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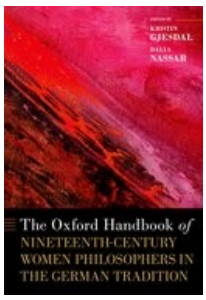
The Oxford Handbook *of* NINETEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN PHILOSOPHERS IN THE GERMAN TRADITION



The Oxford Handbook of Nineteenth-Century Women Philosophers in the German Tradition

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CHAPTER

28 Social and Political Philosophy

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Abstract

This chapter explores the contributions of nineteenth-century women to social and political thought. Focusing on the works of Germaine de Staël, Karoline von Günderrode, Bettina Brentano von Arnim, Hedwig Dohm, Clara Zetkin, and Rosa Luxemburg, it makes visible the important philosophical arc from early romanticism to late nineteenth-century socialism. The chapter concludes with a brief reflections on the legacy of these movements and how they contribute to the shaping of phenomenology and later twentieth-century thought.

Keywords: social and political philosophy, activism, feminism, socialism, abolitionism, Germaine de Staël, Karoline von Günderrode, Bettina Brentano von Arnim, Hedwig Dohm, Clara Zetkin, and Rosa Luxemburg

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The contributions of women philosophers in the long nineteenth century—the period between German idealism and romanticism, on the one hand, and early phenomenology, on the other—span a range of topics and areas. In this period, women contribute to epistemology, aesthetics, ethics, philosophy of science, philosophy of nature, philosophy of anthropology, feminism, philosophy of the human, and other areas. Yet, if one were to try and offer a lens through which these contributions are connected—not an umbrella concept under which they can be subsumed, but a looser commitment around which constellations gather with variation in distance and overlap—it would be this: social and political philosophy.

Women philosophers in this period had been raised (and raised themselves) to be intellectuals. Yet a position within academia—where campus architecture, book collections, and student communities mark a concrete commitment to the life of the mind—was denied them. They were excluded from the discourse

they wanted to make their own. If they were to be philosophers, they would have to carve out space outside of the academy.

As a consequence, women philosophers in this period had to find their own, distinctive voices. They did not have the backing of powerful institutions and mentors, nor did they write for an exclusive academic readership. Instead they discuss, analyze, and deal with the concrete social and political world in which they live. And, moreover, they often write for the wider groups of people with whom they share this world rather than a select collection of peers and colleagues. In this way, women philosophers managed to turn their marginalized position into an advantage. In a time when women were not thought to be capable of rational thought and philosophy (as Rousseau, Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche would all
p. 648 indicate)[1] or were associated with the ↳ private sphere and its entertaining literature (as prescribed by others), they did indeed break both of these barriers and contribute actively and unapologetically to social and political thought. The point is not that all women in the period were social and political philosophers, but that the contributions of women philosophers are often marked by a distinct social and political engagement.[2]

This chapter explores the contributions of nineteenth-century women to social and political thought by making visible the philosophical arc from early romanticism to late nineteenth-century socialism. It covers the works of Germaine de Staël, Karoline von Günderrode, Bettina Brentano von Arnim, Hedwig Dohm, Clara Zetkin, and Rosa Luxemburg, but also, when relevant, makes references to other philosophers of the period. The chapter concludes with some brief reflections on the legacy of these movements and how they helped shape phenomenology and later twentieth-century thought. It is key to the chapter to track and demonstrate the underappreciated contributions that romantic women philosophers make to social and political philosophy, thus highlighting what I take to be a significant lineage from romanticism to midcentury socialism. However, with today's climate crisis in mind, my discussion of the social and political contributions of the early romantic philosophers will also cover their pathbreaking and radical views of nature—views that were not, in the same way, part of mid-nineteenth-century social and political thought.

1 Germaine de Staël

Born to Swiss parents and raised in Paris, Germaine de Stäel developed her thought in interaction with German philosophers. Through the many translations of her works and her contact with German intellectuals, she left a significant mark on German-speaking culture.

p. 649 Staël's philosophical career ran parallel with her successful development as a novelist and her extraordinary achievements as a political agent and influencer during the French Revolution and in Napoleonic and post-Napoleonic Europe—the latter leading to her reputation as a political superpower along with Russia and England.[3] Starting with the publication of *Letters on the Character and Writings of J.-J. Rousseau* (1788),[4] Staël crafted herself as a philosophical force to be reckoned with. The book was published anonymously, but it did not take long for her fellow Parisians to figure out that the author was none other than the twenty-two-year-old daughter of Jacques Necker, the French minister of finance, and Suzanne Curchod, a well-known writer and salonnière. Following the many women philosophers whose interest in education had led them to Rousseau's *Emile*,[5] Staël offers a somewhat hagiographic recapitulation of Rousseau's work, though the very fact that *Letters* was written by a woman did itself undermine his claims about the passivity of women's intellects and the notion that their interests should be but to please their male companions.[6] Moreover, Staël denounces women's domestic slavery. Later in her life, and after the study was praised but also critiqued by Mary Wollstonecraft,[7] Staël added a new and slightly more critical introduction to the work.

Stäel's early political writings emphasize civic duty and the need for shared social values. At this point, she, like Rousseau, was even open to the idea of a state religion.[8] In *On the Current Circumstances that Can End the*

Revolution and the Principles that must Found the Republic in France (1798–99),[9] she offers one of the first republican readings of the French Revolution.[10] She sees republicanism as the only real alternative to the
p. 650 outdated institution of absolute monarchy, on the one hand, and an unstable revolutionary ↳ rule of the people, on the other.[11] In works such as *Germany* (1810/1813) and the posthumously published *Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution* (1818), she defends a liberal point of view. It is here that she, in interaction with German political thinkers (Kant and others), comes to emphasize toleration, religious freedom, individual rights, and the rule of law.[12]

In *A Treatise on the Influence of the Passions Upon the Happiness of Individuals and of Nations* (1796),[13] Staël discusses how the passions—especially when combined with passive groupthink—inhibit judgment and action (TIP 178). Moreover, she asks what makes human beings, regardless of their political affiliations, go to the extremes of fanaticism and political violence.[14] Staël was initially a supporter of the French Revolution but, as the terror escalated, withheld her support for its present form (without thereby giving up her support of the revolution as such). She argues that in acting on raw passions, the opposing fractions had a lot in common (TIP 178). Extremes, as she put it, are not in things, but in the human perceptions of things (TIP 194). Thus, passions need to be modified by philosophical reflection, studies, and, eventually, compassion and pity. Her fight against political fanaticism, or political extremism as we today would call it, remained a key aspect of her thought right up to *Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution* and thus unifies her early and late work.[15]

Throughout her work, Staël extols the virtues of tolerance and impartiality *and* seeks actively to foster it in her readers by exposing them to cultures and ways of thinking of which they had typically been suspicious (for example, this is an explicit goal in *Germany*). For Staël, philosophy, when conducted in this manner, involves a process of self-perfection. The perfection of individuals will lead to a better society *and* the other way around.

A Treatise also touches on the situation of women. Staël describes how women are barred from realizing personal ambitions and made dependent on men in terms of finances, social standing, and recognition (TIP 111). Even a learned woman, she laconically points out, has been brought up with a wish to be loved (TIP 112)—yet far too often love is denied her.

In *The Influence of Literature on Society* (1800), Staël discusses the social and political importance of
p. 651 literature broadly defined. She challenges a Kantian notion of aesthetic ↳ autonomy and argues, as she did in *A Treatise*, that literature (and philosophy) should serve to educate and offer moral edification (that is, she builds on Kant's analysis of the impure rather than the pure aesthetic judgment). Literature, she further argues, must be understood within its social and political context. She elaborates on the predicament of women who seek glory through their written work. Needless to say, this was a situation that Staël knew firsthand. She notes how men will forgive women who overlook household duties, but be hostile toward women with intellectual aspirations: "Women are forgiven if they sacrifice their household occupations for the sake of worldly amusements, but if they take their study seriously, they are accused of *pedantry*" (WP 32; later Dohm makes the same observation).[16] Further, Staël observes how women with intellectual ambitions are treated as outcasts (WP 32). She also discusses the situation of women under different political systems. In a monarchy, exceptional (and learned) women are ridiculed; in a republic they are despised, even though they actualize the very idea of education and excellence on which the republic builds. At this point, Staël overlooks the actual achievements of women in history (their achievements are not mapped as they are in, say, the work of Theodor von Hippel[17]). She further assumes that women intellectuals, like herself, are geniuses whose accomplishments hover above the reach of ordinary women (rather than being a privilege that comes in the wake of private tutors, libraries, etc.).

While it cannot be denied that Staël's celebration of the extraordinary woman is tainted by elitism, it should nonetheless be read in the context of the wider discussion of intellectual women that took place at the time.

In Germany, Goethe and Schiller had launched a crusade against "women dilettantes."[18] In his *Foundations of Natural Right* (1796/97) Fichte, likewise, had stated that "vanity and the thirst for glory are contemptible in a man, but in a woman they are corrupting."[19] He also argues that women cannot make discoveries and should therefore stick to "popular writings for women, writings about women's upbringing, [and] moral teaching for the female sex in particular."[20] Responding to misrecognition of this kind can hardly be labeled arrogance, though the *form* of the response can clearly be discussed.[21]

p. 652 Staël's best-selling philosophical novels *Delphine* (1802) and *Corinne* (1807) further address the treatment of women that was discussed in *A Treatise* and *The Influence of Literature*.[22] The protagonist in *Delphine* is described as a philosopher herself. In this novel, Staël defends the ideals of the Enlightenment and have the characters discuss the situation of women (from a host of different points of view). In *Corinne*, she takes one step further and develops a sophisticated analysis of bias that women encounter even in a presumably enlightened society, and the social price they have to pay if they reject or fail to subject themselves to traditional gender roles. Social sanctions are issued by men, but also reproduced by women who, subject to implicit bias, uphold patriarchal values. *Corinne* offers a brutally honest picture of a (step)mother's attempt to clip the wings of the free-spirited protagonist, thus bolstering repressing social patterns and barring change (this topic is later discussed by Dohm and, in the twentieth century, Simone de Beauvoir[23]). The novel, whose discussion of romantic philosophy is accompanied by references and notes, juxtaposes the stepmother's provincial small-mindedness with Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and tolerance.

A call for tolerance and humanity is also issued in Staël's abolitionist writings. *Mirza*, Staël's 1795 novella, delivers a piercing criticism of slavery and colonialism. Staël traces slavery and colonialism back to a fundamental misrecognition of others (in this case a well-educated and high-minded Senegalese woman). We also find her criticizing American slavery in her letters to Thomas Jefferson,[24] and in her reflections on the work of the British abolitionist William Wilberforce.[25] In both cases, she offers an acute analysis of the price paid for narrow-minded conceptions of European supremacy and for a deficient commitment to developing a shared humanity. In an 1816 letter to Jefferson, she makes it clear that if Americans "manage to abolish slavery in the South, at least there would be in the world one government as perfect as human reason can imagine it."[26] In the same letter, she lets Jefferson know that nothing could make her side with
p. 653 Napoleon. It is important to realize that Staël's abolitionism goes hand in hand with her ↳ critique of cultural bias and the sense of cultural superiority, ultimately also with her cosmopolitan hermeneutics.[27]

After the publication of *Delphine*, Napoleon had branded Staël an enemy of the state and exiled her from Paris. While banned from Paris, she shifted her focus from the French constitution to that of European politics. It was in this period that she traveled in the German-speaking lands and, from 1804, hired August Wilhelm Schlegel as a travel companion and tutor for her children. Staël documents her personal experiences from this period in *Ten Years of Exile* (posthumously published in 1821). The philosophical outcomes of her travels are gathered in *Germany* (1810/1813).

Germany is a major philosophical contribution. The book was positively received, especially in the United Kingdom, where at least one reviewer welcomes the "novelty" of a metaphysical treatise written by a woman.[28] In *Germany*, Staël extolls (and exemplifies) the virtues of tolerance and cosmopolitanism. While the philosophical reception of this work has sometimes been governed by a focus on whether or not Staël gets figures such as Kant, Fichte, and Schelling "right,"[29] it is more important to ask how she develops the positions held in her early work and, in doing so, interacts with the anthropological lineage of thought that reaches back to Herder and Schleiermacher, whose contributions are discussed both in the section on philosophy and in the final section on religion and enthusiasm. Staël's conception of enthusiasm, developed in her early work, represents a "disinterested," but still passionate, appreciation of nature and the universe (defined, with Schleiermacher, as "all there is"). In her early work, she had recommended this kind of healthy, contemplative self-loss as an antidote to the destructive self-loss of political fanaticism.

Germany also presents an ambitious metaphilosophical statement. What sets this statement apart from Kant and the German Idealists is how Staël, developing her position from *The Influence of Literature*, commits to situating philosophy within a concrete social and political reality. Moreover, she hones a methodology that is bottom-up, that is, that begins with the concrete experiential and historical level, and, from there, adds increasing layers of abstractions. The philosophical arc in *Germany* begins with a description of life and manners (this is how women, men, and children live across the German lands), proceeds to a discussion of
p. 654 literature (Jean Paul, Lessing, Goethe, ↳ Schiller, and others), philosophy (Herder, Kant, Jacobi, Schelling, Schleiermacher, and others), and finally, analyzes the sublime feeling of belonging in nature (or the universe) that Staël finds developed in German thought. While the book has sometimes been accused of nationalism—and did indeed create romantic nationalist sentiments of kinds[30]—Staël's focus is primarily on a language area (Germany was not yet politically unified), though she also brings in examples from Danish and other literatures. Her work generated a wider understanding of and interest in romanticism as a concept and movement. In the tradition of Montesquieu and Voltaire, Staël's descriptions of German culture offer a perspective on what she takes to be a (Napoleonic) French culture in decline. This did not escape Napoleon's attention. Moreover, Staël does not mention his name in the book, and she praises Prussia, against whom Napoleon had waged an eight-year-long war. Napoleon ordered the destruction of the first 10,000 copies of Staël's book. Staël fearlessly describes this and other attacks on her in the introduction to the work and in the posthumously published *Ten Years' Exile*.[31] *Germany* was eventually (re)published in French in England in 1813; an English translation followed swiftly.

Throughout her work, Staël encourages intercultural understanding. Her planned (but never finished) work on English culture and thought would in all likelihood have clarified her productive encounters not only with German idealism but also with David Hume and Adam Smith (she had already drawn on the latter in *A Treatise*, especially the culminating discussion of pity). Staël's final work, a shorter essay on translation, explores the gains of cultural exchange.[32] Her views on cultural exchange, moreover, get a real-world exemplification through the eager reception of *Germany* in Scandinavia, Italy, Germany, Russia, and the Anglophone world (including Byron in England and Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, and Lydia Maria Child in the United States).

From the early *A Treatise,* via her work on literature, German culture and philosophy, and the French Revolution, Staël advocates the principles of tolerance and liberty, but also fights, in print and in deed, against extremism, bias, and the deep-seated misrecognition of others that enables misogyny, slavery, and colonialism.

2 Karoline von Günderrode

Karoline von Günderrode is the author of a philosophical work that spans discussions of free will, human
p. 655 agency, the relevance of poetry and art (and their ability to guide ↳ us beyond the limits of reason), and our obligations to human and nonhuman nature (the totality of what she calls "the earth"). Like Staël, Günderrode writes philosophical prose, drama, poetry, and letters. Like Staël, she encourages tolerance and cultural exchange. However, unlike Staël, Günderrode focuses her social and political philosophy on our irreducible commitments to nature, and thus goes beyond, even challenges, the Enlightenment celebration of human rationality and life. Moreover, whereas Staël celebrates a sublime experience of the subject's belonging to nature (thus questioning, from within a Kant-friendly perspective, the Kantian distinction between beauty and sublimity in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*),[33] Günderrode (leaving Kant behind) describes a union between subjectivity and nature. This union can be philosophically approximated, but is more fully expressed through poetical metaphors and tropes.[34]

Until quite recently, Günderrode's philosophy would probably have been placed within the areas of metaphysics and philosophy of art. However, with the present climate crisis, her reflections on nature and the relationship between human beings and the rest of nature take on a direct, political relevance.

Günderrode's work has been associated with the romantic quest for a new mythology, familiar from, among others, Hölderlin, the young Hegel and Schelling, Novalis, and Friedrich Creuzer.[35] Her correspondence with Creuzer, with whom she was romantically involved, reveals how he sought to direct her away from a traditional Enlightenment interest in politics and history and toward a more mythological style of writing (possibly one that he saw more fit for a woman).[36] However, Günderrode had been reading mythological romantic philosophy at least from 1796 onward. Her interest in ecology, however, indicates that she, early on, carves out her own position, one in which the individual, in her relationship to nature ("the earth"), is held responsible to the larger totality of which she is a part.

Günderrode situates herself within the landscape of post-Kantian idealism. Her mother had introduced her to Fichte's philosophy and her 1804 discussion of Fichte's *The Vocation of Humankind* (published four years earlier) initially appears to be committed to a broader, idealist position. In her notes, she starts by analyzing the freedom of the self and the idea that freedom is a condition of possibility for ethical responsibility. Complementing this idea is the notion of nature as a domain of causal relations, that is, a domain in which
p. 656 freedom cannot exist. Günderrode, however, does not stop ↳ here. Against Fichte's dualism of nature and freedom, she argues for a holistic notion in which the I sees itself as fundamentally indebted to nature as a totality.[37] This totality is addressed by Günderrode as a larger "life principle" that "binds me together with all finite entities of my kind, that connects me with itself" (WP 74). As she explains, the intuition of such a totality involves the experience (and reality) of a fundamental belonging: "I am related to that *will* and everything around me is related to *me*. And *its* life is (as far as I can grasp) a *self*-forming and presenting willing that flows through the whole universe in manifold forms. A force that organizes itself in the plants, moves in the animal, and presents its own world in each … all personhood emerges from the sum of the whole" (WP 74).

Unlike Kant, Fichte, and Staël, Günderrode ascribes *reality*—and not simply a regulative status—to the unity between mind and nature. Yet, in going beyond the perspective of subjective idealism, Günderrode still maintains that this unity is only articulated through the manifold of its individual parts. In this way, she maintains the appreciation of diversity that we find in Kant's discussion of nature and biology in the third *Critique*, in Herder's notion of cultural plurality (Günderrode had studied his *Ideas for a Philosophy of the History of Humanity* [1784–91]), and Schleiermacher's reflections, in his *Monologues*, on a manifold of individuals complementing each other in realizing different aspects of a shared humanity. Günderrode, though, extends this kind of thinking beyond the spheres of biology and culture to the earth as such. The fundamental bond between nature and spirit is not conceived of as being prior to individuation. Instead, it rests *with* the diversity of nature. Human beings contribute to the diversity of nature, but have no privileged position or point of view. Indeed, on Günderrode's understanding it is the fact that the individual I belongs to nature that enables it to see itself as differentiated from other human and nonhuman individuals and from the rest of nature. The I is conditioned by its belonging to a totality (the earth), but this totality is conceived of as a unity in difference that allows for, indeed does itself *rely on*, individuation.

This is an original contribution to romantic and idealist philosophy—*and* to our thinking about human responsibility vis-à-vis nonhuman nature. Günderrode advocates the view that human beings, in their relation to the totality of which they are a part, should transform themselves so as to be of service to the earth.[38] The earth is given ontological primacy and this, in turn, implies a fundamental ethical demand. In defending this position, Günderrode goes beyond Kant's emphasis on the disinterested appreciation of natural form, Fichte's call to subject (causally determined) nature to subjectivity (freedom), and Novalis's and Schelling's ideas of an undifferentiated *Ur*-being that is deserving of human reverence.

Günderrode's position also deviates from Enlightenment thinkers such as Herder and Staël who, in different
p. 657 ways, see human self-realization as a progressive process. ↳ Although progress is not ruled out, Günderrode argues that it is, to the extent that it is achieved, not teleologically necessary but historically contingent.[39] The human point of view is, for her, not the ultimate standard.

In her work, Günderrode draws on Spinoza, or at least the Spinozist influences at the time (here she is followed by Lou Salomé). Her monism entails an ethical commitment to prioritize the harmony of nature, as a totality, over against an isolated focus on the needs of human beings. As Günderrode argues in her notes on Schelling ("Philosophy of Nature"), nature is a self-producing activity or force (WP 75; again, she anticipates Salomé). Human life evolves from a totality to which the individual, after death, returns. Arguably, this model of perpetuated renewal (or, revolution) represents a link between Günderrode's philosophy of nature and her philosophy of culture: cultures, too, participate in a cycle of birth, thriving, aging, and death that, in turn, yields new life.[40]

Later strands of naturalism and vitalism have led to an understanding of the human being as fundamentally embodied (even erotic, in the widest sense of the term, such as we find it in Salomé[41]). By reintroducing, into her monism, an idealist focus on ethical subjectivity and its obligations, Günderrode moves in a different direction. However, for her, the quest for a human vocation, for a profound ethical responsibility toward the earth, is related to our obligations to see ourselves *as* part of a larger totality. We are not citizens of a separate moral sphere (that of freedom) that exceeds that of nature (causality). If we do not recognize the ultimate limitations of the human and see ourselves as part of the earth, we fail to understand ourselves and to realize our obligations toward the larger totality of which we are a part.

In two texts from 1805, Günderrode further radicalizes the intertwining of ontology and ethics. In "The Story of a Brahmin" and the posthumously published "The Idea of the Earth," she argues not only that humans are indebted to and part of the earth but also that the earth itself must be ascribed with qualities that have traditionally been associated with the human. The earth, as she now sees it, is a unity of soul and body (WP 82). Appealing to natural forces, growth, and harmony, she argues that the material world is infused with spirit and the spiritual world is realized in nature. Being part of this larger whole—the continuum of the earth—human beings have a duty not only to tread lightly on the earth, but also actively to aid the universe in its self-realization.[42] Indeed, this, for Günderrode, is ultimately a question of justice (WP 83). It is worth noting that Günderrode, early on, connects her insights with Indian philosophy. Her turn to Eastern philosophy developed independently of, say, Friedrich Schlegel and predates Hegel's and Schopenhauer's interest in the subject (it is, though, later than Herder's).[43]

p. 658 Günderrode's philosophical and political engagement—and her interest in world religions—also fuels her dramatic work. In *Hildgund* and *Muhammad, the Prophet*,[44] she stages literal and symbolic encounters between East and West. While we find systematic explorations of non-Western cultures in the works of Herder, Humboldt, and others in this period, Günderrode is unique in directly relating an openness toward non-Western religions to an expanded understanding of our relationship to nature (rather than simply contributing to our cultural and epistemic horizons). Moreover, Günderrode does not follow the late Herder, Hegel, and others in treating European culture as more advanced than non-European cultures.[45]

While engaging philosophers such as Spinoza, Rousseau, Herder, Kant, Fichte, Schlegel, Schleiermacher, Schelling, and others, Günderrode is aware of the unique position of women, and perhaps also of traditional philosophy's tendency to take for granted a male perspective. This is clear in her analysis of the problem of free will—an analysis that bridges her philosophical writing and her drama. While Fichte emphasizes the freedom of the self to act, Günderrode insists that freedom needs to be realized in a concrete, social context (WP 73). Especially for women, this context may well be one in which the subject is not granted freedom at all. Her dramatic protagonist Hildgund, in the work carrying her name, exemplifies a woman whose will encounters limitations in the real world (her abductor, Attila, demands that she be his wife, or else he will

invade her beloved Burgundy), but also summons the agency to overcome them (she plots to kill Attila, thus freeing her country without marrying to her captor).[46]

Günderrode's exploration of women's situation receives further attention when her friend Bettina Brentano von Arnim, thirty-four years after Günderrode committed suicide, published a creative reworking of their correspondence, thus celebrating Günderrode's philosophical contributions while also developing a philosophical position of her own.[47]

3 Bettina Brentano von Arnim

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Bettina Brentano von Arnim's contributions cover a wide range of topics, including philosophy of art, philosophy of history, and philosophy of language. Her uncompromising social awareness flows through and motivates much of her early work, but gets stronger over the years. She adopts a clear position in the contemporary debates of her time, including the discussion of Prussia's subjugation of the Poles and the case against the so-called Göttingen Seven, the university professors who had defended the constitution against overreach from the king. She discusses topics such as the life-conditions of the poor and the shortcoming of the prison system. It is worth noting how Brentano von Arnim's position differs from that of Kant, Staël, and others whose defense of the French Revolution was based in its republican ideals, not in solidarity with lower classes. She met with Karl Marx in 1842.

From the 1820s onward, Brentano von Arnim hosted her own salon (see chapter 6 here). Among the important groups gathering in her salon were members of the Young Germany movement, whose radical writings would be banned in Prussia. Her support of the Left Hegelians caused scandal.[48] Her emphasis on individual freedom and her critique of institutionalized religion led to accusations of antireligious attitudes.

Brentano von Arnim's literary and philosophical breakthrough came with *Goethe's Correspondence with a Child* (1835), published four years after she lost her husband (the poet Achim von Arnim), and two years after Goethe's death. The book is based on her correspondence with Goethe and his mother. The actual exchange took place between 1807 and 1811, and Brentano von Arnim fails to mention that the correspondence abruptly ended after an argument. On the face of it, Brentano von Arnim's position—the child at the feet of the great poet—confirms traditional gender roles and reflects Goethe's own wavering between supporting the work of women writers and rejecting them as mere dilettantes. However, throughout the fictionalized correspondence, she cleverly works out her position, which is then solidified in the diary notes that, toward the end of the book, conclude her philosophical reflections.

Brentano von Arnim sheds light on why she describes herself as a child in the book's title. While her self-positioning alludes to Goethe's Mignon figure (from the novel *Wilhelm Meister*) and the notion of the child as an innocent truth-teller,[49] she herself draws a philosophical parallel between the child and the place of human spirit in nature: "the spirit is a child here upon earth, therefore has love created the sweet blessed ↳ child-like nature, as a language for the spirit."[50] The position of the child implies an ability to take an immediate and sensuous pleasure in natural beauty.

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Where Staël had further radicalized the Kantian notion of natural beauty, and Günderrrode's philosophy of nature is metaphysical and mythological, Brentano von Arnim offers concrete and lively descriptions of the wonders of nature. It is the diversity of its forms—the abundance of different plants, the changing of the weather and the seasons, the variety of minerals and landscapes—that fascinates her. In these passages, Brentano von Arnim takes her voice beyond that of a naïve admirer of Goethe's genius (for her, every human being ought to develop their genius). Her independence from Goethe is made even more visible when she critiques the poet's lack of political engagement, for example his passive attitude toward the Tyrolean struggle for independence.[51] The child, at this point, has clearly grown up and found a language of social and

political critique. For Brentano von Arnim, there is a parallel between the need to cultivate the diversity of natural forms and the need to allow for human and cultural diversity. As was the case with Günderrode, Brentano von Arnim's philosophy of nature, especially her appreciation of nature's diverse forms (and the cohabitation of humans with the rest of nature), assumes political relevance when taking into account the present climate challenges.

A similar strategy—that of developing her own philosophy through a dialogical exchange—organizes *Günderode* (1840), which is built around correspondence with Karoline von Günderrode (from whom she, again, had been estranged).[52] Through their dialogues, Bettine further evolves her philosophy of nature and develops an original philosophy of love that involves our relationship to other human beings as well as to nature. Nature, for her, speaks its own language and we, as philosophers, poets, and lovers of nature, ought to listen. She also discusses the topic of history and canon-formation. In particular she relays how she fails to relate to the past when it is presented as the deeds of great (male) figures to whom she cannot relate. While her friend emphasizes the importance of mastering the historical canon, the impatient Bettine asks for a history in which a young woman can recognize herself (see WP 98–100).[53] Shortly after the book,
p. 661 which ↳ was dedicated to students, was first published, the students in Berlin celebrated it with a torch parade.[54]

A third epistolary work is the exchange with her brother, Clemens, in *The Spring Wreath*, published four years after *Günderode*. Here, Bettine is ready to deepen her discussions of gender. While she does not directly engage the emerging debates about women's rights, she performatively plays it out in her exchanges with her brother, who reacts to her interest in affairs of the state and the revolution by suggesting that she knit him socks.[55] Bettine's response is both hilarious and defiant as she reminds her brother that what she needs is not more knitting but more freedom.[56]

Brentano von Arnim's late work takes an even more direct political turn. Nonetheless, her epistolary writings have prepared for this by viewing natural diversity as a model for human life (rather than the other way around) and by defending each individual's right to freely develop her inner voice and calling.[57] In 1843, Brentano von Arnim published *This Book Belongs to the King*. The title reflects the dedication to Friedrich Wilhelm IV, the young king of Prussia (who, through the interventions of Alexander von Humboldt, had given his permission for the publication of her book). Due to its radical political message—that the king ought to address problems such as socioeconomic inequality—the book was immediately banned in Austria and Bavaria. In England, it was warmly received, with one commentator enthusiastically observing how a lady of high rank gives "the king a lesson in Communism and atheism."[58]

Again, Bettina speaks through a historical figure and, again, she connects to the Goethes. Through the persona of the seventy-seven-year-old Frau Rat (Goethe's mother) and her exchanges with luminaries such as Queen Louise, Bettina offers advice in a style that mirrors Plato's *Republic.* One chapter is indeed called "Socratie der Frau Rat." The book directly and boldly calls for a solution to the growing poverty
p. 662 problem in Prussia. Brentano von Arnim also has Frau Rat address the penal system and argue that ↳ criminality must be understood in light of society's rejection of the poor. In this sense, "the criminal is himself the victim."[59] The state, moreover, should prioritize housing for the needy over grand museums and victory monuments.[60] Toward the end of the book, she includes a lengthy report, commissioned from Heinrich Grunholzer (a young Swiss teacher, who had come to Berlin to study for a year), on poverty in Berlin, where he had spent four weeks interviewing inhabitants. Indeed, this report was often seen as the most provocative part of the book, not only because of the desperate conditions documented, but also because poverty is not blamed on bad luck or individual flaws such as drinking or laziness, but traced back to structural, social conditions. Brentano von Arnim paid Grunholzer an honorarium for his research. In its reliance on empirical data, in its turn to structural explanations, and in its combination of the two, her work broke new methodological grounds in social and political philosophy.

Brentano von Arnim's approach to poverty and pauperism, and her criticism of religion, would resound with the Left Hegelians (Bruno and Edgar Bauer, David Strauß, Arnold Ruge, and others). However, unlike the Left Hegelians, Brentano von Arnim saw social justice as best achieved not through a revolution, but through the work of a just monarch, a people's king.[61] Further, unlike the Left Hegelians, with whom she shared her critique of institutionalized religion, she cultivated a religious spirit throughout her work, albeit one that is unconventional and adaptive to her social causes.[62]

In *Conversations with Demons* (1852) the king, again, is the addressee, this time with demons conveying political advice to the slumbering regent. At this point, Brentano von Arnim was no longer close with the king, and the book received less attention.

In the 1840s, however, Brentano von Arnim had intensified her work for the poor—which had previously included charitable outreach, with among others her sister Gunda and her friend Rahel Varnhagen, during the 1831 cholera epidemic in Berlin—by gathering first-person testimonies of the conditions of the working poor, especially the weavers in Silesia. Among the methods used were newspaper calls for firsthand accounts. Again, Brentano von Arnim's work is methodologically groundbreaking, this time because it
p. 663 grants a voice to the poor rather than speaking over their heads or ↳ interpreting their position from the outside. The book she had planned was never finished, but her correspondence around the project and the notes for what was probably intended as an afterword were posthumously published as *The Book of the Poor* (*Das Armenbuch*).[63] The planned afterword draws on biblical references (the blissful nakedness of Adam and Eve as contrasted with the lack of clothing among the poor) to clarify the suffering inflicted on the Silesian population by poverty. She condemns the Prussian army's brutal suppression of the protests.

Brentano von Arnim, whose circles included the Grimm brothers, also published fairy tales, a literary form that, at least in its oral transmission, was associated with "folk culture" and thus traversing distinctions of gender and class. "The Tale of the Lucy Purse" focuses on a widowed grandmother who struggles to take care of her grandchildren while grieving the loss of her sons to the war.[64] Another fairy tale, also of the political kind, is *The Life of Countess Gritta von Ratsinourhouse*, coauthored with her daughter Gisela and posthumously published. It tells the story of a group of runaway girls who experience a brief semiutopian adventure as they survive in nature.[65] Brentano von Arnim here returns to central topics of the early work (female friendship, female freedom, the relationship between human beings and the rest of nature), thus creating a philosophical arc throughout her works and across her different modes of expression.

Along with Staël and Günderrode, Brentano von Arnim's work goes way beyond the image of romantic women as (naively) infatuated with myth.[66] Her oeuvre forges an important bridge between romanticism, on the one hand, and socialism, on the other.[67] It contains original reflections on gender and agency. And it develops new strategies in political philosophy.

p. 664 4 Hedwig Dohm

In the 1830s and 1840s, the new women's movement in Germany was gaining traction. Brentano von Arnim did not take part in this movement. Indeed, she did, at times, appear to (willfully) ignore it.[68] The new women's movement saw the romantic approach to women—the focus on nature, self-realization, self-expression, love, and education—as outdated and potentially regressive. What mattered was a new emphasis on women's *rights*.

In this context, Hedwig Dohm is important: she is the first to demand suffrage for women in Germany.[69] Throughout her work, Dohm insists on women's rights being human rights.[70] She delivers a scathing critique of the biological (and the metaphysical) understanding of gender. *And* she forges an important

philosophical bridge between Brentano von Arnim, on the one hand, and twentieth-century feminists, on the other. Born in 1831, Dohm lived to see the introduction of women's suffrage in 1918.

Dohm expresses the feeling that her work is untimely—that she is born either a century too early or a century too late, as she puts it.[71] In a certain sense, she has a point. On the one hand, Dohm relates gender to social and cultural (rather than biological and metaphysical) concepts, thereby anticipating a central trend in twentieth-century feminism. To be *born* a woman, that is, with a fixed identity, would be tantamount to
p. 665 being stillborn, as Dohm puts it.[72] She speaks, moreover, for the rights of single mothers and ↳ unmarried women. In this, she is clearly ahead of her time. On the other hand, Dohm positions herself in the lineage of a romantic like Brentano von Arnim.[73] She writes with humor and energy, articulates a harsh critique of institutionalized religion, and seeks to describe the concrete life-situations of women. The topics discussed in her essays include mothers and daughters, the old woman, the unrealized woman, and women's education. Like the romantics, Dohm hosted her own salon and developed her thinking in interaction with women writers and activists such as Fanny Lewald, Helene Lange, Else Lasker-Schüler, Gabriele Reuter, and Lou Salomé. Dohm's work, like that of the romantics, spans a range of genres: treatises, pamphlets, essays, novels, drama (comedy), and novellas.

Dohm only started writing in earnest after she lost her husband. While she published a study of Spanish literature in 1867, it was only in 1872 and 1873 that she published major feminist texts such as *Was die Pastoren von den Frauen Denken* and *Der Jesuisismus im Hausstande*.[74] In these works, Dohm discusses the views of John Stuart Mill.[75] She also acknowledges the importance of Friedrich Schleiermacher, Dorothea Veit, Rahel Levin, Caroline Schlegel-Schelling (WP 131), Staël, and, among the idealists, Fichte.[76]

A consistent topic in Dohm's writing is the nature and power of privilege. She points out that no one is likely to give up privileges without a fight. As far as gender privileges go, "men will not voluntarily give up the rule of their sex [*Geschlechtsherrschaft*], which they regard as their legitimate right, but which is but an ancient privilege that, over the centuries, has corrupted their sense of justice."[77]

Like Staël, Dohm argues that male privileges are often upheld by making women's quests for change seem small and petty-minded. Echoing Staël's analysis of the misrecognition of the intellectual woman, Dohm observes how men accept women's participation in politics as long as they are amusing and charming, but
p. 666 quickly put women down if they challenge or instruct them. Given such attitudes, the fight for ↳ women's rights amounts to nothing short of a revolution—a formidable and wonderful one (*eine gewaltige und wunderbare*), as Dohm puts it.[78] At the core of this revolution is the call for women's suffrage. Hence Dohm is critical of feminists who view women's education as a goal in itself. Indeed, as she sees it, women will not be acknowledged as worthy of education *until* they are given the right to vote (rather than education possibly leading to suffrage).

If Dohm does not see education as a final goal, it nonetheless remains a topic she deeply cares about. In her 1876 *Women's Nature and Privilege*, Dohm points out that while the issue of women's education evokes strong feelings, much greater prejudices have been overcome in the past. Just think of Copernicus, she advises her readers: If he could make people realize that the earth is not the center of the universe, a similar reconsideration must be conceivable with respect to the position of men. Yet, Dohm recognizes the power of custom: "Custom and Habit are more powerful even than the law. [And] the latter is more easily evaded than the former."[79] Leaning on Mill, Dohm further develops the point that nurture, not nature, determines our understanding of gender. And from this point of view, education is indeed needed: "Not blood but upbringing is almost the only thing which stamps the individual with its seal," as she puts it.[80]

In her later essays, Dohm analyzes the lived experiences of oppression—and reviews a series of creative attempts to resist and overcome it. In "The New Mother" (1900), she (again like Staël) points out that patriarchy is not simply upheld by men, but also by women. Mothers play a particularly important role in

this context. Mothers, she claims, should not expect their daughters simply to reproduce their own values and they should be mindful that their ideals are often rooted in the past and, to a younger generation, irrelevant or even oppressive.

Women and aging is another topic that Dohm takes on. With her characteristic mix of wit and criticism, she describes how a society that identifies women with childbearing leads to a systematic underappreciation of the old woman. The old woman, she argues, should fight back: "Mock the mockeries with which they want to intimidate you and close the doors to joy.... Become old for others: but not for yourself" (WP 149).[81] A different, more melancholy portrait of the old woman is found in the earlier novella *Become Who You Are!* (1894). Here, we encounter the aging (but by our standards still relatively young) Agnes Schmidt who undergoes an existential crisis upon realizing that, once she is through her years of childbearing, society no longer has a place for her. As she reflects: "What have I ever done for myself out of love? Nothing that I
p. 667 knew of. ↳ But yet I was always satisfied? I? But I wasn't even an 'I.' ... I have lived a life in which I wasn't even present."[82] The novella opens with a reference to Nietzsche and Pindar, but also indicates how the Nietzschean topic of self-realization remains flawed unless it considers the problems of misogyny and gender injustice.

In the 1880s, many women artists and intellectuals, including Ellen Key, Laura Marholm, and Lou Salomé, took an interest in Nietzsche.[83] Dohm criticizes what she sees as this movement's hagiographic attitudes toward Nietzsche and their apparent compliance with his antifeminism.[84] Yet Nietzsche remains a philosopher on whose work Dohm often draws.

Many of the topics from Nietzsche's philosophy, however, had earlier been developed by Dohm. Her criticism of the church, which centers on its repressive view of women, is brought to focus in the 1873 text on the pastors, that is, before Nietzsche's well-known critique of Christianity in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) and *The Genealogy of Morality* (1887). Likewise, Dohm's early work analyzes how religion colors secular life without us being aware of it—again a point that Nietzsche later develops in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Also, the topic of self-formation, central to Nietzsche, is present in her earlier work. Yet, it remains the case that when Dohm turns to Nietzsche, she finds a voice whose critical spirit she appreciates and whose thinking serves to strengthen her arguments. Dohm's appropriation of Nietzsche, however, is never passive. With respect to self-formation, for example, she goes beyond Nietzsche by focusing on the need for a society in which self-realization can be achieved by everyone, women as well as men (through, among other things, education),[85] and she analyzes the price that is paid for systematic, social repression.

In "Nietzsche and Women" (1898), Dohm chronicles her horror and sadness upon confronting Nietzsche's misogyny. She points to Nietzsche's limited experience with women (WP 129). Moreover, she takes his
p. 668 claims about women to their outermost ↳ consequence, thereby demonstrating their absurdity. Nietzsche claims to detect women's slave-like nature. But how is it, asks Dohm, that the *Übermensch* needs to surround himself with slaves (WP 131, 136)? And if women, as Nietzsche suggests, exist in order to procreate, the *Übermensch* will certainly have his hands full providing for an ever-expanding family (WP 131).[86] Most important, however, in critiquing Nietzsche's attitude toward women, Dohm pursues a systematic line of arguments. She demonstrates how he, in speaking about women, passively internalizes the prejudices of the period, thus failing the critical spirit he otherwise displays. Measuring Nietzsche against his own standards, Dohm's goal is to learn from his mistakes. As good Nietzscheans, she argues, we must avoid this kind of fallacy and remain critical not only of others but also of our own points of view.[87] It could be argued, though, that Dohm herself is subject to internalized bias when, in an essay such as "On the Agitators of Feminism," she praises how some exceptional men have succeeded in portraying the suffering of women (instead of discussing the works of earlier women philosophers and writers).

During World War I, Dohm was an outspoken critic of militarization and war. In the ironically titled "Der Mißbrauch des Todes. Senile Impressionen von Hedwig Dohm" ("The Misuse of Death. Senile Impressions

by Hedwig Dohm," written in 1915, published two years later), she deploys her earlier emphasis on human rights to critique the "cannibalism" of war. War, she points out, reduces human beings to brutes—often under the false auspices of religion or nationalism.[88] In her antiwar activism, Dohm sees eye to eye with, among others, Helene Stöcker, Clara Zetkin, and Rosa Luxemburg.

5 Clara Zetkin

For Dohm, women's rights are human rights. She recognized no special rights or nature for women. Zetkin argues along similar lines. For her, however, it is the political undoing of economic injustice, not the recognition of universal human rights, that will improve the situation of women. Indeed, for Zetkin, the very notion of human rights is a token of bourgeois idealism, that is, it is an ideological construct. Similarly, her antiwar stance is not related to human rights (as it was for Dohm), but to an awareness of how it is, predominantly, the economically oppressed who are sent to war, maimed, and killed, only to see the upper classes profit from it (through for example the industrial production of arms and other goods).

p. 669 In 1889, Zetkin was invited to give a speech at the international workers' meeting in Paris. It was here that she first advanced a philosophical articulation of her platform. Her speech, "For the Liberation of Women," offers a radical, materialist view of women's emancipation. In a capitalist economy, Zetkin argues, women's emancipation is tied to their status as economical beings, that is, their status as workers (WP 162). Women workers financially depend on men *and* on the capitalist class. The question of women's emancipation must therefore be related to class struggle more broadly. Moreover, the interests of working-class women are constitutively different from those of the bourgeoisie, who would have few incentives to call for a radical rethinking of the economic system that had initially generated and maintained their privileges. Precisely because they do not own property and are often subdued at home, working-class women represent a point of view from which social justice can be radically rethought. And without a solution to the grave injustice of the class system, the overall situation of women cannot be improved (WP 163). In this way, Zetkin takes on a question that has also been at the center of later emancipatory movements: whether an oppressed group can be emancipated without an even more comprehensive change to an economical system that feeds off systematic injustice and oppression.

For Zetkin, the oppression of women is a genuinely modern problem. Here she disagrees with Friedrich Engels, for whom, in *The Origin of the Family* (1884), it was traced back to the overthrowing of an *ur*-communist matriarchy. Zetkin pursues a more dialectical argument. As she argues, *both* the promise of freedom *and* the oppression of women are products of industrialization, that is, products of the fact that women are turned into wageworkers. The very moment women gain financial independence they *also* face the oppression of a class-stratified labor market (WP 164). Hence, the liberation of women—with their new-won freedom as paid workers—must involve liberation from the very structure that prevents women, now as members of the working class, from realizing their freedom: "The emancipation of women, like the emancipation of the whole human race, will be exclusively the work of the emancipation of labor from capital" (WP 166). From this point of view, a feminist focus on suffrage is no goal in itself—since one could well imagine suffrage being introduced without the larger political overhaul that Zetkin deems necessary. Zetkin's position on suffrage is modified over time.[89]

While she shapes her feminist thoughts from within a Marxist platform, Zetkin acknowledges that Marx did not have much to say about women.[90] Yet Marx provided the women's movement with helpful conceptual tools. In her words, Marx's "materialist concept of history has not supplied us with any ready-made formulas concerning the women's question … yet it has given us the correct, unerring method to explore
p. 670 and comprehend that question."[91] Similarly, she selectively approaches ↳ the arguments from Engels's *On the Origin of the Family*.[92] She draws on and further develops the analysis of the family as a social construct

and a function of material (production) conditions; it is not given by God or nature, but manmade and, as such, it can be overthrown. Yet, Zetkin did not share Engels's idealization of gender relations in the working-class family, his eulogies for the "primitive" cohabitation structure of free sexual conduct, and his skeptical attitude toward suffrage (which Zetkin now approved of).[93]

Another key text for Zetkin was August Bebel's *Woman under Socialism* (1883). Here Bebel identifies the double burden of women: "The female sex as such has a double yoke to bear. First, women suffer as a result of their social dependence upon men, and the inferior position allotted to them in society; formal equality before the law alleviates this condition, but does not remedy it. Second, women suffer as a result of their economic dependence, which is the lot of women in general, and especially of the proletarian women, as it is of the proletarian men."[94] Moreover, Bebel argues that "there can be no liberation of mankind without social independence and equality of the sexes."[95] Zetkin endorses these arguments.

However, while extending Marxism to involve positions on gender and class, Engels and Bebel do not focus on practical steps toward women's liberation. This lack of fit between their theories, on the one hand, and the practical shaping of the day-to-day struggle for equality, on the other, left a challenge for Zetkin. How best to make use of critical theory and achieve real-world results? Zetkin sets out to answer this question—and, as she does so, she realizes that this is not simply a matter of applying the existing theories. Instead, the practical implementation of the theories will require a reshaping of the theoretical level.

In her work, Zetkin confronts the fear, among male workers, that the introduction of women into the workforce will lower wages across the board. Typically, women were not unionized, which made it harder to negotiate better wages and work conditions. Often, women were faced with oppression at home as well as at work. Unlike Engels's idealization of the working classes, Zetkin insists that "the male workers must stop viewing the female worker primarily as a woman to be courted if she is young, beautiful, pleasant, and cheerful (or not). They must stop ... molesting them with crude and fresh sexual advances. The workers
p. 671 must rather get accustomed to treat female ↳ laborers primarily as female proletarians, as working-class comrades."[96] Similarly, Zetkin challenges the leaders of the social democratic party in their attitudes toward women.[97]

Given the particular situation of the working-class woman—she does not possess property and has no interest in supporting a system that reproduces oppression—Zetkin makes it clear that her struggle will not benefit from cooperation with bourgeois feminists. As she puts it, "there is a women's question for the women of the proletariat, the bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia and the Upper Ten Thousand. It assumes a different form according to the class situation of each one of these strata."[98] This point had not been addressed by Engels or Bebel.[99] Moreover, Bebel had assumed that male workers would not be likely to support the liberation of women workers.[100] Zetkin, for her part, is more optimistic and predicts that the male worker will ultimately join the struggle for women's rights precisely because he will see it as a struggle for universal workers' rights.

Throughout her writings, speeches, and activism, Zetkin senses that there is a need for political information targeting working-class women. With her pragmatic attitudes on this matter, Zetkin has been accused of being condescending toward working-class women.[101] For the modern-day reader, her lack of support for birth control, a hotly debated issue at the time, is also unsettling. Again, Zetkin prioritized a class perspective and views birth control as potentially hurting the working class.[102] Her skepticism toward birth control was something Zetkin shared with Rosa Luxemburg and other socialist leaders.

Zetkin's position on women's emancipation is brought into sharp relief through the debates with Lily Braun.[103] Paradoxical as it may sound, Braun was a Nietzschean social democrat. In 1895, she argued that working-class women must join forces with the bourgeoise women's movement. For Braun, the fundamental distinction is that between men and women, not between classes. For Zetkin, by contrast,

p. 672 women's rights are and must ↳ be social rights and, as a result, there are few shared interests between working-class and bourgeois women.

For Zetkin, a worker is never simply a worker, but a concrete somebody who comes with a particular gender, age, and background. Given her focus on social injustice (under which the oppression of women is subsumed), Zetkin's engagement extends to child labor. In an essay from 1902, she details the grueling conditions of the children and blames politicians for their complacency: "the legislative authorities have kept a deaf ear towards the screams of many hundreds of thousands of tortured human beings. Their eyes have been blind to the twitching pain of the mangled bodies and spirits."[104]

In the 1930s, Zetkin takes a clear stance against systemic racism in the United States and elsewhere. Responding to the case against the so-called Scottsboro Boys, who had been wrongly accused of rape, she situates racial oppression within a larger picture of class and white privilege: "The accusation is a deliberate lie, concocted for the most sinister purposes of landowners and factory owners. They want to have the black youths burned alive, in order to terrorize the working masses of blacks, who are rebelling against their exploitation and, by doing so, forming a united front with their white brothers and sisters against hunger, imperialist wars, and bloody white terror" (WP 174). The reduction of the people to mere onlookers is, for Zetkin, "the greatest of all evils."[105]

Zetkin also opposes the increasing militarization across Europe in the early twentieth century. Her antiwar stance continued after World War I and extended into the period when the National Socialists rose to power. In "The Toilers against War" (1933), she argues that imperialism, without which capitalism cannot survive, is but another of capitalism's injustices.[106] Slavery and oppression are, for her, global phenomena. Thus, they should be fought in the same way as the struggle against oppression of women or working-class children. In both cases, we face a call for economic redistribution and justice.

Her conflict with the social democratic party over its support of World War I led Zetkin to join the Spartacus League, later the German communist party, spearheaded by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. As the National Socialists were gaining ground, Zetkin left Germany for Russia, and it was there that she died in 1933, just months after she, as the oldest member of Parliament, had given the annual opening speech at the Reichstag. As the fascists were rising to power, Zetkin analyses the internal relationship between capitalism and fascist forms of government.[107] Her speech is a veritable antifascist manifesto that retains its relevance today.

p. 673 6 Rosa Luxemburg

Rosa Luxemburg is another pioneer within the socialist movement. In her eulogy of Luxemburg, written after the brutal political murder of Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in 1919, Zetkin observes that Luxemburg's work "combined to a rare degree the power of logical deduction with an acute understanding of everyday life and its development."[108] It is indeed Luxemburg's commitment to the "everyday"—her focus on workers (rather than on the party elite), her rejection of top-down politics, and her critique of imperialism—that distinguishes her contributions to social and political philosophy. This put her in conflict with the leaders of the German Social Democratic Party but also caught the attention, relatively early on, of Georg Lukàcs.[109] Luxemburg's work generated important discussions, still relevant today, of reform versus revolution, the nature of capitalism, and the perils of militarization.

Luxemburg's contribution to political philosophy gets its first systematic articulation in *Social Reform or Revolution*. The material was first published as a series of articles in the fall of 1898 and spring of 1899. Here, Luxemburg critiques Eduard Bernstein's efforts to shift the focus of Marxism from revolution to reform, thereby making social democracy, rather than the end of capitalism, its goal. Bernstein was a leading voice

in German socialism—and therefore, by default, in the international socialist movement. For Luxemburg, Bernstein's willingness to prioritize "the movement" (i.e., reform) over "the goal" (i.e., revolution) cannot be counted as a modification of Marxism, but involves a rejection of the socialist agenda altogether.

As Luxemburg sees it, Bernstein's move represents the first bifurcation of the socialist movement into a reformist and a revolutionary branch.[110] In her view, there can be no socialism without the goal of a postcapitalist society.[111] Hence, while pretending to write under the auspices of Marxism, Bernstein in reality undermines it (RLR 130). His is not, as he claims, a strategic question about the pace of the movement (gradual reform or a sudden revolution), but the attempt to stake out an entirely new path: an effort to merge capitalism and the principles of social justice.

Writing as a political economist (she held a PhD in political economy from the University of Zurich), Luxemburg takes Bernstein to task for his understanding of labor. He fails, she argues, to realize that true
p. 674 democracy requires a reorganization of the ↳ ownership of the means of production, rather than simply a redistribution of financial means within an existing class system (RLR 162). In effect, Bernstein moves socialism away from its material basis, reverting it to the idealist platform it had initially sought to overcome. His is but a bourgeois course (RLR 148), a case of political "opportunism," as Luxemburg calls it.[112]

Luxemburg, however, does not only speak out against Bernstein's reformism. She also engages in a dispute with Lenin. The Lenin-Luxemburg debate addresses the relationship between the working class and its political expression in the party. Where Marx and Engels had assumed that the proletariat would itself press forward with a revolution, later socialists were left to ponder the fact that a revolution had failed to materialize. This created a need to rethink the relationship between the people (the workers) and the party. For Lenin, it was clear that the Russian proletariat would not itself develop class consciousness and that, as a result, class consciousness would need to be brought in from the party elite. In his *What Is To Be Done?* (1902), he argued that "he who wants a *broad* organization of workers, with elections, reports, universal voting &x., is simply an incorrigible Utopian."[113] Two years later, Luxemburg—neither a "he," nor an "incorrigible Utopian"—responds with "Organizational Questions Concerning Russian Social Democracy"(*Neue Zeit*, 1904).[114] As Luxemburg argues, Lenin's position requires, first, that all the branches of the party and the membership blindly submit to the centralized party power and, second, that this centralized power is distinguished from the party grassroots.[115] On her view, this centralization saps socialism of its power. It is an "over-mechanistic conception of social democratic politics" (RLR 253), one that drains the working people of the agency needed for political organization (RLR 261). As Luxemburg sums up her points: "The ultracentralism that Lenin advocates seems to us, in its whole essence, to be imbued, not with a positive creative spirit, but with the sterile spirit of the night-watchman state. His line of thought is concerned principally with the control of party activity and not with its fertilization, with *narrowing* and not with *broadening*, with *tying the movement up* and not with *drawing it together*" (RLR 256). For Luxemburg, socialism is and remains fundamentally democratic. As such, it is a system "*of* the class and not of a little leading minority in the *name of* the class" (RLR 308, emphasis added).

p. 675 Luxemburg's commitment to the people extends to her criticism of imperialism in what is often considered her main work: *Accumulation of Capital: A Contribution to an Explanation of Imperialism* (1913). Together with *Introduction to Political Economy*, a work that Luxemburg began in 1907–1908 when teaching at the Party School in Berlin, *Accumulation of Capital* presents imperialism as the necessary corollary of capitalism. In developing her argument, Luxemburg provides a historical-anthropological analysis of various forms of protocommunism (precapitalist communities). In her view, Marx's theory of imperialism had failed to explain the necessity of capitalist appropriation of noncapitalist parts of the world.[116] Because of the need to invest the surplus gained into ever new markets, it is, in Luxemburg's view, impossible to conceive of a capitalism that is not, by nature, expansive. Moreover, capitalism is the first economic system to display this feature at its very core.[117] Natural economies will typically resist appropriation by capitalism. Thus, the

process of appropriation is necessarily violent and oppressive (though the degree of violence and oppression may vary).[118] By developing this argument, Luxemburg seeks to demonstrate the violence at the heart of the capitalist system (thus bolstering her critique of reformism).

At the time, Marx's studies of precapitalist societies were not yet known. *Grundrisse*, with its section on precapitalist economical formations, was only published in 1939 and, with the exception of Engels's *The Origin of the Family,* which references Marx's anthropological notes, sparse attention was paid to Marx's writings on the non-Western world (Russia, Java, India, Indigenous North and South Americans, Indigenous Australians, etc.).[119] Luxemburg, however, draws on some of the same sources as Marx (and Engels), including ethnologists such as Henry Summer Maine and Lewis Henry Morgan. Her study of historical forms of slavery critiques Engels's claim, in *Anti-Dühring*, that the notion of foreign labor only emerged with private property.[120] In her work, Luxemburg, moreover, analyzes forms of oppression that emerge within precapitalist societies. For example, the Incas, internally a proto-communist economy, imposed on other tribes "a refined system of economic exploitation and political domination."[121] Precapitalist societies are not necessarily idyllic clusters of equality, but vary in their constitutions and developments, and encompass egalitarian as well as nonegalitarian models. In addition to her original theoretical analysis, *Accumulation of Capital* and *Introduction* provide important methodological
p. 676 contributions in that she pursues a (more) historically ↳ and anthropologically founded materialism. That Lenin would deem this part of Luxemburg's work "a shocking muddle"[122] matters less than the fact that she finds it necessary to epistemically justify her analysis with a historical and anthropological review of noncapitalist societies. Despite Luxemburg's failure to grant true political (revolutionary) agency to the inhabitants of these societies (for her, such agency can only be found within the working class of the industrial era),[123] her thinking displays an unusual degree of sensitivity toward social and cultural diversity and the intrinsic value of preindustrial lifeforms.

Luxemburg's effort to display the systematic violence inherent in the capitalist system also underpins *The Crisis in the German Social Democracy*. The work was smuggled out of the prison where Luxemburg was held on account of her antiwar activism and published in 1916 under the pseudonym Junius (and is therefore often called the Junius Pamphlet). The pamphlet delivers a veritable criticism of the social democratic party and its support for Germany's militarization.[124] As Luxemburg sees it, the social democratic movement had allowed itself to be taken off track and duped by bourgeois nationalism. The consequence of this was a compromising of international class solidarity and a splitting of the socialist movements both internally (into reformists and revolutionaries) and internationally (in that collaboration across national borders was lost). Moreover, Luxemburg suggests that the very destruction of the working-class movement was initiated by capitalist forces. These forces, she argues, tend to be one step ahead of the workers, thus manufacturing preemptive strikes once criticism gains traction and protest movements get too strong.

Beyond its immediate political relevance—and call for the internationalist working class to stand up against parochial, bourgeois interests—the Junius Pamphlet furthers Luxemburg's analysis of, and arguments against, imperialism. She sees the military escalation that would culminate in World War I as a result of European imperialism in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.[125] Neither imperialism nor war, however, is in the interest of the working people. Instead, it is the owners of capital—of the steel industry, banks, and military manufacturers (Luxemburg takes both Deutsche Bank and Krupp to task)—who benefit at the
p. 677 expense of the working classes that have been recruited to ↳ protect their nation. Protecting the nation through imperialism, however, is mere fiction. As Luxemburg would put it: "no nation is free whose national existence is based upon the enslavement of another people, for [to the socialist] colonial peoples, too, are human beings, and, as such, parts of the national state."[126] Similarly, the war is an affront to the international solidarity of the working people—and an attempt to divert their attention and drain them of the energy needed for the class struggle that unites them.

In her focus on economic oppression, Luxemburg has been accused of overlooking the situation of (working-class) women, that is, the cause for which Zetkin had been fighting. While there is some truth to this—Luxemburg certainly did not match Zetkin's dedication to the women's cause—it is not the full picture. In a series of speeches from the 1900s, Luxemburg confronts the sexism of the social democratic party. Moreover, her focus is global and she connects the exploitation of women with imperialism (RLR 244–245). For her, the predicament of poor women presents a particularly stark picture of the sufferings of the oppressed. Luxemburg calls for emancipation, but the emancipation recommended is that of the international working class (see for instance RLR 244–245).

Luxemburg defends the right to universal suffrage (as a woman, she herself was not allowed to vote or run for office). She emphasizes, though, that it is not the job of women alone, but of men and women together, to bring about a mass movement for suffrage (RLR 239). Moreover, she insists that suffrage is earned not simply through political education and participation, but also through work. Like Zetkin, Luxemburg has little sympathy with the bourgeois women's movement (RLR 240). Again, like Zetkin, Luxemburg argues that it is not as women but as workers (i.e., in terms of their social rather than biological position) that women will gain full rights and equality. And, with its focus on the working class, who have no particular property or interests to defend, these rights will indeed be universal: "For the property-owning bourgeois woman, her house is the world. *For the proletarian woman, the whole world is her house*" (RLR 243). In this way, Luxemburg's cry for women's rights remains tied up with her fight for global justice—her fight against all ideologies that allow some groups of people to live at the expense of others.

7 Conclusion

Women philosophers contribute actively and importantly to nineteenth-century social and political thought. The political and social motivation of women philosophers extends beyond the philosophers
p. 678 discussed in this chapter and encompasses for example ↳ Gerda Walther's attempt to forge a bond between socialism and phenomenology. For the women philosophers discussed, social and political philosophy is not only a *subfield*, but an entirely central concern—the very reason why they turn to philosophy in the first place. Nonetheless, their contributions have been overlooked in discussions of social and political philosophy as well as of nineteenth-century thought more generally. This neglect leaves us with an incomplete understanding of the field, but also of the period: For example, we risk overlooking the bridge from romanticism to socialism. Moreover, we risk missing the early discussions of issues that are, today, entirely central to social and political philosophy—issues such as imperialism, cultural arrogance, racism, the climate crisis, poverty, justice, the situated nature of freedom, the social nature of gender, and the relationship between economical oppression and oppression based on gender and race. By taking into account nineteenth-century women's contribution to social and political philosophy, we make the field richer in terms of positions and sharper in terms of analytical tools and concepts. If the women discussed here were ignored in traditional accounts of the history of philosophy, they should still be included in our contemporary understanding of social and political thought.

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Notes

1 See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile or On Education*, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 386–387; Immanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ed. and trans. Robert B. Louden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 209; J. G. Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right According to the Principles of the Wissenschaftslehre*, ed. Frederick Neuhouser, trans. Michael Baur (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 299, but also 266–270, 298–307; G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, ed. Allen Wood, trans. H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 207; Arthur Schopenhauer, “On Women,” in *Parerga and Paralipomena*, trans. Adrian del Caro and Christopher Janaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), vol. 2, 555–556; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, ed. Rolf-Peter Horstman and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), §§232–239. In this context, Nietzsche also lauds Napoleon for his rebuking of Germaine de Staël (Napoleon’s reaction to her work is discussed below).

2 Such an orientation can also be found among earlier women philosophers, e.g., of the Renaissance. However, what sets the nineteenth century apart is the increasing professionalization of philosophy, thus also an increasing awareness of

marginalization among the groups who were barred from participation. Moreover, this is the century in which we see women organize politically in order to gain suffrage and access to higher education.

3 For a discussion of her political achievements, see Glenda Sluga, "Madame de Staël and the Transformation of European Politics, 1812–17," *International History Review* 37, no. 1 (2015): 142–166.

4 Published the following year in an English version by an unnamed translator as Germaine de Staël, *Letters on the Works and Character of J. J. Rousseau* (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1789).

5 See Mary Seidman Trouille, *Sexual Politics in the Enlightenment: Women Writers Read Rousseau* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), and Jennifer J. Popiel, *Rousseau's Daughters: Domesticity, Education, and Autonomy in Modern France* (Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire Press, 2008).

6 Rousseau, *Emile*, 386–387.

7 See Mary Wollstonecraft, review of *Letters on the Works and Character of J. J. Rousseau, by Germaine de Staël*, *Analytical Review* 4 (August 1789): 360–362. See also Trouille, *Sexual Politics*, 221–235.

8 See Gérard Gengembre and Jean Goldzink, "Madame de Staël ou pour une religion politique," *Annales Benjamin Constant* 8–9 (1988): 207–222. Staël at this point leans on Rousseau's understanding of religion as a remedy against social fragmentation. Unlike Enlightenment thinkers such as Voltaire, she also sees religion as a halfway cure against political fanaticism.

9 The full text was only published in 1979. See Aurelian Craiutu, introduction to *Considerations on the Principal Events of the French Revolution*, ed. Aurelian Craiutu [based on the 1818 translation by an unnamed translator] (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2008), x.

10 Mauro Barberis describes Staël's *On the Current Circumstances* as the most representative text of republican constitutionalism. Mauro Barberis, "Constant, Mme de Staël et la constitution républicaine. Un essay d'interprétation," in *Le groupe de Coppet et le monde modern. Conceptions-images-débats*, ed. Françoise Tilkin (Geneva: Droz, 1998), 193.

11 Her antimonarchical sentiments distinguish her work from that of Bettina Brentano von Arnim, who defended the idea of a people's king.

12 For a discussion of Staël's transition from republicanism to liberalism, see Andreas Kalyvas and Ira Katznelson, *Liberal Beginnings: Making a Republic for the Moderns* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), chap. 5. The authors, however, overemphasize Kant's influence and downplay the influence of thinkers like Herder and Schleiermacher.

13 Germaine de Staël, *A Treatise on the Influence of the Passions Upon the Happiness of Individuals and of Nations*, trans. unknown (London: Cawthorn, British Library, 1798) (henceforth abbreviated TIP; the translation is old and should be read with caution and in junction with the French original).

14 This point was already developed in Staël's *Des Circonstances*, see, e.g., 327–330.

15 For a systematic discussion of Staël's analysis of political fanaticism, see my "Politics and Passions: Staël on Fanaticism," in *The History and Philosophy of Fanaticism*, ed. Paul Katsafanas (London: Routledge, 2023), 143–160.

16 Germaine de Staël, "On Women Writers" (from *The Influence of Literature on Society*), trans. Dalia Nassar and Stephen Gaukroger, in *Women Philosophers in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Dalia Nassar and Kristin Gjesdal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 32. Henceforth abbreviated as WP. Except for the texts by Staël, all the translations are by Anna Ezekiel.

17 See Theodor Gottlieb von Hippel, *The Status of Women: Collected Writings*, ed. and trans. Timothy F. Sellner (Middletown, DE: Xlibris, 2009), e.g., 251–252.

18 See Helen Fronius, *Women and Literature in the Goethe Era 1770–1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 62–67.

19 J. G. Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, trans. Michael Baur (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 300.

20 Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*, 305.

21 It should be noted that Fichte's classes were audited by Sophie Mereau and Rahel Levin Varnhagen (Mereau in 1791, Varnhagen in 1807–1808). Fichte later met with Staël, who chided him for his idealist position.

22 Germaine de Staël, *Corinne, or Italy*, trans. and ed. Sylvia Raphael (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

23 See Hedwig Dohm, "The New Mother," WP 139–145, and Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), esp. 524–571.

24 See especially Germaine de Staël to Thomas Jefferson, January 6, 1816, in *Madame de Staël: Selected Correspondence*, ed. Georges Solovieff and Kathleen Jameson-Cemper, trans. Kathleen Jameson-Cemper (Dordrecht: Springer, 2000), 367–369.

25 See Staël, "Préface pour la traduction d'un ouvrage de M. Wilberforce" and "Appel aux Souverains" (both 1814). For a discussion of this aspect of Staël's philosophy, see Karen de Bruin, "Romantic Aesthetics and Abolitionist Activism: African Beauty in Germaine de Staël's *Mirza ou Lettre d'un voyageur*," *Symposium: A Quarterly Journal in Modern Literatures* 67, no. 3 (2013): 135–147, and Françoise Massardier-Kenney, "Staël, Translation, and Race," in *Translating Slavery: Gender and Race in French Women's Writings, 1783–1823*, ed. Doris Y. Kadish and Françoise Massardier-Kenney (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1994), 135–146.

26 Staël to Jefferson, 368. See also Richmond Laurin Hawkins, *Madame de Staël and the United States* (Cambridge, MA:

Harvard University Press, 1930), 5; and Biancamaria Fontana, *Germaine de Staël: A Political Portrait* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016).

27 See my "Spinoza's Hermeneutic Legacy: Herder, Schleiermacher, Staël," in *Spinoza in Germany: Political and Religious Thought in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Jason Yonover and Kristin Gjesdal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

28 James Mackintosh, "*De L'Allemagne*. Par Madame la Baronne de Staël-Holstein, 3 vols. London 1813," *Edinburgh Review* (October 1813): 198–239.

29 For solid discussions of Staël's reading of Schelling and Kant, see Margaret R. Higonnet, "Madame de Staël and Schelling," *Comparative Literature* 38, no. 2 (1986): 159–180; J. Gibelin H. Champion, *L'esthétique de Schelling Et l'Allemagne de Madame de Staël* (Geneva: Slatkin Reprints, 1975); James Vigus, "A Weimar Constellation: Aesthetic Autonomy in Henry Crabb Robinson's Private Lectures (1804) and Madame de Staël's *Corinne ou l'Italie*," in *Idealismus und Romantik in Jena*, ed. Michael Forster, Johannes Korngiebel, and Klaus Vieweg (Jena: Wilhelm Fink, 2018), 287–307; Reinhard Lauth, "J. G. Fichte et Madame de Staël," *Archives de Philosophie* 47, no. 1 (1984): 63–75.

30 For a discussion of this point, see John Claiborne Isbell, *The Birth of European Romanticism: Truth and Propaganda in Staël's "De L'Allemagne"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). See also Glenda Sluga, "Passions, Patriotism and Nationalism, and Germaine de Staël," *Nations and Nationalism* 15, no. 2 (2009): 299–318.

31 Germaine de Staël, *Ten Year's Exile* [translator unnamed] (London: Centaur Press, 2005).

32 Germaine de Staël, "The Spirit of Translation," trans. Doris Y. Kadish, in Kadish and Massardier-Kenney, *Translating Slavery,* 162–168.

33 This is clear, e.g., in pt. 4 of *Germany*.

34 Some of these metaphors verge toward a celebration of the dissolution of subjectivity in death. However, as Barbara Becker-Cantarino points out, the term "life" is far more frequent in her work than the terms "death" and "dying." See Barbara Becker-Cantarino, "'New Mythology': Myth and Death in Karoline von Günderrode's Literary Work," in *Women and Death: Women's Representation of Death in German Culture since 1500*, ed. Clare Bielby and Anna Richards (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2010), 51–70; 66–67 in particular.

35 See Manfred Frank, *Der kommende Gott. Vorlesungen über die Neue Mythologie*, pt. 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982).

36 See Karl Preißendanz, ed., *Die Liebe der Günderode. Friedrich Creuzers Briefe an Caroline von Günderode* (Bern: Herbert Lang, 1975), 230–231.

37 See Dalia Nassar, "The Human Vocation and the Question of the Earth: Karoline von Günderrode's Philosophy of Nature," *Archive für Geschichte der Philosophie* 104, no. 1 (2022): 108–130, and chapter 22 here.

38 For an elaboration of this argument, see Nassar, "The Human Vocation."

39 See Anna Ezekiel, "Revolution and Revitalization: Karoline von Günderrode's Political Philosophy and Its Metaphysical Foundations," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 30, no. 4 (2022): 666–686.

40 See Anna Ezekiel, "Revolution and Revitalization."

41 See Lou Andreas-Salomé, *The Erotic*, trans. John Crisp (London: Routledge, 2013).

42 In "The Story of a Brahmin" Günderrode uses the term "Universe," coined by Schleiermacher, as the most inclusive account of humans and nature.

43 For example, the drama *Udohla* (1805) and "The Story of a Brahmin" elaborate Indian mythology, history, and thought. For a general discussion of the reception of Indian thought in the period, see Bradley L. Herling, *The German Gītā: Hermeneutics and Discipline in the German Reception of Indian Thought, 1778–1831* (London: Routledge, 2006).

44 Both texts are translated in Karoline von Günderrode, *Poetic Fragments*, trans. Anna Ezekiel (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016). Ezekiel's translation also includes helpful introductions to Günderrode's philosophy and the aforementioned drama in particular.

45 Indeed, in her turn to Hinduism, she goes as far as to almost romanticize widow burning (see the poem "The Malabarian Widows," in Karoline von Günderrode, *Sämtliche Werke,* ed. Walter Morgentaler [Basel: Stromfeld, 1990–91], vol. 1, 325). Here she distinguishes her perspective from that of Herder, who strongly condemns widow burning. See Herder, *Werke in zehn Bänden*, ed. Martin Bollacher et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985–98), vol. 6, 456.

46 Hence, while Becker-Cantarino may be right to criticize the gender aspects of Günderrode's new mythology (a woman passively gives herself to nature if not also to death), she fails to note that this mythology, allegedly supporting "traditional submissiveness," is balanced with an awareness of agency and gender. For Becker-Cantarino's view, see "'New Mythology,'" 68.

47 At the point of Günderrode's suicide, she and Brentano von Arnim were no longer close. It was, apparently, Creuzer who had initiated the break. See Barbara Becker-Cantarino, "Karoline von Günderrode," in *Bettina von Arnim Handbuch*, ed. Becker-Cantarino (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2019), 160.

48 See von Arnim, "Bettine und die Junghegelianer," in Bettine von Arnim, *Werke und Briefe*, ed. Walter Schitz and Sibylle von Steinsdorf, vol. 3, ed. Wolfgang Bunzel et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985), 727–742

("Kommentar").

49 This reading is found in Christa Wolf, "Your Next Life Begins Today: A Letter about Bettine," in *Bettina von Arnim: Gender and Politics*, ed. Elke P. Frederiksen and Katherine R. Goodman (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), 35–71 (reference is to p. 38).

50 Bettina von Arnim, *Goethe's Correspondence with a Child*, 3 vols., vol. 3 (London: Longman et al., 1839), 76. While the translator is unnamed, Brentano von Arnim had taught herself English to translate the work. See Marjanne G. Goozé, "A Language of Her Own: Bettina Brentano von Arnim's Translation Theory and Her English Translation Project," in Frederiksen and Goodman, *Bettina Brentano von Arnim*, 278–304.

51 On the dispute around Tyrol, see Ulrike Landfester, "'Die echte Politik muß Erfinderin sein.' Überlegungen zum Umgang mit Bettine von Arnims politischem Werk," in *"Die echte Politik muß Erfinderin sein." Beitäge eines Wiepersdorfer Kolloquiums zu Bettina von Arnim*, ed. Hartwig Schutz (Berlin: Saint Albin Verlag, 1999), 1–39 (esp. 9–12).

52 For an account of their friendship, see Barbara Becker-Cantarino, "Karoline von Günderrode," 157–164. In the work, Brentano von Arnim does not mention Günderrode's suicide, though this is indeed mentioned in *Goethe's Letter to a Child* (toward the end of the correspondence with Goethe's mother, Catharina Elisabeth, in bk. 1).

53 For a discussion of Brentano von Arnim's political philosophy, see Giulia Valpione, "Expanding the Canon: The Political Philosophy of Bettina von Arnim," *Symphilosophie* 2 (2020): 131–156. Valpione also helpfully compares Brentano von Arnim's views on gender and agency with those of the other (male) romantics.

54 See Wolf, "Your Next Life Begins Today," 43.

55 The idea of women's knitting resounds in misogynist comments throughout the century. Hedwig Dohm takes on the gendered views on knitting and morality in "Reform der Mädchenschule," in *Frauen. Ein historisches Lesebuch*, ed. Andrea van Dülmen (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1991), 39–41, 41.

56 See Bettina Brentano von Arnim, *Werke*, vol. 2 (Weimar: Aufbau Verlag, 1989), 631. As for her needing freedom, she writes: "Ich weiß, was ich bedarf!—ich bedarf, daß ich meine Freiheit behalte." Brentano von Arnim, *Werke*, vol. 2, 692.

57 This aspect of Brentano von Arnim's philosophy becomes central in the new Hegelian Edgar Bauer's defense of her work, and also in Tugenev's celebration of it. See Heinz Härtl, "Bettina Brentano von Arnim's Relations to the Young Hegelians," in Frederiksen and Goodman, *Bettina Brentano von Arnim,* 156–158. Further, while presented with the view that her King's Book was influenced or partly even dictated by Bruno Bauer, Brentano von Arnim responds that "the philosophy in it … did not come from Bruno Bauer … but from *Günderode*"; 165.

58 Heinz Härtl, "Zur zeitgenossischen Publizistischen Rezeption des Königbuches," in *"Der Geist muß Freiheit genießen … ! Studien zu Werk und Bildingsprogramm Bettine von Arnims*, ed. Walter Schmitz and Sibylle von Steinsdorff (Berlin: FSP Saint Albin Verlag, 1992), 208–235, 220.

59 Bettina Brentano von Arnim, *Werke und Briefe*. Edited by Wolfgang Bunzel et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1985), vol. 3, 200. The conclusion follows Frau Rat's reflection on the state: "What is the state to the people? A lording slave trader who barters with him." In a situation like this, the state fails to take care of the people like a loving parent; 200.

60 *Werke und Briefe*, vol. 3, 217.

61 Similarly, Novalis defends the notion of a *Volkskönig(in)* in *Glauben und Liebe* (1798).

62 Indeed, David Strauß uses Brentano von Arnim's religious spirit to defend his own position against blasphemy charges and asks how long it will take "for people to see a new gospel according to John in Bettina's letters." See Härtl, "Bettina Brentano von Arnim's Relations to the Young Hegelians," 145–185, 147. Härtl also discusses the nuances in the left Hegelian responses to Brentano von Arnim, especially around the issues of religion and pantheism.

63 For an overview of the editions and editorial challenges, see Becker-Cantarino, "Das *Armenbuch*-Projekt (1844/45)," in *Bettina von Arnim Handbuch*, 430–439.

64 For an English translation, see Bettina Brentano von Arnim, "Tale of the Lucky Purse," trans. Helen G. Morris-Keitel, in *Marvels & Tales* 11, no. 1/2 (1997), 127–133.

65 For an English translation, see Bettine von Arnim and Gisela von Arnim Grimm, *The Life of High Countess Gritta von Ratsinourhouse*, trans. Lisa Ohm (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

66 See Ricarda Huch's *Die Romantik* (Leipzig: H. Haeffel Verlag, 1931), vol. 2 (for the discussion of Brentano von Arnim, see 167–193). For a critical discussion of Huch's reading, see Barbara Becker-Cantarino, "Zur politischen Romantik. Bettina von Arnim, die 'Frauenfrage' und der 'Feminismus,'" in Schutz, "*Die echte Politik muß Erfinderin sein,*" 217–248. While Becker-Cantarino also discusses Huch's antifeminism, it should be mentioned that Huch, in her work, pays attention to a number of women romantics, including Karoline Schelling (née Michaelis), Dorothea Schlegel, and others. For a more positive assessment of Huch's contribution, see Gesa Dane, "Women Writers and Romanticism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Romanticism*, ed. Nicholas Saul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 133–146.

67 Brentano von Arnim's endorsement of communism was clear when she gave the Bauer brothers the right to her husband's work and Egbert Bauer in particular the right to *The Spring Wreath* "for no other reason than to support communism

where it is not advocated senselessly but founded on a moral sentiment." See Härtl, "Bettina Brentano von Arnim's Relations to the Young Hegelians," 169.

68 Katherine R. Goodman, "Through a Different Lens: Bettina Brentano von Arnim's Views on Gender," in Frederiksen and Goodman, *Bettina Brentano von Arnim*, 116–117.

69 "Das Stimmerecht der Frauen" (1876), in Elke Frederiksen, *Die Frauenfrage in Deutschland 1865–1915. Texte und Dokumente* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1981), 374. See also Birgit Mikus, *The Political Woman in Print: German Women's Writing 1845–1919* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2014), 213.

70 Here Dohm differs from the different-but-equal attitude that, according to Chris Weedon, characterized much of the early women's movement. See Chris Weedon, "The Struggle for Women's Emancipation in the Work of Hedwig Dohm," *German Life and Letters* 47, no. 2 (1994): 182–192; see 183 in particular.

71 Dohm, "Kindheitserinnerungen einer alten Berlinerin," in *Hedwig Dohm. Erinnerungen und weitere Schriften von und über Hedwig Dohm*, ed. Hedda Korsch (Zurich: Ala Verlag, 1980), 70 and 78.

72 Hedwig Dohm, "Sind Berufsthätigkeit und Mutterpflichten vereinbar?" *Die Woche. Moderne illustrierte Zeitschrift* 38, September 22, 1900: 1667–1669. In the earlier "Herrenrechte" (1886), she points out that if women's inferiority is led back to nature, we also need to ask about men's nature. Are not also men characterized by historically determined social conditions? In this context, Dohm points out how philosophers like Mill benefited from marrying educated women. See Dohm, "Herrenrechte," *Die Zukunft* 14 (1896): 508–512, 511. The same point is repeated in a 1908 essay on reform in girls' schools. Dohm demands comprehensive schooling and coeducation. Dohm, "Reform der Mädchenschule," in *Frauen. Ein historisches Lesebuch*, ed. Andrea van Dülmen (Munich: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1991), 39–41. It should be pointed out, though, that in an earlier essay (1874), she keeps open the possibility that women have a mental organization (*geistige Organisation*) that is different from men's (different, but not of lesser quality, as she specifies). For Dohm, this is an argument to grant women access to the university, because they are likely to provide new and different ideas in the sciences (*neue Formen der Erkenntnis, neue Gedankenrichtungen der Wissenschaft*). See Dohm, "Ob Frauen studieren dürfen, können, sollen?" in Frederiksen, *Die Frauenfrage*, 242–255. Here Dohm echoes a point of view defended by, among others, Louise Otto-Peters. For a rendering of Otto-Peters along these lines see Weedon, "The Struggle for Women's Emancipation." Weedon does not acknowledge Dohm's closeness to this position in the first half of the 1870s.

73 Dohm makes it clear that she identified with Brentano von Arnim ("als Halberwachsene identifizierte ich mich mit Bettina"). "Kindheitserinnerungen einer alten Berlinerin," 70.

74 Hedwig Dohm, *Was Die Pastoren von den Frauen denken* (Berlin: Verlag Reinhold Schlingmann, 1972), https://www.projekt-gutenberg.org/dohm/pastoren/pastoren.html; and *Der Jesuismus im Hausstande. Ein Beitrag zur Frauenfrage* (Berlin: Verlag Reinhold Schlingmann, 1972).

75 Throughout her work, Dohm frequently quotes from *On Liberty* as well as *The Subjection of Women*.

76 She references Staël in *Was die Pastoren von den Frauen Denken*. In this essay, Dohm also mentions George Sand and women writers whose work was published by Goethe and Schiller (Carlotte von Kalb, Therese Huber, "the two Carolines," and others). Fichte is referenced in "Ob Fraue studieren dürfen, können, sollen?," in Frederiksen, *Die Frauenfrage,* 253.

77 Hedwig Dohm, *Der Jesuitismus im Hausstande. Ein Beitrag zur Frauenfrage* (Berlin: Wedekind & Schwieger, 1987), 225, https://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/show/dohm_jesuitismus_1873. In *Women's Nature and Privilege*, she puts it as follows: "the division of labor [women staying at home or not being able to access public life] is not the Right of woman, but the Advantage of man." Dohm, *Women's Nature and Privilege*, trans. Constance Campbell (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1976), 34.

78 *Der Jesuismus im Hausstande.*

79 Dohm, *Women's Nature*, 48.

80 Dohm, *Women's Nature,* 11. It is worth noting that already Dohm's early essays, such as this one, deploy the argumentative strategy she will later make use of in her readings of Nietzsche: that of holding their work up against their own philosophical standards.

81 Already in *Women's Nature*, Dohm criticizes Schopenhauer's view of the old woman as "a horror." *Women's Nature*, 19.

82 Hedwig Dohm, *Become Who You Are*, trans. Elizabeth G. Ametscbichler (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 33.

83 Laura Marholm and Ellen Key enthusiastically promoted Nietzsche's work. The same applies to his friend Malwida von Meysenbug (whose essay on Staël is included in her account of the history of great women in *Individualitäten* [Malwida von Meysenbug, *Individualitäten* (Berlin: Schuster und Loeffler, 1901), esp. 182–203]). Helene Stöcker, whose initial plan for a doctoral dissertation had been to work on Brentano von Arnim, introduced Nietzschean thinking into the League for the Protection of Mothers, which she took over in 1905 (it dissolved five years later). There is also Salomé, who was part of Dohm's circle. Another important figure is Lily Brown. For the women philosophers who turned to Nietzsche (often with a social and political intent), see Carol Diethe, *Nietzsche's Women: Beyond the Whip* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996). Diethe does

not discuss Ellen Key. For Stöcker's dissertation plans, see Annegret Stopczyk-Pfundstein, *Philosophin der Liebe. Helene Stöcker* (Stuttgart: Libri, 2003), 82–83.

84 A summary of Dohm's criticism (with reference to Key, Marholm, and Salomé) is found in "Weib contra Weib" in the 1902 *Die Antifeministen. Ein Buch der Verteidigung* (Berlin: Holzinger, 2015), 59–99. Dohm brands Salomé "antifeminist" and is especially critical of Salomé's claim that it is the call of women to become mothers (a view Nietzsche airs in *Beyond Good and Evil*). See Hedwig Dohm, "Reaktion in der Frauenbewegung," *Die Zukunft*, November 18, 1899, 279–291. However, she also characterizes Salomé as "one of the most profound authors [she knows]" (WP 134).

85 See Dohm, "Ob Frauen studieren dürfen, können, sollen?," in Frederiksen, *Die Frauenfrage.*

86 Dohm here elaborates a point she has made earlier, namely that "only a man of a powerful personality will endure the companionship of a woman who is his equal." *Women's Nature*, 23. She attributes this point to Mill (29).

87 While Dohm developed her particular, critical strategy in her early criticism of antifeminists (e.g., in *Was die Pastoren von den Frauen denken*), it is only in the later essay that she brings it to full philosophical maturity.

88 For this essay, see https://www.projekt-gutenberg.org/dohm/missbrau/missbrau.html.

89 See Richard J. Evans, "Theory and Practice in German Social Democracy 1880–1914: Clara Zetkin and the Socialist Theory of Women's Emancipation," *History of Political Thought* 3, no. 2 (1982): 285–304.

90 Clara Zetkin, "What the Women Owe to Karl Marx" (1903), in *Selected Writings*, ed. Philip S. Foner, various translators (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 94.

91 Zetkin, "What the Women Owe to Karl Marx," 94.

92 Clara Zetkin, "Friedrich Engels. Nachruf zu seinem Tode," in Clara Zetkin, *Ausgewählte Reden und Schriften*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1957), 82–83.

93 As Engels concludes his study with a quote from the anthropologist Lewis Morgan, the new society will all the same be "a revival in a higher form, of the liberty, equality and fraternity of the ancient gentes." Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (London: Penguin, 2010), 217. For Engels's views on suffrage, see Tristam Hunt, introduction to *The Origin of the Family*, 19 and 22. Hunt also points out that even though Engels was against prostitution, he did not shy away from using prostitutes himself.

94 August Bebel, *Woman and Socialism*, trans. Meta A. Stern (New York: Socialist Literature Company, 1910), 6.

95 Bebel, *Woman and Socialism*, 7.

96 Clara Zetkin, "Women's Work and the Organization of Trade Unions," in *Selected Writings*, ed. Philip S. Foner (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015), 58.

97 See Karen Honeycutt, "Clara Zetkin: Socialist Approach to the Problem of Woman's Oppression," *Feminist Studies* 3, no. 3/4 (1976): 131–144.

98 Clara Zetkin, "Only in Conjunction with the Proletarian Woman Will Socialism Be Victorious," in Foner, *Selected Writings*, 74.

99 See Jean H. Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists in German Social Democracy 1885–1917* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 69.

100 Bebel writes: "in fighting for their rights, women should expect as little help from the men as working men do from the capitalist class." Quoted from Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists*, 69.

101 See for example Tânia Ünlüdag, "Bourgeois Mentality and Socialist Ideology as Exemplified by Clara Zetkin's Constructs of Femininity," *International Review of Social History* 47 (2002): 33–58. In my view, Ünlüdag, while making important points about the wider philosophical context of Zetkin's period, is too selective in her choice of texts and fails to convincingly document her claims about Zetkin falling back on traditional bourgeois values (which Ünlüdag, strangely, associates with Nietzscheanism and Christianity).

102 See Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists*, 95–99. See also R. P. Neuman, "Working Class Birth Control in Wilhelmine Germany," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20, no. 3 (1978): 408–428.

103 Quataert, *Reluctant Feminists*, 107–137.

104 Clara Zetkin, "Protect Our Children," in Foner, *Selected Writings,* 87.

105 Clara Zetkin, "Fascism Must be Defeated," in Foner, *Selected Writings,* 172.

106 Clara Zetkin, "The Toilers against War," in Foner, *Selected Writings,* 178.

107 For a discussion of her speech, see Luise Dornemann, *Clara Zetkin. Ein Lebensbild* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1962), 423–429.

108 Clara Zetkin, "Rosa Luxemburg," *Communist International* no. 5, September 1, 1919, 5. https://www.marxists.org/archive/zetkin/1919/09/rosa.htm.

109 See Georg Lukàcs, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1971), especially 1–27 and 272–295.

110 Rosa Luxemburg, "Social Reform of Revolution," in *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader* [henceforth abbreviated RLR], ed. Peter Hudis and Kevin B. Anderson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004), 129.

111 The argument, in other words, echoes Clara Zetkin's concern with respect to the right of women workers and makes it

clear how both Zetkin and Luxemburg develop their arguments as a reaction to what they see as political revisionism.

112 As Nettl points out, "revisionism," "reformism," and "opportunism" are used in this context as interchangeable terms. J. P. Nettl, *Rosa Luxemburg*: *The Biography* (London: Verso, 2019), 2 vols., vol. 1, 202.

113 V. I. Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?,* ed. S. V. Utechin, trans. S. V. and Patricia Utechin (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 140.

114 Lenin then responded to Luxemburg's response, but Kautsky, still close with Luxemburg, did not publish the response in *Neue Zeit*. Lenin's response was only published in Russian in 1930, after the death of both Luxemburg and Lenin. See Charles F. Elliott, "Rosa Luxemburg and the Dilemma of the Non-revolutionary Proletariat," *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 9, no. 4 (1965): 327–338, esp. 336–338. It should be noted, however, that Lenin and Luxemburg cooperated after their debate, especially in the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution in Russia (the First Revolution).

115 See Luxemburg, "Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy," RLR 252.

116 Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital: A Contribution to the Economic Theory of Imperialism*, in *The Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg*, vol. 2, ed. Peter Hudis and Paul Le Blanc, trans. Nicholas Gray and Georg Shriver (London: Verso, 2016), esp. chaps. 4–9.

117 Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital*, 341.

118 Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital,* 267.

119 Karl Marx, *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx*, ed. Lawrence Krader (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1971).

120 Rosa Luxemburg, "Slavery," in Luxemburg, *Economic Writings 1*, in *The Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg*, vol. 1, ed. Peter Hudis, trans. Joseph Fracchia and Georg Shriver (London: Verso, 2014), 301–331.

121 Luxemburg, *Introduction to Political Economy*, in *Economic Writings 1*, 200–201.

122 V. I. Lenin to L. B. Kamenev, Cracow, before March 29, 1913, in *Lenin Collected Works*, vol. 35, 93–94 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, [1976]), trans. Andrew Rothstein, in Lenin Internet Archive, https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1913/mar/oolbk.htm; the webpage has Lenin's notes to Luxemburg in English translation.

123 See Peter Hudis, "Non-linear Pathways to Social Transformation: Rosa Luxemburg and the Post-colonial Condition," *New Formations: A Journal of Culture/Theory/Politics* 94 (2018): 62–81.

124 This had been a significant factor when Luxemburg and Liebknecht formed the Spartacus League in 1914, initially as a group within the social democratic party, then as an independent party. The League was formally renamed the German Communist Party in December 1918. In January 1919, in the midst of the post–World War II period, the party called for a mass uprising and strike. The revolt, which was quickly crushed by the Social Democrats in power, got a further blow with the murder of Liebknecht and Luxemburg.

125 Rosa Luxemburg, *The Crisis in the German Social Democracy*, trans. unnamed (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), 34–35.

126 Luxemburg, *The Crisis*, 95. Ultimately, Luxemburg's antinationalism will lead her to argue that "today the nation is but a cloak that covers imperialistic desires, a battle cry for imperialistic rivalries, the last ideological measure with which the masses can be persuaded to play the role of cannon fodder in imperialistic wars" (*The Crisis*, 98).