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"ENTHUSIASTIC JEW AND LOVER OF HUMANITY": AUGUST BONDI AND
THE ROOTS OF TRANSNATIONAL FREEDOM DURING THE LONG
NINETEENTH CENTURY

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
History

by
Matthew Christopher Long
May 2021

Accepted by:
Michael Meng, PhD, Committee Chair
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ABSTRACT

Migration is a decidedly human condition that has influenced the development of all nations. Yet the cultural and demographic impacts upon the United States during the long nineteenth century brought about by the mass movements of peoples from Africa, Europe, and beyond were especially pronounced. Immigrants to North America brought with them more than linguistic and cultural artifacts, however; propelled by intellectual currents in their countries of origin, they often carried with them a sensibility of revolution, radical republican politics, and a moral suasion that they employed as they navigated the political and social realities in their new countries. Many immigrants would come to view America and the New World generally through a prism of their own making, and thus see opportunity to dismantle and remake the world – economically, socially, culturally, and politically – when conditions at home had failed them.

Two fundamental events shaped this trans-Atlantic consciousness situated toward revolution during the nineteenth century: the European Revolutions of 1848-51, and an increasingly radical anti-slavery and abolitionist movement in the United States during the lead-up to sectional conflict and the Civil War. Both events sought to upend the established order through political, social, and cultural revolution, and both came to reinforce one another intellectually and strategically. Both revolutions sought to attack the existing systems – monarchy, capital, and the legal institutions that upheld slavery – and replace them, in the spirit of revolutions prior, with more egalitarian and liberal structures. Immigrants were often the main vehicles of this transnational cooperation. When it became clear to freedom fighters on both sides of the Atlantic that moral and political gradualism toward parliamentary, democratic

systems of governance, or toward anti-slavery and abolitionist movements, were to be ineffective, they would turn to markedly more radical approaches, and sometimes to violence to enact the changes they sought.

This paper investigates these broad trends through the individuals who personally lived them. One such figure, August (Anshl) Mendel Bondi, was a German-speaking, Hungarian Jew who participated in the revolutionary events in Vienna. Upon the restoration of the Hapsburg Monarchy, Bondi would be forced to flee with his family to the United States. Forging a new life in his new home, he would variously spend time in Louisiana and Texas, and work as a waterman on the Mississippi River. Eventually he would settle in Kansas Territory, where he became radicalized and joined Free Soilers in their fight against pro-slavery forces and Missouri border ruffians. Riding with John Brown during the Bleeding Kansas episode would inspire Bondi to a lifetime of freedom fighting; he and his eventual wife, Henrietta Einstein, another German-speaking immigrant from Bavaria, would be pivotal in establishing stops along the Underground Railroad.

DEDICATION

In dedication to Erica and Sabine, the loves of my life

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All this belongs to the severe fundamental experience of our epoch that all history is at the same time tragedy. The essence of tragedy consists above all else in the fact that the divine and the demonic in man are indissolubly linked together.

–Friedrich Meinecke, *German Catastrophe*¹

[A]nother party has risen up, namely the Republican party. It is against slavery ... All the free-thinking men who were leaders in Germany, here they are also for the good cause[.] [...] The immigrants can do a lot and they will continue to work for the good cause and those who wallow still in error they will [one day] wake up and say, Long live freedom[!]”

–Martin Weitz, Personal Correspondence²

This is one of the truths of speculative philosophy: that freedom is the only truth of Spirit.

–G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*³

But Circumstances are sometimes stronger than we are, General.

–Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*⁴

¹ Friedrich Meinecke, *The German Catastrophe: Reflections and Recollections*, trans. Sidney B. Fay (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1950), 108.

² Martin Weitz, German-speaking immigrant to America, in correspondence written to his family in Schotten in the Vogelsberg region of Hesse. Weitz immigrated to Connecticut in 1854 for lack of economic opportunity in Hesse to take up work in a wool factory in the mill town of Rockville. He was among the first wave of foreign immigrants to work in the mills there. His letter is dated 13 November 1856 and references the Bleeding Kansas episode: “In Kansas it is therefore a time of much murder and other shameful things have happened.” In Walter D. Kamphoefner, Wolfgang Helbrich and Ulrike Sommer, eds., *News from the Land of Freedom: German Immigrants Write Home*, trans. Susan Carter Vogel (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 335-8, 356-7.

³G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to The Philosophy of History*, trans. Leo Rauch (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1988), 20, Kindle. Writes Leo Rauch in the translator’s introduction: “History, for Hegel, is therefore a process of emancipation and enlightenment, with the aim of enabling us to construct a system of society wherein *everyone* can be regarded as free and autonomous, simply by virtue of being a person – conscious and rational.”

⁴ Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, trans. by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky (New York: Vintage Classics, 2008), 122.

INTRODUCTION

The Transnational Currents of Revolution

In *The Water Dancer*, a novel of speculative fiction on the self-liberation of America's slaves, abolitionist freedom fighters, and the creation and workings of the Underground Railroad, Ta-Nehisi Coates's narrator Hiram Walker includes the following short reference to German revolutionaries and the training regimens they inspired:

After supper, we would return to our barracks and change from our dinner garb to the uniform of the night – flannel shirt, elastic-bound trousers, and light canvas shoes. Then we would report for the first phase of our training. We ran for an hour every night, covering, by my estimation, six or seven miles. Mixed in with these miles were breaks for all manner of calisthenics – arm raises, leaning rests, hops, etc. And then after our run there was more – sideways lunges, leg lifts, knee bends, etc. The regimen was derived from the German '48ers, men who'd fought for liberty in their old country, and found common cause here in the Underground. Whatever their origins, they made me stronger.⁵

It is an only the briefest of allusions, and the only time the word "German" appears in the entirety of the text of the novel. Yet it is significant to those who are interested in the transnational roots of abolitionism and freedom movements more broadly. Coates suggests here the common cause for which political revolutionaries fought in the great upheavals of 1848 in Europe, and for which freedom fighters and abolitionists fought in the United States during the American Civil War. It hints at the transnational dimensions of an increasingly radical urge toward freedom and political self-determination across continents and spanning the Atlantic world.

⁵ Ta-Nehisi Coates, *The Water Dance* (New York: One World, 2019), 163. A very special thanks to Dr. Dana Herman at the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati for suggesting both this novel and for recommending August Bondi as a figure for deeper study.

Until recently, the import of transnational freedom movements, especially that of transatlantic abolitionism, was largely understood to be an Anglo-American phenomenon. During the eighteenth, and early- and mid-nineteenth centuries, former slaves would regularly cross the Atlantic to lecture about their life experiences to English audiences, and the intellectual currents of emancipation were exchanged liberally between abolitionists in Britain and the United States.⁶ “By the 1850s,” writes Mischa Honeck, “the Anglo-American abolitionist network had been in place for more than a generation. Petitions, capital, lecturers, pamphlets, and fugitive slaves traversed the Anglophone Atlantic.”⁷ Yet these influences were not the sole purview of English-speaking intellectuals and activists alone. The impacts on antebellum American society through transnational intellectual networks from across the New World and the Old is palpable. These ranged from French-speaking Haiti and across the Spanish-speaking Americas, to German-speaking lands, and indeed across all of mainland Europe. Further, the transfer of the ideals of revolution were complex and multidirectional. A revolutionary rhetoric derived from the American and French revolutions would wash across Europe and the Americas in the early years of the nineteenth century, and having crested, wash back again to the places of their origins.⁸ Writes Jonathan Israel, “Both the American and French revolutions, and all the

⁶ Olaudah Equiano and Frederick Douglass are but two examples of former slaves who shared their stories with English, Irish and Scottish audiences during this period. See Olaudah Equiano, *The Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* (Boston: Isaac Knapp, 1837). Also, Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, 2006).

⁷ Mischa Honeck, *We are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants & American Abolitionists after 1848* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 2.

⁸ As a starting point see again Mischa Honeck, *We are the Revolutionists*; Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics: The United States in an Age of American Revolutions* (New York: Liveright, 2016); Don Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 2015); and Timothy Mason Roberts, *Distant Revolutions: 1848 and the Challenge to American Exceptionalism* (Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 2009).

other supposedly 'national' revolutions, were essentially tussles between rival democratic and aristocratic variants of a single Atlantic Revolution."⁹ If indeed, as Israel argues, the political revolutions from the late-eighteenth through the mid-nineteenth centuries are one revolution that spans nations across the Atlantic world, then it is the people themselves carrying the animating Enlightenment ideals, those contagions of revolution, who become the primary propellants of freedom. Newspapers, broadsheets and personal were clearly strong currency in the roots of these intellectual currents; but moreover, as political migrants traversed the networks of the Atlantic, so too did their ideas travel with them.

Seen in this light, migrants take the center stage of the story. If the nineteenth century is a period of great social upheaval and mass migration, then the individuals who traversed the Atlantic world in all directions would come to define the transfer of revolutionary ideas, strategies and tactics from one country, and on one continent, to another. This diffusion of revolutionary practice across borders is what Richard Stites dubs the "cross-national elements [of] revolutions and the regimes they created or tried to create," among them, the "common intellectual sources, similar practices, outright mimicry, parallel biographies, physical movement of revolutionaries from one struggle to another, and other interconnections."¹⁰ Baker and Edelstein, meanwhile, give name to this idea, calling it the "script of revolution." "Revolutions do not occur ex nihilo," they maintain. "Revolutionaries are extremely self-conscious of (and often highly knowledgeable about) how previous revolutions unfolded. These revolutionary scripts offer frameworks for political action. Whether they serve as models or counterexamples,

⁹ Jonathan Israel, *The Expanding Blaze: How the American Revolution Ignited the World, 1775-1848* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 4.

¹⁰ Richard Stites, *The Four Horsemen: Riding to Liberty in Post-Napoleonic Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), xi.

they provide the outlines on which revolutionary actors can improvise.”¹¹ Revolutionary ideas in the early modern era may have largely spread by books, newspapers, broadsheets and pamphlets (and later in the nineteenth century, by telegraph), but it is the migrants, the peripatetic revolutionaries themselves, who are the living embodiment of the ideals for which they fought. One considers some of the more famous examples. These were revolutionaries like the Italian Giuseppe Garibaldi, who honed his guerilla military strategies in the Latin American revolutions of the 1820s-30s before returning to his homeland to join in the pursuit of Italian unification during the European revolutions of 1848.¹² Or Tadeusz Kościuszko, the Polish freedom fighter of the eighteenth century, who, along with the Marquis de Lafayette, would become among the most celebrated foreign military leaders for their contributions to the American Revolution. Decades later, Simón Bolívar would be heralded in the United States for his role in Colombian independence, and in the minds of many Americans, for spreading the ideals of the American Revolution onto a new, Southern American continent.¹³ Lajos Kossuth, the Hungarian statesman and freedom fighter (and contemporary of Garibaldi’s), would tour prominently in the United States and Britain in the 1840s-50s, sharing his vision for a free and democratic Europe, and in the process, earning the admiration of such mid-century American

¹¹ Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein, “Introduction,” in *Scripting Revolution: A Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutions*, 1-24, ed. Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 2, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹² Lucy Riall credits Garibaldi with importing the idea of a citizens’ volunteer army from Latin America back to Europe, a military tactic that would be put to use in defense of the Roman Republic against an invading French army in 1849. Lucy Riall, *Risorgimento: The History of Italy from Napoleon to Nation State* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), 20-5.

¹³ Perhaps most interestingly, Caitlin Fitz tracks and documents the names given to children in the United States in the early nineteenth century; from this data, an explosion of babies named “Bolívar” can be observed. See Liz Covart, host, “Episode 090: Caitlin Fitz, Age of American Revolutions,” *Ben Franklin’s World* (Podcast), July 12, 2016, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://benfranklinsworld.com/episode-090-caitlin-fitz-age-american-revolutions/>.

luminaries as William Lloyd Garrison, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Horace Greeley, and Abraham Lincoln.¹⁴ These celebrated generals and politicians were certainly the face of liberal and transnational revolutions in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Less famous individuals – indeed, even entirely obscure ones, men and women both – are much less celebrated (if celebrated at all), but their contributions to liberal revolution in this era are no less relevant. To be sure, not all migrants were politically active, and of those who were, perhaps only a plurality held radical political views.¹⁵ But the political milieu across the Atlantic World at mid-century – following decades of revolution and independence in the Americas, and equally long periods of political upheaval, rebellion and insurrection in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars – would come to instill a certain *mentalité* among the travelers. Thus, we see that immigrants from Europe to North America at the mid-nineteenth century carried with them more than the typical linguistic and cultural artifacts; propelled by intellectual currents in their countries of origin, they often brought with them a sensibility of revolution, radical republican politics, and a moral suasion that they employed as they navigated the political and social realities in their new homes. Many immigrants would come to view America and the New World generally through a prism of their own making, and thus see opportunity to dismantle and

¹⁴ See, for example, “Address of Ambassador Geza Jeszenszky on the 150th Anniversary of the Visit to America by Hungarian Democratic Leader Lajos Kossuth,” Congressional Record, Volume 148, no. 59 (May 10, 2002), accessed April 2, 2021, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CREC-2002-05-10/html/CREC-2002-05-10-pt1-PgE771.htm/>.

¹⁵ Indeed, some of those radical views may have been decidedly *illiberal*. As we shall see, the sectional conflict in the United States increasingly pitted pro-freedom and pro-slavery immigrants against one another. August Bondi would become at great odds with one of his pro-slavery, German-speaking settler neighbors on Ottawa Creek in Kansas Territory, who was known as “Dutch Henry” Sherman. Infamously, John Brown and his sons would slay Sherman’s brother, William “Dutch Bill” Sherman, at the Pottawatomie Massacre. See Christopher Rein, “Pottawatomie Massacre,” *Civil War on the Western Border: The Missouri-Kansas Conflict, 1854-1865*, The Kansas City Public Library, accessed Friday, April 9, 2021, <https://civilwaronthewesternborder.org/encyclopedia/pottawatomie-massacre/>.

remake the world – economically, socially, culturally, and politically – when conditions at home had failed them.¹⁶

Surely this progression of liberal revolution was shaped by centuries of political thought and practice, as the migrants and revolutionaries of the Atlantic world were clearly not acting within a vacuum. As we shall see in Chapter Two, by the time of the Age of Revolution, the intellectual currents of freedom had been evolving in the Western world since at least late Antiquity. It is a decidedly modern outlook that allowed humans to view themselves as protagonists in a larger struggle against the status quo. In this way, few aspects of modernity are as important as the changing conception of humanity's place in the Cosmos, and particularly toward an all-powerful God. Considering such questions vexed philosophers of the early Enlightenment. Questions of determinism, freedom and human agency loomed especially large. This was not the first generation to consider such topics. As we shall see, Augustine, Luther, Erasmus and others had interrogated what human freedom meant in a world that was variously ideal and determined on the one hand, or chaotic and free on the other. Immanuel Kant, when faced with a growing reliance on scientific certitude, posited that faith and science should not intermingle. He famously wrote: "Our faith is not scientific knowledge, and thank heaven it is not! [...] Suppose we could attain scientific knowledge of God's existence ... all our morality would break down."¹⁷ In what sense, Kant asks, can humans make moral decisions if their world, as organized by God, is already in its ideal state? Lacking free will, how can humans deign to

¹⁶ See, for example, Karen Odahl Kupperman, "Introduction: The Changing Definition of America" in *America in European Consciousness, 1493-1750*, ed. Karen Odahl Kupperman (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 19-20.

¹⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Lectures on Philosophical Theology*, trans. Allen W. Ward and Gertrude M. Katz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986). As quoted in Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 68.

challenge the status quo? If belief in an omnipotent God requires that humans accept the world as it is, then what good is engaging in speculative and normative ethics at all? How are questions of good and evil, or justice and injustice, or of human freedom and bondage even valid?¹⁸

However intellectuals of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries set about answering these questions, what is clear is that their answers led increasingly toward an expanding conception of political freedom, and of universal emancipation. Among the intellectual currents of freedom, the American and French Revolutions loom especially large as formative events. But while these revolutions did much to promulgate revolutionary rhetoric in the years that followed them – indeed, most scholars consider these two revolutions as the those which ignited the so-called Age of Revolution – these revolutions were not of themselves concerned with freedom for all. Both events emerged in a political milieu across the Atlantic world that gave precedence to a select group of elites – namely the landed gentry and bourgeoisie – at the expense of slaves, indentured servants, women, poor yeoman farmers, and immigrants. But both revolutions also framed their individual rhetorics of freedom within an embrace of universalism, in large part for the legitimacy that such principles would provide their cause. Perhaps not surprisingly, the rhetoric of universalist freedom also gradually came to include expanded rights for *all* people.¹⁹ Later revolutions of the mid-nineteenth century would take on an increasingly social tone. The seeds of abolition, the emancipation of slaves and serfs, of universal suffrage, and of feminism and civil rights had been sown.

¹⁸ This section draws in part on Susan Neiman's thinking about Kant's ethics. See Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 57-84.

¹⁹ This encompasses at least rights for all *citizens*. Hannah Arendt argues that refugees, the stateless, of the twentieth century are the last group of humans to have not been granted rights of any kind. "The world found nothing sacred in the abstract nakedness of being human." Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New Edition (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 1966), 299.

Thus, besides the American and French Revolutions, two other fundamental events specifically shaped this transatlantic consciousness situated toward freedom in the mid-nineteenth century: the European Revolutions of 1848-51, and an increasingly radical anti-slavery and abolitionist movement in the United States during the lead-up to sectional conflict and the American Civil War.²⁰ Both of these sought to upend the established order through political, social and cultural revolution, and, espousing a certain universalism in their rhetoric, both came to reinforce one another intellectually and strategically. Both revolutions sought to attack the existing systems – monarchy, capital, and the legal institutions that upheld slavery – and replace them, in the spirit of revolutions prior, with more egalitarian and liberal structures. When it became clear to freedom fighters on both sides of the Atlantic that moral and political gradualism toward parliamentary, democratic systems of governance, or toward anti-slavery and abolitionist movements, were to be ineffective, they would turn then to markedly more radical approaches, and sometimes even to violence to enact the changes they sought.

This thesis will look particularly at the German-speaking revolutionaries who were veterans of the revolutionary struggles of 1848, the so-called “forty-eighters,” who demonstrated an outsize role in their capacity to influence nineteenth century American abolitionism, and nineteenth century American political culture more broadly. The biography of one such immigrant, August (Anshl) Mendel Bondi (1833-1907), a German-speaking, Hungarian Jew who witnessed firsthand as a student the revolutionary events in Vienna, will serve as a vehicle for exploring these transnational currents of revolution. Bondi makes only semi-regular

²⁰ 1848 as a revolutionary event becomes especially important for understanding the immense social, political and cultural changes that were underway in the nineteenth century. It straddles the divide between the early political revolutions of 1776 and 1789 and the social, communist, and democratic revolutions that would arise afterwards.

and fleeting appearances in the literature on 1848. Yet his is clearly a fascinating and compelling life story, and one worth exploring in more detail. After the barricades fell, upon the restoration of the Hapsburg monarchy in Vienna, Bondi would be forced to flee from his homeland with his family to the United States on a New Orleans-bound sailing ship, *Rebecca*, in September 1848. He and his family would settle initially in Saint Louis, a burgeoning frontier city and a bastion for German-speaking immigrants. A young man, inspired by the revolutionary events in Europe, politically engaged and determined, but lacking a clear direction for his life in a new country, Bondi, like many fellow immigrants, would move itinerantly from place to place around his new home in the southern United States. He sought employment and found it variously, first as a store clerk, errand boy, and saloon keeper in Missouri, and later as a waterman on the Mississippi River and along the southern coast of the Gulf of Mexico. Perhaps also like other young migrants, Bondi had about him a certain romantic streak. In 1851, seeking a return to revolutionary agitation, he volunteered with a local division in Saint Louis and declared to fight for the liberation of Cuba, though the group later disbanded before they could even depart the United States for the Caribbean. Next, the promise of signing on as a seaman aboard Commodore Matthew Perry's expedition to Japan in 1853 drew him from Saint Louis back to New Orleans; but having found that enlistment rosters for the voyage had filled, he instead signed on as a clerk and translator on a commercial Texas-based steamship, *The Brazos*. His parents would ultimately settle in Louisville, Kentucky; but after returning from Galveston to Saint Louis, Bondi would be compelled to move again to the Kansas Territory, in no small part for its promise of land and opportunity. But more than these, Bondi professes that he was animated by an urge to fight for the cause of freedom. Heeding a call in the *New York Tribune* for all "freedom loving men of the states to rush to Kansas and save it from the curse of

slavery,” is how Bondi’s own narrative about what ultimately drew him to Kansas Territory is framed.²¹ To be a new arrival in Kansas in the 1850s meant being at the epicenter of a growing American sectional crisis that violently pitted Free Soilers against pro-slavery forces. In an autobiographical manuscript written many years later toward the end of his life, Bondi would ascribe the formative impacts that both Judaism and of the legacy of his father, Herz Emmanuel, a Freemason interested in equality among all men, would have on him. “Even as a child,” Bondi writes, “I decided to dedicate my life to the ideals of progress and freedom. I never deviated from this decision during the course of my long life, a life rich in stormy events. I have remained faithful to the principles that I swore to uphold during the stormy days of the 1848 revolution.”²²

These are perhaps the words of man, at life’s end, concerned primarily with his legacy. But narrative matters; the very way one shapes the main events of one’s life to create a coherent pattern of meaning can illuminate as much as it can conceal. Whether or not Bondi was an abolitionist from the first, what is clear is that he was hugely inspired by his time as a student fighting on the barricades against Metternich’s imperial forces in Vienna. And however it was that he restlessly came to the decision to move once again to stake a claim in Kansas Territory, Bondi would be drawn into radical circles and would come to take up arms, to fight and to risk death, for the cause of abolition. Bondi and other German-speaking and Jewish immigrants in Kansas would join under John Brown’s banner of radical emancipation and would thus come to draw and shed blood in the first violent struggles of the Bleeding Kansas episode, that which served as the prelude to the American Civil War.

²¹ August M. Bondi, *Autobiography of August Bondi, 1833-1907*, ed. Amanda M. Dooley (Galesburg, Illinois: Wagoner Print Co., 1910), 33.

²² August M. Bondi, “Personal Reminiscences of August Bondi,” from August Bondi papers, 1883-1906, P-178, American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS) Archives, New York City.

This paper will argue that the political effects of 1848 were wide-reaching, and that the intellectual currents of revolution on one continent, in one place, would come to have great influence upon revolutionary events in another. It is through the stories of the revolutionaries themselves – the personal, lived experiences of men and women like August Bondi – where understanding these impacts is at its most compelling.

Literature Review, Historiography, and Definitions

In other sections of this paper, I will discuss in more detail the specific aspects of historiography associated with the topics of the 1848 European revolutions, antebellum abolitionism in the United States, and the experiences of German-speaking and German-Jewish migrants during this period, including, of course, those of August Bondi. For our purposes now, I wish to situate my research in the growing areas of Atlantic studies focused on transnational revolution, along with the circulation of migrants and of ideas (i.e., the migratory and intellectual currents), that formed the bases of transnational freedom movements. Perhaps the most important of these is Jonathan Israel's enormous output of scholarship on the topic of, as he terms it, *Radical Enlightenment*. Israel dedicated much of his life's work to this concept, and a trilogy of monographs and several thousand pages constitute the backbone of his study. I borrow liberally from Israel's ideas, and to a limited extent, from the critical response to it. I largely draw on two of Israel's books, *The Expanding Blaze: How the American Revolution Ignited the World*, and *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Democracy*, though others have been helpful to me as well.²³

²³ Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010). Jonathan Israel, *The Expanding Blaze: How the*

A collection of essays specifically addressing some of the national contexts of the question of revolution and freedom was also extremely formative to my developing ideas. This was Isser Woloch's excellent volume, *Revolution and the Meanings of Freedom in the Nineteenth Century*. Especially useful in this collection were John M. Merriman's essay, "Contested Versions of the French Revolution, 1830-1871," James J. Sheehan's essay, "The German States and the European Revolution," István Deák's essay, "Lawful Revolutions and the Many Meanings of Freedom in the Hapsburg Monarchy," and Woloch's own contribution to the collection, "The Ambiguities of Revolution in the Nineteenth Century."²⁴

Several additional texts also informed my understanding of the transnational connections of political movements across the Atlantic World in the nineteenth century. The aforementioned Richard Stites monograph, *The Four Horsemen: Riding to Liberty in Post-Napoleonic Europe*, helped define my own approach to the writing of transnational histories of freedom in the nineteenth century.²⁵ Caitlin Fitz draws on the work of previous scholars, but I learned much from her book on the international history of the early Republic, *Our Sister Republics: The United States in an Age of American Revolution*.²⁶ Especially influential to Fitz

American Revolution Ignited the World (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017). *Revolution of the Mind* is a shorter volume (of only 276 pages) dedicated to succinctly summarizing his thesis on Radical Enlightenment; *The Expanding Blaze*, on the other hand, is a tome (775 pages) dealing with the transnational elements of the American Revolution. Other titles include *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity and the Emancipation of Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights, 1750-1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). For an excellent collection of essays responding to Israel and positioning his ideas against the German *Aufklärung*, see Carl Niekerk, ed., *The Radical Enlightenment in Germany* (Leiden: Brill Rodopi, 2018).

²⁴ All essays cited are included in Isser Woloch, ed., *Revolution and the Meanings of Freedom in the Nineteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996).

²⁵ Richard Stites, *The Four Horsemen: Riding to Liberty in Post-Napoleonic Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

²⁶ Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics: The United States in an Age of American Revolutions* (New York: Liveright, 2016).

seems to have been James E. Sanders' *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World: Creating Modernity, Nation, and Democracy in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* and R.R. Palmer's *The Age of Democratic Revolution*. Palmer's scholarship was also quite illuminating for me in its treatment of the entanglements between American, French and Polish revolutionaries, and the further connections to democratic movements in places like Holland, England and Ireland.²⁷ Similar in scope, but looking specifically at the mid-nineteenth century revolutions, Timothy Mason Robert's excellent book, *Distant Revolutions: 1848 and the Challenge to American Exceptionalism* traces the American public's encounters with European revolution, and the subsequent grappling with what it meant for the United States, steeped in the rhetoric of liberal revolution and rhetorical egalitarianism, to become a colonizing, imperial world power.²⁸ Other important works about global, comparative and transnational contexts for revolution were two excellent collections of essays: David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam's *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760-1840* and Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein's *Scripting Revolution: An Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutions*.²⁹

Don Doyle's book, *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War*, was exceedingly helpful to me at the very earliest stages of planning my thesis, especially in its presentation of the diplomatic history of the American Civil War within a

²⁷ James E. Sanders, *The Vanguard of the Atlantic World: Creating Modernity, Nation, and Democracy in Nineteenth-Century Latin America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014). R.R. Palmer, *The Age of Democratic Revolution, 1760-1800*, Updated Edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

²⁸ Timothy Mason Roberts, *Distant Revolutions: 1848 and the Challenge to American Exceptionalism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), ProQuest Ebook Central. Roberts and others point to the centrality of the Mexican-American War in this transition of the United States from republican to imperial modes.

²⁹ David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760-1840* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein, eds. *Scripting Revolution: A Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutions* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), ProQuest Ebook Central.

distinctly international frame.³⁰ Moreover, Professor Doyle was very generous with his time and correspondence about my topic. Speaking broadly, Doyle is interested in the personal experiences of those who lived through the tumultuous mid-century events on both sides of the Atlantic – and how they, as individuals, viewed the international affairs of the day. He argues that most historians approach the American Civil War through a decidedly national lens, whereas the people who lived through the sectional conflict were aware of its import in broader terms and thus approached it as part of the wider political events that were transpiring in European capitals simultaneous to the military events on American battlefields. The goal is not to “uncover some novel new view of our past,” he advises, but to “*recover... the common experience of [historical] actors at the time.*”³¹ If this is the goal, then Europeans observing and writing about Americans, and Americans observing and writing about Europeans, becomes incredibly useful for understanding the cross-national currents of revolution and abolitionism. Thus, turning to Karl Marx and his correspondence and newspaper columns about the American Civil War, or Heinrich Heine and his musings on American freedom; or conversely, reading what American newspapers, like Horace Greeley’s *New York Tribune*, had to say about the revolutionary events in Europe, become incredibly useful tools for this approach.³²

Specific studies relating to the experiences of German, German-speaking, and German-Jewish migrants during this time period were all extremely formative. Identity of the migrants becomes an increasingly important theme: how the migrants viewed themselves as they crossed

³⁰ Don H. Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 2017).

³¹ Personal email correspondence, Don Doyle to Matthew Long, May 17, 2020. My emphasis added.

³² For just one example, see Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Civil War in the U.S.* (New York: International Publishers, 1971). The book contains most of their writing on the topic, much of which appeared originally in Greeley’s *New York Tribune* and the *Wiener Presse* (Vienna), as well as their personal correspondence.

national boundaries and established new lives within new ethnic communities clearly conditioned their expression of political and social ideologies. Among the most useful of these books, I count Bruce Levine's *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War*; Alison Clark Efford's *German Immigrants, Race and Citizenship in the Civil War Era*; Mischa Honeck's *We are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848*; Andrea Mehrländer's *The Germans of Charleston, Richmond and New Orleans during the Civil War Period, 1850-1870*; and Charlotte Lang Brancaforte's edited collection of essays, *The German Forty-Eighters in the United States*. Other titles in this vein include Susannah J. Ural's edited collection of essays, *Civil War Citizens: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in America's Bloodiest Conflict*.³³ Also extremely elucidating was general scholarship on European migration during this period, including Bade and Oltmer's article "Germany," in the *Encyclopedia on Migration and Minorities in Europe from the 17th Century to the Present*.³⁴

On the general nineteenth century intellectual milieu, I found most useful Hayden White's *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, and John J.W. Burrow's *The Crisis of European Thought, 1848-1914*.³⁵ In Chapter Two, I will explore in great detail the intellectual history of the rhetoric of freedom at its intersection with liberal revolution

³³ Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Alison Clark Efford, *German Immigrants, Race and Citizenship in the Civil War Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Mischa Honeck, *We are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011); Andrea Mehrländer, *The Germans of Charleston, Richmond and New Orleans during the Civil War Period, 1850-1870* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011); Charlotte Lang Brancaforte, *The German Forty-Eighters in the United States* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989); Susannah J. Ural, ed. *Civil War Citizens: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in America's Bloodiest Conflict* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

³⁴ Klaus J. Bade and Jochen Oltmer, "Germany," in *The Encyclopedia of Migration and Minorities in Europe from the 17th Century to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

³⁵ Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973). J.W. Burrow, *The Crisis of European Thought, 1848-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

and will cite much specific scholarship on these topics. But especially helpful to my organizing my thoughts on this topic were several works from Hannah Arendt, including her essay “What is Freedom?” and her monographs *The Life of the Mind* and *On Revolution*.³⁶ Equally instructive was F.A. Hayek’s *The Constitution of Liberty*.³⁷

Before proceeding, it is necessary to define some of the more salient terms and topics with which I will engage and explore in my study. Among them:

Liberal revolution – the liberal revolutionary tradition is one that spans centuries, having its roots in early modernity and finding expression in the English, American, and French Revolutions, and those which followed in the nineteenth century. It is that which focuses on the establishment of constitutions, and on an expansion of the franchise, and certain other political and economic rights for particular groups of individuals, namely a rising *bourgeoise*.

Radical Enlightenment – As discussed, I borrow from Jonathan Israel on this topic. Radical Enlightenment is distinct from more moderate versions of Enlightenment and focuses on the universal application of rights and political engagement through representative government and enfranchisement for all humans, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or background.³⁸

Freedom – As we shall see amply demonstrated in Chapter Two of this study, many philosophers and intellectual historians have approached the topic of human freedom, and delivered, through their pursuits, multitudinous definitions of the term. My own definition will

³⁶ Hannah Arendt, “What is Freedom,” in *Between Past and Future*, 143-71 (New York: Penguin, 1968); *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006); *The Life of the Mind*, One-volume edition (San Diego: Harcourt, Inc., 1978).

³⁷ F.A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty: The Definitive Edition*, ed. Ronald Hamowy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), ProQuest Ebook Central.

³⁸ See Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind*, vii-viii.

remain simple: freedom for the individual is the absence of coercion from other individuals, or groups of individuals.

Political freedom – is the freedom I will primarily be considering in this study, especially as practiced in the liberal revolutionary tradition. The practice of political freedom is largely concerned with removing the barriers of coercion from a central state or other political authority. Civil rights, broadly, fall within this realm; but so too do the freedoms articulated by the liberal revolutionary tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: freedoms of assembly, association, movement and speech, freedom from unreasonable search and seizure, freedom of the franchise to choose a representative government, etc.

Transnational freedom movements – are those concerned with the expansion of political freedom within a universalist construct, the expression of which focuses on the transfer of revolutionary rhetoric, ideas, strategies and tactics from one state or geographic region to another. Within my study, this will largely focus on the transatlantic dimensions of the transfer of ideas on freedom stemming from the American and French Revolutions and their expansion in the following century to all corners of the Atlantic world and beyond.

Slavery – is the physical and economic coercion of one individual, or group of individuals, over another individual, or group of individuals, such that the more powerful, or paternalistic, in the hierarchy is the sole or majority beneficiary of the arrangement. This might be differentiated, for example, from relationships between parent and child.³⁹

³⁹ This definition borrows in part from Jeffrey Stout. See, for example, from among his Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh, “Lecture 4: Abolitionism, Political Religion, and Secularism,” *The Gifford Lectures: Over 100 Years of Lecture on Natural Theology, 2017*, accessed April 3, 2021, <https://www.giffordlectures.org/lectures/religion-unbound-ideals-and-powers-cicero-king/>.

Radical abolitionism – is the increasingly robust response of the anti-slavery movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as when policies of gradualism and reform failed to overturn the institutions of slavery and the movement began to embrace more extreme measures, including violence, to enact their goals.

Thesis Framework and Outline

This thesis is broken broadly into three distinct, but complementary sections. Chapter One will further introduce these topics by providing the historical context for the events of 1848 and describe how revolutionary patterns in Europe came to influence and mirror a sectional conflict situated toward political emancipation and radical abolitionism in the United States. Of particular interest will be the historiography of revolution across the long nineteenth century, and the role that migrants played generally in expanding the revolutionary flames across borders, over the Atlantic, and around the world. Also of extreme interest is the development of new categories of Americans, and the enormous role that migrants played in the formation of a new, larger, and pluralistic American identity. In this respect, I will focus largely on the development and social impacts of the German-American community at mid-century. Chapter Two will explore in detail the life of August Bondi, using his biography as expressed through his personal papers and correspondence as a vehicle for exploring, in particular, the topic of freedom at the nexus of migration and transnational liberation movements. I will look specifically at Bondi's character development through his evolving political ideology, and describe how his background, revolutionary politics, and Jewish faith came to align him with those of radical abolitionists and freedom fighters in the United States. If the biographies of individual revolutionaries shed light upon the practice of revolution and freedom, then it

becomes important next to understand the intellectual rhetoric that inspired the revolutionaries to fight in the first place. Chapter Three will therefore attempt to situate and analyze the intellectual currents of freedom during the long nineteenth century within a larger historical and intellectual framework. By so doing, I wish to explore the important ideas of freedom within the Western philosophical tradition by connecting them to the practice of freedom, that is, to the wider arc of political emancipation that began in the early modern era and continues in liberal and democratic revolutions that span from the eighteenth century through to the current day.⁴⁰ Finally, I will conclude with some thoughts which will serve to integrate these ideas into a satisfactory whole, and if successful, to tie these ideas to our current political moment in the twenty-first century. From our vantage today, it is increasingly evident that freedom is no less a salient topic of political discourse than it was for the revolutionaries who fought in freedom's pursuit two centuries ago.

⁴⁰ These revolutions are part of a long tradition that span from the English Revolution in the seventeenth century, to the American and French revolutions in the eighteenth, to the Latin American and European revolutions of the nineteenth, to the democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe in the late twentieth, and even, for some, to the Arab Spring movements in the twenty-first.

CHAPTER ONE

1848 IN A WIDER CONSCIOUSNESS

De Tocqueville's Volcano: Europe at the Precipice

In late January 1848, mere weeks before revolution would spasm and flare across the European continent, Alexis de Tocqueville was making something of a stir.⁴¹ Amidst the general unease that had greeted the New Year, de Tocqueville rose to give a speech in the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of the French Parliament and major deliberative body during the Bourbon Restoration and July Monarchy. This speech delivered to his colleagues – the vast majority of whom were members of the landed gentry and thus had the right to vote and hold office – proved so incredibly prescient, so compelling, and so rancorous in its reception that he would ultimately decide to append it, in its entirety, to the thirteenth edition of his magnum opus, *Democracy in America*, in 1850.⁴² Writing ex post facto in his memoir, *Souvenirs*, de Tocqueville describes the French milieu of early 1848: “The country was at the time divided ... into two unequal zones; in the upper one, which was meant to contain the entire political life of the nation, languor, impotence, immobility and boredom reigned; but in the lower one, an attentive observer could easily see from certain feverish and irregular symptoms that political life was beginning to find expression.”⁴³

⁴¹ There are some inconsistencies with the actual date of the speech. In his memoir, *Souvenirs*, de Tocqueville recalls giving the speech on 29 January, and quite a few historians accept this date. But Mayer and Kerr assert that he actually delivered it on 27 January given its publication the next day in *Le Moniteur*, the official public organ of the July Monarchy. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Recollections*, trans. George Lawrence, ed. J.P. Mayer and A.P. Kerr (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1970), 13.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 15.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 11.

Within a preparatory pamphlet he had penned during the days prior, and once again during the speech proper, de Tocqueville offered a severe warning to his colleagues, first about the unrest that was then fomenting among the working classes, but second, about the growing corruption, dysfunction, and torpor that had settled in among the ruling elites. His conclusions are worth quoting at length:

The time is coming when the country will again be divided between two great parties. [...] Soon the political struggle will be between the Haves and the Have-nots; property will be the great battlefield; and the main political questions will turn on the more or less profound modifications of the rights of property owners that are to be made. [...]

Why is everybody not struck by the signs that are the harbingers of this future? Do you think it is by chance, or by some passing caprice of the human spirit, that on every side we see strange doctrines appearing which have different names, but which all deny the right of property or, at least, tend to limit, diminish or weaken the exercise of that right? Who can fail to recognize in this the last symptom of the old democratic disease of the times, whose crisis is perhaps approaching?⁴⁴

As de Tocqueville's speech progressed, his tenor would become more dire, and his warnings more precisely pronounced:

It is said there is no danger because there is no riot, and that because there is no visible disorder on the surface of society, we are far from revolution. Gentlemen, allow me to say that you are mistaken. True, there is no actual disorder, but disorder has penetrated far into men's minds. [...]

[D]o you not see that their passions have changed from political to social? Do you not see that opinions and ideas are gradually spreading among them that tend not simply to the overthrow of [certain] laws, a [certain] minister, or even a [certain] government, but rather to the overthrow of society, breaking down the bases on which it now rests? Do you not hear what is being said every day among them? Do you not hear them constantly repeating that all the people above them are incapable and unworthy to rule them? [...]

⁴⁴ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Recollections*, 12-3.

Gentlemen, my profound conviction is that we are [sleeping] over an active volcano. [...] [S]ooner or later (I do not know when or whence) this ill will bring into the land revolutions of the utmost seriousness: be assured that that is so.⁴⁵

De Tocqueville's warning to his countrymen was not entirely unique. Among his contemporaries, others had also witnessed and commented on similar harbingers of the events that would unfold and which would come to define the year 1848 across Europe.⁴⁶ However justified he may have felt after the fact, even de Tocqueville himself would concede that his was not a completely clear-eyed vision of the future. "No, I did not expect such a revolution as we were going to have; who could have expected it? I think I did see clearer than the next man the general causes that tilted the July Monarchy toward its ruin. But I did not see the accidents that were to topple it over. However, the days that still separated us from catastrophe slipped away fast."⁴⁷ As he spoke in the Chamber of Deputies, de Tocqueville's volcano was in fact beginning to enter the earliest stages of activity that would culminate in enormous conflagration and catastrophe. Within weeks of his speech, seemingly incidental protest and tobacco riots in Milan would soon be followed by active revolution in Paris. The revolutionary fire, once sparked in France – and spurred in intense waves by a trifecta of new technologies of locomotive,

⁴⁵ Ibid., 13-4. Emphasis is mine. It is telling that de Tocqueville stresses the import of the sea change from political to social revolution. The "strange" new "doctrines" appearing "on every side," are notable; a mere few weeks later, in late February 1848, Marx and Engel's *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei (The Communist Manifesto)* would be published in London. It signifies a shift from the liberal bourgeois revolutions of the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that largely benefited property-owning elites, from those of the social and communist revolutions that would occur after. Thanks also to Mike Duncan for introducing de Tocqueville's speech to me. See Mike Duncan, host, "The Volcano," *Revolutions* (podcast), July 16, 2017, accessed April 22, 2020, <https://www.revolutionspodcast.com/2017/07/701-the-volcano.html/>.

⁴⁶ Citing the recollections of Rémusat, Mayer and Kerr posit, "Tocqueville was not the only one to foresee the dangers for the régime in the climate of opinion prevalent among the underprivileged classes of French society." De Tocqueville, *Recollections*, 16. Posits Mike Rapport: "Many of those who would participate in the events of 1848 awoke to the New Year with a nagging sense of foreboding." Mike Rapport, *1848: Year of Revolution* (New York: Basic Book, 2008). 42.

⁴⁷ De Tocqueville, *Recollections*, 16-7.

steamship and telegraph – would not wane until it had spread to Vienna, Berlin, Frankfurt, Budapest, Bucharest, Krakow and Prague⁴⁸. Not even Ireland, Denmark, Norway or the Low Countries were spared the political unrest which culminated in these mid-century challenges to absolutist monarchy and the existing social and political orders.⁴⁹ Seemingly an entire continent had become engulfed in what would be assigned by historians the next in a long series of liberal, political and social revolutions that spanned from 1776 to the twentieth century. Further, historians would imbue 1848 with equal import as an era of intense nationalism, a so-called “Springtime of [the] Peoples,” and an age of “national reawakening” and rebirth.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ See, for example, Mike Rapport, “Chapter 2: The Collapse,” in *1848*, 42-111. Rapport argues for the importance of the industrial revolution, in tandem with political revolution, in helping to engulf a continent in political upheaval. “Word of the February days spread like a dynamic pulse and electrified Europe, hasted by the wonders of the modern world: railway, steamboat and telegraph.” Quote appears on p. 57.

⁴⁹ Of the major, midcentury powers, perhaps only the United Kingdom and the Russian Empire would be spared from the convulsions of revolution, and for two diametrically opposing reasons. The British Parliament’s Reform Act of 1832 played an important role in helping curtail revolutionary forces by granting some liberal protections and offering constitutional reform; whereas in the Russian Empire, the singularly heavy hand of repression during Nicholas I’s reign squashed any political dissent before it might have taken root. Of Nicholas I prior to Russia’s invasion of Hungary, writes de Tocqueville: “Until then the Emperor Nicholas had stayed calm in his undisputed might. He had seen the agitation of nations from afar, secure but not indifferent. He alone of all the powerful governments represented the old society and the ancient traditional principle of authority in Europe. He was not only the representative but considered himself the champion of it. His political theories, religious beliefs, ambition and conscience equally urged him to play his part. He had therefore turned the cause of authority in the world into a sort of second empire even vaster than the first, encouraging by his letters and rewarding by his decorations all those who, in whatsoever corner of Europe, won victories over anarchy or even over liberty, as if they were his subjects and had helped to assure his own power.” De Tocqueville, *Recollections*, 237. See also Mike Duncan, host, “The Volcano,” *Revolutions* (podcast), July 16, 2017, accessed April 22, 2020, <https://www.revolutionspodcast.com/2017/07/701-the-volcano.html/>.

⁵⁰ See Mike Rapport, *1848*, ix-x. Jonathan Sperber, meanwhile, cites Czech writer Karel Havlíček’s 1846 definition of nationalism, which Sperber maintains was widely accepted on the eve of revolution: “A people or nation means, in the purest and most ideal sense, a substantial proportion of the human race who share a common descent, possess their own particular language, form a distinct community (a state), adhere to a particular religion and are clearly differentiated by particular characteristics and customs from other nations.” Sperber argues convincingly that this project of nationalism drew upon a bucolic and pastoral sense of a nation that was grounded in the hardworking values of “the people,” especially those most tied to the land and its soil, the rural peasants. Yet it would be the largely urban, educated intellectual and professional classes who would advance these ideas of the nation, and who would be the progenitors of both nationalism and revolution. See Jonathan Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848-*

The historiography of revolution has long considered 1848 an important, if largely fruitless year in this progression of liberal and social revolutionary development. The failures of revolution – what the revolutionaries could not achieve immediately in terms of democratic and constitutional republican reforms, and the nearly universal restoration of the monarchy in all those places where its governments had initially fallen to the liberal and radical opposition – have been emphasized by historians and the revolutionaries themselves from almost the first. De Tocqueville set an early, wavering tone not long after the events of February 1848. Hindsight allows us to see his position as one of ambivalence and moderation: he both admired the American republican model and, seeing it as the future for France – indeed for all of Europe – he sought political reform to the existing system of King Louis Philippe’s government.⁵¹ Unlike the socialists and radicals, he did not wish to overthrow the monarch but was instead in favor of a gradualist approach that might end with a more liberal, constitutional monarchy.⁵² His

1851, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 89-92, 99. Compare Havlíček’s positivist conception with a mid-twentieth century interpretation of the historiography of nationalism, epitomized by Benedict Anderson’s thesis that all nations are *Imagined Communities*. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006). For a similar construct, see also Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976), 96-101. Weber maintains that France’s peasants had to be convinced to discard regional loyalties and to accept the myth of an overarching French national identity.

⁵¹ Jeremy Jennings summarizes, having just experienced a relatively peaceful revolution in 1830, de Tocqueville is now convinced that democracy is the future for France and for Europe: “The movement toward democracy is now unstoppable, it is a providential fact. It will come – not necessarily in the American form – but it will come.” Thus, de Tocqueville’s interest in America as a test case: a growing, pluralistic and republican society, deeply divided and marked by incredible inequality, and which *may* offer a hint at France’s future. See Melvyn Bragg, host, “Tocqueville: Democracy in America,” In Our Time (podcast), BBC4, March 22, 2018, accessed April 30, 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b09vyw0x/>.

⁵² De Tocqueville’s study of American democracy made him a proponent of the American model in the early nineteenth century, notwithstanding his reservations about the institution of slavery. Robert Tombs argues that de Tocqueville embraced a progressive interpretation of history, and that “equality and democracy on the American pattern was the inevitable future.” On de Tocqueville’s ambivalence, James J. Sheehan posits that overt optimism was not natural to him: “Tocqueville was deeply ambivalent about the cluster of social, political, and cultural developments that he associated with democracy; cautiously

aspirations were therefore neither radical nor anarchist. Writing in 1850 as the tide had begun to shift from the early successes of the revolutionaries to those in the absolutist-legitimist and monarchist camps, de Tocqueville recalled, “We had won, but, as I expected, our real difficulties were now to appear. I had, moreover, always held to the maxim that it is after some great success that the most dangerous threats of ruin usually emerge [...] We would have been much stronger if we had been less successful.”⁵³ Alexander Herzen would be less sanguine than even de Tocqueville. A progressive member of the Russian aristocracy, Herzen was both a socialist and a member of the landed gentry, and thus straddled uncomfortable political and class divides. Writing from exile in London to his son Sasha after the successful counterrevolution, he emphasized the importance of the future after a stunning defeat: “Modern man ... only builds a bridge – it will be for the unknown man of the future to pass over it. You may be there to see him.” He continued with a warning to his son: “But do not, I beg you, remain on *this shore* ... Better to perish with the revolution than to seek refuge in the almshouse of reaction.”⁵⁴

Later historians would come to understand 1848 in a much broader perspective. This expanded framework necessarily includes a temporal shift in focus, a broadening of the time horizon to understand the actual long-term effects of revolution. In this revisionist model, the seeds of nation-building, political self-determination, increased political participation across the

optimistic about the American experiment, he remained sceptical that France could escape from the despotic danger inherent in modernity.” Both quotes from *The Short Oxford History of Europe: The Nineteenth Century: Europe 1789-1914*, series ed. T.C.W. Blanning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 11, 143.

⁵³ De Tocqueville, *Recollections*, 214. One is reminded of George Washington’s admonishment to Alexander Hamilton: “Ah, winning was easy, young man / Governing’s harder.” Christopher Jackson, “Cabinet Battle #1,” in Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton: An American Musical*, directed by Thomas Kail, Atlantic Records, 2015, CD.

⁵⁴ Alexander Herzen, *From the Other Shore* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). Quoted in Mike Rapport, *1848*, 400. See also Francis B. Randall, “Herzen’s *From the Other Shore*,” *Slavic Review* 27, no. 1 (March 1968): 91-101, accessed April 26, 2020. <https://www.doi.org/10.2307/2493915/>.

citizenry, and liberal constitutional reform are all sown within the context of a “failed” revolution. 1848 thus comes to be understood more favorably when one considers the impacts upon later societal and political developments across Europe. In spite of a return to absolutist monarchy and military rule in most countries, there is little doubt that the actual accomplishments of 1848 are broader and deeper than at first recognized. When one views 1848 in this way, it is no longer simply a failed revolution, an historical moment when Europe reached a “turning point [and] failed to turn,” as suggested by British historian George Macaulay Trevelyan, and an oft-repeated maxim in subsequent years.⁵⁵ Instead 1848 becomes an impetus and accelerant toward modernity – toward liberal and nationalist movements and political integration in the German-speaking lands and on the Italian peninsula; toward nationalist movements and *disintegration* among constituent parts of the Hapsburg Monarchy and Austrian and Ottoman Empires; toward emancipation of the serfs across central Europe and the abolition of slavery in France’s Caribbean colonies of Guadeloupe and Martinique; and toward increased suffrage amid an outpouring of political consciousness and engagement across lines of gender, class, religion and race.⁵⁶ On this shift in historiography from failed revolution to that of sowing

⁵⁵ G.M. Trevelyan quoted in Antony Polonsky, “The Revolutionary Crisis of 1846-1849 and Its Place in the Development of Nineteenth-Century Galicia,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 22 (1998): 443-69, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41036752/>. G.M. Trevelyan’s assessment of 1848 may be one of the most frequently cited by historians ever sense. A very similar quote comes from A.J.P. Taylor on 1848 and its relation to German history. Per Taylor, were it but for a different outcome in that revolutionary year, Europe, in Taylor’s mind, would have missed the horrors of Nazism and the Holocaust: “1848 was the decisive year of German, and so of European, history: it recapitulated Germany’s past and anticipated Germany’s future. Echoes of the Holy Roman Empire merged into a prelude of the Nazi ‘New Order’ [...] the German people stepped on to the centre of the German stage only to miss their cues once more. German history reached its turning-point and failed to turn. This was the fateful essence of 1848.” Taylor’s pronouncement has largely fallen out of fashion these days for its rather reductive and positivist approach. A.J.P. Taylor, *The Course of German History: A Survey of the Development of German History since 1815* (New York: Howard-McCann, 1946), 68.

⁵⁶ For more on the various forces – centrifugal and centripetal – of nationalism, see again Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*, 96-7. Sperber neatly summarizes the political and social legacies of 1848 in *The European Revolutions*, 273-7.

the seeds of future success – the so called “Seed-plot thesis” – Jonathan Sperber summarizes: “In recent decades [historians] have come to look at 1848 not as an example of failure of politics so much as an example of an explosion of political participation, of an opportunity for all sorts of people to become involved in [the political sphere].”⁵⁷ This is today, with the hindsight of nearly two centuries, and with the historical context of additional revolutionary movements, the nearly canonical view.

However, more than just an extended temporal framework of revolution is needed to see the import and long-term impacts of 1848. The relatively confined experiences of relatively small numbers of activist revolutionaries across even a majority of European countries does not fully capture the significance of 1848 toward the advancement of republicanism, transnational freedom, and a sense of modernity worldwide. This argument is a natural outgrowth of the historical interest in recent years of placing regional histories into wider, or even global contexts – and indeed in the development of the subfields of Atlantic history, trans-regional studies, thematic global history, and “big history” more broadly.⁵⁸ But it is also an argument that seemingly has little purchase among the preeminent scholars on 1848. Jonathan Sperber, for example, who wrote the authoritative English language textbook on the 1848 revolutions,

⁵⁷ Neil MacGregor, host, “1848: The People’s Flag and Karl Marx,” *Germany: Memories of a Nation* (podcast), BBC4, October 17, 2014, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b04k6rm5/>. The Seed-plot thesis is attributed to British historian Lewis Namier, whose 1948 lectures commemorating the centennial of the 1848 revolutions were titled, “1848: Seed-plot of History.” See, for example, the impacts of 1848 on a burgeoning Ukrainian nationalism: Roman Szporluk, “The Making of Modern Ukraine: The Western Dimension,” *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 25, no. 1/2 (2001): 57-90, accessed May 3, 2020, https://wcfia.harvard.edu/files/wcfia/files/801_szporluk1_01.pdf/.

⁵⁸ For context and just a small sampling of these trends, see “Atlantic History,” *Oxford Bibliographies*, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/page/133#/>. See also Katja Naumann and Matthias Middell, “Bibliography of Global History: Introduction,” *Transnational, Cross-Regional and Global Connections*, February 2, 2018, accessed May 1, 2020, <https://www.connections.clio-online.net/article/id/artikel-4410/>.

downplays the global significance of the event when compared to other waves of revolution that followed in the twentieth century. He asserts: “[The] 1848 revolutions were very distinctly a Eurocentric affair. They had the widest spread in Europe of any revolution. [...] But [they] had very few effects outside [of] the European continent.”⁵⁹ Sperber is not entirely incorrect in making this claim. Indeed, no governments fell outside of mainland Europe, and few experienced widespread protest as an immediate effect. The seismic waves of European revolution were therefore contained in 1848, especially when compared with the previous French Revolution of 1789 and the ensuing European revolutions of 1917 and 1989, as Sperber does. Nevertheless, it is precisely when considering the effects of 1848 within a wider context that one notices the outgrowth of a particularly radical strain of revolutionary ideology. This paradigm is one that would draw upon the ideas of the American and French Revolutions, and in so emphasizing the important political documents of those conflicts – Jefferson’s *Declaration of Independence*, and Sieyès and Lafayette’s *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* – would be employed to challenge the existing social order in places far removed from Paris, Naples and Berlin. It is the very spirit of the 1848 Revolution that would be carried by those radical revolutionaries who would mount the barricades in cities across Europe, and who would subsequently flee political persecution after a successful counterrevolution and restoration of

⁵⁹ Jonathan Sperber, “Tidal Waves of Revolution, 1848-2011,” *Saturday Morning Science* (podcast), October 29, 2011, accessed April 27, 2020, <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/tidal-waves-of-revolution-from-1848-to-2011/id525505899?i=1000115026414/>. Sperber compares 1848 with the communist and republican revolutions arising out of World War I during 1917-23, the post-Soviet democratic revolutions of 1989-91, and the Arab Spring of 2010-12. 1848, he suggests, though signifying a wave of revolution with enormous geographical and political spread and of major consequence within Europe, was still an almost entirely European event, with limited worldwide reverberations. He bases this on the relative paucity of European colonies during the revolution, as well as for the fact that there was no intervention from outside of Europe during the ensuing conflict. I would at least partially challenge this assessment for reasons I will make clear.

the monarchy to locales as far removed as the antebellum United States, Latin America and beyond. Were it not for the rapid spread of the revolutionary ideas of 1848, carried as they were by the revolutionaries themselves around the world, future political thought may not have developed as it had; and indeed, it is hard to imagine the revolutions of 1917 or 1989 without 1848 as their precursor and at least partial inspiration. These Enlightenment ideals informing egalitarianism, abolition of serfdom and slavery, universal suffrage, feminism, and civil liberties were all infused into the political space wherever the 1848ers went. This is in part, therefore a story of migration, of immigrants and their ideologies, revolutionary tactics, and a political sensibility they carried with them. But it is also a story about freedom more broadly, and how political revolution and freedom movements intersect across national borders in sometimes intriguing and unexpected ways. It is my hope in this essay to situate the movements of transnational freedom – particularly that of Abolition movements in the Americas – against a backdrop of international revolution, and to explore how historians have come to understand the legacies of 1848 and liberal revolution – on both sides of the Atlantic – more broadly.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ The scholarship of two historians who have helped to clarify my ideas around transnational freedom and the international scope of revolution and abolition are especially noteworthy. Don Doyle's *The Cause of All Nations* is an excellent study of the international dimensions of the American Civil War, and especially on that of European engagement with the conflict as a microcosm of the struggle between liberty and freedom on the one hand, and tyranny and despotism on the other. Prof. Doyle was also incredibly gracious with his time and suggestions for further research. See Don H. Doyle, *The Cause of All Nations: An International History of the American Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 2015). A slightly different, but equally compelling take on the topic of transnational revolution is Caitlin Fitz's *Our Sister Republics*, which traces the connections between the struggle for independence and revolution in both the United States and Latin America, with particular interest in the abolition movements that were forged in tandem across the Americas, in a hemispheric and diasporic sense. See Caitlin Fitz, *Our Sister Republics: The United States in an Age of American Revolutions* (New York: Liveright, 2016). Prof. Fitz is also featured in conversation with Prof. Liz Covart in the *Ben Franklin's World* podcast, which is a fascinating conversation and good encapsulation of her thesis: Liz Covart, host, "Episode 090: Caitlin Fitz, Age of American Revolutions," *Ben Franklin's World* (Podcast), July 12, 2016, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://benfranklinworld.com/episode-090-caitlin-fitz-age-american-revolutions/>.

To American Shores: European Migration in the Nineteenth Century

*Amerika, du hast es besser
Als unser Kontinent, das alte,
Hast keine verfallenen Schlösser
Und keine Basalte.*

–Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1823-28⁶¹

O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare oppose, not only the tyranny, but the tyrant, stand forth! Every spot of the old world is over-run with oppression. Freedom hath been hunted round the globe. Asia, and Africa, have long expelled her. – Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time an asylum for mankind.

–Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, 1776⁶²

Migration is a hallmark of the human condition; its influence has touched all nations. Yet the cultural and demographic impacts upon the United States during the long nineteenth century brought about by the mass movements of peoples from Africa, Europe, Asia and beyond were especially phenomenal. Immigration has thus come to define the American experience not only of this era, but also of an American identity writ large. On this evolving conception of national identity, Rudolph J. Vecoli emphasizes the recurrent debate between nativist and cosmopolitan elements of American society, between those who have an innate distrust of the new arrivals and those who welcome them. For Vecoli this debate is an ongoing public discourse on immigration, naturalization, borders, and national security, and how each of these elements interplay to inform evolving national identities. The debate spans nearly two hundred years and flares occasionally into the public sphere during waves of immigration generally, but especially

⁶¹ My translation: “America, you have it better than our old continent, / no falling castles, and no basalt.” Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, “Den Vereinigten Staaten,” in *Goethe Gedichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Taschenbuch, 1992), 1139.

⁶² Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man, Common Sense, and Other Political Writings*, Oxford World’s Classics, ed. Mark Philip (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), 35, EBSCO Academic Collection.

during times of economic downturn.⁶³ It is but one portion of the culture wars that have come to define American political life since the founding of the Republic. And while the more nativist elements have not disappeared – indeed they have been emboldened in recent years – there is nevertheless a strong consensus among Americans that, as asserted by Oscar Handlin in the mid-twentieth century, “the immigrants *were* American history.”⁶⁴

Any American story is by definition incomplete without considering the contributions of immigrants. The country’s motto, *E Pluribus Unum* – out of many, one – has become shorthand for this decidedly American ideal. It is a tradition reinforced repeatedly throughout the history of the Republic through cultural totems that span across literature and political discourse.

Wrote Walt Whitman in this vein in 1855:

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)⁶⁵

Even more steeped within this tradition of America’s embrace of immigrants is Emma Lazarus’ sonnet of 1883, “The New Colossus:”

“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,

⁶³ Rudolph J. Vecoli, “The Significance of Immigration in the Formation of an American Identity,” *The History Teacher* 30, no. 1 (November 1996): 9-27, accessed April 30, 2020, <https://www.doi.org/10.2307/494217/>.

⁶⁴ On Lost Causes and a resurgence of populism in the US since 2015, see Susan Neiman, *Learning from the Germans: Race and the Memory of Evil* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019), 180-1. Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1951), 3. As quoted in Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 1.

⁶⁵Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself 51,” in *Leaves of Grass: The Complete 1855 and 1891-92 Editions* (New York: Library of America Paperback Classics, 2011), 246.

I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”⁶⁶

This rhetoric quite possibly belies the reality that newly arrived immigrants were often viewed with suspicion and met with xenophobia for much of the nation’s history. Even as one group of immigrants would grow toward integration, acceptance and Americanization, another wave of migrants, with another group of protagonists, would start the cycle anew.⁶⁷ But whether America’s inclusive rhetoric matched the actual welcome that immigrants felt upon their arrival to the United States is almost moot. What *did* matter were the expectations and imaginations of the immigrants prior to their decision to leave their homes – perhaps permanently – and to endure the difficult Atlantic transit as they placed their lot in an American future. Wherever their countries of origin, the 1848 revolutionaries – like other groups of immigrants before and since – looked aspirationally to the American model they had forged in their minds and found

⁶⁶ Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus,” The Poetry Foundation, accessed April 30, 2020, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46550/the-new-colossus/>. It is fitting that Lazarus wrote and published the poem to raise money for the building of the base of Lady Liberty in New York City Harbor. See again Rudolph J. Vecoli, *The Significance of Immigration*,” 9, 12.

⁶⁷ Consider the case of the Irish. In a now famous study, Noel Ignatiev details how Catholic Irish immigrants, at first met with resistance and confined to the lowest rungs of American society, gradually improved their lot and eventually found acceptance among their new countrymen – greatly at the expense of African Americans. It is no surprise that the Irish were the largest immigrant group in the country in the early antebellum years, and therefore the most likely to compete for low-paying jobs – and to meet the greatest pushback from the nativist element. Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 2009). Mischa Honeck details how Germans were the next in a long line of immigrant groups who followed in this early Irish assimilation model. Mischa Honeck, *We are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 15-8. Meanwhile, Stephen D. Engle highlights how anti-German animosity, often a product of Know-Nothing nativism, seeped eventually into the ranks of the Union Army. He highlights one representative remark: “‘America can curse the day that a dutchman joined her army,’ remarked Edward C. Hubbard of the 13th Illinois. ‘I used to think any white man was better than a negro, but I had rather sleep or eat with a negro than a dutchman.’” See “Yankee Dutchman: Germans, the Union, and the Construction of Wartime Identity,” in *Civil War Citizens: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in America’s Bloodiest Conflict*, ed. Susannah J. Ural (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 11-55. Hubbard quote appears on p. 28.

there an expectation of the United States and its fertile soil for their ideologies. Many would thus choose to make their way to American shores.

Immigrants to North America brought with them more than language and cultural artifacts; they often brought a political sensibility with them as well. Propelled by intellectual currents in their countries of origin, the 1848ers often carried with them a sense of revolution, radical republican politics, and a moral suasion that they employed as they navigated the political and social realities in their new homes. Many immigrants would come to view America and the New World generally through a prism of their own making, and see opportunity to dismantle and remake the world – economically, socially, culturally, and politically – when conditions to do so in their former homes had failed them. Although it has risen to the level of pervasive popular myth, there is still something of an ethos, an overarching sensibility among immigrants in the nineteenth century that America *was* a new world, a place of economic and social opportunity, and a place where they might enact the societal changes that had eluded them in Europe.⁶⁸ The United States during this period of great migration was and continued to be a destination where one could, as described by Karen Odahl Kupperman, “break out, both physically and intellectually,” from Old World models and assert their ideals in the New World – in short, “making or accepting a choice to *become* American.” She continues: “Thus, consciously or unconsciously, emigration meant rejection of Old World relationships, and especially of the

⁶⁸ For a recent example of this ethos in the popular culture, consider Alexander Hamilton’s grand introduction in *Hamilton: An American Musical*. “How does a bastard, orphan, son of a whore, and a Scotsman / dropped in the middle of a forgotten spot in the Caribbean by Providence / impoverished in squalor, grow up to be a hero and a scholar? / The ten-dollar founding father without a father / got a lot farther by working a lot harder / by being a lot smarter / by being a self-starter / [...] Headed for the future, / see him now as he stands on the bow of a ship headed for the New Land / In New York, you can be a new man!” “Alexander Hamilton” in Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton: An American Musical*, directed by Thomas Kail, Atlantic Records, 2015, CD.

greater dependence to which those at home were condemned.”⁶⁹ This choice to become American, argues Kupperman, was no less of the migrants’ own volition whether or not they were driven to their decisions due to economic, social or political circumstance at home.⁷⁰ “Because of this massive transplantation,” she concludes, “by the middle of the eighteenth century America became an accepted part of Europe’s mental landscape.”⁷¹

So too was it for European migrants to America a century later. If anything, this image of America in the European imagination loomed even larger by the time that the revolutionary fires had flared across the continent in 1848. Politically, the revolutionary and liberal ideals of both the American and French Revolutions had by the 1840s nearly fifty years to solidify within the zeitgeist – an allusion to that “disorder” which had “penetrated deeply in the minds of men,” as asserted by de Tocqueville in his January 1848 speech to the Chamber of Deputies. Yet it was more than liberal ideology alone that animated Europeans in their views and dealings with America. By the time of the outbreak of revolution, a number of complementary and even countervailing visions of the United States had taken hold among the European intelligentsia,

⁶⁹ Karen Odahl Kupperman, “Introduction: The Changing Definition of America” in *America in European Consciousness, 1493-1750*, ed. Karen Ordahl Kupperman (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 19-20.

⁷⁰ Kupperman posits that the degree of indentured servitude and the involuntary movement of debtors and convicts to American shores was indeed a factor, but largely overstated, both in terms of gross numbers and overall percentage of migration. She argues here about European emigres – notwithstanding the enormous caveat that virtually all African migrants who were brought to the New World were brought as slaves. Asserts Kupperman on a cultural conception of America: “Although the adventure stories ... often centered on the kidnapping of innocent young men and women by rapacious merchants or ship captains or featured the deportation of criminals, huge numbers of people actually chose emigration.” *Ibid.*, 19. Vecoli similarly emphasizes how immigrants chose to become American. On a constructed American nationality, based not on heredity but on liberal ideology, he writes: “Lacking deep roots in the soil, ancient ties of blood, and recourse to ‘mystic chords of memory,’ such a national identity could be fashioned only from the Enlightenment ideals which had inspired the Declaration of Independence and informed the Bill of Rights in the Constitution. Given these assumptions regarding the universal nature of mankind, one became an American by choice, not by descent.” Rudolph J. Vecoli, “The Significance of Immigration,” 9.

⁷¹ Kupperman, “The Changing Definition of America,” 19.

and these ideas had percolated down into a wider public imagination. Jeremy Jennings describes this European consciousness which viewed America of the 1830s within a variety of frameworks, among them, America as a “philosophical paradise,” comprised of “yeoman republicans of virtue and simplicity.” Some alternately considered “America, the great wilderness,” a concept that had been put into wide circulation by François-René de Chateaubriand and his conception of the North American noble savage in his 1801 novella, *Atala*. Still others viewed Americans themselves as backward and uncultured “Philistines,” incapable of producing a new, meaningful culture of their own. And finally – perhaps most pressingly – many Europeans viewed America as the ultimate contradiction. To them the United States was an experiment in building a new liberal order based upon Enlightenment ideals of freedom and individualism – the salutary effects of which Europe’s liberals greeted with profound enthusiasm. Yet American society was simultaneously founded upon an institutional establishment that condoned and pardoned human bondage and the horrors of chattel slavery as a fair tradeoff for the unfettered pursuit of the rights and property of an elite landed minority, as well as to all those who benefitted economically from the trafficking and sale of human lives.⁷² Thomas Jefferson himself could serve as symbol and allegory for this foundational American contradiction; author of American liberty, “leader of the American Enlightenment,” and supporter of the French Revolution, he failed in both life and death to ameliorate the lives of his slaves, or of those owned by his fellow planters. Paul Finkelman poses a fundamental question when considering Jefferson’s legacy: was he “able to transcend his economic interest and sectional background to implement the ideals he articulated[?]” Finkelman concludes that Jefferson “failed to fulfill the promise of his

⁷² For Jennings’ full remarks, see Melvyn Bragg, host, “Tocqueville: Democracy in America.” Interestingly, Chateaubriand was de Tocqueville’s cousin.

rhetoric.”⁷³ It is not a huge leap to draw the same conclusions about the United States more broadly in its early republican form. These diverse intellectual currents, in sum, created a complex, sometimes contradictory conception of the New World that largely informed the decisions of those who would ultimately embark for American shores.

Yet why did they take leave when they did? Why indeed did Europeans emigrate from their homelands in such massive numbers so as to fundamentally alter the demographics on both sides of the Atlantic, and to subsequently change the course of history? The answer comes in part from the very conditions that helped to foster revolution in the first place. Although there is often disagreement among historians about the legacies of 1848, the historiography finds much more convergence on the event’s causes. Moreover, that recent historiography also suggests that there is much overlap in explaining both the impetus toward mass migration – within Europe and external to it – as there is to the social, economic and political conditions that helped to spur the events that led to protest, upheaval, revolt, turmoil and finally violent revolution. The narrative on the root causes of revolution in 1848 that has found the most traction among historians is something akin to this: Demographically, the early nineteenth century saw an explosion of population growth across Europe, just as technological change vis-à-vis the Industrial Revolution was having enormous impact on both the availability of jobs and the very *way* people worked. The phasing out of the guild systems and the nascent beginnings of free market economies only hastened the pace of economic change. As manufacturing become more prevalent in cities, particularly in the north – with closest proximity to Britain,

⁷³ Paul Finkelman, “Jefferson and Slavery: ‘Treason Against the Hopes of the World,’” in *Jeffersonian Legacies*, ed. Peter S. Onuf (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 181-2. Finkelman reminds us that Jefferson, enlightened as he was, opted against any manumission for his slaves in life or death – per the instructions in his will, all were sent to the auction block.

places like Lille in France, large portions of Belgium, and the German *Ruhrgebiet* were all impacted – rural artisans and peasants moved into these growing urban areas to look for work and better wages. The infrastructure was hardly ready to accommodate the surge, however. Indeed, scourges of disease and pandemics of cholera often ravaged the major urban areas, and many who suffered turned to mutual aid societies and private charities for relief when public aid failed them. Incidental to this, a number of major crop failures, most notably the Irish famine, or Great Hunger of 1845-49, along with poor yield in wheat production across mainland Europe all combined with a series of economic crises during 1846-7, which in sum caused a massive increase in the cost of food and a great strain on the social fabric. Also incidental, but no less pivotal, were transportation and communications revolutions that not only accelerated the spread of the news, but that also helped to foster a greater political consciousness among the citizenry, and a growing voice for those who lacked political agency – namely a growing educated professional class – under the old absolutist regimes. Changes in nearly every aspect of people’s lives were hurtling ahead at an unbelievable pace, particularly when these societal changes are juxtaposed against a relatively static model of European society that had seen very little social or economic change for literally centuries prior. Summarizes Colin Heywood:

To live in nineteenth century Europe was to witness social change on a scale that was both exhilarating and disturbing. It was exhilarating in that the developments associated with the Industrial and French revolutions encouraged hopes of conquering some of the age-old scourges of humanity, such as food shortages, ignorance, and oppression. At the same time, it was disturbing, in that those same revolutionary forces appeared to threaten the whole fabric of society.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Colin Heywood, “Society,” in *The Short Oxford History of Europe: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. T.C.W. Blanning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 47. One gets a further broad view of the current historiography of 1848 from the BBC 4: Melvyn Bragg, host, “1848: Year of Revolution,” In Our Time (podcast), BBC4, January 19, 2012, accessed April 30, 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b019gy9p/>.

Moreover, circumstances begged the “social question”: How would a changing European society contend with growing inequality, and how might it help to improve the lives of the ever-growing masses of urban and rural poor? Wrote Frédéric Ozanam in 1837:

The question which divides men in our day is no longer a question of political forms, it is a social question – that of deciding whether the spirit of selfishness or the spirit of sacrifice is to carry the day; whether society is to be a huge traffic for the benefit of the strongest, or the consecration of each for the benefit of all, and above all for the protection of the weak.⁷⁵

When it became clear that the *Ancien Régime* – and indeed all absolutist monarchies across the continent – were incapable of addressing these urgent questions, conditions quickly transformed into creating a crisis of legitimacy whose nearly inevitable end was *both* widespread revolution *and* mass migration. It was thus that revolutionary rhetoric traversed continents, carried in large part by the revolutionaries themselves.

“America’s Freedom-Loving People”: German-Speaking Immigrants in the United States

A German has only to be a German to be utterly opposed to slavery.

–Frederick Douglass, *Douglass’ Monthly*, August 1859⁷⁶

Niall Ferguson calculates the amazing exodus of those who left Europe during the long nineteenth century. By his calculations, fully 38.1 million Europeans emigrated from 1800 to 1891. Of these, an unbelievable proportion, nearly 33 million, were bound for the United

⁷⁵ As quoted in Colin Heywood, “Society,” 47. For more on the social and political circumstances that helped create the heady stew of revolutionary currents, see also Jonathan Sperber, *The European Revolutions*, 5-55, 109-16.

⁷⁶ As quoted in Mischa Honeck, *We are the Revolutionists*, 34.

States.⁷⁷ These European emigres came from all corners the continent in truly staggering numbers – from the British Isles they came, from Scandinavia, Germany, Italy, Russia, and beyond. Yet among this Europe-wide deluge, there is one group that both illustrates, and stands out from, nineteenth century immigration more broadly: the Germans. By sheer volume – in terms of both number and percentage – ethnic German and German-Jewish immigrants comprised an enormous contribution to the nineteenth century American mosaic, and these German-speaking migrants would prove to leave an indelible imprint upon the American psyche.⁷⁸ More than 5 million German-speaking immigrants would make their way to American shores during the long nineteenth century, second only to Irish emigres among European ethnic groups.⁷⁹ To assess the import of German immigration on the United States might begin with the simple observation that in 1855, *Kleindeutschland*, New York City's ethnic, German-speaking enclave, comprised more German speakers than any city in the world outside of Berlin and Vienna. At approximately 184,000 German-speaking inhabitants within the current-day boroughs of New York City (Brooklyn at the time was its own incorporated city), ethnic German

⁷⁷ Niall Ferguson, "The European Economy, 1815-1914," in *The Short Oxford History of Europe: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. T.C.W. Blanning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 108-111.

⁷⁸ See for example Klaus J. Bade and Jochen Oltmer, "Germany," in *The Encyclopedia of Migration and Minorities in Europe from the 17th Century to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 69. Bade and Oltmer articulate that transatlantic migration networks during the mid-nineteenth century opened a deluge of German and German-speaking immigrants to North America. 90% of all German emigrants from this period were bound for the United States, with Canada forming a distant second (followed by Brazil, Argentina and Australia). "Between 1816 and 1914, about 5.5 million Germans emigrated to the USA, and since then, another 2 million. [...] Between 1820 and 1860, the German-born population of the USA was the second largest group behind the Irish at 30%, and from 1861 to 1890 it was even the largest." For more on the immigrant experience from Europe in the nineteenth century, see also Dorothee Schneider, *Crossing Borders: Migration and Citizenship in the Twentieth-Century United States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 10-18.

⁷⁹ One must disaggregate British ethnicities for this to hold true; per Ferguson, 12.7 million left Britain with the Scottish and Irish over-represented. When taken per capita, the German and Irish emigrants represented approximately 7 and 14 people per 1000, respectively. Niall Ferguson, "The European Economy, 1815-1914," 108-11.

and German-speaking Jews far outnumbered those in even Hamburg – the next largest concentration at 148,754. Based on U.S. census records, the neighborhood of *Kleindeutschland*, if considered its own city, would be the fourth largest *American* city, after New York, Brooklyn, and Philadelphia, during the years from 1860 to 1880.⁸⁰ Bruce Levine summarizes the impact this sudden infusion of immigrants had on American cities in the middle of the century:

Between 1840 and 1860, more than four million people entered the United States ... equal to about 30 percent of the total free population of the nation in 1840. In proportional terms, this influx of immigrants was the largest in the nation's entire history. [...] By 1860 the foreign-born accounted for upwards of half the population of Chicago, St. Louis, Milwaukee, and San Francisco; at least 40 percent of the residents of New York, Cincinnati, Buffalo, Cleveland, and Detroit; and imposing minorities in nearly all other major population centers.⁸¹

This entry of new blood and workers, and of new cultures and languages into American society, would have an incredibly profound and long-lasting impact. Not surprisingly, German-speaking immigrants would shoulder a large portion of these developments. It is out of this practice that a new ethnic identity, that of German-American, would come to be formed.⁸²

And yet the creation of new identities – of a national identity vis-à-vis the United States, and of communitarian and personal identities vis-à-vis the immigrants themselves – would prove to be a mutually codependent arrangement. Both parties, the society at large and the groups of migrants who entered, came to reflect and condition one another. In this way, German and German-Jewish immigrants underwent transformation of their own during this

⁸⁰ Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in New York City, 1845-80* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 1, 173.

⁸¹ Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848*, 2. See also Stephen D. Engle, "Yankee Dutchman," 12-3. David Blight tallies the foreign-born in Boston and New York in 1852 even higher, at 50%. David Blight, "Lecture 4: A Northern World View: Yankee Society, Antislavery Ideology and the Abolition Movement," HIST 119: The Civil War and Reconstruction Era, 1845-1877, Open Yale Courses, accessed May 2, 2020, <https://oyc.yale.edu/history/hist-119/lecture-4/>.

⁸² See Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany*, 4-5.

process of assimilation into American society. Far from homogenous, the immigrants came from literally scores of different backgrounds, countries of origin, classes, political affiliations, religions, and confessions. Some German-speaking immigrants were Catholic, others Lutheran, Calvinist or Freethinker, and still others Jewish. Many came from rural areas in the small duchies and minor kingdoms in western and southern Germany, while still others came from the large and cosmopolitan imperial capital cities of Berlin and Vienna. Some came from German-speaking areas in current-day Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. Many were among the poor working classes with very few skills, though some brought with them the skilled blue-collar and artisan trades of woodworking and carpentry, tanning, brewing and textile production; still others were of the professional classes, educated teachers, lawyers, writers and doctors. Indeed, some were full-time revolutionaries and agitators. All of them, having undergone the transformative process of leaving one country and negotiating a new reality and identity in another, found that, in spite of distinctive differences in their backgrounds, a common language and a distinctly German-American culture knit them together in the New World. Their similarities in the United States, what made them distinctly “German” in American minds (or “Dutch,” as it was in the confused lingo of the time), drew them tightly together in ways that clearly transcended their eclectic and often divergent European identities. Further hastening this dynamic, John Hawgood argues that of critical import was immigrant experience and its engagement with Know-Nothing nativism and xenophobia, outlooks that were commonly held by some of their new American neighbors. These encounters with nativists did much to

encourage an inward turn among the immigrants.⁸³ In *Little Germany*, Stanley Nadel summarizes: “[T]he processes of emigration and resettlement had broken down the regional divisions of the Old World and dissolved them in the new ethnicity of German-America.”⁸⁴

American Progress, American Freedom: A New Adam

*As Adam early in the morning,
Walking forth from the bower refresh'd with sleep,
Behold me where I pass, hear my voice, approach,
Touch me, touch the palm of your hand to my body as I pass,
Be not afraid of my body.*

–Walt Whitman, “Children of Adam,” 1855⁸⁵

Mid-century immigrants to the United States were steeped in the Old World revolutionary milieu, and sudden societal change was thus not foreign to them. But the world that greeted the immigrants in German-America was undergoing its own radical and dramatic changes. Increasingly, the early- and mid-nineteenth century social and economic conditions in North America began to mirror those that were occurring in Europe. Perhaps not surprisingly, as those two sets of conditions began to more closely resemble one another, the subsequent political crises on both sides of the Atlantic also began to take similar shape. David Blight describes the incredible pace of foundational change that came about as a result of the market revolution beginning during the Jacksonian period and extending through to the end of the century. Just as it had in Europe, the market revolution joined with revolutions in industry, commerce, transportation, and communication – and just as they had abjectly transformed

⁸³ See for example John Hawgood, *The Tragedy of German-America: The Germans in the United State of America during the Nineteenth Century – and After* (New York: Putman, 1940), 238. As referenced by Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany*, 5.

⁸⁴ Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany*, 5.

⁸⁵ Walt Whitman, “Children of Adam,” *Leaves of Grass*, 267.

European society, they were doing the same in America. How people worked and made a living, how they shopped and spent their leisure time, how they interacted with one another in their daily lives – all of these had been transformed within a generation. Blight describes a new American *mentalité* that emerged, one wherein an increased sense of social mobility, opportunity, and optimism was ingrained.⁸⁶ Free market ideology reigned, and fortunes in new industries like textiles and the railroads were seemingly made overnight. It also fixed an expansionist westward gaze among the American psyche, one that was fixated on conquering a continent, and fixated as well on taking the ideals of America to Pacific shores and beyond. A boundless optimism for the future had set in. But also, out of this maelstrom of new ideas and practices, a deep uncertainty occurred in equal measure. Economic cycles of boom and bust left an increasingly divided and unequal populace. As fortunes were made for some titans of industry, many more, especially the urban poor, faced food shortages, unfettered disease, bankruptcy and despair. Just as in Europe, increasingly radical solutions were introduced to grapple with these problems. And all of this occurred as an approaching sectional conflict became clearer to the average American; a conflict, per Blight, that was set as against an American backdrop of “a deep and abiding white supremacy.” American Progress bred American exceptionalism; *We are the hope of humankind*, it seemed to suggest, *we are the hope of earth*. Blight again: “Manifest destiny was the fuel of the American imagination, and fuel for the American civilizing mission: that to spread liberty, democracy, Christianity and an Anglo-Saxon

⁸⁶ This optimism might be contrasted with other, competing narratives about the social mood in nineteenth century America. Others, like Barbara Ehrenreich posit a *mentalité* of depression, a lingering after-effect of the Puritanical and Calvinist roots of the early settlement of the continent. This religious inheritance, guided by predeterminism, stresses a static, unchanging society, and beyond Providence, no hope for a markedly different future. See Hari Kunzru, host, “It’s Always Sunny in the Dialectic,” Into the Zone (podcast), accessed April 15, 2021, <https://www.pushkin.fm/episode/its-always-sunny-in-the-dialectic-2/>.

white supremacy around the earth.”⁸⁷ That this vision could be interrupted was evident to some; indeed, that same white supremacy fed further into that which was becoming increasingly evident to all, that the United States in this age of expansion and fervent innovation was moving headlong toward civil war.

An Impending Sectional Conflict and a Move to Radical Abolitionism

His zeal in the cause of freedom was infinitely superior to mine. Mine was as the taper light; his was as the burning sun. ... I could live for the slave. John Brown could die for [him].

–Frederick Douglass, 1881⁸⁸

*Doing The Lord’s work with sabre
sharpened on the grindstone
of the Word:*

Bleeding Kansas:

*the cries of my people the cries
of their oppressors harrowed
hacked – poison meat for Satan’s
maw.*

*I slew no man but blessed
the Chosen, who in the name
of justice killed at my command.*

Bleeding Kansas:

*A son martyred
there: I am tested I am trued
made worthy of my servitude.*

⁸⁷ See David Blight, “Lecture 4: A Northern World View.” Thanks to David Blight for providing this Europeanist with an excellent introduction to American ideology in the antebellum period. For more on civilizing missions of empire, see Kenneth Pomeranz, “Empire & ‘civilizing’ missions, past & present,” *Dædalus* 134, no. 2 (Spring 2005): 35-6, accessed December 14, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1162/0011526053887428/>. See also *Civilizations*, Season 1, episode 8, “The Cult of Progress,” dir. Simon Schama, Mary Beard and David Olusoga, aired June 26, 2018 on PBS, Netflix, accessed October 28, 2018, <http://www.pbs.org/civilizations/episodes/episode-8/>.

⁸⁸ Quoted in David Blight, *Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2018), 280.

*Oh the crimes of this guilty
guilty land:
let Kansas bleed.*

–Robert Hayden, “John Brown”⁸⁹

The 1830s in the United States saw an increase in both activity and intensity in radical abolitionism at just the time that the revolutionary fire was spreading in Europe. William Lloyd Garrison’s *The Liberator* was founded and ran weekly throughout the 1830s, and Nat Turner’s rebellion played a prominent role at the decade’s begin. Yet as radical abolitionism became a greater force in the United States, so too did pro-slavery advocates gain ground during this period. The American contradiction seemed to be headed to all-out confrontation, and by the 1850s, the crisis was imminent. Wrote John Brown in a note to his jailor from his prison cell in Harper’s Ferry, Virginia: “I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with blood.”⁹⁰ Brown, who had already spilled blood and killed with a righteous anger in Kansas and Virginia – and all in the name of freedom for America’s enslaved peoples – recognized what was coming. Though he would not live to bear witness to it, his was a civilization that was hurtling toward civil war. As certain as the battle lines were that were being drawn in the United States around the issues of the expansion of slavery into the western territories, there was nevertheless a profound confusion on the part of those 1848ers who arrived to find the country anything but a land of freedom. This marked ambiguity was expressed by many a German-speaking revolutionary upon his or her arrival to the United

⁸⁹ Robert Hayden, “John Brown,” in *Collected Poems*, ed. Frederick Glaysher (New York: Liveright, 1996), 150.

⁹⁰ As quoted in Ken Burns, “Episode 1: The Meteor,” *The Civil War, a Film by Ken Burns*. PBS, rebroadcast September 7, 2015, accessed May 3, 2020, <http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/civil-war/#/>.

States, only to find in it a deeply divided, and deeply unequal country. It was in fact a moral question for those immigrants who arrived to the United States: how did they hope to enact social change in their new homes? Many found, at least initially, that their efforts had been thwarted by a republican system whose systemic predilection was situated toward conservatism and stasis. A young Carl Schurz, who would famously befriend Abraham Lincoln and serve as Ambassador to Spain during the Civil War, summarized this reaction among the 1848ers: “The democrat just arrived from Europe who has so far lived in a world of ideas and has had no opportunity to see these ideas put into actual, sound practice will ask himself, hesitatingly, Is this [America], indeed a free people? Is this a real democracy? Is this my ideal?”⁹¹

Not all of the 1848ers were freedom fighters immediately upon arrival, of course. Some would evolve to become freedom fighters during the course of their newfound American lives. August (Anshl) Bondi provides a fascinating case study of one such immigrant who grew to radicalize, to fight – and ultimately to risk death – for the goal of an expanding conception of freedom in America. Bondi was among the 1848ers who took to the cause of transnational freedom. A German-speaking Hungarian Jew, and among the youngest radical revolutionaries in Vienna – he was 15 and a student at the time that protests against the Hapsburg Monarchy broke out there – he would be forced to flee the empire with his parents after the restoration of the monarchy during the counterrevolution. Arriving in America, his parents would settle in Louisville, Kentucky. Bondi would take to several lines of work in Louisiana and Texas, including as a waterman on the Mississippi River, before finally settling in Kansas. There he met John Brown and joined in Free Soil political protest, and eventually in Free Soil political violence

⁹¹ Carl Schurz quoted in Mischa Honeck, *We are the Revolutionists*, 23.

against pro-slavery forces and Border Ruffians in the Bleeding Kansas episode of 1855-57. He and his abolitionist wife, Henrietta Einstein, would together create stops along the Underground Railroad, including in their own home, until the outbreak of the Civil War. Much later, ever focused on the incredible historic moments he experienced firsthand, he served as a President of the Kansas Historical Society.⁹²

A young Bondi might not have seen his life's trajectory in quite the way that his older self would. He was deeply divided on many topics, as will become clear. One of them was on equality between the races. Wrote Bondi in a particularly telling excerpt from his manuscript: "Every good-looking young man from the north could have his pick of southern young ladies. I was only eighteen years of age, yet if I had been willing, several young ladies of first families would have fallen in love with me." At 18, Bondi already expresses a distaste for the institution of slavery. "I disliked the idea of marrying a woman who owned slaves." Yet his was yet not a high-minded call to freedom just yet. "Had I stayed south, I would have joined the Confederate army, but while I really did not have much sympathy with [blacks], I felt that my father's son was not to be a slave driver."⁹³ An older Bondi would see things a little differently. In 1903, he mailed this very manuscript and his assorted papers to the American Jewish Historical Society in New York City, stating the importance of "his narrative as a valid record of Jewish participation in the agitation for human freedom in America in the days preceding the Civil War."⁹⁴ Like the country in which they agitated, the contradictions of the freedom fighters were then also apparent.

⁹² See Mischa Honeck, *We are the Revolutionists*, 65. See also Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848*, 208-9, 220-2. The only existing biography of Bondi is Martin Litvin's *The Journey: A biography of August M. Bondi, the American-Jewish freedom fighter who rode with John Brown in Kansas* (Galesburg, IL: Galesburg Historical Society, 1981).

⁹³ As quoted in Martin Litvin, *The Journey*, 132. In his original manuscript, Bondi employs the word "n-----s" in this passage instead of "slaves."

⁹⁴ Martin Litvin, *The Journey*, xiii.

I will be looking closely at the life and times of August Bondi in Chapter Two of this paper, interrogating the ideals – and indeed the contradictions – of those transnational freedom fighters who would agitate on two continents for democracy and freedom. In this way, August Bondi becomes a vehicle for exploring a larger narrative about transnational freedom. Bondi's is likely not an isolated experience. Something occurred in him – and similarly occurred in others – between that moment of fighting on the barricades in Vienna in 1848, and in joining John Brown's guerilla band of anti-slavery activist fighters in Kansas in 1856. What indeed led a white man, a German-speaking immigrant and Hungarian Jew from Vienna to cast his lot with a fledgling radical Republican politics and the Free Soil cause – and ultimately turn to violence to overturn a society's bedrock institution of slavery? Understanding these questions will help us understand transnational freedom movements more broadly.

CHAPTER TWO

AUGUST BONDI AND THE TRANSNATIONAL CURRENTS OF REVOLUTION

Only where this pathos of novelty is present and where novelty is connected with the idea of freedom are we entitled to speak of revolution. [...] But violence is no more adequate to describe the phenomenon of revolution than change; only where change occurs in the sense of a new beginning, where violence is used to constitute an altogether different form of government, to bring about the formation of a new body politic, where the liberation from oppression aims at least at the constitution of freedom can we speak of revolution.

—Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*⁹⁵

August Bondi and the Legacy of 1848

On 23 November 1897, toward the end of a long and momentous life, August Mendel Bondi lodged for the first time an application for his United States passport, and in so doing swore allegiance to the country that had been his home for the past 49 years. His application having occurred in the days prior to photography’s widespread use in government identification, Bondi wrote out the required “Description of Applicant” in his own hand:

Age: 64 years

Mouth: ordinary

Stature: 5 feet, 5 ½ inches, Eng.

Chin: whiskers

Forehead: Broad

Hair: nearly white

Eyes: Black

Complexion: dark

Nose: ordinary

Face: oval⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 24-5.

⁹⁶ United States Department of State, passport application for August Bondi, No. 9928, Saline County, Kansas, issued November 27, 1897, National Archives and Record Administration (NARA).

Bondi had come first to the southern United States in 1848 as a political refugee, having fled at the age of fifteen with his family – his father, mother and younger sister – after the commencement of revolutionary events which had flared and swept across nearly all of Europe during that and the following years. Having witnessed firsthand and participated directly in the student-led uprising against the Hapsburg Monarchy in March 1848, and thereafter spending his intervening years in the United States, Bondi was now set to return to Vienna for the first time since his youth, nearly a half century later, to participate in the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the mid-century European revolutions.

Bondi recognized the impact of European political upheaval, and more broadly, of the major political events occurring on both sides of the Atlantic – among them hemispheric revolution, civil war, and abolition and freedom movements – in shaping his life story. Perhaps not surprisingly, he inscribed that importance into the grand narrative arc of his life’s events. Writing *ex post facto* in the manuscript of his memoir which would be published posthumously by his children as the *Autobiography of August Bondi*, he affirmed:

I had made up my mind when yet a boy to devote my life to the furtherance of progress and liberty. These resolutions remained unshaken throughout my eventful life. I have throughout remained faithful to the principles to which I have pledged allegiance in the stormy days of ‘48.⁹⁷

This allegiance to a universalist egalitarianism, to the tenets of democratic Enlightenment, and for freedom and emancipation for all, might be contrasted with the particular and national allegiances Bondi swore to the United States when signing to affirm his passport application. Yet in sum, Bondi’s life might indeed be construed as emblematic of a lifelong commitment to

⁹⁷ As quoted in Martin Litvin, *The Journey*, 31. See also August M. Bondi, *Autobiography of August Bondi, 1833-1907*, ed. Amanda M. Dooley (Galesburg, Illinois: Wagoner Print Co., 1910).

transnational freedom. On the surface, this certainly seems the case. As if to head off future criticism, Bondi himself goes to great lengths to address the authenticity of his narrative in the early pages of his *Autobiography*:

My children, and whoever else may read these lines, let me impress on you my assurance that in this, my autobiography and memoirs, I have not described nor mentioned anything which my ears have not heard or my eyes not seen – except where I state the events from hearsay, and so declare. Some historians or memorialists may contradict some of my accounts ... but remember, I was on hand at times and places where others were not. I have never favored that embellishment and romanticised tradition should take the place of history, which should be nothing else but true description of the actual happenings and events during the different epochs of humanity as they passed and were acted.⁹⁸

These assertions of Bondi's, though seemingly genuine, might be met with at least some skepticism. One considers that an historical actor reflecting upon his life, and particularly at the end of that life, far removed from the major events of his youth, to be an exercise in selective memory and perhaps even self-hagiography. Bondi might have been tempted in writing his memoirs to emphasize those events of which he was most proud, or to burnish them with a positive, progressive sheen. It is important that we historians and students of the past do not carelessly engage in deification of our historical subjects; we ought to be as critical of their actions and statements – even from those for whom we have great affinity – as we might during

⁹⁸ August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 12. One notices a rather positivist and Rankean view of history in these statements, based on Leopold von Ranke's dictum to write *Geschichte wie es eigentlich gewesen ist* (history as it actually happened), an historical interpretation that was quite fashionable among German-influenced historians of this period. On Ranke, see Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988), 26-31. Also E.H. Carr, *What Is History? The George Trevelyan Lectures* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1963), 5, 20. As we shall see, Bondi was himself predisposed to romanticism in his personal life. He repeatedly sought out adventure whenever opportunity presented. One's thinking on historical memory and representation may indeed diverge from one's own personal outlook regarding their life choices. But it is not a stretch to assume that a romantic embrace of adventure in one's life would likely translate into a romanticized memory of those life events toward the end of one's life.

any other analytical endeavor. Surely such skepticism was at play in 1942 when James C. Malin wrote “Bondi lived to a ripe old age and wrote voluminous reminiscences and letters. Without documentary support, little credence can be given Bondi’s statements, but they have become the principal foundation for articles on the Jewish associations of John Brown.” Elsewhere, Malin calls Bondi’s stated memories “not disinterested,” “lurid,” and “unreliable.”⁹⁹

Healthy skepticism aside, one may choose to weigh the evidence and conclude that Bondi’s claims to an “eventful” life, and of devotion to the “furtherance of progress and liberty” is merited. Bondi’s *was* an incredible life. At fifteen he mounted the barricades in Vienna to fight against Metternich’s imperial forces; his young adulthood was spent traveling the American South as a steamship waterman on the Mississippi River and along the Gulf Coast; in an unlikely development, he befriended John Brown and fought alongside him in Kansas against pro-slavery forces and border ruffians; in the years just prior to the American Civil War, he would come to organize stops along the Underground Railroad in Kansas with his wife and fellow abolitionist Henrietta Einstein, another German-speaking Jewish immigrant from near Augsburg, Bavaria; and when war did break out, he enlisted and fought in Company K of the Fifth Kansas Volunteer Cavalry Regiment, the operations of which would take him to battles and skirmishes in Arkansas, Missouri, and back again through Kansas. Through all of these and more, Bondi demonstrated, as many young people do, a romantic streak, an inclination toward adventure and excitement, but also a strong idealism at his core, and a willingness to fight for that which he believed. But more than this, Bondi’s narrative also cements a lifelong commitment toward egalitarianism and

⁹⁹ James C. Malin, *John Brown and the Legend of Fifty-Six* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1942), 475, 424, HathiTrust Digital Library, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uva.x000664080/>.

freedom for his fellow woman and man, a willingness to engage politically, and with violence when necessary, to overturn the institutions that upheld tyranny and slavery.

For Bondi, this commitment to freedom was inspired by his family and their traditions. His father, Herz Emanuel Mendel Bondi, loomed large in this respect. The younger Bondi cites his father's commitment to Freemason principles, his activity with secret societies generally, and his unwavering respect for Napoleon's emancipation of European Jews. Bondi was thus inculcated from the earliest years with respect for "mental improvement," "mutual aid and assistance," and "religious liberty."¹⁰⁰ But perhaps most significantly, Bondi was steered by his faith. By his own words he stayed firm in the practice of Judaism throughout his life, and he repeatedly cites his lifelong commitment to the religion as among his guiding tenets. Among the more significant of his life's events, from a confessional standpoint – his marriage, the marriage of his daughters, his own funeral – all of these were officiated by rabbis.¹⁰¹ Among the most memorable entries of his Civil War diaries is one wherein he chanced upon a Southern Jewish family while fighting in Arkansas, and broke bread with them for *Rosh Hashanah*.¹⁰² Yet even as a faithful Jew, Bondi eschewed sectarianism, as a certain ecumenical universalism also seems to have guided him. He wrote:

While keeping a strictly Jewish house, my parents favored my knowledge of other religions. I had read the New Testament before I was eight years old. [...] My parents always impressed upon their children that Jews or Christians, high or low, all are children of a common Father. These principles affected my conduct all through life.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Bondi, *Autobiography*, 4.

¹⁰¹ See "August Bondi (1833-1907)," Jewish Virtual Library, accessed April 8, 2021, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/august-bondi/>.

¹⁰² Bertram Wallace Korn, *American Jewry and The Civil War* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1951), 97.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 10. A similar but slightly edited quote appears in Martin Litvin, *The Journey*, 4.

In this chapter, I intend to explore the shape of transnational freedom movements, particularly those connecting Continental Europe to the United States, using the revolutionary life of August Bondi as a vehicle to do so.¹⁰⁴ Bondi and other Forty-Eighter emigrants would come to view America and the New World generally through a prism of their own making, and thus see opportunity to dismantle and remake the world – economically, socially, culturally, and politically – when conditions at home had failed them. When it became clear to freedom fighters on both sides of the Atlantic that moral and political gradualism toward parliamentary, democratic systems of governance, or toward anti-slavery and abolitionist movements, were to be ineffective, they would turn to markedly more radical approaches, and sometimes to violence to enact the changes they sought. The formative idealism and eventual radicalization of Bondi thus becomes a fascinating study for understanding these wider events.

A Short Historiography: August Bondi in the Literature

American Jewish historiography has in recent decades become re-engaged on the topic of Jewish identity in the nineteenth century generally, and in the American South particularly.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ The literature has long emphasized the Anglo-American roots of abolitionism, as one example, while neglecting similar transnational connections among German-speaking countries. See Mischa Honeck, *We are the Revolutionists: German-Speaking Immigrants and American Abolitionists after 1848* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 2-3.

¹⁰⁵ Several important examples include Shari Rabin, *Jews on the Frontier: Religion and Mobility in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 2017); Anton Hieke, *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013); Scott Langston, "Interaction and Identity: Jews and Christians in Nineteenth Century New Orleans," *Southern Jewish History* 3, no. 1 (2000): 83-124, https://www.jewishsouth.org/system/files/sjh_v._3_2000_langston.pdf/, accessed October 11, 2020; Barry L. Stiefel, "In the Board We Trust: Jewish Communal Arbitration Cases in Antebellum Charleston, South Carolina," *Southern Jewish History* 19, no. 1 (2016): 1-27, https://www.jewishsouth.org/sites/default/files/sjh_v._19_2016_stiefel.pdf/, accessed October 11, 2020; and Heather S. Nathans, *Hideous Characters and Beautiful Pagans: Performing Jewish Identity on the Antebellum American Stage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017).

The lives of individual Jewish men and women and their stories naturally play prominently in this literature, but there remain noticeable lacunae for many less well-known actors. For a historical figure whose life story is seemingly so compelling – Jewish or otherwise – it is surprising how obscure August Bondi remains to this day. Indeed, few outside a select group of scholars interested in American Jewry, or those familiar with nineteenth century abolitionism in Kansas, might have even encountered his name. Not long after his death, his children published the aforementioned *Autobiography of August Bondi* (1910), which sowed the seeds, albeit in a limited fashion, for future historical inquiry. His living memory and legacy had remained strong during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Kansas counties where he had resided just before and again after the American Civil War. Bondi’s political engagement and community ties would thus remain fixed throughout his life. He owned a successful law practice in Salina and served as judge, land office clerk and postmaster there.¹⁰⁶ A fixture of Saline County, Bondi served on various boards and community groups, including the Kansas board of state charitable organizations in 1885.¹⁰⁷ Throughout his public life, Bondi seems to have earned the respect and devotion of his fellow Kansans, especially among those who resided in Republican-leaning quarters. The target of erstwhile political attacks from more conservative elements, his fellow citizens often came to his defense. When defamed by a Kansas City newspaper in 1884, editors of *The Atchison Globe* issued their formal reply: “The rot and ruck (as the *Champion* would say) recently published in the Kansas City *Journal* with reference to

¹⁰⁶ See for example, “The State of Kansas,” *The Leavenworth (Kansas) Herald*, vol. 4, no. 29 (Saturday, August 28, 1897), Gale Primary Sources: Nineteenth Century Newspapers, accessed August 10, 2020. See also Leon Hühner, *Some Jewish Associates of John Brown* (New York, 1908), 17, HathiTrust Digital Library.

¹⁰⁷ See “Two More Lies Nailed,” *Atchison (Kansas) Daily Champion*, vol. 21, issue 291 (Friday, March 6, 1886), Gale Primary Sources: Nineteenth Century Newspapers, August 10, 2020.

August Bondi, of Salina, is pronounced a miserable low flung lie.”¹⁰⁸ A testament to Bondi’s influence in Kansas to this day, numerous historical markers across the state, and a street in Greeley, a Free Soil town that he founded in 1857, all bear his name.

But Bondi’s memory would be less pronounced geographically outside of Kansas and temporally in the years following his death in 1907; he would thereafter fade to near obscurity by the end of the twentieth century. It was not for lack of trying on Bondi’s part that his memory would diminish. As a member of the board of directors of the Kansas State Historical Society until 1905, Bondi was certainly attuned to matters of historical memory and preservation.¹⁰⁹ Understanding the historical significance of his life’s events, he donated his papers to the archives of the Kansas State Historical Society, and further, sent mimeographed typeset copies of his manuscript under the title “Personal Reminiscences of August Bondi” (1903), along with select personal correspondence, to the American Jewish Historical Society in New York City.¹¹⁰ Both collections are incredibly rich in their presentation of Bondi’s life and the pivotal moments of America’s history through which he lived.

But the reach of these archival collections would ultimately prove limited. Historians of American Jewry in the nineteenth century, and of the 1848 revolutions, especially those with particular focus on its transnational dimensions, do include short, passing references to Bondi in their work. His life is certainly not absent from the historical record within these specific

¹⁰⁸ “Noah Clites, the huge apple merchant, is now known as ‘skinny,’” *Atchison (Kansas) Globe*, issue 2,101 (Friday, September 5, 1884), Gale Primary Sources: Nineteenth Century Newspapers, accessed August 10, 2020.

¹⁰⁹ See *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1903-1904*, Vol. VIII, ed. Geo. W. Martin (Topeka: Geo. A. Clark, 1904), *iii-iv*.

¹¹⁰ August Bondi Papers, 1883-1906, AJHS Archives (P-178), American Jewish Historical Society, New York, United States, January 16-17, 2020. In his cover letter to the American Jewish Historical Society, he quotes the historical import of his experience fighting alongside John Brown at “the Battle of Black Jack ... the first armed clash between North and South.” *Ibid*.

research areas. Bondi receives treatment of up to several paragraphs each in works from Bertram Wallace Korn and Bruce Levine, two important scholars of nineteenth century American Jewry and German migration, respectively. In using Bondi, Korn focuses on the wartime experiences and relative isolation of observant Jews, while Levine employs him when referencing the Bleeding Kansas episode, and in assessing the impact of radicalizing German influences on antislavery rhetoric.¹¹¹ At the intersection of these disciplines, Jewish abolitionism, Bondi naturally gets the most attention, and twentieth century scholars such as Jayme Sokolow and Leon Hühner go into great detail on Bondi's exploits in Kansas.¹¹² But more recent scholarship, such as Mischa Honeck's 2011 study of German-speaking revolutionary immigrants, *We are the Revolutionists*, offers only a modicum of coverage. Typically terse vis-à-vis Bondi is Honeck's solitary sentence in the book about the freedom fighter: "Charles Kaiser and August Bondi, two Forty-Eighter emigrants who joined John Brown's guerilla band to fight proslavery settlers, deeply impressed Hale."¹¹³

If traditional academic interest in him would be less than overwhelming, Bondi would find more purchase among cultural and popular media sources, especially those from Jewish publications and organizations. A poet and librettist, Aaron Kramer published *A Ballad of August*

¹¹¹ Bertram Wallace Korn, *American Jewry and The Civil War* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1951), 97. Bruce Levine, *The Spirit of 1848: German Immigrants, Labor Conflict, and the Coming of the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 207-8, 220-2.

¹¹² See, for example, Jayme A. Sokolow, "Revolution and Reform: The Antebellum Jewish Abolitionists," *The Journal of Ethnic Studies* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1981): 27-42. For an early twentieth century treatment, see Leon Hühner, *Some Jewish Associates of John Brown* (New York, 1908), HathiTrust Digital Library, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/loc.ark:/13960/t9j393p78/>. A coeval of Bondi's, Hühner cites a personal correspondence with him as among the historical evidence in his footnotes.

¹¹³ Mischa Honeck, *We are the Revolutionists*, 64. Hale is Edward Everett Hale, abolitionist clergyman and member of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, which, per Honeck, "subsidized free-labor colonies in the western territories." Ibid.

Bondi in 1955.¹¹⁴ Commissioned for “the tercentenary of Jewish life in North America,” the work would eventually be set to the music of Serge Hovey and performed by the Jewish Young Folksingers along with Pete Seeger at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.¹¹⁵ Also in 1955 appeared the first biography of Bondi, in Yiddish, written by Abraham Bick.¹¹⁶ Meanwhile a novelist, Lloyd Alexander, wrote a Bildungsroman for Jewish young adults celebrating Bondi’s life several years later in 1958. The book is quite clearly a work of fiction and renders Bondi in the most virtuous of terms, but it does hew quite closely to Bondi’s memoirs as published in *Autobiography*.¹¹⁷ If these represent a cultural highwater mark for Bondi at the middle of the twentieth century, a full twenty-five years would pass before the first and only full-length English language biography of Bondi would be published, by Martin Litvin, in 1981.¹¹⁸ At over 400 pages, the work is engaging, comprehensively researched, and well-written. But its publication with a minor historical press in Illinois, the Galesburg Historical Society, is indicative of the sort of attention Bondi continues to receive by historians.¹¹⁹

Most recently, in the last ten years, Bondi and his associates in Kansas have seen a small resurgence in popularity. Bondi in particular has garnered attention from at least one newspaperman-cum-novelist, and a filmmaker. Aaron Barnhart of the *Kansas City Star* wrote an

¹¹⁴ Aaron Kramer, *The Ballad of August Bondi*, AJHS Monographs, PS3521.R29 B32, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, United States, January 16-17, 2020.

¹¹⁵ Donald Gilzinger, Jr. and Cary Nelson, “Aaron Kramer: American Prophet,” in *Wicked Times: Selected Poems by Aaron Kramer* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), *xivi*.

¹¹⁶ Abraham Bick, *August Bondi* (New York: Jewish Publications and Research Committee, 1955).

¹¹⁷ Lloyd Alexander, *Border Hawk: August Bondi* (New York: Covenant Books, 1958). An original dust jacket heralds the Covenant imprint as “a new and fascinating series designed to take young people, eleven to fifteen years of age, on an adventurous expedition into the realms of Jewish experience.” Moreover, Covenant offers “Stories of Jewish Men and Women To Inspire and Instruct Young People.”

¹¹⁸ Martin Litvin, *The Journey* (Galesburg, Illinois: Galesburg Historical Society, 1981).

¹¹⁹ Galesburg is noteworthy for being the imprint that published Bondi’s *Autobiography* in 1910, and several generations of Bondi’s offspring would also settle and live in this corner of Illinois. Interestingly, Galesburg is also the home of poet Carl Sandburg.

adaptation of Alexander's *Border Hawk*, which, like Alexander's book, is a historical novella for young adults, and simply titled *Firebrand*. Published by Quindaro Press, a publishing house interested in local Kansas history and co-founded by Barnhart and his wife, Dianne Eickhoff, the book hews closely to the original tale written by Alexander nearly seventy years prior.¹²⁰ 2020, meanwhile, saw what was billed by its creators as "the first feature-length documentary" on the topic of mid-nineteenth century transnational Jewish freedom fighters: *The Jewish 48'ers*, a well-researched film that attempts to fill a historical gap, but in so doing, borders on hagiography of its subjects. "[It] is the story of revolution failed and redeemed," asserts a teaser on the film's website, which is included among other bits of inspiring uplift. Bondi does make an appearance in the film, albeit a fleeting one. Even in this, a study of the formative Jewish figures of transnational freedom, he remains only a minor character; just two of the film's fifty minutes contain the entirety of Bondi's life.¹²¹ Also in 2020, *The Good Lord Bird* was released. A fictional television miniseries from Showtime about John Brown's exploits in Kansas Territory and leading up to his eventual attack on Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, it is inspired by a James McBride novel of the same name. Though based upon John Brown's public life in Kansas and West Virginia, it is almost entirely fictive.¹²² It is fitting (and mostly accurate) when the show's narrator, Onion, offers this rejoinder in the opening episode of the series: "John Brown's fearsome [Kansas] army weren't nothing but a ragtag assortment of the scrawniest, saddest-looking individuals I had ever saw: bushwhackers, sticky-rope cattle rustlers, an Indian — even

¹²⁰ Aaron Barnhart, *Firebrand* (Kansas City: Quindaro Press, 2015).

¹²¹ *The Jewish 48'ers: in the American Civil War*, directed by Peter K. Rosenbluth (Jewish Documentaries, 2020), YouTube, accessed April 8, 2021, <http://jewishdocumentaries.info/>.

¹²² James McBride, *The Good Lord Bird* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2013). It is telling the miniseries begins with the lines: "All of this is true. Most of it happened."

a Jew.”¹²³ With only a few exceptions, and even in fiction, Bondi remains obscure. Perhaps a twenty-first century public increasingly interested in the history of abolitionism and civil rights will learn something more of his story in the coming decade. Bondi’s biographer, Martin Litvin, makes plain *his* rationale for writing about Bondi in his selection of top epigraph for the book, which references a quotation attributed to Studs Terkel: “[T]he lives of obscure or forgotten figures are often more significant than we realize.”¹²⁴ One easily imagines the truth of this statement in considering the life of August Mendel Bondi.

*“From smallest acorns / Largest oaks do grow”: Bondi and Revolution in Vienna*¹²⁵

A standard historiography of 1848 emphasizes the amalgam of social, technological, economic, and political developments which had coalesced across Europe by the mid-1840s. Most prominent among these were social instability, major crop failures of potato, wheat and rye, a resultant severe economic downturn, spreading intellectual contagion of revolutionary rhetoric, and an explosion in new technologies, among them in industry, communications, and transportation. These would all combine to set off the revolutionary events that reverberated across the entirety of Europe, and in so doing, inspire an awakening of nationalisms across the

¹²³ Joshua Caleb Johnson, *The Good Lord Bird*, created by Ethan Hawke (Showtime Miniseries, 2020), Showtime app on Amazon Firestick, accessed April 8, 2021, <https://www.sho.com/the-good-lord-bird/>. See also P.J. Grisar, “The true grit of the Jews who fought by John Brown’s side,” *Forward*, October 28, 2020, accessed April 8, 2021, <https://forward.com/culture/457284/john-brown-the-good-lord-bird-august-bondi-jewish-james-mcbride/>. As Grisar points out, it was actually *three* émigré Jews who were associates of Brown’s in the Kansas campaign: Theodore Wiener of Poland, Jacob Benjamin of Austrian Bohemia, and of course, August Bondi.

¹²⁴ Martin Litvin, *The Journey*, n.p.

¹²⁵ Bondi employs this aphorism in discussing the intellectual currents which resulted in the overthrow of governments in Europe, and later, in the abolition of slavery in America. *Autobiography*, 12. One is reminded of Hannah Arendt and her discussion of Aristotle’s *potentia*. See Hannah Arendt, *Life of the Mind / Willing*, 16.

continent, what would come to be called by later historians the “springtime of the peoples.”¹²⁶ Once set into motion, these effects caused political agitation and the fall of governments from Paris, Budapest and Vienna to Sicily, Naples, Krakow, Berlin and Prague. As incredible as these developments were, they would also prove to be rather short-lived. Indeed, by late 1848, with support from Tsar Nicholas in Russia, the monarchist counterrevolution would mobilize, and ultimately prove more formidable than the revolutionary forces unleashed earlier in the year. The short-term revolutionary and democratic gains thus proved ultimately elusive. But even amid failure, the revolutionary reverberations would nonetheless be felt in incredible ways and have profound and lasting effects on the peoples living across all of Europe during this period.

So, too, was it for the Bondy family in Vienna.¹²⁷ In *Autobiography*, August Bondi describes how in 1846 his father’s firm, Emanuel Bondy Söhne (Emanuel Bondy and Sons), went bankrupt after “severe losses through mercantile failures in Italy, Galicia and Hungary.”¹²⁸ Bondi’s father, Herz Emanuel, would serve time in a debtor’s prison while the bankruptcy proceedings unfolded, and would subsequently become seriously ill. Bondi describes this period of two and a half years without his father as a time of great tribulation and hardship for his

¹²⁶ See Jonathan Sperber, *The European Revolutions, 1848-1851*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1.

¹²⁷ Note here the changed spelling of the family name, from Bondy in Europe, to Bondi in the United States. Bondi goes into detail in the first paragraph of the manuscript of his “Reminiscences of August Bondi” to explain the changing family name. Jomtov Landschreiber, a relative in Prague, “when urged to adopt a Christian name and to Germanize it, adopted the name of ‘Bondy.’ He had traveled in Italy and become somewhat acquainted with the Italian language, so he changed the Hebrew word, ‘Jomtov,’ (good-day) for the Italian word, ‘Bondi,’ (good-day), and Germanized it by changing the letter ‘i’ into ‘y,’ making the name ‘Bondy,’ and all the Bondi and Bondy families in the world are descended from that Jomtov Landschreiber.” Upon arrival in the United States, the name would revert to its earlier Italianized rendering. *Autobiography*, 3.

¹²⁸ August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 9. Emanuel Bondy is August’s grandfather; his father, Herz Emanuel, was among the chief partners. One imagines if it had stayed solvent, August might have gone to work in the family firm.

family. But if the years 1846-48 were challenging to him, they would also prove equally inspiring; it was a for the young Bondi a time of intellectual and political awakening. He excelled in his studies in a Catholic *Gymnasium* and later at university, learning along the way rhetoric, poetry, Latin, and several modern languages. During this time, his professors would have an especially profound influence upon him. One of his teachers, a Prof. Podlaha, introduced Bondi to the writings of Thomas Jefferson and George Washington, along with myriad other primary documents from the American Revolution in German translation.¹²⁹ It is significant that, outside of referencing *De Ista Rustica*, an Ode from Horace that he memorized, recited and analyzed in front of his rhetoric class, the documents of the American Revolution are the only ones from his philosophical and literary education which he identifies by name.¹³⁰ His education, he maintains, was “of the best,” and “far ahead of the American high-school humbug,” but still “yet infinitely inferior to the [educational system]” in Prussia at that time.¹³¹

This comparison is notable, for it would be a call to “Freedom to teach and learn,” in the Prussian style which would, in part, animate the student uprisings against Prince Metternich and the Hapsburg Monarchy in early March 1848. This demand would be joined by others on a petition circulated by students from Vienna’s universities. Inspired by events in revolutionary France and Hungary, the students called for the formation of a national guard (a check to an imperial hegemony on state violence); a redress of grievances around corruption in the government, courts, and Catholic Church; and for basic freedoms to be enshrined in a new constitution: the “Freedom of conscience; Freedom of the press,” and the aforementioned

¹²⁹ August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 11.

¹³⁰ One considers that Bondi may have been appealing here to an American audience; but the ties of freedom to revolutionary rhetoric are overt and seem intentional.

¹³¹ August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 11.

“Freedom to teach and learn.”¹³² By Bondi’s estimation, nearly 10,000 students from the “faculties [of] Philosophy, Medicine and Law; the students at the Polytechnical School, and the students at the Academy of Arts,” gathered and agitated “with youthful enthusiasm” for these reforms of the Austrian imperial government for several days starting on March 12.¹³³ The protests grew markedly and came to embrace demands for Metternich’s resignation. Violence and barricades fighting ensued, with Bondi’s own Academic Legion taking a leading role in confronting the Viennese city police and Austrian imperial troops. Bondi, present when his company in the Academic Legion allegedly constructed the city’s first barricades, and with perhaps only some embellishment, writes: “My children, it was your father, who not yet 15 years old, had lifted the first granite paving block to start the first barricade in Vienna.”¹³⁴ In one brief, but violent encounter with imperial troops, Bondi survived a volley of musket fire shot into the unarmed crowds, one which felled one of his close friends, “Heinrich Sptizer, 18 years old, a Jewish student of the Technical school, an only son of his parents, from Voisenz.” Sptizer and another dead student fell onto Bondi, “bring[ing] me down with him, and [yet] another student of the same school [fell] over us both.” In the scuffle that followed, Bondi, attempting to crawl free from his dead classmates, receives from one of the soldiers a rifle butt to his head and a glancing bayonet wound to his back.¹³⁵ It was the first of many such encounters, close calls or near-death experiences while fighting, that greeted Bondi throughout his life. That he continued fighting demonstrates in him a great deal of resilience and determination in character. After several days of such protest and fighting in the streets, the imperial authorities seemingly lost

¹³² August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 12-3.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹³⁴ August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 19.

¹³⁵ August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 14.

their nerve. Indeed, already distracted and weakened by revolutionary events occurring across the empire – in Italy and Hungary, particularly – Metternich’s government lost control of the situation in the metropole. The government ultimately fell, Metternich himself fled in exile to London, and the Emperor instated a new cabinet of liberal ministers, acceding to the protestors’ demands and sowing the seeds for a new constitution.¹³⁶

The revolutionaries’ gains in Austria would prove fleeting, however, as they would across much of Europe. Indeed, by late summer, the imperial counterrevolution was to be in full force, and in large measure, revolution and uprisings across the continent were ultimately and bloodily put down, and monarchies restored. The revolutions had failed.

Yet as we have seen in the preceding chapter, the seeds had been sown for future gains. The revolutionaries themselves would be so inspired, even in their failure to enact meaningful democratic and liberal reforms within Europe. Looking toward the future, they would come to apply and instrumentalize these lessons in other places, and in other facets of their lives. Recall Alexander Herzen plea to his son from his exile in London: “Modern man ... only builds a bridge – it will be for the unknown man of the future to pass over it. You may be there to see him. ... But do not, I beg you, remain on *this shore* ... Better to perish with the revolution than to seek refuge in the almshouse of reaction.”¹³⁷ Bondi, too would affix his gaze to the future, as these formative revolutionary experiences imbued within him the egalitarian principles that would come to define his politics for the rest of *his* life. He and his fellow revolutionaries, many of

¹³⁶ Mike Rapport, *1848: Year of Revolution* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 59-66. Also August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 13-5. Bondi’s account generally comports with Rapport’s but goes into some greater personal detail about his schoolmates who were killed right next to him in the violence.

¹³⁷ Alexander Herzen, *From the Other Shore* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979). Quoted in Mike Rapport, *1848*, 400. See also Francis B. Randall, “Herzen’s *From the Other Shore*,” *Slavic Review* 27, no. 1 (March 1968): 91-101, accessed April 26, 2020. <https://www.doi.org/10.2307/2493915/>.

them, like Bondi, forced to flee after the successful counterrevolutions had taken hold, would continue to seek ways to spread a revolutionary rhetoric and an expanding political emancipation to an ever-growing list of countries around the world. For Bondi and his family, this meant doing so in what many European liberals considered a beacon freedom, the United States.

“Thence to the United States, where others had preceded them”¹³⁸

As we have seen in Chapter One, amazing numbers of German-speaking migrants representing countless nationalities, religions, confessions, classes, and backgrounds made their way to North America in the wake of 1848. Bade and Oltmer, Niall Ferguson, and others describe both the sheer numbers and incredible cultural influence of these migrants in the New World, and particularly in the United States. Per Bade and Oltmer, transatlantic migration networks connected “relatives, acquaintances, and communities of shared origin” on both continents. Especially influential were the so-called “‘emigrant letters’ that circulated within the circles of relatives and friends back home,” connecting regions and communities in Europe with corresponding regions and communities in America. It is in this way that “the exodus began to follow in its own tracks,” and how American cities across the country – New York, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Saint Louis, New Orleans, and Galveston – came to have a distinctly German flavor.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ Quote from August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 16.

¹³⁹ Klaus J. Bade and Jochen Oltmer, “Germany,” in *The Encyclopedia of Migration and Minorities in Europe from the 17th Century to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 69. Fully 90% of these German-speaking emigrants were bound for the United States, with Canada, Brazil, Argentina and Australia comprising most of the remaining 10%. Write Bade and Oltmer, “Between 1816 and 1914, about 5.5 million Germans emigrated to the USA, and since then, another 2 million. [...] Between 1820 and 1860, the German-born population of the USA was the second largest group behind the Irish at 30%,”

Regardless of their origin or destination, all migrants carry with them distinct cultural artifacts and practices which they employ as they navigate the complex social and cultural realities of immigrant life in their new homes. But among the 1848ers, especially, many also carried with them a certain political sensibility – a sense of revolutionary and radical republican politics, a moral suasion, and a commitment to egalitarian principles – which they would apply upon arrival to their new home. It is hardly surprising that these revolutionaries who fought for Enlightenment ideals across Europe would find in the United States a political and social situation that was ripe for engagement. As we have seen, many immigrants saw in the United States an opportunity to enact the reforms and social changes that had largely eluded them back home.¹⁴⁰ But so too for the 1848ers was America a complication, an ambiguity, and a contradiction. To them the United States was an experiment in building a new liberal order based upon Enlightenment ideals of freedom and individualism – yet it was also one that most decidedly did not live up to its aspirational creed. While asserting in its founding documents that *all men are created equal*, the United States simultaneously embraced chattel slavery and the attendant subjugation of humans for the benefit of a few, something European liberals found hard to square with their most optimistic ideas about America. Despite such ambiguity – or

and from 1861 to 1890 it was even the largest.” Niall Ferguson posits similar figures of the mass exodus from Europe during these years, attributing the huge influx to economic and political refugees. Niall Ferguson, “The European Economy, 1815-1914,” in *The Short Oxford History of Europe: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. T.C.W. Blanning (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 108-111. For primary and epistolary sources exemplifying migrant letters and chain migration networks, see Walter D. Kamphoefner, Wolfgang Helbrich and Ulrike Sommer, Editors, *News from the Land of Freedom: German Immigrants Write Home*, trans. Susan Carter Vogel (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991). See also Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in New York City, 1845-80* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1990).

¹⁴⁰ See again, Karen Odahl Kupperman, “Introduction: The Changing Definition of America,” 19-20.

perhaps because of it – German and German-Jewish immigrants continued to pour into the United States in the middle years of the nineteenth century.

For the Bondy family, in particular, the destination of their journey was New Orleans. German deluge notwithstanding, the ties between New Orleans and Europe, especially its northern major port cities of Bremen, Hamburg, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Liverpool, were particularly robust from even the earliest years of the nineteenth century.¹⁴¹ By the mid-nineteenth century, New Orleans had become one of the most cosmopolitan cities in all North America, defined also by a small, but growing Jewish population.¹⁴² A major port city, and the largest and most important city in the southern United States, it was second only to New York in terms of net immigration between the years 1837-60. New Orleans attracted 52,011 immigrants during 1851, which was equal to new arrivals that year in Boston, Philadelphia and Baltimore combined. Between 1820 and 1860, over half a million newcomers made their way to America via the Port of New Orleans. Leslie Gale Parr describes how, "by 1850, the mixture of older and newer arrivals – French, Spanish, Africans, English, Germans, Irish, Greeks, Swiss, Portuguese, Italians, Cubans, Filipinos, Mexicans, Croats, Slavs, Chinese, Sicilians, and others – produced the fifth largest and one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the United States."¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ See, for example, Bertram Wallace Korn, *The Early Jews of New Orleans* (Waltham, Mass.: American Jewish Historical Society, 1969), 130-1. Portions of this and the following paragraphs also rely upon research completed for a previous digital humanities project completed with Professors Vernon Orville Burton and Pamela Mack in fall term 2017. See Matthew Long, "Mutual Aid and the Second Line: A History of Black Benevolent Societies and New Orleans Music," accessed April 10, 2021, <https://spark.adobe.com/page/qV8tzij1XiBpR/>.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 211. See also Shari Rabin, *Jews on the Frontier*, 14-5; and Jayme A. Sokolow, "Revolution and Reform," 28.

¹⁴³ Richard Campanella, *Geographies of New Orleans: Urban Fabrics before the Storm* (Lafayette: Center for Louisiana Studies, 2006), 13. Leslie Gale Parr, "Sundays in the Streets: The Long History of Benevolence, Self-Help, and Parades in New Orleans," *Southern Cultures* 22, no. 4 (2016), 9-10.

In her paper “The German Secrets of New Orleans,” Patricia Herminghouse vividly describes quotidian city life which greeted German and German-Jewish immigrant arrivals to Louisiana from northern Europe.¹⁴⁴ Herminghouse emphasizes both economic and public health challenges that were manifest. Extreme competition in the labor market resulted from a paucity of jobs due to slave labor, and also from the intense competition between newly arrived immigrants and free black labor for the jobs that remained. Equally problematic was the abject rates of morbidity that immigrants encountered through outbreaks of yellow fever, typhus, cholera, ship fever, and other tropical disease. Yellow fever was among the more startling in its terrible effects. “Statistically speaking,” she writes, no less than “one out of every five Irish and one out of every eight Germans in the city succumbed to [yellow fever at mid-century].”¹⁴⁵ To the latter point, Elizabeth Wisner agrees. In her seminal work, *Public Welfare in the South*, Wisner positions New Orleans as a “major port in a semitropical climate near the mouth of the Mississippi River,” where “shipping and epidemic disease [were] closely associated.”¹⁴⁶ New Orleans thus typified a location where waterborne and mosquito-borne illness proliferated; dirty water and open reservoirs meant that scourges of disease regularly wreaked havoc on the city, as they did in similar port cities across the South, like Natchez, Mobile, and Galveston. On keeping healthy and avoiding waterborne illness from the filthy piped drinking water within New Orleans proper, one German language newspaper instructed its readers in 1853: “*Trink kein Wasser – Trink Bier!* (Don’t drink water – drink beer!).”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ Patricia Herminghouse, “The German Secrets of New Orleans,” *German Studies Review* 27, no. 1 (February 2004): 1-16, October 4, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1433545/>.

¹⁴⁵ Patricia Herminghouse, “German Secrets,” 2.

¹⁴⁶ Elizabeth Wisner, *Social Welfare in the South: From Colonial Times to World War I* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1970), 86-90.

¹⁴⁷ As quoted in Leslie Gale Parr, “Sundays in the Streets,” 9-13.

Even in a public health crisis so dire, the city's efforts were yet unable to keep pace with the large influx of immigrants. Prevailing attitudes around the topic of social aid and welfare stifled public investment in relief programs for the poor and destitute of New Orleans and resulted in the widespread adoption of mutual aid and benevolent societies. Immigrant communities thus found safety and security by turning inward and helping one another when governments otherwise would fail them. For Jews in New Orleans, these included The Hebrew Benevolent Association, The Howard Charitable Organization, and the B'nai B'rith Lodge of New Orleans.¹⁴⁸ Wisner posits that this outlook largely arose out of the Roman Catholic beliefs of the city's earliest settlers, who considered the church and private charity to be the primary caretakers of the city's poor. Even as yellow fever ravaged the city in 1822, the city's mayor, while acknowledging the desperate situation, nevertheless professed that "in circumstances so grave and injurious, public benevolence is much less effective and less powerful than private charity." Relative to neighboring southern states, Louisiana did not pass legislation requiring public aid for the state's impoverished until very late, in 1880, and in subsequent years, New Orleans would lag behind nearly every other major city in the amount spent per capita on public welfare.¹⁴⁹ Despite these challenges, the German-speaking population of New Orleans would nevertheless grow markedly during the mid-nineteenth century, mirroring similar developments across the entire United States. Still, precisely because of these challenges, German and German-Jewish immigrants in the main used New Orleans as a point of embarkation for

¹⁴⁸ See, for example, "Yellow Fever and Southern Jewry," *Podcasts in American Jewish History* (podcast), December 11, 2013, accessed October 15, 2020, <https://podbay.fm/p/podcasts-in-american-jewish-history/e/1386827795>.

¹⁴⁹ Leslie Gale Parr, "Sundays in the Streets," 9-10; Elizabeth Wisner, *Social Welfare in the South*, 86-8; David T. Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: Fraternal Societies and Social Services, 1890-1967* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 113-4.

destinations further inland – and they did so by employing the major shipping and transportation routes along the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, landing in cities as far removed as Saint Louis, Louisville, Cincinnati, and Pittsburgh. Each of these cities would see large influxes of German and German-Jewish immigrants during this era.

This ultimately was the route taken by the newly arrived Bondi family. They arrived at New Orleans on November 10, 1848 after a three-week voyage from the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen on the steamship *Rebecca*. As a testament to their relative affluence, the passenger manifest identifies the Bondis as four of the eight passengers who took passage on *Rebecca* in private cabins, as compared to the many dozens of others, among them farmers, carpenters, weavers, butchers, tailors, shoemakers and servants, who stayed below in steerage. By the manifest, Herz Emanuel, 48, Martha, 38, Henriette, 13, and August, 15, comprised the entirety of their party. Others aboard the ship hailed from Bavaria, Polish-speaking Eastern Prussia, and various other German principalities. Bondi's recollections of the transit are generally supported by the available documentary evidence, including official immigration and shipboard documents. He writes, "The vessel had 180 steerage and three cabin passengers, besides us. We occupied one on the upper deck, a small cabin with two large berths."¹⁵⁰ Bondi does not make plain in *Autobiography* how his parents ultimately decided to continue their journey onward into America's interior, but one suspects that poor job prospects and the lingering threat of disease in New Orleans, as well as possible familial ties to Missouri compelled them to continue their journey into the country's interior. Like others on their ship, the Bondis headed inland, this

¹⁵⁰ August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 24. There is however, slight discrepancy on the date of arrival. Bondi recalls arriving to New Orleans on 10 November, while the manifest indicates arrival of *Rebecca* on 16 November. The manifest also indicates four other passengers accompanying the Bondis in the upper cabins, not three as Bondi remembers.

time on the steamship *Buena Vista*, and they disembarked in Saint Louis; others on board were bound variously for Illinois, Missouri, Indiana, and Ohio.

Bondi would prove restless in the first years in the United States, splitting his time between Saint Louis, New Orleans, Galveston, and Louisville, where his parents eventually settled and opened a department store. His early, wandering lifestyle on the western frontier is emblematic of what Shari Rabin describes as the experience of many nineteenth century Jews in the United States. These “wandering sons of Israel” sought economic opportunity and religious and political freedom; the fluidity of the American frontier, and its opportunity for one to remake oneself created a brand-new reality for many Jews across the southern and western reaches of the country. Mobility and freedom of movement in the United States was an entirely new social construct for Jewish immigrants from Europe. Where they had before been taxed and harassed by the authorities, they could now move about the country, relatively unmolested, and seek out new identities and opportunities in their new home. Writes Rabin,

Jews and their fellow migrants came from places in Europe where religious identity was a bureaucratic category that determined one’s possibilities for residence, travel, economic opportunity, and religious life. In the United States, by contrast, such regulations were almost nonexistent for those who were determined to be white and male. [...] Their identity – and that of anyone they knew – could be a product of their own creation as much a fact of personal history.¹⁵¹

Bondi, perhaps responding to and emulating the practices of others, and perhaps intuitively seeking out opportunity and excitement his own way, adopted this very lifestyle. He tried his hand for a time as a shopkeeper in Saint Louis but found the work too pedestrian for him. “I hired with the Ruthenburg Bros., dry goods, one door south of the old theater [...] I staid with

¹⁵¹ Shari Rabin, *Jews on the Frontier*, 14.

them at \$8 per month from Dec. 1 to March 1. When first ordered to sweep the store I broke out in tears. A late member of the Vienna Legion to do such menial work – but soon I came to it, but never became a proficient sweeper.”¹⁵² He tried his hand at printing, hiring on at the German language periodical *Anzeiger des Westens* to learn typesetting and printing, and spent time besides teaching, learning to garden, and working in a tavern.¹⁵³ Owing to his connections to *Anzeiger des Westens* and its editor, Henry Boernstein, a fellow Austrian radical, Bondi became engaged with American politics from nearly the first. His father meanwhile took to peddling and cigarmaking, and his mother and sister to needlework – but Bondi himself felt called to something more. Saint Louis in 1849 clearly offered excitement and variety aplenty; in the words of Steven Rowan, it was “a raw, expanding boomtown, burgeoning on the trade of the American river system and from the overland trade to the opening of the West and Southwest,” full of potential, “amoral energy” and “entrepreneurial spirit.”¹⁵⁴

But Bondi seemingly became tired of the city and fixed his view again to foreign shores. He joined in 1851 the second of two Saint Louis divisions of “a liberating army” bound for Cuba, whose aim was to aid in the Cuban independence movement against the Spanish. “When news of the defeat and annihilation of the first division reached St. Louis, ... the second division

¹⁵² August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 24.

¹⁵³ This inclination of Bondi’s toward applying his labor at just about any opportunity before him seems to have been a lifelong predilection. Write editors of the Kansas State Historical Society on Bondi: “Since settling in Kansas he has worked in stores, printing-offices, on steamboats, kept tavern, taught school, farming most of the time until 1877, with an interval of thirty-seven months in the army; and in later years has engaged in real estate, loan and law practice.” *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1903-1904*, Vol. VIII, ed. Geo. W. Martin (Topeka, Kansas: Geo. A. Clark, State Printer, 1904), 275-6.

¹⁵⁴ Steven Rowan, “Introducing Henry Boernstein, *a.k.a.* Heinrich Börnstein,” in Henry Boernstein, *Memoirs of a Nobody: The Missouri Years of an Austrian Radical, 1849-1866* (Saint Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1997), 5.

disbanded.”¹⁵⁵ Not one to be discouraged, he nevertheless returned to New Orleans in October of that year, seeking to join Commodore Matthew Perry’s naval expedition to Japan. When this, too, failed – he reports: “they had just closed the recruiting office; I had reached it too late” – Bondi elected, finally, to enlist on *Brazos*, a steamship that operated reliably between New Orleans and Galveston, Texas. The skipper of the ship, a certain captain named Thomas Henry Chubb, was in Bondi’s words, “a Boston Yankee, afterwards a Commodore in the Confederate service, and one of the most successful Confederate smugglers and blockade runners.”¹⁵⁶ Bondi, down to his last \$1.15, contented himself with his new employ, and “having purchased a big bag full of wormy crackers for my supper and breakfast for 5 cents,” settled down and “slept nicely on some sacks of grain on deck.”¹⁵⁷

Such was Bondi’s life over the next four years: adventurous wandering about the American Southwest, untethered to any one location, and largely independent of the expectations of others (save perhaps from those of his employer). He sought and took opportunity when he found it and tried his hand at nearly any trade that was presented to him. He considered variously moving to California or settling again in Saint Louis; but his politics led him eventually to Kansas. In this he claims to have been inspired by Horace Greeley’s clarion call to Free Soil advocates across the country. Writes Bondi, “About the middle of March [1854], I happened on a Greeley leader in the *New York Tribune*, appealing to the freedom loving men of the states to rush to Kansas and save it from the curse of slavery to be fastened on it by the ‘squatter sovereignty’ principle contained in the Kansas-Nebraska Bill.”¹⁵⁸ Whether this

¹⁵⁵ August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 27.

¹⁵⁶ August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 28.

¹⁵⁷ August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 28.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 33. Horace Greeley was among the more famous abolitionist newspaper editors of his day.

represented for Bondi an altruistic overture guided by principle, a chance to stake out land and opportunity in Kansas Territory, or simply was for him another adventure is unclear. Perhaps most likely is that various interests compelled him. But whatever his exact motivation, the end result is that he immediately went west to Kansas, arriving on 2 April 1854, and made once again a new life for himself. This new life included meeting John Brown and his sons, riding and fighting with them against pro-slavery, “border ruffian” forces from Missouri, meeting and marrying his wife, Henrietta Einstein, and fashioning a home with her that secreted as a stop along the Underground Railroad. The Civil War, when it broke out, took him east again, but at its conclusion, he finally settled down in again in Kansas, where he would live the rest of his (mostly uneventful) years.

“Enthusiastic Jew and Lover of Humanity”: Bondi, Judaism and the Slavery Question

August Bondi’s professed commitment to Judaism was to him a lodestar his entire life. Like other Jewish revolutionaries who emigrated to the United States, his religion was the Reformed Judaism of his parents that in large measure guided his egalitarian principles. That Napoleonic Enlightenment, Freemasonry principles, and Judaism all played prominent roles in Bondi’s identification and political outlook is self-evident. But it is precisely the articulation of his religious upbringing that Bondi emphasizes, indeed, that which he returns to again and again during the narrative of his life’s events. One early memory stands out. In *Autobiography*, Bondi recounts how, during his youth in Vienna, he would take long walks with his tutor, discussing theology and its intersection with politics. Writes Bondi, “My tutor, Moritz Stern, was liberal minded, yet an enthusiastic Jew, and whenever we walked for an airing, conversed with me on Judaism and religious subjects from a liberal standpoint. I could not, under these conditions,

help forming my mind according to the command of Moses, ‘Thou must love the Eternal, thy God and thy neighbor as thyself.’” He ends this paragraph with a simple, if fragmentary, conclusion: “Enthusiastic Jew and lover of humanity.”¹⁵⁹ Whether he is speaking only of his tutor in making this pronouncement or means to suggest that he adopted this ethos for himself out of his conversations with Stern is unclear. But Bondi’s tutelage under Stern clearly left its mark.

Bondi’s humanitarianism and its connection to Judaism is demonstrably clear in his writing. Bondi, himself a “lover of humanity,” takes great pains to express the universalism that undergirded his values and beliefs. Within this universalist approach, it might be tempting to think that such a stance would dilute his own ethical and religious precepts. But his religion was by no means agnostic, nor was it a perfunctory religious practice devoid of personal meaning and communion with God. On the contrary, his Jewish faith was reportedly among the most important aspects of his identity. Yet he equally maintains never having wavered from a profound belief that the traditional tenets of all religions were to be respected, and that tolerance and pluralism in the public square was a symbol of a progressive, enlightened society. During Bondi’s upbringing, European Jews were hardly treated as equals, nor even as citizens in most countries. Theirs was not an unalienable right to “Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness,” as articulated by the Declaration of Independence, the translation of which he had found so compelling in his youth.¹⁶⁰ Even after emancipation in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, Jews were routinely discriminated against. In the Hapsburg monarchy, for instance, they were subject to special taxes payable to the throne for the right to be “tolerated” and to live

¹⁵⁹ August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 10.

¹⁶⁰ “Declaration of Independence: A Transcription,” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>, accessed October 13, 2020.

unmolested in the empire. Non-resident Jews were prohibited from conducting business within Vienna, and taxes, whether paid in full or not, did little to protect many from the pogroms and other violence directed at them. Indeed, pogroms were routine occurrences, especially among the working-class neighborhoods and suburbs of the city, and particularly during the periods of intense economic hardship that wracked the continent during the mid-1840s. Mike Rapport suggests that it is precisely because of the limited rights of Jews that led many of them to rally under the banner of revolution, and to promulgate the social and egalitarian changes that a successful revolution might have wrought.¹⁶¹

Yet to Bondi, the treachery of some Christians was not reason to reject Christian theology, nor to discount the religious among his gentile classmates and comrades. Instead, he stresses that which joined them together in their struggle for freedom. During his last days in Vienna, with the revolution continuing apace, Bondi recounts an anecdote that is illustrative. On Corpus Christi Day, a holy feast day for Catholic Christians, Bondi found himself in the city center, by Saint Stephen's Cathedral, in formation with the rest of the fighters of the Academic Legion. He writes: "The Jewish students, with one voice, decided to do just as their comrades did, so we Jewish members of the Legion knelt with our Catholic and Protestant comrades before the Christian Host. We did this also at a field mass celebrated in honor of our martyred dead, July 29 '48, by the Legion Chaplain, Father Fuster."¹⁶² One imagines that more than egalitarian camaraderie guided Bondi and his Jewish friends when deciding to honor the Catholic feast day traditions. Indeed, pressure on Jews to conform must have been incredible, especially within the general milieu of antisemitism present in Vienna. But time and again, Bondi

¹⁶¹ See Mike Rapport, *1848*, 170-2.

¹⁶² August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 22.

returns to a humanistic interpretation of his Judaism in defining that which he had in common with his fellow woman and man.

If an expanding conception of humanity brought him closer to practitioners of other religions, Bondi would also be confronted by the humanity of those of another race upon his arrival to the New World. Slavery and the direct subjugation of humans based on racial hierarchy was largely a theoretical construct at home in the metropole. Most Europeans in the imperial capitals of Europe would scarcely have encountered slavery and its horrors firsthand. At a brief stopover at La Balize, a fort at the mouth of the Mississippi River, and just a day before their planned arrival to New Orleans, Bondi bore witness to African slaves for the very first time. “On [November] 9th the tug stopped at a plantation for wood; I went ashore and there saw, for the first time, negroes at the sugar mill. They were late imports from Africa, men and women clad only in coffee sacks, open at both ends, slipped on and tied around the waist.”¹⁶³ Bondi reserves direct comment on the plight of these particular slaves, but one cannot help but feel that he is stunned to encounter his fellow humans in bondage. Did it perhaps call to mind the Torah and its story of the Israelites, wandering and enslaved in Egypt, a foreign land? Bondi does not say, and he may have meant for the image to speak for itself.¹⁶⁴ Practicing Jews of this period would have been most attuned to the image of the wandering, enslaved, and homeless

¹⁶³ Ibid., 24.

¹⁶⁴ Within the fictional account of Bondi’s life by Lloyd Alexander, the novelist invents a scene of Bondi at a slave auction in New Orleans, which does not appear in Bondi’s memoir. The fictional Bondi describes a slave auctioneer “as wicked as Pharaoh’s overseers,” and he subsequently ponders: “He thought of his own people, Israel in captivity. They had suffered under the lash but in the end they had been delivered out of bondage. Perhaps some day...” Lloyd Alexander, *Border Hawk*, 18. Special thanks to Professor Adam Mendelsohn at the University of Cape Town on this point. Personal email correspondence, Adam Mendelsohn to Matthew Long, February 1, 2021.

Israelites in bondage in Egypt.¹⁶⁵ But a complication in his developing thoughts on black slaves and the institutions that enslaved them would ensue. It is not clear that Bondi felt a true connection to African-born slaves; his principled egalitarianism, extended so effortlessly to white Christians, may not have extended fully to black slaves at this stage in his life. For Bondi did indeed fight against slavery and took up arms to defeat it in Kansas.¹⁶⁶ And overall, he found the practice to be abhorrent. But his was not a consistently virtuous rendering of the slaves he encountered through his early adult life. While in Texas, on the steamship *Brazos*, Bondi recounts speaking harshly against a white southerner who was cruel to his slave: "... on the first trip of the Brazos to the Trinity River, the bay was black with swans, pelicans, geese and ducks." Bondi explains that the slave, a young boy, while assisting his master, dropped an oar into the water, thus scaring away the ducks his master intended to shoot. Instead,

Young Morgan, mad, his gun ready for the ducks, deliberately emptied the load into the shoulder of the colored boy. I loudly condemned such cruelty (of course I put into my remarks all the vinegar of an eighteen year old smart aleck) when an old man, Reverend Roach, a minister of the Southern M. E. Church ... reproved me ... and finished his remarks thus: "We have no use for northern abolitionists, and only your age protects you from deserved punishment."¹⁶⁷

Bondi continues, matter-of-factly, on a seemingly unrelated matter, but perhaps means to highlight the cruelty of the slave system: "In February, 1852, three free mulatto sailors, citizens

¹⁶⁵ Professor Steven Marks at Clemson University was helpful on this point. From the Torah: "Now there arose a new king over Egypt who did not know Joseph. [...] Therefore they set taskmasters over [the Israelites] to afflict them with their burdens. [...] And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage – in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field." Exodus 1:8-14 (New King James Version).

¹⁶⁶ He was there alongside John Brown at the Battle of Black Jack (June 2, 1856), which is cited by some as the first unofficial battle of the American Civil War. See, for example, Terry Beckenbaugh, "Battle of Black Jack," *The Missouri-Kansas Conflict 1854-1865*, <https://civilwaronthewesternborder.org/encyclopedia/battle-black-jack/>, accessed November 9, 2020. Subsequently Bondi and his wife, Henrietta Einstein, would help in the creation of stops along the Underground Railroad in Kansas.

¹⁶⁷ August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 30.

of Boston, were, according to Texas law, sold into slavery for attempting to run off three slaves by hiding them in their outgoing vessel.”¹⁶⁸ Again, he does not condemn this development outright, instead seemingly reserving his judgement. These appear not to be the words of one who approves or condones of slavery, but neither are they the words of one who is bounded by egalitarian principles enough to see the common humanity of those who are actually enslaved.

On this same trip to the Trinity River, the reader encounters perhaps the most complicated and challenging segment in all of Bondi’s writing. It is worth quoting at length:

During my stay in Texas I gathered a great deal of information on southern life. When in Galveston the howlings of the slaves receiving their morning ration of cowhiding waked me at 4 o’clock a.m. I found the yankees the most cruel masters. The native southerner had the full knowledge of the negro character and treated slaves with regard to their disposition, so different from whites. Hospitable to any white man, no matter how poor, they yet had no consideration for the poor white laborer. The sick slave received attention, the sick white laborer none. I make these statements from my personal experience and observations. Every good looking young man from the north could have his pick of southern young ladies of first families. I was only 18 years old, yet if I had been willing, several of these young ladies would have fallen in love with me. I disliked to marry a woman with slaves. Had I staid south I would have joined the Confederate army, but while really I did not have much sympathy for the negroes, I felt that my father’s son was not to be a slave driver.¹⁶⁹

The argument here is redolent of those, southern sympathizers, who argue that slavery, based upon an inherent difference among the races, is good for the black slave, but bad for the white slave owner. Here Bondi does not suggest that whites and blacks are equal, or that slavery is repugnant and worthy of toppling as an institution. Nor is he here guided by his erstwhile universalist, egalitarian principles. Instead, he seems to suggest that he might just as easily have served in the employ of the Confederate Army, or have married a gentile Southerner, if only

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 30. Tellingly, in his original manuscript, Bondi uses the word “n-----s,” instead of “slaves.” This is edited out of the published *Autobiography* in 1910.

circumstances had been slightly different. Only an internal compulsion that his father would not have approved of his being a slave owner seems to sway him from this possible course. This contextual and relativist outlook is greatly at odds with the picture Bondi is trying to present about the course of his life's commitment to freedom. Yet one cannot diminish that which Bondi accomplished in freedom's employ. Despite these complications to his character, it is clear that he nevertheless put himself at great risk, and repeatedly did so, to fight for freedom for black Americans; and despite his ambivalence on the idea of equality between the races, he and his wife, Henrietta Einstein, helped actual slaves to escape to their freedom, designating their own Kansas home as a stop along the Underground Railroad in the years before the war. It is perhaps in Bondi's writing about John Brown wherein this commitment to egalitarian principles and a rejection of unjust laws and institutions, all embodiments of that which he calls "a free Commonwealth," is at its strongest. He writes:

Southern Kansas regarded John Brown as an emissary from God and an instrument of His revenge. Brown regarded the institution of slavery as the biggest roadblock in the march to civilization. [...] We were united in a fraternal bond by love, reverence, and devotion to a man who, with tender words and wise counsel, prepared a handful of young men, in the depths of the wilderness at Ottawa Creek, to lay the foundation of a free Commonwealth. He always preached against slavery and hammered home to us that we should never accept existing laws and institutions if our conscience and reason told that they violate human rights.¹⁷⁰

This is indeed Bondi, honoring Brown and channeling his vision. But Bondi does this eloquently and approvingly, and it further serves to form a connective, intellectual bulwark against tyranny

¹⁷⁰ Quotation taken from Abraham Bick's *Veker un Kemfer: Amerikaner Yidn in Kamf kegn Shklaferey, 1848-1865* [*Wakers and Fighters: American Jews in the Fight against Slavery, 1848-1865*] (New York: A Komitet, 1955). Quote translated from the Yiddish by Yankl Stillman in Yankl Stillman, "August Bondi and the Abolitionist Movement," *Jewish Currents* (Archive), March 1, 2004, accessed April 9, 2021, <https://archive.jewishcurrents.org/august-bondi-and-the-abolitionist-movement/>.

and illiberalism. It does so by integrating his stated religious tenets of the sacredness of human life, the universal political rights of all men and women, and the imperative of political engagement, agitation and even revolution, when necessary, to overturn unjust laws and institutions. Even with fleeting evidence to the contrary, this encapsulates the wider arc of Bondi's intended legacy.

The outbreak of The American Civil War, and Bondi's participation in it, would only heighten the internal sense of his Jewishness. A sense of duty to country, passed onto him by his mother, Martha, was yet another important aspect of his religious practice. Bondi states that Martha inspired him thus: "as a Jehudi I had the duty to perform, to defend the institutions which gave equal rights to all beliefs."¹⁷¹ Bondi's mother would further support his son's family during the war, allowing Bondi to enlist and fulfill his sacred duty. "[Since] I must defend my homeland, she would take care of my wife and [one-year-old] child. She kept her word for the entire period that I was in battle."¹⁷² But as a Jew, far from home, it would also prove to be lonely in Company K of the Fifth Kansas Calvary. Bondi recounts a telling anecdote about his fellow soldiers:

To my knowledge there were three Jehudim in the 5th K's – Marcus Wittenberg, Co. F; Simon Wolff, of Co. E; and myself. Some time in July I accosted Wittenberg, asking if he was a Jehudi; he seemed first not to understand, then I repeated my inquiry, "Are you not a Jew?" He answered, "I'm Hungarian, my folks live near Lawrence." There were several Hungarian Jew families settled on farms near Lawrence. A few days after that Wittenberg fell sick [...] He was sent to Mound City hospital where he died [of blood poisoning on] August 31st. A few days after ... his chum, John Emile, brought me some letters addressed to the deceased to interpret, as they were written a language unknown to him. There were letters from his parents, written in Hebrew, among others, informing him of the date of Rosh hashono and Jom-Kipur. Now, if Wittenberg had not denied his being a Jew I would have done all in my power to have

¹⁷¹ August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 72.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

treated for his ailments in post hospital and had seen him daily and had possibly saved him. The other Jehudi, Simon Wolff, would likewise not acknowledge being Jehudi. He was Sergeant of Co. E. and on the Colonel's staff. I let him alone.¹⁷³

Bertram Korn suggests that, "It was unfortunate that he had no Jewish companionship because he was such a devout and loyal Jew. [...] He felt keenly ... his separation from Jewish activities and synagogue services. The closest he came to satisfying his intense Jewish loyalties was a *Rosh Hashanah* dinner with a [Confederate] Jewish family in Pine Bluff, Ark."¹⁷⁴ At least some of this seems projection onto Bondi by Korn. Bondi does not write extensively about his feelings of isolation. But it is also not a great leap to suggest the loneliness of a practicing Jew among a sea of gentiles in the Union Army, especially when the Jews he did know from Kansas largely seem to have either denied their Jewishness outright, or at minimum were inclined to have kept quiet about it. This isolation as a Jew would be a recurring theme throughout Bondi's life. Even as a child, he noticed it well. The Catholic friars, his teachers in the Viennese *Gymnasium*, "paid no attention to the creed of their scholars. They were impartial educators." But, he continues, "[i]n Parva the class numbered 106 students; when we reached Rhetoric we were but 96. In the First Grade there were six Jews. There were but two left when we entered the 6th grade."¹⁷⁵ As an adult in the United States, living on the frontier in a strange new country, his Judaism was indeed challenging to practice. Jews had been living in the United States from the earliest days of colonial life and had only increased their presence in the intervening centuries. But organized religion was not a given anywhere outside of the larger, typically east coast cities. For Korn,

¹⁷³ Ibid., 87-8.

¹⁷⁴ Bertram Wallace Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 97.

¹⁷⁵ August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 11.

Bondi's commitment to his faith, especially in the face of nearly insurmountable obstacles, "in the midst of death and danger," is itself a remarkable achievement.¹⁷⁶

August Bondi's Legacy

The question of where the actual, documentable and verifiable life of August Bondi ends, and where the myth of August Bondi begins, does not have a definitive answer. James C. Malin may have been astute to call Bondi's own narrative of his life's events "unreliable," "lurid," and "not disinterested."¹⁷⁷ Yet nearly as important as the facts surrounding Bondi is his intended legacy, particularly where that legacy intersects with the symbolism he adopted for himself as a figure of transnational freedom. What is certainly clear about Bondi's life is that by participating in revolution on one continent, and continuing that fight on another, Bondi ultimately embraced, defended and fought for that which he believed – namely, freedom and equality for all – and by so doing, he undertook the necessary, sometimes violent steps to enact the freedom he so sought. Moreover, he is representative of those transnational freedom fighters who demonstrate the international currents of revolution, emancipation, and freedom writ large. For many reasons, Bondi remains a complicated figure. However, when his narrative is distilled to its essence, his legacy begins to emerge. About this legacy, and on the legacy of those alongside whom he fought in Vienna, Bondi is at his most eloquent. In *Autobiography*, he considers those who participated in the revolutionary events in Vienna and elsewhere across Europe, and he writes meaningfully, even poetically, about their collective fate:

¹⁷⁶ Bertram Wallace Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War*, 97.

¹⁷⁷ James C. Malin, *John Brown and the Legend of Fifty-Six* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1942), 475, 424, HathiTrust Digital Library, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uva.x000664080/>.

Very few of the young men of 1848 concluded their studies. Once engulfed in the whirlpool of the stress and storm of this revolutionary period they could not concentrate their minds on studying for a livelihood.

Hundreds fell in the October days of '48; some were executed by court's martial, more had the death sentence commuted to imprisonment in the dungeons of Brünn and Spielberz. Hundreds joined the Vienna legion of the Hungarian Revolution and fell in the battles of 1849. Hundreds more were pressed in to the Austrian army and perished in battle or deserted into Turkey or Italy, and thence emigrated to the United States, where others had preceded them. Many went down, even in this free land, in the struggle for bread, and of the survivors many died on the battlefields of the Civil War in the '60's. [...] A very few yet survive, proud of the memories of their youth. None have ever regretted their share in the great drama commenced that fateful day of March, '48, whose last act has not been reached.¹⁷⁸

Contradictions and complications of character are clearly there for a figure like Bondi. But this call toward the incomplete struggle for freedom for all might indeed serve as the distilled essence of Bondi's legacy.

Having considered carefully the life of one international freedom fighter, we turn now, in Chapter Three, to the intellectual currents within the Western philosophical tradition which undergird the formation, development, and practice of freedom.

¹⁷⁸ August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 16.

CHAPTER THREE

FREEDOM: AN INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

I have a sense that I am no longer in charge of my life. I know that none of what I am doing can touch me, not at my core. My memory is a mystical conspiracy of connections. Everything has already happened. I am merely a man, sitting in a chair, listening to a recording made long ago. The needle is travelling in a predetermined track. Eventually, sooner or later, it will hit the run-out groove at the end.

–Hari Kunzru, *White Tears*¹⁷⁹

Die Menschen machen ihre eigene Geschichte, aber sie machen sie nicht aus freien Stücken, nicht selbstgewählten, sondern unter unmittelbar vorgefundenen, gegebenen und überlieferten Umständen. Die Tradition aller toten Geschlechter lastet wie ein Alp auf dem Gehirne der Lebenden. Und wenn sie eben damit beschäftigt scheinen, sich und die Dinge umzuwälzen, noch nicht Dagewesenes zu schaffen, gerade in solchen Epochen revolutionärer Krise beschwören sie ängstlich die Geister der Vergangenheit zu ihrem Dienste herauf, entlehnen ihnen Namen, Schlachtparole, Kostüm, um in dieser altehr-würdigen Verkleidung und mit dieser erborgten Sprache die neue Weltgeschichtsscene aufzuführen.

–Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*¹⁸⁰

No idea is so generally recognized as indefinite, ambiguous, and open to the greatest misconceptions (to which it therefore actually falls a victim) as the Idea of Liberty. [...] When individuals and nations have once got in their heads the abstract concept of full-blown liberty, there is nothing like it in its uncontrollable strength.

–G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Mind*¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ Hari Kunzru, *White Tears* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2017), 154.

¹⁸⁰ Karl Marx, *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte*, 1869, accessed March 20, 2021, https://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/view/marx_bonaparte_1869?p=13/. The English translation: “Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like [an Alp] on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, *creating something that did not exist before*, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language.” Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, accessed March 2, 2021, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm/>. Emphasis added.

¹⁸¹ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of Mind*, trans. William Wallace (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1894), 100-1.

Chapter Introduction: Freedom's Origin

Whence freedom? Attempting to articulate the origin of human freedom – indeed to provide even a compelling and succinct definition of the concept – has proven to be a longstanding and problematic pursuit of thinkers within the Western tradition. The importance of the concept and its relationship to the greater arc political revolution is clear. Indeed, the liberal political tradition has had much impact on the rhetoric and practice of freedom over the centuries; and moreover, these aspects of freedom have themselves had much impact on the course of political history. Both have conditioned and reinforced one another. John Stuart Mill recognizes accordingly that the “struggle between Liberty and Authority is the most conspicuous feature in the portions of history with which we are earliest familiar[.]”¹⁸² Considering the vast history of political revolution and its relationship with the rhetoric of freedom, spanning as it does from at least seventeenth century England to the democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe and beyond in the 1980s, and even to the Arab Spring in the early twenty-first century, R.W. Davis states, “A clear-eyed look at any of [these political revolutions] ... reminds us that freedom, liberty, rights, and democracy are words into which many different and conflicting hopes have been read. The language of freedom is ... inherently difficult.”¹⁸³ In her aptly titled

¹⁸² John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, ed. David Bromwich and George Kateb (New Haven: Yale University Press), 73, ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁸³ R.W. Davis, general ed., “Series Forward,” in *Revolution and the Meanings of Freedom*, ed. Isser Woloch (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), v. The events of the Arab Spring in 2010-12 occurred after Davis wrote these words, but I am taking liberties with their inclusion in this wider arc of revolution. Jonathan Sperber argues for this connection in “Tidal Waves of Revolution, 1848-2011,” *Saturday Morning Science* (podcast), October 29, 2011, accessed April 27, 2020, <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/tidal-waves-of-revolution-from-1848-to-2011/id525505899?i=1000115026414/>. For more on the similarities between the “scripts of revolution” in Europe and the Middle East, see also Silvana Toska, “The Multiple Scripts of the Arab Revolutions,” in *Scripting Revolution: A Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutions*, 325-44, ed. Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), ProQuest Ebook Central.

essay, "What is Freedom?" Hannah Arendt suggests as much when she laments, "It is as though age-old contradictions and antimonies were lying in wait to force the mind into dilemmas of logical impossibility so that, depending on which horn of the dilemma you are holding on to, it becomes as impossible to conceive of freedom or its opposite as it is to realize the notion of a square circle."¹⁸⁴ Arendt is right to be discouraged. As important as the concept of freedom is to political history, philosophers have nevertheless long grappled with, and struggled to find common ground on the topic. Another twentieth century thinker, Isaiah Berlin, begins his own study on the topic by commenting at what centuries of western political philosophy have failed to ascertain: a succinct, canonical definition of freedom, suggesting that there are "more than two hundred senses of this protean word recorded by historians of ideas." He further laments: "Like happiness and goodness, like nature and reality, the meaning of this word is so porous that there is little interpretation that it seems able to resist."¹⁸⁵

It might not be such a difficulty. Berlin attempted to theoretically simplify the concept of freedom in an important lecture he gave at Oxford University in October 1958, the text of which was later published as an essay under the title, "Two Concepts of Liberty."¹⁸⁶ At its most elemental, the seemingly amorphous concept of freedom can be distilled for Berlin into its

¹⁸⁴ Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom," in *Between Past and Future*, 143-71 (New York: Penguin, 1968), 143.

¹⁸⁵ Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Liberty," 121.

¹⁸⁶ For our purposes, liberty and freedom remain essentially the same concept, and will therefore be used interchangeably in this essay. The linguistic roots of the two words stem from the French *liberté* and German *Freiheit*. Both terms are the only words meaning freedom in their respective languages, and both have parity with the Latin *libertas*. Among European languages, only English has two separate words, liberty and freedom, for what is largely considered the same concept. Some recent scholarship has been done attempting to differentiate freedom and liberty, but this remains a murky pursuit. See Ian Carter, "Positive and Negative Liberty," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2019 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed March 2, 2021, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/liberty-positive-negative/>.

elemental, constituent parts: freedom *from* and freedom *to*. Berlin draws here on Kant, describing these as positive and negative liberties.¹⁸⁷ (Though Berlin does not describe this, at the next order of complexity we might expand our categorization to include a third form: from positive liberty we might also extract freedom *as*, for example in terms of self-determination or autonomy, either of an individual or of a collective.)¹⁸⁸ Berlin further explores in his essay, among other topics, the fundamental difference between those humans who have secured, purposefully or happenstance, some level of freedom in their lives, versus those other humans who have not. Historically, human inequality has been a given. That this maxim holds true when considering who is free, and who is not, is not a startling conclusion. F.A. Hayek, drawing on Max Pohlenz, asserts: “Man, or at least European man, enters history divided into free and unfree; and this distinction had a very definite meaning.”¹⁸⁹ Indeed, it is hard to imagine one’s freedom outside of a comparison to the *unfreedom* of others. Arendt notes this fact when she observes, “We first become aware of freedom or its opposite in our intercourse with others, not in the intercourse with ourselves.”¹⁹⁰ But it precisely one’s response to this freedom differential among humans that is most instructive. Berlin observes,

What troubles the conscious of Western liberals is not, I think, the belief that the freedom men seek differs according to their social or economic conditions, but that the minority who possess it have gained it by exploiting, or, at least, averting their gaze from, the vast majority who do not. They believe, with good reason, that if individual liberty is an ultimate end for human beings, none

¹⁸⁷ See also Ian Carter, “Positive and Negative Liberty.”

¹⁸⁸ See Órla O’Donovan, Fiona Dukelow and Rosie Meade, eds., “Introduction,” in *Freedom? By Two Fuses* (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2018), ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁸⁹ F.A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty: The Definitive Edition*, ed. Ronald Hamowy (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 59, ProQuest Ebook Central. Pohlenz, as quoted in Hayek: “Historically [in Ancient Greece], it was the existence of the unfree, the slaves, that first gave the others the feeling that they themselves were free.”

¹⁹⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 148.

should be deprived of it by others; least of all that some should enjoy it at the expense of others.¹⁹¹

Most fundamentally, negative freedom, freedom *from*, is what most political theorists mean when they are thinking about freedom – that is, the removal of barriers, physical, legal, political, and social, which allow for one’s unfettered action within various spheres of life. In terms of the liberal tradition, negative freedom as individual liberty is primarily concerned with political freedom from overreach by a pernicious, coercive central state into the lives of its citizens. However, it might also be construed more broadly into freedom from coercion of *any* kind, from any other individual or group of individuals. Freedoms of assembly, association, movement, and speech, or from unreasonable search and seizure, along with other political inheritance from the liberal revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are all contained within this realm. Less emphasized in current parlance is positive freedom – the freedom of an agent to be able to act positively and autonomously toward his or her own self-actualization, “in such a way as to take control of one’s life and realize one’s fundamental purposes.”¹⁹² There is much debate in current political discourse on the effects of this practice of freedom and the implementation of policy surrounding it. Indeed, where one falls on various political spectra – however liberal or conservative, however libertarian or authoritarian one might be – has much to do with one’s views on human nature, freedom, the import of safeguarding that freedom, and the degree to which governments ought to act in the lives of their citizens to do so. It is scarcely a new debate. Berlin calls this question of how to reconcile an individual’s desire for liberty with the necessity for authority a “natural,” and “familiar”

¹⁹¹ Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty,” in *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 125.

¹⁹² Ian Carter, “Positive and Negative Liberty.”

question of political thought, one that has consumed Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and other political philosophers for centuries.¹⁹³ In the contemporary sense, traditional liberals might wish to enact strong laws to protect the individual from an overreaching and coercive central state; radical libertarians, meanwhile, might focus instead on creating conditions which allow individuals to seek their own positive freedom, to flourish outside of *any* influence from government whatsoever.

This *practice* of freedom is significant. O'Donovan, Dukelow and Meade make a distinction between freedom as philosophy or abstract concept, and freedom as practice – that is, how it is employed by individuals in their quotidian lives. The same phenomenon of the practice of freedom might be observed in the collective for various groups, or even entire nations. What is important here is attempting to identify the means that individuals are inspired by the rhetoric of freedom – and thus inspired, how it is that they decide to engage actively, and sometimes violently, in freedom's pursuit. Put simply, O'Donovan, *et al* pose the question this way: "What is it that motivates people to act and struggle in the name of freedom?" Getting to the root of this particular inquiry allows us to access "the substance" of freedom, moving beyond the theoretical and into the practical realm as "something that we [humans] experience

¹⁹³ Hobbes had an overwhelmingly pessimistic view of humanity, and thus sought to constrain humans from destroying one another in the "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" lives they might otherwise have endured without an assertive political authority; Locke, more optimistically, erred on the side of liberty, that which he felt was man's natural state, and therefore maintained that it was authority that needed to be constrained. Where one draws the border line on this "frontier between liberty and authority" says much about their approach and working assumptions. Isaiah Berlin, "Freedom and Its Betrayal: Jean-Jacques Rosseau (1952)," Isaiah Berlin Centenary [podcast], Oxford University Podcasts, April 14, 2009, accessed March 26, 2021, <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/series/isaiah-berlin-centenary/>. See also Sharon A. Lloyd and Susanne Sreedhar, "Hobbes's Moral and Political Philosophy," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2020 Edition), Edward N. Zalta, ed., accessed March 26, 2021, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2020/entries/hobbes-moral/>.

... in everyday life.”¹⁹⁴ My own research interests coalesce at this intersection of the practice of freedom within the liberal revolutionary tradition. This chapter is therefore an attempt to situate revolution as an expression of individual liberty within the Western intellectual canon.

In a political sense, liberal revolution since the seventeenth century has been concerned with an expanding conception of negative freedom, that which removes barriers imposed by political, religious or social organs which might otherwise dictate, coerce or control the lives of individuals. Revolution has clearly been a propellant of this expanding freedom. But while important to this conversation, revolution is not of itself concerned with freedom *per se*, but rather in the creation of a new political or social order wherein freedom might have opportunity to flourish.¹⁹⁵ Stated another way, revolution is an instrument employed by individual actors to create new political conditions that are completely unlike those which preceded them. In this way, novelty is the most important attribute of revolution, and expanding freedom through violence is thus ancillary, and not fundamental to it. This is described by Hannah Arendt in her 1963 treatise, *On Revolution*:

Only where this pathos of novelty is present and where novelty is connected with the idea of freedom are we entitled to speak of revolution. [...] But violence is no more adequate to describe the phenomenon of revolution than change; only where change occurs in the sense of a new beginning, where violence is used to constitute an altogether different form of government, to bring about the formation of a new body politic, where the liberation from oppression aims at least at the constitution of freedom can we speak of revolution.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Órla O’Donovan, et al, *Freedom?*

¹⁹⁵ While the script of revolution nearly always appeals to freedom, it is very important to distinguish that not all revolution is concerned with expanding freedom for all, and not all revolutions are strictly egalitarian in this sense. Indeed, an important question of revolution is to ask: with *whose* freedom are the revolutionaries concerned? The answer will vary widely based on context and circumstance. English revolutionaries in the seventeenth century will have a rather markedly different answer to this question than will American, Haitian and French revolutionaries in the eighteenth, or Latin American and European revolutionaries in the nineteenth, or Russian, Indian, Iranian and South African revolutionaries in the twentieth, or, finally, Arab revolutionaries in the twenty-first.

¹⁹⁶ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 24-5.

I will return to Arendt and her emphasis on novelty as it relates to political revolution and the rhetoric and expanding practice of freedom in modernity. For now, however, I will let it suffice to emphasize that revolution, while certainly important as an agent of social and political change, is hardly the sole source of the development of freedom within the western philosophical tradition.

A Note on Free Will

Political freedom, as such, should not be confused with topics of free will and determinism. Questions on human agency have been pondered by thinkers since at least Late Antiquity. Epicurus, in asserting that humans can transcend the physical, causal phenomena of the natural world – “he acquires responsibility which proceeds from himself” – became, per Long and Sedley, “the first philosopher to recognize the philosophical centrality of what we know as the Free Will Question.”¹⁹⁷ Whether humans as individual actors have free will, and indeed how this perceived agency, writ large, coalesces into larger historical movements, is a fascinating question and one worth exploring.¹⁹⁸ One considers as just one example Leo

¹⁹⁷ A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, Vol. I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 102, 107.

¹⁹⁸ This is perhaps a topic for another paper. The impact of modern neuroscience and quantum physics on notions of free will is startling to some, and begs the question: could it have been otherwise? Could I, an individual actor, have chosen differently? The answer of most scientists is a simple “No.” Philosophical compatibilism has attempted with some success to restore individual agency by bridging the gap between the modern humanist’s insistence on self-determination and individual free will, against that of the physicist’s phenomenological universe which is wholly determined by prior causes. Despite their best efforts, this continues to be a decidedly murky project. The further impacts of this debate on topics of historical determinism and historical contingency are perhaps the most fascinating of all. Meanwhile, social scientists have begun recently to adopt the language of historical determinism, that which hasn’t been seriously affirmed since historical positivism in the nineteenth century was fashionable. It takes in this case a mathematician-biologist turned historian: Peter Turchin posits that he can draw general laws about the rise and fall of civilizations based upon mathematical modeling of the past 10,000 years. He takes special interest in the preconditions of revolution and their role in hastening historical change. As a starting point, see his academic journal *Cliodynamics: History as Science*, accessed April 9, 2021,

Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, and how Tolstoy juxtaposes through its narrative the massive movements of nations (as in the Napoleonic wars and social displacement thereof) against that of the private lives of ordinary individuals who were swept up into these greater historical events. To what degree did Tolstoy's characters actually have agency over their lives, and how did their individual decisions aggregate into the movements of nations?¹⁹⁹ For that matter, how much agency do *we* have in *our own* lives; how determined are *we*? However one answers these questions, individual free will – and whether it is illusory or not – is a topic that is largely unimportant to this particular study. What *is* important, however, is that, based on human experience, there continues to be an innate sense within most individuals of their freedom to choose, and that this perceived agency might thus be applied toward the struggle for political liberty for oneself and for others. Consider: were it impossible to entertain the thought of novelty for an indeterminate future – to presuppose that one's actions toward that indeterminate future might have been otherwise – would that not necessarily preclude the very idea of fighting for an ideal of freedom, of struggling to overturn systems of oppression and illiberalism? Moreover, without implicit free will, an entire system of normative ethics would be

<http://peterturchin.com/cliodynamics/>. For a profile on Turchin, see Graeme Wood, "The Next Decade Could Be Even Worse," *The Atlantic*, December 2020, accessed April 9, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2020/12/can-history-predict-future/616993/>.

¹⁹⁹ I am indebted to Sarah Hudspith for this idea. Speaking about *War and Peace*, she states: "Tolstoy is concerned with everyday people's lives and the little details which made their lives fascinating and individual. Seen through the lens of explaining an event of an invasion and catastrophic war in which hundreds of thousands of people die, there is a need to see how an ordinary person fits into this vast event." Melvyn Bragg, host, "Tolstoy," *In Our Time: Culture* (podcast), BBC4, April 22, 2002, accessed March 27, 2019, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p00548d7/>. Contemporary fiction is no less interested in these matters. In the German television series *Dark*, the clockmaker H.G. Tannhaus asks: "Why? That's a big word. Why do we decide for one thing and against another? But does it matter whether the decision is based upon the consequence of a series of causal links? Or whether it stems from an undefined feeling inside me? That perhaps everything in my life boils down to this one moment: that I'm part of a puzzle, one that I can neither understand nor influence." Christian Steyer, *Dark*, season 1, episode 10, "Alpha and Omega," directed by Baran bo Odar, aired December 1, 2017, accessed March 26, 2021, Netflix.

swiftly made irrelevant. For what indeed is the vision of an indeterminate future if not at least in part for the chance to change it, and mold from it a better world for oneself, one's loved ones, or even for society at large?

Experience seems to suggest as much: we humans have a canny, ingrained ability to sense our own freedom, and to act therefore within a seemingly free experiential and phenomenological framework, within what some libertarian free will and compatibilist philosophers term the "the garden of forking paths."²⁰⁰ *I turned left at the last intersection, we tell ourselves, but I could have chosen otherwise.* Or perhaps more precisely, we create narratives, ex post facto, to justify the decisions that we make: *I always turn right, so this time I chose to turn left.* Samuel Johnson observed as much when he reportedly stated, "We know our will is free, and there's an end on't."²⁰¹ The impact of this sense of freedom is far-reaching. It touches upon the political, moral, and legal foundations of much of human existence, at least within the Western historical tradition. Hannah Arendt gets at the crux of the problem of free will when she observes: "In all practical and especially in political matters, we hold human freedom to be a self-evident truth, and it is upon this axiomatic assumption that laws are laid down in human communities, that decisions are taken, that judgements are passed." She continues, "In all fields of scientific and theoretical endeavor, on the contrary, [...] freedom turns out to be a mirage[.]"²⁰² Modern physics and neuroscience seems to suggest that which philosophy has long postulated. In this vein, Pierre Simon LaPlace summarizes the materialist

²⁰⁰ See, for example, Robyn Repko Waller and Russell L. Waller, "Forking Paths and Freedom: A Challenge to Libertarian Accounts of Free Will," *Philosophia* 43 (December 2015): 1199-1212, accessed March 18, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11406-015-9612-8>.

²⁰¹ Quoted in Gary Watson, ed. *Free Will*, Second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1.

²⁰² Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom?" in *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, 143-71 (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), 143-4.

axiom that, were an individual to have complete omniscience vis-à-vis the current state of the universe, that is, were able to ascertain all prior causes arising from all previous states of being, this omniscient being could subsequently predict with certitude all future states of the universe as well. In this manner, past, present, and future are all derivative of one, single, determined state of existence:

We may regard the present state of the universe as the effect of its past and the cause of its future. Any intellect which at a certain moment would know all forces that set nature in motion, and all positions of all items of which nature is composed [...] would embrace in a single formula the movements of the greatest bodies of the universe and those of the tiniest atom; for such an intellect nothing would be uncertain and the future just like the past would be present before its eyes.²⁰³

Lacking such omniscience, humans are left with only their own senses surrounding states of consciousness, and many, perhaps the vast majority of us, are compelled by the sense of our free will. Mirage or not, free will simply captivates us. Yet outside of this debate, and regardless of the neurological or psychological realities of cause and effect underpinning human consciousness, violent revolution *has* been employed by humans throughout history. Surely many, if not most, of these revolutionaries were individuals who viewed themselves as free agents within the world; and as such they fought and struggled through the centuries toward an indeterminate future: to change the world and move their society ever-incrementally toward the goal of greater human freedom.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ Pierre Simon LaPlace, *A Philosophical Essay on Probabilities*, trans. Frederick Wilson Truscott and Frederick Lincoln Emory (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1902), 3-4, HathiTrust. Quoted translation appears in Leonard Smith, *Chaos: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 3. This omniscient being has come to be known by philosophers as “LaPlace’s demon.”

²⁰⁴ My ideas in this section on free will and human agency are influenced by the thinking of neuroscientist Sam Harris. For a detailed description, see “#241 – Final Thoughts on Free Will,” *Waking Up* [podcast], March 12, 2021, accessed March 20, 2021, <https://samharris.org/podcasts/241-final-thoughts-on-free-will/>. See also my paper: Matthew Long, “Free Will, Determinism, and Human Agency in Leo Tolstoy’s *War*

A Radical Enlightenment? Rationale and Chapter Outline

This chapter is largely interested in exploring the intellectual roots of liberal revolution in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – all those political actions which, in sum, underpin a corresponding expansion of political and social freedom during these eras. I am drawing partly here upon Jonathan Israel’s scholarship on Radical Enlightenment. Israel’s grand thesis is not without its problems, but I am compelled by his assertion that the revolutions across the transatlantic world – the American, French, and Haitian in the eighteenth century, and the Latin-American and European revolutions of the nineteenth – were of one and the same revolution.²⁰⁵ Like ocean waves crossing the Atlantic, the ideas of revolution intersect, grow and crescendo into a greater form. Israel’s chosen metaphor for revolution is a forest fire: in *The Expanding Blaze: How the American Revolution Ignited the World*, he writes: “Both the American and French revolutions, and all the other supposedly ‘national’ revolutions, were ... variants of a single Atlantic revolution.”²⁰⁶ Moreover, these “national” revolutions all looked toward and found inspiration from one another, and were equally guided by the intellectual currents and rhetoric of Radical Enlightenment. It is worth quoting Israel’s definition of Radical Enlightenment, as we will return to many of these points in this chapter. Per Israel,

Radical Enlightenment is a set of basic principles that can be summed concisely as democracy; racial and sexual equality; individual liberty of lifestyle; full freedom of thought, expression, and the press; eradication of religious authority from the legislative process and education; and full separation of church and state. It sees the purpose of the state as being the wholly secular one of promoting the worldly interests of the majority and preventing the vested

and Peace,” (unpublished paper, Clemson University, May 3, 2019), 4-15, accessed March 20, 2021, https://www.academia.edu/45586044/Free_Will_Determinism_and_Human_Agency_in_Leo_Tolstoy's_War_and_Peace/.

²⁰⁵ For at least one salient response to and critique of Israel, see Carl Niekerk, ed., *The Radical Enlightenment in Germany: A Cultural Perspective* (Leiden: Brill Rodopi, 2018).

²⁰⁶ Jonathan Israel, *The Expanding Blaze: How the American Revolution Ignited the World, 1755-1848* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 4.

minority interests from capturing control of the legislative process. Its chief maxim is that all men [and women] have the same basic needs, rights and status irrespective of what they believe or what religious, economic, or ethnic group they belong to, and that consequently all ought to be treated alike, on the basis of equity, whether black or white, male or female, religious or nonreligious, and that all deserve to have their personal interests and aspirations equally respected by law and government. Its universalism lies in its claim that all men [and women] have the same right to pursue happiness in their own way, and think and say whatever they see fit, and no one, including those who convince others they are divinely chosen to be their masters, rulers, or spiritual guides, is justified in denying or hindering others in the enjoyment of rights that pertain to all men and women equally.²⁰⁷

It should be acknowledged that not all are compelled by Israel's grand model of revolution. Gary B. Nash is one who is not. His argument rests in part on a differentiation between the American War of Independence, which *did* inspire many to attempt revolts and uprisings in the years that followed it, and the American Revolution, which set out to remake America's body politic with a brand-new expression of self-government. He asserts:

The American War for Independence, in sum, considered as an overthrow of colonial masters, would have much more influence ... than the American Revolution, an internal struggle to remake America along very different lines than had previously existed. [...] Thus, we need to be cautious about overstating the aftershocks of the American Revolution, particularly about its internal struggles to restitch the social fabric of its peoples[.]”²⁰⁸

As scholars of history, we should, as Nash cautions, resist overstating the case. The revolutionaries themselves are, not surprisingly, sometimes guilty of overstatement. Thomas Paine may have thrown caution to the wind in declaring in *Common Sense*, “The cause of

²⁰⁷ Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind: Radical Enlightenment and the Intellectual Origins of Modern Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), vii-viii.

²⁰⁸ Gary B. Nash, “Sparks from the Altar of '76: International Repercussions and Reconsiderations of the American Revolution,” 1-19, in *The Age of Revolutions in Global Context, c. 1760-1840*, ed. David Armitage and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2010), 2-3.

America is in great measure the cause of all mankind.”²⁰⁹ Nevertheless, we might also recognize that *something* important happened in the events of 1776, and the impacts of America’s experiment in self-government would certainly come to reverberate and inspire future revolutionaries, particularly those in Europe, and particularly during the following century. My own intellectual interest being the nineteenth century, I wish to situate the 1848 revolutions within a wider framework of freedom in the Western tradition, drawing as it does upon this idea of Radical Enlightenment and spanning temporally from Antiquity to the modern era, and geographically across the Atlantic World, from Eastern Europe to the Americas. In so doing, I will draw upon the philosophical works of several important thinkers. Among them, I will focus on Baruch Spinoza, Arthur Schopenhauer, Hannah Arendt, Erich Fromm, and F.A. Hayek.

Indeed, many philosophers and political theorists in the Western tradition have grappled with ideas of free will, human agency, and freedom. But few have articulated such a comprehensive study of the history of the philosophy of freedom in the manner that Hannah Arendt has. It is with Arendt that I will begin my exploration of the intellectual history of freedom; thereafter I will return to some of the other important thinkers who preceded her for a more comprehensive study on their individual philosophies on freedom of the will, human agency, historical contingency, and political freedom broadly. Arendt will thus provide the broad contours of this intellectual history, and Spinoza, Schopenhauer, Fromm, and Hayek will each add their own crucial elements to the whole. This chapter will conclude with a section on the

²⁰⁹ Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man, Common Sense, and Other Political Writings*, Oxford World’s Classics, ed. Mark Philip (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998), EBSCO Academic Collection (PASCAL eBook). As quoted in Gary B. Nash, “Sparks from the Altar,” 2.

transatlantic roots of abolitionism that came to define transatlantic freedom movements of the nineteenth century.

Hannah Arendt: Of Freedom and Novelty

Hannah Arendt has approached freedom in several of her important philosophical works, among them *On Revolution*, *The Life of the Mind*, *The Human Condition* and *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.²¹⁰ I will draw on each of these works in my discussion of Arendt's philosophy on freedom, but of primary interest is an essay Arendt wrote in 1961 from her book *Between Past and Future*, called, appropriately enough, "What is Freedom?"²¹¹ Arendt was loath to call herself a philosopher, and she rejected this categorization on multiple occasions, instead calling herself a political theorist.²¹² Indeed, on face value, her philosophical work evades categorization of any kind. She tackles myriad and diverse topics in her writing, and though she studied philosophy under Martin Heidegger, Edmund Husserl and Karl Jaspers at the Universities of Marburg, Freiburg and Heidelberg, respectively, she could neither be pigeonholed as an existentialist, or for that matter, as member of any other philosophical school or movement. She was perhaps one who was lucky enough to follow her intellectual interests wherever they ranged and thus made a successful career of being a writer and academic. If one could state anything comprehensively about Arendt and her work, it was that she was eternally fascinated with the human condition; more than any other theme, this thread unites her work. She wrote

²¹⁰ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006). Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, One-volume edition (San Diego: Harcourt, Inc., 1978). Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959). Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New Edition (Orlando: Harcourt Inc., 1966).

²¹¹ Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom?"

²¹² See among others, "About Hannah Arendt," The Hannah Arendt Center at Bard College, accessed April 6, 2021, <https://hac.bard.edu/about/hannaharendt/>.

on love, the history of philosophy, the human mind, consciousness, language, labor and human activity, civil disobedience, revolution, modernity, morality, the problem of evil, authoritarianism and totalitarianism, citizenship, human rights, and more. She was incredibly prolific, publishing some twenty-two major philosophical works during her lifetime. The vast majority of these were published in English, her third language. In spite of her protestations to the contrary, her work in political philosophy, especially that on human agency, freedom and revolution, is among the most erudite and important thinking on the topic written by anyone in the twentieth century.²¹³

Much of her scholarship was undergirded by Arendt's fascination with and devotion to classical Greek texts and ideas, to which she returns repeatedly in her work. She had special affinity for Aristotle and Socrates. The Greek *polis* – or at least an updated republican version of it – with its marketplace of ideas and active political engagement, became for her a model for how society might repair itself in the aftermath of the torn social fabric, mass displacement, death, and destruction of two world wars. The *polis* was characterized by public engagement and a sharing of ideas among one's fellow citizens, that which Aristotle and Augustine after him deemed *bios politikos* or *vita negotiosa/actuosa*. The active life for Arendt was thus defined as “a life devoted to public-political matters.”²¹⁴ Moreover, this political-public discourse for Arendt was the prerequisite for a shared understanding of reality. “Only where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered

²¹³ Biographical detail from this and following sections taken from Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves, “Hannah Arendt,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2019 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed March 28, 2021, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2019/entries/arendt/>. See also Melvyn Bragg, host, “Hannah Arendt,” *In Our Time* (podcast), BBC Radio 4, accessed March 28, 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08c2ljg/>.

²¹⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 12. See also Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, 154-5.

around them know they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear.”²¹⁵ This *vita activa* is distinct from *vita contemplativa*, the life of contemplation as practiced by philosophers and ascetics from Plato onward.²¹⁶ What we today might call the public commons were thus a hallmark of freedom for the Greeks and early Christians.²¹⁷ Arendt describes this as an open forum for a pluralistic, democratic body politic, and one wherein oftentimes dissenting and robust exchanges of ideas might occur within the public square.²¹⁸ Equally important for Arendt, this style of public commons was something that had been steadily on the decline across much of the Western world. Though this recession of engaged democracy and public discourse had been occurring across much of the modern era, it was particularly pronounced in the post-war years in which she wrote. For Arendt, the paradigm of an engaged, active citizenry was thus replaced by the increasing atomization of individuals and an expanding capitalistic consumerism which had become endemic across much of the West. In this model, modern people were no longer viewed as citizens of a collective, interested in and engaged with others in their communities, but rather as individual consumers.²¹⁹ This transition

²¹⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 57.

²¹⁶ There is a bit of irony here that this, which philosophers considered freedom from physical labor and engagement with the public world, is what allowed them to practice, apolitically, “pure thought culminating in contemplation.” Later Christians would similarly withdraw from “worldly affairs, from all business of this world,” to turn their minds and hearts toward eternal matters. “Truth, be it the ancient truth of Being or the Christian truth of the living God, can reveal itself only in complete human stillness.” *Ibid.*, 17, 14-5. This conception of freedom is itself greatly at odds with the active, engaged, and political freedom sought by revolutionaries in the centuries since.

²¹⁷ She asserts that, vis-à-vis the “disappearance of the ancient city-state ... Augustine seems to have been the last to know what it once meant to be a citizen[.]” *Ibid.*, 14.

²¹⁸ See, for example, Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 50-8.

²¹⁹ If “consumers” is problematic, by century’s end and the digital revolution, we would subsequently be called “users,” as though we were drug addicts. It’s hardly an endearing term, but in many ways, it is quite accurate.

was well underway in the mid-twentieth century United States, her new home, when Arendt wrote the following in 1963:

The reason for this insistence on the interconnection of freedom and equality in Greek political thought was that freedom was understood as being manifest in certain ... human activities, and that these activities could appear and be real only when others saw them, judged them, remembered them. The life of a free man [in Ancient Greece] needed the presence of others. Freedom itself needed a place where people could come together – the agora, the market-place, or the *polis*, the political space proper.²²⁰

Similarly, in “What is Freedom?” Arendt posits the importance of the *polis* to understanding freedom’s origin. She writes:

If, then, we understand the political in the sense of the *polis*, its end or *raison d’être* would be to establish and keep in existence a space where freedom as virtuosity can appear. This is the end where freedom is a worldly reality, tangible in words which can be heard, in deeds which can be seen, and in events which are talked about, remembered, and turned into stories before they are finally incorporated into the great storybook of human history.²²¹

Fundamental to Arendt in this framework is the importance of engaged pluralism within the political space, that which by definition finds problematic an individual’s retreat into an atomized, private, personal sphere. When citizens are isolated in this manner, the conditions for tyranny’s flourishing are set.²²² This movement from public to private mirrors Arendt’s oft cited position on Plato. Plato famously was so fundamentally shaken by the death of his teacher, Socrates, that he considered all future engagement between philosophy and public affairs to be deleterious – that which Arendt terms “the conflict between the philosopher and the *polis*.”²²³

²²⁰ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 21.

²²¹ Hannah Arendt, “What is Freedom?,” 154-5. For a different conception of the *polis* as social instead of political space, see Adalberto Giovannini, “Greek Cities and Greek Commonwealth,” in *Images and Ideologies: Self-definition in the Hellenistic World*, 265-86, ed. Anthony Bulluch, et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

²²² See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 57-8. See also Hannah Arendt, *The Origins*, 316-7.

²²³ Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), 107.

Per Arendt in *The Human Condition*, Plato withdrew from the *active* life and moved instead into the *contemplative* life, eschewing political engagement for presumably more lofty ideals of apolitical, higher thinking. Arendt scholar Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves writes,

The remedy which the tradition of Western thought has proposed for the unpredictability and irreversibility of action has consisted in abstaining from action altogether, in the withdrawal from the sphere of interaction with others, in the hope that one's freedom and integrity could thereby be preserved. Platonism, Stoicism and Christianity elevated the sphere of contemplation above the sphere of action, precisely because in the former one could be free from the entanglements and frustration of action.²²⁴

By contrast, D'Entreves continues, "Arendt's proposal ... is not to turn one's back on the realm of human affairs, but to rely on two faculties inherent in action itself, the faculty of *forgiving* and the faculty of *promising*."²²⁵ These faculties, by definition, focus on the relational interactions between humans, particularly in their emphasis on mutual trust and understanding. Similarly, per Frisbee Sheffield, Arendt wishes through her work to "re-throne" the political space as a rejection of its diminishment under the Platonic and Christian traditions. Thus, relying on a Christian sense of novelty, Arendt maintains a distinct sense of optimism about the chance to create a better social reality through a pluralistic and engaged political process.²²⁶ So then for

²²⁴ Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves, "Hannah Arendt."

²²⁵ Maurizio Passerin d'Entreves, "Hannah Arendt." For more on Arendt and Plato, see Miguel Abensour, "Against the Sovereignty of Philosophy over Politics: Arendt's Reading of Plato's Cave Allegory," *Social Research* 74, no. 4 (Winter 2007): 955-982, Project Muse, accessed March 28, 2021, <https://muse-jhu-edu.libproxy.clemson.edu/article/527590/pdf/>. Also Luca Timponelli, "Plato, Arendt and the Conditions of Politics," *Philosophical Readings* IX, no. 1 (2017): 12-7, accessed March 28, 2021, <https://dx.doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.826066/>. If indeed the death of Socrates led to Plato's withdrawal from public life, many scholars point to it more fundamentally as the rationale for Plato's lifelong commitment to philosophy. Were it not for Socrates' unhappy execution, we might not have had Plato's dialogues at all. Writes Goldstein: "The drama of Socrates' life – the true meaning of which was given, for Plato as well as others, in his death – was personally transformative for Plato. It convinced him to devote his life to philosophy[.]" Rebecca Newberger Goldstein, *Plato at the Googleplex: Why Philosophy Won't Go Away* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014), 10.

²²⁶ Sheffield's remarks in Melvyn Bragg, host, "Hannah Arendt." Not all are persuaded by Arendt's "heroization" of the commons. See Jim Morrow's comments in "Innovations in Urban Studies, Lived Space, and Everyday Life," in *Transatlantic Conversations on Science, Technology and Innovation for a*

Arendt, a mature and healthy political system provides for a plurality of viewpoints, an opportunity for dissent, a means for a communitarian and active engagement of the citizenry, and political processes which allow for evolution and non-violent change as a means for addressing inequality.

But beyond all of this is for Arendt is an emphasis on natality, the perceived ability of humans to create something novel and new within the political space. This idea animated much of Arendt's thinking on freedom and revolution. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* she writes, "Freedom as an inner capacity of man is identical with the capacity to begin, just as freedom as a political reality is identical with a space of movement between men."²²⁷ Later, in the final paragraph of the book, she returns again to novelty, presenting images of beginning and new birth, and signifying these as symbols of freedom:

But there remains also the truth that every end in history necessarily contains a new beginning; this beginning is the promise, the only 'message' which the end can ever produce. Beginning, before it becomes a historical event, is the supreme capacity of man; politically, it is identical with man's freedom. *Initium ut esset homo creatus est* – 'that a beginning be made man was created' said Augustine. This beginning is guaranteed by each new birth; it is indeed every man.²²⁸

Arendt's turning to Augustine in this penultimate sentence of the book is significant. Indeed, she returns often to early Christian and neo-Platonic thought throughout her work. But what is

Sustainable Future, Institute of European Studies, UC Berkeley, April 1, 2021, accessed April 6, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJUOVG8p17g/>. Prof. Morrow's comments begin at timestamp 46:45, wherein he asserts that the heroic can include the everyday, the mundane and the pedestrian. Both Morrow and his co-panelist, Prof. Sabine Knierbein, are in agreement, however, that Arendt's diagnosis about the retreat of citizens into their private lives at the expense of pluralistic, democratic engagement is sound. Prof. Knierbein posits the importance of establishing the "relationship between [today's] urban crisis and the crisis of democracy." She continues: "This atomization [of the individual] and the decay of the urban commons play a key role [in these crises]."

²²⁷ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins*, 473. In *Life of the Mind / Willing*, p. 18, she quotes Augustine slightly differently: "[*Initium*] ut esset, creatus est homo."

²²⁸ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins*, 479.

critical here is that within an early Christian worldview, as espoused by Saints Paul and Augustine, there is a necessary overturning of the existing philosophical paradigm of the Ancient Greeks. Nowhere is this more evident than in the changing time conception that followed in the wake of Christianity's adoption by large portions of the Mediterranean world. Per Arendt, Christianity replaced the cyclical worldview of the Ancient Greeks with a new, rectilinear time concept, one which stressed a particular deterministic, providential and apocalyptic movement to history.²²⁹ The ancient Greeks, and indeed all of the ancients, "identified temporality with the circular movements of the heavenly bodies and with the no less cyclical nature of life on earth: the ever-repeated change of day and night, summer and winter, the constant renewal of animal species through birth and death."²³⁰ This paradigm for the natural world extended equally into the "realm of human affairs," for "even opinions (*doxai*) 'as they occur among men, revolve not only once or a few times but infinitely often.'"²³¹ If this worldview of the Ancients had lasted for centuries, a newly formed Christian teleology changed everything. Christ's resurrection became in this way the first novel event in all of human history. Arendt writes, "The story that begins with Adam's expulsion from Paradise and ends with Christ's death and resurrection is a story of

²²⁹ On the rectilinear time concept of the early Christians, see Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 18-19; Hannah Arendt, *Life of the Mind / Willing*, 47-9; Hannah Arendt, *Life of the Mind / Thinking*, 202-3. Consider also R.G. Collingwood's assertion that Christian historiography, as distinct from secular or ancient historiography is "by necessity universal, providential, apocalyptic, and periodized." R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), 49.

²³⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Life of the Mind / Willing*, 16. See again my paper: Matthew Long, "Free Will, Determinism, and Human Agency in Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace*," (unpublished paper, Clemson University, May 3, 2019), 4-15, accessed March 20, 2021, https://www.academia.edu/45586044/Free_Will_Determinism_and_Human_Agency_in_Leo_Tolstoy_War_and_Peace/. Long and Sedley: "Aristotelian doctrine ... allowed that the circular movement of the heavens could be temporally infinite. In Stoicism the infinite extension of time is a function of the everlasting cosmic cycles." A.A. Long and D.N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers*, 307.

²³¹ Hannah Arendt, *Life of the Mind / Willing*, 16-7. Arendt quotes here from Aristotle's treatise *Meteorologica*.

unique, unrepeatable events. 'Once Christ died for our sins; and rising from the dead, He dieth no more.' [...] it has a definite beginning, a turning-point – the year One of our calendar – and a definite end."²³²

Her ideas on revolution are thus hugely informed by this idea of invention, creation, and novelty. Quite simply, revolution requires newness. Without it, indeed without a prevailing paradigm wherein modern man could actually conceive of and create something novel in an indeterminate future, there can be no revolution in its traditional, political sense. But it goes even further than this for Arendt. The very ideals of freedom, and freedom's expression, are themselves fundamental to *all* political life. All political activity rests upon this primal, human concern. She asserts: "Freedom ... is not only one among the many problems and phenomena of the political realm ... freedom ... is actually the reason that men live together in political organization at all. Without it, political life would be meaningless. The *raison d'être* of politics is freedom, and its field of experience is action."²³³ We see therefore, that even as humans evolved into modern beings with an innate sense of freedom of the will – that which was postulated by Augustine and which defines human agency within a rectilinear time concept and an indeterminate future, i.e. that "experience of man's faculty to begin something new," – so, too does a sense of progress, of the ability to change that indeterminate future *for the better* emerge.²³⁴ These changing notions of personal liberty, defined in late Antiquity, can thus be seen as directly tied to the liberal revolutionary traditions that took active form during the

²³² Hannah Arendt, *Life of the Mind / Willing*, 18. Arendt quotes from Paul's Epistle to the Romans: "Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more." Romans 6:8-9 (New King James Version).

²³³ Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom?," 146.

²³⁴ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, 24. It must be noted that "for the better" is clearly an exercise of normative subjectivity.

eighteenth century. In this way, the American and French Revolutions are foundational events. Referring to these transformative events, Arendt writes: “The modern concept of revolution, inextricably bound up with the notion that the course of history suddenly begins anew, that an entirely new story, a story never known or told before, is about to unfold, was unknown prior to the two great revolutions at the end of the eighteenth century.”²³⁵ These both then set the stage and formed the template for myriad revolutions to follow, 1848 inclusive. If Arendt’s insightful analysis is helpful for understanding revolution’s connection to natality, particularly with its roots in Antiquity, it becomes equally important to examine early Enlightenment thought and *its* impact on freedom. Thus, we turn to Spinoza and his thinking on democracy.

Spinoza: An Early Enlightenment Framework for Modernity

Baruch (Benedict) Spinoza's philosophy is fundamental to the early Enlightenment. Based upon rationality, egalitarianism, tolerance and radical democracy, it proved foundational to the emergence of liberal revolution and democratic self-government in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Born in Holland in 1623 to Portuguese Jews, he was steeped in the Judaic tradition and may have even been groomed to become a Rabbi; this was before he abruptly faced excommunication by writ of *herem* in 1656 from his Sephardic community. By most accounts, this was the harshest and most forceful such expulsion that the Amsterdam community of Jews had ever pronounced upon one of its members. There would be no going back to Judaism for Spinoza after this (if indeed, he had any inclination to do so). Intellectually, he was influenced heavily by Greek Stoicism and Descartes' mathematics and dualism. He would

²³⁵ Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, 19.

prove his own merit as among the most impressive and influential philosophers of early modernity. His seminal works were all published either posthumously or anonymously. Even in seventeenth century Amsterdam, among the most cosmopolitan, liberal, and progressive cities in the world at that time, Spinoza's skeptical views on the nature of God, particularly that of the monotheistic God of the Judeo-Christian tradition, was incredibly controversial. Nadler posits that his strongest views against the core tenets of Judaism came into circulation after his death – for example, his forceful denial of “the immortality of the soul,” and rejection of “the notion of a transcendent, providential God,” or in his following claim that the Law “was neither literally given by God nor any longer binding on Jews.” It is likely that formative versions of these ideas expressed to Rabbis at Synagogue may have been the cause of his excommunication as a young man. Still, in spite of this, his scholarship found great purchase in the years after his death, proving durable enough, and of high enough philosophical import, to heavily influence generations of thinkers (most notably Schopenhauer and Hegel) who would follow in his wake.²³⁶

Causation and free will were of deep interest to Spinoza. Quite simply, he believed in the fundament of an interconnected and deterministic universe. If Descartes famously posited a dualistic notion of consciousness for the individual within a materialistic universe, Spinoza guided this idea to its next logical conclusion; in the process he broke the Cartesian paradigm of subjective consciousness. *Cogito ergo sum*, said Descartes in his *Discourse on the Method*. Spinoza saw instead in the human mind something that is just as determined by the laws of

²³⁶ Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Touchstone, 1972), 569-80. Steven Nadler, “Baruch Spinoza,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2020 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed March 22, 2021, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/spinoza/>. For additional biographical details, see also Melvyn Bragg, host, “Spinoza,” *In Our Time* (podcast), BBC Radio 4, accessed March 23, 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0079ps2/>.

physics as a stone's fall toward Earth, or the ripples produced as the stone strikes a pond's surface. On this determinism of the mind, he writes in Postulate 48 of Part II of *The Ethics*: "The Mind is a certain and determinate mode of thinking, and so cannot be a free cause of its own actions, *or* cannot have absolute faculty of willing and not willing. Rather, it must be determined to willing this or that by a cause which is also determined by another, and this cause again by another, etc. [and so to infinity]." ²³⁷ In this model, *everything* in the universe is of one substance, and everything therefore interdependent upon everything else. The human mind and its consciousness are also part of this universal community of existence, and just as causally determined as anything else. This topic of human consciousness had proved elusive for Spinoza's predecessors. But for Spinoza, it was quite simple: the mind, like anything else, was itself guided by the physical principles which governed the laws of Nature. This was something of a radical departure from the views of most of his contemporaries. ²³⁸

Spinoza's theology thus comes to center stage. He continually attached the Natural world and everything in it to that which he called "God, or Nature," a term which would be employed in the following century within decidedly revolutionary pursuits. ²³⁹ God, or Nature, plays for Spinoza a fundamental role. If each thing in existence is connected to each other, and all things exist therefore in relation to one another, each striving in perseverance and for its own

²³⁷ *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, Volume 1, ed. and trans. Edwin Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 483.

²³⁸ Arendt reminds us that Hobbes held similar views. *Life of the Mind / Willing*, 23-4.

²³⁹ One sees the influence of Spinoza in Jefferson's *Declaration of Independence* when he asserts the divinely given rights of man; that "the Laws of Nature and Nature's God" require "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." God and the Natural order of the universe are here, as for Spinoza, one and the same. Inasmuch as the limited knowledge of mankind can fathom the depths of the universe, one can derive political rights from existence within it. "America's Founding Documents," The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, accessed March 22, 2021, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript/>.

fulfillment of potentiality, then the entirety of all existence is a manifestation of God.²⁴⁰ More than this, the aggregate of striving among all things in the universe is the *very essence of God*. Postulate 6 of Part III of his *Ethics* clearly states Spinoza's position: "Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being. ... For singular things are modes by which God's attributes are expressed in certain and determinate ways, i.e. things that express, in a certain and determinate way, God's power, by which God is and acts."²⁴¹ All creation is thus inextricably bound and determined in existence through the express will of God.²⁴² So that while it is correct to assert that Spinoza was no theist in a traditional sense, he was neither an atheist. If he fully rejected a separate, omnipotent and monotheistic deity in the form of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, he embraced instead a concept that God is everywhere, and in all things.²⁴³ On this, the will of God as expressed through the determined interconnectedness of all things, Spinoza writes in Part II of *Ethics*:

For example, a circle existing in nature and the idea of the existing circle, which is also in God, are one and the same thing, which is explained through different attributes. Therefore, whether we conceive nature under the attribute of

²⁴⁰ This concept of potentiality vs. actuality goes back to at least Aristotle. Summarizes Arendt, "This notion [of potentiality] was derived from the mode of being peculiar to the nature of living things, where everything that appears grows out of something that contains the finished product potentially, as the oak exists potentially in the acorn[.]" Hannah Arendt, *Life of the Mind / Willing*, 16. It is hard to know August Bondi's familiarity with Aristotle on this point, but his use of the acorn and the oak tree as metaphor was an important symbol he employed for revolution and the creation of novelty. See August Bondi, *Autobiography*, 12.

²⁴¹ *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, Vol. 1, 498-9. Emphasis in the original.

²⁴² One clearly sees here the connections between Spinoza and the Stoics, particularly in the conception of a harmonious and balanced cosmos (Greek *kosmos*) that is divine in each aspect, each "ordered and animate" thing striving in existence. Luc Ferry describes: "The material world, the entire universe, fundamentally resembles a gigantic animal, of which each element – each organ – is conceived and adapted to the harmonious functioning of the whole. Each part, each member of this immense body, is perfectly in place and functions impeccably[.]" Luc Ferry, *A Brief History of Thought: A Philosophical Guide to Living*, trans. Theo Cuffe (New York: Harper Perennial, 2011), 20.

²⁴³ Some scholars position Spinoza as arriving at the conclusions of Eastern philosophies and religions through employing the precepts of Western rationalism. See, for example, Noah Forslund, "Spinoza the Hindu: Advaita Interpretations of *The Ethics*," *Dianoia* V (Spring 2018): 6-17, accessed March 30, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.6017/dupjbc.v0iV.10461/>.

Extension, or under the attribute of Thought, or under any other attribute, we shall find one and the same order, or one and the same connection of causes, i.e., that the same things follow one another.²⁴⁴

Spinoza traces the causal connection between *all* natural phenomena within the universe, including among them the thoughts, decisions and judgements of man. Humans, in the entirety of their being, are subject to these same phenomenological constraints as everything else in a materialistic universe, are themselves the expression of a primordial urge to vitality underwritten by their natural design. Spinoza asks, why should it be otherwise? Many thinkers who preceded Spinoza asserted a dichotomy between the laws of Nature and the world of man. Spinoza rejects this in the Preface to Part III of *Ethics*, wherein he asserts that the domain man is not separate from the natural world surrounding him:

Most of those who have written about the Affects, and men's way of living, seem to treat, not of natural things, which follow the common laws of nature, but of things that are outside nature. Indeed they seem to conceive man in nature as a dominion within a dominion. For they believe that man disturbs, rather than follows, the order of nature, that he has absolute power over his actions, and that he is determined only by himself.²⁴⁵

The universe is, not, as in Kant, separated into natural laws governing the physical realm and spiritual laws guiding the soul. Kant referred to this dichotomy as the laws of the natural, empirical world versus those of the "supersensible" world, all that which occurs outside of nature, experience and the senses, and which, by definition, contains the human soul. "Of far more importance ... is the consideration that certain of our cognitions rise completely above the sphere of possible experience [...] And just in this transcendental or supersensible sphere, where

²⁴⁴ *Collected Works of Spinoza*, Vol. 1, 451.

²⁴⁵ *Collected Works of Spinoza*, Vol. 1, 491.

experience affords us neither instruction nor guidance, lie the investigations of *Reason*.²⁴⁶ The philosophy of theists resides in a similar intellectual space. For them, humans are made in the image of God and formed therefore separate from, and in dominion over the rest of creation.²⁴⁷ Further, Christian doctrine since at least Augustine held firmly to the notion of freedom of the will for the individual. Made in the image of God, and thus endowed with certain creative liberties – that is, the ability to think, choose and create, to bring novel thought and action into the world – humans are equally subject to a simple choice: that of either acceptance or rejection of God’s offer of salvation through Christ’s death and resurrection incarnate. Built into this Augustinian framework is a presupposition of human freedom. But not all Christian theologians would embrace this view. Luther famously stated, “Here I stand, *I can do no other*.” This is fitting shorthand for his entire philosophy on freedom. Luther terms this as a “bound choice,” and he expanded on the concept in his debate with Erasmus on the topic: “For if we believe it is true that God foreknows and foreordains everything and that he can be neither deceived nor hindered in his foreknowledge and foreordination, and then if we believe that nothing happens unless he wills it – which even reason is forced to concede – then reason itself likewise testifies that there is no free will, whether in man, angel, or any creature.”²⁴⁸ Hume and Kant would

²⁴⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J.M.D. Meiklejohn (New York: P.F. Collier and Son, 1901), 47, Google Books. Emphasis in the original. See also Garrath Williams, "Kant's Account of Reason," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2018 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed April 9, 2021, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/kant-reason/>.

²⁴⁷ Genesis 1:26-8 (New King James Version): “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over ... all the earth ... So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and said unto them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

²⁴⁸ Clarence H. Miller, ed. *Erasmus and Luther: The Battle over Free Will*, trans. Clarence H. Miller and Peter Macardle (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2012), 125.

similarly embrace this Lutheran precept.²⁴⁹ But in Spinoza's day, Luther's surety on determinism was a rare sentiment. Even secular thinkers were prone to belief in freedom of the will through consciousness, based upon, in Arendt's words, "a mere illusion, a phantasm of consciousness, a kind of delusion inherent in consciousness' very structure."²⁵⁰ Spinoza rejects this dichotomy of mind and nature completely: there is no dominion of man that is separate from nature, in spite of common perception to the contrary; man's thoughts and decisions are as causally determined as anything else in nature. Again, in Part III of *Ethics*: "So experience itself, no less clearly than reason, teaches that men believe themselves free because they are conscious of their own actions, and ignorant of the causes by which they are determined, that the decision of the Mind are nothing but the appetites themselves, which therefore vary as the disposition of the body varies."²⁵¹ The ultimate conclusion for Spinoza: "*In the Mind there is no absolute, or free, will, but the Mind is determined to will this or that by a cause that is also determined by another, and this again by another, and so to infinity.*"²⁵²

True freedom for Spinoza is therefore not based upon free will as such, but rather upon an individual's use of rational thought toward self-knowledge and understanding, and toward mastery of his or her passions, those what Spinoza terms "affects." One is free inasmuch as one lives his or her life in accordance with the natural laws surrounding one's being, and to the extent that one is able to obtain his or her potential. This again harkens back to Aristotle's *potentia*. Freedom is tapping into one's inner logic to find self-actualization within the natural world, to become all that one might be able to become. The mind is determined for Spinoza, but

²⁴⁹ See, for example, Arthur Schopenhauer, *Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will*, ed. Günter Zöller, trans. Eric F.J. Payne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 63-4.

²⁵⁰ Hannah Arendt, *Life of the Mind / Willing*, 23.

²⁵¹ *Collected Works of Spinoza*, Vol. 1, 496-7. See also Hannah Arendt, *Life of the Mind / Willing*, 23-4.

²⁵² *Collected Works of Spinoza*, Vol. 1, 483. Emphasis in the original.

humans still have a choice: they may choose those thoughts and actions which either enhance their striving in perseverance, or choose those which are deleterious to it. Choosing the former is for Spinoza the essence of freedom. One notices here a certain symmetry to the Stoicism of Antiquity, especially from that of Marcus Aurelius and his emphasis on seeking virtue through mastery of the self and one's impulses. One can also see echoes of Spinozism in the philosophies of both Schopenhauer and Hegel. Spinoza would come to exert great influence on both nineteenth century philosophers with his thoughts on determinism, freedom and human consciousness.

Schopenhauer: Freedom, Agency, and the Will to Life

By the nineteenth century, human agency and the concept of will had been evolving as a philosophical construct for centuries. Arendt emphasizes this aspect of modernity – a sense of the human will – and its connections to an equally modern construct, a notion of “*Progress* as the ruling force of human history,” which had similarly developed and become intellectually endemic during this era. Arendt positions these two concepts together to contrast modernity with previous historical eras. The upshot is that, unlike previous humans, the Moderns placed incredible import onto the future.²⁵³ Gone were the repetitive cycles of existences *ad infinitum* of the Ancient Greeks, as was gone the static social condition of humans throughout the Middle Ages. Both were replaced by a “notion of the faculty of the Will, our mental organ for a future

²⁵³ See Hannah Arendt, *Life of the Mind / Willing*, 19-23. Hayden White similarly positions progress and optimism as hallmarks of historical imagination of the nineteenth century – and both as holdovers from an Enlightenment-based, positivist theoretical framework from the preceding century. See Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1973), 45-8.

that in principle is indeterminable and therefore a possible harbinger of novelty.”²⁵⁴ An indeterminate future, and the chance to enact progress, to improve social and political conditions, thus gave humans by the nineteenth century a greater sense of agency in their quotidian lives, and similarly created social and political conditions which allowed people to think seriously about utopias, reform, and even altogether new forms of government. It is significant that a human sense of libertarian free will to create something new combined with a more deterministic, providential, or even fatalistic meta-historical outlook, that of Progress as the driver of human history. Yet despite the seeming contradictions, they combined to great effect. Not surprisingly, most all the great thinkers of this period, Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche inclusive, all focused their attention onto this modern concept of will within their philosophies. But few dealt as exhaustively with it as did Arthur Schopenhauer, especially in his detailed exploration of it in *Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will*.²⁵⁵

Central to Schopenhauer’s metaphysics is the concept of what he terms *Wille zum Leben*, or *will to life*. Human freedom, as such, cannot be understood as separate from Schopenhauer’s concept of will, so fundamental is it to his entire philosophy. For Schopenhauer, all existence in the universe is dependent upon this will to life, an instinctual and striving urge toward existence, or a “mindless, aimless, non-rational impulse at the foundation of our instinctual drives, and at the foundational being of everything.”²⁵⁶ Some of his contemporaries and predecessors had considered the will as such within their philosophical and

²⁵⁴ Hannah Arendt, *Life of the Mind / Willing*, 18.

²⁵⁵ Arthur Schopenhauer, *Prize Essay on the Freedom of the Will*, ed. Günter Zöller, trans. Eric F.J. Payne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

²⁵⁶ Robert Wicks, “Arthur Schopenhauer,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2019 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, accessed March 20, 2021, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2019/entries/schopenhauer/>.

phenomenological systems, but Schopenhauer is distinct among Continental philosophers of his era in his positioning of will as being completely independent of a subject's rationality or intellect. Within this framework, even consciousness is not necessary for the expression of will. More fundamental still is that the will to existence is the quintessence of a thing's being: the expression of will is that which fundamentally makes all things what they are. Schopenhauer termed this the "thing-in-itself," that which captures the noumenal essence of being for all things outside of the subjective observations of others.²⁵⁷ Will to life makes us, for example, human beings; it is equally what comprises the essence of deer, or maple trees, or even minerals, that which all things are, each in their own particular ways of being. All things are manifestations of this will to existence, and all things are restlessly striving in a perpetual state of discontent.²⁵⁸ This striving is for Schopenhauer infinite and occurs outside of consciousness. "[T]he world as it is in itself," summarizes Wicks, "is an endless striving and blind impulse with no end in view, devoid of knowledge, lawless, absolutely free, entirely self-determining and almighty."²⁵⁹ Everything in the universe operates under these conditions.²⁶⁰ Schopenhauer thus rejected any concept of progress or meaning within history's movement, a position which set him decidedly at odds with his nineteenth century coevals, the German Idealists, among them Fichte, Schelling, and Schlegel. Perhaps most famously, Schopenhauer considered Hegel a

²⁵⁷ Schopenhauer takes this thought directly from Kant. See Melvyn Bragg, host, "Schopenhauer," In Our Time (podcast), BBC4, October 29, 2009, accessed April 15, 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b00nfrz/>.

²⁵⁸ Schopenhauer clearly is borrowing from Spinoza on this point, but with his own decidedly pessimistic outlook. Per Spinoza, all things of the natural world are striving (*conatus*) toward their perseverance in being. See, for example, Postulate 6, Part III of *Ethics*. This striving toward perseverance of Spinoza's has a certain symmetry to Schopenhauer's *Wille zum Leben*.

²⁵⁹ Robert Wicks, "Schopenhauer."

²⁶⁰ See Stephen West, host, "Episode 99 – Schopenhauer, part 2 – Ethics," Philosophize This! [podcast], March 29, 2017, accessed March 21, 2021, <https://www.philosophizethis.org/podcast/episode-99-schopenhauer-pt-2-ethics/>.

charlatan, and timed his lectures at the University of Berlin to occur just as Hegel's own lectures were starting.²⁶¹

To understand Schopenhauer on freedom, then, necessitates the foundation that all things in the universe are interconnected, and all are striving toward their own goals and purposes within existence. This is for Schopenhauer most apparent among certain living beings – animals and humans, namely – in which Schopenhauer takes special interest in his discursive analysis of freedom, but which he applies equally to all things in existence.²⁶² Animals and humans are the obvious point of departure for Schopenhauer in his discussion on will because of their easily observable motivations and goal-oriented behaviors. Plants and lower lifeforms, let alone all other unconscious things in the universe, equally have their own urge toward existence, but many are inert, or otherwise non-responsive to motivation outside of stimuli. Consciousness is therefore paramount as a distinctive precursor for motivational behavior, and he connects this directly to will. He writes:

It is well known that the basis of animal life is a plant life that as such takes place only on *stimuli*. But all movement performed by an animal *as an animal*, and hence depending on what physiology calls *animal functions*, occur in consequence of a known object, and hence *on motives*. Accordingly, an *animal* is any body whose external movements and changes, peculiar and appropriate to its nature, always ensue *on motives*, i.e., on certain *representations* that are present to its here already presupposed consciousness. However infinite gradations there may be of the capacity for representations and thus for consciousness in the series of animals, there is nevertheless in every animal enough of it for the motives to present itself to it and cause it to move. Here the inner moving force [the Will] whose particular manifestation is called forth by the motive proclaims itself to the now-existing self-consciousness as that which we denote by the word *will*.²⁶³

²⁶¹ See again, Melvyn Bragg, host, "Schopenhauer." Hegel still drew remarkable crowds to his lecture; Schopenhauer wouldn't remain in the academy long thereafter, but his thinking would be nearly as important as Hegel's in the longer term.

²⁶² Arthur Schopenhauer, *Prize Essay*, 3-4.

²⁶³ Arthur Schopenhauer, *Prize Essay*, 28.

Early Enlightenment thought emphasized the essence of man as that of a rational, thinking being, and set man apart from the rest of nature, and particularly, as we have seen, as separate from animals. Schopenhauer sought to undermine this precept. All things in being in the universe are of the same, substance, all are part of the same interconnected web of existence. Existence may in itself have no greater meaning for Schopenhauer, but yet we humans are nevertheless part of a harmonious whole. This is not to suggest that life is free from death and suffering; on the contrary, these things are foundational manifest in living. Yet to harm or destroy another living being, to interfere with its expression of its own will, is in fact to harm or destroy part of oneself. Schopenhauer therefore wished to abolish hierarchies of all kinds – hierarchies of some humans over other humans, of humans over animals, or indeed of humans over the natural world generally. The similarities and influence of Buddhist and Indian philosophy are clear. Also similar is Schopenhauer’s presentation of a certain form of self-denial for one’s own aspirations and appetites within view of this larger framework of the interconnectedness of being. Indeed, Schopenhauer’s entire system of ethics arises from the simple practice of compassion. Famously, he asserted that compassion for other beings is the basis for all morality. On the surface, this seems hardly the stuff of transformative, world-changing, revolutionary rhetoric. Yet when one digs deeper, there is yet something of freedom to be found in his philosophy. Though it is seldom attributed to Schopenhauer, one sees in this a guiding principle for, among other things, the Radical Enlightenment.²⁶⁴

²⁶⁴ See Arthur Schopenhauer, *The Basis of Morality*, Second Edition, trans. Arthur Brodrick Bullock (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2005), 109-17. Schopenhauer was, not surprisingly, also an early advocate of animal rights.

Erich Fromm: Freedom, Enlightenment, and the Seeds of Authoritarianism

For Erich Fromm, psychoanalyst and social philosopher of the Frankfurt School and disciple of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud, the history of the western world is almost singularly focused on the pursuit of freedom. The opening paragraph of his classic text, *Escape from Freedom*, begins on this exact thought:

Modern European and American history is centered around the effort to gain freedom from the political, economic, and spiritual shackles that have bound men. The battles for freedom were fought by the oppressed, those who wanted new liberties, against those who had privileges to defend. While a class was fighting for its own liberation from domination, it believed itself to be fighting for human freedom as such and thus was able to appeal to an ideal, to the longing for freedom rooted in all who are oppressed.²⁶⁵

An exploration of freedom and its pursuit in the western tradition thus casts a long shadow across human history, looking back as it does to the Ancients who first grappled with its ideals, and remaining intellectually salient through to the turn of the twenty-first century and beyond. But more important to Fromm than the longevity of freedom as rhetoric, is that the course of western history, especially within the last 400 years since the Renaissance, has created distinctly modern people. Rebellious against the powers of domination and cutting themselves free from the bonds that had confined them for millennia, the Moderns discovered a new sort of individualism and self-empowerment. They asserted their individuality in what Fromm describes as an epochal struggle for freedom: “Despite many reverses, freedom has won battles. Many died in those battles in the conviction that to die in the struggle against oppression was better than to live without freedom. Such a death was the utmost assertion of their individuality.”²⁶⁶ The idea of sacrificing oneself for an higher ideal is not fundamentally new; but that an

²⁶⁵ Erich H. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1969), 1.

²⁶⁶ Erich H. Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, 1.

individual could sacrifice his or her life in order to create something novel – to die for a *revolutionary ideal*, is itself something novel.²⁶⁷ Even less than revolutionary self-abnegation, to simply take up arms and fight for one's freedom becomes in this way a trope of modernity, an animating, creative force propelling political movements at least from the seventeenth century onward. Revolution to revolution, the struggle for freedom is the stuff of history.

Fromm describes this process at immense scale:

One tie after another was severed. Man had overthrown the domination of nature and made himself her master; he had overthrown the domination of the Church and the domination of the absolutist state. The *abolition of the external domination* seemed to be not only a necessary but also a sufficient condition to attain the cherished goal: freedom of the individual.²⁶⁸

This process of creating radical individuality, unleashed by the Enlightenment, might not necessarily recoil and neatly end itself upon the securing of self-determination and the Rights of Man for all citizens. Radical individuality, to Fromm, cuts both ways. He posits that these forces, left unchecked, end instead at the complete individuation and atomization of all humans, that state which Arendt was lamenting in the post-war years. He attributes this development to the rise of Protestantism, especially Lutheranism and Calvinism, and to an expanding capitalism. But more than a socio-political, religious, and economic phenomenon, this modern individuation is also necessarily tied to the modern inner landscape of humans, making it a distinctly psychological and personal affair. Living as modern humans means freedom from the vagaries

²⁶⁷ Christ's salvific death on the cross for was itself a novel, revolutionary and universal moment in human history. The death and resurrection become a symbol for the creation of a new covenant between God and his people, a model for self-sacrifice to a higher ideal, and as Arendt posits, to the Christian tradition of free will, novelty, and eternal life as formulated by the Apostle Paul. Per Arendt, "The story that begins with Adam's expulsion from Paradise and ends in Christ's death and resurrection is a story of unique, unrepeatable events [as distinct from the cyclical nature of Greek philosophy]." See Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind / Willing*, 18, 63-9.

²⁶⁸ Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, 2. Emphasis in the original.

and constraints of the natural world, freedom from religious dogma, and freedom from other coercive and authoritarian measures. But this condition has also increasingly created humans who are atomized consumers in a system that stresses individual choice. Perversely, modernity has wrought the most inward gazing, disconnected and alienated humans in all history.

Through struggle and revolution, the moderns ushered in an age of economic liberalism, political democracy, and religious autonomy, wherein they might have created lives of their own making. Given this unprecedented *positive* freedom, individual humans, on balance, choose instead to adopt hierarchical roles established external to them – roles of servant, worker, consumer, user – eschewing in this process the opportunity to build intrinsic value, self-determined paths, and authentic relationships with one another. Simply put, given this newfound freedom, the Moderns rejected it for the safety of subservience and conformity. The common experience of individuals in a late capitalistic system is for Fromm thus defined by alienation, a lack of authenticity, and little intrinsic meaning in a system that provides few absolute rules for living. Fromm observes that this condition is largely stable during prosperous times; but when it appears during times of economic insecurity, the end result is a society of humans unmoored and susceptible to authoritarianism and destructiveness. *Escape from Freedom* was first published in 1941. Drawing upon the very recent history of the rise of fascism in Europe, Fromm observes that, “millions ... were as eager to surrender their freedom as their fathers were to fight for it; that instead of wanting freedom, they sought for ways of escape from it; that other millions were indifferent and did not believe the defense of freedom to be worth fighting and dying for.”²⁶⁹ Given the chance to break free permanently from their bonds,

²⁶⁹ Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, 29.

modern humans – for Fromm, specifically his fellow Germans – instead sought out and assumed hierarchical roles in an illiberal, National Socialist death cult.

Fromm ultimately escaped the Nazis and took a professorship at Columbia. Though manifest in different ways, he nevertheless recognized some of the same societal impulses in his new home, the United States, which he had observed so clearly in 1930s Europe. Perhaps because of this, his ideas, along with those of his contemporaries in the newly relocated Frankfurt School, continued to spread and gain influence within the American academy. In the intervening years, his has been well-trod intellectual terrain. Many thinkers of the twentieth century have touched upon the tragic human urge to reject, or simply ignore, the freedom that is presented to them, to embrace rather a life of alienation, consumerism and atomization. James Baldwin was a contemporary of Fromm's, but one wonders how influential the latter's writing may have been to the former. In his collection of essays, "Nobody Knows My Name," Baldwin plainly and neatly summarizes these ideas on what he might dub a modern, American, urge toward unfreedom:

The myth, the illusion, that this a free country ... is disastrous. Let me point out to you that freedom is not something that anybody can be given; freedom is something people take and people are as free as they want to be. One hasn't got to have an enormous military machine in order to be unfree when it's simpler to be asleep, when it's simpler to be apathetic, when it's simpler, in fact, not to want to be free, to think that something else is more important.

Baldwin continues:

[W]e have some idea about reality which is not quite true. Without having anything whatever against Cadillacs, refrigerators, or all the trappings of American life, I yet suspect that there is something much more important and much more real that produces the Cadillac, refrigerator, atom bomb, and what

produces it, after all, is something which we don't seem to want to look at, and that is the person.²⁷⁰

Baldwin's critique of modern, late capitalistic American society seems drawn from the same cloth as Fromm's own assertions on capitalism, particularly vis-à-vis its dehumanizing aspects.

Consider Fromm:

In capitalism economic activity, success, material gains, become ends in themselves. It becomes man's fate to contribute to the growth of the economic system, to amass capital, not for purposes of his own happiness or salvation, but as an end in itself. Man became a cog in the vast economic machine – an important one if he had much capital, an insignificant one if he had none – but always a cog to serve purposes outside of himself.²⁷¹

In his next move, Fromm connects the subservience of human beings under capital to the subservience of human beings to the gods of Luther and Calvin:

Thus Luther and Calvin psychologically prepared man for the role which he had to assume in modern society: of feeling his own self to be insignificant and of being ready to subordinate his life exclusively for purposes which were not his own. Once man was ready to become nothing but the means for the Glory of a God who represented neither justice nor love, he was sufficiently prepared to accept the role of the economic machine – and eventually a "Führer."²⁷²

Freedom leads, perversely enough, back to tranny, authoritarianism, and finally, if conditions allow, to totalitarianism. The success of the rise of the National Socialists in 1930s Germany had much to do with the acquiescence of the German people to authority. They need not have all been party members for this to have worked. Instead, enough people needed only to have rejected the positive freedom that they might have employed otherwise to form their own

²⁷⁰ James Baldwin, "Nobody Knows My Name," in *Collected Essays*, ed. Toni Morrison (New York: Library of America, 1998), 229-30. Baldwin clarifies that he intends these thoughts on freedom "not ... so much in a political sense ... as in a personal sense." Yet the ramifications for both the political and personal are stark.

²⁷¹ Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, 110.

²⁷² Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom*, 111. The argument seems entirely redolent of the *Sonderweg* thesis.

values and judgements, to have rejected the chance to form their own intrinsic meaning about life and their relationships to each other. A shocking number were therefore prepared to embrace political domination from without and to allow themselves to become instrumentalized in the pursuit of the national interest. Summarizes Deslandes, “[O]bedience to conventions, mimetism and loss of autonomy are instruments of submission which prevent us from constructing our own ethical judgements ... and nurture our sadistic and masochistic tendencies.”²⁷³ Freedom, born of the Enlightenment, need not have moved inexorably toward authoritarianism, but it did in 1930s Germany, and, as Fromm warns, it could do so again.

A slight detour into nineteenth century thought may be useful here. If hindsight from very recent events had led Fromm and his contemporaries to posit that modern, egalitarian Enlightenment thought was at least partly responsible for the rise of authoritarianism in twentieth century Europe, some recognized beforehand a distinct possibility that the mid-nineteenth century German milieu was fertile ground for the National Socialism that was later to come. Indeed, Fromm’s twentieth century assertions had echoes in that which was previously promulgated in the preceding century by Heinrich Heine. It may appear to a current reader an act of reductivism to suggest that someone might have actually foreseen the terrible events arising in Europe that precipitated two world wars and the *Shoah*. Heine stands apart, however, for his prescience, for his prophecy even, on this singular point. Having spent many years of exile

²⁷³ Ghislain Deslandes, “*Escape from Freedom: Revisiting Erich Fromm in the light of contemporary authoritarianism*,” *Organization Studies* 39, no. 11 (November 2018): 1649-53, accessed March 5, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840618787166/>. See also Stephen West, host, “Episode 151: The Frankfurt School: Erich Fromm on Freedom,” *Philosophize This!* (podcast), accessed March 5, 2021, <https://www.philosophizethis.org/podcast/episode-150-the-frankfurt-school-erich-fromm-on-love-mx2z9/>. Camus have thought similarly when he wrote, “During the last century, man cast off the fetters of religion. Hardly was he free, however, when he created new and utterly intolerable chains.” Albert Camus, *The Rebel: An Essay on Man in Revolt*, trans. Anthony Bower (New York: Vintage International), 279.

in France and his work heavily censored by the Prussian regime, Heine lamented in the wake of the 1848 revolutions that the German middle and working classes were simply untuned to the political rights and aspirations that were theirs for the taking, that, as in Alexis de Tocqueville's prediction, "the peasants, freed from their feudal overlords and given the vote, would become the most conservative of all classes."²⁷⁴ Like much of his political poetry, he wrote in obliquely coded verse in 1849, about the quiet death of liberal revolution in Germany:

Gelegt hat sich der starke Wind,
Und wieder stille wird's daheime;
Germania, das große Kind,
Erfreut sich wieder seiner
Weihnachtsbäume.

Wir treiben jetzt Familienglück –
Was höher lockt, das ist vom Übel –
Die Friedensschwalbe kehrt zurück,
Die einst genistet in des Hauses Giebel.²⁷⁵

If Heine's verse was circumspect, his prose was direct, powerful and clear. As early as December 1834, almost a century before the National Socialists came to power, he wrote a warning to his French colleagues. It is worth quoting in the original German at length:

Das Christentum ... hat jene brutale germanische Kampflust einigermaßen besänftigt, konnte sie jedoch nicht zerstören, und wenn einst der zähmende Talisman, das Kreuz, zerbricht, dann rasselt wieder empor die Wildheit der alten Kämpfer, die unsinnige Berserkerwut, wovon die nordischen Dichter so viel singen und sagen. Jener Talisman ist morsch, und kommen wird der Tag, wo er kläglich zusammenbricht; die alten steinernen Götter erheben sich dann aus dem verschollenen Schutt, und reiben sich den tausendjährigen Staub aus den

²⁷⁴ Amos Elon, *The Pity of It All: A History of Jews in Germany, 1743-1933* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2002), 182.

²⁷⁵ Heinrich Heine, „16. Im Oktober 1849,“ in *Romanzero*, accessed March 20, 2021, <http://www.zeno.org/Literatur/M/Heine,+Heinrich/Gedichte/Romanzero/Zweites+Buch.+Lamentationen/Lazarus/16.+Im+Oktober+1849/>. Aaron Kramer's translation: "The winds' asleep that howled so wild; / At home it's quiet as can be; / Germania, the great big child, / Plays happily around his Christmas tree. // Domestic joy's our main concern; / Whatever tempts beyond, we label / 'Sin' – the doves of Peace return, / That used to make their nest within our gable." See Frederic Ewan, ed., *The Poetry of Heinrich Heine* (New York: Citadel Press, 1969), 252-4.

Augen, und Thor mit dem Riesenhammer springt endlich empor und zerschlägt die gotischen Dome. Wenn Ihr dann das Gepolter und Geklitze hört, hütet Euch, Ihr Nachbarskinder, Ihr Franzosen, und mischt Euch nicht in die Geschäfte, die wir zu Hause in Deutschland vollbringen. [...]

Der Gedanke geht der Tat voraus, wie der Blitz dem Donner. Der deutsche Donner ist freilich auch ein Deutscher und ist nicht sehr gelenkig und kommt etwas langsam herangerollt; aber kommen wird er, und wenn Ihr es einst krachen hört, wie es noch niemals in der Weltgeschichte gekracht hat, so wißt, der deutsche Donner hat endlich sein Ziel erreicht. Bei diesem Geräusche werden die Adler aus der Luft tot niederfallen, und die Löwen in der fernsten Wüste Afrikas werden die Schwänze einkneifen und sich in ihren königlichen Höhlen verkriechen. Es wird ein Stück aufgeführt werden in Deutschland, wogegen die Französische Revolution nur wie eine harmlose Idylle erscheinen möchte.²⁷⁶

Perhaps most startlingly was Heine's line, from his 1821 play *Almansor*. In response to the 1817 burning of anti-nationalist and reactionary books by pro-unification student groups in Wartburg, Heine penned the now incredible line: "*Dort, wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man am Ende auch Menschen,*" or "There, where they burn books, they will also in the end burn people."²⁷⁷

There is a certain deterministic fatalism to this idea, especially as expressed by some historians of modern Germany in the so-called *Sonderweg* thesis. That modern Germany was

²⁷⁶ Heinrich Heine, „Zur Geschichte der Religion und Philosophie in Deutschland,“ 1834, Projekt Gutenberg, accessed March 20, 2021, <https://www.projekt-gutenberg.org/heine/religion/religion.html/>. My translation: "To some extent, Christianity ... soothed the brutal German urge to fight; but it could not destroy it; and if the restraining talisman of the cross shatters, the clash of the old fighters' savage fury will rise again, and with it the insane berserk rage of which the Nordic poets so often sing and speak. This talisman [the cross] is rotted out, and there will come a day when it will miserably collapse; [and when this happens,] the old stone gods will rise from the lost rubble, rubbing the thousand-year-old dust from their eyes, and Thor will finally jump upward with his enormous hammer and smash the Gothic domes. Then if you, French children next door, should hear [this] rumbling and clinking, take care and do not interfere with the business of what we in Germany are accomplishing at home. [...] As thought precedes action, so does lightning precede thunder. The German thunder is unquestionably clumsy, and it unfolds itself slowly; but it will come, and once you hear the crack of it, a crack such has never happened in all of world history, then you will know that the German thunder has reached its goal. At this sound, the eagles will fall dead from the air, and the lions in the farthest deserts of Africa will bunch their tails and crawl into their royal dens. A drama will be staged in Germany, against which the French Revolution will appear like a harmless idyll."

²⁷⁷ "Book Burning," *The Holocaust Encyclopedia*, The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, accessed March 21, 2021, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/book-burning/>.

somehow intrinsically deficient in its ability to express democratic self-governance is increasingly unfashionable. One can attempt ex post facto to delineate a trajectory from Martin Luther in the sixteenth century, to the French Revolution and Enlightenment in the eighteenth, to the “failed” revolutions of the mid-nineteenth, and finally the rise of authoritarianism in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – and indeed, there is no shortage of historians and thinkers who have expressed this very sentiment.²⁷⁸ Much more in recent years has appeared in the literature in refutation of *Sonderweg*.²⁷⁹ It nevertheless remains largely mysterious how the political and social revolutionary gains that were fought for and accomplished by generations prior were so quickly discarded by following generations, in Germany and elsewhere. Fromm’s analysis notwithstanding, it continues to be a perplexing problem into our own era: what is the continuing allure of illiberalism and the interests that support it? This is perhaps the ultimate paradox of political freedom: that when humans are finally granted it, they instinctively turn to, as Fromm posits, automaton conformity and dominant and submissive roles within established hierarchies, allowing for the abandonment of their individuality and loss of positive self-expression. They allow themselves to become instrumentalized by those whom Jonathan Israel warns against, the self-styled “masters, rulers, or spiritual guides” who might “[deny or hinder] others in the enjoyment of [their] rights.”²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ Among those important works include A.J.P. Taylor, *The Course of German History: A Survey of Germany since 1815*, First American Edition (New York: Coward-McCann, 1946), 7-33; and Fritz Fischer, *Germany’s Aims in the First World War* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1967), 3-49, 608-38.

²⁷⁹ See Friedrich Meinecke, *The German Catastrophe: Reflections and Recollections*, trans. Sidney B. Fay (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950), 1-7; 102-121; and David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 1-35. For additional context see Jürgen Kocka, “German History before Hitler: The Debate about the German *Sonderweg*,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 1 (January 1988): 3-16, accessed April 12, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/260865/>.

²⁸⁰ Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind*, viii.

That we should be on watchful for this *en masse* rejection of positive freedom is perhaps self-evident.

F.A. Hayek's *The Constitution of Liberty*

We turn now, and perhaps most importantly, to F.A. Hayek's groundbreaking work *The Constitution of Liberty*. His articulation of freedom, a term which he also uses interchangeably with liberty, is at least a partial refutation of all those thinkers who preceded him on the topic. If Berlin, in his attempt to simplify the thinking around freedom, posits *two* notions of liberty – positive and negative – Hayek maintains that the model should be quite a bit simpler than this.

Freedom, at its essence is simple:

In this sense “freedom” refers solely to a relation of men to other men, and the only infringement on it is coercion by men. This means, in particular, that the range of physical possibilities from which a person can choose at a given moment has no direct relevance to freedom.²⁸¹

Hayek dismisses the multitudinous definitions of freedom which preceded him, and posits that his is the most common, and most clear version of it. Freedom in this sense is no more than an absence of coercion by others. It is also entirely negative in its construction:

It is often objected that our concept of liberty is merely negative. This is true in the sense that peace is also a negative concept or that security or quiet or the absence of any particular impediment or evil is negative. It is to this class of concepts that liberty belongs: it describes the absence of a particular obstacle—*coercion by other men*.²⁸²

Moreover, his definition serves equally as a basis for all forms of political freedom. He asserts,

The first meaning of ‘freedom’ with which we must contrast our own use of the term is one generally recognized as distinct. It is what is commonly called “political freedom,” the participation of men in the choice of their government,

²⁸¹ F.A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 60.

²⁸² F.A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 69. Emphasis added.

in the process of legislation, and in the control of administration. It derives from an application of our concept to groups of men as a whole which gives them a sort of collective liberty. But a free people in this sense is not necessarily a people of free men; nor need one share in this collective freedom to be free as an individual.²⁸³

This sense of freedom can very well be applied to large groups – entire nations, even – as it was in the liberal revolutions of the eighteenth century. Freedom from coercion in the form of taxation from the British Crown, as in the American Revolution, or freedom from infringement of King Louis XVI into the economic and political rights of the *bourgeoise* in the French Revolution. But even at these, larger, collective scales, it is still the most common notion of freedom that is being employed by Hayek.

This particular expression of freedom had a its own particular resonance in the liberal revolutions that often coincided with the nationalist aspirations of entire nations, of those groups of people, like the Germans and Italians, who shared a common language and cultural heritage, but lacked a national identity through the expression of a nation-state. Hayek comments on this “uneasy alliance” between liberal revolution and nationalist agendas during the nineteenth century:

The application of the concept of freedom to a collective rather than to individuals is clear when we speak of a people’s desire to be free from a foreign yoke and to determine its own fate. In this case we use ‘freedom’ in the sense of absence of coercion of a people as a whole. The advocates of individual freedom have generally sympathized with such aspirations for national freedom, and this led to the constant but uneasy alliance between the liberal and the national movements during the nineteenth century. But though the concept of national freedom is analogous to that of individual freedom, it is not the same; and the striving for the first has not always enhanced the second. *It has sometimes led people to prefer a despot of their own race to the liberal government of an alien majority; and it has often provided the pretext for ruthless restrictions of the individual liberty of the members of minorities.* Even though the desire for liberty as an individual and the desire for liberty of the group to which the

²⁸³ F.A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 61-2.

individual belongs may often rest on similar feelings and sentiments, it is still necessary to keep the two conceptions clearly apart.²⁸⁴

Equally important to the liberal revolutions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is an expression of freedom that has its own roots in Antiquity. Hayek, like Arendt, finds important context for his discourse on freedom in this ancient model.

[M]anumission decrees [in Ancient Greece] normally gave the former slave, first, “legal status as a protected member of the community,” second, “immunity from arbitrary arrest,” third, the right to “work at whatever he desires to do,” and, fourth, the right to “movement according to his own choice.” [...] This list contains most of what in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were regarded as the essential conditions of freedom. It omits the right to own property only because even the slave could do so. With the addition of this right, it contains all the elements required to protect an individual against coercion.

Hayek ends his chapter, “Liberty and Liberties,” on what he perceives to be so far lacking: a definition of coercion, which is increasingly important if one is to understand freedom defined as its absence.

By “coercion” we mean such control of the environment or circumstances of a person by another that, in order to avoid greater evil, he is forced to act not according to a coherent plan of his own but to serve the ends of another. Except in the sense of choosing the lesser evil in a situation forced on him by another, he is unable either to use his own intelligence or knowledge or to follow his own aims and beliefs. Coercion is evil precisely because it thus eliminates an individual as a thinking and valuing person and makes him a bare tool in the achievement of the ends of another. Free action, in which a person pursues his own aims by the means indicated by his own knowledge, must be based on data which cannot be shaped at will by another.²⁸⁵

Hayek ends with one particularly salient thought, and one that also helps us to return to the topic of revolution. Namely, coercion among individuals can only be held at bay with the threat

²⁸⁴ F.A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 63-4. Emphasis added. There is symmetry here between Hayek and Fromm on this point.

²⁸⁵ F.A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, 71.

of further coercion, and, moreover, this threat of coercion in a free society becomes necessarily a monopoly of the state. One hears echoes of Hobbes in Hayek's pronouncement: "Coercion, however, cannot be altogether avoided because the only way to prevent it is by the threat of coercion. Free society has met this problem by conferring the monopoly of coercion on the state and by attempting to limit this power of the state to instances where it is required to prevent coercion by private persons."²⁸⁶

On Freedom and Radical Abolitionism

[Christ's Atonement] should [not] allow his Followers in the most arbitrary and Tyrannical Oppression that Hell has invented on this Globe.

—Ralph Sandiford, 1729²⁸⁷

If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are men who want crops without plowing up the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.

This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be a physical one, and it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. [...] The limit of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.

—Frederick Douglass, 1857²⁸⁸

As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent of the difference, is no democracy.

—Abraham Lincoln, 1858

²⁸⁶ F.A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Freedom*, 71-2.

²⁸⁷ Ralph Sandiford, *A Brief Examination of the Practice of the Times* (Philadelphia, 1729), as quoted in David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 320.

²⁸⁸ Frederick Douglass, "West India Emancipation Speech," BlackPast.org, accessed March 20, 2021, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1857-frederick-douglass-if-there-no-struggle-there-no-progress/>.

The rise of the modern Republican Party, and with it an increasingly radical abolitionist movement, had its roots in the political aftermath of the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. Indeed, the Bleeding Kansas episode of the mid-1850s, which pitted Free Soil partisans against their southern Democrat adversaries, might be well attributed to the bill proposed by Stephen A. Douglas. Douglas attempted in it to find common ground on the question of slavery in the western territories through the establishment of popular sovereignty; by so doing, he also helped overturn established Constitutional precedent grounded in the Missouri Compromise of 1820, which had kept slavery out of the northern territories situated above the longitude of 36° 30' north (i.e., Missouri's southern border). The passage of Douglas's bill and establishment of popular sovereignty vis-à-vis the slavery question in the western territories set in motion a series of events which led to the relocation of many thousands of partisans from North and South alike into the Kansas and Nebraska territories. Samuel C. Pomeroy, a Free Soil partisan from Southampton, Massachusetts, is emblematic of this migration. Reportedly on hand when President Franklin Pierce signed the Kansas-Nebraska Act into law, he is said to have remarked to the President, "Your victory is but an adjournment of the question from the halls of legislation at Washington to the open prairies of the Freedom-loving West, and there, sir, we shall beat you." Pomeroy would subsequently travel to Kansas with some 200 fellow citizens from New England dedicated to the Free Soil cause.²⁸⁹ Similar migration from the pro-slavery South was equally animated. As Southern slaveholders asserted both their personal honor and the honor of the institution of slavery, both sides became increasingly radicalized in tit-for-tat violence. The Kansas-Nebraska Act was of course not the sole source of an increasingly hostile

²⁸⁹ William E. Connelley, *Kansas and Kansans*, Vol. 3 (Topeka: Kansas State Historical Society, 1918), 1289. As quoted in Martin Litvin, *The Journey*, 453.

sectional conflict; but it played perhaps *the* foundational role in a series of violent events and reprisals that spun out from it, both on the western frontier and in Washington, DC, including the burning of Lawrence, Kansas, the caning of Charles Sumner by Preston Brooks on the floor of the U.S. Senate, and the slaughter by John Brown and his sons of five pro-slavery settlers in Pottawatomie, Kansas. John Brown murdered thus, “in the name of freedom and equality.”²⁹⁰

By the mid-nineteenth century, chattel slavery in the American South had become emblematic for illiberalism and tyranny the world over. Serious political efforts to overturn slavery in the Atlantic world had by then been underway for more than a century. Jeffrey Stout describes and analyzes this intellectual history compellingly. Over the course of six days during his 2017 contributions to the Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh, Stout elucidates the rather enormous topic of freedom in the Western philosophical tradition at its intersection with religion, under the title “Religion Unbound: Ideals and Powers from Cicero to King.”²⁹¹ In his fourth lecture, “Abolitionism, Political Religion, and Secularism,” Stout argues convincingly that abolitionism was an eclectic and diverse movement, and one whose very success was rooted in the convergence of pluralistic voices, comprised as they were of the myriad political, secular and religious interests it contained. Stout compares the religious ideas on slavery to the secular ones in this era and posits that which is sometimes overlooked: the distinctly moral and quasi-religious dimension of the anti-slavery argument. As some religious thought leaders upheld the standard view that slavery was condoned in the Bible, and thus an appropriate institution for the present day, others like Ralph Sandiford, Elizabeth Heyrick, Benjamin Lay, William

²⁹⁰ See Orville Vernon Burton, “Chapter 3: To Carry Out the Lord’s Vengeance,” in *The Age of Lincoln*, 50-76 (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007). Quote appears on p. 76.

²⁹¹ Jeffrey Stout, “Religion Unbound: Ideals and Powers from Cicero to King,” *The Gifford Lectures: Over 100 Years of Natural Theology* (lecture series, The University of Edinburgh, 2017), accessed April 9, 2021, <https://www.giffordlectures.org/lectures/religion-unbound-ideals-and-powers-cicero-king/>.

Wilberforce and Frederick Douglass all wrapped their abolitionist arguments in decidedly Christian terminology. Wrote Douglass in his autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, “[B]etween the Christianity of this land [the United States], and the Christianity of Christ, I recognize the widest possible difference – so wide, that to receive the one as good, pure, and holy, is of necessity to reject the other as bad, corrupt, and wicked.”²⁹² Some Enlightenment arguments for egalitarianism and against slavery were subdued by comparison. Stout asserts that such luminaries as David Hume and Voltaire argued for the end of theism, or the formation of its replacement with an ecumenical “secular religion.” But non-religious arguments about the equality of all men and women swayed neither Hume nor Voltaire. Instead, their version of Enlightenment allowed for strict social hierarchies, an innate inequality between the races, and even a continuation of the slave trade during a time when its darker side was becoming more and more tangible within the public imagination. (One considers Hume and Voltaire in this sense as members of the conservative Enlightenment, as opposed to Jonathan Israel’s *Radical Enlightenment*.)²⁹³

As we have already seen, transatlantic Anglo-American abolitionism had already begun to emerge by the middle of the eighteenth century, largely in the form of Quaker and Anglican cooperation. But contemporaneous to this were similarly emergent intellectual currents in the German-speaking world. By the turn of the nineteenth century, some fifty years later,

²⁹² Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (Boston: The Anti-Slavery Office, 1847), 118, Google Books.

²⁹³ Ideas in this section are largely inspired by Jeffrey Stout, “Lecture 4: Abolitionism, Political Religion, and Secularism,” from the Gifford Lectures. See footnote no. 190 above. See also, among others, Nabila Ramdani, “Voltaire Spread Darkness, Not Enlightenment. France Should Stop Worshipping Him,” *Foreign Policy*, August 31, 2020, accessed April 10, 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/08/31/voltaire-spread-darkness-not-enlightenment-france-should-stop-worship-paris-statue-racism-black-lives-matter/>. Ramdani positions Voltaire’s legacy supporting slavery against the current Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement.

abolitionism and a call to ameliorate the conditions of African slaves in the Americas had been well defined in the popular consciousness across German-speaking lands. August von Kotzebue is today (at least in the English-speaking world) a largely forgotten German playwright, but his *Sklavenstücke* (literally “slave plays”) were incredibly popular in Weimar. Beyond Kotzebue, the genre was clearly successful from an economic standpoint; Goethe, who was highly attuned to matters of audience taste and theater economics, staged many such plays in Weimar (while interestingly, neglecting to stage many of his own).²⁹⁴ Kotzebue himself outpaced both Goethe and Schiller in the metric of “number of plays performed at theaters across German-speaking states.”²⁹⁵ Obenewaa Oduro-Opuni, in her excellent essay on Kotzebue and the *Sklavenstücke* genre references the “visible rise in German-speaking theater plays between 1775 and 1815 that address slavery, the transatlantic slave trade [and] abolition.”²⁹⁶ She asserts further: “The last decades of the eighteenth century heralded a significant, powerful transnational social movement that cut across classes, races, and nationalities, as well as genders.”²⁹⁷ Oduro-Opuni connects Kotzebue’s abolitionism to his formative experiences “with the predicament of Estonian peasants who served German aristocrats in a bondage relationship called *Leibenshaft*,” or serfdom.²⁹⁸ Serfdom would be largely abolished across much of Europe in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars in the early nineteenth century, while slavery in the Americas

²⁹⁴ Personal email correspondence, Johannes Schmidt (Professor of German, Clemson University) to Matthew Long, January 27, 2020.

²⁹⁵ Obenewaa Oduro-Opuni, “German Abolitionism: Kotzebue and the Transnational Debate on Slavery,” *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 10, no. 1 (2019): 240, accessed April 10, 2021, <https://escholarship.org/content/qt8rm531sh/qt8rm531sh.pdf?t=qduws8&v=lg/>.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 252.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 237.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 240.

would continue unabated for another fifty years.²⁹⁹ It is this continuation of the subjugation of African slaves in the Americas, especially after Haiti's revolution and independence by 1804, that became center in the consciousness of Europe's intelligentsia and all those interested in transnational freedom more broadly. The increasingly radical urge toward freedom by the mid-nineteenth century thus mirrors liberal and democratic revolutionary development across the Atlantic world which was occurring contemporaneously to it.

Violence would become integral to both. Indeed, the story of political freedom, especially within the context of revolution and abolition, is necessarily a story of violence. When it became apparent to those who were agitating for more egalitarian social structures that the political processes available to them were ill-prepared to enact the changes they saw as necessary, radicalism and violence became their primary tools to enact these changes. Thus, we see the emergence of figures like John Brown. David Blight describes Brown in coming to believe "that violence in a righteous cause was like a rite of purification."³⁰⁰ Abolitionism in America came to embrace revolutionary ideology, rhetoric and means in the years subsequent to The Kansas-Nebraska Act and the U.S. Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision. So too did the struggle take on an apocalyptic tenor. Men and women both began to struggle, to agitate, to fight for the cause of freedom, and when doing so took on the mantle of sacred duty, they increasingly risked their lives, and even became willing to kill, in freedom's pursuit.

²⁹⁹ An exception seems to be Russia, which did not enact emancipation for the serfs until 1861. For comparison, the US Emancipation Proclamation was issued in 1862, and Brazil abolished slavery in 1888. For additional context see also Shane O'Rourke, "The Emancipation of the Serfs in Europe," in David Eltis, et al, ed. *The Cambridge World History of Slavery, Volume 4: 1804-2016* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 422-40.

³⁰⁰ David Blight, "Lecture 9: John Brown's Holy War: Terrorist or Heroic Revolutionary?" HIST 119: The Civil War and Reconstruction Era, 1845-1877, Open Yale Courses, accessed April 15, 2021, <https://oyc.yale.edu/history/hist-119/lecture-9/>.

CONCLUSION

What is at stake?³⁰¹ Stated differently, what is the relevance of the topic of transnational freedom in the nineteenth century to us – scholars, students, lay people alike – from our vantage point in the twenty-first century? Ours is surely an era of continued inequality for many. The year 2020, with its pandemic reminder that we are all still living in history, also surely exacerbated these ingrained inequalities. Moreover, 2020 featured a resurgent message of egalitarianism and civil rights, begun centuries ago but not yet completed, in the form of Black Lives Matter (BLM). Langston Hughes famously wrote, some eighty-six years after the end of the American Civil War, about a “a dream deferred.” I quote the entirety of his poem “Harlem” below:

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin the sun?
Or fester like a sore –
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over –
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

*Or does it explode?*³⁰²

“*Or does it explode?*” is telling. Hughes wrote “Harlem” in 1951, only years after Americans had fought and died for freedom against illiberalism across the oceans during World War II, and just

³⁰¹ Professor P.C. Anderson, now Clemson Historian and Professor Emeritus, very helpfully posed this question to me repeatedly during my early days of graduate school. My father, Paul B. Long, also similarly posed this question after reviewing portions of my manuscript. Thank you to both.

³⁰² Langston Hughes, “Harlem,” from *The Collected Works of Langston Hughes*, Poetry Foundation, accessed April 12, 2020, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46548/harlem/>. Emphasis in the original.

as the American Civil Rights Movement was coming into full force. Within fifteen years of his writing, by the mid 1960s, calls to revolution, endemic social unrest, and the struggle for civil rights for all would coalesce into another moment of great upheaval across the Atlantic world. The question remains unsolved, however: if freedom from fascism had been completed abroad, what of freedom and equality for African Americans at home? This idea, as expressed through BLM, remains salient to us in the twenty-first century. It is perhaps a truism, but it is worth repeating: if freedom is at stake for some of us, if it is actively being denied for some Americans, should it not also be considered under threat for all of us? Arguably, the ultimate effect of the American Civil War and abolitionism was in an expansion of freedom to those previously denied it, those enslaved Americans who won their freedom and who saw the codification of that freedom in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the US Constitution. Freedom was in fact expanded through this struggle, but continually, subsequently, that freedom has proven capable of retracting in equal measure. In light of this, what are we to make of this current moment of the American experience? What does an ideal of freedom for all, begun centuries ago in the Radical Enlightenment and yet still lacking final completion – a dream deferred, per Hughes – mean to us today?

Another hallmark of our current moment is the continued flight of migrants into our country, many of whom, like Bondi and his fellow 1848ers, are fleeing political violence in their places of origin. I hope that this paper has in large part enunciated the import of immigrants to the American experience, as indeed, our country would not be what it is today were it not the contributions of our immigrants. But still, centuries on, we in the United States continue to struggle with what it means to be American, and how immigrants fit into this larger question of American identity. We engage yet in the performance of nativism versus cosmopolitanism that

is so clearly described by Vecoli and which has been manifest since the earliest days of the Republic.³⁰³ We still fail to recognize that which Hannah Arendt postulated so powerfully in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, on the inherent rights of all humans, regardless of their immigration status, of the inherent worth of *all* humans. She writes, on those refugees who were displaced and fleeing from World War II, and who were thus considered legally stateless and without rights:

The conception of human rights, based upon the assumed existence of a human being as such, broke down at the very moment when those who professed to believe in it were for the first time confronted with people who had indeed lost all other qualities and specific relationships – except that they were still human. *The world found nothing sacred in the abstract nakedness of being human.*³⁰⁴

Perhaps more than any, this sums up what is meant by Jonathan Israel in his definition of Radical Enlightenment: that all people, based simply on their being *human*, have rights that are inherent and irrevocable, rights that no one might hinder, deny, or curtail.³⁰⁵ Israel continues by quoting d’Holbach: “[I]f error and ignorance have forged the chains which bind peoples in oppression, if it is prejudice which perpetuates those chains, science, reason and truth will one day be able to break them.”³⁰⁶

Freedom and an instinctual urge toward it still compels many of us. It continues to be an animating force of history. How we continue to enact, perform, and practice that freedom will be instructive. Indeed, with the correct outlook, we might eventually break d’Holbach’s chains

³⁰³ Rudolph J. Vecoli, “The Significance of Immigration in the Formation of an American Identity,” *The History Teacher* 30, no. 1 (November 1996): 9-27, accessed April 30, 2020, <https://www.doi.org/10.2307/494217/>.

³⁰⁴ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins*, 299. Emphasis added.

³⁰⁵ Jonathan Israel, *A Revolution of the Mind*, viii.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

of oppression and realize the egalitarianism that was first attempted in the Age of Revolutions centuries ago.

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