

## Introduction

Why bother to look at Strauß today? If there is one thing shared by both his conservative critics who see in him the anti-Christ Himself and his liberal defenders who see in him a martyr for critical scholarship, it is the conviction that he is no ‘divine oracle.’ Nonetheless, he is a quintessential scholar, rigorously seeking understanding. One benefits from those insights and claims that he does well. These include his presentation of the Supernaturalist, the Rationalist, and the Mythic readings of the gospel stories of his *Life of Jesus Critically Examined*. However, it is equally the case with his two volume study of Church Doctrine and his attempts to find an epistemological and metaphysical alternative to his original Hegelianism that shapes the last ten years of his life. Just as importantly, though, one is stimulated to search beyond his personal conclusions for clarity and resolution for those things which he failed to grasp ‘adequately.’ In other words, even where he ‘fails,’ he contributes to his reader’s formulation of the questions that drive understanding forward.

Strauß was at the very heart of one of the most fruitful intellectual periods on the European continent. The century-and-a-half prior to him was an age in which ‘science’ knew no nationalistic boundaries even if there were rivalries between a Leibniz and a Newton. Both wrote in the intellectual *lingua franca* of Latin as did Kant in his earliest writings. Furthermore, the continent was flooded with the reflections of England and Scotland, for example, with respect to moral theory. Thanks to his mentors, Strauß came to intellectual awareness in the anti-Enlightenment and anti-Kantian currents at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> C, and he followed a trajectory across the intellectual schools of his day to arrive at a ‘materialism’ that he acknowledged has serious gaps. However, as is the coin of the realm today, he was confident that materialism contained the key to all further advancement in any and all understanding.

This project seeks to profile Strauß’ achievements, but it does not shy away for a moment from his limits. Both underscore his humanness with its strengths and weaknesses.

### History or Falsehood?

If Strauß is remembered at all, it is because of his *Life of Jesus Critically Examined* of 1835 in which he underscored the ‘mythic’ nature of the Christian gospels. Unfortunately for Strauß, few even among his defenders grasped what all is involved when it

comes to his ‘mythic’ reading of the gospels much less that his real aim was a new defense of the traditional Church Doctrine of the Incarnation.<sup>1</sup>

His text shook the Christian world not for what he said but because of what people mistakenly thought he said. If they read the *LJ* at all, people ‘read out’ of his work (*exegesis*) what they ‘read into’ (*eisegesis*) it. In short, an engagement of the writings of those who responded to him paradigmatically illustrates the distortions of the all too common *vicious hermeneutical circle* that, unfortunately, drives ‘understanding’ – although it is possible to curtail the circle’s damage. Tragically, though, in Strauß’ case, the distortions led to a political revolution in Zurich. Yet, all that was new to his ‘mythic’ reading of the text was the thoroughness of his documentation of the ‘mythic’ in the gospels in contrast to those alternative readings of his day that frequently referred to the ‘mythic’ stories absent an exhaustive study of their pervasiveness in the texts. Even his suggestion of a ‘higher’ philosophical defense of traditional Church Doctrine was by no means novel although his own philosophical defense is no exception to the

1. A paradigmatic example of a ‘liberal’ defender of Strauß is the American Unitarian, Theodore Parker, who published in 1840. Theodore Parker, “Strauß’s Life of Jesus” in the *Christian Examiner* for April, 1840. Reprinted from The *Critical and Miscellaneous Writings of Theodore Parker* (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1843): 248–308 (available at <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/7> [20 December 2024]). Parker based his review on the third edition of the *LJ* in which Strauß tried to repair bridges with the Schleiermachians and those who defended the Gospel of John as the most trustworthy source for the Christian faith.

Five themes are raised in Parker’s review that demonstrate the unfortunate shallowness on the part of Strauß ‘defenders’. 1) The sole intellectual issue in Strauß’ work that interests Parker is the question of history in the gospels. 2) The Gospel of John remains for Parker the most trustworthy source for information about the historical Jesus. 3) Strauß cannot destroy the hopes and meaning contained in Christianity. 4) Strauß is no Hegelian, according to Parker. 5) Religion is not reducible to Kantian morality.

Re. 1) History in the gospels: “Mr. Strauß has plainly asked the question, ‘What are the historical facts that lie at the basis of the Christian movement?’” Parker takes Strauß to have “push[ed] his mythical hypothesis too far.” (305): Parker concludes that Strauß leaves the reader with three options: 1) biblical literalism (the Supernaturalists); 2) there is little or no historical ground in the text and what historical element is there is “wrapped in legends and myth;” or 3) “the Bible, and in particular the New Testament, ‘always rests on historical ground, though it is not common historical ground, *nor is it so rigidly historical that no legendary or mythical elements have entered it.*’” (Parker’s emphasis) (298) As I explain below, it turns out that the difference between Strauß (Parker’s 2<sup>nd</sup> option) and Parker’s own 3<sup>rd</sup> option is a matter of epistemology, not historical evidence.

Re. 2) Having read the third edition (and not checked the 4<sup>th</sup>), Parker is pleased that Strauß had come to doubt his earlier rejection of the authority of John’s Gospel under the influence of Neander and de Wette. (263) Clearly, though, even Parker does not take the Gospel of John to come from a disciple: “It seems [...] that the fourth Gospel was written not by John, but from someone who drew from the Christian tradition as received by the more refined Hellenists.” (287) John commands itself because it is “the most modern” (283) although Parker admits that elements in the Gospel are difficult to accept as true. (e.g., on pre-existent Christ: 279; the discourses attributed to Jesus present “difficulties” 282 although Parker addresses the ‘metaphysical question’ only with respect to God’s enduring agency, not as an identification of Jesus and God 283–284). Parker concludes with respect to the Gospel of John: “[...] [T]his evangelist treated the authentic tradition in the freest manner, and in the tone and spirit of the Alexandrians, or Hellenists.” (284)

silent anthropomorphic elevation of humanity to the throne of God that lurks in all religious understanding, conservative or liberal.

Re. 3) Strauß can't destroy Christian hope and meaning: Parker writes, no book can displace "[...] an institution, cherished and clung to by the choicest hopes, the deepest desires of the human race." (307) He concludes his review saying: That even Jesus of Nazareth "is fruitful only for a time," but that "[i]t has been his earnest desire to render the world entirely free; it must, therefore, be his wish to make it free also from himself, that God may be all in all. Then men (*sic.*) will not only know that they have power enough in themselves to obey perfectly the will of God; but in the perfect knowledge of this, they can go beyond its requisitions, if they only will! Yea, when the Christian name is forgotten, then for the first time shall a universal kingdom of Love and Truth arise, in which there shall lie no more any seen of enmity, that from the beginning has been continually sown between such as believe in Jesus, and the children of men. But (*sic.*) this fable can never be true. Even if the letter [the bible or the fab le?] should perish, – which is holy, only because it preserves to us this image, – the image itself would remain forever. It is stamped so deep in the heart of man, that it never can be effaced, and the ward of the Apostle will ever be true, 'Lord, whither shall we go? thou only hast the words of eternal life.' (307–308) From whence comes Parker's confidence? *Parker's confidence is grounded not in a text, a fable, or metaphysical claims for the Christ but in the epistemological 'certainty' that 'history' precedes the 'idea'.* "Mr. Strauß [...] reverses the order of things; makes the effect precede the cause; the Idea appear in the mass [Strauß' universal Christology of the species], before it was seen in an individual." (298) "If there was not an historical Christ to idealize, there could be no ideal Christ to seek in history." (299) "Mr. Strauß takes the idea, which forms the subject, as he thinks, of a Christian myth, out of the air, and then tells us how the myth itself grew out of that idea. But (*sic.*) he does not always prove from history or the nature of things, that the idea existed before the story or the fact was invented." (299) Parker claims that, as a consequence, Strauß' mythic strategy can turn everything into fiction (e.g., 299–300). Facts must precede ideas! A remarkable claim for a New England 'Transcendentalist'. However, to generate the story (*Erzählung/myth*) of a messiah, one needs no factual messiah. One needs only the anthropomorphic assumptions of Occasionalism that there is a Personal Deity, who possesses eminent causality, to 'anoint' (= messiah) a charismatic personality with supernatural capacities to achieve the aim of the Personal Deity. Parker's fanciful reading of American history illustrates the epistemological conundrum. Finite consciousness does not have direct access to the phenomena themselves and must *deduce* (not *create!*) the conceptual/lawful order out of the relationalities of appearances. Hence, the temptation of mythic amplifications, historical fancies, and delusional conspiracy theories. When the 'idea' of the anthropomorphic, Personal Deity is grafted onto Hellenistic notions of Spirit (*voūc*) (as was the case with Philo of Alexandria at the time of Jesus), the notion of the 'messiah' takes on a cosmic dimension all of which were subsequently applied to a remarkable teacher, Jesus of Nazareth. Rather than claiming, though, that facts must precede ideas, Parker is surely making an epistemological, not a metaphysical claim. Whereas metaphysically a New England 'Transcendentalist' would claim that 'ideas' precede 'facts', epistemologically (for finite consciousness) 'facts' must precede 'ideas'. However, Parker has not understood Kant's notion of '*deduction*' of concepts (and 'laws') out of the relationalities that are appearances.

Re. 4) Strauß is no Hegelian: [Although in transient and permanent, Parker appears to embrace Strauß' notion of the species, rather than the individual, as the ultimate object of religion.] Parker tells us that Strauß "[...] is by no means the representative of the followers of Hegel, many of whom are opposed to him." He footnotes to the Right-wing Hegelian, Bruno Bauer's review of Strauß' *LJ*. This is equivalent to saying that because one is not an extreme Supernaturalist, one is not a Christian. Bauer's Hegelianism is the epitome of what Kant calls the 'melancholy' view of the world. See Kant, *Menschenkunde* AA XXV,2: 1160–1163; Olms ed.: 340–342 and *Anweisung* Olms ed.: 44–45.

For Bauer finite experience is only pain and suffering (negation). The 'proper' understanding of 'myth' is its dialectical antithesis to 'laws of nature', whose ultimate truth is Absolute Spirit 'above' both. The pain and suffering of the world is overcome by itself being negated by the great Second Negation

In light of the conservative to liberal, theological spectrum of his day that stretched from Personal Theism to the theologies of the Rationalists and Schleiermacher, as well as the Hegelian spectrum from conservative to liberal, Right-, Center-, and Left-wings, Strauß was rejected even by the Left-wing Hegelians by whom he, initially, personally felt at home. It is no wonder, then, that his theological audience was very small. In short, he was known by 'reputation,' not by the careful study of his work that it deserves and rewards.

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imaged in the incarnation of the God/Man but ultimately the promised unification of humanity with God beyond history (the 'scientific' meaning of repentance of Matthew 11:21 is 'negation'). See Bruno Bauer, „Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet von David Fr. Strauss, Dr. der Philos. Zweiter Band. P. XII, 750. Tübingen, 1836.“ In *Jahrbücher für wissenschaftliche Kritik*, 86 (Mai 1836): 688, 691. See especially, Bauer's criticism of Schleiermacher's 'perfect God-consciousness' Christology in *ibid.*: 703–704. Given that this meta-narrative is based on an the assumption of the *necessity* of a logic of negation that requires the sole *a priori* synthetic judgment of Absolute Spirit, it is a meta-narrative of rapture (*Schwärmerei*) that takes a mystical, anthropomorphic element of humanity (consciousness) to be the ultimate explanation of all that is. Rather than a meta-narrative of human perfection overcoming 'sin', Right-wing Hegelianism is a meta-narrative of human spirit overcoming the pain and suffering in the material world. Both meta-narratives are humanity worshipping itself. Hence, Strauß' exasperated cry in the *Glaubenslehre* I : "Where is the *Symbolum Quicunque* [the 'Athanasian Creed']? "God became man that man might become God"? Give it to me! I want to swear it twice, before I call the sentences of our philosopher only once differently than superstitions." However, this is not Strauß' Hegelianism as I demonstrate throughout these present two volumes. Parker, as many of Strauß' readers, has invoked superficial reasons for distancing Strauß from Hegel. Although Strauß rejected the Hegelian meta-narrative of Absolute Spirit, but he retained the Hegelian 'scientific' epistemology of form (*Vorstellungen*) and content (*Inhalt*) as well as the Hegelian "Moral View of the World."

Re. 5) Religion is not reducible to Kantian morality, but it also is not an internal, eternal order as Parker wishes to believe: Parker writes of Kant: Kant "[...] did not concern himself with the history, but only with the *idea* the history unfolded; this idea he considered not as theoretical and practical, but only the latter [...]. [T]he Christian writings must be explained, so as to make them harmonize with the universal laws of a pure moral Religion," (258) Just what 'pure religion' means is left unclear with such statements as: "We still believe our real enemies are 'the Flesh and the Devil,' and that neither the philosophy of Hegel, nor the Biblical Criticism of the Germans will ever weaken the popular faith in God or man (*sic.*), or the pure religion that mediates between the two." (305–306) Parker describes this 'pure moral religion' in his "Transient and Permanent in Christianity" of 1841 (three years after Strauß' text with this title) by calling on God to "[...] send us a real religious life, which shall pluck blindness out of the heart, and make us better fathers, mothers, and children; a religious life, that shall go with us where we go, and make every home the house of God, every act acceptable as a prayer. We would work for this, and pray for it, though we wept tears of blood while we prayed." Theodore Parker, "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity" in *Three Prophets of Religious Liberalism: Channing-Emerson-Parker* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961): 146. Just how it is possible for there to be such a 'pure moral religion' and how it is to able to strive for it is left inexplicable by Parker. On Kant's notion of 'pure' with respect to epistemology and religion, see: 558, n. 109 and 928, n. 189. According to Kant, religion is far more than 'merely' morality (see 727), and it is also more than empty promises and blind hope based on literal, anthropomorphic projections of forgiveness or ultimate escape from pain and suffering by attaining a permanent status of moral perfection in the afterlife, which characterizes most of Christian dogmatics despite Parker's narrow emphasis on Christian clinging to "[...] the choicest hopes [... and] the deepest desires of the human race." (307)

With such superficial and distorting 'defenders', Strauß and Kant don't need enemies.

However, it was not the limited, theological audience that led him to question Hegelianism and commence a journey in search of an alternative ‘foundation’ for faith. Contrary to those who ‘read’ Strauß to be denying all ‘historical facts’ in the gospels, what drove him was his thirst for metaphysical understanding that grounds knowledge in ‘facts’. Consequently, his focus was not on the theological implications of the ‘evangelists as authors’ but on the centrality of ‘facts’ for the understanding of ‘ideas’.

It was this focus which led him to question, almost immediately after (if not already brewing in) the *LJ*, the Hegelian meta-narrative of Absolute Spirit and, eventually, the Idealist epistemology itself. Above all, his engagement of Ludwig Feuerbach at the end of the 1830s deepened his conviction of the significance of finite, historical experience not only for understanding humanity but also for understanding ‘ultimate reality’.

Before following Strauß on his metaphysical peregrinations, it is important to draw up an assessment of his starting point, the *LJ* of 1835, which is the focus of Volume I of this present work. At the age of 27, this 1,500 page tome was received with limited applause and great misunderstanding, when not horror,<sup>2</sup> across the spectrum of Christian dogmatics.

If there was nothing new about either its methodology of textual criticism or its metaphysical defense of Christian doctrine, why was it taken to be such a threat to the Christian faith? The answer is not simple. On the one hand, it is certain that no one had so exhaustively applied the ‘mythic’ reading to the Christian gospels as did Strauß in his *LJ*. On the other hand, Strauß provided a) a careful, as it was thorough, criticism of the inconsistencies and incoherence of the Supernaturalists’ literal reading of the text as well as b) a careful, as it was thorough, criticism of the so-called Rationalists, who had to introduce foreign elements into the text in order to give a ‘scientific’ explanation for what they viewed as the mis-apprehensions that resulted in the early Church’s account of miracles in the gospels.

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2. Karl Barth quotes Albert Schweitzer: ‘In order to understand Strauß, one must love him’ (Gesch. der Leben-Jesu-Forschung 1926 S. 69). Barth, *Die protestantische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert. Ihre Vorgeschichte und ihre Geschichte* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1981): 491 Barth concludes his evaluation of Strauß by amending Albert Schweitzer’s observation: ‘In order to understand Strauß, one must love the question he raised. His question is loved only by a few and from most feared.’ Barth, *Ibid.*: 515. Barth derisively dismisses the Schleiermacher disciple, Alexander Schweizer, who opposed Strauß’ appointment in Zurich for not understanding where ‘true’ theology arises. Proper theology begins with Strauß’ question. Barth was not threatened by the sharpness of Strauß’ historical question. When it comes to the historical questions of biblical scholarship and the ‘historical Jesus,’ Barth as well as Pannenberg agree with Hegel that the theological answer comes from beyond history with a post-resurrected Christology. See Chapter 1: ‘Methodology.’ 152, n. 156. However, I propose that the question for Strauß was not myth versus history, but which epistemology and metaphysics ground the truths of empirical history?

When the criticism of the Supernaturalists and Rationalists is combined with the claim that the gospel narratives are foremost 'myths,' the doors were thrown wide open, at the least, to historical ambiguity and, at the most, to the conclusion that the gospels were riddled with subjective relativity if not outright falsehoods. Leaving it to the reader to decide which narrative had as its core an historical event, a philosophical/theological idea, or a theological symbol, *threatened the Church's authority* (as well as the salaries and pensions of pastors and professors who defend it). Justifying the proclamation of the literal teaching even though not the conviction of the pastor/priest because that's what the laity wishes to hear is hypocrisy.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that Strauß' philosophical 'restauration' of the shattered Church Doctrine of the God/Man, which Strauß, at the time, took to be based on the 'scientific' study of the gospels, involved invoking Hegel's Philosophy of religion. However, this 'restauration' was no solace to the Church. Who understands Hegel other than those elitist philosophers trained in the *a priori* synthetic world of the Hegelians? It is in the self-interest of institutional authority to stand by *the (?) 'simple' story* that 'everyone,' supposedly, can easily understand, while ignoring that it must be *brought to the text as the case with every understanding of the text*. Yet, it is also misanthropic because it encourages 'blind' faith instead of aiding the 'overcoming of self-imposed immaturity'.<sup>4</sup>

A further ingredient that drove the explosive reception of Strauß' book was its timing. It appeared some 60 years after Herman Samuel Reimarus and the controversy over the historical status of the gospels sparked by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's publication of his anonymous Reimarus Fragments. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> C a group

3. Kant writes in *Menschenkunde* (1778/1779 or 1787/1788), which was published in 1831 so that it could have been available to Strauß: „No one is permitted by means of false pretenses (*Vorwand*) and vain hopes to lead others astray. Humanity has a right to investigate the truth above all else [...]. [By dogmatically claiming that enlightenment is harmful], one cries out just\f "A" as much against the improvement of the church [just as one defends the despotic ruler], and yet it has subsequently become clear that enlightenment has by no means produced the harm that ignorance caused. It was believed that the abolition of ceremonies [ritual] would cause people to lose their attachment to religion, but experience has proved that people have just the sooner strayed to the other side, and have become all the greater unfettered fanatics (*Schwärmer*). Nothing worse can therefore be thought of than when men (*sic.*) on the basis of such [anti-enlightenment] principles seek to keep others in error and are careful not to disturb anyone in her/his deep sleep of ignorance or even go so far as to take it upon themselves to plunge others into new errors, when they, left to themselves, would probably have wriggled out of ignorance alone. No one is entitled by any intention of supposed benefit to do such a thing; because it can fail, and it is a degradation of mankind to want to treat a free creature in such a way that [...] a free individual] should be encouraged to follow the mere opinions of another's rationalizations. People must be free in regard to concepts [...] Even the government gains by general enlightenment; the ruler himself (*sic.*) may be deluded [sounds all too familiar!], and imagine advantages that are absurd.

If we block the source of improvement, all hope is gone. These are unforgivable sins; they destroy the whole plan of 'providence' [the given conditions/capacities possessed by all persons] with respect to the human race, so that no one can progress to perfection [Note: there is no expectation to achieve perfection!]. (*Menschenkunde* XXV,2: 1048–1049; Olms Verlag: 224–225)

4. See Kant, *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?* AA VIII: 35.

of 'First' Testament scholars in Göttingen had developed the understanding of myth as a narrative 'husk' in which a historical fact, an idea, or a symbol can be found at its 'kernel.' Strauß, however, was the first to apply the insights of this 'Mythic School' so thoroughly to the Christian gospels. The dry underbrush of historical scholarship on the scriptures had been accumulating over two generations by the time Strauß published his exhaustive study. Are the gospels fact or fiction; history or myth? Strauß was the one who, unintentionally, struck the match. The accumulation of dry tinder was sufficient to generate a conflagration *without the reader having to be confused by actually reading Strauß*. Strauß' text became an 'icon' not for what he said but for what his opponents wanted him to have said. One could hold the two massive volumes of his *Life of Jesus Critically Examined* in one's hands as evidence of the size of the threat to the historical veracity of the text.

## Two Aspects to Myth: 'Husks' and 'Kernels' and The *Genetic Mythical Principle*

Strauß employed two hermeneutical strategies when it came to the issue of 'mythic' material in the gospels. The first, and for Strauß the foremost, was the epistemological strategy that took stories to be narrative 'representations' that have at their core a historical fact, a philosophical/theological idea, and/or a symbol. The second strategy, the *genetic mythical principle*, Strauß learned from Wilhelm Krug. It is a theory of narrative formation. It suggests that narratives are the shaping of inherited stories (what Paul Ricoeur calls the *pre-figured*) to generate a new story (what Paul Ricoeur calls the *con-figured*, creative process of an author).

Strauß' own, *re-figuration* of the gospel narratives in the *LJ* was based on the Hegelian philosophy of religion that provided him with a *pre-figured* epistemology for understanding the 'husk'/'kernel' character of the narratives as examples of the Hegelian distinction between 'representations' (the actual stories) and the 'idea' that is the 'true,' core meaning of the stories. This *re-figuration* allowed Strauß to apply his understanding of the Hegelian philosophy of religion to gospel narratives as a way of criticizing the *con-figured* reading made by Traditional Theology that insisted that the gospel stories had to be literal, historical accounts as a reporter would present in Strauß' and our world today.

In addition to providing him with a hermeneutical strategy of reading the gospel stories as external husk (representations) with an imperceptible kernel (their true content), Strauß' Hegelian *re-figuration* was his way of 'restoring' the 'true' meaning of Christian dogmatics, which appears to be devastated by the acknowledgment of how little factual history there is in the scriptures. The Christ is not an historical individual who existed at a specific point in time. Rather, for Hegel he is the resurrected Lord beyond history who represents human consciousness as the location where Absolute Spirit becomes aware of Itself by negating its finitude.

Although he had already presented a revision of Hegel's Christology in the *LJ*, as his Hegelian convictions faded immediately in the years following its publication, Strauß looked for alternatives that allowed him, ever more strenuously, to emphasize the significance of factual history for humanity rather than emphasize the implied subjective, theological relativism of the evangelists as authors.

However even in the *LJ*, Immanuel Kant is present as the unexamined elephant in the room. Taking as accurate the anti-Kantian and anti-Enlightenment reading of Kant by those who influenced Strauß' early development, Strauß never undertook anything close to a serious study of Kant as I demonstrate in Volume II – although he invoked Kant all along the trajectory of his intellectual odyssey.

Rather than pursuing the implications for the gospel narratives in light of the *genetic mythical principle*, which would appear to emphasize only the subjective relativity of the gospels, Strauß viewed the *genetic mythical principle* merely as confirming that the miracle stories in the gospels were not 'factually' true. Had he appreciated the *re-figuring*, creative dynamic of the *genetic mythical principle* of the gospel authors, he could have viewed the gospels as paradigmatic examples of what Kant calls humanity's creative, *autonomous freedom that is guided by moral principles*, which provide humanity with options of understanding and guide (as well as challenge) humanity's agency in the world.

Kant had placed *autonomous freedom* at the very core of his Critical Idealism. Critical Idealism points out not only that humanity possesses 'transcendental consciousness,' which is the non-material, imperceptible dimension of the mind (of course, embraced by the Hegelians), but also that humanity's 'transcendental consciousness' is what makes it possible for humanity *intentionally* to initiate sequences of events, which nature cannot accomplish on its own! It is only to the degree that humanity possesses *autonomous freedom* that it is able to *add elements* to its perceptions that are not directly given in them to understand (theoretical reason) and to assume responsibility for its agency (practical reason). Without *autonomous freedom*, humanity is a mechanical toy completely determined by nature's causality. Of course, this raises the question: which imperceptible elements are appropriately applied to perceptions? This question was formulated by Kant as: How are *a priori* synthetic judgments possible? This is a far more profound formulation than simply the question: Which *a priori* synthetic judgments are correct? By asking the question 'how' rather than 'which,' Kant is simultaneously emphasizing the capacities of all finite, transcendental consciousness, which in turn establish which *a priori* synthetic judgments are appropriate.

In other words, Strauß could have viewed the mythic aspect of the gospels as more than merely a confirmation that the form of the narratives was not factual history mired in subjective relativity. To be sure, he recognized that at least some of the stories had a historical event at their core, but he stressed that discernment of the historical in the stories was the most difficult aspect of biblical hermeneutics because the stories were a mixture of fact and myth. Consequently, Strauß focused on the issue of 'what

*is historical' in the scriptures, not on the genetic formation of the gospels as an example of creative, autonomous freedom.* I explore in Volume II the significance of Strauß' drawing only on the anti-Kantian and anti-Enlightenment *pre-figurations* that are Hegel's Idealism and, after 1841, on the *pre-figurations* of Feuerbach's Materialism. I will point out that the *con-figured* presentation of Kant's Critical Idealism through the lenses of Hegelian anti-Enlightenment and anti-Kantian reading remained a massive blind spot in Strauß' reflections, whose discernment leaves open a profound, 'third' option for today's reader.

### The Erosion of Hegel's Philosophy of Religion

Hegel's epistemology of 'actual representations' (*sensible Anschauung*) of sense perception and their 'true content' of intellectual perception (*intelligible Anschauung*) initially offered more to Strauß than a way for understanding the stories in the gospels as 'mythic' husks of philosophical truth. Hegel's epistemology was embedded in a meta-narrative of Absolute Spirit as the truth of all of history and, especially, of finite spirit.

However, already in the *LJ* with his version of a universally inclusive Christology, Strauß grabbed a red-hot iron of Hegelianism. Strauß' *interest from the get-go was on historical truth. The key to historical truth is 'science.'* The paradox of science, though, is that sense perception in and of itself is no guarantee of truth. In order to embrace the Copernican Revolution, one must unequivocally deny the 'clarity and distinctness' of sense perception. If clear and distinct perception doesn't guarantee truth, what does?

Truth requires ideas, not merely clear and distinct perception. Truth depends not only upon ideas but also upon one having 'correct' ideas for one's perceptions. This is the point where a huge bifurcation occurs in the theory of knowledge (epistemology). Whereas perceptions are, obviously, transient, our 'ideas' remain the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. I constantly perceive different chairs, but the idea 'chair' that I must employ to understand that these objects, as different as they can be, must be, and remain, 'the same.' At the least, our ideas are the closest that finite consciousness comes to experiencing 'the eternal.' Whether or not ideas, in fact, are 'eternal,' of course, is a question that finite consciousness can never determine. Their proof as 'eternal' would require an 'eternal consciousness,' and the only form of eternal consciousness that finite consciousness can ever experience is grounded 'figuratively' in an analogy to human finite consciousness. That is, 'eternal consciousness' is a leap of understanding grounded not in experience but in an analogy to finite consciousness. If there is anything certain about an analogy, it is that it cannot be proven to be literally

true, and, as David Hume pointed out, there is no greater hubris than a finite mind claiming that the entire universe is explained as functioning like a finite mind.<sup>5</sup>

Nonetheless, the metaphysical paths of Absolute Idealism and Reductionist Materialism diverge in this wood. The divergence is a matter of ‘metaphysics’ in the sense that the alternative paths require non-physical commitments; otherwise expressed, they both involve convictions that are ‘meta-’ (‘above’ or ‘in addition to’) the physical. Without any additional criteria, the path one chooses to follow (Absolute Idealism or Reductionist Materialism) is a capricious wager of ‘faith.’ Nonetheless, when it comes to their starting points (not their concrete claims, of course), there is nothing different from the ‘faith’ of traditional Christianity and the ‘faith’ of empirical materialism. Both depend upon communities that share the same convictions about the nature of ‘reality.’

According to Absolute Idealism (and *in contrast to Kantian Critical Idealism*), ‘truth’ is an eternal, ‘spiritual’ realm independent of physical nature because physical nature, ‘obviously’ requires that this ‘spiritual’ realm must be, at the least, equally enduring (e.g., Leibniz’ ‘Preestablished Harmony’ theory<sup>6</sup>) or ‘spiritual’ ideas must *precede* the material order, which can only be ‘copies and shadows’ of ‘eternal’ ideas (e.g., Platonism<sup>7</sup> and Christian Platonism<sup>8</sup>). Succinctly, according to Absolute Idealism, ‘ideas’ must precede the objects that are their ‘copies.’ The material copies come by means of a conscious agent having, first, thought the idea and, second, shaping matter according to the original idea. For Absolute Idealism, then, knowledge consists in grasping the eternal, *a priori*, archetypal idea whereas particular objects only serve to ‘trigger,’ *a posteriori* mental awareness of the ‘truth,’ which is the *a priori*, archetypal idea.

In diametrical contrast, Reductionist Materialism claims that the physical universe is ‘eternal’ and that ideas are merely transient abstractions created by each individual, finite consciousness *after having experienced* a set of objects, that is ideas are *a posteriori* constructions by the individual. Ideas here are ectypal, *a posteriori*. They are abstractions drawn out of experience by the individual by, first, recognition of similarity, then, identity among a set of phenomena. In short, ideas are human abstractions, not archetypal, *a priori* ‘eternal’ mental objects.

Strauß cut his philosophical teeth on Hegel’s philosophy. Unfortunately, Hegel’s “*Glauben und Wissen*” was explicitly anti-Enlightenment and anti-Kantian, and Strauß never developed any independent understanding of Kant by his own study.

5. See David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1982): 14–15.

6. Leibniz Preestablished Harmony maintains that ‘God’ prescribes that the ‘spiritual’ side and the ‘material’ side of experience are ‘eternally’ coordinated.

7. Platonism claims that ‘ideas’ are the eternal thoughts of an eternal deity with ‘creation’ a ‘two-step’ process of God first having thought His (!) ideas and then copied them in matter with the latter being only ‘copies and shadows’ of God’s ‘eternal’ ideas.

8. Christian Platonism is the Logos theology that maintains that the Christ is the incarnated Word (eternal system of ideas) of God.

He had no sympathy for Kant, whom he consistently portrayed, as did Hegel, as a dualistic, 'subjective constructivist'<sup>9</sup> rather than Hegel's and the early Strauß' preferred, monistic, 'objective rationalism.' He shared Hegel's judgment<sup>10</sup> with respect to the 'weakness' and 'barbarism' of Kantian reason that 'had no grasp of the significance of Absolute Knowledge,' as well as Hegel's ridiculing of Kant for encouraging the individual to 'think for her-/himself rather than engage in fealty to Absolute Reason. Furthermore, he shared with Baur, Hegel, and Daub the dismissal of Kant's notion of 'freedom', which they took to mean only a championing of merely self-interest driven by sensuousness.<sup>11</sup> Strauß did embrace aspects of Kant's work as of 1864, but, again, only indirectly through the influence of his circle of friends who called for a 'return to Kant.'<sup>12</sup>

Especially as a 'child' of Hegelian Idealism, the early Strauß was no Christian Platonist who defended a Personal Deity beyond history. Rather, 'God' in Hegelian Idealism is not 'outside' creation. Following Spinoza, the Hegelians viewed God as immanent to the process that is history. Hegel is a 'pan-en-theist' for whom God is inseparable from the finite processes He (!) creates. Rather than describe that divine, creative process, though, in terms of Platonism's two step, anthropomorphic 'thinker' who first thinks His idea and then creates an external copy (*Timaeus* 27d ff; 69b-70a), Hegel took creation to be governed by a 'necessary' logic of dialectic,<sup>13</sup> that is, negation of (or distinguishing between) a 'this' from a 'that.'

Absolute Oneness is, logically, incapable of experiencing anything, much less Itself, because experience requires at least 'two-ness.' In order to experience Itself, Absolute Spirit 'had to have' (according to Hegel) employed the logic of Double Negation. By means of a First Negation, Absolute Spirit *had to* negate Its own Oneness to generate multiplicity that eventually led by further negations of multiplicity to the

9. Both Hegel and Strauß ignore Kant's explicit rejection of 'constructivism' (*Erdichtung*) in the *Critique of Pure Reason* B xxxix\*.

10. See Hegel, "Glauben und Wissen" GW II: 287–288.

11. F.C. Baur writes: Kant "[...] agreed with [... the ecclesiastical doctrine of forgiveness] in the serious endeavor to address the need for restoration and reconciliation in its entire depth [unlike Kant, Baur takes this to mean the attainment of moral perfection]. This is what Kant's doctrine of radical evil refers to, which, according to [Baur's reading of] Kant, consists not merely in sensuality [explicitly contradicted by Kant, see 833], but in the subordination of the moral law to sensuality, and is called radical because, although it can have its ultimate cause only in an act of freedom, [Baur erroneously claims for Kant that] [... radical evil] nevertheless precedes every use of freedom given in experience, and is ingrained in man as a natural inclination which itself corrupts the root of all particular evil principles and actions, the supreme subjective cause of all principles." *Die christliche Lehre von der Versöhnung* II: 575–576 (emphasis added) Baur is reading Kant's notion of 'radical' evil to mean 'original sin,' which Kant emphatically rejected. See *Metaphysik Mrongovius* (AA XXIX: 771), *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim* (AA VIII: 1–22), and *Religion* (AA VI: 19–20, 22, 35, 42–43). Kant explicitly says that the origin of evil remains inexplicable for us (*ibid.*, AA VI: 43).

12. See Ziegler, II: 700.

13. On Kant's rejection of dialectic for grounding the ultimate, causal ground of 'what is,' see *Critique of Pure Reason* B 697 in Chapter 6: 670.

establishment of the material conditions for the emergence of finite consciousness. By means of a Second Negation, finite consciousness '*has to*' negate, mentally, its own experience of multiplicity in order to experience the original and originating Absolute Oneness that is Absolute Spirit, Absolute Knowledge, and Absolute Freedom.

Although the early Strauß shared with the Hegelians this 'meta-narrative' of Absolute Spirit's logic of Double Negation, already in the *LJ* Strauß flagged his resolute commitment to history in contrast with the Hegelians. However, this time, the diverging pathways were not Absolute Idealism versus Reductionist Materialism because Strauß was committed in the *LJ* to the Hegelian, Absolute Idealist meta-narrative of Double Negation. Rather, Strauß parted ways with the Hegelians with respect to Christology or the meaning of the God/Man incarnation as the paradigm of the Second Negation.

*For Strauß, the issue of Christology was not simply a metaphysical quarrel. It had to do with the very nature of historical 'science.'* For the Hegelians, 'science' was not concerned with the investigation of empirical phenomena by means of the hypothetico-deductive method, *per se*. Rather, 'science' (knowledge, *scientia*) was Absolute Idealism itself.

Copernicus was not 'right' because he grasped the raw, empirical data, properly. There can be no 'correct' empirical data for heliocentrism. Rather, Copernicus had discovered the 'right' idea for understanding the empirical data. The 'content' (*Inhalt*) of knowledge is the imperceptible idea, not the perceptible 'representations' (*Form, Vorstellungen*) that are perceptible, empirical phenomena. For Strauß, this epistemological structure of true 'content' and ambiguous 'representations' is grounded in the issue: how are ideas related to particulars?

The Hegelians and early Strauß shared the conviction that the heart of Christian dogmatics was the teaching of the incarnated God/Man. Their paths parted, though, not over '*what*' the God/Man was but over '*who*' He was.

In other words, the Hegelians and Strauß parted ways over the issue of how ideas are related to particulars. Strauß insisted that no idea is exhausted in a single particular or any finite set of particulars. Specifically, the idea of the God/Man cannot be exclusively limited either to one individual or even a group of individuals. This is not a historical issue for Strauß. It is an epistemological issue: Ideas (the God/Man is *the* Idea incarnate) by definition are universal, and they apply to all of their instantiations in particulars. It was Strauß' epistemological convictions with their giving equal weight to particularities, not the metaphysics of the Hegelian meta-narrative of Double Negation, that led Strauß in the *LJ* to his universally, *inclusive* Christology in contrast to the Hegelians. The Incarnation occurs in the totality of finite consciousness, even when not understood by the individual.

Hegel rejected Traditional Christian Theism's God/Man as the historical Jesus. However, he took the God/Man to be an event necessarily 'beyond' history experi-

enced in faith as the resurrection claimed for Jesus as the God/Man.<sup>14</sup> The God/Man is the event in finite consciousness where the Second Negation occurred. As a 'spiritual' (mental) event, this Second Negation is nothing physical (historical) but purely mental (spiritual). Consequently, it is a claim, according to Hegel's ambiguous formulation, that the Christ event (the incarnation of the God/Man) is not about a historical individual who lived in Palestine. Rather, it is a spiritual conviction of those who take the Christ to be the God/Man unity achieved in Spirit beyond history. Within two years of the publication of the *LJ*, Strauß criticized Hegel for not being interested in 'biblical criticism' because the historical status of the gospel narratives was not important to him.<sup>15</sup>

The Right- and Left-wings of Hegelianism clarified Hegel's ambiguity. Right-wing Hegelians (e.g., Carl Daub) insisted that the God/Man is, *exclusively*, the Jesus of history as claimed by Personal Theism. However, the exclusiveness of Christology is not with respect to an historical, material individual. Rather, the reconciliation of God with humanity is represented by the Second Negation as a spiritual reconciliation, not a material atonement for humanity's sins. Left-wing Hegelians (e.g., Philipp Marheineke) took the God/Man as, *partially inclusive* in that all who 'think' the Second Negation are the God/Man. Consequently, the God/Man for both the Right- and Left-wing Hegelianism was an 'elitist' event either limited *exclusively* to Jesus or *inclusive* of those philosophers who grasp the meaning of the Double Negation. In either case, the Incarnation meant *escape from the particularities of historical life and spiritual divinization of finite consciousness*.

In his *LJ*, Strauß took the Christological claim of his professor, Ferdinand Christian Baur, to its extreme. He agreed with Baur, who had criticized Hegel's Christology as an event beyond history. According to Baur, the God/Man was an *inclusive* event, but Baur identified the God/Man with the narrow inclusiveness that is limited to the Christian community, which consists of the historical community that makes up the 'body' of Christ in history. In contrast to Baur's *limited, inclusive* Christology, though, Strauß' Christological formulation in the *LJ* is emphatically a *universally, inclusive* Christology that includes all of humanity for all time, not just those who live in ritual conformity as a self-conscious community.

Strauß was shocked that the Hegelians wanted nothing to do with his *universally, inclusive* Christology,<sup>16</sup> whereas the Right- and Left-wing Hegelians viewed Strauß as a threat to Christian uniqueness and exceptionalism. Down to 1837, Strauß tried to convince them otherwise, but, in the meantime, other conundrums of Hegelianism resulted in his looking for an option other than Hegelian epistemology's 'husk'/'ker-

14. See Strauß, „Hegel's Ansicht über den historischen Werth der evangelischen Geschichte“ in *Streitschriften* III: 80–81; see as well, 83, 84, 86, 92, and 93.

15. See Strauß, *ibid.* in *Streitschriften* III: 90–91.

16. See Strauß, „Verschiedene Richtungen innerhalb der Hegel'schen Schule in Betreff der Christologie“ in *Streitschriften* III: 126.

nel' and meta-narrative of Double Negation for 'restoring' the Christian dogmatics destroyed by criticism of the historical status of the gospel narratives.

Those other Hegelian conundrums were related to its historical 'Indifferentism' that eliminated any contribution on the part of particular, historical events to the 'truth' of Absolute Spirit. To be sure, Hegel insisted that, without the struggles, suffering, and pain of history, all of history is only the playing of God's self-absorbed love with Himself.<sup>17</sup> For Hegel, the Owl of Minerva only flies at the end of history<sup>18</sup> (i.e., with the achievement of the highest point of history, the God/Man). Yet, even Hegel insisted that the 'truth' of events was decided by their 'Idea,' not by the empirical facts themselves, which are 'opposed to the idea.'<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, having rejected the notion of a Personal Deity who dispense grace to atone for human sins, Hegel spoke of the 'cunning of reason' (*List der Vernunft*) that, like a predetermining, 'hidden hand of God,' silently, inscrutably, yet persistently ensures that the 'truth' of Absolute Spirit achieves its goal for history of achieving Absolute Knowledge and Absolute Freedom in Absolute Spirit Itself.<sup>20</sup>

### Strauß' Historical Convictions

In Volume II, I trace Strauß' attempts to formulate an option to Hegelianism that began even before his engagement of Feuerbach. In his "Transient and Permanent in Christianity" of 1838, which makes no mention of Feuerbach, he even more emphatically than in the *LJ* articulates his understanding of 'religion' in terms of empirical history, no longer in terms of Hegelian Idealist escapism from the sensuousness, ignorance, and un-freedom of finite consciousness.

He retains his focus on Jesus as the founder of a 'new' religion, but Jesus is no longer portrayed as the God/Man of Christology. In fact, Jesus is explicitly 'removed from the throne of God' and is now a historical teacher among other historical teachers of religion, if *unsurpassable* by others. Though not a 'genius' of technical skill, Jesus is a 'religious genius' who represents the 'internal harmony' of God-consciousness, that is, an intimate and lively harmony between the ideational and physical lawfulness that governs the world.<sup>21</sup> He defines immortality not as a metaphysical liberation from the world but as the experience 'eternal in the present.' However, neither his notion of reason nor his notion of God-consciousness is indebted to Hegel's meta-narrative of reason. Equally important, Strauß perhaps shares the same metaphors notions of reason and God-consciousness with him, he is also not indebted to Schleiermacher's

17. See Hegel, *Phänomenologie* GW III: 24 (Baillie trans. 80–81).

18. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* GW VII: 28.

19. See Hegel, "Wissenschaftliche Behandlungsarten" GW II: 456.

20. See Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* (1837) "B" GW XII: 49.

21. See Strauß, "Vergängliches und Bleibendes im Christenthum:" II6.

Christology of ‘Perfect God-consciousness.’ At the most, he derives his metaphor for immortality as the experience of the ‘eternal in the present’ from Schleiermacher’s earliest writing, *On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers*, but, as with his reading of Hegel, Strauß emphasizes ‘history’ over Hegelian Knowledge and Schleiermachian Perfection.

Nonetheless, this attempt at articulating a non-Hegelian and non-Schleiermachian understanding of religion grounded in ‘reason’ was shattered by Ludwig Feuerbach. There was no other, more vociferous critic of Hegel than Feuerbach, who not only challenged the Hegel anthropomorphic character of Hegel’s theism but also challenged Hegelian Absolute Idealism.

### **The *Glaubenslehre* that Wasn’t**

Even before writing the *LJ*, Strauß shared with his friends the intent of writing a history of Church Doctrine that would restore by means of the Hegelian philosophy of religion what was destroyed by a critical study of Church Doctrine.<sup>22</sup> By the time Strauß was able to devote his attention to the project, however, he had given up on the Hegelian meta-narrative and even his own inclusive Christology based on Hegel. His two volume, 1,500 page *Glaubenslehre* of 1841 consists of a brilliant demonstration of the legitimacy of his aphorism that “the criticism of Church Doctrine is its history” without any need to invoke an ‘external’ philosophy. However, the *Glaubenslehre* contains no attempt at doctrinal restauration and ends with a perplexingly formulated comment accompanying his citation of Schleiermacher’s notion of immortality as the ‘experiencing of the eternal in the present.’

In fact, Strauß’ own wrestling with his Hegelian conundrums, Feuerbach’s criticism of equating religion and reason, along with Feuerbach’s defense of ideas as ectypal not archetypal, and Strauß’ own dismissal of Schleiermacher as a genuine option in his essay “Schleiermacher und Daub” of 1839, all contributed to Strauß’ twenty-year theological silence following the publication of his *Glaubenslehre*.

### **Breaking the Theological Silence: Religion as Morality**

Following up on his *Hermann Samuel Reimarus* of 1862, in 1864 Strauß dramatically articulated his theological convictions at the time with *The Life of Jesus Examined for the German People*. The shifts here are subtle but profound. Gone is the theme of

22. See Strauß, “Allgemeines Verhältniß der Hegel’schen Philosophie zur theologischen Kritik” (1837) in *Streitschriften III*: 58–59.

religion as grounded in ‘reason.’ Dramatically, the ‘religion of the Christ’ is replaced by the ‘religion of humanity.’ Jesus is no longer the ‘object’ of faith either in terms of the ‘true’ content of faith as the God/Man or as the ‘unsurpassable’ religious genius who achieved the pinnacle of God-consciousness of internal harmony that consists of an intimate and lively harmony between the ideational and physical lawfulness that governs the world. Rather, religion is concerned with the moral ‘improvement’ of humanity as a species as a consequence of its changing historical context demanding, and the community’s generation of, ever new moral principles applicable to ethical achievement in life. What can be established ‘historically,’ according to Strauß, is that Jesus is a ‘surpassable’ teacher and model of morality because the ever-changing familial, social, economic, and political context of humanity in history requires the discernment of new ‘moral principles.’ In short, Strauß has given up on *a priori* archetypal ideas both in epistemology and in morality.

### **The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History: Rejection of Perfect, Eminent Causality**

In 1865, Strauß turned his attention, once again, to a rigorous engagement of Schleiermacher. In contrast to his “Schleiermacher und Daub” of 1839, though, what is strikingly new here is his focus on Schleiermacher’s Christology of ‘Perfect God-consciousness’ that Schleiermacher claimed was a new metaphysical causality introduced with Jesus of Nazareth into history as a novel, historical ontological condition. Jesus’ ‘Perfect God-consciousness’ is taken by Schleiermacher, analogous to Anselm’s argument for the sacrifice of the Perfect Christ to ‘save’ humanity from its sin, to be an infinite, *eminent* causality (greater than any other finite, efficient causality prior to Jesus) to ‘save’ humanity from its imperfect God-consciousness.<sup>23</sup> Jesus’ ‘Perfect God-consciousness’ is the changed ontological condition that makes it possible for humanity’s ‘imperfect God-consciousness’ to overcome its sensuousness and to transform its self-understanding on the basis of the ‘feeling of absolute dependence’ upon God.

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23. All events (effects) occur as the consequence of an ‘efficient’ causal sequence. However, we experience two kinds of ‘efficient’ causality: ‘formal’ and ‘eminent’. ‘Formal,’ efficient causality ‘adds nothing’ to the natural steps that lead to the effect (e.g., a seed of corn ‘duplicating itself’). ‘Formal,’ efficient causality is a ‘closed circle’ causal sequence. In contrast, ‘eminent,’ efficient causality involves ‘more’ than merely the ‘natural steps’ to achieve ends that the ‘natural steps’ alone cannot achieve. In our experience, this is the finite, eminent efficient causality of human creativity. Human beings can initiate efficient causal sequences of events to achieve ends that, left on its own, the natural sequence of events could never achieve (e.g., build an automobile engine). It is only because humanity exercises such a *finite*, ‘eminent,’ efficient causality that it occurs to us that there is a divine, *infinite*, ‘eminent,’ efficient causality to the universe that, unlike finite, ‘eminent,’ efficient causality can ignore the ‘natural sequence’ of ‘formal,’ efficient causality to achieve its ‘higher,’ ‘perfect’ ends.

Prior to Jesus' 'Perfect God-consciousness,' humanity neither could understand nor accomplish 'Perfect God-consciousness' because, according to the Principle of Sufficient Reason, an effect must have at least as much reality as its cause. In light of the obvious fact that human beings do not possess 'Perfect God-consciousness' but must strive for it, they can do so only if the perfect cause of 'Perfect God-consciousness' actually exists. In short, echoing Anselm of Canterbury's logic of why the incarnation was necessary and Descartes' argument for God as perfect, humanity's imperfection cannot be the cause of perfection because that would mean that 'something could come from nothing' in violation of the Principle of Sufficient Reason.

Strauß devastatingly rejects Schleiermacher's infinite, eminent causality by pointing out that a finite effect, which is always the case when it comes to finite consciousness, does not require a 'perfect,' infinite cause. Once again, Strauß removes any temptation to treat Schleiermacher as a viable, theological option.

### *The Old and the New Faith: Nature 'Turning In-ward'*

For those not paying attention (e.g., Nietzsche<sup>24</sup>), Strauß' *The Old and the New Faith* appears to be a radical break with his earlier theological reflections. Even the 'liberal' theologian appointed by the Liberal government in Zurich some ten years after the Zurich revolution prohibited Strauß' appointment to the University of Zurich, Alois Emanuel Biedermann, wrote to a friend that he would give up a finger on his right hand, were Strauß not to have published this work.<sup>25</sup>

In his *Critique of Capacity of Judgement*, Kant defines the capacity of judgment (*Urteilskraft*) as the *subordination of a set of phenomena under a concept* and distin-

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24. For example, Nietzsche criticized Strauß for the "lack of anything offensive" in his writing. See Nietzsche, "David Strauß. Der Bekenner und der Schriftsteller" in *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* [Untimely Meditations] in *Friedrich Nietzsche. Werke I*. Karl Schlechta, ed. (Frankfurt/M: Verlag Ullstein GmbH, 1980): 191. Given that Nietzsche did not recognize the theological and philosophical fire storm generated by Strauß, not to speak of Strauß as having sparked a political revolution in Zürich, it cannot be a surprise that Nietzsche criticizes Strauß for his arrogant, nationalist elitism by calling him a *Bildungsphilister* (Educational Philistine). See "David Strauß. Der Bekenner und der Schriftsteller:" 142, 176. Nietzsche failed to see (derives the label Philistine from?) that Strauß himself called Wolfgang Menzel a 'Bursch-Philister' (a Fraternity Philistine) as stiffly wooden as his walking cane (*Streitschriften* I: 139, s. Strauß' recommendation (*ibid.*, 141) that Menzel read Hegel's "Wer denkt abstrakt?" [Jaener Schriften GW II: 575–581] because Menzel had said Hegel was so stiffly wooden as his lectern). In other words, Strauß rejects what Nietzsche accuses Strauß of being: a nationalistic (see Strauß' searing dismissal of Menzel's ad hominem attack on Johannes von Müller as national traitor: *Streitschriften* I: 100–123, 132) and dogmatic moralist (*ibid.*, 124, 127, 190), who takes truth to be apodictic and criticism to mean subjective opinion (*ibid.*, 190).

25. See Ziegler, II: 722.

guished between two kinds of judgment: *reflecting and re-producing judgment*.<sup>26</sup> He also points out that reflecting (*reflektierende*) judgment precedes all re-producing

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26. Reason 'deduces the concept' out of the imperceptible relationalities among appearances. It does not 'create' or 'prescribe the concept'. Given that it is a deduction and not a prescription or creation *ex nihilo*, it is not Nominalism, which for its part overlooks that the relationalities in appearances are already structured by the imperceptible order of 'things-in-themselves' on the basis of which Nominalism then claims that consciousness creates its abstractions. Whereas Nominalism ignores the conundrum of order always and already in phenomena, Kant consciously presupposes it as an imperceptible limit to reason.

#### On Imagination, the Law of Association, and Reflecting Judgment

On the difference between *reflecting* and *re-producing* judgment, see Kant, *Critique of the Capacity of Judgment* AA V: 179–180: "Judgment in general is the faculty (*Vermögen*) for thinking of the particular as contained under the universal. If the universal (the rule, be the principle, the law) is given, then the capacity of judgment, which subsumes the particular under it [...] [has been previously deduced]. If, however, only the particular is given, for which the universal is to be found, then the capacity of judgment is merely reflecting [and the concept is yet to be deduced]." See as well, *ibid.*: AA V: 185–186 and: 878.

To avoid any suggestion that Kant is a 'constructive idealist,' I prefer the translation '*the capacity of re-producing judgment*' for '*die bestimmende Urteilskraft*' and '*the capacity of reflecting judgment*' for '*die reflektierende Urteilskraft*'. Kant doesn't claim that transcendental consciousness *prescribes* laws (or concepts) to govern nature or perceives them directly in phenomena. Rather, it *dis-covers* them by an heuristic, deductive strategy and applies them to what for the individual is novel phenomena by means of *reflecting* judgment.

CUP translates '*bestimmend*' as 'determining'. One could mistakenly take 'determining judgment,' then, to mean the individual's subjective creating *in advance* (*a priori*) *what the concept must be* and imposing the concept to a set of phenomena as if Kant was claiming that concepts were an individual and/or social construction imposed upon phenomena or directly given as the thing-in-itself of objective, sense perception (*sinnliche Anschauung*).

Kant denies both options. In his posthumous *Menschenkunde*, Kant gives his account of concepts as relationalities in perception deduced by the mind by means of 'association' (*Vergesellschaftung*) (AA XXV,2: 946–948; Olms ed.: 108–110), which are evoked through sense perception (AA XXV,2: 944; Olms ed.: 106). He distinguishes between the 'productive' and 'reproductive' imagination (AA XXV,2: 945; Olms ed.: 107). The 'productive' imagination 'generates things that were not directly in our senses'. The 'reproductive' imagination 'is the capacity to recall representations that one had in the past'. In Kant's *Anweisung* Olms ed.: 12 (see as well 33), he speaks of the reproductive imagination as involving 'something mechanical' because it is the 'mere knowledge' of rules (*Anweisung* Olms ed.: 31). Kant proceeds in his *Menschenkunde* to distinguish between the 'voluntary' and the 'involuntary' imagination (AA XXV,2: 945–946; Olms ed.: 108). Fantasy is 'involuntary' whereas the 'voluntary' imagination is creative. The origin of the involuntary imagination is a capricious event, but reason channels it 'according to the laws of the soul [...] so that it can be precisely conceived'. (AA XXV,2: 946; Olms ed.: 108) 'This law, according to which the mind orders everything, is called the law of association (*Vergesellschaftung*)'. (AA XXV,2: 946; Olms ed.: 109) Kant calls it a 'natural law,' which is graspable by reason. (AA XXV,2: 946; Olms ed.: 109) "Representations are associated when there is a ground of connection by which they are related, or at least neighboring, to other representations, so that they can be connected by the unity of place and time. – Concepts [Begriffe] arise by kinship when they are related to each other in understanding ; they are linked by neighborhood when they are linked to each other by nothing other than the unity of place and time." (AA XXV,2: 946; Olms ed.: 109) With kinship and neighborhood, "[i]n both cases it is as follows: representations may be related or neighboring by similarity, as cause and effect; so our mind has the property of associating such representations. One representation attracts the other, and so the representations come together.

(*bestimmende*) judgment.<sup>27</sup> Kant did not claim, though, that transcendental consciousness *creates* or *prescribes* the concept or law for nature for that, of course, would be solipsism (or social relativism). Kant clearly states the opposite. He writes later in the *Critique of the Capacity of Judgment*: As an activity of *reflecting* judgment, the business of *finding a universal* for a manifold “[...] is [...] neither prescribing (vorschreiben) a law to nature nor learning one from it by means of observation (although that principle can be confirmed by the latter).”<sup>28</sup> To invoke Philip Wheelwright’s distinctions,<sup>29</sup> reflecting judgment is the ‘tensive,’ ‘living’ role of metaphor in all consciousness. *Bestimmende Urtheilskraft* is more appropriately translated ‘*re-producing* judgment’ to emphasize that this kind of judgment is a ‘steno,’ ‘dead metaphor’ (Paul Ricoeur prefers the notion ‘worn out’ metaphor rather than dead because a concept can be metaphorically rejuvenated.<sup>30</sup>) that *attributes* a concept or law to a set of phenomena

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Since all representations, however dissimilar they may be, can nevertheless have some similarity, our imagination can also reduce thousands to hundreds. For our imagination is so extravagant that even the slightest resemblance brings representations together. (AA XXV,2: 946–947; Olms ed.:109) The ‘law of association’ is invoked by reason in order that fantasy can be brought into order. (AA XXV,2: 947; Olms ed.:110)

In the *Critique of the Capacity of Judgment*, Kant explicitly writes: As an activity of *reflecting* judgment, the business of *finding a universal* for a manifold “[...] is [...] neither prescribing (vorschreiben) a law to nature nor learning one from it by means of observation (although that principle can be confirmed by the latter).” Kant, *Critique of the Capacity of Judgment* AA V: 186 Kant wrote a page earlier: “Understanding [...] possesses] a priori universal laws of nature without which nature could not be an object of experience at all; but still it requires in addition a certain order of nature [...], which can only be known to it empirically and which from its point of view are contingent. These rules [...] it must think as laws (i.e., as necessary [Kant’s parentheses]), because otherwise they would not constitute an order of nature, even if he did not recognize their necessity or could not ever see it.” (emphasis added) Kant, *Critique of Capacity of Judgment* AA V: 184. On Kant’s distinction between reason (*Witz*) as deducing a rule/concept and the capacity of judgment (*Urtheilskraft*) as distinguishing the species included under the genus as concerned with the details of reflection, as well as the capacity of judgment as a universal capacity possessed by all finite, transcendental consciousness, see Kant’s the section “On the Ability of our Soul to Make Comparisons” in *Menschenkunde* (AA XXV,2: 959–974; Olms ed.: 122–138).

27. See *Critique of the Capacity of Judgment* AA V: 187.

28. Kant, *Critique of the Capacity Judgment* AA V: 186. Kant’s *What does it Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?* begins: “However high we may set our concepts, and however much we may abstract them from sensuality, they are still attached to figurative ideas whose real purpose is to make them, which are not derived from experience, suitable for use in experience. For how do we want to give sense and meaning to our concepts if they are not underpinned by some kind of conception (which ultimately must always be an example from some possible experience)?” AA VIII: 133. See as well, in *Reflexionen aus dem Nachlaß, Reflexionen zur Anthropologie* at AA XV: 379, 859: “Reason can only serve to explain phenomena [...] and certain laws and characteristics of the ‘Sch’(ema)], but not to prescribe laws [nicht die Gesetze vorschreiben] to it, because true reason does not consist in the objective at all, but in the form of the inner affection.” (emphasis added).

29. For Wheelwright’s distinction between ‘tensive’ and ‘steno’ metaphors, see below, 122 n. 57.

30. See Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language*, Robert Czerny, Kathleen McLaughlin, and John Costello trans. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977): 294.

as if the concept was absolute when, in fact, it conceals the originally ‘tensive,’ ‘living’ metaphorical process of reflecting judgment (*reflektierende Urtheilskraft*) that allows for the identification of ‘sameness’ in the midst of ‘difference, in the first place.<sup>31</sup>

The surprised reader is the reader who took Strauß’ texts to be merely presenting conclusions of re-producing judgments that they expect him to ‘have to draw’ given such a reader’s assumption that Strauß is merely confirming the reader’s own conclusions. If one reads Strauß as an odyssey in reflecting judgment that is sorting its way through confusing phenomena and conundrums, the flags and signposts are clear. If one reflects along with Strauß over the course of his corpus, one cannot be surprised at the outcome because, as far as Strauß’ reflections allowed him to see, there was no limb other than Feuerbachian Materialism to crawl onto once one had sawed off the limbs of Hegelian Absolute Idealism and Schleiermacher’s religion of feeling.

Although Strauß invokes Kant as of *The Life of Jesus Examined for the German People* for his ‘moral,’ ‘religion of humanity,’ Strauß did so under the influence of his circle of friends who called for a ‘return to Kant’ at the beginning of the 1860s. Yet, it is clear to the most superficial reader (the one thing that Nietzsche got right about Strauß<sup>32</sup>) that Strauß did not even remotely engage in a serious study of Kant analogous to his study of Hegel and Schleiermacher. When it comes to Kant, Strauß is, as always, dependent on the analysis and judgments of others.

Having recognized that the gospels not only do not provide sufficient historical evidence for a biography of Jesus or even to identify the content of his teaching, Strauß now no longer invokes the distinction between the ‘genius of skills’ and the ‘religious genius’ of God-consciousness as the ‘internal harmony of reason’ as he had in “The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity.” He also no longer invokes the moral improvement of humanity in an attempt to pump new life into the ‘old’ faith. Rather, the ‘religion of *nature*’ and the eternal ‘*human species*’ as material and historical progress replace the ‘*religion of the Christ*’ and the ‘*religion of humanity*’ that had earlier replaced Hegel’s meta-narrative of *Absolute Spirit*.<sup>33</sup>

The individual, to be sure, is an ambiguous moment in that trajectory of optimistic, moral progress because of her/his limits. Nevertheless, the species as a whole (!) is what allows for retention of ‘hope’ in improvement, technically and morally. Technical improvement is *driven by humanity’s self-interest*. Moral improvement is *demanded by history* because moral principles can emerge only out of the changing social, political, and economic context of communities as they identify the rules that should govern the new circumstance of the community.

31. Kant points out that bestimmende Urteile were at their conception reflektierende Urteile in *Critique of the Capacity of Judgment* AA V: 187.

32. See Friedrich Nietzsche, “David Strauß. Der Bekenner und der Schriftsteller.” 164.

33. See Strauß’ conclusion to Strauß, *Hermann Samuel Reimarus*: 408–409 and “On Kant’s ‘Pure’ Religion:” 968, n. 158.

Strauß retains Jakob Böhme's theodicy, which he embraced in his *Glaubenslehre*, that 'evil' is the motor that drives progress.<sup>34</sup> Without 'evil' there can only be stagnation. In short, 'what is' 'ought to be' (which, of course, is a blatant violation of the 'is'/'ought' fallacy!) because the overwhelming trajectory of the human species is 'improvement.' Although the individual is an ambiguous moment in that trajectory of optimistic progress, the species as a whole is what allows for retention of 'hope' in improvement: technically and morally: technically, because humanity is, obviously, gaining ever more 'sovereignty' over nature; morally, because moral principles can emerge out of the changing social, political, and economic context of communities as they identify the rules that should govern the new circumstance of the community.

In other words, the human species here replaces Hegel's 'cunning of reason.' It is no longer 'reason' in any form that is governing the trajectory of history.<sup>35</sup> Rather, it is nature itself and the 'natural' species as a product of nature that confirms that history is improving thanks to the negations that are 'evil'.

Embracing Böhme's 'is'/'ought' fallacy, the 'ought'/is' fallacy of Hegelian metaphysics (Absolute Spirit 'ought' to be the starting point of the logic of negation, so it 'is') is replaced by the later Strauß with another 'ought'/is' fallacy. In this case, it is that nature 'ought' to have the capacity to bring about living things and consciousness. Consequently, what 'is' demonstrates that nature has chosen life and consciousness as the vehicle for its inward turn to continue its technical and moral progress.<sup>36</sup> The later Strauß remains trapped in both an 'is'/'ought' as well as an 'ought'/is' fallacy. In both cases, Strauß engages in a *μετάβασις εις ἄλλο γένος* in that he turned a description into an absolute causal explanation.

In terms of 'popular' consciousness, though, Strauß' 'new' faith is thriving today: Materialism has replaced Absolute Idealism, and morality is an issue of the social construction of moral norms and confidence that the species 'will eventually get it right.' Strauß is the 'Moses' who viewed the 'Promised Land' of technical and intellectual cleverness, but he himself didn't enter it. He bridged the trajectory between Absolute Idealism (Hegelianism) to Reductionist Materialism (Feuerbach), but the gaps in

34. Böhme's theodicy is not to be confused for Kant's 'method of negation'. On Kant's 'method of negation', see "Kant's 'Negative Method' in 45, n. 28. Böhme takes 'evil' to be an ontologically determining, constitutive reality whereas Kant's 'method of negation' presupposes the creative, self-determination of autonomous freedom without which there can be no choice between 'good' and 'evil' principles to give oneself permission to act.

35. Strauß criticizes Hegel's notion of the 'cunning of reason,' which Strauß calls humanity's "dark urge [...] aware of the right way," which would mean that theological quarrels are merely conflicts over the 'husks' of truth, not truth itself, but which leaves truth in the hands of the philosophers, which would mean that theological quarrels were a matter of human folly. Strauß' conclusion of this dialectic: "How from this point of view a satisfying philosophical view of history would be possible, is not to be foreseen." Strauß, *Glaubenslehre* I: 23–24. See the "Preface," 52, n. 48.

36. On Strauß' view of nature as 'turning inward on itself' to continue its advance, see Strauß, *Der alte und der neue Glaube*: 145, 240, and 365. See as well the suggestion that it is as much a parody of Hegel as it is a commitment to the empirical sciences: 57, n. 64.

that materialistic account (e.g., hylozoism and the emergence of consciousness out of matter) remain gaps to this day.

What remains is Ralph Waldo Emerson's irritating thorn claim in "The Transcendentalist" that "[e]very materialist will be an idealist; but once an idealist s/he can never go back to be a materialist."<sup>37</sup> Strauß *appears* to contradict Emerson. The ambiguity over the appearance of Strauß' Reductionist Materialism led his biographer, Theobald Ziegler, to draw the speculative conclusion, even, that Strauß always remained a 'Hegelian.' This is because Strauß' materialism is dripping with major gaps both in understanding and explanation. For example, just what causes 'life'? What causes nature 'to turn inward on itself' to continue its progress? Such questions indicate that Strauß' Reductionist Materialism is not as materialist as it might seem. Yet, the claim that 'nature is perfect' turns Strauß' new faith into a materialistic version of Hegel's indifferentism over against history. If nature is perfect, then effort at learning of skills and gaining understanding/wisdom as well as the pain, suffering, exploitation, persecution, terror, and wanton destructiveness of humanity are all ultimately of no significance.

Strauß was no more or less an Idealist than he ended up more or less a Materialist. In other words, he was always both. His universal, inclusive Christology based on the 'relationship' between an 'idea' and its particulars indicates that he valued particulars as much as the 'idea.' His entire intellectual career sought to find an epistemology and metaphysics that fit with his materialist convictions. Rather than portray Strauß as an Idealist who turned into a Materialist, I take him to have been trapped in two systems of causal explanation with neither satisfactory as a causal account of the other. Simply because something looks like, walks like, and quacks like a duck does not mean that it is a duck. *Judgment regarding a set of particular appearances in perception depends upon the application of an imperceptible, universal concept to the phenomena that is not given directly with the appearances. In short, judgment is both empirical and a priori synthetic, and judgment itself is no causal explanation of how the empirical and a priori elements are related to one another.* Specifically, Strauß 'ought'/'is' fallacy of hylozoism does not 'prove' that nature causes life and consciousness. Rather, as a causal explanation, it is a dictum based on effects. Hylozoism is a heuristic description that perhaps to a certain degree constructively assists understanding, but it is no causal explanation.

The 'broader' and 'deeper' understanding of the human conditions as finite, transcendental consciousness is that the conditions that make possible transcendental consciousness' theoretical and practical reason are a 'given' (a 'faith of reason' openly communicable although their cause is not clear to us<sup>38</sup>). Theoretical reason is subordi-

37. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Transcendentalist" in *The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Random House, 1940): 87.

38. Kant, *Religion*: AA VI: 138.

nate to practical reason, and the individual requires a community that understands that responsible creativity requires the encouragement and support of a community (a ‘culture’ that promotes the will in contrast to a ‘culture’ of technical skill<sup>39</sup>).

Religion is concerned, then, not with how life ends but with the inexplicable conditions of possibility both perceptible and imperceptible that make possible anything like conscious experience, understanding, *and* responsible agency in the world possible, from the get go. Religion is not, as a matter of merely self-interest, a condemnation of imperfection nor a call to perfection (material or spiritual) either in the sensuous world or as a siren call out of the sensuous world. The afterlife is no substitute for this life and surely no crippling of the capacities that discourage experience, understanding, and *responsible* agency in this life. Religion is *non-epistemic faith*, not Absolute Knowledge, and it is not reducible to any element or domain of transcendental consciousness, especially not ‘merely morality’. Religion is the hope by no means for merely, external ‘success’ but comes from confidence in, and internal satisfaction from, the thrilling and *responsible*, inquisitive, *creative* search for the not yet understood lawfulness of ‘territory’<sup>40</sup> under guidance of a moral compass. Although *necessarily* internal and individual, religion depends upon that community, past, present, and future, that understands, supports, and sustains the efforts of the imperceptible orders of theoretical and practical reason especially when those efforts appear to be contrary to personal or social self-interest. In short, religion is no absolute choice between good and evil. Religion is a choice for life as creative, responsible, self-determining agency on the basis of imperceptible capacities and *autonomously embraced* (not heteronomously imposed) lawfulness that make possible perceptible experience, understanding, and *responsible* agency a reality. We have experienced no other transcendental consciousness, which doesn’t mean that there isn’t one somewhere else, with such capacities. Why would we want to be anything less than what we can be? I know of no other definition of religion that is more adequate.

### An Unrealized Kantian Option:

Strauß never really gave Kant a chance! As I have indicated, Strauß’ mentors and friends shaped his understanding of Kant, not Strauß’ own serious study of Kant. One can learn from Strauß what happens when a rigorous scholar only is able to ‘see’ a contrast between Absolute Idealism and Reductionist Materialism without consideration of the ‘middle way’ of Critical Idealism. Chapters 6, 7, and 8 of Volume II use the rubric of Theoretical Reason (Chapter 6), Practical Reason (Chapter 7), and

39. See Kant, *Critique of the Capacity of Judgment* AA V: 431–432.

40. On Kant’s distinctions among ‘field,’ ‘territory,’ and ‘domain,’ see See Kant, *Critique of the Capacity of Judgment* AA V: 174 ff and Chapter 1: 116.

Aesthetics (Chapter 8) to present Hegel's and Strauß' reading of Kant. These chapters aim to demonstrate, then, not only what Strauß actually said, but also it explores, especially, his philosophical sources that shaped what he understood (or, as in the case of Kant, didn't understand).

In each of these three Chapters I demonstrate that, given the collapse of Absolute Idealism and Reductionist Materialism, there is another limb, ignored by Strauß, on which to crawl that recognizes the limits to reason while focusing on those conditions and capacities (*Anlagen*) that are required for finite, transcendental consciousness to experience, understand, and exercise responsible agency in the world. This option avoids both the *μετάβασις εις ἄλλο γένος* of both the 'ought'/'is' and the 'is'/'ought' fallacies without succumbing to the illusion, as did Hegel, that the Owl of Minerva is actually and ridiculously trying to fly in a vacuum and sleep soundly because nature is perfect.

Critical Idealism does not simply describe the world. It claims that transcendental consciousness is the one, certain (!), place where we experience the natural world as an 'open' system, not a 'closed' system of 'blind' mechanical, physical causality. The strength of the limits to reason is that transcendental consciousness involves more than a capacity to know. Transcendental consciousness is the condition for us to recognize that what we can't know offers us confidence that there is enough order (both rational and moral) to the cosmos for us to seek understanding and assume responsibility for our agency. Every other epistemological system constructs an illusion of knowledge to convince us that we ought to seek knowledge. To be sure, Critical Idealism finds us in a 'precarious position':

Here ... we see philosophy [i.e., philosophical theology, Kant's label<sup>41</sup>] put in fact in a precarious position, which is to be firm even though there is nothing in heaven or on earth from which it depends, or on which it is based. Here philosophy is to manifest its purity as sustainer of its own laws, not as herald of laws that an implanted sense or who knows what tutelary nature whispers to it, all of which — though they may always be better than nothing at all — can still never yield basic principles that reason dictates and that must have their source entirely and completely *a priori* and, at the same time, must have their commanding authority from this: that *they expect nothing from the inclination of human beings but everything from the supremacy of the law and the respect owed to it* or, failing this, condemn the human being to contempt for himself and inner abhorrence.<sup>42</sup> (emphasis added)

Finally, the turn to Critical Idealism re-enforces my use of Ricoeur's three-fold, mimetic theory of narratives as structured by the *pre-figured*, *con-figured*, and *re-figured*. The task is not to tell the reader what s/he must think – as if an author's *con-figuration*

41. Kant calls his philosophy 'philosophical theology'. See the "Preface to the First Edition" of *Religion AA VI: 9*.

42. Kant, *Groundwork*: AA IV: 425–426.

of language, themes, and issues was some ‘final word’ of objective truth. Rather, even when it comes to ‘factual accounts’ (*logoi*) in distinction from merely ‘narrative accounts (stories/*mythoi*), there is an inescapable influence of authorial construction of textual claims.<sup>43</sup> Kant emphasized in *What is Enlightenment?*, as well, that the task is for the reader to think for her-/himself. Whether consciously or not, the reader is *re-figuring* the text that s/he is reading. A serious reader assumes conscious responsibility for her/his *re-figuration* and does depend lazily on the conclusions of the text that s/he is reading.

When one combines these insights, one does not arrive at the end of Strauß’ corpus with simply the question: Does he have the right take on the ‘new faith’? Rather, one arrives at the end of his corpus, literally, back at the beginning with the ‘*genetic mythical principle*’ of the *LJ*. By his restricting his own attention to the historical claims of Christianity, Strauß never appreciated the full significance of the *genetic mythical principle*, which he applied to the gospels only to conclude that the gospel narratives were by no means literal historical accounts of the life and ministry of Jesus. By the writing of *The Old and the New Faith*, Strauß was aware that the determination of the historical kernel of the so-called ‘historical myths’ was not adequate to construct a biography of Jesus or to distill out his actual teaching.<sup>44</sup>

Rather than focus on the content claims of the gospel stories, though, he could have emphasized the significance of the unique storytelling capacity of a species that possesses transcendental consciousness and the capacity of creative, *autonomous freedom*. Had he focused on *capacities (Anlagen)* rather than *story content*, he would have been not only more receptive to Kant’s Critical Idealism, but he could also have illuminated the conditions and capacities that make humanity, quintessentially, ‘religious.’ Far more than metaphysical, ontological, dogmatic, and even moral claims, *religion is the best label for humanity’s storytelling capacities of both theoretical (technical skills) and practical reason (responsible agency)*. The question addressed by religion, Kant proposes, is neither ‘what can we know?’ (theoretical reason) nor ‘what ought I to do?’ (practical reason). Rather, the question of religion is: ‘*What can I hope for?*’ Along with the others, this question is, in fact, *none other than the question: ‘What is autonomous freedom?’*<sup>45</sup>

43. See Ricoeur, Paul, *Time and Narrative*, Vol. 3, by Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988): 148–156 and, especially, Chapter 8, as well as, Ricoeur, “History as Narrative and Practice” in *Philosophy Today*, XXIX (3/4): 213–221.

44. In *The Old and the New Faith*, Strauß of 1872, Strauß has given up on the attempt to identify the teaching of Jesus much less the writing of a biography of him based on the gospels. See Strauß, *The Old and the New Faith*: 58 (as well, 53) and the “Epilogue”: 33–34.

45. Kant formulated four questions for humanity: The first three questions are found in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (B 832–833); all four are found in the *Logic* (AA IX: 24–5). Humanity’s hope consists of confidence in the indelible, conditions of possibility of humanity’s moral agency because the conditions of possibility of its practical reason can never be eradicated as long as one is living. There can be no proof (or disproof) of autonomous freedom that makes it possible for

As superficial as Nietzsche's assertion that David Friedrich Strauß in his *The Old and the New Faith* was a 'want-to-be genius' by serving as founder of a new religion as well as an elitist, 'educational Philistine' (*Bildungsphilister*) whose self-inflation is expressed by the imperial 'we,' Nietzsche, nonetheless, shares with Strauß the accurate prognostication of a coming 'materialism.' Strauß was by no means the 'founder' of a 'new religion' with respect to anything recognizably 'institutionally religious.' Yet, he accurately described the 'new faith' that has swept over humanity in the 150 years since his death: *reality is exclusively material and values are relative to the 'level' of political, economic, and cultural achievement of a people.*

Nietzsche, however, has also proven to be accurate in that he established the, now beloved, paradigm of the 'oracle genius.' Yet Nietzsche's 'genius' is one who makes a lot of noise with 'clever, yet, ultimately insignificant and ridiculous, metaphors for whom what is 'valued' as 'culture' is that one's 'music' (and the 'music' of one's tribe) be performed by other tribes across the globe.

In turn, 'meaning' in life is acquired for all 'non-geniuses' by having the 'honor' of getting close to 'fame' in the classroom, the concert hall, the museum, etc. In other words, with both Strauß and Nietzsche, we are confronted with an impoverishment of humanity, whereby the individual is discouraged from 'thinking for her-/himself' and taking responsibility for her/his own creative agency much less for encouraging and sustaining others to do the same, especially when 'doing the right thing' appears to be contrary to their, and the community's self-interest.

Nonetheless, if we employ Paul Ricoeur's notion of the three-fold, mimetic thesis of human narratives (the pre-figure, con-figured, and re-figured character of texts and ever-new text formation), it is worthwhile to engage Strauß. not because of the enduring 'success' of his personal music, obviously, but in order to understand those pre-figured intellectual narratives that initially formed him, as well as to witness his various attempts to con-figure an alternative, non-institutional, 'new faith.' Strauß illustrates the Western world as an inebriated drunk, metaphysically staggering from one side of the street (Absolute Idealism) to the other side (Reductionist Materialism) with erudition but limited acuity. A 're-figuration by today's readers of the pre-figured alternative of Kant's Critical Idealism, available to, but only partially and, then, inadequately configured by Strauß offers an alternative to reductionist materialism that can shake up

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transcendental consciousness intentionally to do things that nature on its own cannot, which is the ground or condition of moral responsibility. There can only be a transcendental defense of autonomous freedom as the required condition for us to be able to exercise this capacity so central to what it means to be human. See *Groundwork*: (AA IV: 459), see as well, "A New Exposition of the First Principles of Metaphysical Knowledge" (1755) (AA I: 403): Although the ground for morality is not the good or bad ontological status of our soul (see *Religion* AA VI: 39–44) or the consequences of our actions (see *Groundwork*: AA IV: 399–400, Kant does suggest in the "First Preface" to *Religion* that our hope is that there is a connection between the categorical and the contingent. It is precisely this connection, which, among other elements to be sure, requires belief in (but no proof of!) God (see *Religion* AA IV: 6\*). Explicitly though, Kant speaks of religious hope not (!) in terms of receiving divine assistance (grace) but in terms of maintaining our moral attitude (see *Religion* AA VI: 68–69).

humanity's priorities, which focus merely on the 'genius' of skills and measure 'success' by conspicuous consumption. This new set of priorities places practical reason's 'what ought to be?' above theoretical reason. Furthermore, Critical Idealism establishes the liberating role of 'pure' religion's hope that finite, transcendental consciousness can understand the physical world and can govern its creative freedom on the basis of physical and moral lawfulness, not speculative, dreams of flying in a vacuum. Critical Idealism does so adequately only when there is a 'culture that promotes the moral will not by external finger-wagging but on the basis of encouraging and sustaining adherence to the imperceptible Commonweal of 'God's imperceptible universal order of ends that embraces learning, research, and ever-expanding understanding even absent perfection and exclusive concern for one's own and one's tribe's self-interest.

