (22-24 February), for the national guard and the people managed to work together, take control of the capital swiftly, force Louis-Philippe to abdicate, restore order, and proclaim the Second Republic. The effectiveness of the process was openly acknowledged and even praised by the *Revue*, and so were some of the first decisions of the Government. However, the *Revue* did not hesitate to express its concerns regarding the future. The problem for its contributors was the left wing of the February Revolution and of the newly established Government, the agitations of the democrats, of Ledru-Rollin, of Louis Blanc.[115]

The *Revue*'s liberalism, and Orléanist liberalism more generally, was not democratic liberalism as it is commonly understood today, but a very elitist one. As Lyons has argued, 'the liberals of the mid-nineteenth century were not democrats in a modern sense. They believed that workers and peasants were illiterate or poorly educated, and under the influence of reactionary priests and nobles. So liberals were afraid of giving everyone the vote, and at the time they were right: universal male suffrage only brought the dictatorship of Napoleon III into power.'[116] The *Revue*'s contributors wished to preserve the established order. Fear of the social movements that emerged especially after the June Days[117] were a constant theme in their articles. They regularly addressed the power and the dangers of democracy, socialism, and communism, mocked humanitarians and utopians, and fought revolutionaries and sectarians.[118] It is therefore no surprise that Taillandier was critical of Proudhon and French socialists more generally, as 'L'Athéisme allemand et le socialisme français' demonstrates. The remarks that he made in it are worth examining because they complement his earlier commentaries on Stirner and showcase the kind of information and interpretations upon which most subsequent commentators of Stirner in France eagerly relied.

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[111] On Taillandier's appeals in this sense, see Furman, *La* Revue des Deux Mondes, 122.
[112] Taillandier, 'L'Athéisme allemand', 281.
[113] Thomas C. Jones, 'French Republicanism after 1848', in Moggach and Stedman Jones (eds.), *The 1848 Revolutions* (70-93), 76-77; Edward Berenson, 'The Second Republic', in Edward Berenson, Vincent Duclert, and Christophe Prochasson (eds.), *The French Republic. History, Values, Debates* (Cornell University Press, 2011), 31-33; Tombs, *France 1814-1914*, 389-90; Edward Berenson, *Populist Religion and Left-Wing Politics in France, 1830-1852* (Princeton University Press, 1984), Chapters IV-VII.
[114] Guyver, *The Second French Republic*, 27. Guyver has also aptly noted that 'There was little that the Orléanist elite could see of republicanism beyond insurrectionary violence and a misplaced and distasteful nostalgia for the Jacobins' (ibid). For a history of the barricades, see Jill Harsin, *Barricades. The War of the Streets in Revolutionary Paris, 1830-1848* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).
[115] See Fortescue, *France and 1848*, 117-51.
[116] Martyn Lyons, *Post-Revolutionary Europe, 1815-1856* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 216.
[117] Thèodore Zeldin, *France 1848-1945*, I, *Ambition, Love and Politics* (Oxford University Press, 1973), 725-28.
[118] De Broglie, *Histoire politique de la* Revue des Deux Mondes, 47-8.

Unlike his earlier article, 'De la crise actuelle', which drew comparisons between Stirner and Ruge, 'L'Athéisme allemande et le socialisme français' addresses Stirner primarily in relation to Karl Grün and Proudhon. The ever-optimistic Taillandier uses Proudhon's apparent, or at any rate partial, change of heart after his flirtation with the atheist doctrines promoted by the Young Hegelians to emphasize and appeal to the better nature of the French while also warning about the dangerous attractiveness of those doctrines.

Early on in the article, Taillandier explains to the readers that Grün had gone to Paris in 1845 as a 'true missionary' of the Hegelian school to study the progress of French socialists and check in on their doctrines using German atheism as a benchmark and an evaluation method. He describes Grün as a passionate admirer of Proudhon, whom the German socialist considers 'a true son of Hegel, a brother of Strauss, Feuerbach, Stirner, strayed – no one knows why – in our poor France.'[119] At the same time, Taillandier argues, Grün has been Proudhon's master, teaching him in detail this German philosophy which Proudhon had already largely foreshadowed independently.[120]

With his distinctive biting wit, Taillandier ridicules Grün's joy in having found such an extraordinary man in France as Proudhon, who in his view is capable of wielding Hegelian dialectics against society and God with the same cold excitement as Stirner or Feuerbach. He then adds that

> … despite the compunction of his faith in atheism, Karl Grün is a clever man. I point him out as the most complete kind of Young Hegelian, a type unknown to France, for where else if not in Germany can one find today this neophyte of atheism, brimming with devotion and gaiety, going from metaphysics to mischievousness, from science to romping, pedantic and frivolous at the same time, serious and whimsical, and always entertaining in all his forms?[121]

Later in the text, however, Taillandier seems to partly contradict his earlier assessment of Grün when, in recapitulating Stirner's position within Young Hegelian circles, he describes Stirner's '*homo sibi Deus* philosophy' as 'the most *advanced*' of the School and presents Grün as a follower of Stirner.[122] In fact, it is especially thanks to Taillandier's repeated claims about Stirner's role as the last, most extreme, most logical and coherent representative of the Young Hegelian school that the author of *Der Einzige* ended up embodying, in French popular imagination, the ridiculous and repugnant 'Hegelian type'.

Regarding Proudhon, on the other hand, Taillandier points out that there is one common element between him and his German masters: 'the method, the detestable use of what they call antinomy and synthesis. As for the core of his philosophy, the French reformer […] distinguishes himself from German

[119] Taillandier, 'L'Athéisme allemand', 284.
[120] As has been pointed out in the previous chapter, the 'influence' exerted on Proudhon by Grün and other German thinkers in Paris is a controversial issue. For a recent analysis of the German influence on Proudhon, see Edward Castleton, 'The Reception of German Philosophy in the Mind of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon', in Chepurin et al. (eds.), *Hegel and Schelling*, Vol. 2, 97-141.
[121] Taillandier, 'L'Athéisme allemand', 284.
[122] Ibid, 301.

atheism, or rather from the religion of humanism discovered by Feuerbach, perfected by Stirner, and preached by Karl Grün. For the Young Hegelians there is no God other than humanity; Proudhon recognizes a God whom he describes and analyses, a God who is an enemy of man, a God that we must fight and defeat.'[123]

Taillandier mordantly emphasizes how Proudhon, so eager to desecrate any belief, is at the same time extremely preoccupied by, and scrupulous with regard to, the possibility of impinging upon the atheism of the neo-Hegelians. These concerns, Taillandier continues, suggest that Proudhon's *Système des contradictions économiques* (1846) was addressed more to the 'doctors' beyond the Rhine than it was to France, as is also confirmed by the fact that entire chapters of the book would be unintelligible to the reader unfamiliar with the debates of the Young Hegelian school. One is surprised, Taillandier writes, to see Proudhon humiliate himself and beg for mercy in the prologue to his book, all because he had begun his scientific exploration with the hypothesis of a God: 'To whom are these monstrous apologies addressed, if not to Feuerbach, Stirner, Karl Grün?'[124]

Consistent with the goals of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* during the late 1840s, Taillandier fights socialism and communism in all their national variants; and if German authors provided French socialists and communists with more effective intellectual tools, taught them doctrines more radical than their own, deceived them and led them to betray their nature, then all the more reason to attack them. At the same time though, the moralist Taillandier seems to be willing to spare, where possible, the French victims of the German spell, encouraging them to do better. This is essentially what he endeavours to do with Proudhon, but not before castigating him for his mistakes.

According to Taillandier, Proudhon's approach is fundamentally inconsequential. The French anarchist, he argues, reprimands the humanists for preserving divinity by transfiguring it within humanity, embracing yet another form of religion rather than science, and leaving room once again for mysticism and fanaticism. Proudhon claims that God is the enemy and that man should fight him. Yet the Hegelians, Taillandier notes, could legitimately reply that Proudhon is violating the laws of antinomy and synthesis, failing to put an end to the conflict between finite and infinite and make the opposites simply disappear. Moreover, he submits, while he recognizes that God is a human product, Proudhon also unnecessarily prolongs an imaginary war, for man has already rejected the idea of God and governs the world. Lastly, Taillandier rightfully points out that Grün's candid admiration for Proudhon is not shared by all of his compatriots: 'Stirner, the real chief of humanism,[125] had already condemned Proudhon's ideas as too

[123] Ibid, 315.
[124] Ibid.
[125] In 'La Crise actuelle', however, Taillandier had implicitly suggested that Stirner *rejected* humanism when he (Stirner) criticized Feuerbach for replacing God with humanity.

sentimental [in *Der Eizinge*];[126] furthermore, he had claimed that the famous definition "property is theft" contained an implicit acknowledgement of property: for property and theft, the German doctor[127] said, are two correlative ideas, and those who believe that theft is a crime admit at the same time that property is sacred.'[128]

Towards the end of the article, Taillandier tempers his verdict by pointing to a number of passages written by Proudhon which seem to him to indicate a partial 'awakening' of the latter and an acknowledgement of his errors. Sanguine as usual, the author maintains that perhaps not all hope is lost, for Proudhon's flirtation with the Hegelians seems to have come to an end. Although his mind is still troubled by countless contradictions, Taillandier writes, he seems to have returned to the honest pursuit of the truth and of the good, of healthy philosophy. According to Taillandier, he has pronounced kinder words on God, he has allowed – consciously or unconsciously – for the possibility of the immortality of the soul, and shown signs of a possible rapprochement with spiritualism.

Taillandier concedes that, in the final analysis, Proudhon's undeniable intellect has simply fallen victim to an exacerbated dialectic which commands him to search for oppositions everywhere, to exaggerate them, even create them when necessary, seduced by a deceptive form of originality (presumably that of the Young Hegelians). For Taillandier, the examples of Grün and Proudhon are not but further proof of the delusional, pernicious doctrines of 'sensualist' socialism. While the author does not provide a definition for this current of thought, the reader may get an idea of the kind of doctrine or trend that he has in mind based on the value-loaded terms that he opposes to it: duty, freedom, morality, social cohesion, the sanctity of family, love for our own kind, respect for property, right, and God. The information and insights provided by Taillandier in his study of 1848, including his observations on Stirner, went on to inform several similar accounts published by a variety of subsequent commentators who also addressed Stirner.[129]

Taillandier's optimism and his readiness to capitalize on the (alleged) failures of his antagonists can also be observed in subsequent studies on the Young Hegelians. Particularly relevant for discussions on Stirner is an article published in two parts in 1850 and entitled 'La littérature en Allemagne depuis la Révolution de Février'.[130] In the first part, devoted to 'La Littérature politique. Les philosophes et les poètes',

[126] On this subject, see Maurice Schuhmann, 'Max Stirner's critiques of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon', *Philosophica: International Journal for the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 21, No. 41, April 2013, 57-69.
[127] Stirner never achieved the title of Doctor of Philosophy.
[128] Taillandier, 'L'Athéisme allemand', 316.
[129] See, for example: Anonymous, 'Le citoyen Proudhon reçoit la visite d'un docteur allemande', *Mémorial Bordelais*, 30 Oct. 1848, 1-2; Aurélien de Courson, review of Proudhon's *Confessions d'un révolutionnaire*, in *L'Ami de la religion*, Vol. 143 (Paris: Bailly, 1849), 745-50; Alphonse Duhamel de Milly, 'Études sur les défenseurs de la propriété', fifth part, 153-80, *L'Université Catholique*, No. 43, July 1849, in Vol. XXVII, second series, Vol. VII, No. 7, 1849; Jean-Joseph Thonissen, *Le Socialisme et ses promesses*, 3 Vols. (Brussels: A. Jamar, 1849) Vol. 2, 30; Joseph Dourif, *Des Rapports du dogme et de la morale* (Paris: F. Stadler, 1858), 230; Eugène Poitou, *Les Philosophes français contemporains et leurs systèmes religieux* (Paris: Charpentier, 1864), 65-6.
[130] *Revue des Deux Mondes*. The first part, 'La Littérature politique. Les Philosophes et les poètes', was published on 15 Apr. 1850 (Vol. VI, 273-307). The second part, devoted to 'L'Histoire, le Roman, le Théâtre', appeared on 1 Aug. 1850 (Vol. VII, 465-505).

Taillandier notes that while 'Hegelian demagogy had reached the final limit of its follies, [while] the most coldly fanatic of its tribunes, Max Stirner, terrorized Germany with his savage cries',[131] and in spite of the furore of the most extreme parties and the proliferation of 'evil works' and 'guilty doctrines', the fields of literature and public thought in Germany progressed steadily until 1848. After suffering a sudden, distinct, but temporary setback around this time, they gradually resumed activity – much to Taillandier's delight.

Taillandier believed that literary history was connected with political and moral history. As his various articles on Germany demonstrate, he clearly regarded the ideas expressed by the Young Hegelians as a mirror of German contemporary culture more in general, and as a symptom *and* cause of its malaise. In his view, working against the 'healthy advancement' of German politics and literature were not only the Young Hegelians, whom the French critic judged to be 'violent and monotonous, exaggerated and languishing', but also a 'mass of improvised publicists'.[132] It is these publicists, alongside philosophers and even poets, that Taillandier openly set to interrogate on the recent events that had occurred in Germany, namely the revolution of 1848 and its aftermath.

The National Assembly that was formed at Frankfurt, Taillandier explains, was the most important event in Germany after the Revolution of February.[133] In Germany, however, the revolts began in March, not in February as in France. By making this claim Taillandier was perhaps stressing the importance of French events in Germany and, more broadly, the leading role played by France in Europe, particularly in light of its revolutionary tradition.[134] It should be pointed out, though, that when certain events that he deplored took place, he generally tended to blame Germany rather than France, or at any rate his criticism of French authors was often tempered with an emphasis on the alleged change of heart in them that he claimed to have detected, as has been seen in the case of Proudhon in 'L'Athéisme allemand'.

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[131] Taillandier, 'La Littérature politique. Les philosophes et les poètes', 274.

[132] Ibid, 277.

[133] On Germany's debates on its borders, national identity, and historical mission in the context of the Frankfurt Parliament of 1848, see Brian E. Vick, *Defining Germany: the 1848 Frankfurt parliamentarians and national identity* (Harvard University Press, 2002).

[134] On the concrete consequences and significance of the French Revolutions in Germany, see: T. C. W. Blanning, *The French Revolution in Germany* (Cambridge, 1983); Manfred Kossok and Werner Loch, *Die Französische Julirevolution von 1830 und Europa* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985); Steven B. Smith, 'Hegel and the French Revolution: An Epitaph for Republicanism', *Social Research*, Vol. 56, No. 1, *The French Revolution and the Birth of Modernity* (Spring 1989), 233-261; Jonathan Sperber**,** 'Echoes of the French Revolution in the Rhineland, 1830-1849', *Central European History*, Vol. 22, No. 2, The French Revolution in Germany and Austria (Jun. 1989), 200-217; Harold Mah**,** 'The French Revolution and the Problem of German Modernity: Hegel, Heine, and Marx', *New German Critique*, No. 50 (Spring - Summer, 1990), 3-20; Ehrhard Bahr and Thomas P. Saine, (eds), *The Internalized Revolution: German Reactions to the French Revolution, 1789–1989* (Routledge, 2016 [1992, Garland Publishing Inc.]); David Blackbourn, *The Long Nineteenth Century. A History of Germany, 1780-1918*, (Oxford University Press, 1998), XIII-XIV, 47-57, 71, 129; John Breuilly, '1848: Connected or Comparable Revolutions?', in Axel Körner (ed.), *1848 – A European Revolution? International Ideas and National Memories of 1848* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), 32-34 and *passim*; Axel Körner, 'Die Julirevolution von 1830: Frankreich und Europa', in Peter Wende (ed.), *Große Revolutionen in der Geschichte: Von der Frühzeit bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 2000), 138–57; Peter Wende, *A History of modern Germany* (Macmillan, 2005), Chapter Five; Jean-Numa Ducange, *La Révolution française et la social-démocratie. Transmissions et usages politiques de l'histoire en Allemagne et Autriche, 1889-1934* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012, translated into English in 2020 by Haymarket); Julia A. Schmidt-Funke, 'The French Revolution of 1830 as a European Media Event', article published on June 6, 2018, on the website *Brewminate: A Bold Blend of News and Ideas* [accessed on April 8, 2023]: https://brewminate.com/the-french-revolution-of-1830-as-a-european-media-event/; Frank Jacob, *The Revolution and Germany's Intellectual Left. From the French Revolution to the Late 20th Century*, Vol. 1, *The Long 19th Century* (Büchner-Verlag, 2023).

Be that as it may, Taillandier regards the National Assembly of Frankfurt as the most important event in Germany since the Revolution's outbreak, which in turn explains, in his view, why it occupied a big place within the literary movement of 1848. According to many 'naïve *esprits*', Taillandier writes, the Frankfurt Parliament introduced Germany to the glorious paths of militancy, bringing into the theatre of life all the feverish activity that is generally, pointlessly dispensed in books. Knowledgeable men set out to *make* history rather than merely write it, but all these projects and childish hopes vanished. Thanks to the demagogues, Taillandier writes sarcastically, Germany has grown weary of its trials, and the Frankfurt Parliament 'has produced nothing but a library'.[135] (Whether 1848 and the Frankfurt Parliament were a complete failure for Germany, however, is of course debatable).[136]

Taillandier rejoices at the fact that liberal society does not concern itself with the 'muffled propaganda' of Hegelian doctrines, for it has already encountered evil and knows who the enemy is. Yet at the same time he deems it necessary to devote a large section of the article to openly challenging the Young Hegelians in light of their disappearance from the public arena after having so enthusiastically preached their incendiary and revolutionary theories and after having seen them eventually translated into practice. For him, 'it is to philosophers that one should link the immense moral overturning which has transformed the country of spiritual ardours into a hotbed of atheism; it is the Young Hegelian school that has prepared all the follies […] of this time. Hegel's pupils have given demagogy a flag, a doctrine, a whole apparatus of scientific formulas; they know better than anyone else what happens deep down in people's minds, and they have seen the consequences of their systems translated into actions.'[137]

Clearly, then, Taillandier does not seem to doubt that the 1848 Revolutions were, to use Namier's popular expression, 'revolutions of the intellectuals',[138] or at any rate, from this moment onward, he repeatedly endeavoured to convey to the public the message that the Young Hegelians were intellectually

[135] Taillandier, 'La Littérature politique. Les philosophes et les poètes', 275. Taillandier is referring here to the *Paulskirchenbibliothek* (Library of Saint Paul's Church, where the National Assembly worked), later known as *Reichsbibliothek* (Reich library). Between 1848 and 1849, numerous German editors and booksellers offered several thousands of volumes to the Frankfurt Parliament for the creation of this parliamentary library. It was abandoned after the end of the revolutionary period. The books were moved to the Germanishes Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg and later transferred to Leipzig's library. On the failure of the 1848 revolution for German intellectuals, see Michael Kuur Sørensen, *The Young Hegelians before and after 1848* (Peter Lang, 2012), esp. Chapters Six and Seven; Bernhard Giesen, *Intellectuals and the Nation: Collective Identity in a German Axial Age* (Cambridge University Press, 1998 [1993, *Die Intellektuellen und die Nation*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp]), 119-22.

[136] The idea of a 'turning point where Germany failed to turn', famously discussed by J. P. Taylor in *The Course of German History*, as well as the notions that Germany failed to join the modern world and that 1848 represented the tragic collapse of liberalism have recently been challenged, for example by Martin Swales in 'Events and Non-Events… Cultural Reflections of and on 1848', in Körner (ed.), *1848 – A European Revolution?*, 50-63. If one thinks of 1848 in terms of 'reform' rather than 'revolution', Swales suggests, then arguably the Frankfurt Parliament did produce significant changes, for example reforms on the freedom of the press and the creation of a climate of more open discussion (59). According to Ronald J. Granieri, on the other hand, while Taylor spoke of a turning point that did not turn, he did not actually believe in any missed opportunity for liberal Germany, on the grounds that German liberals had no clear vision, no clear programme for working with the people, and no respect for the non-Germans in Central Europe. See 'A. J. P. Taylor on the "Greater" German problem', *The International History Review*, Mar. 2001, Vol. 23, No. 1, 28-50 (36).

[137] 'La Littérature politique. Les philosophes et les poètes', 287.

[138] Lewis Namier, *1848: The Revolution of the Intellectuals* (Oxford University Press, 1944). Building on the view that the 1848 Revolutions were a revolution of intellectuals, John Wyon Burrow has described the years 1848-49 as an epoch of 'disillusionment of the intellectuals', and the period between 1848 and the First World War as one of intellectual crisis for Europe. See *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848–1914* (Yale University Press, 2000).

responsible. To support his views, he claims – deliberately inflating numbers and facts – that 'throngs of followers' have gathered around Feuerbach and Stirner, to the point that almost all university youths responded to these two masters.[139] Then, he continues, when the turmoil in Europe broke out, it was only natural that the revolutionary spirits would finally unchain their 'impatient cupidities'. In fact, Taillandier observes, 'Stirner has written for an epoch of frenzied desires the declaration of rights on this matter.'[140]

Despite Taillandier's alarming estimates, in reality very few people in Germany seem to have answered Stirner's alleged call to 'unleash their instincts' and fulfil their 'frenzied desires'. Zenker's account, for example, albeit published almost four decades after the publication of *Der Einzige*, painted a rather different picture of the situation:

> How strange and anomalous Stirner's individualism appeared even to the most advanced Radicals of Germany in that period emerges very clearly from a conversation recorded by Max Wirth, which Faucher had with the stalwart Republican Schlöffel, in an inn frequented by the Left party in the Parliament of Frankfurt. 'Schlöffel loved to boast of his Radical opinions, just as at that time many men took a pride in being as extreme as possible among the members of the Left. He expressed his astonishment that Faucher held aloof from the current of politics. "It is because you are too near the Right party for me," answered Faucher, who delighted in astonishing people with paradoxes. Schlöffel stroked his long beard proudly, and replied, "Do you say that to *me*?" "Yes," continued Faucher, "for you are a Republican incarnate; you still want a State. Now *I* do not want a State at all, and, consequently, I am a more extreme member of the Left than you." It was the first time Schlöffel had heard these paradoxes, and he replied: "Nonsense; who can emancipate us from the State?" "Crime," was Faucher's reply, uttered with an expression of pathos. Schlöffel turned away, and left the drinking party without saying a word more. The others broke out laughing at the proud demagogue being thus outdone: but no one seems to have suspected in the words of Faucher more than a joke in dialectics'. This anecdote is a good example of the way in which Stirner's ideas were understood, and shows that Faucher was the only individual 'individual' among the most Radical politicians of that time. On the other hand, Proudhon's doctrines, which in their native France could not find acceptance, gained a few converts among the Radical Democrats, and especially among the Communists of Switzerland and the Rhine.[141]

While he attacks many of the most prominent Young Hegelians, Taillandier is convinced that there are at least *some* sincere souls within the group, and he believes that the current state of affairs gives them the right and the duty to speak out. 'I have read with dedication everything that these philosophers have

[139] For Feuerbach's influence on German radicalism around the time of the Revolution of 1848, see Peter C. Caldwell, *Love, Death, and Revolution in Central Europe. Ludwig Feuerbach, Moses Hess, Louise Dittmar, Richard Wagner* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009). The book explores how Feuerbach's critique of religion served as a rallying point for radicals who sought to create a new, post-religious form of religiosity and emancipate humanity from the constraints of mere institutions as part of the revolutionary mission. It includes numerous references to the thought of, and the relationship between, Stirner and other Young Hegelians.
[140] Taillandier, 'La Littérature politique. Les philosophes et les poètes', 287.
[141] Zenker, *Der Anarchismus*, 87-8.

written; one thing has struck me in particular: the silence of the leaders of atheism. Since the February Revolution sent the corps-francs of Hegelian demagogy around Germany, neither Stirner nor Feuerbach have shown any sign of life.'[142] Blaming the German theoreticians for having – sometimes deliberately, sometimes inadvertently – incited their readers to take up arms and start a revolution, Taillandier presses on:

> Feuerbach has not published one line in two years; he has no longer addressed universal suffrage or aspired to a seat at Frankfurt's Parliament or in Bavaria's assemblies. These revolutions that he has prepared, he has not manifested the desire to take part in them, to lead them in his own way, to moderate them or affirm them: he stepped back, he took shelter in silence. And what happened to Stirner? Why has he interrupted the illustration of his politics and morals so abruptly? "Death to the people! – the tribune of egoism used to write – death to the people, so that the individual can be free! Death to Germany, death to all European nations, and may man, once he has disposed of all his bonds and freed himself from the last spooks of religion, rediscover his full independence!" Speaking this way, Stirner expressed with sincere brutality what the revolutionary hypocrisy dissimulates with its declamations; he proclaimed the ideal of demagogy without mincing words. Why, then, this obstinate silence after two years? Had Stirner not undertaken the task of unmasking the tribunes, of proclaiming out loud what the latter think in a low voice? Does he have no more hypocrisies hiding their sensual appetites behind the words revolution and homeland? Or, on the contrary, afraid perhaps to see many of his furious disciples escape his call after having seen millions of men hanged, Stirner has realized that it was not permitted to play around with ideas, and that in searching for benefits in scandal he has relied too much on the meekness of his times and country? We are told that Stirner is a learned, peaceful, studious man, that his book is the work of a solitary thinker; if Stirner has profited, as I wish to believe, from the experience of these two years, he should not keep the fruits of this crude lesson for himself. Lastly, what he thinks cannot remain neutral. Friends or adversaries, all of those whom he has pushed towards evil and all of those whom he has made indignant have the right to ask him to account for his silence and elicit his confession.[143]

A confession, Taillandier argues, is something that Strauss to some extent offered in the capacity of a candidate to Frankfurt's Parliament in April 1848.[144] The German philosopher attended electoral meetings in various cities of the country, he willingly underwent the people's judgement. In doing so, Taillandier says, Strauss has finally encountered some Christian beliefs, a firm faith, while appearing as some sort of Antichrist in the eyes of those naïve souls to whom his sole name would sound frightening. Convinced that Strauss

[142] Taillandier, 'La Littérature politique. Les philosophes et les poètes', 287. This silence was noticed in other countries as well. See, for example, the unsigned *Risposta di un Costituzionale Pontificio alla Civiltà Cattolica*, written on 30 October 1850 but published in 1851 (Florence: Le Monnier, 56). The author, who resents the positions of certain German contemporary writers on religious and political matters, points out that while Strauss, Feuerbach, and Stirner have now gone silent, others, like Arnold Ruge, Nauwerck, Vogt, Grün, Karl Ludwig Michelet, and their immense amount of supporters are extremely vociferous at the present time.
[143] Ibid, 288.
[144] For analyses of Strauss' speeches and his political engagement around 1848, see Norbert Waszek, 'David Friedrich Strauss in 1848: An Analysis of His "Theologicopolitical Speeches"', in Moggach and Stedman Jones (eds.), *The 1848 Revolutions*, 236-53; Frederick C. Beiser, *David Friedrich Strauß, Father of Unbelief: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2020), Chapter 12 ('Career in politics and Political Writings').

looked forward to this confrontation not for the love of scandal but, on the contrary, to clarify his previous conduct and rectify it through the new attitude that he was planning to embrace, Taillandier acknowledges that the German author, who used to be 'so abstract, so riddled with barbaric formulas in his *Leben Jesu*', has become, after two years, a clear and elegant writer. Thanks to this process, Strauss has slowly remedied the damage that he has done, and this has borne fruits. Finally, Strauss was redeemed in Taillandier's eyes.

But between Strauss and the other two philosophers, Feuerbach and Stirner, Taillandier still sees an abyss, for they 'have sworn the ruin of all religious ideas; the former believes in a religion as such and preserves the label of theologian as a title and a protection.'[145] Moreover, Taillandier laments, other secondary exponents of the 'woeful doctrines' discussed above seem to have doubled their violent propagandistic activity. Among these, the French critic includes Arnold Ruge, Karl Nauwerk, Karl Vogt ('the great orator of atheism'), Karl Grün ('Proudhon's master'),[146] and Karl Ludwig Michelet, whom he accuses of having kowtowed to the Young Hegelians and 'converted to their furious atheism'.[147] Taillandier insists that 'the most hideous thing, that which more than anything else should repulse the country of Leibniz and Kant, of Schiller and Jean Paul, is materialism. Apply this principle to the present state of affairs, and translate it as follows: the most fearsome enemy of Germany is called demagogy, and the strongest support to demagogy is Hegelian philosophy.'[148]

While portraying a bleak scenario of post-1848 German intellectual life,[149] Taillandier tries to find some comfort in the fact that a number of literati have begun, in his view at least, to interrogate themselves about the current state of affairs. Man, he says, must find himself again, his humanity, and by doing so, the critic assures, he will once again find Divinity, the laws of order, the way to progress.[150] Germany and France ought not to disavow their instincts and traditions. In Germany, the absolutism of the press and the threat of demagogy are the enemies to fear, and the country needs to reappropriate its own tradition, its genius, its virtues, in order to put an end to this 'disastrous situation'.[151]

The remedy, which according to Taillandier is now in the hands of German people, lies in the possibility of reforms, for a constitutional government has finally been created, after having been promised and always refused since 1813. Perhaps in response to the criticism made by the German revolutionary Jellinek back in 1847, Taillandier is now finally able to claim, with encouraging tones, that 'Political life exists' in Germany, that the country 'has clearly entered in this manly and laborious process [and] will not fail its duties.'[152]

[145] Taillandier, 'La Littérature politique. Les philosophes et les poètes', 290.
[146] Ibid, 292.
[147] Ibid, 294.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid, 305.
[150] Ibid, 306.
[151] Ibid.
[152] Ibid, 307.

Taillandier returned to Stirner and the Young Hegelians on multiple other occasions, for example in 1852, in the context of a discussion on literature (which as usual he understands in a rather broad sense). With the same spirit observable in his other post-1848 works, he urges here 'La poésie catholique en Allemagne'[153] to renew, elevate, and fortify itself, confident that 'the exhaustion produced by the excesses of reason will not last forever.'[154] Looking back on the atheist drift, Taillandier now describes it merely as a temporary fever, arguing that 'the partisans of the Young Hegelian school, very numerous still a few years ago, the disciples of Feuerbach, the friends of Stirner will only be, we hope, bizarre anomalies, since every epoch and every literature offers them.'[155] Germany, Taillandier explains, needs a new existence, for it has denied itself one under the influence of so many sophists. The ties with traditions have been severed, the German genius has been clouded, and the country of dreams and sublime contemplations has lost itself in materialism. 'How much further can things go this way?' – Taillandier wonders. For, 'beyond the Feuerbachs and the Stirners, there is nothing else, the bottom of the abyss has been reached. It is time for Germany to finally search for and find itself again.'[156]

In the introduction to the first volume of his successful *Études sur la Révolution en Allemagne* (1853), it is once again to Stirner that Taillandier reserves his most vitriolic comments. In fact, the author takes particular pride in having shown to the French public the 'savage' and 'monstrous' egoism, the 'appalling' doctrine of this 'tribune of atheism' who does not care about peoples and nations but only wishes to base his right to happiness on universal destruction.[157] Later in the text, Taillandier challenges Stirner's critical views on revolutionary fanaticism. For Stirner, he explains, the Revolution was merely another idol, another form of religious fanaticism. But Taillandier takes issue with this equivalency: how can Stirner not see – he wonders – that by turning the Revolution into an idol the men of 1793 have merely worshipped their own thought, and therefore themselves, in accordance with what Stirner himself professes in his own system? With a slight of hand, Taillandier tosses Stirner's criticism back at him and, at the same time, links him with 1793, that is, with the Reign of Terror. According to Taillandier, the difference between fanaticism (whatever form it might take) and the religion of Christ is that, with the latter, man has for the first time ceased to worship himself, returning to order and greatness through humility, whereas revolutionary fanaticism led him (man) to do precisely what Stirner advocates.[158]

In a subsequent article, published in 1855, Taillandier further clarified his views on the author of *Der Einzige*.[159] Stirner, he writes in this article, is not a 'bizarre oddball'; his system is not original, for 'the

[153] The full title is 'La poésie catholique en Allemagne. M. Oscar de Redwitz', in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, new period, Vol. 15, No. 4, 761-81, 15 Aug. 1852.
[154] Ibid, 781.
[155] Ibid.
[156] Ibid, 764.
[157] *Études sur la Révolution en Allemagne* (Paris: A. Franck, 1853, 2 Vols.), Vol. 1, Introduction, XL-XLI.
[158] Ibid, 383.
[159] 'Le roman et les réformes religieuses en Allemagne', Vol. X, Year 25, 1.285-1.316, June 1855.

weakness of intelligence, the sterility of invention he has displayed in his latest writings[160] are good proof that he does not speak for himself. The day in which he has celebrated with hideous joy the advantages of atheism, he expressed out loud the secret thoughts of his colleagues.'[161] Nor is the author of the formula *homo sibi deus* the one who personally created the disorders which have afflicted Germany. For Taillandier, 'the evil had existed for a long time, and perhaps the writer who has exposed it so brutally was only responsible for opening the eyes of the blind.'[162]

It is Stirner's theories, however, that have 'descended to the streets and made the saturnalia begin',[163] and it is essentially his theories that, to Taillandier's delight, a number of German religious men have fought with determination, as the article explains. Taillandier reports in fact that the unrest caused by the extreme doctrines of Stirner and the Young Hegelians has been so strong in Germany that five hundred theologians, pastors, magistrates, and elders of all professions and ranks have gathered in Wittenberg in 1848 to organize a mission to fight back.[164]

Taillandier's works on Germany were very successful. Appreciation for his studies frequently came in the form of overt commendation and direct references. His *Études sur la révolution en Allemagne* (1853), for example, were paid tribute by the historian and journalist Charles de Mazade (1820-93), who praised him for studying the German intellect in all its forms, even the most bizarre ones, such as Feuerbach or Stirner.[165] Other examples include an 1853 article by Henry Cauvain which largely draws on Taillandier's publications,[166] and a review of the *Études* published in 1853 by his friend, the jurist, poet, deputy, and senator for life Édouard Laboulaye (1811-83), who wrote that

> His portraits are well studied […]; and when Taillandier does justice to the sophisms of the Young Hegelian school, one can sense in his voice the indignation of an honest man who defends the supreme good of

[160] Taillandier may be referring here to Stirner's *Geschichte der Reaktion* (History of Reaction), which appeared in two volumes in 1852. This work, however, is mainly a collection of the works of others, to which Stirner added an introduction and a few comments of his own throughout.
[161] Ibid.
[162] Ibid, 1.288.
[163] Ibid.
[164] On this episode and its wider context, see the account provided by one of its protagonists, the theologian and social pedagogue Johann Hinrich Wichern (1808-81), founder of the *Innere Mission* (Inner Mission) movement of the Protestant Church: *Die innere Mission der deutschen evangelischen Kirche* (Hamburg: Rauhes Haus, 1849), 259ff. For more recent accounts, see: Hans-Martin Gutmann, 'Das harmonisierte Gemeinwesen. Über die Ambivalenz eines protestantischen Ideals', in Richard Faber and Gesine Palmenr (eds.), *Der Protestantismus – Ideologie, Konfession, oder Kultur?* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), 41-76 (62ff); Hans-Martin Gutmann, 'Der Schatten der Liebe. Johann Hinrich Wichern (1808-1881)', Johann Anselm Steiger (ed.), *500 Jahre Theologie in Hamburg* (Berlin / New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 155-188; Matthias Jung, *Jenseits der "Mauern kirchlicher Tradition und Gewohnheit"* (2020), 24-29. The information provided by Taillandier was subsequently used by Doctor A. Brierre de Boismont, who, while discussing Hegel and Feuerbach in the context of their critique of Leibniz, makes a brief and unoriginal reference to 'Mac' Stirner, suggesting that after surpassing Feuerbach he has proclaimed himself the champion of atheism and materialism. See *Du suicide et de la folie suicide considérés dans leurs rapports avec la statistique, la médecine et la philosophie* (Paris: Germer Baillière, 1856), 607.
[165] *Chronique de la Quinzaine – Histoire Politique et Littéraire*, in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, second series, new period, Vol. 4, No. 2, 14 Oct. 1853 (386-403), 396.
[166] 'Paris, 19 Octobre. L'Allemagne et la Révolution', *Le Constitutionnél*, 20 Oct. 1853, 1.

> humanity, God, and truth. Nothing is delineated better than the figure of Stirner, the dialectician *par excellence*, the man who has taken absurdity farther than anyone else. […] Following Hegel's example, Stirner reduces all science to logic, and extrapolates all existences from his thought, he only sees himself in the universe, and he only believes in himself. That is egoism deified! That is what surpasses all the boldness of the neo-Hegelians; but is this, at least, the final word of all these follies? I am afraid not, and it seems to me that an idealist or a Pyrrhonian with the force of a good Marphurius would prove Stirner to be another Sganarelle who does not have the right to believe in his own existence, that there is still a remainder of prejudice in him, and that he has more of a capuchin in himself than he imagines. […] All these schools of atheism, demagogy, and communism, Taillandier has fought with as much spirit as firmness in a time when praising them made one popular. It is a merit that should not be overlooked.[167]

The reason, for Laboulaye, is that after a time of crisis such as the year 1848, it is good to render justice to some of the upright minds and honest 'soldiers' who participated (figuratively, of course, in Taillandier's case). A few years later Laboulaye elaborated on his own divergences with Hegel and his disciples (particularly Strauss, and often via Émile Saisset's arguments) in his *Études morales et politiques* (1862).[168]

Around the mid-1850s, however, Taillandier also attracted some criticism. The Young Hegelian Moses Hess, for example, attacked him from the pages of the *Revue philosophique et religieuse*[169] in the context of a wider critique of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. For Hess, the *Revue* was failing to inform the French public properly about what he thought were the truly important intellectual currents emerging in Germany. The reason, in his view, was that the contributors to the *Revue* – sardonically renamed *Revue du Vieux Monde* (Revue of the Old World) – were still prostrating before the idols of the past and perpetuating a cult of the illustrious dead. Based primarily on the contents of Taillandier's article of 1 August 1856, 'L'Allemagne littéraire', Hess therefore reproached the French author for allegedly remaining too concentrated on a no longer relevant, indeed non-existent influence of metaphysics on contemporary literary works while also apparently downplaying or completely ignoring the importance of the German naturalistic movement of the 1850s.[170]

Hess was arguably exaggerating. However, it is true that Taillandier did not devote to German scientific materialism the same level of attention that he had devoted to the Young Hegelians or the Young Germany movement. The naturalist movement was addressed in greater detail and fought more energetically by other spiritualists who also wrote about Stirner, particularly the philosophers Elme-Marie Caro and Paul Janet, as shall be seen in Chapter Three.

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[167] *Études contemporaines sur l'Allemagne et les pays slaves* (Paris: A. Durand, 1856), 300-302.
[168] Édouard Laboulaye, *Études morales et politiques* (Paris: Charpentier, 1862), 44-55 and *passim*.
[169] Founded by a group of intellectuals of Saint-Simonian sympathies and published between 1855 and 1858.
[170] 'Comment la *Revue des Deux Mondes* apprécie le mouvement des esprits en Allemagne', *Revue philosophique et religieuse*, Vol. V, Paris, 1856, 254-58.

The examples provided in this chapter of French authors who have manifestly borrowed material and opinions from Taillandier are not sufficient to demonstrate the influence that his work has exerted on subsequent commentators in France. Indeed, his impact is observable even in the tacit appropriations of his thoughts by a plethora of writers especially throughout the 1850s and 1860s, as the following chapters will demonstrate.

III. 'L'Allemagne du présent' in Alexandre Thomas' travel reports

Less influential than Taillandier's commentaries, but equally instructive for today's scholars and for the present study, Alexandre Thomas' accounts on German intellectual and political life during the mid-1840s also provided the French public with basic information about, and a number of negative interpretations of, Stirner and other Young Hegelians. Thomas began his career as a professor of history at Dijon in 1844 and as a contributor to the *Journal des Débats* and the *Revue des Deux Mondes* the following year,[171] where he published numerous articles on political history, contemporary religious literature, Poland, and the movement of ideas in Germany. Under the Second Republic, he worked with Saint-Marc Girardin as political editor of the *Revue*'s *Chronique de la Quinzaine*, and he continued to collaborate with the periodical until 1853. As a young academic and journalist, he made a few enemies but also important friends, including Victor Cousin, historian and politician Eugène Rendu, and the aforementioned Girardin, who all supported him when the then minister of Public Education, Narchisse-Achille de Salvandy, made him leave his post as Professor of History at the college Henri IV for his political opinions.[172]

A convinced liberal, Thomas left France after the coup of 2 December 1851. Rather than witnessing the inauguration of the Empire, he preferred to go into exile to Brussels. Here, he edited the anti-Bonapartist *Bulletin français*. His hostility towards the President of the Republic Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (soon to become Emperor with the title of Napoleon III), and his broader criticism of the new order of things in France caused him troubles with the Belgian Government, leading to his prosecution. The trial ended with an acquittal, but Thomas, upset and insulted by the incident, moved to England, where he wrote articles for the *Review of Edinburgh*. Later on, however, he moved back to Brussels, where he died in 1857.

Thomas visited various German cities in the 1840s and subsequently wrote about his experience there. Between 1846 and 1847, he published a series of articles/travel reports on the *Revue des Deux Mondes* which presented French contemporary readers with a thorough description of 'L'Allemagne du présent'[173] based on his impressions. In 1847, he was in Germany again, this time to document the development of the

[171] For Thomas' biographical details, see Jean Maitron's online Dictionnaire Biographique: 'Thomas, Alexandre Gérard.'
[172] Thomas appealed and eventually won his case. On this controversy, see ibid, and Charles Dejob, 'La vie universitaire sous le gouvernement de Juillet' (second part), in *Revue internationale de l'enseignement*, Vol. 65, Jan.-June 1913, 301-310.
[173] Published in the *Revue* (initial period) in seven parts: Vol. 13, 1846 (488-519, 765-789); Vol. 14, 1846 (104-125, 376-403); Vol. 15, 1847 (39-71); Vol. 16, 1846 (850-876); Vol. 20, 1847 (80-114).

first Prussian parliament in Berlin for the *Revue*. Like Taillandier, Thomas could rely on first-hand knowledge and personal experience when he wrote about the Young Hegelians and their intellectual context: his sojourn in Berlin coincided with the publication of some of their key works (including Stirner's) as well as with the gatherings and activity of several of these authors in the same city. These circumstances make Thomas a privileged witness whose reactions to Stirner's work are worth exploring for at least two reasons: first, because they helped consolidate a number of emblematic, negative interpretations of the German philosopher's thought; second, because his commentaries on the Young Hegelians reveal, like Taillandier's, the kind of 'uses' of these authors' ideas made by French liberal intellectuals who specialized in German matters and wished to warn the public against revolutionary and blasphemous doctrines.

The first part of Thomas' 'L'Allemagne du présent' is called 'À M. le prince de Metternich', and consists of a sort of open letter to Prince Klemens von Metternich (1773-1859), the protagonist of the Concert of Europe for three decades as the Austrian Empire's Foreign Minister from 1809 and Chancellor from 1821 until the revolutions of 1848, which forced his resignation. In the article/open letter, Thomas submits to Metternich (or rather to the French public) a general review of Germany's new dangerous political and philosophical trends. This is followed by a report of his experience in Tübingen, where he describes the developments of Left Hegelianism. In his address to Metternich, Thomas paints a rather ominous picture of Germany's 'awakening':

> As an unknown traveller, I have gathered along my journey the first rumours of this new life; I denounce it to you. Do not be mistaken, it is no longer schoolboys or dreamers declaring war on you; you have had too easy a game with those poetic conspiracies that you pretended to fear. Those honest Teutons who contemplated the death of kings and the ruin of thrones and who could restore the splendours of the Holy German Empire are no more. No longer do they conspire in universities, in the depths of beer taverns, amidst the clinking of glasses and the clattering of swords; they conspire in broad daylight, prince, and you can do nothing about it. They conspire in frock coats and top hats, without picturesque devices, without romantic fantasies, each in their place and in their own affairs, whether in their counting houses, their pulpits, their cabinets, or behind their plows. […] Now, these tireless conspirators are, in truth, the most peaceful people of the world, and that is the bad sign for you; they are composed individuals, with domestic habits, merchants and property owners who previously only thought about managing their business or their belongings, scholars who fed on commentaries, jurists who never strayed from the Digest [the Roman Law], all the philistines of the past! There are no more philistines, or at least the species has changed. Here come the bourgeoisie, the true bourgeoisie of the constitutional society; defend yourself as you may, this breed is merciless.[174]

Thomas' views on Stirner and the Young Hegelians more specifically are expressed quite clearly in the sixth of the articles that compose 'L'Allemagne du présent', that is, in the section that focuses on Berlin

[174] 'L'Allemagne du présent', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, first period, Vol. 13, 1846 (488-519), 489.

and the religious situation.[175] It emerges here that Thomas was familiar, to some degree at least, not only with the main recent publications by members of the Young Hegelian circles but also, and importantly, with the philosophical quarrels between Stirner and his detractors that followed the appearance of *Der Einzige* at the end of 1844. Thomas may therefore have read or at least been aware of the critical reviews of *Der Einzige* by Hess, Szeliga, and Feuerbach, as well as of *Recensenten Stirners* (Stirner's critics), a response published by Stirner in the *Wigands Vierteljahrsschrift* in 1845. These quarrels, which are not addressed in any of Taillandier's works, were characterized, among other things, by repeated attempts of the authors involved in the querelle to surpass one another's radicalism in their philosophical effort to achieve true freedom not merely from a religious perspective but also politically and intellectually. The Young Hegelians also tended to refer to their opponents disparagingly as 'still bigoted' or 'transcendental'.

According to Thomas, science has fallen into disgrace in Berlin: the predominant 'so-called philosophy' has transformed the world and history into a 'cave of emptiness' populated by phantoms, not by wills or actual people. These phantoms and abstractions, Thomas explains, which are generally used to replace man, are sometimes referred to by German contemporary thinkers as God, but that is merely for reasons of courtesy or cautiousness. Feuerbach, in his back-and-forth discussion with Stirner, has argued that there is no God, only his perfections, which truly belong to man. Man calls them God when he forgets that his heart belongs to himself. According to Feuerbach, Thomas says, Stirner is still a bigoted atheist, for when he claims that God is nothing, he fails to realize that 'nothing' is a definition of God. To this, Thomas writes, Stirner, the 'strange inventor of this unbelievable book called *L'Individu et sa propriété*',[176] replies that he is a better atheist than Feuerbach, for he does not believe in the existence of any of the divine qualities (e.g. justice, love, wisdom, etc.) that he claims to see in man. In fact, Stirner rejects 'man' as a category in the first place. Man, and the self too, are merely empty words for him; there is only one real essence, and that is the particular individual with his egoistic enjoyment.[177] But without delving any deeper into the diatribe, Thomas eventually moves on to other topics, keenly deploring these debates and, much like Taillandier, applauding the efforts of those who reacted against these philosophical extravagancies.

Another very transversal contemporary account on the state of the city of Berlin in the 1840s, published by an unidentified author on the monthly academic journal *Bibliothèque Universelle de Genève* in

[175] 'L'Allemagne du présent. VI. Berlin. La situation religieuse', 31 July, Vol. XVI, year 16, new series, 1846, 850-76.
[176] Thomas, 'L'Allemagne du présent', 868.
[177] Scholars today would no doubt challenge this interpretation, or at any rate this phrasing. After all, for Stirner there is no such thing as 'the real essence of the individual'. Stirner scholar De Ridder offers some clarity both on this issue and on a core difference between Stirner and Feuerbach when he writes that 'contrary to what Feuerbach claimed, […] Stirner's "I" is not a substitute for "man". It does not set out a new calling to realize one's own alleged true being. It is exactly this kind of reasoning that Stirner set out to destroy in the first place. The "I" has no essence to realize, for it is in fact a field of action which allows no fixed essences'. He then adds: '*Der Einzige* is not haunted by the spectre of one's own true being beyond ideology'. See 'Max Stirner: The End of Philosophy and Political Subjectivity', 156 and 160 respectively.

1848,[178] offers a slightly less harsh assessment of the recent intellectual debates taking place in the city. The author describes the Young Hegelians as 'systematic Jacobins who, transposing the negation of logic into reality, philosophically demolish philosophy, religion, and the State through critique, and critique itself too.'[179] Stirner is portrayed as an erudite and charming advocate of this approach, who only saves brutal, passionate egoism from it. But although Stirner seemed to be the ultimate conclusion, the author maintains, he too is eventually surpassed (the author does not specify by whom) and deemed as a 'mystic' – the definitive condemnation among the Young Hegelians. While openly praising the Young Hegelians' perseverance, their logical intrepidity, their ardour in their quest for freedom, their honesty, the author of the article rejoices at the fact that the conclusions of these philosophers are all ultimately rejected. Yet they have not worked in vain, the author says, and science will be grateful to them precisely because with their speculations they have depicted a number of possible protracted and terrible experiences in life. In other words, their contributions are useful insofar as they provide a prophetic, educational vision.

Both Thomas and Taillandier studied the visions contained in the publications of the Young Hegelians with attention and apprehension, warning the French public about the radical drift of German contemporary philosophy. As liberals and as nostalgic admirers of the Germany described by Mme de Staël, they sincerely hoped for the emergence of political liberalism beyond the Rhine and for Germany's adoption of the fundamental principles of the French Revolution, or at any rate of the 'French liberal model'. However, based on their experience in Germany and their reading of German contemporary authors, they worried that Left Hegelianism would lead Germany astray. Taillandier also feared that German unification would result in the hegemony of Prussia and to conflict with France.

Thomas and especially Taillandier largely contributed to consolidating the image of the average 'Hegelian type' in French popular imagination. Throughout the 1840s-1870s, Taillandier's commentaries on the Young Hegelians served as key sources of reference for a multitude of Catholic and Protestant theologians or clergymen, spiritualist philosophers, and French intellectuals at large who perpetuated and enriched their negative interpretations of Stirner but often used them for different purposes in a variety of other debates.

[178] I.Z.L. (author), 'Berlin avant ses derniers evénéments' (part one), Vol. VII, 457-478. On the *Bibliothèque Universelle*, see Yves Bridel and Roger Francillon (eds.), *La «Bibliothèque universelle» (1815-1924). Miroir de la sensibilité romande au XIX^e siècle* (Jacques Scherrer, Editions Payot Lausanne, 1998); Rowe, *A Mirror on the Rhine?*, 14.
[179] I.Z.L. (author), 'Berlin avant ses derniers evénéments', 468.

The rise of materialism and pessimism in Germany and Stirner's spiritualist reception

I. Introduction

Besides Taillandier, the spiritualist reception of Stirner involved prominent philosophers such as Émile Saisset, Elme-Marie Caro, and Paul Janet – all of whom lauded Taillandier and were reciprocally praised by him[1] – as well as a number of lesser-known spiritualist authors. From a temporal perspective, Stirner's spiritualist reception was mostly concentrated, like his reception among Catholic and Protestant polemicists, which is discussed in the following chapter, in the period that corresponds to the Second Republic (1848-52) and the Second Empire (1852-70), though some echoes could certainly be found after 1870 in both cases.

Spiritualist philosophers under the Second Empire referred to this period as a time of 'crisis',[2] and worked intensely for a serious renewal of Cousin's eclectic spiritualism in a more religious and liberal sense. The effects of this renovation process were especially visible in the debates on education of the early Third Republic.[3] Together with Comtean positivism, the progress of the natural sciences and the rise of materialism (and somewhat later of philosophical pessimism) in Germany were among the most important objects of discussion for the project of reconstruction of a spiritualist philosophy carried forward by both Cousin's orthodox and heterodox disciples, whether within or at the margins of academia. In fact, the conflation between materialism and positivism was very common among spiritualists. Caro, for example, argued that although Comte had repudiated any possible connivance with materialism on multiple occasions, the positivist period had nonetheless been a 'period of preparation' for it.[4] For Caro, the calling into question of metaphysical certainties, in which he saw a typical trait of German thought, had its negative outcomes in France in the 1860s with a number of educated men: Renan, whose *La Vie de Jésus*, translated by the positivist Littré – which probably also suggested to Caro and his contemporaries a possible convergence of Hegelianism and positivism – is imprinted on Strauss' model; Hippolyte Taine, who denies the existence of synthetic a priori judgement and represents the outburst of post-Kantian Germany in French philosophy; the Hegelian Étienne Vacherot. At the origin of these developments, Caro maintained, were Kantian skepticism

[1] See Taillandier's reviews of Janet's *La Morale et la libre pensée* (1874) in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, third period, tome 4, 1874 (324-347), of Caro's *La Philosophie de Goethe* in *Revue des Deux Mondes*, second period, tome 68, 1867 (763-5), and of Saisset's *Essais de philosophie religieuse* (1864, 2 Vols.) in 'La Philosophie spiritualiste depuis Descartes jusqu'à nos jours', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, second period, tome 35, 1861, 62-95.

[2] See especially Caro's *L'Idée de Dieu et ses nouveaux critiques* (Paris: Hachette, 1864), and Janet's *La Crise philosophique. MM. Taine, Renan, Littré et Vacherot* (Paris: Germer Baillière, 1865).

[3] See Loeffel, *Le Spiritualisme au XIX^e siècle en France*.

[4] *Le Matérialisme et la science* (Paris: Hachette, 1867), 79.

and Hegelian philosophy: the former had inspired a distrust of all belief beyond experience, whereas the latter had 'annihilated all spiritual truth in the escaping forms of universal becoming.'[5]

In recent years, a number of scholars have increasingly and convincingly challenged the idea of a fundamental opposition between spiritualism and materialism, between spiritualism and science, and even between spiritualism and positivism.[6] These scholars' findings and observations, however, do not diminish the importance, for contemporary spiritualists, of materialism as a perceived threat and as a convenient catch-all label ready to use for polemical reasons in the spiritualist discourse, as Stirner's reception also shows.

Since the reintroduction of the teaching of philosophy at the university by Victor Duruy in 1863, spiritualist philosophers capitalized on the controversies surrounding positivism by revitalising the spiritualist model. The renovation or moral reconversion of spiritualism during the 1860s, Landrin argues, reflects both the desire to provide a new definition of philosophy in light of the challenges posed by the positivist sciences *and* a strategy of (re-)appropriation of the cultural resources connected with Cousin's name and institutional legacy.[7] But spiritualist debates also had a wider political dimension. In fact, the liberal elements contained in the publications of spiritualist thinkers of this epoch cannot be understood without taking into account their attempts to deal with the events of 1848. In the wake of the February Revolution, spiritualists felt compelled to react against the double threat of radical democracy and positivist socialism, which seemed to them to have joined forces in the revolutionary context.[8] Consistent with the liberal tradition, their counteroffensive was driven by a desire to defend the minority against the tyranny of the majority and build democracy in accordance with a metaphysical conception of the human person that their opponents seemed to deny.

Spiritualist philosophy under the Second Empire therefore entered a polemical phase against all those contemporary theories – scientific theories, philosophical theories, utopian and eschatological theories of progress – which promoted various forms of pantheism, positivism, or materialism and whose common denominator was, or was believed to be, a rejection of the fundamental tenets of spiritualism: from the existence of God to the immortality of the soul and the metaphysical foundation of man's natural right. It is within this complex framework that spiritualist philosophers addressed Stirner during the 1850s and 1860s,

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[5] Caro, *L'Idée de Dieu*, 8-10.

[6] Kelly, 'Materialism in nineteenth-century France', 37 (in the chapter, Kelly also challenges the idea that any true materialist even existed in France in the first place); Mark Sinclair and Delphine Antoine-Mahut, 'Introduction to French spiritualism in the nineteenth century' and Laurent Clauzade, 'Auguste Comte and spiritualism', both published in *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 28, No. 5, 2020: *French Spiritualism in the Nineteenth Century*, respectively 857-865 and 944-965; Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron, *Le Spiritualisme français* (Cerf, 2021), 235-44; F. C. T. Moore, 'French Spiritualist Philosophy', in Alan D. Schrift Daniel Conway (eds.), *The History of Continental Philosophy*, Vol. 2, *Nineteenth-Century Philosophy: Revolutionary Responses to the Existing Order* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), Chapter Seven.

[7] Xavier Landrin, '"L'éclectisme spiritualiste" au XIXe siècle: sociologie d'une philosophie transnationale', *Le Commerce des Idées Philosophiques, Editions du Croquant*, 2009, 29-65.

[8] On the spiritualist reaction against radical democracy and positivist socialism since 1848, with a focus on Janet, Saisset, and Caro, see Tristan Pouthier, *Au Fondement des droits. Droit naturel et droits individuels en France au XIXe siècle* (Garnier, 2019), 316-23. On the three authors, see also Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin*, 198-206.

generally in conjunction with Feuerbach. While they considered Stirner's conclusions appalling and dangerous, spiritualists acknowledged the sound logic and consistency of his arguments. In fact, as shall be seen, some even 'appropriated' Stirner's critique of Feuerbach and repurposed it in order to better highlight the shortcomings and intellectual timidity of Comte and French (declared or alleged) positivists and/or Hegelians.

To properly understand Stirner's spiritualist reception, and more generally, the transformation of his French reception from the mid-nineteenth century to the period following the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71) and the early Third Republic, which is examined in the final chapter of this dissertation, it is first necessary to examine a number of significant developments in German philosophy during the 1850s and 1860s, as the repercussions of these developments reverberated in both Germany and France until at least the close of the century. Accordingly, the first section of this chapter will be devoted to an overview of two phenomena in particular which had a substantial impact on Stirner's German and French reception: the transition, in certain German philosophical milieus, from idealism to materialism, and the rise of philosophical pessimism. The second section will explore the immediate reactions in France to the rise of materialism and pessimism, particularly in the context of French spiritualism.

II. Meanwhile in the Germany…

One of the most important intellectual disputes of the second half of the nineteenth century in Germany was the so-called 'materialism controversy'.[9] This intellectual dispute began in the 1850s, and its echo reverberated until the end of the century. At its core was the old conflict between reason and faith, between, on the one hand, a doctrine increasingly validated by the success of natural sciences, according to which only matter exists, governed entirely by mechanical laws, and, on the other hand, a religious worldview based on the existence of God, free will, the soul, and immortality. The re-emergence of this conflict between reason and faith was one of the results of the collapse of Hegelianism, but it was also due, of course, to the advancement of science itself. Beiser distinguishes two phases in the materialism controversy. The first or 'classical' phase, from 1854 to 1863, was primarily philosophical, marked by the conflict between idealists and materialists.[10] The 1850s in particular were also the years when the scientific materialists Karl Vogt, Jacob Moleschott, and Ludwig Büchner published some of their most celebrated works, and when materialism became a more prominent subject in the natural sciences and was openly defended by a number of

[9] German studies on the history of philosophy seem to have begun to refer to this debate in such terms from at least 1886, when the historian of philosophy Richard Falckenberg published his influential *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie von Nikolaus von Kues bis zur Gegenwart* (see Chapter XVI). On the 'materialism controversy', see Beiser, *After Hegel*, Chapter Two.
[10] Beiser, *After Hegel*, 55.

scientists.[11] Vogt, Moleschott, and Büchner were not the only scientists advocating materialism during their era, but as Gregory has pointed out, they were pioneers, and they were amongst the most popular in Germany.[12] Büchner himself noted that he, Vogt, and Moleschott had become known at some point as 'a kind of underground trinity', in spite of the fact that they had never joined forces formally.[13] The tendency to lump the three scientists together was extremely common in France as well. Moreover, many French commentators, especially Catholic polemicists but also some spiritualists and other authors from all sorts of fields, tended to make little or no distinction between the philosophical materialism of the Young Hegelians of the 1840s and the scientific materialism that emerged in Germany in the 1850s.[14] In fact, Vogt, Moleschott, and especially Büchner came to be increasingly associated with Stirner, Feuerbach, and other Young Hegelians. The Büchner-Stirner association in particular became very popular during the 1880s in the context of the French reception of Russian nihilism, which is discussed in Chapter Five.

Generally, French spiritualists proved to be careful observers and thorough commentators of the rise of materialism. Some, like Janet, still tendend to qualify the materialism of authors like Büchner, Vogt, and Moleschott as a *philosophical* movement,[15] whereas others, like Caro, were much more categorical on the radical transformation of Germany from an idealist to a materialist country:

> In the past few years, we have made strange assumptions about the philosophical situation of our neighbour. As soon as we have begun in France to read Schelling and Hegel, we have imagined that these two masters of pure thought still reign on the other side of the Rhine. We have become accustomed to believing that there lived towards the end of the Kehl bridge a singular people made of scholars and professors, engaged in the

[11] Frederick Gregory, *Scientific Materialism in nineteenth century Germany* (D. Reidel, 1977), 7-10. Throughout the book Gregory also addresses the negative reactions to materialism in Germany. These reactions prove that, despite French intellctuals' frequent claims to the contrary, not everyone in Germany was a scientific or philosophical materialist.

[12] Ibid, preface, XI.

[13] Ibid, 2.

[14] Doctor and philosopher of medicine Paul Dupuy (1827-1917), professor at Bourdeaux's faculty of medicine and city councilman, is one example. See his *De la nécessité des études métaphysiques*. *Discours de réception***,** transcribed in the *Actes de l'académie impériale des sciences, belle-lettres et arts de Bourdeaux*, third series, year 27 (Paris: E. Dentu, 1865), 236-55, and his *Essai critique et théorique de philosophie médicale* (Paris: Adrien Delahaye, 1862). Other examples are civil engineer Eugène Maldant's *Matière et Force* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1883), 31, 313-4, and Adolphe Deschamps' 'L'école dans ses rapports avec l'Église, l'État et la liberté', in *Journal historique et littéraire* (year 34), *Revue générale*, year 4, new series, tome I, 365-405, Brussels, 1868, 393. In his *La Vie future suivant la foi et suivant la raison* (Paris: Dezobry, E. Magdeleine, 1858), Thomas-Henri Martin (1813-84), a fine Hellenist, historian of science, fervent Catholic, spiritualist philosopher and disciple of Cousin, denounced the 'criminal extravagance', the sophisms, and the violent language of Stirner, Karl Grün, Nauwerck, Vogt, Moleschott and their disciples without recognizing any significant difference between them (254). See also the *Dictionnaire de la conversation et de la lecture. Supplément offrant le résumé des faits et des idées de notre temps*, Tome I (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1864), 129. The dictionary erroneously attributes to Stirner thoughts which he never expressed. *Der Einzige* is described as the most remarkable work in the context of the 'sect of sophists' in Leipzig and Berlin who claimed to represent the *esprit* in opposition to the masses or people, denying everything except the reality of the self and 'declaring useless the efforts of science to identify the secret laws of nature'. Stirner never made such claims. In fact, he did not devote much attention to science in *Der Einzige*.

Finally, see the speech on the 'Renaissance de l'athéisme' pronounced by Swiss protestant theologian and philosopher Ernest Naville (1816-1909) in January 1864 in the context of a course held at Lausanne and published the same year as *Le Père celeste. Résumés du cours fait a Lausanne en janvier 1864, Extrait du Chrétien évangélique* (Lausanne: Georges Bridel, 1864), 25-35. Like Caro and Janet, Naville laments that spiritualism is in danger in France. Drawing from Taillandier, Gratry, and Saisset (with whom he was friends), he denounces French critics of religion, the positivists, and German atheists and materialists such as Stirner, Feuerbach, Vogt, and Büchner.

[15] Janet, *La Crise philosophique*, 14.

> raptures of the subjective which devours the objective, in the contemplation of the idea which absorbs nature and proclaims from morning till night in the sanctuary of universities that the only existing God is that who is becoming and that Hegel is his prophet. Pure deception […]. As of this moment, idealist Germany is becoming, very resolutely, materialist.[16]

It was certainly possible to detect some degree of continuity between philosophical and scientific materialism, or between idealism and materialism more generally. After all, as Gregory has noted, 'the scientific materialists picked up where the Young Hegelians, in particular Ludwig Feuerbach, had left off', even though 'their critique of Hegel, their atheism, their criticism of authority, and their monism were proclaimed as the results of science, not as the musings of philosophers or radical theologians.'[17] What is important to stress here, in any case, is that the lines between the different coexisting forms of materialism, whether they claimed to be based on the natural sciences or not, were often blurred.[18]

The second or 'Darwinian' phase of the 'materialism controversy' identified by Beiser, spanning from 1863 until the close of the century, was centred on the discourse surrounding Darwin's theory of natural selection.[19] It is in these years that philosopher Friedrich Albert Lange (1828-75), one of the fathers of neo-Kantianism, published his *History of Materialism* (1866).[20] The book was, as Beiser argues, 'one of the most important and influential works in German philosophy in the nineteenth century',[21] and quite a familiar one among Stirner scholars. It was by reading this work at the British Library in London, in 1887, that Stirner's biographer and devotee John Henry Mackay discovered the author of *Der Einzige*.

But Lange's *History of Materialism* had a significant impact in France too, as Marc Bonnemaison has shown.[22] Notably, there was a spiritualist reception of the book – it was read, for example, by Charles Renouvier, Alfred Fouillée, Charles Lévêque, and Henri Bergson – and a reception connected with Nietzsche's interpretation of Lange's work. This latter kind of reception involved a number of authors who wrote about both Nietzsche and Stirner, such as Charles Andler, Lucien Herr, and the aforementioned Fouillée.

Translated into French between 1877 (Vol. 1) and 1879 (Vol. 2), long before *Der Einzige*, Lange's *History of Materialism* provided the French public with a brief but relevant mention of Stirner which already suggested an affinity with Schopenhauer regarding the emphasis placed by both authors on will:

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[16] Elme-Marie Caro, *Le Matérialisme et la Science* (Paris: Hachette, 1867), 72-5.
[17] Gregory, *Scientific Materialism*, 2. Gregory explicitly approaches scientific materialism 'as a second wave of the criticism of idealism that surfaced in the late thirties and early forties' (Preface, XI).
[18] Ibid, Preface.
[19] Beiser, *After Hegel*, 55.
[20] *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegnwart* (Iserlohn: J. Baedeker, 1866). For a general analysis of the book, see Beiser, *After Hegel*, 89-96.
[21] Beiser, *After Hegel*, 89.
[22] See Marc Bonnemaison, 'Sur la réception en France de l'*Histoire du matérialisme*, par F. A. Lange', *Revue de Méthaphysique et de Morale*, 2011/1 (No. 69), 61-75.

> The man who in German literature has most preached Egoism recklessly and logically – Max Stirner – finds himself in distinct opposition to Feuerbach. Stirner went so far in his notorious work, "Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum" (1845), as to reject all moral ideals. Everything that in any way, whether it be external force, belief, or mere idea, places itself above the individual and his caprice, Stirner rejects as a hateful limitation of himself. What a pity that to this book — the extremest that we know anywhere — a second positive part was not added. It would have been easier than in the case of Schelling's philosophy; for out of the unlimited Ego I can again beget every kind of Idealism as my will and my idea. Stirner lays so much stress upon the will, in fact, that it appears as the root force of human nature. It may remind us of Schopenhauer. Thus there are two sides to everything.[23]

Already in 1859 though, that is, seven years before the publication of Lange's *History of Materialism*, Stirner's name had been mentioned in a book which focused on the subject of materialism and was first published in German and then translated into French (1861). The book is entitled *On Materialism from the Point of View of the Natural Sciences and of the Progress of the Human Spirit*.[24] Its author is August Nathaniel Böhner, a member of the Swiss Natural Scientific Society. Böhner's work, which does not seem to have been particularly influential, is essentially a conservative defense of religion from contemporary atheistic materialism, whose leader Böhner identified in Feuerbach. Böhner opposes the humble spirit of the brilliant scientists of the past to the arrogance of recent materialists such as Vogt, Moleschott, Buchner, Czolbe, Feuerbach, and Stirner.

Aside from the materialism controversy, the other fundamental event that helped to keep Stirner's name alive in Germany and to shape his reception was the rise of pessimism in the 1860s, a philosophical and cultural movement which spread all across Europe and particularly in France.[25] German contemporary accounts show that pessimism rapidly surpassed materialism as the predominant, most pressing issue of the time, swiftly becoming 'the talk of the town, the subject of literary salons, and even the object of satire.'[26] According to Beiser, the 'pessimism controversy'[27] consisted, like the materialism controversy, of two main phases: the first one began in the 1860s with Schopenhauer's rise to fame; the second in 1870, in reaction

[23] Friedrich Albert Lange, *History of Materialism and Criticism of its Present Importance* (3 Vols.), translated into English by Ernest Chester Thomas (London: Trübner and Co., 1880), Vol. II, 256.

[24] August N. Bohner, *Naturforschung und Culturleben in ihren neuesten Ergebnissen zur Beleuchtung der grossen Fragen der Gegenwart uber Christentum und Materialismus, Geist und Stoff* (Hannover, 1859).

[25] Early studies on pessimism in France include Foucher de Careil's *Hegel et Schopenhauer* (1862), which is also one of the earliest presentations in France of Schopenhauer's philosophical system; Théodule Ribot's *Philosophie de Schopenhauer* (Paris: Germer-Baillière, 1874), where Stirner is mentioned in passing (9); Elme-Marie Caro's *Le Pessimisme au XIXe siècle. Leopardi, Schopenhauer, Hartmann* (Paris: Hachette, 1878), originally published as a series of articles in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* under the title 'La maladie du pessimisme au XIXe siècle' (third period, tome 24, 1877, 241-68, 481-514, and tome 27, 1878, 321-52). An early study devoted to Hartmann specifically is Albert Réville's 'Un nouveau système de philosophie allemande. M. von Hartmann et la philosophie de l'inconscient', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1 Oct. 1874.

[26] Beiser, *After Hegel*, 159.

[27] Ibid, Chapter Five.

against the *Philosophy of the Unconscious* (1869) by the pessimist philosopher Eduard von Hartmann (1842-96), whose book 'had reaffirmed but qualified Schopenhauer's pessimism'.[28]

But Hartmann's work also played an important role in the history of Stirner's reception.[29] *The Philosophy of the Unconscious*, essentially a critical synthesis of Schopenhauer, Hegel, and Schelling, only devotes three pages to Stirner, yet his importance for Hartmann is evident. Not only does the pessimist philosopher describe *Der Einzige* as 'a book that nobody interested in practical philosophy should leave unread',[30] but he also implies that much of what he wrote in his own book was fundamentally an attempt – successful, in his opinion – to overcome Stirner.

After his *Philosophy of the Unconscious*, Hartmann returned to Stirner on a few other occasions, for example in his 1874 *Die Selbstzersetzung des Chrìstenthums und die Religion der Zukunft* (Christianity's self-destruction and the religion of the future), which was translated into French in 1876 as *La Religion de l'avenir*, and in his 1879 *Phänomenologie des sittlichen Bewusstseins* (Phenomenology of the moral consciousness). In the former, Hartmann made the following comments on *Der Einzige*:

> This book, richer in ideas than the complete works of many a celebrated Philosopher, is, in the Carnival-like extravagance of its thoroughly logical conclusions, the most strikingly unintentional proof of the impossibility of making Individualism the basis of Morality, and of the necessity of finding this basis in Monism. There has been a conspiracy of silence against this book even in the most Liberal circles, and people have covered their faces with virtuous indignation at it. But the secret terror, betrayed by this mode of action, only proves that they have not been able to find a weak point in this unpleasant adversary, or that they have shrunk from putting on the only weapons with which this egoism can be struck to the heart, namely, Monism and Pessimism.[31]

In the *Phänomenologie*, on the other hand, Hartmann described Stirner and Schlegel as advocates of the cult of free will, and argued that the inevitable transformation of the 'subjectivist form of abstract monism' into the system of 'the absolutization of the individual' found in Max Stirner 'its historical representative'.[32]

In the 1890s, Hartmann went on to argue that his brief mentions of Stirner in his *Philosophy of the Unconscious* and *Phenomenology of the Moral Conscience* had led to the rediscovery of the author of *Der Einzige*, yet Mackay disputed this claim in his 1898 biography of Stirner.[33] In reality, as has been shown earlier, Stirner never really disappeared from the radars of German intellectuals, at least not completely. In addition

[28] Ibid, 160.
[29] See the Hartmann-Nietzsche diatribe, analysed by Bernd A. Laska in 'Nietzsches initiale Krise (Stirner)', *Germanic Notes and Reviews*, Vol. 33, No. 2, fall/Herbst, November 2002, 109-133.
[30] Eduard von Hartmann, *Philosophy of the Unconscious. Speculative Results according to the Inductive Method of Physical Science* (New York: Macmillan, 1884), Vol. III, 97.
[31] Eduard von Hartmann, *The Religion of the future*, English translation (approved by the author) by Ernest Dare (London: W. Stewart, 1886), 84-5.
[32] *Phänomenologie des sittlichen Bewusstseins* (Berlin: Carl Duncker, 1879), 403-4, 801.
[33] Mackay, *Max Stirner* (Hubert Kennedy's translation), 19-20.

to Lange's reference in his widely-read 1866 work on the *History of Materialism*, Stirner was mentioned in the same year by historian of philosophy Johann Eduard Erdmann (1805-92), who devoted a couple of pages of his *History of Philosophy* to him, essentially describing him as an opponent of Feuerbach.[34] Moreover, according to Théophile Droz (1844-97), a fellow student of Nietzsche during his year in Bonn in 1864, Stirner's book was 'much discussed in this epoch as a novelty, even though it had appeared several years earlier.'[35] Stirner seems to have exerted a certain influence on the early thought of pessimist philosopher Julius Bahnsen (1830–81), and Beiser has identified a few similarities (but also fundamental differences) between Stirner's thought and that of the young pessimist philosopher Philipp Mainländer (1841-76).[36] A number of scholars have also stressed Stirner's influence on Richard Wagner.[37]

In France, Schopenhauer and Hartmann enjoyed great popularity.[38] After 1870, Schopenhauer became the best-known and most discussed German philosopher in the country, at least until Nietzsche's rise to fame in the 1890s. His most celebrated work, *The World as Will and Representation* (1819), was only translated into French in 1886; until then, knowledge of his thought was almost entirely based on critical texts. The same was true of Hartmann, whose *Philosophy of the Unconscious* was first translated into French in 1877 as *Philosophie de l'Inconscient*.

'Le schopenhauerisme' of the 1880s has been described by some as a fad.[39] Indeed, interest in the philosopher often involved a certain level of dandyish posturing. Anne Henry, for example, has pointed out that all the 'snobs blasés' considered themselves Schopenhauerians.[40] However, beyond this superficial

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[34] *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Halle, 1866), Vol. II, 684-5.

[35] Théophile Droz, 'La revanche de l'individu – Frédéric Nietzsche', *La Semaine Littéraire* (Geneva), No. 44, 517-20, 3 Nov. 1894, 518.

[36] See Frederick C. Beiser, *Weltschmerz. Pessimism in German Philosophy, 1860–1900* (Oxford University Press, 2016), Chapters Nine and Ten (for Stirner, see 209-10, 233-4)

[37] Writing in 1852, François-Joseph Fétis (1784-1871), a Belgian influential musicologist, composer, and music critic, described Wagner as a disciple of both the Young Hegelians and Comte, pointing out however that there was one difference between them: 'Auguste Comte in Paris and Feuerbach in Berlin preach the cult of humanity. But Max Stirner, a disciple of Feuerbach, and *more advanced* than his master, has published in 1844 [sic] a book in which he establishes that man shall not have other God but himself, and that he should adore himself. Now, that is the final term at which Richard Wagner has arrived: he adores himself and subsumes within himself humanity in its entirety'. See 'Richard Wagner' (seventh and final part), *Revue et Gazette Musicale de Paris*, year 19, No. 32, 8 Aug. 1852, 257-259 (259).

In the early 1900s, Victor Roudine and Albert Lévy suggested that Richard Wagner was aware of, and perhaps even influenced by, Stirner. They also discussed the possibility of Wagner playing a role in exposing Nietzsche to Stirner's ideas. See Victor Roudine's *Max Stirner* (Paris: H. Fabre, 1910) and Albert Lévy's *Stirner et Nietzsche* (Paris: Société Nouvelle de Librairie et d'Édition, 1904). On Stirner and Wagner, see Howard Gray, *Wagner* (Omnibus Press, 1990), 55, and 'Richard Wagner, Der Nibelungen-Mythus. Als Entwurf zu einem Drama (1848)', in Richard Wagner, *Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen*, Vol. 2 (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1911), 156-166. Martin Gregor-Dellin argues that Wagner was possibly introduced to Stirner by August Röckel. See *Richard Wagner: His Life, His Work, His Century*, transl. J. Maxwell Brownjohn (London: Collins, 1983 [1980]), 130-131, 136. Mark Berry draws several parallels between the protagonists of Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung* and Stirner's ideas in *Treacherous Bonds and Laughing Fire: Politics and Religion in Wagner's* Ring (Ashgate, 2006).

[38] For recent accounts on Schopenhauer's and Hartmann's reception in France, see Bootle, 'The Reception of German Philosophy', 27-36; Serge Nicolas and Laurent Fédi (eds.), *Un Débat sur l'Inconscient avant Freud: la réception de Eduard von Hartmann chez les psychologues et philosophes français* (Paris: Harmattan, 2008). Hartmann's work was introduced in France by his translator Désiré Nolen (1838-1904), who also translated Lange's work and wrote articles about him, and by Lionel Dauriac (1847-1923). See Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin*, 51, 57.

[39] René-Pierre Colin, *Schopenhauer en France: un mythe naturaliste* (Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1979), 14.

[40] Anne Henry, 'La réception française de Schopenhauer', in Anne Henry (ed.), *Schopenhauer et la création littéraire en Europe* (Paris: Méridiens Klincksieck, 1989), 32.

fascination, Schopenhauer's ideas also exerted a more profound influence, though possibly in French literature more than in the realm of French philosophy.[41]

Schopenhauer and Hartmann were often regarded by French commentators as representatives of a unified pessimist school in German philosophy. As Bootle has argued though, Hartmann was not a controversial figure to the same extent as Schopenhauer, 'around whom myths, rumours and polemic relentlessly swirled'. Bootle further notes, however, that 'as well as the demonization of Schopenhauer himself, the pessimism, atheism and (supposed) nihilism of his and Hartmann's philosophy were also condemned as diseases infecting the French body politic.'[42] Moreover, after the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71) Hartmann and Schopenhauer began to be lumped together with Stirner and other German thinkers whom many French commentators believed to be responsible, more or less directly, for a number of contemporary evils. Among these evils, as shall be seen in Chapter Five, were those which had purportedly led to the war itself, such as Germany's cult of force and its imperialistic ambitions, but also the moral corruption of France allegedly observable both before and after the war.

III. Stirner's spiritualist reception

Before delving into the reception of Stirner among French spiritualists, a preliminary overview of their common beliefs, goals, preoccupations, and 'enemies' under the Second Republic and especially under the Second Empire is necessary. This will help contextualize their interpretations of Stirner's thought, their hostility to it, and their uses of it.

While recognizing that spiritualists could hold very different views on metaphysics, politics, and morality, J.-L. Vieillard-Baron has identified four major characteristics or tendencies which allow to recognize a spiritualist thinker.[43] Firstly, they seek *transcendence*, the *absolute* (God, the divine, divinity, etc., but also, in more rational terms, the 'necessary unique' or, in less religious and more political terms, republican values, the rights of men), whether in a Christian or non-Christian framework, but always outside any Church. Although they accept the Christian roots of contemporary philosophy, spiritualists do not adhere systematically to the social body of the Catholic or Protestant Church. In fact, Vieillard-Baron points out, spiritualism during the Second Empire was largely anticlerical, though this was not a key feature. Secondly, spiritualists share a *metaphysical understanding of the esprit*, by which they mean *mind* more than they mean *spirit*, the faculty of intelligence, connected more to psychology than metaphysics. They understand the *esprit* as living activity. Thirdly, they consider *spiritual freedom* inherent in human consciousness, which is the basis for all analysis. From this perspective, Vieillard-Baron argues, spiritualism differs from idealism, in

[41] Anne Henry, 'Actualité d'un vieux prophète', in ibid, 11-14 (12), and 'L'expansion du schopenhauérisme', in ibid, 15-19; Alexandre Baillot, *Influence de la philosophie de Schopenhauer en France (1860–1900)* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1927), i.
[42] Bootle, 'The Reception of German Philosophy', 29.
[43] Vieillard-Baron, *Le Spiritualisme français*, 31-4.

that the former is a philosophy of consciousness, whereas the latter is a philosophy of the subject. Lastly, the spiritualists all uphold *some notion of the soul*, which grants access to a whole 'spiritual' realm with shifting boundaries.

Spiritualism aimed to produce an anthropological renewal. It sought to create a conception of Man alternative to those proposed by materialism, sensualism, moral determinism, and utilitarianism. Spiritualists like Elme-Marie Caro, Paul Janet, Émile Beaussire, Adolphe Franck, Jules Simon, Étienne Vacherot, and Marin Ferraz all dealt with natural right in their works and academic courses. As Pouthier argues, 'Each defended the two pillars of spiritualist natural right, the human person and moral absolute, against the multiple avatars of modern philosophical relativism',[44] and each in their own way sought to keep alive the link established by Cousin between classic metaphysics, morality, natural right, and the analysis of liberal social order. The spiritualists' constant effort was to show that the notions of freedom, of the human person, of right and duty, of God as a supreme and transcendent cause are not refuted by natural and historical sciences, and that only these notions can produce a liberal social order.[45]

For the spiritualists, Pouthier explains, both the complete independence of the individual and the sacralisation of the social organism are false ideals. The former inevitably results in the dissolution of society, the latter in the oppression of the individual by the group. The true ideal of society, the one that produces the greatest organic integration, is the free pursuit of moral perfection by each member of society, equally protected by right.[46] Individual right for the spiritualists was based on a moral principle, namely the ideal of the human person harmoniously developed, which in turn prescribed the inviolability of this person. Accordingly, public institutions and laws were conceived as a system with a purpose, that of the free development of the individual. This conception must be understood in relation to the spiritualists' revision of their eclectic theory of progress prompted by the controversies on this notion which animated intellectual debates across Europe around 1848. Spiritualists were forced to clarify or modify the role of history and moral absolute in their doctrine, reconceiving the advancement of civilization as the gradual replacement of instinctive forms of social organization with juridical relationships based on ideas and rational grounds.

The main threat to the spiritualist conception of the rights of man were the philosophical and political currents which rejected the idea of the immutability of human nature. Those who adhered to these currents understood the rights of man in a historicist way, claiming that men can freely build their own nature and fate, and essentially confusing the rights of men with the image of a future society where social equality, fraternity, and happiness are achieved. The optimism inherited from the Enlightenment and the French Revolution evolved in the nineteenth century into a quasi-religious faith in progress and the necessary improvement of human condition throughout history. In France, this faith found expression in various groups

[44] Pouthier, *Au Fondement des droits*, 476.
[45] Ibid, 311.
[46] Ibid, 433.

such as the utopian socialists following in the footsteps of Saint-Simon, Christian socialists like Pierre Leroux, and the positivists. In England, figures like Herbert Spencer and proponents of evolutionary theories also played a role in shaping and propagating these ideological trends. In Germany, a number of Left Hegelians rejected the Christian God and elevated Humanity to a divine status. Spiritualist philosophers looked with concern at the growing success of these radical philosophies of history, foreshadowing the dangers for the idea of human destiny when thought is not solidly anchored in a transcendental reality.[47] Among these dangers, spiritualists maintained, were the reduction of right to force and the dreadful alternatives of anarchy and despotism.

The careful analysis of anti-spiritualist philosophies was inaugurated by Émile Saisset (1814-63) towards the end of the 1840s,[48] followed by the two leaders of the spiritualist school at the Sorbonne, Elme-Marie Caro (1826-87)[49] and Paul Janet (1823-99)[50], and by Étienne Vacherot (1809-97).[51] The former three are also the most prominent spiritualist philosophers to have engaged with Stirner's ideas or at any rate to have briefly addressed him, together with Alfred Fouillée a few years later. All three approached Stirner in the context of their critique of humanitarian doctrines and in relation, more specifically, to Comte and the so-called 'positive school'.[52]

In an 1850 article published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Saisset suggests that the positivists and the Young Hegelians share a number of common views.[53] The positivists, he says, argue that the religion of the future would be non-religion, like Feuerbach in Germany. However, Saisset concedes, they understood a great truth, namely that the roots of religion are indestructible, and that man remains a religious being. The positive school inveighs against this necessity but accepts it. They looked for what the object of man's respect

[47] Ibid, 392.

[48] 'La philosophie positive', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, initial period (new series), Vol. XV, July-Sept. 1846, 185-220; 'Les Écoles philosophiques en France depuis la révolution de février' (two parts), *Revue des Deux Mondes*, new period, Vol. VII, July-Sept. 1850, 670-92, 831-53.

[49] *Études morales sur le temps présent* (Paris: Hachette, 1855); *L'Idée de Dieu et ses nouveaux critiques* (1864); *Le Matérialisme et la science* (Paris: Hachette, 1867).

[50] *Le Matérialisme contemporain en Allemagne* (Paris: Germer Baillière, 1864); *La Crise philosophique* (1865).

[51] His defence of spiritualist philosophy can be found in his *Essais de philosophie critique* (1864) and *La Science et la Conscience* (1870).

[52] According to Natalie Richard, the 'positive school' was a cultural construct which emerged in the context of the French philosophical polemics of the 1860s. It was primarily used by spiritualist philosophers (most notably by Caro, Janet, and Félix Ravaisson) and Catholic polemicists (above all the Bishop of Orléans, Félix Dupanloup) to designate a philosophical movement with flexible boundaries but ostensibly united by a common cause. Those branded as 'positivists' shared, or were believed to share, some commonalities, particularly a rhetoric of 'positive' knowledge, the criticism of spiritualism in the name of empirical rationalism, and the rejection of metaphysics. In addition to its philosophical implications, Richard further explains, the term 'positivist school' took on religious and political connotations in the context of the debates surrounding the rational approach to religion and the political and social role of the Catholic Church. Consequently, the label came to be associated with 'anticlericalism' and 'free-thinking', and began to be used to characterize liberal opponents to the alliance of throne and altar that dominated the initial years of the Second Empire. In the 1860s, the anticlerical element attracted many students and young professionals who later turned this form of positivism into a defining feature of the Third Republic. See Natalie Richard, 'The French Philosophical Crisis of the 1860s and the Invention of the "Positivist School"', in Johannes Feichtinger, Franz L. Fillafer, Jan Surman (eds.), *The Worlds of Positivism. A Global Intellectual History, 1770–1930* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), Chapter Seven.

[53] 'Les Écoles philosophiques en France', part 1. The logical filiation between Stirner and Grün, Saisset points out, has been described by Taillandier 'with the sagacity and reasoning skills that characterize him' (681).

and adoration could be once God is suppressed, and they found nothing better than humankind. In this sense too, Saisset maintains, the positivists are similar to the Hegelians, and to Feuerbach in particular.

Saisset criticizes both Feuerbach and Comte for being 'timid atheists', who stopped half-way through the process. They rejected the absolute, the ideal, the transcendent, merely to propose the cult not of a real, palpable, positive thing, but of an abstract being, *humankind*, which is an indefinite being, an ideal, an absolute that never realizes itself. Pressing on, Saisset writes: 'Would you be consistent? Follow the example of Feuerbach's disciples, like Stirner and Karl Grün. Encourage every individual to worship himself, invite him to proclaim himself God. The individual, become god, loving only himself, regarding all his passions and lusts as legitimate and sacred things – there you have the religion of sensualism and demagogy fallen into insanity.'[54]

The association between Comtean positivism and German humanitarianism was further developed by Elme-Marie Caro, a student of Saisset at the École Normale, where he replaced his former professor as *maître de conférences* in 1857. Caro was a member of the Académie des sciences morales et politiques (1869) and of the Académie Française (1874). A well-known and skilful publicist, whose strength lay in exposition and criticism rather than in original thought, Caro gained a notoriety that extended beyond academic circles. His reviews on modern literature appeared in the Bonapartist, clerical daily *La France*, but he also wrote for *La Revue contemporaine* (similar in its political orientation to *La France*), the *Instruction publique*, the *Revue européenne*, and the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. His oeuvre, primarily focused on the history of philosophy and literary critique, was praised by many spiritualists, including Vacherot,[55] Léon Ollé-Laprune, who commended him as a true spiritualist and a great teacher,[56] Janet, who applauded Caro's best effort, *L'Idée de Dieu et ses nouveaux critiques* (1864),[57] and Lachelier, who saw in Caro's work a 'revenge of spiritualism'.[58]

Caro's earliest comments on Stirner can be found in the first part of his 1853 'Études morales sur le XIX^{e} siècle',[59] which was devoted to 'humanitarian idolatry'. From the first few lines, Caro takes issue with sensualism, arguing that at the time he was writing it was more alive than ever, and that despite its numerous metamorphoses, its core had not changed. It was no longer the individual that was worshipped, but the species. The cult of pleasure, he writes, has become the religion of Humanity, of the Idea, of Progress, and there is a school, or rather a 'sect', made of prophets and enlightened men rather than proper philosophers, which has replaced Christ with the Idea, this new religious, absolute formula without specifications.[60] For Caro, what is constant among all the 'hierophants of the Idea' is the hatred of religion and spiritualism in its

[54] Ibid, 681-2. This and other passages on positivism reproduced in this article were originally part of a long study on 'La Philosophie Positive', published for the first time by Saisset in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in July 1846, on the occasion of the publication of a manifesto written by Littré in favour of Comte's *Cours de Philosophie Positive* (six tomes, 1830-1842). The entire text can be found in Saisset's *Mélanges d'histoire, de morale et de critique* (Paris: Charpentier, 1859).
[55] *Le Nouveau spiritualisme* (Paris: Hachette, 1884), 119.
[56] 'Caro – Son enseignement à l'École', in *Le Centenaire de l'École normale (1795-1895)* (Éditions Rue d'Ulm, 1994 [1895]), 356-365.
[57] *La Crise philosophique*, 8-13.
[58] Lachelier wrote three articles on Caro, collected in *Oeuvres*, 2 Vols. (Paris: Alcan, 1933). For the quote, see Vol. 1, 4.
[59] *Revue Contemporaine*, tome XI, Year 2, Paris, 1853, part one, 5-23.
[60] Ibid, 6.

original form, namely that of Descartes and Bossuet. These 'incoherent' and 'often hostile' doctrines 'run the streets', conquering more and more people. Strauss' contributions, Caro reminds the reader, have made their part and now 'we too have Bauers, Feuerbachs, Stirners'.[61] What brings together all these 'logicians', Caro submits, is the religion of humanity, this 'humanitarian Pantheon', this 'vague system', this 'pompous theodicy' which, in the final analysis, is not but 'inconsequential sophistry' and 'extraordinary materialism'.[62]

Some of the concerns and criticism voiced by Caro in this study were reiterated the following year in the context of a review of Taillandier's *Études sur la Révolution en Allemagne* (1853).[63] Here, in response to the troubling doctrines coming from Germany as presented by Taillandier, Caro writes that Hegel's absolute idealism lost itself in the follies of an unbridled materialism and in unimaginable excesses: 'From Hegel to Ruge, from Ruge to Bauer, from Bauer to Feuerbach and Stirner, what path has been rapidly walked! What a long fall! And how clearly does this show us the extent to which the infatuated genius resembles madness!'[64]

Paraphrasing and building on Taillandier's account on Stirner's criticism of Feuerbach, Caro comes to the conclusion that Stirner very well has the right to claim that he has unmasked the last 'capuchins',[65] conceding that, if nothing else, he is not the one that will be charged with cowardice. The second part of Stirner's book, Caro continues, develops with 'cold audacity' and some sort of 'cynical indifference' the consequences of absolute egoism. Caro then quotes a passage from Stirner (found in Taillandier's collection of essays), which he believes to be extremely instructive and more telling than any commentary:

> My relationship with the world, what should it lead to? I want to enjoy the world; that's why it must be my property. I ask neither for freedom nor equality among men. I only ask for my power over them; I want them for the property of *moi*; I want them as material, as sustenance for my pleasures. As long as you believe in the truth, you do not believe in yourself, and you are a servant, a religious man. Only you are the truth, or rather, you are more than the truth, which is nothing before you. [66]

Caro's reaction is one of utter astonishment: 'One would believe oneself to be dreaming while reading this page.'[67] He refuses to accept that these are not isolated mistakes, that Feuerbach, Ruge, and Stirner are not merely adventurers in search for scandal but rather, as Taillandier maintains, the leaders of a party backed up by an army of adepts within the university. One of the chapters of Taillandier's volume, however, seems more comforting to Caro, for it identifies positive symptoms of a resurrection of philosophy and truth, particularly in the work of the German philosopher Karl Rosenkranz (1805-79). Caro grants

[61] Ibid, 8.
[62] Ibid, 10.
[63] The review was published in the *Revue de l'instruction publique*, year 14, No. 12, 22 June 1854, 172-5.
[64] Ibid, 173.
[65] That is to say, those who were still religious, devout.
[66] My translation of the quote that Caro found in Taillandier and that he reported in his review of Taillandier's *Études*, 174. This quote actually combines two separate passages from *Der Einzige*. For reference, see *The Unique* (Landstricher's translation), 330, 364.
[67] Ibid, 174.

Taillandier merit for having contributed to the general restoration of philosophy; by defending duty and God, he writes, Taillandier has proven to be a more sincere friend of freedom than those who declare it emancipated from all obligations, and a more devout partisan of dignity than those who strip God of his qualities in favour of the divinity of man; in a word, *a true spiritualist*.

Caro then points out that Descartes had pushed reason forward while remaining respectful of faith, skilfully correcting the temerities of speculation based on practical experience, wehereas Germans have chosen to put Descartes' method aside, and through a series of rational equations, they have set themselves to find the solution to the problem of the absolute. In doing so, Caro submits, they only arrived at the notion of the self, and this in turn has boldly divinized itself, thereby affirming atheism, as Stirner's example demonstrates.

There are a number of other important comments on Stirner and the Young Hegelians in Caro's review of Taillandier's study which deserve attention. Caro reproduced them verbatim in a larger study devoted to 'La religion positiviste', published in 1855. The fact that they were included in a work which focuses on positivism is in itself quite telling. It is here, in fact, that he first drew connections between Comte and Feuerbach in an explicit way (and not dissimilarly from Saisset), using Stirner's logic and arguments to highlight their flaws. In the third of the three articles that compose 'La religion positiviste', Caro depicts Comte as 'timid' and 'inconsequential', comparing him to Feuerbach in this respect.[68] Both authors, he says, despise all metaphysics and religions, they believe that man has been sacrificing himself to the idols of a delusional philosophy and worshipping vain abstractions. Both authors deny that God has created man; in fact, for them the reverse is true. However, Caro contends, neither Feuerbach nor Comte did much more than replacing God with a new god: humanity. For this reason, he points out, Feuerbach was soon criticized and surpassed by the 'last Hegelian', Max Stirner, who considered the former to be still devout and religious, too tending to transcendence. For Caro, the 'lively and strict dialectic' that Stirner used against Feuerbach can perfectly apply to Comte as well: 'We too, with Stirner, can ask Comte: What were you expecting to do, then? Change a name? Is that all? It used to be God, now you say humanity. The beautiful conquest, the beautiful triumph! Where is, then, true freedom, and when are we going to stop being deceived?'[69]

Echoing Stirner, Caro argues that this millenarian deceit will only cease when each one of us has overthrown all abstractions, destroyed all idols, wiped out all cults, and with them rights, duties, love, fraternity, and humanity. 'With Stirner', Caro claims sardonically, 'we shall declare that there is nothing above

[68] Elme-Marie Caro, 'La religion positiviste. 3e et dernier article. Le Culte – Conclusion', *Revue de l'instruction publique*, No. 48, Variétés, Paris, 1 Mar. 1855, 735-38. These remarks on Comte as a timid, inconsequential thinker in comparison with Young Hegelians such as Feuerbach and Stirner, and Caro's criticism of positivism more in general, were echoed in the section on 'Positivism' of the *Dictionnaire du parallèle entre diverses doctrines philosophiques et religieuses d'une parte et de la foi catholique de l'autre*, 1.017-1.025, edited by vicar Charles Berton and published by abbot Migne as part of the third and final volume of the *Encyclopédie Théologique* (Paris, 1858).

[69] Caro, 'La religion positiviste', 737.

the individual, that the individual is the only God, that I am God to myself and the unique pastor of my solitary divinity; that beyond myself is pure nothingness, that the absolute of being is within myself, and myself only.'[70] In this way, he maintains, at least there would not be any inconsistency or illogicality.

Caro returned to the Young Hegelians on a few other occasions over the years, making passing references to Stirner too, for example in his 'Mouvement et tendances de la philosophie en France',[71] and in *L'Idée de Dieu et ses nouveaux critiques* (1864).[72] Many of the views expressed in the latter book were echoed by Paul Janet in his *La Crise philosophique. MM. Taine, Littré, Renan, Vacherot* (1865). Commenting on the Hegelian Left, Janet pointed out that while Feuerbach still preserved a certain kind of religion, the religion of humanity, 'analogous to that of the Positivist school', his disciples Bauer, Stirner, and Ruge went farther, rejecting this God-Humanity and the cult called anthropolatry. 'Max Stirner combated Feuerbach's humanity as a remnant of superstition, preaching autolatry instead, self-worship: "Every man his own God", said he, *quisquis sibi Deus*. "Everybody has a right to everything", *cuique Omnia*.'[73] Then, Arnold Ruge argued that 'atheism is still a religious system: the atheist is no freer than a Jew who eats ham. Religion should not be fought, it should be forgotten.'[74]

Based on the accounts just examined, it is clear that a number of spiritualists, like Saisset and Caro, openly acknowledged one of the main elements that separate Stirner from most other Young Hegelians, namely his focus not on humanity but on the unique individual. This is also one of the many aspects that separate Stirner from Comte, of course. In fact, Comtean positivism shared the general aversion to individualism that characterized French society during the nineteenth century.[75] Moreover, Comte's talk of altruism could not be farther from Stirner's egoistic interpretation of the dynamics of human life. Nevertheless, in the spiritualists' eyes Stirner fully belonged in the same category as the Young Hegelians because, like them, he allegedly shared a common advocacy of an unbridled form of freedom that seemed to them to be at the antipodes of the liberal spiritualist conception of it.

The spiritualist hostility against the Young Hegelians is perhaps best understood in relation to the status of Hegelianism in France after the downfall of eclecticism and Cousin's gradual withdrawal from public intellectual life. Following the clergy's attacks received in the context of the 'pantheism controversy', which is discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, Cousin began to revise his eclectic system, reorienting it towards a 'theistic and popular' form of spiritualist philosophy, as his former pupil Janet would later describe it,[76] or a 'semi-spiritualism', to use another fitting definition by Félix Ravaisson (1813-1900), also a

[70] Ibid, 738.
[71] *Revue contemporaine*, tome XX, 31 July 1855, 545-589 (562).
[72] *L'Idée de Dieu et ses nouveaux critiques* (Paris: Hachette, 1864), 14.
[73] Paul Janet, *La Crise philosophique. MM. Taine, Renan, Littré et Vacherot* (Paris: Germer Baillière, 1865), 6.
[74] In ibid.
[75] Steven Lukes, *Individualism* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1973), 3-16.
[76] *Victor Cousin et son oeuvre* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1885), 368.

former student, and then critic, of Cousin.[77] The spiritualist turn of eclecticism was characterized among other things by Cousin's repudiation, from the early 1840s, of his earlier German influences and by a greater focus on the sphere of psychology, which he believed was entirely missing in German contemporary idealism.[78] By 1849, Cousin had declared his Hegelian experience terminated.[79] According to Bellantone,[80] the tombstone on French academic debates on Hegel was laid in 1862 by the spiritualist writer and politician Louis-Alexandre Foucher de Careil (1826-91) in his *Hegel et Schopenhauer*, where he claimed to prefer the latter's *Wille* over Hegel's *Idee* and described the *Phenomenology* as a 'monster' and Hegel as an 'intellectual Gargantua'.[81]

The majority of Cousin's disciples followed his lead and turned their back on Hegelianism, but a few members of the eclectic school, or at any rate of a cultural milieu that was very close to eclecticism, were not ready to abandon Hegelian thought under the pressure of Catholic critics. Admirers of Hegel included, for example, Charles Magloire Bénard (1807-98), translator of Hegel's lectures on aesthetics (1840-52), Vacherot, Augusto Vera (1813-85), Taine (who had been a student of both Bénard and Vacherot), and Renan. Janet was no Hegelian,[82] yet he tried to reconcile both Hegelian and Kantian idealism with spiritualism, and when the philosophical society of Berlin launched its appeal in 1870 for the erection of a statue of Hegel to celebrate the centenary of his birth, Janet was among the first in France to subscribe to the initiative.[83]

While recognizing the value of certain Hegelian ideas, liberal and eclectic philosophers such as Saisset, Auguste Laugel, and Edmond Schérer were nonetheless careful to distance themselves from them.[84] The editors of the *Revue germanique*, the Alsatians Charles Dollfus (1827-1913) and Auguste Nefftzer (1820-76), as well as a number of their collaborators did not fear referencing the work of materialist thinkers such as Vogt or Moleschott and engaging with the publications of the Young Hegelians. As was predictable, they were systematically targeted by spiritualist critics, often on account of their fascination with Hegelianism and materialism. Here are the concerns, for example, of Protestant theologian Edmond de Pressensé: 'We fear that the *Revue germanique* wants us to know only one side of Germany, the one that most appeals to its main editors… We hope that […] they will inform us not only about pantheist Germany but also about

[77] *Rapport sur la philosophie en France au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 1867).
[78] Bellantone, *Hegel en France*, Vol. 1, 303-7; Bellantone, *Tra Eclettismo e Idealismo*, 86-9. See also Chepurin et al. (eds.), *Hegel and Schelling*, Vol. 1, 52-54.
[79] Bellantone, *Hegel en France*, Vol. 1, 303-4.
[80] Bellantone, *Tra Eclettismo e Idealismo*, 100.
[81] *Hegel et Schopenhauer* (Paris: Hachette, 1862), respectively 30 and 53.
[82] In fact, he reserved severe criticism for Hegel, for example in his *Études sur la dialectique dans Platon et dans Hegel* (Paris: Ladrange, 1861).
[83] Émile Beaussire, 'Le centenaire de Hegel en 1870', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1 Jan. 1871, second period, Vol. 91, No. 1 (145-161), 145.
[84] See Saisset's 'La philosophie moderne depuis Ramus jusqu'à Hegel', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, second period, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1 Mar. 1856, 50-72, and his 'Leibnitz et Hegel, d'après de nouveaux documents', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, second period, Vol. 30, No. 4, 15 Dec. 1860, 961-996; Auguste Laugel, untitled review article, *Revue des Deux Mondes* (15 Sept. 1859), 511-12; Edmond Schérer, 'Hegel et l'hégélianisme', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, second period, Vol. 31, No. 4, 15 Feb. 1861, 812-856. Schérer also addressed a few unfavourable remarks to Feuerbach and Stirner (850-1).

Christian Germany.'[85] But it was especially the *Journal Général de l'Instruction Publique*, the flagship of spiritualism, that condemned in an anonymous article the *Revue*'s openness to materialism, to authors like Feuerbach and Vogt.[86] The *Journal* points out that while Stirner, 'who denies all society', is not necessarily supported by the *Revue germanique*, his master Feuerbach, on the other hand, 'this audacious propagator of the theory of *humanism* which denies all spirituality and all religion', seems to be its favourite philosopher.[87]

The Bonapartist journalist and politician Bernard-Adolphe Granier de Cassagnac (1806-80) wrote a virulent attack against the *Revue germanique* in an article – whose title, 'Invasion des Barbares', is in itself quite telling – in which he deplored the fact that 'the new revue, less curious about literature than it is about disorder, seems to have undertaken the task of introducing and popularizing in France German materialists, atheists, and socialists…'[88]

Two other smaller journals deserve to be mentioned: *La Liberté de penser* (1847-51), founded by the spiritualists Amedée Jacques, Jules Simon, and Émile Saisset, and the apolitical *Revue philosophique et religieuse* (1855-58), whose slogan was 'progrès, liberté, rationalisme'. Both revues only lasted for a short while, but they gave the Hegelians Karl Ludwig Michelet, Ewerbeck, Hess, and Vera space to express a number of points of view on German philosophy which were in contrast with eclecticism and in line with Left Hegelianism.[89] It is important to point out, however, that these revues also published articles and reviews which were critical of certain aspects of German contemporary thought. The few passing references to Stirner in *La Liberté de penser* were negative in nature too. One of these was made by Ernest Renan, who would soon become one of the spiritualists' favourite targets. In his 'Les historiens critiques de Jésus', Renan argues that the great result of the historical critique of the nineteenth century is to have recognized the necessary stream of systems, to have discerned some of the laws through which they overlay each other and the way in which they constantly oscillate towards truth, following a natural course. But the application of this speculative law of the progress of systems, Renan points out, may become dangerous when presumptuous and vain minds frantically attempt to surpass their predecessors disregarding the fact that the production of new systems should be spontaneous, not driven merely by the personal desire to become the most advanced thinker. This, for Renan, is what happened in Germany after Strauss, with people like Feuerbach, Bruno Bauer, and Stirner.[90]

[85] *Revue Chrétienne*, fifth year, Paris, 1858, 126-7.
[86] *Journal Général de l'Instruction Publique*, Vol. 27, No. 27, 3 Apr. 1858, 209-11.
[87] Ibid, 210.
[88] In the journal *Réveil*, 10 Apr. 1858.
[89] Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin*, 294-5.
[90] Ernest Renan, 'Les historiens critiques de Jésus', III, 'École positive: Bruno Bauer etc.', *La Liberté de Penser*, Vol. 3 (Paris: Joubert, 1849), 437-70. Another reference to Stirner in *La Liberté de Penser* can be found in a review of Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* by L. Jacquemard, one of the editors of the *Voix du Peuple* and of *Peuple de* 1850. Here Stirner is mentioned in passing and in a neutral way. Jacquemard's views on the young philosophers of Germany are, overall, negative, though he concedes that some of the main representatives do not lack talent. See *La Liberté de penser*, tome 7 (Paris, 1851), 93-9.

During the Second Empire, well-known spiritualist thinkers writing in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* promoted a broad conception of religion with the aim of reconciling Cousin's legacy, Protestant moderate liberalism, and the liberal, even reformist tendencies of Catholicism.[91] These authors, among whom were Charles de Rémusat (1797-1875) and Taillandier, drew inspiration from anglo-Catholicism and even German Protestantism, but their appreciation for the two traditions was not unmitigated.[92] As Jérôme Grondeux has argued, 'Up to the 1870s, a hope was expressed in the columns of the *Revue*: in order to fight the rise of atheism and materialism […], the different reformist movements, Protestant and Catholic, may form an alliance with spiritualism. A renovated Christianity, less exclusivist, dogmatically wider, would be capable of seducing the liberal elites.'[93] Similar hopes and concerns among the spiritualists could of course be found even after 1870, as is testified by the foundation of a *Ligue nationale contre l'athéisme* in 1886 by the spiritualists Adolphe Franck and Charles Waddington. The *Ligue*'s members included Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and deists from the academic and political world. Among them there were also the spiritualists Jules Simon and Étienne Vacherot. In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), as shall be seen in Chapter Five, the spiritualists Taillandier and Alfred Fouillée would continue to engage with Stirner's ideas, primarily in relation to the theme, so dear to the spiritualists, of natural right.

[91] Jérôme Grondeux, 'Influences étrangères et réforme intellectuelle du christianisme en France au XIXe siècle', *Histoire, économie et société*, 2002, Year 21, No. 1 (47-58), 50-2. On French liberalism during the Second Empire, see Annelien de Dijn, *French Political Though from Montesquie to Tocqueville* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), Chapter Seven.

[92] On the relationship between spiritualism and Protestantism more generally, see Loeffel, *Le Spiritualisme au XIX^e siècle en France*, 126-39.

[93] Grondeux, 'Influences étrangères', 50-2, 51.

Christian apologetics and narratives of decline

I. Introduction

The protagonists of the present chapter are the numerous theologians, clergymen, and non-ecclesiastical Christian apologists who wrote about Stirner between the 1840s and the late 1860s. Catholic polemicists, in particular, not only constitute the vast majority of Stirner's French commentators during the broader period that goes from the publication of *Der Einzige* in 1844 to the early 1890s, but they are also the first authors ever to have made references to him in France. Since the eighteenth century, French Catholics had been producing apologetic literature that was appreciated, translated, and replicated all around the world. Their style, language, vocabulary, and arguments continued to be a source of inspiration for theologians and intellectuals from various countries well into the nineteenth century,[1] which makes studying their publications and thought all the more important for scholars interested in the history of Stirner's French (and international) reception.

In all or almost all of the writings examined in this chapter, there is no clear indication that Christian apologists directly engaged with Stirner's original work or possessed thorough knowledge of his ideas and cultural background. In fact, it appears that the majority of them drew on second- or even third-hand sources, most notably Taillandier's accounts, or brief summaries of his accounts, provided by other ecclesiastical personalities. But the abundant, if often cursory, textual references to Stirner, especially those contained in the popular works of leading Catholic theologians and archbishops of the time, are evidence that his name was well known among French clerical circles. They reveal, moreover, that citing the author of *Der Einzige* served a variety of religious, political or ideological purposes, both in the context of specific public debates and in the wider framework of the nineteenth-century clergy's apologetic mission.

The clergymen and fervently Christian intellectuals who commented on Stirner during this period were of course part of a much larger religious community whose members shared several disciplining beliefs, literary practices, and 'enemies'. During the 'Catholic Revival' (1815-70)[2] and the roughly concomitant

[1] Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford University Press, 2001), 109-12.

[2] For accounts on the Catholic Revival, see Vincent Viaene, *Belgium and the Holy See from Gregory XVI to Pius IX (1831–59). Catholic revival, society and politics in 19th century Europe* (Brussels: Leuven University Press, 2001); Roger Magraw, *France, 1800-1914. A Social History* (Longman, 2003), 162-7; Mary Heimann, 'Catholic revivalism in worship and devotion', in Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, Vol. 8, *World Christianities, c. 1815 – c. 1914* (Cambridge University Press, 2006); James F. McMillan, 'Catholic Christianity in France from the Restoration to the Separation of Church and State, 1815-1905', in Gilley and Stanley (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, Vol. 8, esp. 219-20; Roger Price, *Religious Renewal in France, 1789-1870. The Roman Catholic Church between Catastrophe and Triumph* (Palgrave McMillan, 2018). Price, however, does not explicitly speak of a 'Catholic Revival'. On the renovation of French Catholicism, its debates, and its overall success during the 1850s, see Guillaume Cuchet, *Une Histoire du sentiment religieux au XIX^e^ siècle* (Paris: Cerf, 2020), Chapter Nine and *passim*. On the political divisions and tendencies within Catholicism in the aftermath of 1789, see also Jérôme Grondeux, 'Néocatholicisme, catholicisme libéral et catholicisme social. Une nouvelle donne politique pour le catholicisme', in Charle (ed.), *La Vie Intellectuelle en France*, Vol. 1, 187-193.

Protestant *Réveil* (or *Réveils*)[3] in France, they produced works and voiced concerns of similar nature in the field of Christian apologetics. To be sure, they did not always come from the same social or educational background, nor did they always agree with one another on specific doctrinal issues internal to Christianity or on political matters. In fact, especially within Catholicism, various sensibilities and intellectual positions coexisted. In the matter of theological doctrines, one may encounter a number of different and often competing philosophical systems, such as traditionalism, fideism, intuitionism, ontologism, and neo-scholasticism, all of which laid claim to be the authentic Christian philosophy and therefore the best fitted to safeguard the younger generations from the mounting threat of incredulity. From a more political perspective, Catholics could be intransigents, liberals, ultramontanes, Gallicans, legitimists, Orléanists, or supporters of social Catholicism, and their affiliation with any one or more of these currents did not necessarily imply rigid observance of all their specific dictates. Protestant clergymen and intellectuals were also divided, both by their sub-denominations (Lutherans, Calvinists, Anglicans, Baptists, independents, etc.) and by their political views. Above all, Protestants were split between orthodox (or revivalists), more attached to traditional Protestantism, and liberals, who were comparatively more open to modernity.[4]

Despite all their confessional and ideological differences, however, the great majority of Christian apologists during the July Monarchy, the Second Republic, and the Second Empire were extraordinarily united in their condemnation of what they believed to be the principal 'evils' of their time, whether domestic or foreign. Their favourite targets included Hegelianism (though not always in its entirety) and its French enthusiasts, the advocates of scientific materialism (particularly the triad of Büchner, Vogt, and Moleschott) and indeed of any kind of materialism, French positivists and eclectics, socialists, communists, utilitarianists, sensualists, pantheists, and atheists.

Faced with the ever new challenges posed by modernity and progress, French Catholic apologists generally opted for backward-looking or nostalgic solutions, consistently with the increasing defensiveness and austerity of the Vatican under the papacy of Pius IX (1846-78),[5] who was convinced that freedom of

[3] According to Patrick Cabanel, a variety of Protestantisms existed in nineteenth-century France, 'minorities within minorities', which issued from different *Réveils*. See *Histoire des protestants en France, XVI^e^-XXI^e^ siècle* (Fayard, 2012), 959-61. In the context of French Protestantism, the *Réveil* (which means revival, but also awakening) refers to the religious revolution of the years 1810-1840, marked especially by the Methodist influence. For Cabanel, the *Réveil* is 'primarily a language, and more broadly a *style* of preaching, of faith, and of life. It rejects the rationalist dulling that the eighteenth century supposedly imposed on reformed Christianity and returns to the very doctrine of Calvin', that is to say, to its fundamental elements (ibid, 956). On the French *Réveil*, see also Alice Wemyss, *Histoire du Réveil, 1790-1849* (Paris: Libraire Protestante, 1977); Kenneth J. Stewart, *Restoring the Reformation: British Evangelicalism and the Francophone «Réveil» 1816-1849* (Wipf and Stock, 2006); André Encrevé, 'Le Réveil du XIXème siècle', *Réforme*, 4 Sept. 2008.

[4] For general accounts on nineteenth-century French Protestantism, see André Encrevé's works *Histoire des protestants en France* (Toulouse: Privat, 1977), *Les Protestants en France de 1800 à nos jours. Histoire d'une réintégration* (Stock, 1985), and *Protestants français au milieu du XIX^e^ siècle, les Réformés de 1848 à 1870* (Geneva: Labor & Fides, 1986). See also Henri Dubief and Jacques Poujol, *La France protestante. Histoire et lieux de mémoire* (Montpellier: Max Chaleil, 1992); Sébastien Fath, *Du Ghetto au réseau. Le Protestantisme évangelique en France 1800-2005* (Labor et Fides, 2005); Jean Baubérot, *Histoire du Protestantisme* (PUF, 2007), Chapter Five, section 4 and *passim*; Patrick Cabanel, *Histoire des protestants en France XVI^e^-XXI^e^ siècle* (Fayard, 2012); Jean Baubérot and Marianne Carbonnier-Burkard, *Histoire des Protestants. Une Minorité en France (XVI^e^-XXI^e^ siècle)* (Ellipses Marketing, 2016).

[5] See Charles Sowerwine, *France since 1870. Culture, Society, and the Making of the Republic* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009 [2001]), 40-41.

thought, political radicalism, and moral decline were closely intertwined. This is not to say of course that Catholics did not actively engage with their century, as Robert Priest has noted[6] (think, for example, of the vociferous intransigent and ultramontanist journalist Louis Veuillot), or that they did not produce original thinkers (e.g. Félicité de Lamennais and Charles de Montalambert). However, there was a pronounced tendency among Catholic apologists to interpret and treat contemporary issues and events as manifestations of larger, more ancient issues, such as the decline of faith (perceived or real), social stability, public morality, freedom of cult, the clergy's role in public education, the preservation of the Church's privileges, and the relationship between Church and State.

The attitudes, intellectual trends, and literary practices of Catholic apologists in the mid-nineteenth century were strongly informed by the age-old apologetic traditions of the Counter-Reformation, the Counter-Enlightenment, and the Counter-Revolution, and cannot therefore be fully understood without reference to them.[7] The clergy, but also a number of ardently Christian literati outside of the Church, usually provided the same kind of abstract explanations for society's contemporary ills, based on well-established theological and philosophical arguments rather than detailed socio-political or economic analysis of facts and events. When dealing with crucial political or social phenomena of their time, they often pointed to the same causes and historical origins, unfailingly subscribing to the same macro-narratives to account for society's deterioration, especially after the French Revolution. Moreover, they generally adopted the same vocabulary, style, and linguistic register, which consisted of sensationalistic tones and vitriolic, rather unchristian comments along the lines of those contained in the works of their predecessors. The doctrines of the Young Hegelians, in particular, were regularly branded as monstrous, barbaric, cynical, delusional, insane, blasphemous, vulgar, impious, dangerous, sophistic, nihilistic, savage, and Jacobin – to only mention some of the most common labels.

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[6] Robert D. Priest, 'Nineteenth-Century Religious Thought', in Michael Moriarty and Jeremy Jennings (eds.), *The Cambridge History of French Thought* (Cambridge University Press, 2019), Chapter 38.

[7] For general accounts on French apologetic literature between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries against which to compare the attitudes and methods of nineteenth-century Catholic apologists, see Albert Monod, *De Pascal à Chateaubriand, Les défenseurs français du christianisme de 1670 à 1802* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1970); Cyril O'Keefe, *Contemporary Reactions to the Enlightenment (1728–1762): A Study of Three Critical Journals, the Jesuit* Journal De Trévoux, *the Jansenist* Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques, *and the Secular* Journal Des Savants (Geneva: Andesite Press, 1974); Jean Deprun, 'Les Anti-Lumières,' in Yvon Belaval (ed.), *Histoire de la philosophie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973), II, 717-27; William R. Everdell, *Christian Apologetics in France, 1730–1790: The Roots of Romantic Religion* (New York: Edwin Mellen, 1987); Maria-Cristina Pitassi, (ed.), *Apologétique 1680–1740: sauvetage ou naufrage de la théologie? Actes du colloque tenu à Genève en juin 1990 sous les auspices de l'Institut d'histoire de la Réformation* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1991); Didier Masseau, *Les Ennemis des philosophes: l'antiphilosophie au temps des lumières* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000); McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*; Pierre-Yves Kirschleger, 'Défendre le christianisme en France au XIXe siècle', *Histoire, économie, société*, Year 21, No. 1, 2002, 29-45; Darrin M. McMahon, 'The Real Counter-Enlightenment, the Case of France', in Joseph Mali and Robert Wokler (eds.), *Isaiah Berlin's Counter-Enlightenment* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2003), 91-104; Sylviane Albertan-Coppola, 'Apologetics,' in Alan Charles Kors (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment* (Oxford University Press, 2003), I, 58-63; Olivier Ferret, *La Fureur de nuire: échanges pamphlétéraires entre philosophes et antiphilosophes (1750–1770*) (Oxford University Press, 2007); Avery Cardinal Dulles, *A History of Apologetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005) [first ed. by Corpus Instrumentorum, 1971], 196-201 (for the nineteenth century, see 226-37, 254-60); Jeffrey D. Burson, 'The Crystallization of Counter-Enlightenment and Philosophe Identities: Theological Conflict and Catholic Enlightenment in Pre-Revolutionary France,' *Church* History, 77 (2008): 1-47.

As Michèle Sacquin has shown, religious thinkers in the nineteenth century preferred 'macro-histories', great philosophico-religious frescos to explain the cataclysm of the Revolution: 'The equation Reformation-Philosophy-Revolution [was] rapidly adopted by reactionary thinkers. For the theocrats, it offer[ed] the advantage of linking directly the religious and the political, spiritual society and civil society, and thereby providing one of those global explanations of which the epoch was fond.'[8] The French Revolution continued to shape the political and cultural life of the country throughout the whole century and beyond.[9] All subsequent revolutions, and even the Paris Commune (1871), were continually tied back to 1789 by reactionary thinkers.[10]

Catholic writers and preachers, especially those with legitimist sympathies, promoted a conception of history which idealized a rural and hierarchical 'golden age', a medieval society along the lines of Saint Louis' reign. This harmonious society, so their argument went, had been destroyed by three successive 'negations', namely Protestantism, Enlightenment *philosophisme*, and socialism,[11] all evils which they habitually associated with the Young Hegelians.

The connection between the Reformation and its supposedly excessive claims of religious freedom informed the works of numerous Catholic counter-revolutionary writers[12] and continued to be a pillar of Catholic anti-*philosophie* discourse and conservative repertoire well into the nineteenth century.[13] Amongst the conservatives who argued for the Protestant origins of the French Revolution, there were some who believed in the existence of conspiracies, involving not only Protestants and *philosophes* but also Jews, Freemasons, and Jesuits.[14] Others focused instead on the *longue durée*, specifically on the long-term effects of the ideologies of the early reformers.[15]

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[8] Michèle Sacquin, *Entre Bossuet et Maurras. Antiprotestantisme en France de 1814 à 1870* (Paris: École des Chartes, 1998), 300, 306. On the broader tendency in France to write 'great histories of the Revolution […] that began with Protestantism', see François Furet, 'The Revolution is Over,' in *Interpreting the French Revolution*, transl. by Elborg Forester (Cambridge University Press, 1981), 1-3; François Furet, 'Academic History of the Revolution,' in François Furet and Mona Ozouf (eds.), *The Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution*, transl. Arthur Goldhammer (Harvard University Press, 1989), 883. See also Paul Viallaneix, 'Réformation et révolution,' in Furet and Ozouf (eds.), *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, Vol. 3.

[9] On the French Revolution's legacy, see Furet and Ozouf (eds.), *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture,* Vol. 3.

[10] See, for instance, J. Bazy's *L'Esprit révolutionnaire* (Dunkirk, 1872).

[11] Price, *Religious Renewal*, 75.

[12] David Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism in France, 1680-1800* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), 30.

[13] McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 77-83.

[14] See Gordon S. Wood, 'Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style: Causality and Deceit in the Eighteenth Century,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 39 (1982) 401-41; Timothy Tackett, 'Conspiracy Obsession in a Time of Revolution: French Elites and the Origins of the Terror, 1789-1792,' *The American Historical Review* 105, No. 3 (June 2000), 711; Peter R. Campbell, Thomas E. Kaiser, and Marisa Linton, *Conspiracy in the French Revolution* (Manchester University Press, 2007); McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 77-83. For this enduring tendency in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see John Morris Roberts, 'The origins of a mythology Freemasons, Protestants and the French Revolution,' Vol. 44, No. 109, May 1971, 78-97; Johannes Rogalla von Bieberstein, *Die These von der Verschworung 1336—1945: Philosophen, Freimaurer, Juden, Liberalen und Soyalisten als Verschworer gegen di Soyalordnung* (Berne, 1976); William Doyle, *Origins of the French Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 1988), 24-5; Robert Gildea, *The Past in French History* (New Haven, 1994), 225-33, 248; Robert Tombs, *France, 1814-1914* (Longman, 1996), 88-94; McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 194-5; Valérie Sottocasa, *Mémoires affrontées. Protestants et catholiques face à la Révolution dans les montagnes du Languedoc* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2004), Chapter Ten.

[15] One example is *Les Français devenus protestants sans le savoir, ou parallèle de la religion protestante et de la nouvelle religion de France* (Paris, 1792), written most likely by Nicolas Sourdat. The argument contained in this book was taken up again and extended

The historical-political analysis that links together the Reformation, the philosophy of the Enlightenment, and the Revolution was also shared by considerable segments of the Left. Examples include the Protestant pastor Rabaut Saint Étienne (*Précis de l'histoire de la Révolution française*, 1791), Charles de Villers (*Essai sur l'esprit et l'influence de la Réformation de Luther*, 1802), and Quinet (*La Révolution*, 1865). As Bryan Banks has noted, Alexis de Tocqueville, François Guizot, Louis Blanc, and others also thought of the French Revolution in religious, if not explicitly Protestant, terms. Like Hegel, he argues, they saw the Reformation as 'an intellectual wellspring and a source of individualism that combatted both spiritual and secular absolutism.'[16] Even the non-Christian – yet in his own way religious – Auguste Comte made the equation Reformation-Revolution in his *Appel aux conservateurs* of 1855. By exploring and imagining possible links between the Christian tradition and the Revolution's heritage, individual thinkers sought to make larger points about the importance and role of religion in the post-revolutionary era, identify the positive and negative outcomes of unfettered freedom of conscience, and review the State's relationship with religious communities and institutions.

The Catholic apologists' theological-philosophical narrative consists of three main phases or themes. First, there is Protestantism. Particularly, the intellectual heritage of the Reformation was the lens through which Catholic polemicists regularly examined, for strictly critical purposes, all aspects of German contemporary philosophy and culture more in general. Next comes rationalism and the supposed 'excesses' of reason, both in their German and French manifestations. Last but not least was pantheism, which Catholic apologists often considered to be the antechamber of atheism. The numerous other *–isms* constantly decried by Catholic authors (e.g. individualism, materialism, psychologism, sensualism, egoism, positivism, utopianism, socialism, and communism) were but corollaries of these three major evils. (Protestant apologists on the other hand defended religious individualism, of course, but they too denounced all the other doctrines listed above). Different authors established slightly different conceptual links or relations of cause and effect between these perceived moral and political vices, without however altering the larger narrative in a significant way.

In the Catholic grand narrative, Stirner came to be invariably depicted as the *ne plus ultra* of philosophical extremism, the nadir of the desolating chasm of immorality and impiety. Accordingly, his name began to frequently emerge in discussions whose aim was to establish causal connections between German 'bad influences' and large-scale national maladies. Additionally, Stirner and a few other Young Hegelians, with whom he was often lumped together rather indiscriminately, served as a sort of yardstick against which Christian polemicists could gauge supposedly dangerous French authors like Proudhon, Auguste Comte,

in his *Les véritables auteurs de la Révolution de 1789* (1797). The links between the original Reformers and the Revolution were further popularized by Joseph de Maistre in his *Réflexions sur le protestantisme* (1798).

[16] Bryan Banks, 'The Protestant Origins of the French Revolution: Contextualizing Edgar Quinet in the Historiography of the Revolution, 1789-1865', *Journal of the Western Society for French History*, Vol. 24, 2014.

Émile Littré, Étienne Vacherot, Ernest Renan, and Hippolyte Taine, among others. Factual or alleged intellectual affinities between these German and French intellectuals allowed their Catholic and Protestant critics to dismiss them all collectively as guilty by association.

The chapter is divided into three sections, mirroring the three main phases or themes of the Catholic apologists' grand narrative. Each section will explore the role that Catholic thinkers attributed to Stirner in the history of (German) thought and of modernity in relation first to Protestantism, then to rationalism, and finally to pantheism. Occasional references to Protestant thinkers will be made throughout the chapter to signal any relevant agreement or disagreement between them and their Catholic counterparts. The principal aim of the chapter is to demonstrate how between the 1840s and 1860s a legion of combative Catholic and Protestant apologists contributed, through their concerted effort, to spreading reductive, negative interpretations of Stirner, consolidating his image in France as one of the most corrupt, malign progenies of Hegelian rationalism and, from the Catholics' perspective, Protestantism.

II. Protestantism: the root of all evil

In order to understand the role that Stirner played in Catholic apologists' narratives of societal decline and the purpose that their extremely diluted and partial representations of his ideas served, one must necessarily begin by situating their publications in the context of nineteenth-century anti-Protestantism. In turn, nineteenth-century anti-Protestantism needs to be understood in relation to the Counter-Enlightenment, Counter-Revolution, and Counter-Reformation traditions.[17] The middle decades of the century saw an intensification of the old ideological war fought in the field of historical investigation and interpretation between Catholic and Protestant publicists, and between reactionary and liberal historians more broadly. Both sides were bent on demonstrating, often through distortion and simplification, the history of intolerance, violence, corruption, or falseness of one another's creed and institutions, so as to present one's own as superior and rehabilitate them, or better to support one's own political agenda.[18] The controversy was paired with another old debate, which gained renewed attention in those years (and then again in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War),[19] surrounding the idea that those nations where

[17] On anti-Protestantism in the sixteenth century, see Jean-Marie Constant, *La Ligue* (Paris: Fayard, 1996); Denis Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu: La violence au temps des troubles de religion, vers 1525-vers 1610* (Champ Vallon: Seyssel, 2005 [1990]). For the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Élisabeth Labrousse, *Une foi, une loi, un roi? La révocation de l'édit de Nantes* (Paris / Geneva: Payot / Labor et Fides, 1985); Bernard Dompnier, *Le Venin de l'hérésie: image du protestantisme et combat catholique au xviie siècle* (Paris: Le Centurion, 1985). On the anti-Protestant and anti-Semitic sentiment in France in the context of the 1789 Revolution specifically, see Arno J. Mayer, 'The Perils of Emancipation: Protestants and Jews', *Archives des sciences sociales des religions*, Apr.-Jun., 1995, year 40, No. 90, 5-37. On anti-Protestantism in the nineteenth century, see Sacquin's fundamental *Entre Bossuet et Maurras*.
[18] Sacquin, *Entre Bossuet et Maurras*, 343-60; Cabanel, *Histoire des protestants*, 1.001ff.
[19] See Chapter Five.

Protestantism had developed and become predominant were themselves superior in terms of morals, civilization, progress, industrialization, economy, prosperity, discipline, or social order.[20]

Anti-Protestant publicists, Sacquin points out, put forward two apparently contradictory propositions: 'the Protestant religion does not exist, for, lacking dogmas and normative authority, it dissolves little by little into deism and pantheism; but at the same time, Protestantism has pervaded everything, corrupting everything it touches. Protestantism, rejected as a confessional alternative on account of its pluralism (the famous "variations"[21]), is understood as one whole due to its being a nefarious and destructive entity.'[22] Nor did Catholics make much distinction between Lutheranism, Calvinism, Anglicanism, reformed national Church, and free Churches. Protestantism, Sacquin continues, '[was] no longer merely a confession or a group of Churches, but a method, individual inquiry, a state of mind, the famous Protestant *esprit*, which results on the one hand in doubt and skepticism at the private level, and on the other in claims of popular sovereignty at the political level. As such, it [went] beyond the religious sphere assuming a triple dimension, ideological, historical, and political, to finally become confused with modernity.'[23]

Especially after 1848, the fact that Protestantism and German philosophy enjoyed some degree of popularity among republican and liberal intellectuals[24] was of course easily instrumentalized by Catholics who considered their opponents' political sympathies as incriminating evidence of the intrinsic connections between free religious and philosophical inquiry on one side and political radicalism on the other. According to Sacquin, for example, the introduction of universal (male) suffrage on 25 February 1848 gave weight to the argument that Protestantism was an agent of subversion. More broadly, she argues, 'It is from 1848 that Catholic controversialists begin to emphasize the filiation between Protestantism and socialism, confident of arousing the attention of a significant part of the middle classes which at that point were haunted by the fear of the red.'[25] The mere interest in German thought too could be used as a way to damage the reputation of those who displayed it, to question their moral integrity and condemn their religious or philosophical views. From this perspective, to equate a French thinker with German authors operating within the Hegelian tradition, particularly with ill-reputed characters like Stirner, was to stigmatize them as subversive, immoral, blaspheme, and dangerous. In the middle decades of the century, for many French Catholic authors the battle against Hegelianism had turned to all effects and purposes into a battle between Catholic France and Protestant Germany.

The Reformation was generally perceived by the Roman Catholic Church as the first of two major and connected catastrophes, the second being of course the French Revolution. The evils of the 'Protestant

[20] Sacquin, *Entre Bossuet et Maurras*, 374-90.
[21] Sacquin is referring here to the 'variations' of Protestantism identified and analysed by the anti-Protestant bishop and theologian Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet (1627-1704) in his influential work *Histoire des variations des Églises protestantes* (1688).
[22] Ibid, 295.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid, 309-15; Banks, 'The Protestant Origins'.
[25] Sacquin, *Entre Bossuet et Maurras*, 80. On the Catholics' association between Protestantism and socialism, see ibid, 360-4.

esprit', Sacquin has pointed out, became a paradigm of counter-revolutionary literature after the beginning of the century.[26] Both the Reformation and the Revolution represented massive transformations, periods of uncertainty which threatened chaos and anarchy. The Revolution, in particular, was regarded as a form of Divine Punishment, to which the Church's response should be to seek atonement. This partly explains the flourishing of victimal theodicies, a reflection of the wider concern in French post-revolutionary social thought with the perpetuity of violence.[27] Most importantly though, it explains the increasing efforts of theologians, clergymen, and intellectuals in producing apologetic literature which denounced any doctrine that could challenge religious authority. The Reformation, Catholic apologists consistently argued, was the original sin; every other form of political, social, or moral disorder fundamentally stemmed from this disastrous religious drift.

The argument that religious critique necessarily leads to civil revolt can be traced back to the anti-*philosophes*. To them, religion, public morality, and political order were inseparable. To attack one was to simultaneously attack the others.[28] As Amos Hofman has shown, anti-*philosophes* perceived the Reformation as 'a paradigm of civil disorder', as 'a pattern of religious dissent and civil disobedience' set by Martin Luther which could potentially be repeated by subsequent groups or 'sects' if the authorities were to permit them to 'criticize freely the established religious practices and institutions'.[29] This is precisely the process that Catholic apologists in the middle decades of the nineteenth century believed was unfolding before their eyes when the Young Hegelians 'succeeded' the *philosophes*, when their critique, initially addressed to religion and philosophy, was soon redirected towards the political sphere, often resulting in radical activism and revolutionary propaganda.

One of Stirner's numerous critics, the Catholic philosopher and sociologist Antoine Blanc de Saint-Bonnet (1815-80), is a case in point.[30] Some of Saint-Bonnet's remarks on the nefarious impact of Protestantism in history perfectly encapsulate the reductive views of many Catholic apologists of the time. Writing in 1851, he stated that, quite simply, 'Error begins at Protestantism and ends at socialism. All other systems are not but the various stops of the same thought.'[31] In a slightly more articulate way, Saint-Bonnet made the same point ten years later in his *L'Infaillibilité* (1861), where he stated that error 'begins at Protestantism, marches through different systems, arrives to pantheism, realizes and consumes itself in socialism.'[32] For him, overthrowing divinity and replacing God with man had led, necessarily, to overthrowing

[26] Ibid, 296. On the connection made by Catholic authors between Protestantism and Revolution, see 289-94, 302-9.
[27] Carolina Armenteros, *The French Idea of History. Joseph de Maistre and his heirs, 1794-1854* (Cornell University Press, 2011), Chapter Seven.
[28] McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 42.
[29] Hofman, 'The Origins', 168.
[30] Forgotten today, Saint-Bonnet was a very influential intellectual in his time. A prominent representative of the ultramontanist movement, he was regarded as the continuator of the traditionalism of Maistre and Bonald within legitimist milieus.
[31] *De la Réstauration française* (Paris: L. Hervé, 1851), 185.
[32] Saint-Bonnet, *L'Infallibilité* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1861), 501.

morality, politics, and society. Man, he writes, has said to himself: *but I am the one who is God!*, that is, he has embraced the teachings of the latest impious philosophers, he has responded to the 'dreadful cry' of Hegel, Feuerbach, Stirner, and Proudhon.[33]

In the same vein, the abbot, philosopher, and university professor Narcisse Cacheux (1789-1869) argued that by overthrowing every religious truth, Protestant reformers, British deists, and then French materialists had reached the supreme negation, the absolute void, pure atheism. They yielded, he maintains, to the irresistible power of a destructive principle: 'By its essence, Protestantism resolves itself in pure individualism and gives birth to the most senseless reveries'[34]; 'dissolution, anarchy, this is the final word of individualism with regard to this doctrine'; 'the individualism of the *esprit* produces practical individualism.'[35] One perfect example of this is, of course, Stirner. The German philosopher, Cacheux explains, rejects Feuerbach's claim that humanity is God. He 'does not recognize other God than the individual with his passions and appetites – *Homo sibi Deus*.'[36] More precisely, Cacheux clarifies in another text, Stirner's *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum* does not refer merely to the individual and his property, but to the *unique one* and his property, for there is only one being for Stirner: himself. Feuerbach's humanity does not exist in Stirner's world, only 'le moi'. Outside of it, Cacheux writes echoing Taillandier, Stirner does not know or believe in anything: 'Complete atheism with egoism, and there you have the abyss underneath it when you desert Christianity.'[37] What is worse, the author continues, Stirner did not content himself with claiming that there are no other rights than those of the individual with his appetites and passions, with the formula *Homo sibi Deus*. Instead, Cacheux points out (once again echoing Taillandier), Stirner has coldly dwelled on the 'savage' results of his doctrine, he 'has written in an epoch of unrestrained greed the declaration of rights on the matter.'[38] In yet another text, Cacheux writes that Heine, Feuerbach, Bauer, Marx, Ruge, Grün, Moses (sic) Hess, Engels, Ewerbeck, Weitling, Max (sic) Stirner all regard man in general and man at the level of the individual as a deity, and the only one possible.[39] More broadly, Cacheux condemns the degeneration of Germanic idealism observable in the doctrines, actions, and publications of Ruge, Strauss, Nauwerck, Vogt, Grün, and Karl Ludwig Michelet.

Similar interpretations of the decline of German philosophy as a consequence of the development of the individualist principle inherent in Protestantism could already be found in an 1844 study entitled *Hegel et la philosophie allemande* by Auguste Ott (1814-1903), a Catholic lawyer and editor whose interests soon

[33] Ibid, 502.
[34] *Discussion théologique et philosophique avec le Protestantisme* (Paris: Charles Douniol, 1855), 53.
[35] Ibid, 343, 169. For the equations 'Protestantism-individualism' and 'Reformation-Enlightenment' made by Catholics and reactionaries, see Sacquin, *Entre Bossuet et Maurras*, 298-301.
[36] Here Cacheux refers the reader to Taillandier's article 'La Littérature politique. Les Philosophes et les poètes', published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* on 15 Apr. 1850 (Vol. VI, 273-307).
[37] *Études philosophiques sur l'Église* (Paris: Bureau de l'Enseignement Catholique, 1854), 201.
[38] Cacheux, *Discussion théologique*, 233. Very similar comments on Stirner were made, among others, by abbot Joseph Dourif, vicar of Saint-Louis d'Antin, in his *Des Rapports du dogme et de la morale* (Paris: F. Stadler, 1858), 11.
[39] Cacheux, *De la philosophie de St. Thomas D'Aquin* (Paris: Ch. Douniol, 1858), 314.

turned to philosophical, moral, and economical issues.[40] The book had the double aim of educating the French public about Hegel's philosophy and demonstrating its logical, moral, and religious errors, with all the dangers that the French author believed would stem from them. One of these dangers, Ott argues, is individualism, the spirit of division and separation, which he considers a very pronounced trait of the German nature; certainly born out of Protestantism, he claims, it is present in everything that Germany has produced, from literature to science and politics.[41] In Ott's view, 'Germany lacks social experience, and its philosophers resemble children enjoying their dangerous weapons whose effects they ignore. They do not know that when an idea is offered to the masses it makes its logical way to the ultimate consequences, and that no human force can arrest it.'[42] If all men believed in the principle of pantheism, in the unity of substance, Ott argues, no one would recognize anything superior either in the sky or on earth anymore. No man would feel obligated by any duty, by any concept of sacrifice. Each man would find an aim in himself, becoming his own God and law. Driven exclusively by his own interest, man would only do good if he saw profit in doing it, and evil if he were able to do it without peril. Humanity would ultimately be governed by an absolute, shameless egoism.[43]

Little did Ott know at the time that, just a few months after the publication of his work, a new German thinker, an obscure man going by the name Max Stirner would release a scandalous book which rigorously summarized and vigorously advocated precisely all these doctrines. Yet Ott eventually addressed Stirner in 1883, perhaps prompted by the appearance of the second edition of *Der Einzige* in Germany the year before. In his *Critique de l'idéalisme et du criticisme* (1883), Ott referred to the German thinker in the context of a critique of solipsism designed to refute idealism, whose status he believed had been restored in those years by John Stuart Mill, Alexander Bain, and Charles Renouvier. Specifically, Ott wrote that while the claim 'Moi l'unique' could not be seriously accepted by anyone, it was nonetheless the unavoidable conclusion of idealism, the grim deadlock where every doctrine which rejects any reality other than the self ultimately ends. This, Ott added, was the conclusion that a 'practical joker', writing under the pseudonym of Max Stirner, sought to justify in a work entitled *L'unique et sa propriété*, a book which 'has aroused curiosity for a moment, but was soon recognized to be a mere cry for attention.'[44]

The perception that German philosophy had gradually declined over the previous few decades was shared even by lay champions of Catholicism. For example, the historian, philosopher, journalist, and municipal councillor of Orléans, Fernand Baguenault de Puchesse (1814-89), argued, drawing on Taillandier's accounts, that, after Hegel, the German school fell through its disciples into an abyss where it could no longer be followed.[45] Puchesse speaks of 'strange aberrations, dreams of the most vulgar materialism, mere

[40] For an analysis of Ott's role in the history of Hegel's French reception and Hegelianism in France, see Bellantone, *Hegel en France*, Vol. 1, 234-63.
[41] Auguste Ott, *Hegel et la Philosophie Allemande* (Paris: Joubert, 1844), 41.
[42] Ibid, 24.
[43] Ibid.
[44] *Critique de l'idéalisme et du criticisme* (Paris: Fischbacher, 1883), 304.
[45] *Le Catholicisme présenté dans l'ensemble de ses preuves* (Paris: Gaume, 1859, 2 Vols.).

challenges to common sense.'[46] German systems, he submits, are as dangerous as they are obscure, escalating into insanity and chaos. In this regard, the author refers the reader to the works of Bruno Bauer, Feuerbach, and Stirner, among others.[47]

Most Catholic critics of German philosophy argued that the atheist and materialist doctrines of contemporary authors like Stirner were but a re-proposition of the principles of the French materialists of the Enlightenment and of the old and unfruitful errors of skepticism, if not even of worldviews based on universal unity of ancient Greece.[48] In fact, for mid-nineteenth-century Catholic apologists, German contemporary philosophy more generally was in many ways what *philosophie* had been for most of its detractors during the second half of the eighteenth century.[49] Catholic (but also Protestant) writers of the period examined here made explicit links between the Young Hegelians and the *philosophes*, the French Revolution, Jacobinism, and the Terror. Before the advent of Hegelianism, the same treatment had been reserved for liberalism. During the Restoration, liberalism was seen by anti-*philosophes* as yet another long-term consequence of Protestantism, and liberals merely as '*philosophes* in new clothing.'[50] Some described liberalism as 'political Protestantism', and regarded its numerous variations as a mirror of the Reformation's schisms and conflicts. Catholic apologists denigrated liberals for their pride and self-love, their egoistic individualism, their talk of rights in place of duties, and their elevation of the individual above the social whole, which reminded them of the positions of the *philosophes*.[51] Likewise, the Young Hegelians were seen merely as the latest product of Protestantism, as yet another progeny of the *philosophes*, as authors who surpassed even the liberals in terms of radical ideas. In the eyes of their French Catholic critics, the Young Hegelians had re-opened the door to the worst excesses of Revolution.

Before 1789, anti-*philosophes* had spent years attacking the *philosophes* and trying to counter their influence. With the Revolution first and then with the Terror, they finally saw all of their previous fears, suspicions, and accusations confirmed. From then on, counter-revolutionary writers insisted on the existence of an unbreakable link between *philosophie* and the Terror. For them, the Revolution *was* the Terror, and

[46] Ibid, Vol. 2, 323.
[47] Ibid, 324.
[48] See, for example, the young writer Alfred Tonnellé (1831-58), who, in the context of an assessment of German pantheism, argued that the Germans detach themselves from Christianity and return to paganism and Greek ideas of a harmonious universal unity. They want to turn the world of man into a divine world, and in doing so they place themselves on the path of egoism and pride. For them, Tonnellé explains, the soul has no aspiration but itself, it becomes the centre of everything. It is known, Tonnellé points out, what these ideas have produced in the domain of politics and practice: they generated communism, social utopias, the right to pleasure and immediate well-being, the rehabilitation of the flesh. This, he maintains, explains Feuerbach's and Stirner's vulgar, violent movement, a result of Hegel's pantheism. See G.-A. Heinrich (ed.), *Fragments sur l'art et la philosophie de Alfred Tonnellé* (Tours: Douniol, 1859), 232-3. Still in 1881, German materialism was interpreted by abbot Pernet Chanoine de Belley merely as a reproduction of the doctrines of Epicurus, Lucretius, and the French Enlightenment. See *Démonstration catholique contre le positivisme, le matérialisme et la libre pensée* (Paris: Bray et Retaux, 1881), Vol. 1, Chapter VI (220 for Stirner).
[49] For good general accounts, see McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*; Masseau, *Les Ennemis des philosophes*.
[50] On the association *philosophie*-liberalism, see McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 164-70.
[51] On the equation Protestantism-individualism and the Catholics' tendency to draw connections between the Reformation and Enlightenment philosophy, see Sacquin, *Entre Bossuet et Maurras*, 298-301.

both of them were the product of the doctrines of the *philosophes*. Much in the same way, Catholic apologists writing in the mid-nineteenth century saw their previous concerns, misgivings, and allegations about the Young Hegelians largely confirmed by the events of 1848. The Revolutionaries of 1848 began to be considered the Hegelian theorists' willing executioners, just like the Revolutionaries of 1789 and the main actors of the Terror had been, in the eyes of eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century Catholic apologists, the offspring of the *philosophes*.[52]

The association between the Young Hegelians and Jacobinism, on the other hand, began to gain currency from the 1840s,[53] becoming almost commonplace in the 1850s-1860s especially amongst the clergy. The connection is not unfounded. Many Young Hegelians had engaged with the subject of the Revolution's legacy,[54] generally approaching it with a mixture of admiration and skepticism. Their doubts, however, were in most cases a consequence of their estimation that the Revolution had failed to complete the project of reason, since the revolutionaries had failed to understand the nature of religion and had not extended their criticism of it to the religious nature of politics. Their explicit positions regarding the Revolution therefore seemed to corroborate the fears voiced by French Catholics, namely that religious controversy was but the first stage of a critique that would subsequently and inevitably be redirected to politics, morality, and society, possibly (or necessarily) resulting in civil revolt.

Catholic authors writing in the middle decades of the century were content to present the indicting link between the Young Hegelians and the *philosophes* as self-evident. The aforementioned Saint-Bonnet, for example, maintained, quite simply, that 'After Voltaire, d'Alembert, and Dupuis came Hegel, Feuerbach, and Stirner, to conclude "that God is still nothing, and that he only becomes self-conscious in man… That man should adore himself, for there is no other God; and that that who is imagined is not but an abstraction destructive of humanity."'[55] Another example is Dr Mathieu Barbaste (1814-89), a physician and member of the Medical Faculty of Montpellier, known especially for his research on anthropology. Barbaste drew connections – without however explaining them – between Spinoza, the *philosophes*, and German contemporary thought, writing that 'D'Alembert, Helvétius, La Mettrie, d'Holbach, Dupuis, Volsney, St. Lambert and the king of Prussia, Frederick II,[56] belong to this infernal sect of thinkers where some want the ruin of Christianity and the others the inauguration of atheism within society.'[57] After all, 'Who could possibly deny the close relations that the accomplished revolution of our days in Germany has had with the

[52] McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 95-106; Hofman, 'The origins', 162.
[53] A. Lèbre, for example, used it in 1843 to refer to the Left Hegelians that came after Strauss, who, compared to them, was a 'Girondin'. See 'Crise actuelle de la philosophie allemande. École de Hegel, nouveau système de Schelling', new series, Vol. 1, No. 1, Jan. 1843, 5-42 (21).
[54] On the Young Hegelians' interpretation and theoretical uses of the French Revolution, see Calvié, *Le Renard et les Raisins*, Chapter Seven and *passim*; Sørensen, *The Young Hegelians*, 70-6.
[55] Saint-Bonnet, *L'Infallibilité*, 441.
[56] Notoriously a supporter of enlightened absolutism.
[57] *De l'Autorité en politique* (Nimes: Durand-Belle, 1849), 50.

Enlightenment and the *pantheistic theories* of Spinoza, Schelling, Hegel, etc.?'[58] Likewise, for the historian, poet, and librarian at Troyes, Charles Des Guerrois (1817-1916), with their impiety and their impudent language and doctrines, Bruno Bauer, Feuerbach, and Max Stirner clearly descended at least as much from the French philosophers and demolishers of the Enlightenment as from Spinoza.[59] These approaches were extremely widespread at the time. As Sacquin has pointed out, reductive logic and amalgams were classics of Catholic apologetics.[60]

Aside from the tendency to link controversial materialist and rationalist philosophers with revolution, the writings of nineteenth-century Catholic apologists display many other similarities with the publications of eighteenth-century anti-*philosophes* which are worth exploring here so as to have a general picture of the literary practices and beliefs that virtually all of the authors discussed throughout the rest of the chapter fundamentally embraced. In fact, one may easily apply many of the insightful observations on eighteenth-century anti-*philosophie* literature made by McMahon to the assessments of the Young Hegelians by subsequent Catholic apologists. For example, in the anti-*philosophes*' mind, *philosophie* was a 'thing', a unified whole, a cohesive entity.[61] In the same way, Catholic apologists in the nineteenth century conceived of, or at least chose to present, German contemporary philosophy as a 'thing', a *continuum*, a coherent body of interconnected ideas whose representatives were working towards mutual ends. Like their predecessors had done with the *philosophes*, they denounced the Young Hegelians' perversion of reason, their immorality (particularly their emphasis on the pursuit of pleasure and self-interest), their atheism, their radical individualism, their republicanism, their taste for revolution, and their naturalistic conceptions of the physical world. In their eyes, German philosophers were no different from the *philosophes*, mainly because they seemed to them to only recognize one higher being: the individual. At the time, of course, hardly anyone could appear to embody this vision more than Stirner, the allegedly cynical and cold egoist who had pushed reason to insanity, the epitome of everything that had gone wrong with German thought since the birth of Protestantism.

As in the second half of the eighteenth century, Catholic controversialists in the nineteenth century rarely engaged in thorough explanations and meticulous critique of their opponents' views. Rather, the apologetic literature of these two periods was content to make broad and bold claims, drawing on well-established criticisms from the previous centuries: 'Pulling together the more nuanced reflections of countless earlier apologists, this discourse radically simplified complex phenomena, providing a master

[58] Ibid, 51. Barbaste returned to some of these points in his *De l'Homicide et de l'anthropophagie* (Paris: Baillière et Périsse, 1856), where Stirner is discussed in the context of those German doctrines which deify man and which in his view were subsequently taken up in France by Comte, Proudhon, and Émile de Girardin (438). The book flags the dangers of socialism, with its alleged claims of absolute freedom (in which he even detects glimpses of a justification for homicide and anthropophagy and which he thinks may lead to anarchy and despotism), as well as of sensualism, rationalism, skepticism, and humanitarian idolatry, among other things.
[59] *Essais sur le dix-neuvième siècle* (Paris, 1856), 186.
[60] Sacquin, *Entre Bossuet et Maurras*, 285.
[61] McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 31.

narrative through which orthodox Catholics could understand the bewildering changes that seemed to be overtaking their society.'[62] Anti-*philosophes* regularly isolated incendiary passages and quoted out of context.[63] They also quoted 'selectively and eclectically to construct a reified *philosophie*, a composite caricature of the complex and conflicting ideas of eighteenth-century philosophy, reduced to the sum of its worst parts.'[64]

Nineteenth-century Catholic (but also Protestant) apologists reserved the same treatment for German contemporary philosophy. Stirner and a few others were of course the 'worst parts' in this case, elevated to faithful examples of what excessive rationalism, encouraged by Protestantism since the time of the Reformation, could produce. The term *prétendu philosophe*,[65] used by eighteenth-century Catholic apologists to mirror that of *prétendu réforme* favoured by French Counter-Reformation writers, was increasingly applied from the 1840s to various German contemporary philosophers, whereas the term *philosophisme*, also inherited from anti-*philosophie* tradition,[66] was frequently used to describe their doctrines. Similarly, the tendency to label the Young Hegelians as a 'sect' or a 'cabal' of 'fanatics' can be traced both to sixteenth-century Catholic apologists, who used these terms to refer to the Protestants, and to the anti-*philosophes*, who used them to refer to the rationalist thinkers of the Enlightenment.[67]

For many Catholics and Protestants alike, social and political restoration was a precondition for religious restoration. At the same time though, they believed that there could be no society without religion. From this perspective, the Catholic narrative went further than the Protestant: without Christianity, it was argued, there can be no religion; without Catholicism, there can be no Christianity; without the infallible Pope, there can be no Catholicism.[68] Most Catholic anti-Protestant arguments were predicated on the assumption that Protestantism is a dogmatically unstable creed which often, or indeed always, leads to incredulity.[69] In the words of Mgr. Louis-Gaston de Ségur, for example, 'Incredulity is in Protestantism like the oak is in the acorn, like the consequence is in the principle.'[70] At a minimum, Protestantism was thought not to be suitable for France. 'If Protestantism was sometimes met with sympathy in France', Ségur argued, summarizing the views of most Catholic apologists, 'it was only within the revolutionary parties that rose against legitimate authority; if it has ever been used as a banner by certain Frenchmen, these Frenchmen were rebels who conspired with foreigners and fomented civil war; if, apart from these sectarians, it finds in France friends and supporters, it is its revolutionary principle that attracts them, and these partisans do not

[62] Ibid, 27-8.
[63] Ibid, 101 and *passim*.
[64] Ibid, 28.
[65] See McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 44. See also Graeme Garrard, *Counter-Enlightenments. From the eighteenth century to the present* (Routledge, 2006), 44.
[66] McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 32.
[67] Ibid, 44-5.
[68] Sacquin, *Entre Bossuet et Maurras*, 302-5.
[69] See the final section of this chapter.
[70] *Causeries familières sur le protestantisme d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: J.-B. Pélagaud, 1858), 230.

do justice to it.'[71] By and large, the Protestantism against which anti-Protestants of the nineteenth-century fought was not so much a properly spiritual notion but rather, as Sacquin has suggested, a *political myth*.[72]

The influence of Stirner and other Young Hegelians on German contemporary thought was often deliberately exaggerated by Christian apologists in order to suggest that free religious and philosophical inquiry, promoted by Protestantism, aimed, had resulted, and would always culminate not only in atheism but also in political, moral, and social disorder. 'One cannot but shudder', Dourif wrote with reference to Stirner and the other usual suspects, 'at the thought that entire cities in Germany have transformed these doctrines from theories into practice, and after having abjured all cults, have developed outside of all religious belief.'[73] According to Cacheux's blatantly inflated accounts, 'Disciples have immediately come in droves; almost the entirety of youths belong to two masters [i.e. Feuerbach and Stirner] of an appalling idealism.'[74] Few critics expressed a different view in this regard. One example is legitimist journalist, literary critic, and politician Armand de Pontmartin (1811-90), editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, according to whom 'the most appalling audacities of Hegel, Strauss, Feuerbach, Max Stirner are limited to some sort of metaphysical life; they happily remain contemplative, and the more or less honest mistakes of certain science-intoxicated brains do not necessarily become an element of faith and popular activity.'[75]

To sum up, anti-Protestantism constitutes the broad intellectual framework and the starting point of a popular narrative used by Catholic clergymen and intellectuals to interpret and deal with society's degeneration, particularly in relation to the perceived threats posed by German contemporary philosophy. But the customary considerations that Catholics made in their publications regarding the supposedly negative tenets of the Protestant doctrine would generally and rapidly give way to discussions on other variously related themes, first and foremost that of pure rationalism and the perversion of reason, where Stirner would also play a peculiar, recurring role.

III. Rationalism and its excesses

Arguably the second most important theme, after Protestantism, in the macro-narrative that Catholic authors invariably used to explain the religious and moral decline of society, rationalism was generally considered a child of Protestantism. At the same time though, the Reformation was itself described as a product of rationalism, of Luther's promotion of individual reason and free religious examination. Like Protestantism, rationalism, or rather the corruption of reason, was enumerated among the long-term causes of the French Revolution and seen as breeding ground for such alleged evils as pantheism, sensualism,

[71] Ibid, 231.
[72] This is a core theme of her book, *Entre Bossuet et Maurras*.
[73] Dourif, *Des Rapports*, 12.
[74] Cacheux, *Discussion théologique*, 233.
[75] Review of François Guizot's *Médiations sur l'essence de la religion chrétienne* (1864), in *La Gazette de France*, 6 Nov. 1864, 1-2.

individualism, materialism, socialism, and communism. Catholic apologists wove an intricate narrative connecting all these doctrines in multiple ways to that coherent entity that Protestant Germany's contemporary philosophy represented in their eyes, with a special emphasis on its most radical proponents – the Young Hegelians. In the pantheon of Germany's most controversial thinkers, Stirner stood out as the quintessential example of what human reason could generate when left unchecked, that is to say, when not submitted to faith or put in the service of Christianity.

The subject of reason, its limits, boundaries, inherent dangers, and complex relationship with faith occupied countless Catholic authors. Unlike the problem of Protestantism, however, the hatred of which had traditionally been a uniting factor within the Catholic community, rationalism remained a very divisive issue. This was also true for French intellectuals at large, as the history of Descartes' French reception demonstrates.[76] By the early decades of the nineteenth century, Azouvi has shown, connections between Cartesianism and Protestantism, rationalism, modernism, Spinozism, pantheism, atheism, materialism, and the Revolution were all well-established. Being for or against Descartes could imply a number of political statements vis-à-vis the French Revolution, the Enlightenment's legacy, and modernity more broadly. Both Descartes' admirers and critics acknowledged the importance of Cartesianism for the history of rationalism. In the macro-narrative of society's decline delineated by the opponents of pure rationalism, wherein Stirner was often included, Descartes was deemed to be, together with Spinoza, one of the most culpable philosophers, whether directly or indirectly. Merely by developing or perverting Descartes' thought, Catholic apologists argued, Spinoza and subsequent thinkers, including in more recent times the Young Hegelians, had pushed rationalism to the extreme, producing ever more appalling philosophical doctrines.

To most Catholic, and indeed Protestant, apologists, the Young Hegelians and, later, the German exponents of scientific materialism appeared merely as the newest torchbearers of well-known, age-old impious doctrines already fought by their predecessors. In the historical narrative crafted by Catholic authors, the Young Hegelians were dismissively labelled as yet another incarnation of an ancient enemy, armed with ever more subtle arguments – or 'sophisms' – to attract and persuade both the educated and the masses. Catholic apologists, confident that their interpretations were grounded in decades or even centuries of apologetic literature, and certain that their primary audience, the clergy, would readily understand their references and message, limited themselves to adding the Young Hegelians to the long list of infamous, proscribed philosophers of the past who had tried to undermine all religious authority and debase morality, thereby threatening political and social stability as well. These new German philosophers were but the latest addition to the line of intellectual continuity imagined by Catholic apologists which typically began with Luther, followed by Descartes and Spinoza. Together, these three thinkers had eventually come to embody the popular formula 'Protestantism-Rationalism-Pantheism'. Among the other supposed ancestors of Left

[76] See François Azouvi's thorough study *Descartes et la France. Histoire d'une passion nationale* (Hachette, 2006).

Hegelianism and modern rationalism, Catholic polemicists occasionally signalled Giordano Bruno, Vanini, Malebranche, Berkeley, Pascal, Locke, Condillac, the Scottish Reid and Dugald-Steward, Leibniz, and above all the *philosophes*, as has been seen in the previous section.

The debates on rationalism of the 1830s and 1840s often crystallized around the role that Cousin had conferred to reason in his eclectic system and his appropriation of Descartes, but they generally extended to German idealism as well. After all, as Rowe has rightly pointed out, the proposition that Idealism in some sense descended from Cartesian thought is in itself 'perfectly valid', and the idea was a 'familiar one' in many philosophy manuals of the time.[77] The connection was used by Mme de Staël to legitimize Kant in French eyes, and Hegel himself acknowledged it in his *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*.[78] Cousin went so far as to describe German idealism as the 'immortal heir of Cartesian philosophy', praising Kant as 'the Descartes of our age, the father of the second epoch of modern philosophy.'[79]

Among the theologians who, following in the wake of Lamennais' innovative and controversial work, animated the Catholic discourse on rationalism in relation to the problem of knowledge were such prominent personalities as Louis Bautain, Henry Maret, and Joseph Alphonse Gratry. All three wrote, if briefly, about Stirner; the former two will be discussed here, whereas Gratry will be addressed in greater detail in the section on pantheism. While they were not the first French Catholic apologists to make references to the author of *Der Einzige* – in fact, they only mentioned him in their later publications – these three authors laid the foundations for, or at any rate greatly influenced, the debates on rationalism and pantheism to which the majority of their colleagues subsequently participated and where Stirner's name would make frequent appearances. All three confronted themselves with Eclecticism and the spiritualist tradition while seeking to reconcile Christianity and philosophy. All three also believed that a truly contemporary Christian philosophy need not reject modernity – which of course did not prevent them from criticizing many of its aspects.

Variously indebted to the traditionalist thought of Maistre, Bonald, Ballanche, Buchez, and Lamennais, each theologian pushed traditionalism in different directions. According to Francesca Aran Murphy, by the 1830s two schools of traditionalism could be distinguished: 'One maintained its original theme, that all knowledge of God derives from a primal revelation passed on in tradition. The other, known as ontologism, was more interested in divine illumination, or in 'revelation epistemology', than in tradition as such.'[80] Notwithstanding their dissimilar views on the relationship between reason and faith, however,

[77] Rowe, *A Mirror on the Rhine?*, 229.
[78] Isbell, *The Birth of European Romanticism*, 39, 161. For Hegel, see also Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, *Der gute Trommler. Heines Beziehung zu Hegel* (Hoffmann und Campe, 1986), 158.
[79] In his Hegel obituary, published posthumously in Jules Barthélemy-Saint Hilaire, *Victor Cousin: sa vie et sa correspondance*, 3. Vols. (Paris: Hachette, 1895), Vol. 3, 49.
[80] Francesca Aran Murphy, 'Traditionalism and Revelation', in Balázs M. Mezei, Francesca Aran Murphy, and Kenneth Oakes (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Divine Revelation* (Oxford University Press, 2021), Chapter One. On ontologism, see Bernard Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition: Aspects of Catholic Thought in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge University Press, 1975), Chapter Eight.

virtually all Catholic apologists agreed that the 'pure rationalism' that permeated Hegelianism was inherently corrupt and detrimental to religion and society.

A remarkable figure of French Catholic thought in the first half of the nineteenth century, Louis Eugène Marie Bautain (1796-1867)[81] studied philosophy at the École Normale, where he came under the influence of Cousin. In 1817 he was appointed to the Chair of Philosophy at Strasbourg's University. Here he discovered the systems of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. Cousin, delighted with the success of his former pupil, invited the young Bautain on a tour of Germany to meet some of that country's leading philosophers, including Hegel, Fichte, and Jacobi. Bautain's enthusiasm for their philosophy, however, was short-lived. After going through stages of sensualism, eclecticism, and idealist rationalism, he regained the faith of his childhood in 1819 following his recovery from a serious breakdown in mental health. In December 1822, Bautain was finally ordained priest. From that moment, his university lectures would be devoted to promoting his new conception of reality, which he liked to sum up with a famous phrase borrowed from St. Augustin's *De vera religione* (Vol. 5): 'Philosophy, which is the study of wisdom, is nothing else but religion.'[82] For the rest of his life, he remained convinced that the only true philosophy is the *Philosophy of Christianity* (which is also the title of his main work, published in 1835). In 1849, Bautain was nominated general vicar of the diocese of Paris. From 1853, he was professor of moral theology at the Faculty of Catholic Theology of Paris, a position he held until his death in 1867.

According to Poupard, Bautain was 'first and foremost an apologist. […] In his writings, just as in his lectures, it is an apologist who speaks. But he speaks, as a philosopher, to the philosophers of his time.'[83] In fact, Bautain's aim was to bring back the many intellectuals who had wandered from faith back to Church's arms. In his view, the reason behind the large-scale defection from the Church was to be found in the current apologetic literature. Contaminated by the methods and even by the ideas of their enemies, the French clergy seemed to him to have succumbed to rationalism. For Bautain, who over the years came to reject the power of reason that he had celebrated so passionately in his juvenilia, God could not be demonstrated by the methods of equation, deduction, or induction. Nor could syllogisms heal or console a wretched man, as he had been himself around 1819. Bautain, it has been argued, was primarily concerned with making men *feel*

[81] On Bautain's life and thought, see Antoine Campaux, *L'Abbé Bautain, ancien doyen de la Faculté des lettres de l'Académie de Strasbourg* (Paris: Berger-Levrault and sons, 1868); E. de Régny, *L'Abbé Bautain. Sa vie et ses oeuvres* (Paris: Bray et Retaux, 1884); Walter Marshall Horton, *The Philosophy of the Abbé Bautain* (New York University Press, 1926); Paul Poupard, *La Philosophie du Christianisme de l'Abbé Bautain* (Angers: Université Catholique, 1959); Paul Poupard, 'Louis Bautain: Apologist and Apostle', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Winter 1959, Vol. 48, No. 192, 443-450; Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition*, 113-137; Bríd O'Doherty, 'A Man with a Message: Louis Bautain (1796-1867)', *The Maynooth Review / Revieú Mhá Nuad*, Dec., 1984, Vol. 11, 11-25; Gerald A. McCool, *Nineteenth-century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1989), 46-58; J.-L. Hiebel, L. Perrin (eds.), *Louis Bautain: l'abbé-philosophe de Strasbourg (1796-1867)* (Strasbourg: ERCAL, 1999); Azouvi, *Descartes et la France*, 156-199; Vieillard-Baron, *Le Spiritualisme Français*, 179-86, 265; Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron (ed.), *Le Supplément d'âme, ou, Le Renouveau du spiritualisme* (Paris: Hermann, 2016), Chapter Nine.

[82] Quoted in Poupard, 'Louis Bautain: Apologist and Apostle', 444.

[83] Ibid.

that God exists, rather than proving it to them.[84] Like Pascal, he believed that reason must first be humiliated, otherwise it would tend to proudly declare itself self-sufficient. Its defeat is the best proof of divine revelation, with which it should ultimately be fused.

At the same time though, and somewhat ambiguously, Bautain repeatedly insisted that it was not his intention to dismiss reason altogether – a position that was at least partly due to the troubles that his equation of philosophy and religion had caused him at the university and with the Church. As Aran Murphy explains, ontologists like the Belgians Bautain and Casimir Ubaghs (1800-75) 'were simultaneously rationalistic, in equating the (God-given) act of faith with a (human) intuition-like act, and fideistic, in barring the door to discursive, non-intuitive knowledge of God.'[85] More cautious than his French predecessors – like Lamennais, for example – Bautain granted reason a somewhat ancillary role, arguing that once a person's faith has been 'illuminated' by tradition, reasoning to God may be effective. But pure rationalism, as shall be seen in a moment, was a whole different matter.

Reviewing past and present philosophical systems, Bautain argued in his *Philosophy of Christianity* (1835) that none of them could fulfil the thirst for truth and provide a conclusive solution to the problem of man's destiny. While not mentioning Cousin explicitly, *Philosophy of Christianity* had the eclectic teaching directly in view. According to Bautain, a theism based on purely rational considerations has pantheism as its inevitable outcome,[86] an argument that would regularly be used by subsequent Catholic apologists both against French and German rationalists. In his estimation, pantheism, resuscitated in contemporary Germany as the philosophy of the absolute, was rapidly becoming a formidable enemy.[87] In fact, the destiny of Christian civilization itself seemed to Bautain to depend on the idealistic confusion of God and man.[88]

In a subsequent work, entitled *La Morale de l'évangile comparée aux divers systèmes de morale* (1855), Bautain provides his own account on the history of the degeneration of reason into pantheism, which begins with Spinoza and ends, logically and necessarily, with German contemporary thinkers: 'Germans always push onward, without knowing where they are going, or at any rate without worrying about it, until they fall into an abyss or into the mire. This is what has happened here. The disciples of Hegel, Bruno Bauer, Ruge, Feuerbach, and Stirner in particular – the latest addition, I believe – have fallen back, by dint of cunning speculations, into the coarsest sensualism, into that materialism which, like false mysticism, begins with the *esprit* and ends with the flesh.'[89] Of the authors mentioned above, Bautain only quotes, or rather

[84] See Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition*, 120.
[85] Aran Murphy, 'Traditionalism and Revelation', Chapter One.
[86] *Philosophie du Christianisme* (Paris / Strasbourg: Dérivaux / Février, 1835), Vol. 2, 82.
[87] Ibid, 148-9.
[88] Ibid, 95.
[89] *La Morale de l'évangile comparée aux divers systèmes de morale* (Paris: Auguste Vaton, 1855), 334. Bautain condemned skepticism, rationalism, pantheism and its negative influence in a number of other publications as well. See, for example: *L'Esprit humain et ses facultés ou psychologie expérimentale*, Vol. 1, second ed. (Paris: Auguste Vaton, 1859) [first ed. published in 1839 under the title *Psychologie expérimentale*]; *Les Choses de l'autre monde: journal d'un philosophe* (posthumous) (Paris: Hachette, 1868). For German idealism and pantheism, see 99-104 and *passim*.

paraphrases, Stirner,[90] whose complete exaltation of the I over God and everyone else he uses, like many Catholic apologists of the time, to describe the terminal point of Kant's critique and German philosophy. What the French author seems to find especially striking is that Germany's critical enterprise was accomplished *philosophically*, with a certain elegance, calmly, cold-bloodedly. For Bautain, Stirner's achievements stand as a monument to what reason alone can generate.

To make matters worse, Bautain continues, pantheism has made its appearance in France as well, though in lesser degree. Without indicating specific names, Bautain points to the 'humanitarian school' (that is, presumably, the positivist school) and the eclectic school, before moving on to an explanation of how pantheism has destroyed public and private morality and of the way in which political utopias such as communism and socialism have suppressed individuality. This argument is a rather curious one, especially in light of Bautain's previous criticism of Stirner's glorification of the individual, or at any rate of Stirner's explicit anti-communist and anti-socialist remarks, evidenced by the very quote that Bautain himself chose to cite. This, however, was not an isolated case: on the one hand, Christian apologists ranked Stirner among those socialists and communists who exalt the State and society, disregarding the individual; on the other, in an exquisitely contradictory fashion, they quoted passages from *Der Einzige* (or from summaries of it) in which Stirner unequivocally declares that the individual is sovereign.

The tendency described above betrays the lack of interest among Catholic authors in making any fine distinction between German contemporary philosophers associated with Hegelianism, revealing instead their pressing need to portray German philosophy as a single, coherent entity, a united whole that could therefore more easily be rejected *en bloc*. To these men of faith, it made little difference whether the Young Hegelians had replaced God with the egoist individual, as they thought Stirner had done, or with humanity at large (understood either as an abstract concept or in a concrete way), like Feuerbach and others. In either case, man had been elevated over God, and this affront could not be tolerated.

An attack on eclecticism and Hegelianism comparable to that made by Bautain came from the Gallican, liberal priest and theologian Henri Louis Charles Maret (1805-84).[91] An adversary of intransigent Catholicism, ultramontanism, and papal infallibility, Maret was one of the most prominent intellectuals within the clergy and an early advocate of what came to be known later on as Christian democracy. Similar to Bautain, Maret's importance for the history of Stirner's French reception does not reside in what he directly wrote about him – in fact, he only makes brief references to him or allusions in his later publications

[90] There is no solid indication, however, that he actually read *Der Einzige*. No reference is provided in the text.

[91] On Maret, see Gustave Bazin, *La Vie de Mgr Maret*, 3 Vols. (Paris: Berche et Tralin, 1891), which includes Maret's own *Mémoirs*; Andrea Riccardi, 'Alle origini del neogallicanesimo di Henri Maret', *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae*, Vol. 14 (1976), 219-64; Claude Bressolette, *L'abbé Maret. Le combat d'un théologien pour une démocratie chrétienne 1830-1851* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1977); Claude Bressolette, *Le Pouvoir dans la société et dans l'Église. L'ecclésiologie politique de M^gr^ Maret, dernier doyen de la faculté de théologie de la Sorbonne* (Paris: Cerf, 1984); Vieillard-Baron, *Le Spiritualisme Français*, 186-91; Reardon, *Liberalism and Tradition*, 186-91; Bellantone, *Hegel en France*, Vol. 1, 203-12, 263-74; Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self*, 247-51.

and in a couple of public speeches. Instead, Maret's impact lies in the resonance of his critical interpretations of Hegelianism and in the intellectual contexts or debates in which he situated both Hegel and his disciples. As a highly influential author and Archbishop, Maret played a significant role in solidifying the associations of Hegelianism, and by extension Stirner, with certain controversial philosophical doctrines and traditions. Like Bautain, he helped set the stage within Catholic circles for the discussions on rationalism and pantheism by which even Stirner's first ever French commentators were informed.

Thanks especially to the impact of his first and best-known work, the *Essai sur le panthéisme* (1840), on the archbishop of Paris, Mgr Denys Auguste Affre (1793-1848), and to 'an act of calculated contrition by none other than Victor Cousin as Minister of Public Education',[92] whom the *Essai* had criticized, Maret was appointed professor of dogmatics at the Faculty of Theology in 1841. Upon the establishment of the Second Empire, Maret expressed his support for Louis Napoleon, and in 1853 his loyalty was rewarded with an appointment as the dean of the theological faculty at the Sorbonne. From that point forward, he maintained a close association with the imperial government and established a friendly rapport with Napoleon III himself. Despite the ostracism of Pius IX, who disapproved of his liberal views and his Gallican stance, Maret continued to exert a strong influence on national religious matters, particularly in the selection of new bishops. He also diligently managed his academic responsibilities, ensuring that his staff included top-tier scholars such as Bautain and Gratry.

Maret's *Essai sur le panthéisme*, described by Bellantone as an anti-Eclectic, anti-German treaty and as the first true anti-Hegelian stance of French Catholic thought,[93] enjoyed an astounding success. According to Maret's nineteenth-century biographer, since its first appearance the book was avidly read by all the educated classes in France, both clerical and lay. The first edition sold out within weeks, and a second printing followed within the year. The *Essai* also achieved significant resonance abroad and was quickly translated into German, Italian, and, somewhat later, Spanish and Polish.[94] For Goldstein, the success and wide readership of the *Essai* 'no doubt owed to its broad scope, the general cultural criticism in which it embedded its specific, religious criticism of Cousin.'[95] The political purpose of the *Essai*, which was largely inspired by Bautain's work and, to some extent, by Lamennais', was twofold: on the one hand, it had the future of the French education system in view, opposing Catholic education to Cousin's pantheistic, reformist pedagogy; on the other, it aimed to contrast the advent of socialism and atheism preconized especially by certain German contemporary philosophers from the Hegelian tradition.

For Maret and most Catholic apologists of the time, to attack Cousin and the Eclectics was to attack their Hegelianism, and doing this was in turn part of a larger apologetic enterprise. The Catholic anti-Eclecticism and anti-Hegelianism of the 1840s, Bellantone argues, were only in part influenced by the *querelle*

[92] Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self*, 247.
[93] Bellantone, *Hegel en France*, Vol. 1, 203-4.
[94] Bazin, *Vie de Mgr Maret,* Vol. 1, 73-4; Louis Foucher, *La Philosophie catholique en France au XIXe siècle* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1955), 156.
[95] Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self*, 247.

on public education that had unfolded during Cousin's second teaching phase (1828-31), when, in order to defend the secularism of Universities, the father of Eclecticism had engaged in a confrontation with the French clergy.[96] As Bellantone explains, the anti-Eclecticism of the Catholics during the first part of the Orléanist Monarchy was connected primarily with the struggle between moderates and reactionaries over the control of post-Napoleonic France. At the time Maret was writing though, the scenario had changed. The enemies were not just liberal moderates, but also the democrats and the socialists. Like most Catholic polemicists in those years, Maret fought both at the same time in the attempt to demonstrate that between them there was only a difference of degree, not of substance or quality.[97] Bellantone considers this a 'banal approximation and a sectarian accusation', pointing out more broadly that 'Maret's works were but tendentious works' whose 'partiality and polemical intention were explicitly planned in the act of their redaction. The anti-Eclectic and anti-Hegelian polemics were merely a corollary of Catholic apologetics.'[98] This is confirmed by Maret's exceptionally loose understanding of the concept of pantheism, which allowed him to unite under this label such diverse personalities as Cousin, Guizot, Michelet, the Saint-Simonians, Lamennais, but also of course Hegel, Schelling, Fichte and, above all, the Young Hegelians.

Like Bautain, Maret was convinced that pantheism was the inevitable outcome of rationalism, and that history had invariably confirmed as much. Following Bautain, Maret maintains that any purely rational understanding of God will inexorably lead to equating him with the universe itself, thereby abolishing the distinction between divinity and humanity. Yet unlike Bautain, Lamennais, and the majority of the Catholic opponents of Eclecticism and German philosophy, Maret, like Affre, was not anti-Cartesian. On the contrary, he was among those admirers of Descartes who considered themselves his heir. Accordingly, he contested the Eclectics' right to call themselves Cartesian, for in his eyes Cousinian rationalism had separated philosophy from religion.[99]

Maret's second important publication is the *Théodicée chrétienne, ou comparaison de la notion Ancienne et de la notion rationaliste de Dieu*, published in 1844 and re-edited twelve times in France. The book is fundamentally a sequel to the *Essai*, both polemical and didactic in nature. As Bellantone has summarized, Maret 'writes his work to inform the French public and prevent a revolutionary turn of rationalism in France.'[100] In the *Théodicée*, the French theologian approaches and fights Eclecticism and Hegelianism as products of the same philosophical error, that is, the substitution of the Christian knowledge of God with rationalism. Occasionally, however, he mitigates his criticism of Cousin, arguing that Eclecticism

[96] Bellantone, *Hegel en France*, Vol. 1, 203-4.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Azouvi, *Descartes et la France*, 184-5.
[100] Bellantone, *Hegel en France*, Vol. 1, 264.

is neither 'pure Spinozism' nor 'Germanism',[101] and that 'it would be a great injustice to confuse Eclecticism with Hegelianism.'[102] Specifically, what saved Cousin's philosophy in Maret's eyes was the spiritualist element contained in it, which Cousin increasingly emphasized over the years while also gradually distancing himself from German philosophy.

Maret fundamentally understands pantheism and atheism as two sides of the same coin, as two slightly different consequences of the same logical error. By removing the principle of non-contradiction, pantheist philosophers ended up reducing God to the world or the world to God, therefore denying, in the final analysis, both. In the first case, they become atheists; in the second, they remain pantheists in the narrower sense. This double possibility, Maret argues, was contained in Hegel's philosophy. Yet whereas Hegel remained a pantheist, the Young Hegelian school descended into atheism pure and simple. For his analysis of German philosophy, it should be pointed out, Maret did not engage directly with German sources. As was the case with most Catholic apologists of the epoch, his knowledge of German idealism drew chiefly on French sources: Barchon de Penhoën for Hegel, Jean Ancillon for Fichte and Schelling, Taillandier for the Young Hegelians. He did however spend much of 1840 in Munich, where he could sense for himself the German philosophical climate.

For Maret, the Hegelian Left was Hegel's true heir, for they developed with clarity and precision the principles of the master, and made them accessible to the most vulgar intellects. In Maret, as in many other Catholic apologists writing in those years, the evolution from Hegelianism to the Hegelian Left was just as logical and necessary as the evolution from Kant to Hegel. This interpretation typically rested on the fundamental idea that German contemporary philosophy consisted merely of a series of variations on a few key themes, all of which should be understood in relation to the Protestant Reformation. In Bellantone's words, 'The *topos* of a uniform progression from Kant to Hegel, a simple series of elaborations of an original doctrine, recurred in all the French observers of the philosophy of German idealism and it was difficult to make distinctions within the framework of this process, Maret being no exception.'[103]

During a speech pronounced on 4 March 1854 for the inauguration of the new amphitheatre and of the courses of the Faculty of Theology of Paris, Maret briefly returned to the overall negative impact of Eclecticism and especially of German contemporary philosophy, essentially reiterating the main points made in his previous works but this time including Stirner in his list of deplorable contemporary thinkers.[104] Alluding to the author of *Der Einzige*, Maret says that some philosophers even went so far as to proclaim themselves

[101] *Théodicée chrétienne, ou comparaison de la notion Ancienne et de la notion rationaliste de Dieu* (Paris: Méquignon Junior et J. Leroux, 1844), 445-6.
[102] Ibid, 447.
[103] Ibid, 208. See also Bellantone, *Tra Eclettismo e idealismo*.
[104] *Discours d'ouverture du nouvel amphithéatre et des cours de la Faculté de Théologie de Paris*, pronounced on 4 March 1854. The speech was transcribed and published by Jules Delalain in 1854, and then included in *L'Enseignement Catholique*, Year 4, 1854, Paris, 274-82.

as deities, asserting that they recognize no authority other than their own strength and no governing principle apart from their own desires. These 'savage' doctrines, Maret points out, found some echoes in France – witness Proudhon's 'odious' and 'blaspheme' claim that 'God is evil... man is God's rival' (from Proudhon's *Philosophie de la misère*, 1846). Escaping from the books where they had been confined until then, Maret maintains, these doctrines stirred up the crudest instincts in uncultured souls and in hearts where Christianity was almost erased. They ignited the most formidable passions, 'and for a moment, it seemed that the world was threatened with a universal conflagration.'[105]

Throughout the past three centuries, Maret explains, all the foundations of religion and thought have been investigated: 'all dogmas, all principles, all things have been examined, discussed; the most diverse and contradictive systems have been proposed. Out of all this immense controversy which begins with Luther and ends with Strauss, Feuerbach, and Stirner, clouds have formed which have obscured the sky and flutter within thought to conceal the pure light rays of Christian truth.'[106] After 1848, however, Maret joyfully observes, France has witnessed a gradual return to Christianity. As for Germany, Maret notes that Schelling, the 'glorious veteran of philosophy', has clarified or disowned his earlier system, and professed a Christian faith. Based on Taillandier's accounts, Maret declares that 'Hegel is explained, rectified or strongly rejected; the savage doctrines resulting from his school are cursed at or reduced to silence.'[107] Much to his delight, people are going back to Kant, Leibniz, Descartes, and the religious and Christian sentiment can be seen reanimated everywhere.[108]

By the mid-1850s, Maret had abandoned certain tenets of traditionalism and moved fully into the ontologist camp. He shifted his attention from the critique of reason to the positive emphasis placed by Bautain – by whom he continued to be inspired – on the idea of being, which gives man the faculty of knowing God directly and through intuition. Yet his increasingly rationalist approach did not translate into a more benevolent attitude towards German philosophical rationalism, as is testified by his next important work, *Philosophie et religion. Dignité de la raison humaine et nécessité de la révélation divine* (1856). Here, while reviewing 'negative philosophy' – that is, German post-Kantian idealism – Maret cites a passage from Taillandier where the latter explains that Stirner has rejected humanity as yet another abstraction, as yet another form of the old God, just like family, the homeland, right, morality, love, fraternity, and common interest. Accusing his predecessors of intellectual cowardice, Taillandier-Maret writes, Stirner claimed that the individual is the only existing being, that nothing outside of him is real, and that the individual shall reign

[105] Ibid, 14.
[106] Ibid, 22-3.
[107] Ibid, 19.
[108] Here Maret refers the reader to an 1853 article by Taillandier on the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of 15 August.

with all the power of his individuality, completing atheism with egoism.[109] Once again, Stirner is presented as the culmination of the rationalist follies of German idealism.

Despite the considerable success of some of his subsequent works, Maret's most influential text remained the *Essai sur le panthéisme*. In fact, soon after its publication in 1840, several other works by both Catholic and Protestant commentators who associated Hegelianism with a pernicious rationalism and with pantheism followed suit, for example Amand Saintes' *Histoire critique du rationalisme en Allemagne depuis son origine jusqu'à nos jours* (1841), Dr. Gros' *De la personnalité de Dieu et de l'immortalité de l'âme* (1841), Auguste Ott's *Hegel et la philosophie allemande* (1844), abbot Hyacinthe de Valroger's *Études critiques sur le Rationalisme contemporain* (1846), and Swiss Protestant pastor and historian Étienne Louis Chastel's *De la valeur de la raison humaine, ou ce que peut la raison par elle seule* (1854).[110] From the early 1840s, anti-rationalist critiques also began to be published by some fairly influential intransigent, ultramontane, and legitimist Catholics. It is precisely in this kind of apologetic literature that the earliest direct references ever made to Stirner in France can be found. These works largely followed in the tradition inaugurated by Bonald, Maistre, and Lamennais and subsequently developed by Bautain and Maret, among others.

One of the earliest direct references to Stirner by a French author is contained in a series of letters published in January 1846 – a little over a year after the appearance of *Der Einzige* in Germany – by journalist and dramatic poet Gaston-Étienne de Flotte (1805-82),[111] a militant legitimist, Catholic, and monarchist, member of the Académie de Marseille and collaborator of *La Mode*, the *Revue de Marseille*, and the *Gazette du Midi*, of which he became editor. Flotte vehemently opposed the July Regime in the *Gazette du Midi* and was equally hostile to Napoleon III and the Third Republic. From 1851 to 1880, he served as a representative in Marseille for Henry d'Artois, Duke of Bordeaux and Count of Chambord,[112] who held him in great esteem. He established personal relationships or entertained correspondences with all sorts of renowned personalities of the time, including Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, and Frédéric Mistral.

In his four *Lettres sur le livre du docteur David Strauss intitulé* Vie de Jésus *à Monsieur le general comte Racul de la Tour-du-Pin*, first published in the Marseillaise *Gazette du Midi* in 1846,[113] then united in a brochure in the same year, and finally included in the volume *Les Sects protestantes* (1856) 'as a corollary, as

[109] In a speech on *L'Antichristianisme* pronounced on 4 June 1864, Maret alluded to Stirner once again and referred the reader to his own book *Philosophie et religion*. See *L'Antichristianisme. Discours prononcé dans l'Église métropolitaine de Paris pendant l'octave de la dédicace de cette basilique* (Paris: Douniol, 1864), 12-13.

[110] *De la valeur de la raison humaine, ou ce que peut la raison par elle seule* (Paris: J. Leroux et Jouby, 1854). See esp. 450-2, where Chastel mentions Stirner.

[111] For biographical details and an overview of his major publications, see *Nouvelle Biographie Générale depuis les temps les plus reculés jusqu'à nos jours*, Vol. XVIII: Florus – Fryxell (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1858), 8; 'Le baron Gaston de Flotte et sa famille', *Revue de Marseille*, year 28, 1882 (December), 529-54; Viscount Olivier de Carné, *Éloge du Baron Gaston de Flotte* (Barlatier- Marseille: Feissat, 1885); Paul Masson (ed.), *Les Bouches-du-Rhône, encyclopédie départementale*, tome XI, biographies by H. Barré (Marseille, 1913).

[112] The disputed 'King of France' of the legitimists, grandson of Charles X and pretender to the throne as Henry V from 1844 until his death in 1883.

[113] Jan. 3, 7, 10, and 14. Flotte had himself written a *poème* entitled *Jésus-Christ* (1841).

a logical consequence of it'[114], the Baron outlines Strauss' arguments and reviews the latest developments in German philosophy. The wider aim of the work in which these letters were included was to show the dangers to which human reason can lead if abandoned to itself, and to stress the primacy of religion and theology over any other subject. *Les Sectes protestantes* may be regarded as a complement to Bossuet's *Histoire des variations des Églises protestantes* (1688), one of the most influential texts on Catholic anti-Protestant, anti-*philosophie* apologists both in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.[115] In the text, Flotte argues that Strauss' work is the 'mathematical corollary' of Protestantism;[116] the entire history of Luther's legacy is in a way contained in it.[117] Strauss, he continues, may defend himself from the accusation of being a rationalist, but in his conclusions one may nonetheless find the pantheism of the prophet Mani (the founder of Manichaeism), of the Eleatic school, of Spinoza, Kant, Schelling, Hegel, Johann Heyne, blended with the rationalism of Abelard, Semler and German modern thinkers.

At the time he was writing his letters on Strauss, Flotte continues, the author of *Leben Jesu* had already been 'surpassed' by Bruno Bauer, who called him a prudish orthodox; then, Feuerbach reproached Bauer for failing to understand that the only God, the only Christ, is humanity; next, Max Stirner challenged all of them and labelled them as bigots, for to replace God with humanity is to replace a superstition with another superstition. In Stirner's view, Flotte writes, only the individual is sacred. Christ-Humanity, like the historical Christ, is merely an invention of religious people. Slightly altering the traditional sequence of German thinkers reproduced by most French Catholic critics, Flotte writes that, after Stirner, the poet Herwegh took up his lyre and surpassed all his predecessors, then Wilhelm Marr took it upon himself to sum up everything: 'The dogmas of God's existence and the immortality of the soul are not but tales of old ladies which reason has tossed away. I want great vices, and bloody, colossal crimes; when will I stop seeing this trivial morality, this virtue which bothers me?'[118]

Roughly a year before the publication of Flotte's letters, another Catholic legitimist author had already briefly outlined and condemned a number of German recent and extreme philosophies, including Stirner's, in a private letter, dated September 1845 but only published in 1853.[119] The author of the letter is the abbot and apologist Ambroise Louis François Martin de Noirlieu (1792-1870),[120] a close friend of

[114] *Les Sects protestantes ou histoire alphabétique des divisions survenues dans la réforme depuis Luther jusqu'à nos jours* (Paris: Étienne Giraud, 1856), 339.
[115] See Sacquin, *Entre Bossuet et Maurras*, and McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment*, 146, 180.
[116] Flotte, *Les Sects protestantes*, 390.
[117] Ibid, 183.
[118] In ibid, 388.
[119] In a volume called *Exposition et défense des dogmes principaux du Christianisme* (Paris: Auguste Vaton, 1853), 400-7.
[120] Noirlieu studied the humanities in Reims and Rome, and taught rhetoric in Paris. In the mid-1820s, Charles X appointed him as under-tutor to his grandson, the duke of Bordeaux and Count of Chambord, whom Noirlieu served until the Count and his family went into exile in 1830. During the July Revolution, he was in Germany, travelling for his health, but the cold climate obliged him to return to Rome. In 1840, the Archbishop of Paris, Mgr. Affre, made him curate of Saint-Jacques-du-Haut-Pas. Marie Dominique Auguste Sibour, who filled in Affre's position as Archbishop of Paris in 1848, gave Noirlieu the benefice of Saint-Louis-d'Antin at the close of the same year, which the latter held until his death in 1863.

Lamennais and Lacordaire, and a personal acquaintance of Dupanloup and Bautain, whom he greatly admired. The recipient of the letter is a former, elderly student of Noirlieu's at the École Normale. In the letter, Noirlieu deals with some of the criticisms received by the clergy in those years, criticisms which, he explains, portray them as enemies of philosophy, not only in books and literary or scientific reviews, but also in public courses. Specifically, he rejects the view that in order to avoid being accused of obscurantism and fanaticism, or of being an enemy of progress, one must necessarily become a rationalist, an eclectic, or a pantheist.[121]

Determined to defend his category and Catholicism more broadly, and redirecting the attention of his interlocutor to what he believes to be the real problem, *rationalism*, Noirlieu points out that the history of this philosophical tradition has consisted of one perpetual circle of systems alternately resumed and abandoned, a process which he thinks ultimately proves – to the desperation of their inventors – their ineffectiveness and failure. When reason is left to its own devices, Noirlieu says (echoing his numerous predecessors), it inevitably fails. Yet while the rationalist battle has been lost, Noirlieu goes on to argue, pride still leads certain modern rationalist philosophers to excesses, to 'monstrous mistakes', to 'theories which frighten society and threaten to drag the earth into the horrors of the abyss.'[122] One example, provided by Noirlieu in a footnote,[123] of the 'enormities' which in recent years have been published in the 'motherland of rationalism' is Max Stirner, who Noirlieu claims has stated: 'The individual, with his appetites and passions – that is the true God. Each individual is God, and God to himself.'[124] In keeping with the widespread trends within Catholic apologetics discussed earlier, Noirlieu considers all the criticisms addressed to the Church in those years and the recent developments of rationalist philosophies as part of a larger conspiracy against Christianity. Accordingly, he urges those who are sincere friends of truth, of religion, of social order, to 'oppose all their power to the triumph of this rationalist philosophy which, after having devastated the intellects without conquering them at the same time, now threatens to destroy society.'[125]

A similar call to action came from legitimist viscount and parliamentarian Gustave de La Tour (1814-93),[126] another early commentator of Stirner: 'The French nation is the most populated and powerful of

[121] Noirlieu, *Exposition et défense des dogmes principaux du Christianisme*, 401.
[122] Ibid, 406.
[123] This footnote, like others in the text, was probably only added by Noirlieu in the context of the text's publication as part of a larger collection of writings in 1853, and in any case the author must have conceived it after 1847. A couple of clues suggest this. First, the fact that the translation of Stirner's quote largely resembles the one first made by Taillandier in 1847, which seems to have become every French commentator's favourite after Taillandier's more resonant introduction of Stirner in France, rarely showing any notable variations. Second, Noirlieu's explicatory addendum 'Stirner réfutant Feuerbach', written in brackets, also typically follows Stirner's famous quote in several of these such occurrences in French texts, and is therefore another hint that any reference to Stirner must have been added after Taillandier's study of 1847. In the same footnote, Noirlieu also reports two quotes by Wilhelm Marr and concludes by praising Abbot Gratry's *Étude sur la sophistique contemporaine*, a text that contains a critical analysis of German contemporary philosophy (including Stirner) and which was only published in 1851.
[124] Ibid, 406.
[125] Ibid.
[126] Gustave le Borgne de La Tour was deputy of the Côtes-du-Nord from 1852 to 1870, mayor of Tréguier, and a military official. Together with Louis Veuillot and Montalambert, he opted for the *ralliement* under the Second Republic and, shortly after, under the

Catholic nations. Consequently, the protectorate of Catholicism in the entire universe falls upon us.'[127] Like Noirlieu, La Tour also points to rationalism as a serious threat, describing it as an evil which has poisoned Germany and France in the same way and with the same results; only, the former country is some sixty years behind the latter. To demonstrate this claim, the author recalls the precursors and the broader philosophical currents behind some of the most renowned German philosophers, including Kant, Schleiermacher, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and the Left Hegelians, showing that rationalism really originated in France – probably a bitter admission to make for the author, but nonetheless an important reminder to his readers of France's key role in the intellectual development of the world.

After briefly reviewing Strauss, Bauer, Feuerbach, and Ruge, the author moves on to Stirner, who, La Tour claims, has accepted individual reason, the self, as the only deity, and has therefore made individualism, egoism, the only philosophy that man should embrace. Vice and crime consequently become empty words which do not trouble man at all. From this perspective, La Tour detects remarkable similarities between the fall of the Hegelian school and the degeneration of the French rationalist philosophy of the Eighteenth century. This philosophy, inspired by Voltaire and Maupertuis, had culminated in the 'hideous' materialism of La Mettrie, Diderot, and their numerous followers. For La Tour, something similar had occurred within the Young Hegelian school. In the social and political fields, La Tour continues, the same doctrines embraced by the Young Hegelians in his own time had produced, a few decades earlier, Mirabeau, then Babœuf, Robespierre, and Fourier. Once again, the links with the *philosophes*, with the Terror, and in this case even with socialism are simply presented as self-evident.

For La Tour, the revolution that Europe was undergoing was more social than it was political, something that he thought was demonstrated by the fact that German rationalism had begun 'to produce Fouriers and Babœufs.'[128] Idolizing pride and cherishing sensualism, the Hegelians inevitably gained some success in an epoch in which pleasures and power are sought after with equal ardour – another common argument among Catholic thinkers during the July Monarchy, as has been seen before. This, La Tour argues, is what makes their books truly dangerous. Audacity, good faith in their search for truth, and an underlying will to render service to humanity by trying to free it from morality and religion are the features that constitute the strength of 'the ultra-Hegelians and communists everywhere.'[129] La Tour however rejoices that the German 'demagogues' and their '*philosophisme*' have encountered a formidable resistance even in their own country.[130]

The seemingly reassuring trends that many Catholic intellectuals (including Taillandier) and clergymen claimed to have registered after the February Revolution did not diminish their efforts to counter

Second Empire, on the condition that the new regimes would safeguard the rights and freedom of the Church. He also approved of the *ralliement* proposed by Leon XIII during the Third Republic. His religious convictions led him to oppose the war against Italy.

[127] Gustave De La Tour, *Du Mouvement social* (Paris: Jacques Lecoffre, 1848), 92-3.

[128] Ibid, 96.

[129] Ibid, 98.

[130] Ibid, 100.

the potential influence of rationalism and other supposedly harmful philosophies. In fact, throughout the 1850s and well into the 1860s, the debates on rationalism, understood both as an internal theological issue (i.e. the question of how man knows God and the relationship between reason and faith more broadly) and as a Protestant value or approach with potentially dangerous political implications, were carried on with remarkable vigour. Thanks especially to Bautain and Maret, who had accused Cousinian Eclecticism and Germany's post-Kantian idealist tradition of glorifying human reason as an all-powerful, self-sufficient force that rules out faith, reducing God to the world while implicitly raising man to a divine status, the notion that pure rationalism inexorably leads to pantheism became an integral element of subsequent Catholic apologetic literature, the very same literature in which Stirner would repeatedly be addressed.

IV. Pantheism in public controversies and the state of religion in society

The issue of pantheism, at least as old as the related issue of rationalism, continued to haunt Christian apologists throughout the whole nineteenth century. Most Catholic polemicists in the period examined here tended to make little or no distinction between pantheism and atheism, between lack of faith or criticism of certain tenets of Catholicism and active, militant hostility towards it. Moreover, they maintained that modern pantheism and atheism had both been reinvigorated in modern times by Protestantism. In his famous anti-Protestant polemic, *History of the Variations of the Protestant Churches* (1688), Bossuet had already chronicled what he believed to be the inevitable descent of Protestantism into atheism. The advent of biblical exegesis in Germany, together with Spinoza's renaissance – first in Germany, towards the end of the eighteenth century in the context of what became known as the *Pantheismusstreit*,[131] then in France during the first half of the nineteenth century[132] – gave new luster to this old argument. Spinoza's role in debates on pantheism within French Catholic circles was similar to that of Descartes in the discussions on rationalism: Catholic thinkers approached Spinoza from more or less laudatory perspectives depending on what they thought would best serve the Church's interests and the Catholic faith. Like Descartes, the Dutch philosopher

[131] The *Pantheismusstreit* (pantheism controversy), also referred to as *Spinozismusstreit* or *Spinozastreit*, began as a personal dispute between Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819) and Moses Mendelssohn (1729-86) over their different understanding of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's Spinozist beliefs. This quarrel gained public attention when Jacobi published his correspondence with Mendelssohn in 1785, sparking a series of public discussions on the matter. In the nineteenth century, the controversy continued to exert a profound impact on German intellectual and cultural life. The pantheism controversy was a transnational phenomenon. While it originated in Germany, it soon took on very different forms in France and Italy. For recent accounts on the *Pantheismusstreit* and its enduring influence on German thought, see François Dayon, 'Spinoza et la querelle du panthéisme. Entre la foi en la raison et les raisons de la foi', *Horizons philosophiques*, Vol. 13, 1, Autumn 2002; Peter Jonkers, 'The Importance of the Pantheism-Controversy for the Development of Hegel's Thought', *Hegel-Jahrbuch*, 11 (2002), 272-78; Frederick C. Beiser, *The Romantic Imperative: The Concept of Early German Romanticism* (Harvard University Press, 2003), 171-86 and *passim*; André Tosel, Pierre-François Moreau, and Jean Salem (eds.), *Spinoza au XIX^e siècle* (Publications de la Sorbonne, 2007), part one ('Spinoza au XIX^e siècle: l'Allemagne'); Georg Essen and Christian Danz (eds.), *Philosophisch-theologische Streitsachen. Pantheismusstreit, Atheismusstreit, Theismusstreit* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2012); Eckart Förster and Yitzhak Y. Melamed (eds.), *Spinoza and German Idealism* (Cambridge University Press, 2012); Józef Piórczynski, *Der Pantheismussstreit. Spinozas Weg zur deutschen Philosophie und Kultur* (Würzburg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2019); Till Kinzel, Oliver Koch, and Anne Pollock (eds.), *Im Kontext des Spinozastreits: Lessing – Jacobi, Mendelssohn und Hamann* (Wolfenbüttel, 2020).

[132] See the relevant chapters in the section 'Spinoza en France' in Tosel, Moreau, and Salem (eds.), *Spinoza au XIX^e siècle*.

could either be portrayed as Satan or as a Christian saint.[133] The majority of Catholic apologists, however, concerned by the perceived advancement of pantheism, tended to condemn Spinoza and were quick to label spiritualist eclectics and French admirers of Hegelianism as his (and Descartes') heirs. Spiritualist philosophers, for their part, including Cousin, Jules Simon (who had prefaced an 1842 edition of the *Œuvres de Descartes*), and Spinoza's translator Émile Saisset, tried to shield themselves, Eclecticism, and Descartes against the Catholics' accusation of embracing Spinozian pantheism[134] – but to little avail.

In their macro-narrative of society's intellectual and moral decline, Catholic apologists generally drew a line of logical continuity between Spinozian pantheism and German contemporary thought. Stirner was typically positioned at the end of this intellectual lineage, for he was regarded as one of the latest expressions not only, as has been seen earlier, of Protestantism and rationalism per se (and of Hegelianism, of course), but also of this other ancient evil – developed by Spinoza but brooded in Germany – that was their direct result: pantheism. Stirner's name came now to be used by Catholic apologists to discredit specific French controversial thinkers by mere association. To equate someone with Stirner, Feuerbach, Bauer, Strauss, and the other usual suspects from the Hegelian Left was to attribute to them an excessive confidence in reason, a lack of faith, and therefore a questionable morality, all of which were indicated as potential pitfalls of the fascination with Hegelianism. Once more, then, the significance of French Catholic apologists' commentaries on Stirner lies not so much in the contents, which often remained unoriginal and superficial, but rather in the intellectual frameworks in which these authors situated him, the discussions in which they employed his ideas – however fragmented or distorted their summaries may have been – and the underlying motives behind their references to him.

In *Der Einzige*, Stirner is not concerned with religion directly, nor does he spend much time openly preaching atheism. In fact, a much more active and hostile opposition to God could certainly be found in Bruno Bauer's writings. As Hellman has noted, Stirner 'simply assumed the atheism of his reader', for his target audience was composed primarily by Young Hegelians who, if not atheist themselves, were all well acquainted with the religious criticism of Strauss and Bauer.[135] Fundamentally, Stirner ruled out the option

[133] See Chantal Jaquet, 'La Réception de Spinoza dans les milieux catholiques français', in ibid, 243-254.

[134] Émile Saisset, 'Philosophie du clergé', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, May 1844; P. Macherey, 'Les débuts philosophiques de Victor Cousin', *Corpus: revue de philosophie*, Vol. 18, 1991, 29, 47-8; Pierre-François Moreau, 'Traduire Spinoza: l'exemple d'Émile Saisset', in Tosel, Moreau, and Salem (eds.), *Spinoza au XIX^e siècle*, 221-30; Jean-Pierre Cotton, 'Spinoza et Victor Cousin', in ibid, 231-42; Jaquet, 'La réception de Spinoza'; Mogens Laerke, 'Spinoza in France, c. 1670–1970', in Yitzhak Y. Melamed (ed.), *A Companion to Spinoza* (Wiley, 2021), 506–16, 511. Jules Simon, on the other hand, rejected the view that France had ever produced any proponent of pantheism, or at least any serious ones. See J. Simon, 'Œuvres de Spinoza, traduites par M. É. Saisset', *Revue de Deux Mondes*, 1 June 1843, 786.

[135] Hellman, *Berlin*, 190. Albeit regularly charged with atheism by French commentators, some of the most prominent Young Hegelians were not atheists. Feuerbach, for example, was an enemy of theology, not religion, and he explicitly rejected the atheist label. See Gregory, *Scientific Materialism*, 4. Strauss prefaced his *Life of Jesus* by saying: 'The author is aware that the essence of the Christian faith is perfectly independent of his criticism… The supernatural birth of Christ, his miracles, his resurrection and ascension, remain eternal truths, whatever doubts may be cast on their reality as historical facts'. See D. F. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus* (London: Chapman, 1846, 3 Vols.), Vol. I, XI. Moses Hess was no atheist either, and Marx's atheism has also been challenged. See Vanessa Wills, 'Marx', in Graham Oppy (ed.), *A Companion to Atheism and Philosophy*, 43-57 (Wiley Blackwell, 2019). Naturally, Stirner's views on religion, like those of a Bruno Bauer, a Ruge, or an Ewerbeck, are a whole different matter.

of God from the outset, dismissing it as one of many abstract ideals. Nevertheless, French Catholic commentators of the nineteenth century deliberately exaggerated the role of atheism in Stirner, or at any rate they focused especially on that element, for the sake of their broader apologetic mission. Their primary objective was to counter the increasing threat posed by German contemporary philosophy to religion and morality, particularly in light of its influence on French prominent academics and intellectuals (chiefly the eclectics and the positivists), but also on French socialists and communists.

According to Ragghianti,[136] the controversy between Cousin and his Catholic critics in France, partly addressed in previous sections, was entirely unrelated to the German debate that accompanied the dissolution of the Hegelian school. The debate in Paris, he writes, immediately took a political turn – the issue of the university teaching monopoly – disguised behind the label of pantheism, far from the atheistic consequences of German speculation. It is certainly true, as Ragghianti points out, that stating that pantheism had flooded into German metaphysics and accusing all that culture of Spinozism – like Quinet did in his 1837 review of Strauss' *Leben Jesu*, and like countless Catholic apologists did from the 1830s – were actually responses to purely French polemics. Yet as much as Cousin's monopoly over public education and the influence of Eclecticism in academia continued for several years to represent the most pressing issue at hand for many Catholics, they were but reflections, local manifestations of greater evils that Catholicism fought throughout the whole century. It would therefore be a mistake not to recognize the wider scope of Catholics' apologetic discourse with respect to the numerous issues posed by modernity, many of which they linked, in their large theological-philosophical reconstructions, with the old and new philosophical doctrines of Protestant Germany.

Placing greater emphasis on the issue of pantheism than on that of rationalism, some scholars, including Ragghianti, have interpreted and labelled the controversy between Cousin and his Catholic detractors as a 'querelle du panthéisme'.[137] From the 1830s, these scholars argue, the Church and a number of ultra-royalists had begun to denounce Eclecticism on the grounds of its supposed pantheism, however it was not until 1841 that the so called 'querelle du panthéisme' truly unravelled in France. The querelle, they explain, originated with the *Tableau de l'état actuel de l'instruction primaire en France* presented to the King by the Minister of Public Education, Abel François Villemain (1839-45), on 1 November 1841.[138] In it, Villemain proposed to subject schoolteachers in the associations of brothers and in the congregations to the same requirements to practice as their secular counterparts, which included a certificate of competency and one

[136] Renzo Ragghianti, *Filosofia, storiografia e vita civile. L'eclettismo francese tra Cousin e Bergson* (Scuola Normale Superiore Pisa, 2014), 81-83.
[137] Ibid, Chapter Two. See also Christian Mauve, 'La querelle du panthéisme', *Cahiers du Collège international de philosophie*, No. 4, Nov. 1987; Patrice Vermeren, *Victor Cousin. Le jeu de la philosophie et de l'État* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995), Chapter Nine; Renzo Ragghianti, Introduction: *Victor Cousin et la querelle du panthéisme*, in Victor Cousin, *Nouvelle théodicée d'après la méthode psychologique*, edited by Renzo Ragghianti (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001); Loeffel, *Le Spiritualisme*, 70-2; Kirill Chepurin, 'Pantheism and the Dangers of Hegelianism in Nineteenth-Century France', in Chepurin et al., *Hegel and Schelling*, Vol. 2, Chapter Seven.
[138] It was published in the same year in Paris by J. Renouard.

of morality. The proposal caused a strong reaction from the clergy, leading fiftysix bishops to protest publicly. The religious polemic ended up crystallizing on the denunciation of the monopoly of the University as well as on eclectic philosophy and its teaching, condemned as a school of vice and atheism.

From a philosophical perspective, however, the querelle of pantheism can be traced back to 1832, when Bautain proposed and put in place his philosophy program for the colleges. Bautain's *Philosophie du Christianisme* (1835), on the other hand, may be considered as the book that inaugurated the key topics which subsequent commentators would unfailingly pick up for discussion in the context of the pantheism controversy. These included, as has been seen, the apology of divine revelation as the source of true knowledge, the denunciation of any system based on reason as pantheism, and the condemnation of pantheism as the true heresy of the modern world. Maret returned to these arguments and systematized them in his successful *Essai sur le panthéisme* (1840). According to Ragghianti, the querelle of pantheism extinguished itself by the time of the publication of Christian Bartholmèss' *Histoire critique des doctrines religieuses de la philosophie moderne* in 1855.[139] For Christian Mauve, by contrast, the pantheism controversy was protracted until the end of the century.[140]

The effects of the pantheism controversy on French public debates, which had repercussions on the French reception of Hegelianism as well,[141] and by extension on Stirner, could be observed for example in the polemic that began in 1851 between the eclectic philosopher Étienne Vacherot (1809-97) and the liberal Catholic priest Joseph Alphonse Gratry (1805-72),[142] Chaplain of the École Normale Supérieure and distinguished theologian.[143] Despite their vastly differing opinions, both authors were trying to reconcile Catholic thought with modern science. Vacherot, however, also sought to create the premises for a dialogue

[139] Ragghianti, *Filosofia, storiografia e vita civile*, 81-2.

[140] Mauve, 'La querelle du panthéisme'.

[141] See Chepurin, 'Pantheism and the Dangers of Hegelianism in Nineteenth-Century France.' Chepurin suggests that the connotations that Hegel's name started to carry in France in the context of the pantheism polemics largely contributed to the formation of the standard French image of the German philosopher which survived into the twentieth century (148). More generally, Chepurin makes pantheism the main reading key for the critical reception of Hegelianism in nineteenth-century France: 'It is Hegel's alleged pantheism that French authors often take to be the root cause of the other dangers that become associated with Hegelianism over the course of the century, ranging from the defence of the status quo to radical socialism to pangermanism.' For Chepurin, the widespread fixation on pantheism as the main enemy of truth and as a defining feature of the age is 'symptomatic of the perception of the nineteenth century by its contemporaries as a period of crisis and turmoil, in which heretical energies are let loose that threaten to unground all authority and all transcendence' (143).

[142] On Gratry's life and work, see Adolphe Perraud, *Le P. Gratry, sa vie et ses oeuvres* (Paris: Téqui, 1900); Amédée Chauvin, *Le Père Gratry 1805-1872* (Paris: Bloud, 1901); Guillaume Cuchet, *Penser le christianisme au XIX^e siècle. Alphonse Gratry (1805-1872*). Journal de ma vie *et autres textes* (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes/Société d'histoire religieuse de la France, 2017), coll. «Histoire religieuse de la France», No. 44; Vieillard-Baron, *Le Spiritualisme Français*, 125-128, 289-300, and *passim*; Foucher, *La Philosophie catholique en France au XIX^e siècle*, 196-236; Cuchet, *Une Histoire du sentiment religieux*, Chapter Two; Olivier Prat (ed.), *Alphonse Gratry (1805-1872). Marginal ou précurseur?* (Paris: Cerf, 2009); Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron, 'Alphonse Gratry (1805-1872)', in Andrea Bellantone and Jean-Louis Vieillard-Baron (eds.), *Figures du spiritualisme. De Biran à Boutroux* (Paris: Hermann, 2022), 39-56. On Gratry's anti-Hegelianism specifically, see Bellantone, *Hegel en France*, Vol. 1, 397-406.

[143] On the controversy, see Paul Gerbod, *La Condition universitaire en France au XIXe siècle* (PUF, 1965), 265-6; François Léger, *La Jeunesse d'Hippolyte Taine* (Albatros, 1980), 119ff; Bellantone, *Hegel en France*, Vol. 1, 373-6; Cuchet, *Penser le Christianisme*, Chapter One, the section called 'L'Affaire Vacheort (1851)'; Sudhir Hazareesingh, 'From Democratic Advocate to Monarchist Critic of the Republic: The Penitent Jacobinism of Étienne Vacherot (1809–1897)', *English Historical Review*, 113 (1998), 1.149; Chepurin et al. *Hegel and Schelling*, Vol. 1, 106-107.

between Cousin and his German partners, to find common ground between their philosophies. This he eventually found in the interest of both parties in ancient philosophy, and in Platonism and Neoplatonism in particular.[144]

In his three-volume *Histoire critique de l'école d'Alexandrie* (1846-51), Vacherot, then director of studies at the École Normale, akin in his general attitude to the later eclectics and strongly drawn to Hegelianism, assigned a fundamental place in the development of Christianity to the Alexandria school – Neoplatonism – and to Hellenism in general. Confident in the progress of reason, he presented the new school, which had assimilated elements of Hegelianism, as the future of philosophy, seeing it as capable of overcoming the tensions between the various systems.[145] Vacherot's work was immediately interpreted as an attack on the divine nature of the Catholic Church by Gratry, who was one of the most vehement opponents of Hegelian philosophy in France in the 1850s. In his vitriolic *Lettre à M. Vacherot* (1851), he portrayed the eclectic philosopher as a representative of this new form of sophistry called Hegelianism and accused him of embracing atheism.

Having sojourned in Germany for many years, Gratry was well acquainted with the German language and with the country's philosophical currents. Evidently up to date on the latest developments of German philosophy, and drawing especially on Taillandier's article on the 'Littérature en Allemagne depuis la Révolution de Février' (1850) as a source of knowledge and citations, Gratry scolds Vacherot for an intellectual connivance with Ewerbeck, Feuerbach, and Stirner.[146] Writing in 1859, the Archbishop of Tours, Cardinal, and biblical exegete Guillaume-René Meignan (1817-96),[147] who had studied philosophy in Paris under Victor Cousin and then in various German universities, described Vacherot's 'positive metaphysics' as one of three hotbeds of atheism in France (the other two being Proudhon's socialism and Comte's positivism), and the product of a broader discontentment within the university linked with the increasingly asphyxiating omnipresence of Cousin's official philosophy. Meignan further spoke of a separation which had eventually taken place among the 'rebels': Jules Simon and Émile Saisset, representing the Right, confined themselves to deism, while more audacious minds such as Vacherot formed the Left and (allegedly) raised the flag of atheism.[148]

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[144] As Espagne has noted, there is a connection between the rediscovery of Alexandrine philosophy and Hegelian philosophy, as well as between the interest in Neoplatonism and the reading of Schelling. More broadly, studying German philosophy in France also meant receiving impulses in other variously related areas, such as Ancient Greece. In fact, nineteenth-century French philosophers and philologists often approached Ancient Greece through the mediation of German scholars, most notably Eduard Zeller. See Espagne, *En deçà du Rhin*, 16.

[145] *Histoire critique de l'école d'Alexandrie*, Vol. 3 (Paris: Ladrange, 1851), 487. On Vacherot's Hegelianism in relation to Neoplatonism, and his synthesis between Hegelianism and science, see Bellantone, *Hegel en France*, Vol. 1, 361-97.

[146] Joseph Alphonse Gratry, *Une Étude sur la sophistique contemporaine ou Lettre à M. Vacherot* (Paris: Gaume Frères Éditeurs, 1851), 146-58, and 152 for Stirner in particular.

[147] On Meignan's life and thought, see Henri Boissonnot, *Le Cardinal Meignan* (Victor Lecoffre, 1899); 'Guillaume Meignan', in Alphonse-Victor Angot and Ferdinand Gaugain, *Dictionnaire historique, topographique et biographique de la Mayenne* (Laval, Goupil, 1900-1910).

[148] Guillaume-René Meignan, 'D'un mouvement antireligieux en France', second part, 'Les Athées au dix-neuvième siècle', 429-455, *Le Correspondant*, Tome 46, new series, Tome II (Paris: Charles Douniol, 1859), 444-8.

A protégé of Maret, Meignan had also already commented on Stirner. In fact, he was the first in France to explicitly describe him as the 'founder of individualism':

> Max Stirner built upon Feuerbach's *humanism* and declared it to be nothing more than an abstraction. 'Humanity,' he said, 'exists nowhere; there are only individuals.' Stirner created *individualism*. It is the substitution of egoism for philanthropy, the negation of society, and the assertion of individual sovereignty. It must be acknowledged that the abhorrent doctrine of Max Stirner has only garnered dubious assent. But is the doctrine of *humanism* much more solid than that of *individualism*? From the standpoint of Feuerbach and Stirner, which can claim greater logical advantage? It is certain that Stirner's individualism is easier to defend than Feuerbach's humanism. If man exists by himself, he depends only on himself. Thus, Feuerbach is already under threat. The rest of the metaphysics and abstraction that this system implies is displeasing.[149]

Gratry's reasons for attacking Eclecticism and Hegelianism were informed to some extent by the same views on rationalism expressed a few years prior by Bautain and Maret, both of whom he had a personal acquaintance with. Like them, he believed that reason is a useful, indeed necessary tool, and as such it should be encouraged and stimulated. The danger however lies in its excesses, for these can produce absurdities. For Gratry, too, the main perpetrators of the suicide of reason were Hegel and his German and French followers, among whom he includes Vacherot, Renan, Schérer, and Proudhon. The real danger, from an intellectual perspective, was not religious skepticism (what Roman theologians used to call 'indifférentisme'), or the rational critique of Christianity, but *philosophical* skepticism; hence Gratry's attacks against Vacherot and his incriminating association with authors like Ewerbeck, Feuerbach, and Stirner.

According to Lucien Sève, the controversy generated by Gratry and Vacherot – which ended when the former resigned on 29 June 1851 and the latter was forced to take an extended leave – was the reason of the banishment of Hegelianism from French universities that lasted until the years 1920-1930.[150] One relevant example of the practical consequences of this diatribe which further demonstrates the difficulty for Hegelianism to penetrate in French universities was Hyppolite Taine's abandoned attempt to write a dissertation on Hegel's *Logic* in 1851. Taine's decision to give up his project was influenced by the advice received from his friend Vacherot, who at that point had first-hand experience with the obstacles that a similar enterprise would have encountered.[151] With respect to Stirner's Catholic reception, on the other hand, Gratry's passing reference gains significance when one considers the wide readership of the French theologian and the diffusion that his reductive, negative comments on Stirner and other Young Hegelians, like those made by Bautain and Maret, could enjoy in those years. In fact, albeit forgotten today, Gratry was,

[149] Ibid, 438.
[150] Lucien Sève, *Penser avec Marx aujourd'hui*, Vol. 3. *La philosophie* (La Dispute Éditions, 2014), 499-501.
[151] D'Hondt, 'La Réception profane de Hegel en France', 59.

according to Cuchet, 'one of the most prominent figures of the Catholic intellectual world of the nineteenth century'[152] and one of the most widely read religious authors by French Catholics up until the First World War and beyond.[153]

Gratry returned to the attack of Hegelianism in a number of other works, for example in *De la Connaissance de Dieu* (1854, two volumes) and *Les Sophistes et la critiques* (1864), though Stirner is not mentioned here. In a review of the former book, however, historian Aurélien de Courson, while further elaborating on Gratry's criticism of German contemporary philosophy, reproduced parts of Taillandier's summaries of the positions of Stirner and the Young Hegelians and cited them as relevant examples of the corrupt philosophy that Gratry had addressed. In the same context, Courson extended his criticism to Romanticism, which he believed had instilled the taste for the horrific and the ugly in literature and the arts as well as the 'insolent display' of vice and crime, inspiring 'the destitute who now speak the same language of Wilhelm Marr and Stirner.'[154] The link with Romanticism was pushed even further by the journalist Pontmartin, who associated the Romantic movement with 'political revolution', by which he meant 'this revolutionary spirit which began in '89 and only stopped with the radical negations of a Max Stirner or a Proudhon.'[155]

Concerns about the advancement of pantheism continued to inform the apologetic activity of the clergy in subsequent public controversies involving other French intellectuals connected with positivism and influenced to varying degree by German philosophy. The years 1862-1863, for example, were marked by a series of political and religious conflicts which eventually reached a critical point in the summer of 1863, when Renan's *Vie de Jésus* was published and a ferocious campaign was launched against it.[156] Back in 1857, a coalition of Catholic protesters had already rallied against Renan when his name began circulating as a possible replacement as Chair of Hebrew, Chaldean, and Syriac Languages at the Collège de France. Preoccupied with the possible dangers of assigning the post to a man whose writings purportedly undermined religion, these Catholics demanded that the role go to a member of the clergy instead.

The candidacy of the positivist Émile Littré (1801-81) for the Académie française in 1863 generated polemics similar to those that engulfed Renan. In fact, his candidacy ended up being rejected due to the strong opposition of the Bishop of Orléans, Mgr Félix Dupanloup, himself a member of the Académie and one of the most renowned clerical writers of the time. Dupanloup denounced Littré's works as immoral and impious in a polemical brochure, entitled 'Avertissement à la jeunesse et aux pères de famille sur les attaques

[152] Cuchet, *Une Histoire*, 67.
[153] Ibid, 68. On Gratry's success, see also 87-105; Cuchet, *Penser le Christianisme*, Chapter Three; Claude Savart, *Les Catholiques en France au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1985), 715.
[154] Aurelien de Courson, 'De la connaissance de Dieu', part 1, *Gazette Nationale ou le Moniteur Universel*, 30 Dec. 1853, 1.443.
[155] *Études littéraires*, part three, in *L'Assemblée Nationale*, year 9, No. 74, 14 Mar. 1856, 3.
[156] See Robert Priest, *The Gospel according to Renan. Reading, writing and religion in nineteenth-century France* (Oxford University Press, 2015), Chapters Four and Five.

dirigées contre la religion par quelques écrivains de nos jours',[157] which would soon become a template in the philosophical, theological, and political debates of the time. Specifically, the pamphlet condemned the 'dangerous' books that promoted materialism and atheism and threatened the moral and political foundations of social order. In it, Stirner is mentioned in passing together with Bauer and Feuerbach, all cited as examples of ultra-Hegelians who have long surpassed the timid and outdated Strauss. A few years later, Dupanloup revisited the same themes in another study, *L'Athéisme et le péril social* (1866), where he made direct comparisons between Hegelianism and Positivism: 'Left Hegelianism, as it were, culminated, like our French positivists, in God-Humanity; there have also been Hegelians who even endorsed this incredible formula of atheism: "Each one is a God to oneself: Quisque sibi Deus."'[158] The reference is, of course, to Stirner.

In addition to generating public controversies such as the ones discussed above, or at any rate to being used strategically within them, the issue of pantheism, with all its corollaries, led many Christian apologists to publish books, articles, and institutional reports where they attempted to take stock of the concrete impact of German controversial doctrines in France in recent decades, particularly on the youth. In doing so, they often cited authors like Stirner and Feuerbach as the main culprits, widely overstating their true influence both in Germany and abroad, and largely inflating the numbers of their 'disciples'. Several authors denounced the role of French journals in the diffusion of German dangerous philosophical doctrines. Meignan, for example, who spoke of 'waging war against the atheists' and at the same time of a rather oxymoronic 'pacific intellectual crusade', argued that French writers had reproduced the doctrines of the various Feuerbach and Stirner with striking accuracy, frequency, and extensiveness in periodicals and daily newspapers,[159] from the *Revue germanique*, the *Presse*, and the *Siècle* to the *Revue des Deux Monde*s.

A brief unsigned article published on *Le Mémorial Bordelais* in 1850[160] highlights instead the connection between German religious criticism and the extremes of socialism, with a focus on their influence on French socialist periodicals. The author provides the example of the space and respect given to Hegelian thinkers in the *Liberté de penser* (1847-51) and the glowing articles devoted to Feuerbach in Georges Sand's *Révue Indépendante*. But the article also mentions Stirner, the author who has 'cold-bloodedly described the savage results of his doctrines and which will make the earth a theatre of horrible carnage and unprecedented excesses.'[161]

For A. D. Gentili, atheism in France had progressed immensely over the previous twenty years. This 'disease', he argues, had developed and propagated mostly within the confines of a certain semi-learned class 'which called itself lettered', but 'Woe betide to society if [it] were to infect the people! The least that

[157] In *Nouvelles oeuvres choisies de Mgr Dupanloup*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Plon, 1863), 23-180.
[158] *L'Athéisme et le péril social* (Paris: Charles Douniol, 1866 [third edition]), 108.
[159] 'D'un mouvement antireligieux en France', second part.
[160] 'Le socialisme allemand', 26 Apr. 1850, 1.
[161] Ibid.

could happen would be its fall into barbarism: it is therefore urgent to engage in a vigorous fight against atheism.'[162] Gentili spend a few words on Stirner too: a 'true, logical atheist', the German thinker sanctifies all of man's passions and divine instincts.[163] 'Who dares to repeat the violence and unprecedented blasphemy contained in the books of Bauer, Feuerbach, and Stirner and all those Left Hegelian lunatics who have made cynicism their religion and nothing their God?', wrote abbot and theologian Louis Baunard (1828-1919), thereby emphasizing the extreme nature of the doctrines promoted by German philosophers.[164] Yet France, Baunard points out (with reference to Dupanloup's 'Avertissement'), has little to envy of them.[165] Abbot Frédéric-Édouard Chassay (1816-80), professor at the Seminar of Bayeux, argued on the other hand that behind Feuerbach and Stirner one could see 'the monstrous armies of pantheism, of humanism, of egoism, the ferocious hordes hungry for pleasures.'[166]

More institutional investigations into the influence of Germany's philosophical and religious systems in France could also be found in this period. One example is the 1855 survey published by the Catholic liberal historian and right-wing politician Mgr Eugène Rendu (1824-1903),[167] whose assessments were clearly more informed and somewhat more insightful than those provided by most other Catholic commentators. The survey was based on studies commissioned by two ministers of French public education and aimed, among other things, to assess the impact of German doctrines on the moral development of the lower classes.[168] In the text, Rendu scolds Strauss – who he claims had once told him, in Weimar, that he had not written his *Leben Jesu* for the people or with the intention of attacking their belief – for failing to anticipate the effect that his work would have on the public. However, Rendu adds that some German personalities had finally begun to understand the potential dangers of spreading certain doctrines, that fear was becoming an

[162] *L'Athéisme réfuté par la science* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1869), preface, I.
[163] Ibid, 233.
[164] *Le Doute et ses victims dans le siècle présent* (Paris: Adrien Le Claire, 1866), 293-294.
[165] Ibid. As late as in 1884, Baunard's determination to fight atheism in all its forms and sing the victories of faith over it had by no means weakened, as is testified by his introduction to his *La Foi et ses victoires dans le siècle présent* (Paris: Poussielgue, 1884), where Stirner, with his 'raving imprecations', makes another brief appearance after Hegel and next to other notorious German atheists and critics of religion (Vol. 2, VIII).
[166] *Défense du Christianisme historique*, Vol. 3, second ed. (Paris: Poussielgue-Rusand, May 1851). Occasionally, Chassay cites a number of Taillandier's works. A critical account on the Young Hegelians by Chassay could already be found in his 'Le docteur Strauss et ses adversaires en Allemagne. Histoire critique du système mythique', in *Démonstrations évangéliques*, Tome XVIII, 553-931, Paris, 1849. Here, Chassay's reconstruction of the philosophical developments after Strauss in Germany essentially follows the same pattern used by Taillandier. In another work, entitled *Jésus vainquer de la mort. Histoire de la résurrection de Notre Seigneur* (Paris: Louis Vivès, 1854), Chassay referred to Luther, Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach, and Stirner as 'significant names which summarize the entire development of a theology which begins by negating the divine authority instituted by Jesus Christ and ends deteriorating into atheism' (324). For Stirner, see also Chassay's *Jésus, Sauveur du monde. Histoire de la passion de Notre Seigneur* (Paris: Louis Vivès, 1854), Vol. 2, 469.
[167] Rendu worked in the Ministry of Public Education during the Second Republic. He took part in the elaboration of the Falloux Law of 1850. The following year he was Inspector of Primary Education, then Head of Personnel for Primary Education in 1857, and finally General Inspector for Public Education in 1860.
[168] *De l'Éducation populaire dans l'Allemagne du Nord et des rapports avec les doctrine philosophiques et religieuses* (Paris: Hachette, 1855). The book was well received. See, for example, Maret's 1856 *Philosophie et religion* (457), and Alhonse Dantier 'La philosophie hégélienne et l'école populaire en Allemagne', *Revue contemporaine*, fifth year, tome XXVI, Paris, 1856, 682-717 (705 for Stirner).

inhibitor when reason was not always a light. Rendu gives the example Heinrich Heine's *mea culpa*,[169] where the German poet repudiated his earlier atheism.[170]

But Rendu's work includes relevant mentions of Stirner as well. For example, he refers to him in relation to the *Lichtfreunde* (Friends of the Light), an association of Protestant rationalist pastors founded by the clergymen Leberecht Uhlich (1799-1872). Specifically, Rendu criticizes the German pastor's heterodox Protestantism, which he thinks has culminated, with Uhlich's disciple and collaborator Heinrich Sachse (1785-1860), in atheism and other doctrines that are not so different from those promoted by Feuerbach and Stirner. After paraphrasing Feuerbach's rebuttal to Stirner and the latter's reply to the former,[171] Rendu hesitantly refers the reader to Feuerbach's 'hideous and pathetic' *Qu'est-ce que la Religion?*[172] and concludes that 'In metaphysics, the philosophy of the absolute has climaxed in Stirner's awkward theories.'[173] Yet contrary to most contemporary critics of the German philosophical trends of the time, Rendu maintains that it would be unfair to suggest that German Protestantism in its entirety revolves solely around Strauss, Feuerbach, or Stirner, for not everyone shares their 'senseless nihilism', nor did these philosophers give the impulse to the faculties of theology in Berlin, Halle, or Bonn.[174]

These are only some of the numerous examples that could be cited. Many other publications, especially by Catholic authors, made roughly the same points about German contemporary philosophy and the pantheist threat, dealing with Stirner in similar ways[175] (not to mention countless others which address various Young Hegelians but not Stirner specifically). Some authors, like Rendu, show a little more familiarity with the state of affairs of German contemporary thought than others. Some use more apocalyptic tones or provide more sensationalistic accounts. Some are more concerned with the disintegration of the institution

[169] In the *Gazette d'Asbourg*, Heine had written: 'I begin to feel that I am not precisely a biped God, as professor Hegel told me 25 years ago', in Alphonse Le Roy, 'La philosophie en 1854', *Revue trimestrielle*, Vol. 5, second year, Tome I (Brussels: Henry Samuel, 1855), 155-79.

[170] Rendu, *De l'Éducation populaire*, XII.

[171] Ibid, 173-4.

[172] Which of course is not a work by Feuerbach but a collection of some of his and other German authors' texts, edited by Ewerbeck, as seen in Chapter One.

[173] Rendu, *De l'Éducation* populaire, XII. Rendu points out that Taillandier, 'a distinguished writer, has shed a bright light on the sick theories which prevailed in the high spheres of lettered Germany before 1848' (X).

[174] Ibid, 175-6.

[175] For additional examples of texts by Catholic authors which address Stirner, see: Georges Darboy, 'Théorie et pratique de la nouvelle philosophie allemande', *Le Correspondant*, tome XXXIV, 161-83 (Paris: Charles Douniol, 1854), 174-6; F. Millet, *De la révolte contre l'autorité divine* (Paris: Jacques Lecoffre, 1856), 120-1; Louis-François Jéhan, *La Cité du mal ou les corrupteurs du siècle* (Paris: Ambroise Bray, 1859), 140-2; Jules de Mirville, *Des Esprits et de leurs manifestations diverses* (Paris: H. Vrayet de Surcy, 1863, six volumes), Vol. 2, 62, 78, and Vol. 4 (1864), 480; Amedée de Margerie, *Théodicée. Études sur Dieu* (Paris: Didier, 1865), Vol. 1, 23; Pierre Pradié, *La Liberté* (Paris: Jouby and Dentu, 1861), III, and *Le Monde nouveau ou le monde de Jésus-Christ* (Paris: Perisse brothers, Régis Ruffet, 1863), 53; François-Victor *Roger, Études sur le but de la vie* (Caen: Chénel, 1863), 390; Mme M. de Marcey (pseudonym of Louise de Guérines), *De la vie de famille et des moyens d'y revenir* (Lyon: Girand et Josserand, 1861), 20; Eugène Loudun, *Les Nouveaux Jacobins* (Paris: C. Dillet, 1869), 97, 105, 238; Nicolas Joseph Laforet, *Pourquoi l'on ne croit pas ou des principales causes de l'incrédulité en matière de religion* (Paris: Ch. Peeters, 1864), 134-5; Dr. Chauvet de Tours, in *Bulletin de la société médicale homœpathique de France*, tome IX (Paris, 1868), 120; Eusèbe Godfroy, *De l'Exégèse rationaliste*, in *Études de théologie, de philosophie et d'histoire*, Vol. 1 (Paris, 1857), 121; Ernest Guillemot, *Conscience et opinion* (Paris, 1866), 25; Eugène Poitou, *Les Philosophes français contemporains et leurs systems religieux* (Paris: Charpentier, 1864), 65-6; *Dictionnaire général des lettres, des beaux-arts et des sciences morales et politiques*, edited by Th. Bachelet in collaboration and co-direction with Ch. Dezobry (Paris, 1862), 87; Marie-Auguste-Alexis Pernet's *Démonstration catholique contre le positivisme, le matérialisme, et la libre pensée* (Paris: Bray and Retaux, 1881, Vol. 2, 220).

of family or with other specific issues connected with pantheism. But the general apologetic approach, methods, and tactics discussed throughout the chapter were virtually the same in all of their writings. Moreover, while the estimations on the exact impact of pantheism may differ slightly depending on the authors considered, the majority of Catholic thinkers came to the same conclusions: that the danger is real, that the Church must take action, and that Catholicism will eventually triumph as it has always done in the past.

A number of eminent French Protestant authors also addressed Stirner in relation to the theme of the alleged progress of pantheism and atheism. Generally, French (particularly Alsatians) and Swiss Protestant commentators were better informed about German thought than their Catholic counterparts, especially in the fields of philosophy and biblical exegesis. Many of those who commented on Stirner, however, held views on him and the Young Hegelians similar to those expressed by their Catholic counterparts and shared their same preoccupations with respect to incredulity and its consequences.[176] Alsatian theologian and professor Frédéric Auguste Lichtenberger (1832-99) represents perhaps one of the few partial exceptions to what has been said so far in terms of the uses and purposes of the reference to Stirner made by Christian apologists. In fact, in his *Études sur le principe du Protestantisme d'après la théologie allemande contemporaine* (1857), the author cites Stirner and Feuerbach in a rather different context than that in which other French authors commonly chose to address them (or Stirner at least), namely a discussion on internal issues within the domain of Protestant theology. Specifically, Lichtenberger refers to the two philosophers within the framework of his critique of German theologian Ferdinand Christian Baur (1792-1860), chief of the theological school of Tübingen.

While defending religious individualism as the final and complete expression of Protestantism, arguing that one's relationship with the Church should be defined by one's direct relationship with Christ rather than the other way round (as in the Catholics' case), Lichtenberger criticizes the subjectivist tendency within Protestant theology to only rely on the authority of moral conscience and to downplay the importance of significant aspects of the history of Christianity (and of Christ himself). Accordingly, Lichtenberger rejects Baur's argument that moral conscience, an authority allegedly superior to that of the Church and the Scriptures, suffices alone to prevent the excesses of religious subjectivism. Nor does it seem to him to represent the final link between objective Christianity and individual faith which will allow for a future reconcilement between Protestantism and the Roman Church, as Baur suggests. Lichtenberger disagrees

[176] One example is the theologian Christian Bartholmèss (1815-56). He addressed Stirner in his *Histoire critique des doctrines religieuses de la philosophie moderne* (Paris: Ch. Meyrueis, 1855, Vol. 2, 458-9), then again in his 'Mémoire sur les doctrines religieuses de Hegel', in Ch. Vergé (ed.), *Séances et travaux de l'Académie des sciences morales et politique. Compte rendu*, third trimester, third series, Tome XVII (XXXVII in the collection), Paris, 1856 (407-29), 411. Another example is Reverend Edmond de Pressensé (1824-91), one of the most important personalities of French Protestantism in the second half of the nineteenth century. In an article published in 1855, he made comments on Stirner and the Young Hegelians which are consistent with those of most Christian apologists of the time. See 'Philosophie religieuse. Un coup d'oeil sur l'incrédulité contemporaine', *Revue Chrétienne*, Year 2, No. 1, 15 Jan. 1855 (553-67), 562.

with Baur's view that subjectivism, once its absolute sovereignty is proclaimed, will relinquish part of its rights to objective authority. For him, the various Feuerbachs and Stirners are proof that without being grounded in some objective authority, moral conscience ends up recognizing no other God than itself.[177] While the nature of the discussion in which Lichtenberger referred to Stirner was somewhat different from those considered thus far, his opinion on the author of *Der Einzige* was not. Fundamentally, for Lichtenberger too, Stirner was a perfect example of the pernicious consequences of not recognizing any higher authority than one's own conscience and of elevating oneself to God.

At the end of this exploration of the Catholic and Protestant narratives surrounding the issue of incredulity, it is worth asking if and to what extent the concerns of Christian apologists were truly warranted. The replacement of God with humanity can certainly be found in a number of philosophical or social systems developed in various countries during the nineteenth century. According to Charlton, however, the most popular substitute deity of the century was not humanity but nature: 'in one guise or another many of these new creeds were variants of the age-old doctrine of pantheism – of the belief, essentially, that God is everything and everything is God. Several different tendencies in the century's thought led to pantheism.'[178] From the perspective of a Christian apologist, the concern with pantheism was therefore more than justified. The threat of atheism, on the other hand, was largely an invention. In spite of all the disquieting, sensationalistic accounts provided by many French contemporaries, incredulity or atheism properly so called was in no way predominant in France at the time.[179]

As Charlton has pointed out, 'Non-Christian, anti-Catholic though many nineteenth-century secular thinkers might be, and often enthusiastic about the conquests of science, they were usually far from irreligious in their general attitude. It would be quite false to imagine that they were content with unbelief or unconcerned with the intellectual and emotional vacuum left by their rejection of the Christian faith. Isolated thinkers did not even concede that they had in fact rejected it',[180] and by and large, 'Very few were merely hard-headed, scientifically minded and unemotional materialists.'[181] What is more, the decline of faith in Christianity was widely counterbalanced by the spread of alternative creeds driven primarily by concerns about social utility or genuine spiritual yearning. These substitutes of Christianity came in several different forms: from the 'social religions' of Saint-Simon or Comte and the cults of science and progress to the metaphysical constructions of Spinoza, Hegel, or other German philosophers; from the 'natural religion' of Cousin and his eclectic followers to the doctrines of Renan and Vacherot; from the various pantheistic

[177] *Études sur le principe du Protestantisme d'après la théologie allemande contemporaine* (Strasbourg: Treuttel et Würtz, 1857), esp. 101-6.
[178] D. G. Charlton, 'French Thought in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries', in G. D. Charlton (ed.), *France. A companion to French Studies* (New York: Methuen, 1979 [1972]), 287.
[179] D. G. Charlton, *Secular Religions in France. 1815-1870* (Oxford University Press, 1963).
[180] Ibid, 24.
[181] Ibid, 28.

systems to occultist currents, neo-pagan beliefs and minor religious sects; from freemasonry to non-Christian religions. Almost all of them claimed the term 'religion' for their own system, and 'perhaps no other century has so enthusiastically misappropriated and redefined the concepts of the Christian creeds or invented so many synonyms for "God" – *l'Idéal*, *le Grand Tout*, *le Grand Être*, even, it sometimes seems, *l'Inconnaissable*.'[182]

The alarming estimates provided by French contemporary commentators on the state of religion in the country around the mid-nineteenth century clearly call for a great deal of contextualization, especially in relation to the much-discussed influence of German philosophy in France. While some of the Young Hegelians and scientific materialists had found occasional admirers and imitators beyond the Rhine (something that does not seem to be true for Stirner in any case), their overall reception was mostly negative. The frequent claims to the contrary made especially by Catholic authors must be understood primarily as part of their apologetic enterprise, as attempts to synthesize and deal with the problems brought by modernity whose detrimental effects they detected everywhere, from public education and morality to philosophical, political, and cultural debates.

[182] Ibid, 35-6.

The Franco-Prussian War and the early Third Republic

I. Introduction

Following France's catastrophic defeat in the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71), Germany underwent a rapid and dramatic transformation within French collective imagination. With few exceptions, French contemporaries were utterly shocked by what they perceived as an abrupt, drastic metamorphosis of Germany under the influence of Prussia from a military, political, and cultural perspective. As Digeon put it, in the wake of the war 'another France interrogates another Germany.'[1] A sense of disenchantment from the idyllic Staëlian image of Germany permeated the analyses of numerous writers of the time. This image, as shall be seen, increasingly gave way to that of a fanatical, savage, barbaric, militarized, belligerent nation, with major repercussions on the reception of German philosophy and literature. French reactions to, and explanations for, the defeat varied greatly, of course, like Frenchmen's attitudes towards Germany in the years following the conflict.[2] What is of interest here, however, are primarily those changes in French intellectuals' approaches to Germany which had the greatest impact, whether direct or indirect, on Stirner's reception.

The shift in French perceptions and depictions of Germany not only reinforced the critical interpretations of Stirner's thought established in previous decades but it also resulted in the emergence of new negative trends in the philosopher's reception which would endure for several decades. The most significant novelty in French responses to Stirner during the 1870s is without doubt the tendency, common among intellectuals from the most diverse fields, to depict him as the quintessence of Prussia's 'new national philosophy', as a more or less direct source of inspiration of Bismarck's aggressive foreign policies. More specifically, he came to be described as a theorist of Germany's 'cult of force' and an advocate of the principle according to which, in international relations, 'might is right'.

In this, however, he was not alone. Hegel, far more prominent a philosopher than Stirner, received similar accusations in light of his alleged legitimization of the Prussian State, his apparent rationalization of

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[1] Claude Digeon, *La Crise allemande de la pensée française, 1870-1914* (Paris: PUF, 1959), 139.

[2] Jean-Marie Carré's *Les Écrivains français et le mirage allemand* (1947) and Digeon's *La Crise allemande* continue to be useful sources for French reactions to the war and the subsequent role of Germany in French intellectual life. On the post-1871 reception of German philosophy specifically, see also Bootle, 'The Reception of German Philosophy in Nineteenth-Century France', esp. 36-42. On the image and role of Germany in French literature, see Bauer Roger, *L'Image de l'Allemand dans la littérature française – l'image du Français dans la littérature allemande* (Bonn: Inter Nationes, 1977); Wolfgang Leiner, *Das Deutschlandbild in der französischen Literatur* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1991). On French contemporary historians' attitudes towards Germany, see Gérard Schneilin, 'Les historiens français et l'Allemagne au XIXe siècle', in Gilbert Krebs and Gérard Schneilin (eds.), *La Naissance du Reich* (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1995), 28-39; Christian Simon, *Staat und Geschichtswissenschaft in Deutschland und Frankreich 1871—1914: Situation und Werk von Geschichtsprofessoren an den Universitäten Berlin, München, Paris* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1998, 2 Vols.). On the role of Germany in various areas of French life during the Third Republic, and on Franco-German relations more generally, see also Allan Mitchell's series of works on the subject; the numerous relevant contributions by Werner and Espagne cited throughout this dissertation; Raymond Poidevin's and Jacques Bariéty's *Les Relations franco-allemandes, 1815-1917* (Armand Colin, 1977); and Mareike König's and Élise Julien's *Rivalités et interdépendances, 1870-1918* (Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2018).

the status quo ('what is real is rational, and what is rational is real'), and his conception of right.[3] Consequently, a veil of silence fell on the philosopher within the French University which would not be lifted for roughly two decades. Hegel's centenary in 1870 was not celebrated in France but merely reported. The appeal by Renan, Taine, and Janet for subscriptions towards a commemorative statue of Hegel in Berlin aroused little enthusiasm. According to Kelly, the prolonged silence surrounding Hegel's work in France during this period was mainly a result of the national humiliation stemming from the war defeat, though he also mentions additional causes such as the suppression of the French socialist movement that occurred after the Commune massacre in 1871, Hegel's association with revolution, and the revival of Catholic *intégrisme*.[4] To be sure, Hegel, like a number of Young Hegelians, was addressed in several publications, but in many of these he was quickly dismissed as a sophist or linked with Prussia's militaristic philosophy.[5] From all these points of view, Stirner's reception was very similar to Hegel's. The main difference of course was that despite the widespread hostility towards him, Hegel still had at least some admirers in France – something that cannot be said about Stirner, certainly not before the early 1890s.

The tendency, predominant until then, to address and interpret Stirner in connection with other prominent Young Hegelians was still fairly common in this period. The links between Stirner and the German scientific materialists became ever more recurrent, especially in the context of analyses of the influence of German atheist materialism on Russian nihilists. In addition to these thinkers though, Stirner also began to be regularly associated with Schopenhauer in the context of critiques of Germany's cult of force and the 'might is right' principle. The connection between the two philosophers was based primarily on their common emphasis on will as the main drive of human nature. The link can be found in all sorts of publications, from books and articles – many of which written by lawyers, some by spiritualist philosophers – to novels and studies on Oriental theogonies and myths.

The second most important trend in Stirner's reception during the early Third Republic, and particularly during the 1880s, was his association with Russian nihilism.[6] After the assassination of Emperor Alexander II on 13 March 1881 in a bomb attack, perpetrated by the revolutionary political organization Narodnaya Volya, nihilism became, as Ana Siljak has put it, a 'journalistic obsession.'[7] The attempts on the Tsar's life actually date back to 1866,[8] but in France and Europe more broadly the terrorism born out of the Russian nihilist movement only became a prominent subject of debate during the 1880s due to the rise in

[3] The reactionary interpretation of Hegel has largely been discredited over the course of the twentieth century. See Beiser, 'Hegel and Hegelianism', 117-8.
[4] Kelly, *Hegel in France*, 25.
[5] On Hegel's post-1870 French reception, see the relevant sources mentioned in Chapter One.
[6] For a recent study on Stirner in relation to political nihilism in general and Russian nihilism in particular, see Dowdall, *Max Stirner and Nihilism*, Chapter Five.
[7] Ana Siljak, '"The Beauteous Terrorist." Russian Women and Terrorism in Literature at the Turn of the Century', in Carola Dietze and Claudia Verhoeven (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Terrorism* (Oxford University Press, 2022), Chapter 13.
[8] See Claudia Verhoeven, *The Odd Man Karazov* (Cornell University Press, 2009).

those years of propaganda by the deed and anarchism, which caused a similar kind of political and social chaos across the globe.

Images of Russia (but also of Germany) in France in this period were crafted for internal use, reflecting widespread concerns regarding the loss of Christian values, the country's secularization, cosmopolitism, the rise of social movements and revolutionary theories. Novels too, including those with Russian and German protagonists, were often informed by memories of the Commune, debates on the justification for colonial expansion, and the tendency to amalgamate revolutionaries, Jews, and freemasons in large conspiracy theories.[9] Imbued with ideological bias, these images reveal more about the traits typical of the French society of the late nineteenth century – from racism to xenophobia (especially Germanophobia) and chauvinism – than they do about Russians and Germans. 'L'âme slave', reduced to a cliché, was elevated to the status of a myth, often to the detriment of the German type.[10]

In this context, Stirner was often described as one of the main German sources of inspiration for Russian nihilists and as a nihilist himself,[11] thanks to interpretations of *Der Einzige* which strategically stressed its alleged nature as a political manifesto ready to use for militant revolutionary activists and the role of 'negation' in Stirner's thought. From this perspective, one of the most vigorous and emblematic critics of Stirner during the 1880s was the philosopher, sociologist, and jurist Théophile Funck-Brentano (1830-1906). His accounts on Stirner's thought are some of the most extensive and in-depth to have been produced in France in the whole period examined in this dissertation, except for those produced by Taillandier. For this reason, and because of Funck-Brentano's relatively wide readership at the time, special attention will be devoted to his various commentaries in this chapter.

But the association of Stirner and German philosophy more broadly with nihilism cannot be understood without reference to Franco-Russian political and cultural relations during the early Third Republic in general and to the anti-German component that informed them in particular.[12] The Franco-Prussian War significantly altered the distribution of forces in Europe. The newly unified Germany, having expressed its aspirations to dominate the world stage, remained a potential enemy in the eyes of France and

[9] Janine Neboit-Mombet, *L'Image de la Russie dans le roman français (1859-1900)* (Clarmont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2005).
[10] Ibid.
[11] It is worth pointing out from now that Stirner never used the term 'nihilism' or any of its derivatives.
[12] See Charles Corbet, *L'Opinion française face à l'inconnu russe (1799-1894)* (Paris: Didier, 1967); Marianna Butenschön, *Zarenhymne und Marseillaise. Zur Geschichte der Rußland-Ideologie in Frankreich (1870/71–1893/94)* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1978); Valerii Ivanovich Bovykin, 'The Franco-Russian Alliance', *History*, 64 (1979), 20-35; George F. Kenna, *The fateful alliance: France, Russia, and the coming of the First World War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984); Michel Espagne, 'Le Train de Saint-Pétesbourg. Les Relations Culturelles Franco-Germano-Russes après 1870', in Katia Dmitrieva and Michel Espagne (eds.) *Philologiques IV. Transferts culturels triangulaires France-Allemagne-Russie* (Paris: Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1996), 311-35; Anne Hogenhuis-Seliverstoff, *Une alliance franco-russe. La France, la Russie et l'Europe au tournant du dernier siècle* (Brussels / Paris: Bruylant / L.G.D.J., 1997); Anne Hogenhuis-Seliverstoff, 'Russophilie et germanophobie en France et en Russie entre 1878 et 1918', in Ilja Mieck and Pierre Guillen (eds.), *Deutschland – Frankreich – Rußland: Begegnungen und Konfrontationen – La France et l'Allemagne en face de la Russie* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2000), 71-86; Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, *La Russie et la France. De Pierre le Grand à Lénine* (Arthème Fayard, 2021), Chapter XI.

Russia, whose geopolitical interests coincided more often than they diverged. The gradual rapprochement of France and Russia eventually resulted, through a long and not always smooth-running process, in the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1891-94, also known as Dual Entente.

Reactions in French public opinion to the idea of a rapprochement with Russia were, for the most part, favourable across the political spectrum.[13] The Russophilia of the early Third Republic is perhaps most noticeable in the field of literature, where it often displayed, as in several other fields, strong anti-German elements.[14] Hogenhuis-Seliverstoff went so far as to say that in France 'Russia is only loved to the extent that Germany is detested.'[15] But the idea of a Franco-Russian alliance also had a number of authoritative critics. Among them were some of Stirner's most notable commentators, including the publicist, historian, and expert on Russian history Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu (1842-1912),[16] briefly discussed later in the chapter.

But whether they were for or against or even simply skeptical of the idea of a rapprochement between France and Russia, whether they were critics of the Russian Empire or admirers of all things Russian, most French commentators stressed that the origins of nihilism were to a large extent or entirely German. Those in France and Russia who were in favour of an alliance often emphasized the German roots of nihilism in order to absolve their own countries and dissociate themselves from the phenomenon. Some also tended to minimize or trivialize the nihilist and anarchist threats for the benefit of the nascent alliance. But in most cases, the end result for Stirner was fundamentally the same: he was consistently presented as one of the main inspirers of Russian nihilism, especially in relation to its terroristic manifestations.

Based on all the premises outlined above, the first section will begin with a brief review of Germany's transformation in French collective imagination after the Franco-Prussian War. This will help explain the emergence of the association of Stirner with Germany's militaristic philosophy, its cult of force, and the 'might is right' principle. The second section will first provide a general summary of the state of the debates on Russian nihilism in France before and after the Tsar's assassination in 1881. These debates, as shall be seen, were largely shaped by the prospect of a Franco-Russian rapprochement and by anti-Germanism. The

[13] See the sources mentioned above.

[14] On the French reception of Russian literature, and on the image of Russia in France, see: Jean Bonamour, 'La littérature russe en France à la fin du XIXe siècle: la critique française devant «l'âme slave»', *Revue Russe*, No. 6, 1994, *La Russie et la France: Trois siècles de relations* (Actes du colloque organisé à Saint-Lô et à l'abbaye d'Hambye par le Conseil général de la Manche, Sept. 17-18, 1993), 71-9; Robel Léon, *Histoire de la neige: la Russie dans la littérature française* (Paris: Hatier, 1994); Hogenhuis-Seliverstoff, 'Russophilie et germanophobie'; Christophe Charle, 'Champ littéraire français et importations étrangères. De la vogue du roman russe à l'émergence d'un nationalisme littéraire (1886-1902)', in Espagne and Werner (eds.), *Philologiques, III*, 249-263; Steven G. Marks, *How Russia Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton University Press, 2003); Neboit-Mombet, *L'Image de la Russie*; Ezequiel Adamovsky, *Euro-Orientalism. Liberal Ideology and the Image of Russia in France (ca. 1740-1880)* (Peter Lang, 2006), Chapter Six; Charlotte Krauss, *La Russie et les Russes dans la fiction française du XIXe Siècle (1812-1917)* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2007); Alexandre Stroev (ed.), *Les Intellectuels Russes à la Conquête de l'Opinion Publique Française* (Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2019), 231-62, 271-82, 305-16. See also the sources mentioned in previous footnotes.

[15] Hogenhuis-Seliverstoff, 'Russophilie et germanophobie', 82.

[16] On Leroy-Beaulieu's works and views on Russia, see Adamovsky, *Euro-Orientalism*, 195-207. Critical or skeptical positions regarding Russia and the idea of a rapprochement are addressed in many of the works mentioned above.

remaining part of the second section will be devoted to an analysis of the various publications where Stirner was addressed in relation to theme of nihilism, with a special focus on Funck-Brentano.

II. The cult of force and the 'might is right' principle

In order to be able to contextualize properly the unfavourable reactions to Stirner's thought in the years following the Franco-Prussian War, and to fully understand the polemical purposes for which it was generally used, it is crucial to provide a brief overview of some of the key aspects of Germany's transformation in French perceptions. After the war, the mutual, widespread hatred between Germany and France, albeit not shared by everyone or certainly not to same extent, became a prominent part of everyday life in both countries.[17] Memories of the war continued to inform the publications of French intellectuals in all fields and to shape French social attitudes.[18] Among the most noticeable expressions of war memories were the concept of *revanche* and the desire to reclaim the lost territories of Alsace-Lorraine, though scholars have shown that while the idea of revenge may have been a popular fantasy, it was never a realistic foreign policy goal, and in any event domestic political concerns often took precedence over thoughts of revenge. In fact, by the late 1880s, *revanche* seemed to have been forgotten even among nationalists, and it was rarely mentioned in the press.[19]

The events of l'*année terrible* revived old antagonisms between the clergy and republicans, with important consequences for French debates on Germany.[20] While Catholics, traditionalist philosophers, and men of letters lamented that Protestantism, German philosophy, and Romanticism had weakened the French Latin mind, their modernist counterparts attributed France's intellectual decline and military defeat to its failure to keep pace with German advancements in education, religion, and science.[21] Authors like Quinet,

[17] See Michael Jeismann, *La Patrie de l'ennemi. La notion d'ennemi national et la représentation de la nation en Allemagne et en France de 1792 à 1918* (CNRS, 1997); Simon, *Staat und Geschichtswissenschaft*; Christian Geulen (ed.), *Vom Sinn der Feindschaft* (Berlin: Akademie, 2002); Michael E. Nolan, *The Inverted Mirror. Mythologizing the Enemy in France and Germany, 1898–1914* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2005).

[18] See the sources provided in the second footnote of the introduction to this chapter. On the memories of 1870-71 in France, see more specifically Karine Varley, *Under the Shadow of Defeat. The War of 1870-71 in French Memory* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); Mathilde Benoistel, Sylvie Le Ray-Burimi, and Christophe Pommier (eds.), *France-Allemagne(s) 1870-1871: La Guerre, la Commune, les Mémoires* (Paris: Gallimard, 2017); Pierre Allorant, Walter Badier, and Jean Garrigues (eds.), *1870, entre mémoires régionales et oublie national* (Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2019). See also Mareike König and Odile Roynette-Gland (eds.), *Relire les expériences de guerre franco-allemandes (1870-1871)*, *Revue d'histoire du XIX^e siècle*, 2020/1, No. 60, Dossier: 75-190.

[19] See B. Joly, 'La France et la revanche (1871–1914)', *Revue d'histoire mondiale et contemporaine*, 46 (1999), 325-48; B. Joly, *Déroulède: L'inventeur du nationalisme* (Paris: Perrin, 1998); P. M. Rutkoff, *Revanche and Revision: The Ligue des Patriotes and the Origins of the Radical Right in France, 1882–1900* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981).

[20] See Varley, *Under the Shadow of Defeat*, 41-4.

[21] Despite the general politicization of religious matters in this time, more objective studies in France on religion in Germany did exist. For example, Alsatian Protestant pastor and theologian Frédéric Auguste Lichtenberger, encountered in Chapter Four, published a very well-informed, fairly impartial work entitled *Histoire des Idées Religieuses en Allemagne* in three volumes, where Stirner is also briefly discussed along with the Young Hegelian school (Paris: Sandoz et Fischbacher, 1873, 77-8). The quotes from Stirner provided by Lichtenberger were later used for polemical purposes by priest F. Vigouroux in the chapter on 'Les excès de l'extrême gauche Hégélienne' of his 1877 book *La Bible et les découvertes modernes en Égypte et en Assyrie* (Paris: Berche et Tralin, Vol. 1, 74-5) and

Michelet, Hugo, Renouvier, Taine, Renan, Leconte de Lisle, Challemel-Lacour and numerous republican politicians pointed to Catholicism as one of the causes of the disaster. Digeon goes so far as to say that the 'general impression – and especially that of anti-clericalists – is that France has been defeated *because* it was Catholic.'[22] For Hansen, the literati, and especially the decadents, denounced Catholicism as 'a vile, hypocritical, and anti-intellectual system, which rewarded weakness and misery', and rejected the Church's insistence on the equality and brotherhood of man as foolish, unfair, and illusory.[23]

Catholics by contrast interpreted the cataclysm as a punishment for French shortcomings, as a necessary form of atonement of the country's sins. Calling for a return to faith and patriotism, they lashed out at the immorality, lust, spiritual corruption, moral sensualism, materialism, atheism, individualism, and military vanity of the French.[24] Some of these social evils, they argued, were a consequence of the diffusion of German doctrines through the mediation of Cousin, Vacherot, Quinet, Renan, Taine, and Havet, among others, all guilty of having 'Prussianized' France intellectually long before Bismarck thought of dominating it militarily. This is, for example, what deputy Charles Calemard de la Fayette, abbot Payrard, Adrien Lascombe, and Charles Rocher wrote in a joint address to their compatriots in the French area of Velay:

> Before attacking us with weapons, Prussia demoralized us through its writings. We did not know what the initial word of the formidable realities which were being plotted in Berlin's barracks had been, but we madly aspired to the philosophical and religious incredulity of German universities. Renan is not but a plagiarist of Strauss. The patriarchs of idealist atheism, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and the coryphaei of materialist atheism, Bauer, Stirner, Feuerbach, have been Bismarck's scouts before the Uhlans. The Krupp cannons have entered through the breach that had been dug by Germanic pantheism.[25]

Édouard Patry, fellow at Nancy university and academy inspector at Auch, went so far as to say that 'in almost all of our writers one may recognize Dr. Strauss, Ewerbeck, Max Stirner and, finally, the Hegelian Left, Feuerbach and Ruge […].'[26] For Patry, however, who tended to see 'negation' everywhere, the attacks on God had come from other sides too, for example from Comte and all those who worship humanity, or Proudhon, or Hegel's French interpreters such as Taine, Renan, and Vacherot, among others.

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by abbot Marie Auguste Alexis Pernet in his *Démonstration Catholique contre le positivisme, le matérialisme et la libre pensée* (Paris: Bray et Retaux, 1881, Vol. 2).

[22] Digeon, *La Crise allemande*, 80. The italics are mine.

[23] Eric C. Hansen, *Disaffection and Decadence: A Crisis in French Intellectual Thought, 1848-1898* (Washington: University Press of America, 1982), 119.

[24] See, for example, Jean-Baptiste Caussette, *Dieu et les malheurs de la France* (Toulouse: Édouard Privat, 1871); Jean-Joseph Gaume, *Où en sommes-nous? Étude sur les événements actuels: 1870 et 1871* (Paris: Gaume, 1871); Louis Veuillot, *Paris pendant les deux sièges* (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1871).

[25] *Tablettes historiques du Velay*, second year (1871-1872) 1-4 (Le Puy: Desbenoit, 1872), 3.

[26] *L'Anti-Lucrèce du Cardinal de Polignac* (Auch: F.-A. Cocharaux, 1872), 202. This work is a doctoral thesis presented at the faculty of letters of Nancy.

General Vicar Jean-Baptiste Causette made similar points, but explained that while he had not forgotten the role played in the history of 'contemporary negation' by the German patriarchs of idealist atheism (Kant, Fichte, and Hegel) and of materialist atheism (Schopenhauer, Feuerbach, Bauer, Stirner, Ruge, and Moleschott), Germany still seemed to him to also be the country of audacious minds and good souls.[27] This, for Causette, is proven by the fact that the 'coryphaei' that constitute the former group have been described by German people as the 'charlatans of ideology', and that the latter group only exerted limited influence in certain universities. On the other hand, Causette agrees that France is very much to blame for its own condition too. French philosophy seems to him to have broken with the spiritualist tradition of Cousin and Royer-Collard, to reconnect itself with Condillac, Broussais, and Cabanis. The direction of the 'negative movement' in France, Causette further writes, has changed from the École normale to the School of Medicine; moral ideas have given way to anatomical dissection and animal physiology; the people, fed on atheism, have begun to 'play with eternal justice on the brink of their grave', producing a daunting overflow of incredulity.[28] Thanks to the French double apostolate of science for salons and revolutionary materialism, the clergyman maintains, the 'cult of nothing' spread across the country.

Other authors stressed the role of 'negation' in the context of the Paris Commune, pointing specifically to the influence in France of Proudhon's doctrines, which were in turn inspired by a number of German thinkers, among whom a few French critics included Stirner. In his *1871. Le vrai coupable*, abbot Odon Dignat argued that Proudhon pushed negation to its extreme limit without fear, and arrived, through atheism and the dogma of absolute liberty, to the formula proposed by Stirner and other atheists from Germany which claims that 'Man is King, Pope, and God to himself.'[29] The link between German philosophy and 'negation', as the second section of the chapter will show, became especially common in France from the 1880s in relation to the reception of Russian nihilism.

After 1871, the idea of a 'hereditary enmity' between Germany and France, albeit not new,[30] increasingly gained currency in France. As Jörg Ulbert has pointed out, Austria had traditionally been France's actual 'hereditary enemy', but it was eventually replaced by Prussia when this began to threaten French interests in Europe.[31] More in general, Prussia's political standing, its military might, and its evolving

[27] *Dieu et les malheurs de la France* (Toulouse: Édouard Privat, 1871), 158-9.
[28] Ibid, 158-60.
[29] Odon Dignat, *1871. Le vrai coupable* (Paris: Ch. Douniol, 1871), 6-7. An essentially identical observation was made by Pierre Pradié in his *Notes à mes collègues sur les propositions soumis à l'Assemblée et relatives à la religion* (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1871), 11-12.
[30] Reiner Marcowitz, 'Attraction and Repulsion: Franco-German Relations in the "Long Nineteenth Century"', in Carine Germond and Henning Türk (eds.), *A History of Franco-German Relations in Europe from "Hereditary Enemies" to Partners* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 13-26; Bernhard Struck, 'War, Occupation, and Entanglements: German Perspectives on the Napoleonic Era', in Germond and Türk (eds.), *A History of Franco-German Relations*, 27-38. On the evolution of this idea on France's side, see also Laurent Dornel, 'La fabrication de l'ennemi "héréditaire" allemand (1815-1914)', in Jean-Claude Caron, Laurent Lamoine, and Natividad Planas (eds.), *Entre traces mémorielles et marques corporelles. Regards sur l'ennemi de l'antiquité à nos jours* (Presses universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2014), 107-21.
[31] Jörg Ulbert, 'France and German Dualism, 1756–1871', in Germond and Türk (eds.), *A History of Franco-German Relations*, 39-48.

relationship with Germany were key elements in the shift in French depictions of Germany after the war. In the early stages of the conflict, there was still a widespread tendency in France to distinguish Prussia from Germany.[32] Elme Caro, one of the most vigorous proponents of the notion of the 'deux Allemagnes',[33] hoped to rescue the good Germany of Kant from the Prussia of Hegel, Bismarck, and Moltke by attributing all the negative features of modern Germany – from science to the military genius, from Hegelianism to Machiavellism – to Prussia, excluding other German States (like Hanover, Saxony, Bavaria, etc.) in light of their refractory position in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. Subjugated by Prussia's force, these States allegedly possessed the qualities of 'the good Germany'. This Germany fundamentally corresponds to the idyllic land described by Mme de Staël in *De l'Allemagne*. As has been seen in previous chapters, her influential accounts had already been partially challenged by Quinet in the 1830s and by Taillandier in the 1840s, among others. Yet it was only after the shock of 1870 that the Staëlian tradition began to be seriously reconsidered and disputed in France. As Jennings has explained, 'the romanticized picture provided by Madame de Staël of Germany as a temple of philosophy and literature was eclipsed by that of a barbarian nation, its people subject to an impersonal and hierarchical discipline, its values those of materialism, organization, and economic might. At best, there appeared to be two Germanys, one civilized, the other cruel and immoral, with an unbridgeable abyss separating the two.'[34]

While the notion of the two Germanys continued to be used for a variety of political purposes after 1871, many French intellectuals found it increasingly difficult, if not counter-productive or simply inexact, to make distinctions between Prussia and Germany such as those mentioned above. More and more commentators began to argue that, under the influence of Prussia, Germany had come to embrace the maxim 'might is right' as a guiding principle in foreign policy, that its vision of the world and of the political relations between states was informed by an appalling cult of force, and that Germany as a whole was to be held accountable. Indeed, after 1871 the Prussianization of Germany was one of the most common themes among French observers, together with the historical illegitimacy of a self-proclaimed Reich and the dangers that this represented for Europe's balance and peace.[35] Numerous French intellectuals, including moderates,

[32] See Michael Werner, 'La nation revisitée en 1870-1871. Visions et redéfinitions de la nation en France pendant le conflit franco-allemand', *Revue germanique internationale*, 4, 1995, 181-200.

[33] See 'La morale de la guerre. Kant et M. de Bismarck', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 Dec. 1870, 577-94; 'L'dée de la patrie. Ses défaillances et son réveil', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 Jan. 1871, 243-66; 'Les deux Allemagnes. — Madame de Staël et Henri Heine', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1 Nov. 1871, 5-20. These and other articles were subsequently included in a volume called *Les Jours d'épreuve* (Paris: Hachette, 1872). For an analysis of Caro's interpretation of the 'deux Allemagnes' and the echoes and significance of this notion, see Digeon, *La Crise allemande*, 157-64; Leiner, *Das Deutschlandbild in der französischen Literatur*, Chapter VIII (see also Chapter X for 'The end of German idyll' in France); Werner, 'La nation revisitée'.

[34] Jeremy Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic. A History of Political Thought in France since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 440.

[35] Bariéty, 'La France et l'Allemagne.'

began to speak of an 'invasion of barbarians'.[36] The accusation of savagery and the broader tendency to deny all 'moral' qualities to the enemy could also be found in Germany, of course.[37]

In the eyes of many French intellectuals, Germany's cult of force, its savage militarism, and the alleged elevation of the 'might is right' motto to the status of national philosophy seemed to be reflected in a famous speech delivered by Otto von Bismarck on 30 September 1862, during his tenure as Minister President of Prussia. The speech, which came to be known as *Blood and Iron* (*Blut und Eisen*), focused on the consolidation of German territories. Bismarck declared that 'Germany did not look to Prussia's Liberalism but rather to her power' and ultimately only 'iron and blood' would solve the political problems. The expression 'blood and iron' gained huge popularity worldwide and became for many a symbol of Bismarckian *Machtpolitik* (power politics). Already after Prussia's defeat of Denmark in 1864 and of Austria in 1866, Bismarck's speech was increasingly interpreted, both in Germany and abroad, as advocating the principle that 'might is right' and promoting the use of force;[38] following the debacle of 1870-71, for many French intellectuals there seemed to be no doubt that Prussia and indeed Germany as a whole embraced Bismarck's vision.

Numerous French commentators suggested that Bismarck's foreign policies were perfectly consistent with, or had even been directly informed by, the philosophies of Hegel, the Young Hegelians, and other controversial German thinkers. From this perspective, Taillandier is a case in point. Looking back at his earlier publications in 1875, he wrote: 'I attacked the doctrines of atheism, *humanism*, *egoism* as if I had divined that the revolutionary theories, if employed one day by unscrupulous politics, could be used to separate us for centuries.'[39] Taillandier's decades-long fixation with Stirner in particular is worth noting: 'I could not imagine at the time that such a doctrine would have disciples outside of the schools where Hegelian sophistry was extolled. After 1870, events have proven that Max Stirner had laid out in advance the philosophy of war and politics as the founders of the new German empire understand it.'[40] In the same spirit, and to further support his claim, Taillandier praised an article written by the spiritualist philosopher and social theorist Alfred Fouillée (1838-1912) a year before and published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*[41] where

[36] On the use and significance of this and similar images, see Digeon, *La Crise allemande*, 149; Werner, 'La nation revisitée'; Jeismann, *La Patrie de l'ennemi*, 187ff. According to abbot Émile Castan (1824-1888), who mentions Strauss, Bauer, Feuerbach, and Stirner as relevant examples, it is when Protestant Germany endeavoured to replace God with humanity that it has resurrected the latter with the most hideous features of barbarism: from the complete absence of ideals and generosity to pillage, callousness, carnage. See *De l'Union de la religion et de la morale* (Paris: Victor Palmé, 1871), Introduction, XXXV-XXXVI.

[37] See, for example, historian Heinrich von Treitschke's *Was fordern wir von Frankreich?* (Berlin, 1870).

[38] One example in Germany is the Catholic-conservative newspaper *Der Volksbote für den Bürger und Landmann* (published in Munich from 1848 to 1872). See No. 124, 25 Nov. 1866, 1, and No. 67, 23 Mar. 1866, 1. See also: *Münchener Bote für Stadt und Land*, No. 286, 2 Dec. 1864, 1; *Bayerisches Volksblatt*, No. 33, 3 Feb. 1869, 1.

[39] Taillandier, *Dix Ans de l'histoire d'Allemagne* (Paris: Didier, 1875), Preface, VIII.

[40] Ibid, 382.

[41] Alfred Fouillée, 'L'Idée moderne du droit: le droit, la force et la génie d'après les écoles allemandes contemporaines', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1 June 1874, third period, Vol. 3, No. 3, 517-49. The article inspired a broader study, published four years later under the title *L'Idée moderne du droit en Allemagne, en Angleterre et en France* (Paris: Hachette, 1878), where Stirner is mentioned at

Fouillée attempted to show how the political theorists of Prussia essentially confirmed the systems of Feuerbach, Arnold Ruge, and Max Stirner: 'Fouillée only had to compare today's doctrines with those that caused the indignation of public taste thirty years ago; they are their outcome and coronation. What a misfortune for Max Stirner to have to leave this world without witnessing the triumph of his ideas!'[42]

One specific passage from *Der Einzige* began to be quoted *ad nauseam* by a multitude of French commentators, who in most or virtually all cases had not read the book themselves. The quote evidently seemed to many French critics not only to encapsulate the entirety of Stirner's own thought, but also to reflect the essence of Bismarck's speech and Germany's political philosophy. For its importance, and for future reference, the quote is worth reporting here: 'I demand no right, so I also don't need to recognize any. What I am able to get by force I get by force, and I have no right to what I don't get by force, and I don't boast of or console myself with my inalienable rights.'[43] French commentators often paraphrased the quote, but aside from minor variations, the emphasis was always clearly placed on the idea that force is what gives a nation right, even though Stirner's talk of the use of physical force in *Der Einzige* was limited to the context of everyday life and single individuals, with no reference to international relations specifically.

One of the fiercest and most revealing attacks against Stirner in relation to Germany's cult of force came from an extraordinary and controversial figure: Louis Jacolliot (1837-90).[44] An anticlerical barrister, judge in the French colonies, lecturer, occultist, and popularizer of Hinduism and India, Jacolliot is generally remembered for a number of works on Indian civilization which are a mixture of scholarship and fantasy, truth and deliberate misrepresentations. For this reason, René Guénon has described Jacolliot as 'a superficial writer […] whose authority one cannot possibly invoke.'[45] David Smith has written that 'in his heyday, the 1870s, Jacolliot's Hinduism and Jacolliot's India were significant factors on the popular literary and cultural scene – not only in France but also Britain, the United States, and India, notwithstanding that they were the product of the imagination of a silly man.'[46] To Jacolliot also goes the 'dubious credit', as Joscelyn Godwin has put it, of having created the myth of Agartha, a legendary kingdom which is said to be located on the inner surface of the Earth.[47] The Agarthian myth is sometimes linked with the belief in a hollow Earth and is a recurrent subject in esoteric literature.[48] Jacolliot's translations from Sanskrit, including that of

page 30. A revised edition appeared in 1883 (see 45 and 145 for Stirner). Fouillée returned to Stirner on multiple occasions, though in most cases in relation to Nietzsche. See *Histoire de la Philosophie* (Paris: Ch. Delagrave, 1875), 454; 'La Morale de la via selon Guyau et selon Nietzsche', *Revue Bleue*, fourth series, tome XI, 1 Apr. 1899, 385-387; *Nietzsche et l'immoralisme* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1902), Chapter One and *passim*; *Le Moralisme de Kant et l'amoralisme contemporain* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1905), 257.

[42] Taillandier, *Dix Ans de l'histoire d'Allemagne*, 382-383.

[43] *The Unique* (Landstreicher's translation), 221.

[44] For biographical details, see Daniel Caracostacea, 'Louis-François Jacolliot (1837-1890): a biographical essay', *Theosophical History*, Vol. IX, No. 1, Jan. 2003, 12-39.

[45] René Guénon, *Le Roi du Monde* (Gallimard, 1958), 7.

[46] David Smith, 'Nietzsche's Hinduism, Nietzsche's India: Another Look', *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, No. 28 (2004), 37-56 (37).

[47] Joscelyn Godwin, *Arktos. The Polar Myth in Science, Symbolism, and Nazi Survival* (Adventures Unlimited Press, 1996), 81.

[48] Mircea Alexandru Tamas, *Agarttha, the Invisible Center* (Rose-Cross Books, 2003).

the ancient legal Hindu text *Manu Smriti*, which would later arouse the interest of Nietzsche, were also judged to be unreliable both in his own time and by scholars writing in recent years.[49]

Jacolliot's first text of interest for the present study is his *La Genèse de l'Humanité. Fétichisme, Polythéisme, Monothéisme* (1875). Several parts of the introduction have little or nothing to do with the subject of the book, which is primarily concerned with Oriental theogonies and myths. Filled with vitriolic attacks on various German personalities, the introduction seems clearly designed instead to warn the reader of the dangers represented by German contemporary philosophical and political ideas. Considering the historical context in which the book was published, namely that of the Franco-German 'war scare' of 1875,[50] it is plausible to assume that Jacolliot, feeling compelled to comment on the current situation, incorporated his critical remarks on Germany in the text in a somewhat forced manner shortly before its release. This hypothesis seems confirmed by the fact that, throughout the introduction, Jacolliot proceeds to compile a series of impromptu statements from various German personalities with the evident aim of creating the ominous picture of a Germany on the warpath. Included among these are Stirner's infamous passage quoted earlier; claims by David Strauss regarding the danger and the impossibility of suppressing war; and assorted quotes from Heinrich Heine, Friedrich Vischer, and others, presented by Jacolliot without any accompanying remarks on their context. Consistent with the general trend among French commentators of his epoch, Jacolliot compares the Germans to barbarians, writing that 'it is the right of Tamerlane, Genghis Khan, and Attila that Germans enfold with hypocritical formulas in order to legitimize attacks that would make the Apache of the American prairies blush.'[51]

Among the author's creative associations between rather diverse thinkers and cultural contexts, there is also one involving Stirner and Schopenhauer. The latter, Jacolliot explains, had claimed that 'in the world of man, as in the animal kingdom, *what reigns is force, not right*; right is not but the measure of the power of each individual!',[52] and all Germany, the author maintains, repeated this final point after him.[53] Stirner, the French author continues, went even further with his 'ironic cynicism', 'arousing the admiration of all the incendiary apprentices of the universities of Berlin and Heidelberg' (it is at this point that Jacolliot introduces Stirner's famous quote).[54] It should however be noted that, albeit contemporary and possibly aware of one another, Stirner and Schopenhauer never mentioned one another's name. After all, as Beiser

[49] See David Smith, 'Nietzsche's Hinduism, Nietzsche's India: Another Look', *Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, No. 28 (2004), 37-56.
[50] On the 'War-in-Sight' Crisis of 1875, see James Stone, *The War Scare of 1875: Bismarck and Europe in the mid-1870's* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2010).
[51] Louis Jacolliot, *La Genèse de l'Humanité. Fétichisme, Polythéisme, Monothéisme* (Paris: A. Lacroix, 1875), 12.
[52] Ibid. A few years later, in his novel *La Côte d'Ébène* (1876), Jacolliot drew this parallel again in the context of a conversation between some of the characters regarding the justification for conquering and colonizing other countries. One of the characters invites another to read Schopenhauer's quote from a book that had been left open on a table, paired with the notorious passage from Stirner's *Der Einzige* mentioned earlier. Schopenhauer and Stirner are presented here as two of the 'colonnes maîtresses' of modern German philosophy. See *La Côte d'Ébène. Les derniers des négriers* (Paris: Libraire Illustrée, 1876), 58-9. The text eventually became the first of three parts of a larger novel published the following year, entitled *L'Afrique mystérieuse* (Paris: Libraire Illustrée, 1877), 22-3.
[53] Ibid, 15.
[54] Ibid, 12.

points out, Schopenhauer's views 'could not have been more antithetical to the aims and assumptions of the Young Hegelians, whose political agenda he did not share and whose attachment to Hegel he deplored.'[55] Nevertheless, these exotic and often scarcely substantiated associations were, as has been seen in previous chapters, common practice in France at the time. The comparison between Stirner and Schopenhauer, in particular, was reproduced in terms which were roughly identical to Jacolliot's in numerous French publications,[56] where it served as 'proof' of the theoretical justifications of the cult of force allegedly provided by German philosophers.

To respond to the new German threat, Jacolliot argues, France needs men, citizens, and soldiers; not because war is a form of progress, but because the Germans 'dream of conquest' and of the 'annihilation of the homeland'.[57] France, he says, should not embrace the new doctrines coming from Germany, which are based on 'absurd principles' and 'scholastic syllogisms';[58] instead, it should 'resume the civilizing mission it has assigned to itself, give up on the spirit of conquest, proscribe international brigandage, then give its support to right against force, and keep high the flag of duty, morality, and freedom, without which the world would not know more *than German brutality or oriental fatalism*…'[59] Jacolliot therefore urges France to take action: 'There are some French individuals, very German in this sense and not ashamed of acquiring their neighbour's goods *through force*, *without the need to resort to right*; we have the habit of sending them the police. Today, as this theory has become the *practical* guide of a neighbouring nation, we only need to do one thing, and that is to deal with it at the first opportunity in the same way we dealt with Attila's army in the Battle of the Catalaunian Plains.'[60] For Jacolliot, France ought to be prepared because 'for the honour of Humanity, and to preserve its civilization, its nationality, its richness acquired throughout fifteen centuries of genius and work, it will need to defeat a new barbaric invasion.'[61]

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[55] Beiser, *After Hegel*, 28. Hellman has detected a few similarities between Schopenhauer and Stirner. For example, he notes, they both 'take a jaundiced view of human nature'. However, he points out, Stirner did not share Schopenhauer's pessimism and his rationalizations for suicide, and he 'did not consider the fact of human selfishness grounds for despair'. See Hellman, *Berlin*, 174. Generally speaking, few scholars in our times have attempted to make the case that Stirner is a pessimist.

[56] For example by French journalist Adalbert Frout de Fontpertuis (1825-87) in his review of the first edition of Alfred Fouillée's 1878 *L'Idée moderne du droit en Allemagne, en Angleterre et en France*. (Fouillée, however, had not drawn such a specific, direct connection himself). See *Journal des économistes*, fourth series, first year, tome IV, October-December 1878 (Paris: Guillaumin), 479-483. Another example is a speech by the influential bishop of Angers, deputy of the National Assembly, and advocate of social Catholicism Charles-Émile Freppel (1827-91), pronounced at the fourth Congress of Catholic Jurisconsults in Angers on 1 and 2 October 1879 (transcribed and published in the *Revue Catholique des Institutions et du Droit*, seventh year, 1879, 301-5, and in *L'Univers*, 2 Oct. 1879). An extract that included the passage on Schopenhauer and Stirner was also published in *La Liberté*, 3 Oct. 1879, 2. See also: abbot Joseph Crozat's *Des Droits et des devoirs de la famille, de l'État et de l'Église en matière d'enseignement et d'éducation* (Paris, 1883), 2, and his 'Rapport sur le Césarisme et le Socialisme d'État', presented at the ninth Congress of Catholic Juriconsultants held in Dijon in 1884 and published in the *Revue Catholique des institutions et du droit* (Vol. 23, year 12, second semester, 433-47, Paris, 1884, 437); the *Essai sur la séparation des pouvoirs* by lawyer and law professor Antoine Saint-Girons; General lawyer M. Noguères's 1891 discourse on *Des Progrès du Droit international public au XIX^e siècle* (Audience solennelle de rentrée du 16 octobre 1891, Chambéry, 1891); Vicomte Luc de Saint-Ours' *La Philosophie de l'alliance franco-allemande* (Florence, 1884), 53-4.

[57] Jacolliot, *La Genèse*, 34.

[58] Ibid, 15.

[59] Ibid, 35.

[60] Ibid, 13.

[61] Ibid.

Jacolliot returned to some of the themes and personalities discussed above, including Stirner, in his *Les Traditions Indo-Européennes et Africaines* (1876),[62] though this time he approached them from a different angle. The book opens with a number of methodological considerations on the study of the origins of languages, which help him support his critique first of Germans' sense of intellectual superiority and then of the attempts of German educated men from various fields to justify the current state of affairs. Particularly, Jacolliot takes issue with the role that he claims is generally accorded to hypotheses in the exact sciences and in linguistics, for it is not in the nature of man, he maintains, to abandon them promptly in light of new, concrete discoveries. Hypotheses, he contends, are not demonstrated truths, yet they end up being part of our common cultural baggage. They soon turn into systems, and systems attract supporters. Eventually, they gain an official status within the sciences and form schools. This, Jacolliot explains, is essentially the mistake that German linguists have perpetrated in the study of the origins of language. More broadly, Germany's undeniable erudition, he argues, lacks judgement and method, it often lends itself to pure speculations which do not rest on scientific accuracy but rather on syllogisms, odd considerations, and quotes.

Outside the exact sciences, Kant is the first German author to fall victim to Jacolliot's implacable critique. He is then followed by Strauss, who according to Jacolliot prefers what is mysterious and absurd over what is rational, since in his view nothing can be profound unless it is mysterious. Then, the French author turns to Heine, who Jacolliot claims had written that his personal position was, like that of other German thinkers, encapsulated in the two words 'mysticism' and 'brutality'. Later in the chapter, Jacolliot addresses Stirner too, attributing to him the following quote:

> The search for truth in philosophy, like imagination in poetry, must be independent of all restraints. The Germans are the pathfinders of the human spirit: they seek new routes, they test unknown means; how could one not be curious to know what they have to say when they come back from their excursions in the infinite?[63]

The attribution of these words to Stirner is as interesting as it is perplexing. This is firstly because Jacolliot claims that Stirner pronounced these words at Heidelberg University less than two years prior, that is, in 1874. This could not possibly be the case, of course, since Stirner died in 1856.[64] Moreover, the views expressed in the quote were completely alien to Stirner, who challenged the very idea of truth and in any event never spoke of Germany in such 'romantic' terms. In fact – and this explains the 'romantic' flavour of the quote – the person who uttered these words in reality was none other than… Mme de Staël.[65]

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[62] *Les Traditions Indo-Européennes et Africaines* (Paris: A. Lacroix, 1876).
[63] Ibid, 22.
[64] The issue of *Le Siècle* of 2 July 1856 reported Stirner's death in its necrology section: 'Mr. Schmidt, who has published under the name Max Stirner a work (*L'Individu et sa propriété*) in which he has developed the ultimate consequences of Hegelian philosophy, died in Berlin the day before yesterday' (3). The date, however, is incorrect: Stirner did not die on 30 June but on 26June.
[65] *De l'Allemagne* (1813 [1810]), Vol. 1, second part, 9.

This bizarre episode was hardly an honest mistake. After all, Jacolliot was no stranger to literary manipulations (to quote David Smith again: 'with Jacolliot fabrication is always likely').[66] Indeed, this was not even Jacolliot's first forgery involving Stirner. In *La Genèse*, Jacolliot had attributed to him, without providing any references, the following quote: 'The moral law does not exist, everything boils down to the laws of physics.'[67] In this case, too, the context was a discussion on the Germans' alleged elevation of force over all morality and right. The quote, in reality, is from Alfred Fouillée, who wrote these words in his aforementioned article 'L'idée moderne du droit' in the form a rhetorical question, not of a statement, and in relation to his critique of the Germans' idea that 'might is right' and of their philosophical, religious, and historical fatalism.[68]

While it remains difficult to establish what the thinking behind the attribution of Mme de Staël's words to Stirner may have been, its overall result appears to be consistent with Jacolliot's broader goal of denouncing Germany's self-aggrandizing narratives and its alleged plans for a cultural domination of the world, which at the time seemed to numerous French commentators to threaten France's traditional role as a beacon of humanity and its *mission civilisatrice*.

Jacolliot proceeds to condemn German authors for having introduced their mystical and cloudy forms of reasoning into the sciences, for disdaining general science and replacing it with a Germanic science, specific to their race. More generally, the French author deplores the belief, diffused in his view among German professors and purportedly encouraged by the 'ephemeral success of 1870', that the Krupp cannon had placed Germany at the head of the intellectual world, that the Germans had taken back their leading position in civilization, vindicating their superiority from a philosophical and scientific perspective which in turn should presumably allow them to conquer, dominate, and influence other peoples.[69]

Jacolliot was but one of countless French commentators on Germany who shared similar views. Less extravagant than him, but just as eloquent, a number of other contemporary intellectuals wrote about Stirner in relation to Germany's cult of force from a variety of angles and using different approaches. In his study on 'L'idée moderne du droit', for example, Fouillée devoted greater attention to German philosophers than Jacolliot – whose studies of course were not primarily concerned with philosophy – and particularly Hegel and his disciples. Fouillée believed that the latest German schools had reduced society to a 'system of forces where triumph belongs, in reality and in the law, to the most powerful or intelligent',[70] and that the notion that 'might is right', or rather the absence of right, had apparently informed Bismarck's innermost thought

[66] Smith, 'Nietzsche's Hinduism', 46.
[67] Jacolliot, *Les Traditions Indo-Européennes et Africaines*, 15.
[68] *Revue des Deux Mondes*, June 1874, 517-549 (542). Abbot Paul Roca, perhaps after reading Jacolliot's *La Genèse*, also erroneously attributed Fouillée's quote to Stirner, but pairing it with the latter's more famous (and real) quote: 'What do I care about right…etc.'. See *La Fin de l'Ancien Monde* (Paris: Jules Lévy, 1886), 167.
[69] Jacolliot, *Les Traditions Indo-Européennes et Africaines*, 23.
[70] Fouillée, 'L'idée moderne du droit', 531. See also Fouillée's wider study inspired by this article and entitled *L'Idée moderne du droit en Allemagne, en Angleterre et en France* (Paris: Hachette, 1878).

too.[71] Fouillée returned to this subject in his *Histoire de la philosophie* (1875), especially in the chapter devoted to 'Les successeurs de Kant', where he discusses the systems of Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and the Young Hegelian school, and Schopenhauer.

In Hegel, he argues, the all-powerfulness of the State, its personification in an entity superior to individuals could only lead to absolutist politics or, as Fouillée describes them later in the text, 'political aberrations'.[72] The principle of these politics, he maintains, is that the State has a mission of its own, an idea to actualize which is distinct from those that operate in the realm of individuals. But Hegel, Fouillée submits, fails to see that the best way to ensure the triumph of so-called superior ideas is to start observing the rights and freedom of individuals, so they can independently take care of the enactment of the truest and most just doctrines. Instead, Fouillée explains, Hegel resorts to despotism, he defends a State personified in a single man, the monarch, depositary of its power and of the idea that it is designed to realize. What is worse, the author continues, once the State has absorbed the rights of the individual and family, it too finds itself absorbed by superior States, superior nationalities, superior races. Hence the right to conquest and the perpetuity of war; hence the principle that the prevailing nation is always *better* than the defeated nation and that its force is itself proof of its own right, for that which is real is rational; hence, on a broader level of analysis, Hegel's historical fatalism which places humanity above individuals and the State. For, ultimately, the apotheosis of success and power does not represent but one single moment of universal evolution where humanity, through its genius (in the arts, religion, and science), develops itself.

A couple of pages of Fouillée's *Histoire de la philosophie* focus on the Young Hegelians, though the author's analysis is limited to Strauss, Feuerbach, Bauer, and Stirner. The latter, Fouillée writes (echoing his spiritualist colleagues), rejects the cult of humanity advocated by Feuerbach, which he considers as some sort of Great Being in the manner of Auguste Comte. Stirner, Fouillée explains, believes that humanity only exists and has value in the individuals that compose it; thus, for him the true cult is the cult of the individual, of the self, which will be complete when all the scholastic entities of Humanity, Nationality, the State, Authority, the Law, give way to the unique reality: the I.[73]

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[71] Ibid. There is no evidence, however, that Bismarck's political and military decisions were ever directly inspired by the radical doctrines of the Young Hegelians. Historian and Bismarck's biographer Otto Pflanzer, building upon Erich Marcks' uncompleted biography *Bismarcks Jugend, 1815-1848* (Stuttgart, 1909), has pointed out that in his youth Bismarck 'had no interest […] in the philosophy of German idealism', and that 'although he read Hegel, [Bismarck] admitted that he did not understand him. He also read Spinoza and the Young Hegelians, but it was their religious rather than their philosophical viewpoints which interested him. He was attracted by Spinoza's pantheism and by the biblical criticism of Strauss, Bauer, and Feuerbach. But this also he soon rejected'. See Otto Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany*, Vol. 1, *The Period of Unification, 1815-1871* (Princeton University Press, 1963), 50 and 52 respectively. There is no evidence that Bismarck ever read Stirner either. Nonetheless, it was not infrequent for Stirner to figure in studies on the German Chancellor's use of force. For example, Alexis Bertrand, professor of philosophy at the Faculty of Letters of Lyon, opened his article on 'Le droit et la force' with Stirner's quote (which he had found in Fouillée's *L'Idée moderne du droit*) on the superfluousness of right in the face of force. This was followed by Bismarck's notorious 'might is right' formula. See *Revue Pédagogique*, new series, tome XV, July-December 1889, 15-18.

[72] *Histoire de la philosophie* (Paris: Ch. Delagrave, 1875), 449.

[73] Ibid, 454-5. Fouillée briefly mentioned Stirner again in an 1880 article in the context of a discussion on utilitarian philosophies, arguing that authors like Spencer, Bentham, Hobbes, La Rochefoucauld, Helvétius, and Stirner all believed that human will is driven by a quest for pleasure, by self-attachment, by interest. Specifically, Fouillée compared Bentham with Stirner ('La morale contemporaine', Part I, 'La morale de l'évolution et du Darwinisme en Angleterre', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, third period, tome 40,

A much more wide-ranging study on Germany's elevation of the principle that 'might is right' to a national creed can be found in the *Études sur l'Empire d'Allemagne* (1879), by lawyer and publicist Joseph Cohen (1817-99).[74] The volume collects the author's impressions of Germany produced by a long sojourn in the country after the Franco-Prussian War.[75] For the French author, under Hegelianism, which 'reigns unchallenged' in Germany,[76] the progressive movement of humankind has been unreservedly attributed to the power of things; in France, by contrast, this movement had traditionally been attributed to the power of man. Hegel ascribed the force of becoming and the law of historical development to the nation as a whole, which he conceives as a general, superior power and idea. The social being is absorbed by it, like the natural being is absorbed by the universe. The nation, or rather the State, which is its necessary expression, alone embodies the right of everyone and all. Consequently, Cohen explains, individual men no longer have personal rights; force compresses and fatally, incessantly englobes human beings, leaving them with no faculty to navigate the events that unfold around them, to direct them, much less govern them.

According to Cohen, the Hegelian theory is not solely the justification of absolute power but also, in a certain way, its deification: 'It is political pantheism. The State, society's necessary form, drags everything into its orbit. But the State is itself part of universal evolution. The national spirit that it represents needs to continually combine and identify itself with the spirit of other peoples through an irresistible attraction where the strongest dominates and absorbs the weakest. This is the international theory of force'.[77]

All of the above, Cohen points out, does not reflect any attempt on his part to somehow exaggerate Germany's dominant doctrines; instead, he says, these are precisely the doctrines advocated by Hegel and his 'most loyal' disciple Feuerbach, by Fichte, Schelling, Strauss, Schopenhauer, Hartmann, Kirchmann, Bluntschli and Young Germany in its entirety. More broadly, Cohen adds, this is the general belief shared by the philosophers, statesmen, and even theologians of the new German empire. Eight out of ten Germans, he estimates, adopt the maxim 'right as force' as the only principle underlying what is and what ought to be. This worldview, he notes, implies a state of constant conflict between opposing forces. Eternal war between States, races and all the classes of society is elevated to the level of a national code. The results of such doctrines, Cohen points out, can be observed in the contemporary rise of socialism.

It is at this point that Cohen brings Stirner into play – this 'Hegelian who is also one of the apostles of radicalism' – reporting his infamous (and in this case abbreviated) quote: 'What do I care about Right? I

112-143, 1880, 127). In the third part of the article, devoted to 'La morale contemporaine en Allemagne' (*Revue des Deux Mondes,* tome 44, 1881, 92-127) and centred primarily on Schopenhauer and Hartmann, Fouillée criticized the latter for essentially perpetuating Stirner's fallacious paralogism, that is, for failing to appreciate that from the fact that one exists as a real *subject*, with an existence of one's own, it does not follow that one is for oneself also the only possible *object*, or in other words for placing individuality and egoism on an equal footing (111).

[74] For biographical details, see Valérie Assan, 'Joseph Cohen, avocat, publiciste', *Archives Juives*, 2012/2, Vol. 45, 141-2.

[75] *Études sur l'Empire d'Allemagne* (Paris: Calmann Lévy, 1879).

[76] Ibid, 438.

[77] Ibid, 440.

do not need it. That which I can obtain through force, I own and enjoy'.[78] The outburst of militarism, Cohen writes, has no other origin: it is the 'monstrous theory' described in the chapter, so conducive to conquering ambitions, that has encouraged individuals, races, and peoples to claim their superiority. On a broader level, Cohen maintains, nations no longer aim merely at rebuilding themselves; the new goal is to become the Great Being within which other nations are reduced to subordinate elements. For him, the direction of modern society as envisaged by contemporary Germany, with its metaphysical rhetoricians, with its sophists and syllogisms, does not lead to a higher civilization but back to barbarism.[79]

Germany, Cohen maintains, considers itself superior to all peoples and destined to dominate the world. For the Germans (at least according to the Hegelian perspective), the 'strongest' are those who are physically and morally superior, those who are more in harmony with the existential conditions in which they find themselves, and above all those who, thanks to a more perfected organism, are ahead of everyone else in the path to becoming. Thus, the strongest nations or peoples have a right and duty to subject all the inferior beings.[80] Germany, Cohen submits, aims at replacing the Romans; for them, the evolution of Latin races has come to an end, and that of Germanic races has begun. Germany's modern civilizing mission, he writes, does not consist in humanizing the world but in Germanizing it. Hegel has made the human self a God; Germany's chauvinism made the German self a God.[81] In this context, Cohen does not mention Stirner specifically, but since he speaks, like numerous other French commentators before him, of a philosopher in Germany who has allegedly elevated the self, and not humanity, to a God, the reference to him seems implicit.[82]

Connected with debates on Germany's cult of force was another common theme amongst French critics in the aftermath of the war, namely that of Germany's strong sense of discipline, not only in the army but in all aspects of public life. After 1870, as noted by Swart, most publicists across the political spectrum were reluctant to attribute Germany's victory to inherent superior qualities of the German people, yet they readily acknowledged the Germans' superiority in terms of discipline, organization, and national unity. French weaknesses in these areas, on the other hand, were often summed up under the ambiguous label of 'individualism'.[83] Similarly, Digeon has argued that the common post-war feeling in France was that Germany was no longer the country of dangerous individualism, but rather a collective mass. To the French, the enemy appeared to be 'amorphous, indistinct, desireless, without a will of its own, without personality, a subhuman,

[78] Ibid, 443.
[79] Ibid, 445.
[80] Ibid, 440-1.
[81] Ibid, 487.
[82] Points similar to those made by Cohen were made by the Advocate General Émile Pierrot in a speech pronounced at the Court of Appeal of Nancy in 1875. See *Du Droit et du domaine des lois. Discours prononcé par Émile Pierrot* (Vagner, 1875). Like many others, Pierrot presents Stirner as the author who pushed the 'might is right' principle to the extreme, using his famous quote as evidence (ibid, 15).
[83] Koenraad Wolter Swart, *The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 127.

incapable of initiative, an automaton in the hands of its leaders. It is disciplined; this is the generally acknowledged fact which struck the minds.'[84]

The theme of Germany's excessive discipline also informed French commentators' works on German contemporary literature and poetry, generally considered by the literary critics of the time as the areas in which the Germans' intellectual efforts had proven most wanting. In this area, too, Stirner began to be identified as a negative influence, along with other German philosophers. German contemporary publications came to be frequently belittled by French reviewers, especially in comparative analysis between the classics (e.g. Schiller or Goethe) and the authors of the previous twenty or twentyfive years. The general impression shared by an increasing number of French educated men disillusioned with German contemporary literature was that the German genius of the eighteenth century, personified by immortal authors such as Lessing, Schiller, Goethe, Novalis, Klospstock, Achim von Armin, or Werner, and glorified in France by Mme de Staël, had left no worthy successor. After all, as historian and publisher Edgar Bourloton (1844-1914) notes, Friedrich Schlegel himself wrote at the beginning of the century that the time was near when it would no longer be a matter of individual talents, but of the general development of the nation, a time when writers would no longer attract the public, but rather the public, with their spiritual needs and the demands of their hearts, would shape and inspire writers.[85]

Reflecting on Schlegel's words and on Mme de Staël's now palpably outdated accounts, Bourloton argues that the times announced by the German poet have indeed come: no powerful individuality is emerging anymore, and German literature has truly become the expression of society.[86] The vulgarization of literature and poetry, Bourloton affirms, has multiplied the writers and spilled into the public domain. The German novel has become practical and increasingly concerned with utilitarian matters. It wishes to instruct, convince, offer a thesis. It has assumed the role of a mediator between the obscure speculations of philosophy and the people. German novelists, Bourloton submits, have idealized the individual to the point that the characters they create are essentially metaphysical entities, living and walking phenomena. For Bourloton, this is a dangerous trend, which makes one occasionally wonder whether one is reading a philosophical novel or novelistic philosophy. And it is in the philosophical field, he adds later in the text, that the activity of the German mind flourished the most:

> Fichte, and Hegel after him, beyond the inaccessible subtleties of *autotheism* and *ideotheism* (if we are allowed to use this term), have sown the seeds of a deplorable morality whose practical consequences their less transcendental disciples, such as Feuerbach, Max Stirner and others, have hastened to formulate. These

[84] Digeon, *La Crise allemande*, 59.
[85] In Edgar Bourloton, *L'Allemagne contemporaine* (Paris: Germer Baillière, 1872), 78.
[86] Ibid.

experiments have sufficiently demonstrated the danger and the insanity of their systems, but the novel has formulated the protest of common sense and public conscience most energetically.[87]

After reading Bourloton's work and M. A. Bossert's *Goethe, ses précurseurs et ses contemporaines* (1872), a dismayed Jules Zeller (1820-1900), historian and writer, expressed similar views in an 1872 article entitled 'Les contemporains de Goethe et les contemporains du Prince de Bismarck'.[88] Zeller was especially shaken by how different Germany had become from the time of Mme de Staël's romanticized portrayals of the country. In literature and poetry, Zeller writes, the new Germany has culminated in the 'Kutschke Lied' (the most popular song among German soldiers during the Franco-Prussian War, written by fusilier Kutschke of the Fortieth Regiment at the advanced posts at Saarbriick). For Zeller, 'it is still the materialism of Feuerbach or Max Stirner that runs and overflows in the lush verses and forced imagination' of German contemporary poetry.[89]

Zeller's article is one of countless examples of the harsh, generalizing, and to some extent superficial criticism reserved by French commentators for German contemporary literary productions. These were regularly mocked and faulted for being either sensualist or, perhaps worse, too utilitarian, politicized, militarized, and patriotic. More generally, images of a barbaric Germany inebriated with ideas of racial superiority, conquest, and the primacy of force over right continued to be quite common in all sorts of publications in France throughout the Third Republic and beyond. From this perspective, references to Stirner, in particular, could also still be found, occasionally. Yet already during the 1880s, his association with Germany's cult of force and the 'might is right' principle was no longer the main trend in the context of his French reception. Instead, as the following section will show, Stirner's interpretation as a nihilist and/or as a primary source of inspiration for Russian nihilists became, for a short while at least, predominant.

III. The association with Russian nihilism

Nihilism in Russia was a philosophical, cultural, literary, and revolutionary movement whose intellectual roots can be traced back to at least as early as 1855,[90] when it was essentially a philosophy of moral and epistemological skepticism. Ivan Turgenev later popularized the term 'nihilism' in his influential novel *Fathers and Sons* (1862), where he used it to describe the younger generation's disenchantment with both the traditionalists and the progressive reformists who preceded them. Incorporated into the Russian nihilist movement were various elements of skepticism, hard determinism, atheism, materialism, scientific

[87] Ibid, 83. For Stirner, see also 96.
[88] *Le Moniteur Universel*, 2 May 1872, 3.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Stephen Lovell, 'Nihilism, Russian', *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Taylor & Francis, 1998). Lovell, however, points out that the first uses of the term in Russia date back to at least 1829.

rationalism, positivism, utilitarianism, moral relativism, individualism, and rational egoism borrowed from Western traditions and adapted to the Russian cultural and social context.[91] The influence of German philosophers and scientists – including Stirner, the Young Hegelians more generally, and the scientific materialists – has been the object of numerous studies, though the precise nature and extent of the influence of some of them on specific Russian individuals continue to divide scholars.[92]

According to Calasso, Russia is the country where more than anywhere else Stirner could find appreciation: 'If one thinks about the avidity with which all German philosophical texts were read in those years […], and if one also takes into account the fact that precisely in those years the nihilist cloud was beginning to thicken, it immediately becomes natural to see Stirner in a Russian version, ambiguous, treacherous, which suits him far more than the magniloquent language of Hegel's German heirs.'[93] For Carroll, 'in the latter half of the nineteenth century it was in the hotbed of revolutionary thought and action, Russia, that Stirner's ideas were seized upon with the greatest enthusiasm. There they formed an important component of the egoist-nihilist-anarchist complex of doctrines.'[94] Čyževśkyj wrote that 'Stirner was perhaps more well-known in Russia in the 1840s than in Germany', but rightfully added that while he was read, he was also often cited as an example of the detrimental influence of Hegelianism.[95]

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[91] James P. Scanlan, 'Russian Materialism: the 1860s', *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Taylor & Francis, 1998); G. M. Hamburg and Randall Poole (eds.), *A History of Russian Philosophy, 1830-1930* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), esp. Chapters 1-4. For a recent analysis of the nihilist movement and the notion of negation in particular, see Kristian Petrov, '«Strike out, right, and left!»: a conceptual-historical analysis of 1860s Russian nihilism and its notion of negation', *Studies in East European Thought*, 71, 2019, 73-79.

[92] On the Russian reception of German philosophers (including Stirner) and/or scientists during the nineteenth century, see: Pavel Annenkov, *The Extraordinary Decade. Literary memoirs* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1968 [1880]), 211, 214; D. Čyževśkyj, 'Hegel in Rußland', in Dmitri Tschijewskij (ed.), *Hegel bei den Slaven* (Reichenberg: Verlag Gebrüder Stiepel, 1934), Chapter Two and the relevant sections where Stirner is mentioned; Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, *The Spirit of Russia*, 3 Vols. (Allen and Unwin, 1919, 1967); Boris Jakowenko, *Geschichte des Hegelianismus in Russland*, Vol. 1, *Ergänzungsband der Zeitschrift. Der russiche Gedanke* (Prague, 1940); Peter Scheibert, *Von Bakunin zu Lenin* (Leiden, 1956); Scanlan, 'Russian Materialism: the 1860s'; Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to Marxism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); 'Stirner-Rezeption in Rußland', *Der Einzige*, Max Stirner Arrchiv Leipzig, 2000, Vol. 9/10, 34-38; Victoria S. Frede, 'Materialism and the radical intelligentsia: 1860s', in G. M. Hamburg and Randall A. Poole (eds.), *A History of Russian Philosophy, 1830-1930. Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 69-89; Herzog (ed.), *Hegel's Thought in Europe*, Chapters One and Two; Andrzej Walicki, *The Flow of Ideas. Russian Thought from the Enlightenment to the Religious-Philosophical Renaissance* (Peter Lang, 2015); Markos Galounis, 'Sobre as fontes de niilismo em Crime e Castigo de Dostoiévski', RUS, Vol. 11, No. 16, Sept. 2020. For a contemporary analysis, see Ferdinand Lannes, 'Le mouvement philosophique en Russie', part two, 'La philosophie de Hegel et les cercles philosophiques', *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*, July-Dec. 1892, tome 34, 561-589.

For comparative analyses between Dostoevskij and Stirner, see Andrzej Walicki, 'Dostoevsky and the Idea of Freedom', *Osobowość a historia. Studia z dziejów literatury i myśli rosyjskiej* (Warsaw, 1959); Dominique Arban, *Dostoïevski par lui-même* (Seuil, 1962); John Carroll, *Break-out from the Crystal Palace. The anarcho-psychological critique: Stirner, Nietzsche, Dostoevsky* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974); Carlo Scilironi, 'Il sacro in Dostoevskij e Stirner', in Enrico Ferri (ed.), *Max Stirner e l'individualismo moderno* (Naples: Cuen, 1996), 583-92; Nadine Natov, 'Dostoevskij versus Max Stirner', *Dostoevskij studies*, New series, Vol. VI (2002), 28-38. See also Dowdall, *Max Stirner and Nihilism*, 137-39.

Additionally, studies on the intellectual formation of such key figures as Nikolai Chernyshevskii, Dmitrii Pisarev, Nikolai Dobroliubov, Ivan Sechenov, or Mikhail Artsybashev all generally devote some attention to the German influence. The literature that deals with the relationship of revolutionaries like Herzen and Bakunin with Left Hegelianism and German materialism is also of course rather vast. Most of the texts above touch on it to varying extent.

[93] Roberto Calasso, 'Accompagnamento alla lettura di Stirner', in *L'Unico e la sua proprietà*, translated by Leonardo Amoroso (Adelphi, 1979), 406.

[94] Carroll, *Break-out from the Crystal Palace*, 28.

[95] Čyževśkyj, 'Hegel in Rußland', 155 and 287 respectively.

In the 1860s, the liberal movements in Russia were still moderate. These years were marked by an unwavering faith in progress and the natural sciences, by the rise of individualism and the quest for human dignity. Philosophical contemplation found its primary expression in literary works, exemplified by Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?* (1863), which he published in response to Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*. Efforts in this time were still mainly concentrated on initiatives aimed at educating people, consistently with the appeals of Herzen and Bakunin. The 1870s and 1880s, by contrast, were a period of mounting pessimism.[96] Towards the end of the 1870s, disappointed by the stagnation of Alexander II's reforms and exasperated by the regime's repression and persecutions, Russian nihilists radicalized. The dramatic actions that ensued – the bombings, the murders, followed in turn by bloody repression and mass trials – eventually captured the interest of the French public, including fiction authors. The most catalysing event of course was the Tsar's assassination in 1881. Thanks also to the Russian government's skilful propaganda, the goal of nihilism came to be identified with the rejection of all moral obligations, the transgression of social restrictions, and even violent actions.

This interpretation, Gotelind Müller-Saini has pointed out, was not shared by the Russian terrorists, who never claimed adherence to 'nihilism' but tried instead to rationalize their deeds and explain them politically and morally.[97] Nevertheless, outside Russia, the term 'nihilism' came to encompass the entirety of the country's revolutionary milieu,[98] and it was also often assimilated to anarchism. As Walter Laqueur noted, 'The public at large was fascinated by the secret and mysterious character of the anarchist groups; anarchists, socialists, nihilists and radicals were all believed to be birds of one feather. Governments and police forces who knew better saw no reason to correct this impression.'[99] Though not all of them were politicized to the same extent, Russian nihilists began to be frequently mischaracterized throughout Europe as revolutionary activists, political terrorists, and violent criminals, particularly after the Russian Emperor's death.

In French literature, nihilist characters became increasingly familiar precisely at a time when the revolutionary movement in Russia had already entered a phase of exhaustion and divisions. According to Charlotte Krauss, 'the late appearance of nihilists in French literature explains why they are more closely associated with radical anarchists and unscrupulous terrorists than with the skeptical and moderate philosopher represented by Turgenev's Bazarov.'[100] While initially posing a challenge to the traditional, stereotypical Russian characters presented in French literature until then, Krauss further argues, authors found a way 'to integrate the anarchist phenomenon, to trivialize it and turn it into simple subjects of adventure novels where the nihilist characters appear as negligible, easily manageable criminals. […] French

[96] Rosamund Bartlett and Linda Edmundson, 'Collapse and Creation: Issues of Identity and the Russian Fin de Siècle,' in Catriona Kelly and David Sheph (eds.), *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution: 1881-1940* (Oxford University Press, 1998) 165-224.
[97] Gotelind Müller-Saini, 'China and the "Anarchist Wave of Assassinations" around the Turn of the Twentieth Century', in Dietze and Verhoeven (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Terrorism*, 310-328 (315).
[98] Richard Pipes, 'Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Inquiry', *Slavic Review*, 23 (3), 1964, 441-458.
[99] Walter Laqueur, *A History of Terrorism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017 [1977]), 14.
[100] Krauss, *La Russie*, 290.

fiction does not echo either the precursors of Russian nihilism or the moderate phase of the movement.'[101] The tendency in French literature to reassure the public about the nihilist phenomenon must of course be understood in relation to the widespread desire to promote the nascent Franco-Russian Alliance and, on a material level, to encourage the French to invest in Russian loans. As Marianna Butenschön has pointed out, 'if the French were to invest their savings in Russia, the impression had to be created that nihilistic activities were only the brainless actions of a few youthful fools, who could and must be dealt with.'[102]

While acknowledging that nihilism in its current manifestations was pre-eminently a Russian phenomenon, most French observers, whether in favour or against the idea of a Franco-Russian alliance, were nonetheless quick to emphasize the role played by German philosophy in its development. In this context, Stirner was often presented as one of the main sources of inspiration for Russian nihilism – if not even the theorist of nihilism *par excellence*[103] – and sometimes as a nihilist himself.

The association of German authors, particularly Hegel and his heirs, with nihilism is not new. Catholic and Protestant apologists were already drawing this connection in the 1840s and 1850s,[104] and Taillandier

[101] Ibid, 288-9.

[102] Butenschön, *Zarenhymne und Marseillaise*, 259.

[103] Numerous publications of the time, both in France and elsewhere, explicitly pointed to Stirner as one of the primary inspirations of Russian nihilism. For example, in an unsigned article appeared in the British periodical *The Publisher's Circular*, it is written that one of the proscribed works of nihilism, 'Max Stirner's "Property and the individual", formed, with Büchner's manual [*Force and Matter*], the basis of Nihilism' (*The Publisher's Circular*, No. 1001, Vol. XLII, 2 June 1879, 410). The *Library of Universal Knowledge* states that 'As early as 1859 nihilistic societies began to be formed in Russia among the students of the agricultural college of Petrovski, near Moscow, who had adopted the materialistic views taught by Büchner in his *Force and Matter*, and those on socialism set forth by the German Max Stirner in his *Property and the individual* […]'. See *Library of Universal Knowledge* (New York: American Book Exchange, 1881), Vol. X, 'Nihilists', 629. The same information can be found expressed in roughly identical terms in *Appleton's Annual Cyclopedia and register of important events of the year 1879* (New York: D. Appleton, 1880, new series, Vol. IV, 683) and in the book *Modern Communism* by American author and poet Charles W. Hubner (Atlanta: Jas. P. Harrison, 1880, 43).

Italian writer and editor Giovanni Battista Arnaudo wrote that Stirner 'had chosen, as an epigraph to his book on *The Unique and its property*, the axiom that "his thesis was founded on nothing". […] *Ex nihilo nihil* seemed to be an axiom; Max Stirner denied the axiom, and from nothing he extracted something. Hartmann later said that that book only proved that one may systematize even the most foolish idiocy, but among the students of Saint Petersburg it was all the rage; it was the negation of negations, it was nothing elevated to the highest of the apotheoses' (*Il Nihilismo*, Turin: Francesco Casanova, 1879, 40). Arnaudo's book was translated into French a year later as *Le Nihilisme et les Nihilistes* (Paris: Maurice Dreyfous, 1880).

In his article 'Tzarisme et Nihilisme. Les Origines du nihilisme en Russie', Belgian author naturalized French Joseph Vilbort (1828-1911) writes that 'Nihilism is not English, Italian, Spanish, or French: it is a product of Germany. […] Büchner, Schopenhauer, and with them Stirner, Buckle, Feuerbach and Herzen, these have been the true fathers of this sect of despair. There is not one single French among them' (*La Revue politique et littéraire. Revue des cours littéraires*, second series, year 9, No. 35, 813-20, Paris, 28 Feb. 1880, 819). In his 'Les Origines du Nihilisme', Gabriel Ferrère also stressed the importance of Hegel's and his disciples' influence on Russian nihilists, particularly Herzen and Bakunin (*La Croix*, 1 Dec. 1882, 499-506). The author writes that Stirner 'pronounced the final word of the Hegelian school' (504).

[104] See: Maret, *Théodicée chrétienne*; Godfroy, *De l'exégèse rationaliste*, 121; Bartholmèss, *Histoire critique des doctrines religieuses*, 331, 404-7; Étienne Chastel, *De la valeur de la raison humaine* (1854), and *Le Christianisme aux dix-neuvième siècle* (1874), 151-2. The association was frequently reiterated by Catholic authors over the following decades. See, for example, abbot Fulcran Vigouroux's *La Bible et les découvertes modernes en Égypte et en Assyrie* (Paris: Berche et Tralin, 1877, Vol. 1), 78, and the review of Vigouroux's text by abbot François Moigno, who branded the views contained in Stirner's quotes specifically as 'ignoble nihilism' (*Les Mondes*, year 16, May-Aug. 1878, tome 46, 101).

had also already associated Stirner with nihilism as early as in 1858.[105] The very term 'nihilism', after all, had originated in Germany, not in Russia.[106] Before the 1860s, however, the term was still used in a rather vague way in France, especially by clergymen and theologians, and in any case in connection more with German thinkers than with Russian thinkers. The links between German and Russian 'nihilistic philosophies' only began to be addressed from the 1860s, after the term 'nihilism' was popularized by Turgenev.

One example which is quite representative of the liberal approach to Russia in France is the historian and journalist Charles de Mazade (1820-93), who commented on the state of Russia's politics, culture, and society in an 1866 article published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.[107] Like many other contributors to the *Revue*, Mazade admired and was indebted to the publications of his colleague Taillandier.[108] As Christopher Guthrie has pointed out, it is precisely through the lens of its liberalism that the *Revue*'s attitude towards Russia should be understood: 'Equally opposed to revolutionary changes and the abuses of autocracy, wary of both democracy and militarism, the journal continually advocated for a moderate course of gradual, careful reforms in Russia between 1855 and 1917. It saw that Tsarist Russia had to change in order to survive, but it also argued that the price for the failure to change would be violent revolution and chaos.'[109]

For Mazade, while in the past people in Russia were happy to find inspiration in the most eminent publicists of Europe and in their wise theories, the books by Büchner, Vogt, and Stirner had become, at the time he was writing, the gospel of the new generation.[110] Radicalism, socialism, and democracy, he maintains, have pervaded Russian political and social life, challenging the nobility and shaking public opinion. Mazade further argues that 'the recent years have witnessed the most singular development in Russia of the doctrines of the coarsest materialism, of the crassest atheism, *nihilism*, which after being erratic in Russian society has become for all intents and purposes an epidemic and easily penetrates within a multitude of middle-class families.'[111] Russian socialist writer Alexander Herzen (1812-70), Mazade explains, 'has now retreated and lost influence, but he has been surpassed by young adepts for whom he is not but a straggler imbued with old Western prejudices. The materialist and brutally atheist doctrines pervade the habits as well as literature, and it is very fashionable today to treat without manners all that is duty, old moral notions, social conventions or fine arts as aristocratic inventions or sophistications of a decrepit civilization.'[112]

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[105] 'La question religieuse en Suède et les publicistes allemands', Vol. XIII, Year 28, Paris, 1 Jan. 1858, 370-399 (395).
[106] The invention of the term is often credited to either Jacob Obereit, Daniel Jenisch or Friedrich Schlegel. See Karen Leslie Carr, *The Banalization of Nihilism: Twentieth Century Responses to Meaninglessness* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), 13. The concept was then popularized by Friedrich Jacobi, who indicated nihilism as the prime fault of Enlightenment thought and the speculative counterpart of the French Revolution, of which Jacobi was a critic.
[107] 'La Russie sous l'Empereur Alexandre II. La société et les gouvernements russes depuis l'insurrection polonaise', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 Mar. 1866.
[108] As seen in Chapter Two, 76.
[109] Christopher E. Guthrie, 'The "Revue des Deux Mondes" and Imperial Russia, 1855-1917', *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, Jan.-Mar., 1984, Vol. 25, No. 1, *Autour du symbolisme russe* 3, 93-111 (94).
[110] Mazade, 'La Russie sous l'Empereur Alexandre II, 297-8.
[111] Ibid, 297.
[112] Ibid, 298.

In the early 1880s, Russian nihilism and the influence upon it of German thinkers, particularly the Young Hegelians and the scientific materialists, began to be addressed in a more consistent way. One example is Paul Souquet (1848-1923), a professor of philosophy who had been involved in the Franco-Prussian War. For Souquet, the struggle of the Russian middle class to emerge under the age-old despotic Tsarist organization, which fostered resentment and a frenzy of radical renewal and outraged negation, was a precondition for nihilism, this 'devastating social gangrene', to take hold.[113] At the same time though, Souquet traces back the origins of nihilism to German idealism and materialism. He explains that the prophets of the great renovation, the first theoreticians of Russian nihilism (among whom he includes Turgenev and Chernyshevsky), made their appearance and began to group around 1850, pointing out however that it was only from 1856-1857 that the spirit of practical and destructive negation began to manifest itself among the Russian youths returning from German universities, the access to which had been permitted again to them, after despotic prohibition, by Alexander II.

According to Souquet's account, in 1857, after Hegel, Schopenhauer excited the young revolutionaries of Russian universities. The forbidden works of Moleschott and Büchner, he says, with their trenchant scientific materialism, were read with enthusiasm. Subsequently, Max Stirner and the British historian Henry Thomas Buckle (1821-62), the former with his 'highly negative critique', the latter with his 'materialist sociology', completed the education of young Russian minds 'with the fermentation of a fully negative and pessimistic metaphysics combined with violent materialism.'[114] Souquet then concludes: 'In sum, the social disease, the revolutionary crisis known under the name of nihilism, has been nurtured, at least in its doctrinal form, in the ardour of some sort of morbid *philosophisme* which is especially inspired by and follows from the worst elements of the thought of the various Hegel, Schopenhauer, Feuerbach, Stirner, Büchner. […] There is, in the Russian nihilist, something of the French socialist, but fond of a cold and evil intoxication of metaphysical radicalism imported from Germany.'[115]

Other commentators went further back in time in their search for the sources of nihilism, turning their attention to France itself and throwing rather diverse personalities into the mix. Belgian socialist economist, historian, and progressive liberal Émile de Laveleye (1822-92), for example, linked nihilism with socialism and argued that

> If we now tried to go back to the sources of nihilistic socialism, we would find, on the one hand, the egalitarian philosophers of the past century: J.-J. Rousseau, Morelli, Mably, Brissot, Helvétius, and the socialists of this century: Owen, Saint-Simon, Fourier, Proudhon, Louis Blanc, and, on the other hand, the German philosophers Hegel, Feuerbach and Schopenhauer. Marx and Lassalle, Herzen and Bakunin, were Hegelian enthusiasts initially. It is in a strange book, dated 1845, *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum* (*The Individual and his property*),

[113] 'Nihilisme russe et philosophie allemande', *Le Globe*, 11 June 1880, 2.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.

by Max Stirner, that one can see Hegelianism culminate in the deification of egoism, denying everything else completely. Stirner uses as an epigraph this verse from a song by Goethe: *Ich habe meine Sache auf nichts gestellt*.[116] His doctrine is summarized in the words of the preface: 'My cause is not the divine, or the human, or truth, or the good, or freedom, etc., but what is mine; myself and my interest, nothing else.'[117]

A self-described 'academic socialist', Laveleye believed in the necessity of state intervention to secure the triumph of the common interest over particularist egoism[118] – something that situates him at the antipodes of Stirner, of course.

Due to their notoriously radical nature, Stirner's philosophical positions were also often used by French authors as a yardstick for assessing the various manifestations of contemporary nihilism in a number of public debates and in the context of the most diverse comparative analyses, including, occasionally, some more 'exotic' ones. For example, the ethnologist**,** palaeographer, and linguist Charles Schoebel (1813-88) used Stirner's (alleged) nihilism as a term of comparison for the Buddhist doctrine of self-emptying within the original element of nature, whose intensity he deemed to be much more extreme than Stirner's doctrine.[119]

As far as the association with (Russian) nihilism is concerned, however, the most significant and indeed most representative commentaries on Stirner in the 1880s and early 1890s were produced by Théophile Jean-Baptiste Funck, later known as Funck-Brentano (1830-1906),[120] a Luxembourgian-French

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[116] Which Laveleye translated with excessive fantasy as *Je ne tiens plus à rien* (I no longer care about anything).

[117] *Le Socialisme contemporain* (Paris: Germer-Baillière, 1883 [1881]), 281. It is only from this second edition of the book that Stirner makes his appearance in the text. This may have to do with the publication of the second edition of *Der Einzige* in Germany in 1882.

[118] A. Courtois, 'Laveleye, Emile de', in The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 7.640-1.

[119] 'Le Buddhisme', *Actes de la Société Philologique*, tome IV, No. 5, April 1874, 188. The earliest parallels between Stirner and Eastern religions to be drawn by authors who wrote in French, though not in relation to nihilism specifically, can be traced to two women of letters. The first is Romanian-Albanian duchess and writer Mme Dora D'Istria (1828-88), who noted that certain philosophical, esoteric Brahman systems in India are 'just as advanced as Hegel's or Schelling's theories. Eugène Burnouf has shown how Buddhism, which counts some three or four hundred million followers in Asia, has resulted in a gigantic atheism which is just as logical as that of Feuerbach and Stirner'. See *Excursions en Roumélie et en Morée* (Paris: J. Cherbuliez, 1863), Vol. 2 (*Le Péloponèse*), 497-498.

The second is Princess Carolyne de Sayn-Wittgenstein, born Iwanowska (1819-87), a Polish noblewoman, prolific writer, and lover of Franz Liszt. In a book on *Bouddhisme et Christianisme*, Sayn-Wittgenstein attempts to shed new light on the dialogue on morality between Christianity and the religions from the Far East (stressing the unique virtues of the former), while fighting incredulity at the same time. Hence her remarks on Stirner: 'One should admire God's goodness which allows various religions to contain very pernicious germs that do not instantly produce all their fruits. One should be thankful for the instinct of the good which he has imprinted in human conscience which prevents man from reaping such fruits while he works to make them blossom. Thanks to this, when Max Stirner publishes in Germany the final practical and perfectly logical deductions of a Bouddhist skepticism leading to a Chinese materialism, an appalled silence from precisely those who had generated such conclusions greeted a work whose cynical nature he had the naivety of revealing, by marking it with a revolting title (*Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum*). Men are indignant that they have been publicly validated, an immorality to which their dormant passions have not been accustomed yet.' See *Bouddhisme et Christianisme* (Rome: J. Aurelj, 1868), 106-107.

After 1900, the famous French writer and explorer Alexandra David-Néel (1868-1969) also showed an interest in the relationship between Stirner and Chinese individualist philosophy. See her 'Un «Stirner» chinois', *Mercure de France*, No. 275, tome LXXVI, 1 Dec. 1908, 445-452. See also her *Les Théories individualistes dans la philosophie chinoise: Yang Tchou* (Giard and Brière, 1909).

[120] In 1860 or 1861, he married Sophie Brentano, niece of German romantic novelist Bettina von Arnim (1785-1859), born Brentano, herself sister of the German romantic poet Clemens Brentano (1778-1842). Bettina also published a critical review of Stirner's work in 1847. See her 'Die Auflösung des Einzigen durch den Menschen', in *Die Epigonen* (Leipzig: Otto Wigand, 1847), Vol. 4. For biographical details about Théophile Funck-Brentano, see *Biographie nationale du pays de Luxembourg* (Luxembourg: Victor Buck,

philosopher, sociologist, and jurist generally remembered today for his contributions in the field of international law and his opposition to humanitarian intervention, though he also wrote about philosophy, morality, politics, and political economy. His commentaries on Stirner's thought are some of the most extensive and comparatively most in-depth to have been published in France in the whole period examined in this dissertation, except of course for those provided by Taillandier. For this reason, and because of his fairly wide readership at the time more generally, his various commentaries on Stirner require special attention.

Funck-Brentano studied medicine, law, and philosophy in Vienna, Bologna, Paris, Brussels and, finally, Wurzburg, where he graduated in medicine with a thesis in German in 1860. During the Franco-Prussian War, he served in the French army as a military doctor, for which he was decorated with the cross of the Legion of Honour by the Minister of War himself. Naturalized French, he and his family settled in Paris in the early 1870s. From 1873, he worked as chief of statistical service at the Ministry of Finances, where he was tasked, among other things, with the translation of works on comparative law. In the same year he became professor of law at the École libre des sciences politiques, later known as Sciences Po. Together with historian Albert Sorel (1842-1906), the best known of the numerous historians who taught at Sciences Po before the First World War, he wrote an influential introduction to international law entitled *Précis du Droit des Gens* (1877), the only text of his which is still occasionally addressed by scholars today. A member of the *Akademie der Wissenschaften* of Berlin, he was also the director of the *Collège libre des sciences sociales*, founded by Madamoiselle Dick May in 1895.[121]

Funck-Brentano was an assiduous collaborator of the literary-political journal *La Nouvelle Revue*, founded and edited by the fervently chauvinistic, anti-German, republican writer and *salonnière* Juliette Adam (1836-1936). A persistent critic of Bismarck and an advocate of *revanchist* policies, Adam was a very influential personality during the Third Republic, and arguably the most tenacious and passionate promoter of the Franco-Russian alliance outside strictly political circles. Funck-Brentano, for his part, remained quite skeptical of the idea of a rapprochement with Russia, a young nation with a very different administrative structure and culture. Nevertheless, by 1891 he seemed to have essentially accepted the prospect of a rapprochement as inevitable.[122]

Aside from his positions on Russia, Funck-Brentano's broader political views are perhaps best understood in relation to the vision and mission of the École libre, where he taught until 1905. Founded in

1962), Vol. 11, 245-55; Gustave Vaporeau, *Dictionnaire universel des contemporains* (Paris: Hachette, sixth edition, 1893), 633; Gabriel Monod, 'Bulletin historique. Nécrologie', *Revue historique*, Year 31, tome 90, Jan.-Apr. 1906 (Paris: Félix Alcan), 349. See also Funck-Brentano's 'Souvenirs de la guerre', in *La Nouvelle Revue*, tome 111, Mar.-Apr. 1898, 193-214. Théophile's son, Frantz Funck-Brentano (1862-1947) – not to be confused with the German philosopher and psychologist Franz Brentano, who was Théophile's brother in law – was very critical, like his father, of contemporary socialism, and he too despised the 'terrible doctrines' of Proudhon, Marx, and Stirner. See 'Grandeur et Décadence des Aristocraties', *La Réforme Sociale*, second series, tome X, year 10, July-Dec. 1890 (685-696), 693-4.

[121] On the staff, programme, and goals of the School, see 'A proposito del Collège libre des sciences sociales', *Giornale degli Economisti*, Feb. 1896, second series, Vol. 12, year 7, 185-192.

[122] See his 'L'Europe et l'Alsace-Lorraine', *La Nouvelle Revue*, tome 72, Sept.-Oct. 1891, 465-480 (480).

1872 by a group of French intellectuals (including Taine, Renan, Sorel, and Paul Leroy-Beaulieu), politicians, and businessmen, the École was initially led by Émile Boutmy (succeeded after his death by Paul Leroy-Beaulieu's brother, Anatole). Liberal, anglophile, positivist in outlook, and largely Protestant in religious background, these men created the school in response to widespread concerns that the perceived shortcomings of the French political and diplomatic leadership might further weaken the country's international standing. This apprehension arose amidst various challenges, such as the humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, the collapse of Napoleon III's regime, and the tumult and bloodshed produced by the Paris Commune. The school's founders aimed to revamp the education and training of French politicians. As Osborne has summarized, 'the founders of the Sciences Po were not merely patriots and upper-bourgeois liberals, but positivists in the looser sense of the term. […] The liberalism of the École Libre was a rather conservative type, attracted to the idea of order and hierarchy as well as individual freedom. These men held that historical science demonstrated the folly of sudden revolutionary change. All socialist or other abstract, ideological dogmas were suspect, even dangerous chimeras.'[123]

Many of Funck-Brentano's publications do indeed display a general distrust of, and even open hostility towards, a variety of contemporary philosophies. In the case of German philosophy specifically, he was often critical of Kant and everything that Germany produced after him. Funck-Brentano's own philosophy, by contrast, remains somewhat difficult to identify. In fact, he seems to have been preoccupied more with issues of method than with elaborating a doctrine of his own or declaring his allegiance to specific currents.[124]

The apparent absence of any signs of attachment to a specific philosophy was already noted by Barbey d'Aurevilly in his overall positive review of Funck-Brentano's *Les Sophistes grecs et les Sophistes contemporains* (1879),[125] a work in which the author makes analogies between the alleged errors of the Greek sophists and the alleged errors of British contemporary thinkers, particularly John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer. D'Aurevilly however draws attention to a specific passage contained in Funck-Brentano's book which seems to him to reveal the spiritual nature of its author, a spiritual nature which, for d'Aurevilly, the spiritualists themselves lack. In the passage in question, Funck-Brentano writes: 'in vain will idealism and sensualism change their name and sign and become criticism, synthetism, the philosophy of common sense, positivism, eclecticism, evolutionism, nihilism; none of them can lead to any solution without a higher principle.'[126] It would seem, then, that aside from a not-well-defined sense of spirituality,[127] Funck-Brentano's

[123] Thomas R. Osborne, *A* Grande École *for the* Grand Corps*. The Recruitment and training of the French Administrative Elite in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 92, 95. See also Osborne's previous work on the subject: 'Social Science at the Sciences Po: Training the Bureaucratic Elite in the Early Third Republic', *Historical Reflections / Réflexions Historiques*, Spring 1981, Vol. 8, No. 1, 51-76.

[124] This could already be observed, for example, in his *Les Sciences humaines. Philosophie, médecine, morale, politique* (Paris: A. Lacroix, 1868), 6.

[125] In *Le Constitutionnel*, 30 June 1879, 2-3.

[126] *Les Sophistes grecs et les Sophistes contemporains* (Paris: E. Plon, 1879), 140.

[127] On this, see also Funck-Brentano's article 'L'âme et son immortalité', *La Nouvelle Revue*, tome 89, Nov.-Dec. 1894, 508-522.

philosophical orientation is perhaps defined more by what he rejects than by what he affirms. From this perspective, the author's rejection of modern German philosophy since Kant is paramount. D'Aurevilly himself detected in Funck-Brentano's approach a 'very French disgust for German ideas.'[128]

One thing that can safely be said about Funck-Brentano is that he firmly believed in the existence of a direct connection between philosophy and social development – hence his critical engagement with the philosophies of his time and with what he liked to call, in a highly ambiguous and even contradictory way, 'sophistry'.[129] As shall be seen, the most 'sophistical' thinkers of all for him were German contemporary philosophers, whom he addressed perhaps most extensively his *Les Sophistes Allemands et les Nihilistes Russes* (1887). But the relationship between German philosophy and Russian nihilism had already been explored by the author in the early 1880s. For example, during a session of the *Société Internationale des Études Pratiques d'Économie Sociale*,[130] held on 6 June 1880 and entitled 'Les Origines et les caractères du nihilisme russe',[131] Funck-Brentano, together with historian and expert of Russia Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu (1842-1912),[132] attempted to unpack the key elements that allegedly characterized the Russian nihilist movement, and he did so by placing great emphasis on the role that he thought Stirner's ideas had played in its intellectual development. His selection of quotes from *Der Einzige* suggests that he may have read the book or had at least access to some extracts from it, for at the time he was writing some of these quotes had not yet appeared anywhere in the French language.

According to Funck-Brentano, a number of German authors had vaguely indicated the road to nihilism throughout the nineteenth century, but it was the appearance of Max Stirner's famous work, *L'Unique et sa propriété*, that finally opened a new channel and defined the ultimate goal with 'unforgiving logic' and violence.[133] For Stirner, Funck-Brentano says, there is no such thing as humanity; the becoming of the world has no objective reality outside of the individual and can only 'come about from nothing.'[134] The French author is hinting here at one of the most popular and abused concepts put forward by Stirner in *Der Einzige*, that of a 'creative nothing'. Funck-Brentano limits himself to stating that Stirner was himself a nihilist based on a few assorted quotes, and subsequently claims that the philosopher's nihilism influenced that advocated by Russian authors and revolutionaries, without providing evidence or significant insights into Stirner's thought or the works of Russian authors. But the issue of Stirner's alleged 'nihilism' is, of course,

[128] In his review of *Les Sophistes grecs*.
[129] Funck-Brentano's misleading use of the term and a number of other rather confusing aspects of *Les Sophistes grecs* were addressed by the philosopher and historian of philosophy Victor Brochard (1848-1907) in his sharp review of the book, published in *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*, Vol. 8, July-Dec. 1879, 521-527. Like d'Aurevilly, Brochard was perplexed by Funck-Brentano's secrecy about his own doctrine.
[130] Founded in 1856 by the sociologist and economist Frédéric Le Play (1808-82), by whom Funck-Brentano had been mildly inspired.
[131] Transcribed and published in the *Bulletins des séances de la Société Internationale des Études Pratiques d'Économie Sociale. Sessions de 1880 et de 1881* (Paris: E. Dentu, 1882), tome VII, 291-318.
[132] Leroy-Beaulieu was also the third and last president of the *Ligue nationale contre l'athéisme*.
[133] Ibid, 295-6.
[134] Ibid, 296.

much more complex than Funck-Brentano's brief exposé suggests.[135] Before going any further in the analysis of his comments on the possible links between Stirner and (Russian) nihilism, a few clarifications are therefore necessary.

The concept of a 'creative nothing' pervades and serves as a premise to much of what Stirner says in *Der Einzige*, raising a variety of issues which pertain, among other things, to ethics, psychology, and the role of language. The most explicit references to it are contained in the initial and final lines of the book, where the author famously declares to have 'based his affair on nothing'. The passages in question are reported here for reference:

> If God, if humanity, as you affirm, have enough content in themselves to be all in all to themselves, then I feel that I would lack it even less, and that I would have no complaint to make about my 'emptiness.' I am not nothing in the sense of emptiness, but am the creative nothing, the nothing out of which I myself create everything as creator.
>
> Away, then, with every cause that is not completely my affair. You think that at least the 'good cause' must be my affair? Which good, which bad? I am myself my own affair, and I am neither good nor bad. Neither makes any sense to me.
>
> The divine is God's affair; the human cause is 'humanity's'. My affair is neither the divine nor the human; it is not the good, the true, the just, the free, etc., but only my own, and it is not general, but is – unique, as I am unique.
>
> For me, there is nothing greater than me!

> I am *owner* of my power, and I am so when I know myself as *unique*. In the *unique* the owner himself returns into his creative nothing, from which he is born. Every higher essence over me, be it God, be it the human being, weakens the feeling of my uniqueness, and only pales before the sun of this awareness. If I base my affair on myself, the unique, then it stands on the transient, the mortal creator, who consumes himself, and I may say:
>
> I have based my affair on nothing.[136]

While it is true that, throughout *Der Einzige*, Stirner devotes much of his energies to destroying all sorts of ideals and institutions, the 'positive' side of his overall enterprise, far too frequently overlooked, is no doubt equally important. As Saul Newman has summarized, 'Stirner wants to strip away the layers of human existence, to go beyond essences till one finds the *individuum*. This is the foundation of what Stirner terms the "creative nothing," the "unique one." The self may be seen as an open identity, rather than a full

[135] For a good recent work that does justice to the complexity of the issue, see Dowdall, *Max Stirner and Nihilism*, especially Chapter Seven for Stirner's 'creative nothing'.
[136] *The Unique* (Landstreicher's translation), 27, 377.

or complete one. For Stirner, the self exists only to be consumed'[137] – that is, *enjoyed*, here and now, as 'creator and creature in one', to use Stirner's own words.[138] The 'nothing' that Stirner talks about is not passive emptiness – in the sense of meaninglessness – or the mere contemplation of one's own destructive action, but rather, as Stepelevich has argued, 'negation as the principle of determination.'[139]

Stirner's 'creative nothing' may therefore be understood as a point of departure and constant return, as some sort of primordial ooze of one's own identity (which is therefore never fixed) where life perpetually seethes, as a neutral dimension of pure existence to which one goes back at every moment and out of which at every moment one creates oneself. From a similar perspective, it has also been duly noted that Stirner's 'nothing' is perhaps best understood in relation to (and possibly even as a parody of) Hegel's metaphysical system and more specifically to the dialectic Being-Nothing-Becoming. While Hegel considered 'nothing' as merely the second moment after the empty concept of 'Being', Stirner makes 'nothing' the starting point, and it is from this that 'Being' issues.[140]

Additionally, it is worth pointing out that, at the time of *Der Einzige*'s publication, nihilism was not a widespread, readily identifiable, agreed upon doctrine or current of thought in Germany, much less a movement or a commonly used term. Thus, whether Stirner was a 'nihilist' properly so called is, at the very least, debatable. Much of course depends on what nihilism is taken to mean in the first place.[141] But settling this matter is beyond the scope of the present study. What is important to stress here is that the *theoretical* 'nothing' of which Stirner makes so much in *Der Einzige* has arguably little to do with the Russian nihilist movement, often insurrectionary and *practical*, described by Funck-Brentano and many of his contemporaries. Therefore, the image of Stirner as a mere 'destroyer' is largely a construct, one that was no doubt useful to authors like Funck-Brentano for a critique of the Germans' apparent savagery and bellicosity.

In fact, a general hostility towards German culture is evident in Funck-Brentano's account. For example, the French critic stresses – like many others before him – the 'implacable brutality' of Stirner's 'dismal' motto, reminding his audience that an 'illustrious politician' (that is, Bismarck) has given France a taste of this principle in recent years.[142] For Funck-Brentano, the 'voluptuousness of destruction', of which Stirner seems to him to make no secret, is 'nihilism in its practical conclusion and in all the horrors of its

[137] 'Max Stirner and the Politics of Posthumanism', *Contemporary Political Theory*, Vol. 1, 2002, 221-238 (233).
[138] *The Unique* (Landstreicher), 167-8.
[139] Lawrence S. Stepelevich, 'Hegel and Stirner: Thesis and Antithesis', *Idealistic Studies* 6 (3): 263-278 (1976), 274.
[140] Ibid, 270-4. See also Widukind De Ridder, 'Max Stirner, Hegel and the Young Hegelians: A reassessment', *History of European Ideas*, 34 (2008), 285-297 (293-4). For additional insights into, and interpretations of, the concept of 'nothing' in Stirner, see: Giampietro Berti, 'La Dimensione anarchica in Max Stirner', in Ferri (ed.), *Max Stirner e l'individualismo moderno*, 333-56; José Barata-Moura, 'Stirner: von der Vernichtung bis zum subjectiven ethischen Moment', *Der Einzige. Jahrbuchder Max Stirner Gesellschaft*, 2009/2, *Die Kritik Stirners und die Kritik an Stirner*, 15-61; Saul Newman, *Max Stirner* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 203-4; Jacob Blumenfeld, *All Things Are Nothing to Me. The Unique Philosophy of Max Stirner* (Zero Books, 2018), 94-7 and *passim*; Larry Alan Schiereck, *Max Stirner's Egoism and Nihilism* (Underworld Amusements, 2018).
[141] Dowdall's recent book *Max Stirner and Nihilism* is worth citing here again for further reference on this subject, as it provides the most detailed and stimulating analysis of Stirner's relationship with nihilism in all of its forms and nuances to date.
[142] *Bulletins des séances*, 299.

ultimate actions.'[143] More broadly, the French author tends to concentrate on those aspects of *Der Einzige* which may have a greater impact on politics, such as Stirner's rejection of parliamentarism and constitutionalism (though Funck-Brentano does also mention his critique of socialism and communism). Stirner, Funck-Brentano notes, seems to only grant some leniency to humanitarian liberalism, this 'source of sentiments' which for the French author are essential to the durability of any form of minimal society.

In Germany, Funck-Brentano further argues, the doctrine of nihilism did not spread easily, whereas its diffusion in Russia was more rapid, thanks especially to two men: Alexander Herzen, initially a disciple of Hegel and then, according to Funck-Brentano, an 'ardent supporter' of Stirner's theories;[144] and Bakunin, the 'apostle of destruction', though from the point of view of his doctrines, the French author claims, he merely repeats Stirner's ideas, with the addition of tireless, passionate, fiery action.[145] In a subsequent work, entitled *Les Sophistes Allemands et les Nihilistes Russes* (discussed in more detail below), Funck-Brentano linked Bakunin directly to Stirner once again, writing that the latter's absolute 'I' necessarily led to the former's apology of the Russian brigand and political assassination: both represent the 'I' in its entire powerfulness and complete independence.[146]

Bakunin's conclusions though, the French author points out, are the necessary consequence of the principles articulated in the works of the fathers of modern philosophy. From this perspective, Funck-

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[143] Ibid, 300.

[144] This, however, is an unsubstantiated claim on Funck-Brentano's part. According to Aileen Kelly, 'Among the Left Hegelians only Max Stirner was as uncompromising as Herzen in his attack on the abstract concepts and ideals to which men enslave themselves; but Herzen wrote on this theme in 1843, two years before the appearance (in the original German) of Stirner's *The Ego and Its Own*, and there is no evidence that he subsequently read Stirner. Moreover, Stirner's ideal rejected, in the name of the ego, all universal laws and the imperatives of reason itself, while for Herzen an understanding of these imperatives was a prerequisite for the emancipation of the individual. The concreteness and precision of Herzen's language contrast with the abstraction of that used by the leaders of the Left Hegelian movement.' See 'The Destruction of Idols: Alexander Herzen and Francis Bacon', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 41, No. 4, 635-662, Oct.-Dec., 1980, 635-6. Andrzej Walicki has addressed the possible resemblance between Herzen's defence of egoism and Stirner's *Der Einzige* in *The Slavophile Controversy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 387-8.

[145] Writing in 1876, an unidentified author argued that Bakunin, during his sojourn in Berlin, 'threw himself into the arms of Hegel's most radical disciples. Arnold Ruge and Max Stirner took care of his philosophical, literary, and above all revolutionary education.' See 'Mélanges. Un socialiste russe. Michel Bakounine', *Revue Générale*, 461-3, tome XXIV, year 12, Vol. 3, 1876, 461. Without providing any form of evidence, Max Nettlau wrote in 1901 that Bakunin met Stirner in Berlin in July 1848 (*Michael Bakunin. Eine biographische Skizze*, 1901, 11). In *The Spirit of Russia* (Vol. 1, 432), Masaryk also wrote that Bakunin met Stirner, offering no evidence to support this claim. Roudine, on the other hand, argued that Bakunin may have influenced Stirner through his article 'Reaction in Germany' (1842), but considered any idea of a reverse influence of Stirner on Bakunin as 'impossible, even chronologically'. See Victor Roudine, *Max Stirner* (Paris: Henri Fabre, 1910), 84.

McLaughlin strongly rejects the conflation of Stirner and Bakunin, pointing out that even though the influence of the former may have contributed to the libertarian aspect of Bakunin's mature socialism, 'Stirner's egocentric philosophy represents a quasi-Kierkegaardian corruption of Left-Hegelian logic — the twisting of the either-or into an absurd personalistic logic — that Bakunin would never endorse'. McLaughlin further notes that 'On one of the few occasions that Bakunin mentions Stirner in his writings, he refers to the "cynical logic" of this "nihilist."' See Paul McLaughlin, *Mikhail Bakunin: The Philosophical Basis of His Theory of Anarchism* (New York, 2002), 67-8.

Tim Dowdall has recently challenged McLaughlin's interpretation of Bakunin's words as a direct attack on Stirner, considering it 'misleading at best and disingenuous at worst', and suggesting that this 'speculative interpretation' may be be 'inspired by the received wisdom of Stirner being an archetypal nihilist' (Dowdall, *Max Stirner and Nihilism*, 130-31). For a comparative analysis between Stirner and Bakunin, see Marco Cossutta, 'Ribellione e rivoluzione: note su un possibile confronto tra Bakunin e Stirner', in Ferri (ed.), *Max Stirner e l'individualismo moderno*, 311-32; Alex Prichard, 'Freedom', in Carl Levy and Matthew S. Adams (eds.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Anarchism* (2019), 71-89 (see esp. 76-7); Dowdall, *Max Stirner and Nihilism*, 127-31.

[146] *Les Sophistes Allemands et les Nihilistes Russes* (Paris: E. Plon, Nourrit and Company, 1887).

Brentano goes so far as to say that starting from the German philosopher Christian Wolff (1679-1754), in each phase of the progress of German philosophy one could not find the slightest sign of rupture among all the links of this great chain.[147] Similarly, Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, the other speaker who addressed the subject of nihilism during the session, maintained that the principles of this 'repulsive doctrine' of nihilism were a corrupt product of Kant's and Hegel's philosophy.[148] More broadly, for him everything in Russia in the domain of speculation and pure abstraction derives from Germany (of which, in spite of everything, he was an admirer). Stirner, whom Leroy-Beaulieu described as 'the nihilist prototype' on another occasion,[149] is only mentioned in passing in his speech in relation to the decline of the religious sentiment, which for the French author is one of the reasons behind the success of nihilism in Russia.

Funck-Brentano returned to the subject of nihilism in his 1887 work *Les Sophistes Allemands et les Nihilistes Russes*. The aim of the book is clearly stated in the preface, where the author directly addresses the Russian reader: 'In Russia, the influence of German sophistry is at least contemporary, and if the results to which it has led there are terrible, the roots are shallow, extending into a few circles. The hope that one or another supporter of the movement that sweeps this great country may return to healthier ideas is the sole motive that determines me today to make this publication.'[150] The volume, in which Funck-Brentano essentially blames all the ills of Western civilization on Kant and his successors, includes several long quotes from *Der Einzige* and is one of the most eloquent contemporary examples of deliberate misrepresentation of Stirner's thought and of its influence on Russian authors and revolutionaries. In terms of Stirner's position in the history of thought, Funck-Brentano agrees with Taillandier (whom he quotes) that with *Der Einzige* the Young Hegelian school ended its period of dissolution and ruin. This is because Stirner, for Funck-Brentano, is 'the least sophistical representative of the philosophy of modern Germany. No more double meanings, no more contradictions, no more wordplay; he is as rigid as a syllogism, as limpid as crystal, and as hard as it. Stirner took German sophistry to its final limit; one more step, and he saw its insanity.'[151]

According to Ettore Zoccoli, who had already given a harsh account on Taillandier's criticism,[152] the best that Funck-Brentano was able to do in exposing Stirner's thought with the aim of refuting it – through 'inaccuracies and excesses' – was 'giving proof of an unenviable agility in striking from all sides with a very

[147] In *Bulletins des séances*, 305-306. See also *Les Sophistes Allemands*, 210.
[148] Ibid, 307. Along similar lines, and widening the focus, Gabriel Ardant (1857-19…), a contributor to *Le Correspondant*, writes that 'It is Hegel's philosophy that procreated German communism and Russian nihilism, simultaneously serving absolutism, and today it provides State socialism with weapons.' He then adds that a man whose name has been forgotten, Max Stirner, 'outlined the principles of nihilism' in his '*The Only One and His Property*', a book which he claims has been looted by the founder of Russian nihilism, Bakunin, just like Marx was looted by Lassalle. See 'Le Communisme et le government en Allemagne', *Le Correspondant*, tome 141 of the collection, new series, tome 105, Paris, book II, 329-50, 25 Oct. 1885, 333.
[149] 'Les Juifs et l'Antisémitisme: IV. Le Génie Juif et l'Esprit Juif', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, third period, Vol. 114, No. 4, 15 Dec. 1892, 758-801 (788).
[150] *Les Sophistes Allemands*, IV.
[151] Ibid, 188.
[152] See Chapter Two.

questionable decorum for a scientist and, what is worse, showing evident ignorance of the surrounding developments of German thought.'[153] Zoccoli is trenchant: 'The whole work is a tendentious and extremely superficial critique of German post-Kantian philosophy' which made Stirner 'unrecognizable.'[154] Zoccoli's assessment seems confirmed, among other things, by Funck-Brentano's rendition (or indeed deliberate manipulation) of Stirner's crucial expression, 'I have based my affair on nothing', as 'I have based my *book* on nothing.'[155] While the former option suggests that Stirner may have been merely describing the way in which he used to conduct *his own life* (whether this is true or not is not relevant here and, in any case, it is unverifiable), the second arguably places greater emphasis on the very act of delivering a book to the world, and therefore on the 'public' nature and social implications of Stirner's enterprise.

Consistent with this reading, Funck-Brentano goes on to treat *Der Einzige* as some kind of programmatic manifesto, as a call for revolutionary action and a set of prescriptions virtually applicable to all epochs and contexts. Stirner, he argues, 'believes in progress, in the power of words, and with his pen he wants to upset the world.'[156] He must have believed, therefore, in some form of idea after all. But this, Funck-Brentano hastens to point out, would of course make him a 'coward' like his predecessors, whom he had hypocritically criticized for having religiously elevated ideas to articles of faith.[157]

Stirner, Funck-Brentano further explains, gratefully accepts what centuries of experiences and discoveries have produced, however he considers all these experiences and discoveries as general and abstract ideas, and every word that we learn as a tyranny exercised on our intelligence, especially when we are infants, that is, when we are most vulnerable. The individual envisioned by Stirner, whom Funck-Brentano therefore mockingly describes as a 'brutal, savage, and cruel mute'[158] and as an *a posteriori* self, seems to the French author to derive directly from the pure, *a priori* self of the sophist Kant.

Echoing what he had already stated back in the early 1880s, Funck-Brentano claims that

> with the appearance of *L'Unique et sa propriété*, the formula of the new school was found; the book became the *vade mecum* of all German revolutionaries. While Schopenhauer and Hartmann concluded with nothing, these did not stop, but marched towards the realization of their program. They gave birth to nihilism in Russia, founded the International in other countries, and their school became the terror of modern States. One should not play with sophistry, men are too naïve, too sincere.[159]

[153] Zoccoli, Introduction to *L'Unico e la sua Proprietà*, XI.
[154] Ibid. For a more recent and equally harsh critique of Funck-Brentano's treatment of Stirner, see Patrick Gérard Debonne, *Max Stirner Pédagogue* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009), 18-33.
[155] Funck-Brentano, *Les Sophistes Allemands*, 183. The italics are mine.
[156] Ibid, 189.
[157] Ibid.
[158] Ibid.
[159] Ibid.

Later in the text, however, Funck-Brentano explains that 'the term nihilism, which Jacobi had given to Kantian philosophy and through which Turgenev designates the opinions of Russian anarchists, can really be applied only to the immediate disciples of Max Stirner and to some admirers of Schopenhauer or Mr. Hartmann.'[160] With his anarchism and nihilism, he contends, Stirner has inspired or can at least be compared to Russian thinkers, most notably the revolutionary Alexander Herzen[161] – an opinion that Funck-Brentano essentially confirmed in a later article entitled 'Positivisme et nihilisme' (1894), where the author of *Der Einzige* is depicted again as 'one of the men who has contributed the most to the rise of Russian nihilism.'[162]

But Funck-Brentano's associations of rather different thinkers and ideas do not stop here. For example, he argues that

> Karl Marx, if considered seriously, leads to the same result as Stirner, and both to the same end in practical life as Schopenhauer and Hartmann do in metaphysics. The protection granted to Hegel and his school by the Prussian government bore fruits. If Schopenhauer's admirers content themselves with elevating a statue to the hermit of Frankfurt and with dreaming of Nirvana in the context of the German *Heimath* [homeland], the disciples of Stirner and Marx persist in their practical solution, and the latest discovery of science, dynamite, will eventually serve humanity's final 'becoming.'[163]

Once again, a connection is established between what Funck-Brentano liked to call 'abstract ideas' or 'sophistry' – whatever their form – and revolution or war. Both the German government and the socialists, Funck-Brentano submits, only follow, like Hegel, the 'idea'. Hegel considers the history of a people as an idea. Likewise, its progress, development, organization, habits, and laws are all but ideas. In this logic, Funck-Brentano continues, war is merely a sanguinary change of ideas. This observation provides the French author

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[160] Ibid, 279.

[161] Contemporary German journalist, historian, and politician Julius von Eckardt (1836-1908) explicitly claimed that '[Herzen] and his friends were ardent adherents of Ruge, and subsequently of Stirner, and of the other followers of Hegel's doctrines'. See *Modern Russia* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1870), 27. A few years later, in a review of the 1894 book *Die socialpolitischen Ideen Alexander Herzens* by Otto von Sperber, Charles Andler criticized the latter for having limited himself to mentioning the various intellectual influences of Herzen (among whom were Hegel, Feuerbach, Stirner 'with his outraged individualism', Ruge, Saint-Simon and others) without however demonstrating how the Russian thinker managed to reconcile them. See the *Revue internationale de sociologie*, No. 7-8, second year, July-August 1894, Paris, 817-820. In more 'recent' years, historian Martin Malia has described Herzen's morality as 'absolute egoism', arguing that 'in contemporary thought there was no individualism so extreme except the very similar egoism of Max Stirner'. See *Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism, 1812-1855*, Cambridge, 1961, 277. Malia's interpretation, however, was challenged by Aileen Kelly in her *The Discovery of Chance: The Life and Thought of Alexander Herzen* (Harvard University Press, 2016), 536.

Drawing a rather wide parallel, and with the help of Herzen's own words, Weidemaier has argued that 'Much like Stirner, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche, Herzen complained that the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie was levelling society by "the democratization of the aristocracy and the aristocratization of democracy… From below, everything is dragging itself up into the bourgeoisie, from above, everything is sinking down into it due to the impossibility of maintaining itself." Thus, "with the coming of the bourgeoisie, the beauty of the race is effaced"'. See William Cannon Weidemaier, 'Herzen and the Existential World View: A New Approach to an Old Debate', *Slavic Review*, Winter, 1981, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Winter, 1981), 557-569, Cambridge University Press, 567.

[162] In *La Nouvelle Revue*, Tome LXXXVII, March-April, Paris, 1894, 471. This article was subsequently included by Funck-Brentano in his *L'Homme et sa destinée* (Paris: Eugène Plon and Robert Nourrit, 1895).

[163] Funck-Brentano, *Les Sophistes Allemands*, 195.

with the opportunity to condemn Germany's cult of war and might,[164] and to remind the reader that 'Count Moltke [would later see] in war the highest idea of the civilization of people, at the same time when Prince Bismarck, from the height of the tribune, [greeted] in accordance with Max Stirner's *beati possidentes*[165] the army of the Russians, triumphantly entering Adrianople.'[166]

In a laudatory review of Funck-Brentano's *Les Sophistes Allemands*, published in *La Nouvelle Revue* in 1887, an unidentified commentator wrote that despite its evident severity against German speculations, Funck-Brentano's criticism was completely legitimate, for

> too often France and the French Revolution are accused of having given rise to those woeful doctrines whose ferocious adepts do not draw back from any sort of violence and constitute a danger to the world. Mr. Funck-Brentano does this absurd criticism justice and sends back to the right target – that is, German sophistry – the responsibility for all the socialist utopias and revolutionary crimes. What is more contrary, in fact, to our national spirit than these brutal and sanguinary theories? One must completely ignore the philosophical movement in Europe over the past century not to recognize this and acknowledge that the revolutionary socialism of Max Stirner, of Karl Marx, and Russian nihilism are not but the application within social life of the metaphysics of Schopenhauer and Hartmann, which in turn derive from Kant and Hegel. Does the conclusion into nothingness of these two philosophers not necessarily culminate, in practice, in universal destruction?[167]

Coming from the columns of *La Nouvelle Revue*, such views are not surprising. Aside from displaying the typical anti-Germanism of the journal, the remarks of the author of the review clearly reflect the desire of moderate republicans to dissociate the French Revolution's legacy from 'all the socialist utopias and revolutionary crimes' (i.e. the Paris Commune), and to defend the regime from the anti-republican, reactionary right.

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[164] Funck-Brentano addressed the relationship between force and right in his *Précis du droit des gens* (1877), and the relationship between force and freedom in his *La Politique: principes, critiques, réformes* (Paris: Arthur Rousseau, 1892), 23-36. It is also worth mentioning here that Funck-Brentano edited and prefaced the *Correspondance diplomatique de M. de Bismarck (1851-1859)* (Paris: E. Plon, 1883, 2 vols.), which he considered 'especially interesting [because] it reveals to us not only the tendencies, concerns, and ideas of a man, but of an entire race […]. A race that consists entirely of discipline and of simple and strong affections, arrogant towards the inferior, submissive towards the superior, having neither the pietistic mysticism nor the illusory ambitions of the German aristocracy, nor the rebellious spirit or the democratic sentiments of the urban bourgeoisie' (X-XI).

[165] 'Blessed are those who possess'.

[166] Ibid, 196. The author is referring here to the brief Russian occupation of Adrianople during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1888 and to the League of the Three Emperors (the Kaisers of Germany and Austria-Hungary, and the Tsar of Russia), formed in 1873 and dissolved in 1887. The allusion is to Bismarck's 'clearance' for the Russian occupation.

[167] Bulletin bibliographique, *La Nouvelle Revue*, tome XLVIII, Paris, September-October 1887, 191. The author may be the socialist, feminist sociologist, teacher, and writer Léopold Lacour (1854-1939) or the journalist Adolphe Badin (1831-90). Views similar to those expressed here can be found in a number of other appreciative reviews of Brentano's book: H. Pellerin's review in *Le Pays* (year 39, No. 195, 17 July 1887, 3), where the author, stretching Funck-Brentano's arguments even further, presents Stirner as 'the founder of Russian nihilism'; an unsigned review entitled 'Les origines philosophiques du nihilisme russe', in *Le Temps*, year 27, No. 9.591, 9 Aug. 1887, 3-4; Emile Hervet's 'Doctrine Allemande', *Le Pays*, year 39, No. 219, 10 Aug. 1887, 1.

Funck-Brentano's continued interest in the subject of nihilism is demonstrated by some of his subsequent publications, such as his aforementioned article 'Positivisme et nihilisme' (1894). As in *Les Sophistes Allemands*, Funck-Brentano provides here numerous long quotes from *Der Einzige*, arguing that Stirner's message, as he understood it, had become the imperative of nihilist and anarchist propaganda. But in this text Funck-Brentano also draws a connection between Comte and Stirner, and between both of them and Russian nihilists. What is interesting about the Comte-Stirner connection, in particular, is that unlike the spiritualists discussed in previous chapters, Funck-Brentano draws on ideas expressed by Stirner in Part One of *Der Einzige*, the contents of which had been largely or completely overlooked by virtually everyone who commented on Stirner's work before 1892, including Taillandier.

As has been mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, it was only from 1892 that a number of extracts from *Der Einzige*, including some from Part One, began to be published in French, whereas a full French translation of the book only became available to the public in 1899. Even then, however, the first half of *Der Einzige* continued to be systematically disregarded, especially by the anarchists, who had little patience for complex philosophical works that required good knowledge of Hegel's thought and of the Young Hegelians' debates and publications. Mackay himself did not care much for it, and still to this day, many of those who write about Stirner in the context of studies on anarchism and its history devote little attention to it. Thus, Funck-Brentano's very reference to the contents of Part One of *Der Einzige* represents an important novelty. Even more important, however, is the way in which he interpreted the ideas that Stirner expressed there.

In Part One of *Der Einzige*, Stirner sets out a tripartite dialectical structure which reflects the three stages of the life of an individual: childhood, youth, and adulthood. These correspond in turn to what he presents as the three phases of the history of humankind: realism, idealism, and egoism. The intellectual edifice created by Stirner mimics the structure upon which Hegel built his own cultural hierarchies and his philosophy of history more broadly.[168] A number of scholars have pointed out that Stirner's 'historical' reconstructions of the evolution of humankind and his racial hierarchies are purely allegorical and should not be understood literally. Fleischmann, for example, has argued that they should be interpreted as 'merely an

[168] For the similarities and differences between Hegel's three stages of a human life and Stirner's, as well as for an interpretation of *Der Einzige* in relation to Hegel, see Lawrence S. Stepelevich, 'Ein Menschenleben. Hegel and Stirner', in Moggach (ed.), *The New Hegelians*, 166-75. Stirner scholar Bernd Kast adheres more generally to what he calls 'an ironic or trivializing reading' of Stirner's Hegelianism. See *Max Stirners Destruktion der spekulativen Philosophie* (Freiburg / Munich, Karl Alber, 2016). Widukind De Ridder has also proposed a reading of *Der Einzige* as 'in part a carefully constructed parody of Hegelianism deliberately exposing its outwornness as a system of thought'. See 'Max Stirner, Hegel, and the Young Hegelians: A Reassessment', *History of European Ideas*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 2008, 285-297. In his recent book, *Radicalism of Departure: A Reassessment of Max Stirner's Hegelianism* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018), Jeff Spiessens has argued that the fundamental question concerning the nature of Stirner's relation to Hegel has been devoted little attention. His answer to what he has called 'the Hegelian question' is that 'Stirner is *consciously and conspicuously framing* his arguments and ideas in a Hegelian setting to make a point *about* Hegelian philosophy, [which] means that all the Hegelian references gain a deeper level of meaning which has to be explored in order to get to the philosophical heart of Stirner's work' (1-2). On Stirner's appropriation of Hegel's *Philosophy of History* specifically, see ibid, Chapter Four. For other studies on Stirner in relation to Hegel, see the journal *Der Einzige*, Feb. 2002, No. 17: *Rings um Stirner. Hegel und "Die Freien"* (Max Stirner Archiv Leipzig); *Der Einzige*, Feb. 2003, No. 21: *Max Stirner und Hegel* (Max Stirner Archiv Leipzig).

ironical reply to the historical speculations of the Hegelian school.'[169] Similarly, Landstreicher has written that 'Stirner was quite intentionally ahistorical' and that 'he was making a mockery of Hegel's dialectically progressive view of history in order to twist it back on those who used this Hegelian view to support their perspectives. […] Stirner's playful argument is that, even if you assume that there is a history that progresses, by Hegel's own logic, you have to end up back at *egoism*.'[170] Landstreicher further adds that 'For Stirner, there was no ultimate aim of history, no inherent progress, and so for him the dialectic could never be anything more than a tool. The use he found for this tool was precisely that of using the dialectic to undermine the dialectic.'[171]

Funck-Brentano does not seem to have been particularly familiar with, or indeed interested in, much of the arguably indispensable information regarding the historical-intellectual context in which *Der Einzige* was conceived, the authors with whom Stirner was in conversation (i.e. Hegel and the Young Hegelians, especially Feuerbach and Bruno Bauer, but also *Die Freien*), their publications, and the wider public discourses in which Stirner participated. This is probably the reason why he interprets Stirner's 'history' of civilization and his racial hierarchies literally rather than figuratively, and why he uncritically accepts them as Stirner's own true beliefs. Based on this interpretation, he therefore proceeds to draw a parallel between Stirner and Comte, and then between positivism and nihilism.

According to Funck-Brentano, a number of Russian nihilists transformed Chernyshevsky's illusions, expressed in his novel *What is to be done?* (1863), into pompous history, discovering different phases of nihilism, like Stirner, Hartmann, and Comte did with the march of humanity. Having denied the truth of metaphysical ideas, Funck-Brentano writes, 'Auguste Comte divided the history of humanity into three epochs, proclaimed the faith in experimental sciences, and created the positivist religion. Max Stirner, a disciple of Hegel, also divided history in three ages and concluded with the advent of the individual.'[172] Comte's three epochs, Funck-Brentano explains, represent the following stages of human development: first, the epoch in which man believed in superior beings over all forms of experience; second, the philosophical epoch, during which man attempted to explain natural phenomena through abstract hypotheses and systems based on generalities without substance; third, the positive epoch, which begins with the progress accomplished in experimental sciences and finds it consecration in the doctrine of positivism.

In the same year that Comte founded his positivist society, Stirner, 'one of the men who most contributed to the birth of Russian nihilism',[173] also divided the history of humankind into three epochs. For him, Funck-Brentano writes, civilization, which comes entirely from the Caucasian race, has first of all done away with the 'negro character', represented by antiquity, a time when men were subjected to the material

[169] Eugène Fleischmann, 'The Role of the individual in pre-revolutionary society. Stirner, Marx, and Hegel', in Z. A. Pelczynsky (ed.), *Hegel's political philosophy. Problems and perspectives* (Cambridge University Press, 1971), 220-229, 225.
[170] Landstreicher, introduction to *The Unique*, 13-14.
[171] Ibid, 15.
[172] 'Positivisme et nihilisme', 473.
[173] Ibid, 471.

manifestations of things. Then, in the second age, the Caucasian race has abandoned its Mongolian ties, its enslavement to abstract ideas, its moral doctrines and philosophical beliefs. Finally, the third epoch is that of the complete independence of the individual, master of himself and of all things – the era to which the future of humanity belongs. In conclusion to his summary, Funck-Brentano points out that, if one removes from this reconstruction the terms 'negro' and 'Mongolian', Stirner's division is infinitely more accurate with regards to the reality of facts and experience than Comte's.[174]

For the French author, the positivist and nihilist 'sects' share the same faith in positive sciences, profess the same atheism, and dream of the same science of the future:

> If the object of the positivists is to give back to society the love, faith, and activity that it has lost, through the knowledge of the laws of matter and vitality, that of the nihilists is to use the progress of science and employ all their forces of abnegation, of devotion, of action, to take down all the institutions which seem to them to thwart the emergence of the 'sociability of the future.'[175]

Their methods may differ, Funck-Brentano says, but their results are the same. Russian nihilism, however, still seems to him to be far more logical and forthright than positivism.[176]

Finally, Funck-Brentano returned once more to Stirner in his *La Science sociale, morale, politique* (1897), in the context of a critique of the individualist conceptions of human life and of what he believes to be a false dichotomy between individualism and socialism from a sociological and, to a lesser degree, philosophical perspective. For Funck-Brentano, no one in the social sciences has dared to consider individual independence in its entire extension. In philosophy, by contrast, 'Kant, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel and, after them, the Hegelian Left, Strauss, Feuerbach, Bruno Bauer, Herwegh, made a joint effort to render the conception of individual independence possible in all its extension. The doctrine that was its final and logical result made its appearance in 1844 [sic], in a volume entitled: *L'Unique et sa propriété*, written by Gaspard Schmidt under the pseudonym of Max Stirner.'[177] As in other previous works, Funck-Brentano provides several quotes from *Der Einzige*. He then summarizes and paraphrases some of Stirner's ideas with sarcastic undertones:

> Your trails of iron annoy me? I make the trains derail. Your electricity blinds me? I cut the wires. Let those who think otherwise act differently! Me? It pleases me to act this way. And not only do I reject progress, which

[174] Ibid. As Landstreicher explains, however, Stirner's attribution of 'Mongolism' to his German contemporaries 'shows that even one of his tactics for avoiding the censors (using "China" or "Japan" instead of "Germany" whenever he was making a critical reference to the German authorities of his time) was part of the joke.' See Landstreicher's introduction to *The Unique*, 14.
[175] Funck-Brentano, 'Positivisme et nihilisme', 473.
[176] Ibid, 469.
[177] *La Science sociale, morale, politique* (Paris: E. Plon, 1897), 24.

> displeases me; I do the same with instruction and education, which have been imposed upon me as a child. What a tyranny it is that my parents and relatives have imposed their language upon me and, with it, their ideas and feelings! It has prevented my natural development, my true independence.[178]

Here Funck-Brentano is mocking Stirner's views on education, partly illustrated in Part One of *Der Einzige* but developed more in detail in *Das unwahre Prinzip unserer Erziehung* (The False Principle of our Education, 1842),[179] though the French author does not seem to have been aware of the latter text. Stirner's positions, according to Funck-Brentano, are the logical consequence of the independence of the I, of absolute individualism, which were then translated into practice not by Stirner, a 'petty clerk of the Hanoverian government',[180] but by Bakunin. This extreme form of individual independence, Funck-Brentano argues, is absurd and leads to the negation not of society but of the individual himself. This becomes evident, in his view, in the practical world. The I envisioned by Stirner, he writes, is abandoned to himself, weak, ignorant, incapable of living and defending himself. How, Funck-Brentano asks, is he supposed to become a man, if not through society? No individual escapes social action or influence, nor is there a society, whether a tribe or a state, that does not owe its existence to individuals: 'society in itself, the individual in himself, are myths. Society and the individual are solidary; they manifest themselves in each social action as they do in each individual action. All individual action has social action as a basis; all social action has origin in individual initiatives.'[181] For Funck-Brentano, in sum, Stirner failed to appreciate the reality and necessity of the influence of society on the individual.

Funck-Brentano's *La Science sociale, morale, politique* is the last of his publications where Stirner was mentioned. During the 1890s and beyond, occasional associations between Stirner and (Russian) nihilism could still be found, of course, and nihilism more generally continued to be the subject of numerous literary works. However, as has been mentioned, already during the 1880s the danger of Russian terrorist nihilism was soon downplayed and trivialized through representations of the nihilists as simple malefactors that could easily be managed. From this perspective, the enthusiasm for the nascent Franco-Russian Alliance was an important factor. Between the late 1880s and the early 1890s, a series of attacks perpetrated by French self-proclaimed anarchists thrust anarchism into the public spotlight, making nihilism somewhat secondary in public debates. Consistently with these developments, the tendency to describe Stirner as a nihilist and to associate him with Russian nihilism rapidly gave way to anarchist interpretations of his thought and to the

[178] Ibid, 28.
[179] First published in the *Rheinische Zeitung* in the supplements to the issues 100, 102, 104, and 109 of April 10, 12, 14, and 19, 1842. For a recent analysis of Stirner's views on education, see Anatole Lucet, 'L'éducation comme création de soi chez Max Stirner', *Astérion*, 19, 2018.
[180] Ibid.
[181] Ibid, 32-3.

Stirner-Nietzsche association, both of which are more familiar (and still highly controversial) among Stirner scholars.[182]

[182] See, for example, Alexander Stulpe, *Gesichter des Einzigen. Max Stirner und die Anatomie moderner Individualität* (Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, 2010).

Conclusion

In the early 1890s, positive responses to Stirner's thought finally began to emerge in France. The year 1892, in particular, has been described in this thesis as a sort of watershed moment in the history of Stirner's French reception. In November 1892, the *Entretiens Politiques et Littéraires*, known for its anarchist leanings, published a four-page translation of passages from the book by the Alsatian Germanist Charles Andler (1866-1933) under the title 'Apologie du mensonge',[1] in reference to Stirner's views on lies and deceit in *Der Einzige*.[2] Andler had also already prepared the ground for Stirner's introduction to the readers of the *Entretiens* with an eleven-page summary of *Der Einzige* the previous September, in an article where he had referred to Stirner's magnum opus as 'Le Livre libérateur' and sung the German author's praises.[3] In his summary, Andler argued that Stirner had consciously written 'the most complete anarchist manual there is.'[4] Stirner's influence on the young Andler could also already be observed in a widely overlooked article entitled 'Pathologie du devoir', published in the *Mercure de France* earlier in 1892,[5] though Stirner's name is never mentioned there.

Andler was the first but not the only Germanist to engage with and translate Stirner in the early 1890s in France. His translation of a few pages from *Der Einzige* was soon followed by the publication of the book's preface in the *Mercure de France* in 1894, plus five other short sections of it between 1894 and 1899,[6] all translated and annotated by Henri Albert[7] (1869-1921), and by an analysis of the text by Henri Lichtenberger (1864-1941) in *La Nouvelle Revue* in 1894.[8] In addition to being all Alsatians and Germanists, these authors had four other fundamental things in common, which contributed to giving Stirner's post-1892 reception in France very precise intellectual and political connotations: a complex relationship with Germany,

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[1] *Entretiens Politiques et Littéraires*, third year, Vol. 5, No. 32, Nov. 1892, Paris, 201-204. Andler signed this translation using his pseudonym, Théodore Randal.

[2] For reference, see *The Unique* (Landsteicher's translation), 309-316. The passages chosen by Andler, some of which are paraphrased rather than translated rigorougly, come from this section of *Der Einzige*.

[3] See *Entretiens Politiques et Littéraires*, third year, Vol. V, No. 30, Sept. 1892, 117-128. Months later, Andler's summary was still recommended by other publicists in other journals, for example in *L'éclair* of 29 Nov. 1892, 3.

[4] Ibid, 128.

[5] 'Pathologie du devoir', *Mercure de France*, No. 29, tome V, May 1892, 19-27.

[6] 'Je n'ai mis ma cause en personne', *Mercure de France*, May 1894, tome XI, No. 53, 28-31; 'Une Vie humaine' (Book One, Chapter One), Aug. 1894, tome XI, No. 56, 316-322; 'Les Hommes de l'ancien temps' (Book One, Chapter One), Nov. 1894, tome XII, No. 59, 210-221; 'Les Hommes du temps nouveau' (Book One, Chapter Two, 2), Feb. 1895, tome XIII, No. 62, 183-191; 'Les Hommes du temps nouveau' (second part), May 1895, tome XIV, No. 65, 213-226; 'Ma Puissance' (Book Two, Chapter One), Oct. 1899, tome XXXII, No. 119, 391-417.

[7] His full name is Henri-Albert Wilhelm Haug.

[8] 'L'anarchisme en Allemagne. Max Stirner', *La Nouvelle Revue*, Tome LXXXIX, Jul.-Aug., Paris, 1894. In 1895, the new-born anarchist journal *Les Temps nouveaux*, founded by Jean Grave, also translated a handful of lines from *Der Einzige*, taken from the section of the book called 'Social Liberalism' and presented by the journal under the title 'Intellectual emancipation' (*Les Temps nouveaux, supplément littéraire*, No. 24, Paris, 1895, 574). Over the following years, extracts and aphorisms taken from Albert's translated sections of *Der Einzige* or independently translated by other authors directly from Stirner's original text began to appear in several periodicals of various political inclinations.

oscillating between veneration and skepticism; a pronounced interest in Nietzsche; socialist inclinations; and the interpretation of Stirner as an anarchist.

Aside from the first partial translations of *Der Einzige*, a number of other important publications appeared in this period which contributed to the increased interest in Stirner in France. In 1891, Mackay published his influential work *Die Anarchisten*, a semi-fictional account on the year he spent in London from the spring of 1887. In the introduction to the text, Mackay suggested: 'The nineteenth century has given birth to the idea of Anarchy. In its fourth decade the boundary line between the old world of slavery and the new world of liberty was drawn. For it was in this decade that P. J. Proudhon began the titanic labour of his life with *Qu'est-ce que la propriété?* (1840), and that Max Stirner wrote his immortal work: *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum* (1845).'[9] Stirner's name does not appear again in the text, yet his ideas permeate the action of the novel. The book was translated into French in 1892 by Louis de Hessem and published as *Anarchistes: moeurs du jour*.[10]

French periodicals consistently kept track of Mackay's subsequent reports on his discoveries about Stirner's life and minor works. One example is the issue of the *Mercure de France* of November 1892, where Henri Albert presented the latest results of the 'Max Stirner subscription' created by Mackay and published in September by the *Frei Bühne*. Among Mackay's new findings were Stirner's last abode and burial place. As Albert explains,

> In order to preserve the memory of the prodigious individualist to whom we owe the '*Livre libérateur*', which Mr. Randal [pseud. of Charles Andler] has discussed in the latest issue of the *Entretiens*, Mackay, the author of *Anarchistes*, took the initiative of a subscription, closed a few months ago. Thanks especially to the lively interest that Hans von Bülow, the eminent musician, has accorded to the enterprise, the necessary amount has been promptly collected. A plaque has been installed at number 19 in Philippstrasse, Berlin N. W. It has the following inscription written in golden letters: 'Max Stirner (Dr. Kaspar Schmidt, 1806-1856), author of the immortal book *The Unique and its property*, 1845'. On the philosopher's grave, surmounted by a granite monument, it is written in big letters these simple words: MAX STIRNER. […] May the enthusiasts of the master honour his memory through pious pilgrimage.'[11]

Another example is a brief piece of *La Revue des Revues* of February 1895, which informed its readers that, in the *Neue Deutsche Rundschau*'s issue of January, Mackay had enthusiastically presented to the

[9] John Henry Mackay, *Die Anarchisten. Kulturgemälde aus dem Ende des XIX Jahrhunderts* (Zürich, 1891), X.
[10] *Anarchistes: moeurs du jour* (Paris: Tressk and Stock), 1892. A positive, unsigned review of Mackay's novel, where Stirner's book is also mentioned, circulated on a number of journals, for example *Le Pays*, (1 July 1892, 4), *La Cocarde* (1 July 1892, 3), *Le Petit Caporal* (12 July 1892, 3), and *L'Opinion Française politique, commercial et financière* (17 July 1892, 2).
[11] *Mercure de France*, No. 35, tome VI, Nov. 1892, 281.

German public a number of pages written by Stirner, the 'father of anarchy', that he had managed to retrieve.[12] The text rediscovered by Mackay is Stirner's *The False Principle of Our Education* (1842).

In 1892, Robert Schellwien published a relatively successful study entitled *Max Stirner und Friedrich Nietzsche*.[13] Schellwien was no admirer of the two philosophers, but he believed that their work deserved greater attention and that a thorough study of it would be particularly instructive for the development of a sound individualist position that avoided their mistakes and could perhaps be reformulated in a different language. While he agreed with their claim that words such as 'state' or 'people' stood for nothing but personified abstractions, he warned against the dangerous tendency of their kind of individualism to erupt into nihilism. Schellwien's book elicited mixed reactions both in Germany and in France (even though it was never translated into French). One of its first French reviewers, the philosopher, playwright, artist, and pedagogue Lucien Arréat (1841-1922) considered it of great interest because it discussed two philosophers, Stirner and Nietzsche, who were little known in France at the time.[14] In fact, he bewailed the lack of biographical details about them in Schellwien's work. Arréat's summary of the book gives the reader a general idea of some of Stirner's main themes and of Schellwien's re-elaborations of them. Schellwien, he writes, regards Stirner as a *critical* author and Nietzsche as a *dogmatic* thinker, in that he proceeds from a law of objective causality and understands conscience as a function of the unconscious. In the final analysis, Arréat explains, Schellwien sides with Stirner, even though he believes that the consequences of his doctrines should be entirely different.

La Revue des Revues, by contrast, treated Schellwien with sarcasm. An unsigned review of just a handful of lines stated that the German author had the rare merit of having muddled the limpid, albeit somewhat paradoxical, theories of Nietzsche, this 'extremely powerful thinker.'[15] Schellwien, the reviewer further claims, has attempted to counterbalance Nietzsche's importance with that which he attributes to Stirner, but thanks to his metaphysical commentaries, he has managed to make both Nietzsche and Stirner equally incomprehensible.

In France, the habit of linking Stirner not only with Nietzsche but also with anarchism accompanied him from the early 1890s onward. To a large extent, these and other developments in Stirner's French reception in this period reflected a number of developments in his reception in Germany, where *Der Einzige* had been re-published in 1882 (Leipzig: Otto Wigand) and 1893 (Leipzig: Reclam)[16] and where a variety of

[12] *La Revue des Revues*, 1 Feb. 1895, Vol. 12, 253-254.
[13] *Max Stirner und Friedrich Nietzsche* (Leipzig: Pfeffer, 1892).
[14] *Revue philosophique*, tome 34, Paris, No. 9, Sept. 1892, 331-335. A few years later, Arréat reviewed other works by Schellwien, for example his *Der Geist der neueren Philosophie* (1896) – the book discusses Stirner, but Arréat only mentions him in passing in his review (*Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*, tome 42, Jul.-Dec., 210-213) – and his *Wille und Erkenntiniss* (1899). Arrèat also reviewed Rudolf Steiner's *Friedrich Nietzsche, ein Kamper gegen sein Zeit* (1895), reporting that Steiner spent words of commendation for Stirner and described him as a precursor of Nietzsche (*Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger*, tome 41, Jan.-Jun., 1896, 463-464.
[15] Review of Schellwien's *Max Stirner und Friedrich Nietzsche*, in *La Revue des Revues*, 1 Jan. 1892, 383.
[16] For a history of the German editions of *Der Einzige*, see Bernd A. Laska, *Ein heimlicher Hit. 150 Jahre Stirners "Einziger": Eine kurze Editionsgeschichte* (Nürnberg: LSR-Verlag, 1994).

intellectuals, including of course Mackay with his research on Stirner's biography and work, had begun to engage with the philosopher in a progressively more substantial manner.[17] The French public eagerly embraced many of the interpretations of Stirner provided by German authors (particularly the anarchist interpretation and the Nietzsche-Stirner association), consolidating them further in a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes that would require greater attention than can be devoted to them here.

The interpretations of Stirner that emerged in France before 1892, on the other hand, have each undergone a different evolution since the final decade of the nineteenth century. Some were soon abandoned almost entirely, leaving few to no traces. For example, Stirner ceased to be associated, at least as frequently as before, with sensualism, positivism, and scientific materialism, for these themes were no longer the worries of the day during the early twentieth century. The nihilist interpretation of Stirner, by contrast, has assumed multiple forms over time and remains quite common to this day. As Dowdall has aptly pointed out, 'It is the vagueness of the word nihilism which has allowed it, over the last two hundred and fifty years, to adopt so many guises and, indeed, to be applied so freely to Stirner',[18] including in France. Some past and recent commentators have described Stirner's nihilism as a practical philosophy with very concrete implications, while others have interpreted it as merely a theoretical position. Most, however, seem to have come to the conclusion that Stirner's nihilism is fundamentally destructive and negative in nature, intimately connected with selfishness and individualism[19] and based on a pessimistic view of life as absurd and meaningless.[20]

A number of commentators have challenged the nihilist interpretation as early as in the 1890s for a variety of reasons. Stirner's translator Reclaire, for example, sought to rescue Stirner from his portrayal as a destructive nihilist in order to be able to establish a link between the philosopher's ideas and a more positive, constructive and solidaristic form of anarchism. In the introduction to his 1899 translation of *Der Einzige*, Reclaire wrote that 'it would be mutilating the thought of its author and misunderstanding the importance of *The Unique and Its Property* to see it merely as the work of a nihilist logician', that is, as mere destruction. Rather, Stirner's nihilism should be understood as a 'purely theoretical' position, consisting of the negation

[17] For Stirner's reception in Germany, see Bernd A. Laska, *Ein dauerhafter Dissident: 150 Jahre Stirners "Einziger": eine kurze Wirkungsgeschichte* (Nürnberg: LSR-Verlag, 1996); Stulpe, *Gesichter des Einzigen*. For the first few years of Stirner's reception in Germany specifically, see also the collection of texts by German contemporary authors edited by Kurt W. Fleming: *Max Stirner's* Der Einzige und sein Eigentum *im Spiegel der zeitgenössischen deutschen Kritik. Eine Textauswahl (1844-1856)* (Leipzig: Max Stirner Archiv, 2008, *Stirneriana* series, No. 20).

[18] Dowdall, *Max Stirner and Nihilism*, 144.

[19] For a recent example in France, see François Geury, *Archéologie du nihilisme de Dostoïevski aux djihadistes* (Paris: Grasset, 2015).

[20] In the section of the *Encyclopédie Universalis* (online) devoted to 'nihilisme', Jean Granier (1933-2019) writes for example that 'Under the influence of Max Stirner, the premonition of catastrophe led the most lucid minds to seek refuge in the exaltation of the self. But behind this haughty and vindictive narcissism looms the shadow of universal absurdity. Turgenev, in *Fathers and Sons* (1862), imagines the character of Bazarov, who expresses a distinctly Schopenhauerian bitterness: "We have only the barren satisfaction of understanding, to a certain extent, the sterility of what is."'

of the *spirit*, as opposed to the Christian conception of the world and that philosophy which is a negation of *life*. Based on these premises, Reclaire concluded that

> In the non-rational self, made of accumulated ancient experiences, full of hereditary instincts and passions, and the seat of our 'great will' as opposed to the 'small will' of the selfish individual, in this 'Unique' of the logician, science allows us to glimpse the common foundation for all, upon which must rise, beyond the lies of Christian fraternity and love, a new solidarity, and beyond the lies of authority and right, a new order. It is on this fertile ground, which Stirner lays bare, that the great negator reaches out across fifty years to the anarchists of today.[21]

Contrary to Reclaire, sociologist and philosopher Georges Palante (1862-1925) linked Stirner with nihilism (as well as with individualism and intellectual and moral solipsism) but challenged Stirner's association with anarchism.[22]

Other commentators found more complex ways to link Stirner with nihilism. One example is *Louis Vialle*, who addressed Stirner in a 1933 book eloquently entitled *Le Désire du Néant.* Vialle's declared goal in the book is to show 'the most remarkable moral subterfuges by which man manages to "divert" himself from certain thoughts whose obsession is dangerous to life'[23], particularly the obsession with death. These subterfuges, he argues, all consist in reducing as much as possible the awareness of the personality or its inevitable limits. Included among the 'diversions' discussed by Vialle are morality, art, and philosophical systems. Vialle examines how notions of the 'absolute' serve as illusions to mitigate existential anxiety, describing the 'absolute' as the negation of everything that causes suffering: death, change, plurality, limitations, and desire. For Vialle, the search for the absolute is nothing other than what religion calls the need for redemption. This need, he argues, creates 'religious diversion' (examples include theists and mystics such as Saint Teresa, Saint John of the Cross and Pascal); 'metaphysical diversion' (examples include Schopenhauer); 'positivist-altruist diversion' (Comte). Even in the individualism of a Stirner and his precursors, Vialle discovers a kind of mysticism in the drive toward the absolute, which ultimately identifies with the desire for the nothingness of the self. For Vialle, Stirner's work is an act of joyful liberation, a cry of revolt, the exaltation of a dream of powerfulness[24] which, in the face of the absurdity of life, offers us a form of 'individualist redemption'.[25] While describing *Der Einzige* as 'a work of universal destruction' (a very

[21] R. L. Reclaire, Preface to *L'Unique et sa Propriété* (Paris: Stock, 1899). In more recent years, scholars Boulad Ayoub and Vernes have stated – without providing evidence or relevant examples – that 'Stirner certainly inspired 19th-century nihilism, but his theoretical nihilism, which exposes the arbitrary aspects of political activities that destroy individual freedom, also inspired anarchists who place their trust in collective power rather than in its representatives.' Josiane Boulad Ayoub, Paule Monique Vernes, *Aux fondements théoriques de la représentation politique* (Québec, Canada: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007), 91.

[22] 'Anarchisme et individualisme', *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger*, tome LXIII, April 1907, 337-363 (338).

[23] Louis Vialle, *Le Désire du Néant* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1933), 1.

[24] Ibid, 708-709.

[25] The title of the fifth and final part of Vialle's book, where Stirner is addressed.

widespread interpretation during the first half of the twentieth century, as mentioned[26]), Vialle therefore argues that Stirner may actually be animated by a secret hope of seeing a prodigiously new life rise from the ruins.[27]

Numerous commentators in France and beyond have associated the concept of nothingness in Stirner with a form of existential nihilism, including Carl Friedrich Heman (1839-1919), Eduard Bernstein (1850-1932), Matteo Johannes Paul Lucchesi (1869-?), Karl Löwith (1897-1973), Giorgio Penzo (1925-2006), Ludger Lütkehaus (1943-2019), R. W. K. Paterson, Jörg Ulrich, Elmar Dod and, perhaps most famously, Albert Camus (1913-60).[28] In *L'Homme Révolté* (1951), Camus, appalled by Stirner's apparent justification of murder and suicide, by his implicit encouragement of a war between the unique individuals, and by his being untroubled by any act of destruction, portrays the author of *Der Einzige* as the ultimate prophet of nihilistic rebellion.[29] As Dowdall has noted, 'The impression Camus gives of Stirner is of a bitter and twisted, apocalyptic rebel, laughing demonically at his acts of destruction. [He] exaggerates the significance of Stirner's apparent condoning of murder, while ignoring the positive themes of self-mastery, individual autonomy, and liberation from external subjugation…'[30]

Gilles Deleuze (1925-95), for his part, identified Stirner as one of the prime embodiments of Nietzschean nihilism, referring to Stirner's 'extreme nihilism' and describing him as 'the dialectician who reveals nihilism as the truth of the dialectic.'[31] French philosopher Vladimir Jankélévitch (1903-85) had already described the content of Stirner's philosophy as 'extreme nihilism' (and as 'absolute nihilism') in a 1931 article devoted to 'L'Unique et le Surhomme. Le problème de la personnalité chez Stirner et chez Nietzsche.'[32] In the article, Jankélévitch explicitly sought to show that 'if [Stirner's] doctrine repelled his contemporaries due to its purely and fiercely negative nature, we are now able to realize that at the time it appeared, it could hardly have been otherwise.'[33]

[26] Writing in 1951, French philosopher Jean Wahl (1888-1974) also associated Stirner (and Hegel) with nihilism, placing this doctrine at the heart of modern individualism and describing it as a pessimistic form of consciousness, one that is aware of its destructive power and of its own destruction. See Jean Wahl, *Le Malheur de la Conscience dans la Philosophie de Hegel* (Brionne: Gérard Monfort, 1951), 56.

[27] Vialle, *Le Désire du Néant*, 712.

[28] See Dowdall, *Max Stirner and Nihilism*, Chapter Four and *passim*. According to Stirner scholar Henri Arvon (1914-92), 'After the Second World War, Stirner appears as one of the precursors of existential philosophy. The affirmation of uniqueness is associated with the revaluation of the human person attempted by existentialism, since, for Stirner, particularity, far from being seen as a flaw, is considered the most reliable mark of man's eminent dignity. In May 1968, Stirner found a new audience; through his concept of the creative void, he seems to have paved the way for the notion of creativity. To prevent any sclerosis, he indeed recommends to the Unique a perpetual questioning, constant renewal, and periodic immersion in a fountain of youth.' See 'Stirner Max (1806-1856)' in the *Encyclopédie Universalis* (online).

[29] Albert Camus, *L'Homme Révolté* (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), 87.

[30] Dowdall, *Max Stirner and Nihilism*, 243.

[31] Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, transl. by Hugh Tomlinson (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), 161-163.

[32] *Revue d'Allemagne*, 15 Feb. 1931, year 5, No. 39, 27-40 (part one), 216-243 (part two).

[33] Ibid, part one, 30.

The view that the nature of Stirner's 'doctrine' was 'purely and fiercely negative' has been challenged, most recently (and rather convincingly), by Tim Dowdall, who has argued in his *Max Stirner and Nihilism* that

> the word nihilism without a qualifying adjective generally means, in current usage, existential nihilism', but this 'is completely unsuitable as a description of Stirner's life-affirming philosophy, which is utterly devoid of the negative aspects of existentialism. […] As a comprehensive description of his thought, nihilism would only be appropriate in the unlikely event that the word were one day to lose its negative connotations, and a new variety, mythological nihilism, were coined. In the meantime, and in the light of this study, it is more reasonable to conceive of Stirner as a hedonistic, pluralistic, quasi-nominalistic, anti-heteronomous, iconoclastic demythologizer, whose ethics are consistent with moral nihilism, and whose philosophy is based on the oft-misconstrued concept of egoism. Admittedly, this is not a simple characterization of Stirner's thought, but nor is it a simplistic misinterpretation or, worse still, a sophisticated falsification.[34]

Aside from the nihilist interpretation, another long-lasting interpretation of Stirner was the one according to which the German philosopher had been a theorist of Germany's cult of force and of the 'might is right' principle embraced not only by Bismarck but also, allegedly, by the Germans as a people. More generally, many of the criticisms levelled at German philosophy in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71) were taken up, modernized, further elaborated and repurposed by new commentators during the early decades of the twentieth century, particularly in the context of the First and Second World Wars.[35] From the 1890s onward, the interpretation of Stirner as a theorist of the cult of force and the 'might is right' principle evolved into a broader association of his philosophical message with German imperialism[36] and, later, even with twentieth-century right-wing ideologies and dictatorships. In fact, several post-WWII observers have not failed to notice the interest in authors like Stirner and Nietzsche shared during the twentieth century by fascist, Nazi, or right-wing intellectuals and ideologues more in general.[37]

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[34] Dowdall, *Max Stirner and Nihilism*, 247-248.

[35] See, for example, Léon Daudet, *Hors du joug allemande. Mesures d'après-guerre* (Paris: Nouvelle Libraire Nationale, 1915).

[36] See, most notably, Ernest Seillière's 'La morale impérialiste chez Stirner', *Mercure de France*, 15 Mar. 1906, 179-198. While Seillière's article reproduces many of the arguments and clichés contained in the publications of the nineteenth-century commentators discussed in Chapter Five, his treatment of Stirner is comparatively more extensive and complex than these, and it would require greater attention than can be devoted to it here.

[37] Examples include Benito Mussolini, Carl Schmitt, Ernst Jünger, Julius Evola, Maurice Barrès, Georges Bataille, Louis-Ferdinand Céline, and Berto Ricci. For Stirner's influence on the rights, see: Enrico Ferri, *La Città degli Unici* (Turin: Giappichelli, 2001), 401-42; Luca Leonello Rimbotti, 'L'Unico e le sue "improprietà": Max Stirner visto da destra', in Enrico Ferri (ed.), *Max Stirner e l'individualismo moderno* (CUEN, 1996), 435-56.

In his *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism, 1933-1944*, first published in 1942 and then in an expanded edition in 1944, German lawyer and political scientist Franz Leopold Neumann wrote, with reference to the years after Germany's wars of liberation and particularly after Bismarck's appointment as first Imperial Chancellor of the German Empire in 1871, that 'A whole stream of Anti-Semitic writers marks the period: Eugen Dühring, the famous critic of liberal capitalism whom Engels attacked in his *Anti-Dühring*; Max Stirner, the anarchist; Hermann Ahlwardt, who incited pogroms and succeeded in staging a ritual murder trial at Xanten, near Düsseldorf' (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, ed. 2009, 110).

Emphasizing Stirner's (allegedly) continued influence in Germany, journalist and politician Georges Pioch (1873-1953) wrote in March 1939 (that is, some six months before the outbreak of World War II) that 'Germany, which was able to give birth to the ideologues who shaped Hitler's mind, remains obscurely pregnant with Max Stirner.'[38] One month after the beginning of the Second World War, journalist, writer, and art critic Auguste Dupouy (1862-1967) wrote that Germany had two credos: the idea that might is right and the superiority of its race, both of which predated Hitler. The author essentially re-proposes the same arguments made by the nineteenth-century French intellectuals discussed in Chapter Five, mentioning Frederick II, Bismarck, Fichte, Hegel, and Stirner as examples of advocates of the idea that might is right.

In his *The Great German Conspiracy* (London: Drummond, 1943), the controversial British journalist, editor, and author of a number of propagandist works against the Nazi regime Hugh William Blood-Ryan wrote that 'Because the German mind has an innate predisposition towards pessimism and nihilism, Hitler's attitude to life has been understood by the masses [and the military clique]. The German philosophers in the last century preached that nihilism was about to come in Europe. Nihilism was uppermost in the thoughts of Schopenhauer, Stirner, Hegel, Böhme, and Eckehart. […] Hitler has probably never read any of the German philosophers, but unconsciously his nature has adapted itself to the conditions they saw pending. […] Through the years, Hitler became the embodiment of Germany. In trepidation I watched the change in every German I knew. I was appalled by their lack of resistance to the narcotic of Hitlerism, or perhaps I should say ultra-patriotism. Everyone pointed out to me that in Germany alone a man of the people ruled. Thus, in continually stressing his humble origin Hitler confessed, in terms of Stirner's egotism, "I am the Nothing, not in the sense of emptiness, but as the creative Nothing, out of which I, the creator, produce everything", [and] from 1933 on, Hitler's government apparently produced something out of nothing…' (128-29). Blood-Ryan met Hitler on two occasions and had frequent conversations with Göring and von Papen (*Isle of Wight County Press*, 20 March 1948, 'Death of Mr. H. W. Blood-Ryan at Ryde. A distinguished journalist', researched and typed by Ann Barrett Margaret Truckel).

In his *De Zaak 40/61* ('Criminal Case 40/61', 1963; report on the Eichmann trial), the Dutch writer Harry Mulisch argues that Hitler 'may have read *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and Stirner's *The Ego and His Own* – at least my father, who was in the same army, read it then. In my family copy I find the following passage marked: "Tomorrow they carry thee to the grave; soon thy sisters, the peoples, will follow thee. But, when they have all followed, then mankind is buried, and I am my own, I am the laughing heir!"' [translated by Steven T. Byington, *The Ego and His Own*, New York: Benj. R. Ticker, 1907, 285] (*Criminal Case 40/61, the Trial of Adolf Eichmann: An Eyewitness Account*, ed. 2005, University of Pennsylvania Press, translated by Robert Naborn, 97).

Historian Otto-Ernst Schüddekopf has included Stirner among the direct intellectual inspirers of fascism in his *Revolutions of Our Time: Fascism* (New York and Washington: Praeger, 1973, 58-59). In the same vein, historian Léon Poliakov, who presents Stirner as an anarchist, has included the author of *Der Einzige* in the long list of thinkers responsible for the birth of the Aryan myth. Poliakov's arguably far-fetched conclusion is based on a supposed (and in fact hard to verify) attempt on Stirner's part to urge his contemporaries to 'conquer a heaven reserved for "Caucasians" alone'. See *Le Mythe aryen. Essai sur les sources du racisme et des nationalismes* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1971, English ed. by Chatto-Heinemann for Sussex University Press, 1974, 244).

Historian Hans Günther Helms' extremely critical and tendentious (in a Marxist sense) *Die Ideologie der anonymen Gesellschaft* (Köln, 1966) is probably one of the most explicit attempts to link Stirner to Nazism and fascism (see esp. 473-90). Helms goes so far as to say that 'The history of Stirnerianism is the history of fascism' (4) and suggests that Hitler himself may have been indirectly exposed to Stirner through the mediation of Dietrich Eckart (appendix to Chapter XII). Based on Helms' studies, Polish philosopher and historian of ideas Leszek Kołakowski has written: 'At first sight, Nazi totalitarianism may seem the opposite of Stirner's radical individualism. But fascism was above all an attempt to dissolve the social ties created by history and replace them by artificial bonds among individuals who were expected to render explicit obedience to the state on grounds of absolute egoism. Fascist education combined the tenets of asocial egoism and unquestioning conformism, the latter being the means by which the individual secured his own niche in the system. Stirner's philosophy has nothing to say against conformism, it only objects to the Ego being subordinated to any higher principle: the egoist is free to adjust to the world if it appears that he will better himself by doing so. His "rebellion" may take the form of utter servility if it will further his interest; what he must not do is to be bound by "general" values or myths of humanity. The totalitarian ideal of a barrack-like society from which all real, historical ties have been eliminated is perfectly consistent with Stirner's principles: the egoist, by his very nature, must be prepared to fight under any flag that suits his convenience' (*Main currents of Marxism* [first published in Polish in 1976], Vol. I, ed. Oxford University press, 1978, 167-168).

In his *Gli Anarchici* (Turin, 1971, Vol. I), Italian historian Gian Mario Bravo described Stirner as a precursor of Nazi-fascism, and Italian philosopher and historian Antonio Capizzi has argued that 'Hitler has retraced rather accurately the path that goes from Stirner […], passes through Nietzsche […] and consolidates itself in Jünger […]' (*Alle radici ideologiche dei fascismi. Il mito della libertà individuale da Constant a Hitler* (Rome: Savelli, 1977, 143).

[38] Georges Pioch, 'Peuples en uniforme', *La République*, 5 Mar. 1939, 1, 4.

Unlike his predecessors, however, Dupouy does not quote the usual passage from *Der Einzige*, but another: 'I have the right, wrote the Bavarian Max Stirner nearly a hundred years ago, to do everything I have the power to do. The tiger that leaps at me is right; and I, who kill it, am also right.'[39]

What is important to stress here with regards to the evolution of Stirner's reception before and after 1892 is that, in spite of the relative thematic continuity that may be observed in the association of Stirner with Germany's cult of force and the 'might is right' principle or in his interpretation as a nihilist, most or all of the intellectuals who wrote about Stirner in France after 1892 simply ignored what had been written by his previous French commentators. These intellectuals therefore reached their conclusions (whether positive or negative) independently, proving to have been informed by completely different political constellations and ideological motivations, the analysis of which will hopefully constitute the object of a future study.

Against a prevailing narrative, this thesis aimed to demonstrate how Stirner never completely 'fell into oblivion' only to be 'rediscovered' in the 1890s. This was not the case in France, nor does it seem to have been the case in several other countries, particularly Russia.[40] In fact, as far as France is concerned, quite a few additional primary sources on Stirner exist which further confirm that the author's name was fairly well known in the country (evidently, though, the same cannot be said about his philosophy). These sources, comprising encyclopaedias, histories of philosophy, and essays and novels by more or less prominent French authors have not been included into the main body of the thesis both for reasons of space and because the ways in which they deal with Stirner are essentially consistent with all the main trends discussed in the various chapters. However, details for all these sources have been provided in a separate section of the bibliography for further reference.

The notion of a Stirner 'renaissance', which has contributed to the scholarly neglect of Stirner's early French reception, need not necessarily be abandoned, provided that it is understood simply as denoting the increased interest in Stirner towards the end of the nineteenth century and especially the emergence of *positive* reactions to his thought, which were previously almost non-existent, at least in France. However, the evidence discussed in this thesis shows that Stirner's early French reception, and arguably his early reception more in general, needs rethinking. This study demonstrates that even a reception characterized by passing comments and negative remarks can tell us much, about the history of a given author's reception, the intellectuals who engaged with that author, and possibly about the author himself. The initial reception of Stirner in France is not only an unjustly forgotten chapter in the history of his intellectual legacy but also represents a snapshot of the country's debates on philosophy, politics, religion, and literature in the nineteenth century, particularly in relation to Germany and certain radical ideas that Stirner, in the eyes of many, came to embody more than anyone else.

[39] Auguste Dupouy, 'L'Apostolat de la violence', *La Dépêche*, 12 Oct. 1939, 1-2.
[40] See the sources provided in Chapter Five.

Although Stirner's reception in France after 1892 is somewhat better known to scholars, there nonetheless remains much work to be done on this period too. The French would still have much to say about Stirner in the *fin de siècle* and during the twentieth century, using his ideas in a variety of other original ways that deserve to be studied in greater detail. For example, little has been written about how the early translators of Stirner in France, both those of partial translations (Andler, Albert, and Lichtenberger) and those of the complete translations of 1899/1900 (Reclaire and Lasvignes), engaged with his ideas and shaped his subsequent reception in France. Furthermore, the frequently mentioned but poorly studied influence of Stirner on French (and not only French) individualist anarchism continues to prompt scholars to argue either that Stirner's influence was far-reaching and pervasive or, on the contrary, that his impact has often been exaggerated and needs to be downscaled.[41] The common limit of these two positions, though, is that they are defended without substantial evidence. The risk of making inaccurate claims is therefore inevitable if the topic is not systematically studied with a more historical eye and with evidence at hand. The same applies, of course, to all other areas of the French (and non-French) reception of Stirner: discussing the historical importance of a thinker without knowing their actual influence on subsequent thought and based on partial information can only result in speculation and generalizations.

This thesis, instead, aimed to gather as many primary sources as possible and study all the dimensions and facets of Stirner's reception overlooked in the existing secondary literature. It is not sufficient, though, to simply gather these sources and present them to the public as they are, as has generally been the case in the few existing publications on Stirner's early French reception.[42] What a given author wrote about Stirner needs to be contextualized and explained. Moreover, and importantly, this should be done in relation not to Stirner's relevance for us today but to the goals and assumptions of those actors who engaged with him in their own time. Today, there is more interest in establishing whether Stirner was a

[41] On the one hand, Robert Graham has gone so far as to describe the entire individualist anarchist tradition as merely 'a footnote to Max Stirner'. See Robert Graham (ed.) *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume One: From Anarchy to Anarchism (300 CE to 1939)* (Black Rose Books, 2005), XIII. On the other hand, Gaus and D'Agostino have argued against Graham that while 'Stirner's book is often taken to be the principal guiding text of individualist anarchism, […] Stirner's influence on individualist anarchism has been fairly slight, with most of its thinkers either being unaware of Stirner or rejecting him.' See Gerald Gaus and Fred D'Agostino (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Social and Political Philosophy* (New York and London: Routledge, 2013), 221. Indeed, Stirner's influence on individualist anarchism and illegalism has often just been assumed and stated rather than demonstrated. See, most notably, Richard Parry, *The Bonnot Gang* (London: Rebel Press, 1987).

Various scholars, however, have rejected the anarchist label or, at any rate, Stirner's interpretation as a precursor of anarchism. See, for example, Eugène Fleischmann, 'The Role of the individual in pre-revolutionary society. Stirner, Marx, and Hegel', in Z.A. Pelczynsky (ed.), *Hegel's political philosophy. Problems and perspectives* (Cambridge University Press, 1971), 220-229 (223); Robert J. Hellman, *Berlin. The Red Room and White Beer. The "Free" Hegelian Radicals in the* 1840s (Washington: Three Continent Press, 1990), 4. Regarding Stirner's relationship with the anarchist tradition and his interpretation as an anarchist, the most prudent approach remains, arguably, the one adopted by Angaut: 'One cannot reproach the anarchist tradition for its interest in Stirner, or for having seen in him a precursor. Yet it would be a mistake to retrospectively attribute to him the characteristics of this movement, or the ideas that one has about him. Nor should one denigrate this tradition by making Stirner one of its infamous sources, or belittle the contribution represented by the interpretation of Stirner given by certain anarchists. One simply needs to recognize that Stirner could not or did not wish to call himself an anarchist: those who associated themselves with anarchy in his time were precisely those who distanced themselves from him…' See Jean-Christophe Angaut, 'Stirner et l'anarchie', in Olivier Agard and Françoise Larillot (eds.), *Max Stirner. L'Unique et sa propriété: lectures critiques* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2017), 205-223 (223).

[42] See the Introdocution, section II.

nihilist, an anarchist, an existentialist, etc., than in studying his actual historical impact on these traditions. And if interest in his influence exists, it is only in certain areas (particularly, in recent years, the history of literature and art), in specific timeframes (generally excluding the period before the 1880s or 1890s), or in relation to specific aspects and interpretations of his philosophy.

If we look at Stirner as philosophers, political theorists, artists, or simply as enthusiasts primarily interested in *using* his ideas or giving interpretations of his work, then the issue of Stirner's place in the history of thought and his intellectual legacy will inevitably remain a matter of subjective opinion. Of course, this is a perfectly legitimate exercise. After all, Stirner himself, to be consistent with his teaching, could not have objected to the egoistic appropriation of his thought by his readers for personal purposes. As Stirner himself declared: 'Do with [my thought] what you will and can, that's your affair, and I don't care.'[43] But if we are to express a judgement as accurate and informed as possible on his historical impact and his place in the history of ideas, then we must, especially if we are historians, change our way of thinking about Stirner's reception and our approach to studying its history. The first step, this thesis has argued, would be to produce more systematic, comprehensive studies on his reception in various countries using a transnational approach more sensitive to the methods employed in intellectual history and reception studies. This may also allow one day for comparative studies on Stirner's reception in different countries.

[43] *The Unique* (Landstreicher's translation), 308. On reading Stirner as intentional violation of his thought, see Jacob Blumenfeld's recent *All Things are Nothing to Me. The Unique Philosophy of Max Stirner* (Winchester/Washington: Zero Books, 2018), 14-15.

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Appendix

In the introduction of this thesis, it was stated that, before the early 1890s, there were no positive reactions to Stirner by any French commentator. There was, however, at least one text published in France and written in French by a non-French author which contained positive remarks on Stirner. This text is worth briefly reviewing here, at the end of this study, not merely for the sake of completeness but also because it was a very successful publication and because it represents a rather remarkable exception to the prevailing unfavourable reactions to Stirner everywhere at the time. Specifically, this work presented the French public with the only dissonant interpretation of *Der Einzige*'s particularist conception of the individual as diametrically opposed to the predominant socialisms and communisms of the epoch, with which virtually all French commentators tended, by contrast, to link Stirner. The text in question is *La Décadence de l'Europe*,[44] by Polish writer and politician Stefan Buszczyński (1821-92), who chose to release the book in France because in Poland 'the publisher had only been able to find one subscriber.'[45]

Born to a noble family, Buszczyński completed his humanistic studies at the University of Kiev. He participated in the unsuccessful January Uprising (1863-64), a Polish rebellion against Russian rule in Poland. In the aftermath of the failed insurrection, a sentence to death forced him into exile. He lived in Switzerland, Germany, and France, where he worked as a publicist. Buszczyński advocated the Polish cause and the principles of democracy, and he shared the romantic belief in Slavic unity, though he consistently denied Russia the right to call itself Slavonic.[46] He authored a number of works on the idea of a European federation. Over the years, his focus shifted to issues related to the Habsburg dynasty and the Slavic nations and, later, the entire world. He developed the so-called 'Noarchy' project, envisioning a world where all nations and individuals could attain happiness and peace.[47]

La Décadence de l'Europe investigates the evils that purportedly afflicted the Old Continent and outlines Buszczyński's vision for its future. The book is said to have aroused the 'avid interest' of people like Jules Michelet, Victor Hugo, and Napoleon III.[48] This fact is quite significant, for it attests that such illustrious French personalities had come across Stirner's name and read a positive account on his ideas (though it does not appear that any of Buszczyński's known French readers ever expressed a particular interest in the German philosopher).

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[44] *La Décadence de l'Europe* (Paris: Librairie du Luxembourg, 1867).

[45] Jeremi Sadowski, 'Two Hundred Years of Polish Disputes over Federalism – about the Forgotten Chapter of the Polish Contemporary History', *The Polish Quarterly of International Affairs* 2/2007: 65-80 (72).

[46] Piotr Eberhardt, 'Polish precursors to the idea of the political unification of Europe', *Geographia Polonica*, Vol. 82, No. 2, 2009, 35-44 (40-41).

[47] See Zuzanna Ładyga's notices on Buszczyński which introduce her translation of excerpts from Buszczyński's *Przyszłość Austrji: Rozwiązanie kwestii słowiańskiej*, in 'The Future of Austria', in Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček (eds.), National Romanticism: The Formation of National Movements (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), 361-365.

[48] Ibid, and Krzysztof Karol Daszyk, 'Stefan Buszczyński o Krakowie Stańczykow', *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 1/1993: 75-89 (76).

Contrary to the widespread tendency amongst French critics to include Stirner in very mixed and ambiguous categories such as 'the communists' or 'the socialists', Buszczyński reserves to the author of *Der Einzige* a particular place in his critique of the humanist doctrines of past and contemporary social reformers. For Buszczyński, Stirner's oeuvre proves precisely that the theories of socialists, communists, and others whose aim is universal unity are essentially impractical and necessarily lead to despotism. The Polish author is one of the few observers to acknowledge in those years that while socialist ideas were becoming increasingly popular all across Europe, Stirner 'dreamed of *individual emancipation*', and that instead of the absolutism of humanity 'he sought to establish *the supreme authority of the I* (des Ich), *individual autonomy*'.[49] French commentators, by contrast, had shown little interest in making any fine distinctions in this sense. While they acknowledged (and criticized) Stirner's insistence on the individual, they nonetheless proceeded to depict Stirner's philosophy as merely another variation on the humanist and socialist themes in vogue around the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

Stirner's absolute, Buszczyński points out, is not the general I, but the individual I, not man in general, but one specific man, particularly defined, unique – in a word, *the I*. For Buszczyński, Stirner's entire philosophical 'system' (provided that 'system' is an appropriate label for Stirner's enterprise) has two aims: to overthrow the universality of the idea which recognizes the rights of the 'kind' without implementing them in the application to species and individuals, and to react against communism and socialism, which seek to achieve social freedom to the detriment of free individuals.

A further distinctive feature of Buszczyński's reading of *Der Einzige* is his defence of Stirner's theory of egoistic love,[50] which in his view does not contain anything immoral. Yet some commentators, he explains, have derived from this theory the principle that to love your neighbour is reprehensible and have attributed this very opinion to Stirner, a manoeuvre which Buszczyński dismisses with the bitter remark that 'there is no way to fight against bad faith.'[51] Additionally, the Polish author argues that from the doctrines of socialism and communism against which Stirner has protested so vigorously, a host of confusing, sometimes even 'revolting' ideas have followed which mistake individual and social responsibility for one another and give rise to tyranny.[52]

Despite these few instances of approval for some of Stirner's intellectual efforts, and in light of the Polish author's adherence to Christianity as well as of his general condemnation of egoism and the excesses of man's passions, it is hard to imagine that he could possibly have endorsed all the teachings and ideas contained in *Der Einzige*. The author does not provide a straightforward, overall verdict on the book.

[49] Buszczyński, *La Décadence de l'Europe*, 76.
[50] For a recent (positive) appraisal of it, see Skye Cleary, 'Max Stirner and Loving Egoistically', *Existentialism and Romantic Love* (New York: Palgrave, 2015), 21–44.
[51] Buszczyński, *La Décadence de l'Europe*, 77.
[52] Ibid.

Nevertheless, his comments clearly stand out as an exceptional case of (partial) reappraisal of Stirner amidst an otherwise overwhelmingly negative early reception in France.

In fact, even non-French authors living in France and writing in French generally shared the same negative views discussed in the thesis. One example is Louis Wihl (1807-82), a German poet and philologist who fled to France, where he became professor of German in Paris and Grenoble. In an 1858 article,[53] Wihl commented on the various philosophies that had appeared in Germany from Kant until his times, including those of Hegel and the Young Hegelians. As far as Stirner is concerned, Wihl agrees with him that Feuerbach's efforts to make the individual self a universal self were vain. In fact, he claims, the individual self is something real, concrete, perceptible, and while it can certainly form a collection of selves if united with others, it will never be *one*, it will never be a *single* self. But here, according to Wihl, lies Stirner's mistake too, a mistake that does not, in his view, make him so different from Feuerbach and the other Young Hegelians after all. Stirner, Wihl contends, has essentially elevated the individual self to the place that was previously occupied by Feuerbach's humanitarianism. The names have changed, but the fact and the cause remained the same. For Wihl, Stirner is the most consistent, but he is also the most absurd: 'Feuerbach ended up in nonsense, Stirner has abjured reason.'[54] Overall, he adds, both Stirner and Feuerbach have not done much more than postulating an imaginary theism, which they subsequently took to the extreme and rendered monstrous so that they could compare their splendid atheism with it and make it appear like the best choice. But this stratagem, Wihl argues, could only appeal to a public that is not initiated to this kind of manoeuvres. Stirner's 'orgies of the self' do not convince Wihl. For him, the philosophy of *The Unique* is false progress. Stirner, Wihl concedes, has courageously set himself to obtain his own freedom, but what ultimately remains of his philosophy does not even represent a concrete danger to society. Stirner is 'more of a dialectician than a real philosopher', the difference being, to paraphrase Wihl, that the former kind of thinker is mainly concerned with fighting other dialecticians and eventually leaves nothing on the battlefield but the debris of his arguments, whereas the second kind of thinker supposedly *constructs* and *proposes*, or in other words he puts forward a positive stance rather than a merely nihilistic one.[55]

Stirner's 'bible', as Wihl calls it, even reverses Proudhon's famous claim, 'property is theft', into 'theft is property'. The author of *The Unique*, this 'sad book', opposes property to freedom by making it coincide with the individual, with the self, for according to him one is the owner of everything that is in one's power, and the proprietor of anything that one is capable of mastering.

On one side, Wihl acknowledges – like Buszczyński would do a few years later – Stirner's reaction against the socialism and communism that his predecessors have professed as the latest result of their humanitarian ideas; but, on the other, he identifies something terrible in Stirner's theory, namely the fact

[53] Louis Wihl, 'Des phases diverses de la philosophie allemande depuis Kant. Deuxième partie. De Hégel jusqu'à nos jours', in *Revue contemporaine*, second series, tome 5, Paris, 1858, 470-495.
[54] Ibid, 484.
[55] Ibid.

that such a doctrine ‘pulls out the germ of every honest idea from our heart, it does not recognize any God or morals, and it preaches the salvation of humanity from tyranny which it presents as the culmination of the anarchic state, from which it follows that war is the normal order of things of human societies.’[56]

[56] Ibid, 486.