

Letters of Frederick Engels

To Friedrich Graeber In Berlin

Source: MECW Volume 2, p. 487

Written: 9 December 1839

First published: in part in *Die neue Rundschau*, 10. Heft, Berlin, 1913, and in full in: *F. Engels, Schriften der Frühzeit*, Berlin, 1920

Bremen, December 9, 1839-February 5, 1840

December 9.

My dear fellow, your letter has just arrived; it is amazing how long one has to wait for you people. Nothing has been heard from Berlin since your and Heuser's letter from Elberfeld. One ought to give oneself up to the devil if only his existence were proved. But you have now arrived and that is good.

Imitating you, I leave theology to the last as a worthy crowning to the pyramid of my letter. I busy myself very much with literary work; since I received Gutzkow's assurance that my contributions are welcome I have sent him an essay on K. Beck; then I am composing a lot of verses, which, however, badly need polishing up, and also writing prose pieces to practise my style. The day before yesterday I wrote "Eine Bremer Liebesgeschichte", yesterday "Die Juden in Bremen"; tomorrow I think I shall write "Die junge Literatur in Bremen", "Der Jüngste" ["A Bremen Love Story", "The Jews in Bremen", "Young literature in Bremen", "The Youngest"] (namely, the office boy) or something else of the kind. In a fortnight, if one is in the mood, one can thus easily scribble up to five sheets, then one polishes up the style, puts in verses here and there for variety, and publishes it as *Bremer Abende*. My prospective publisher came to see me yesterday; I read him *Odysseus Redivivus*, [\[220\]](#) which delighted him exceedingly; he will take the first novel from my factory and yesterday wanted desperately to have a small volume of poems. But unfortunately there aren't enough of them, and — the censorship! Who would pass *Odysseus*? Incidentally, I don't allow the censorship to keep me from writing freely; let them cross out as much as they like afterwards, I don't commit infanticide on my own thoughts. Such censorship cuts are always disagreeable, but also honourable; an author who reaches the age of thirty or writes three books without cuts by the censor is not worth anything. Scarred warriors are the best. You must be able to tell by looking at a book that it has come out of a battle with

the censor. By the way, the Hamburg censorship is liberal; in my last *Telegraph* essay on the German *Volksbücher* there are several pieces of very bitter sarcasm about the Bundestag and the Prussian censorship, but not a letter has been crossed out.

December 11. Oh, Fritz! For years I have not been so lazy as I am at this moment. Ha! it is beginning to dawn on me what I need — I must visit the *tertium locum*.



December 12. Really, what asses — I meant to say what good people — the Bremen people are! In this present weather the streets are terribly slippery, and they have strewn sand in front of the town-hall cellar so that the drunks will not fall.

The fellow on the side here suffers from world-weariness, he visited H. Heine in Paris and caught it from him; then he went to Theodor Mundt and learnt certain phrases indispensable for world-weariness. Since then he has become visibly thinner and is going to write a book on world-weariness as the only sure remedy against corpulence.

January 20 [1840]. I did not want to write to you until it was certain whether I shall stay here or go away. Now at last I can tell you that for the time being I shall stay here.

21st. I admit that I am not very keen to continue the theological debate. One misunderstands one another and by the time one replies, one has long since forgotten one's *ipsisima verba* which are the point at issue, and so no purpose is achieved. A thorough discussion of the matter would require much more space, and it often happens to me that I cannot endorse in a subsequent letter things I said in an earlier one because they belonged so very much to the category of preconception of which I have freed myself in the meantime. Through Strauss I have now entered on the straight road to Hegelianism. Of course, I shall not become such an inveterate Hegelian as Hinrichs and others, but I must nevertheless absorb important things from this colossal system. The Hegelian idea of God has already become mine, and thus I am joining the ranks of the "modern pantheists", as Leo and Hengstenberg say, knowing well that even the word pantheism arouses such colossal revulsion on the part of pastors who don't think. Thus today at midday I was highly amused by a long sermon in the *Evangelische Kirchen-Zeitung* against Märklin's pietism. ^[221] The good *Kirchen-Zeitung* not only finds it most peculiar that it is counted among the pietists, but finds also other curious things. Modern pantheism, i.e., Hegel, apart from the fact that it is already found among the Chinese and Parsees, is perfectly expressed in the sect of the Libertines, which was attacked by Calvin. ^[222] This discovery is really rather too original. But still more original is its development. It is already very difficult to recognise Hegel in what the *Kirchen-Zeitung* passes off as his views, and that again has a very far-fetched similarity with a most vaguely expressed proposition of Calvin's on the Libertines. The proof was enormously amusing. The *Bremer Kirchenbote* puts it even better and says that Hegel

denies the truth of history! It's stupendous what nonsense sometimes comes out when somebody labours to make out that a philosophy which stands in his way and which he can no longer get round, is un-Christian. People who know Hegel only by name and have only read the notes in Leo's Hegelingen want to overthrow a system which, being cast in a single mould, needs no clamps to hold it together. — This letter is presided over by an eminently unlucky star. God knows, I no sooner get down to it than the devil is let loose. I am always given office work.



These are two puppets which are so stiff contrary to my will. Otherwise they would be men.

Have you read Strauss' *Charakteristiken und Kritiken*? See that you get it, the essays in it are all excellent. The one on Schleiermacher and Daub is a masterpiece. From the essays on the Württemberg demoniacs an enormous amount of psychology can be learnt. [\[223\]](#) Equally interesting are the other theological and aesthetic essays. — In addition I am studying Hegel's *Geschichtsphilosophie*, an enormous work; I read out of it dutifully every evening, the tremendous thoughts grip me terribly. — Recently Tholuck's old gossip sheet, the *Literarische Anzeiger*, fatuously raised the question why "modern pantheism" had no lyric poetry, though the ancient Persian, etc., had. [\[224\]](#) The *Literarische Anzeiger* can just wait until I and certain other people have got to the bottom of this pantheism, the lyric poetry will come all right. It is very fine, by the way, that the *Literarische Anzeiger* accepts Daub and condemns speculative philosophy. As if Daub did not also adhere to Hegel's principle that humanity and divinity are in essence identical. There you have this dreadful superficiality; whether Strauss and Daub agree in principle they care little, but that Strauss does not believe in the marriage at Cana [\[225\]](#) while Daub does, suffices for them to elevate one into heaven and declare the other a candidate for

hell. Oswald Marbach, the *Volksbücher* publisher, is the most confused of men, but especially (*cum — tum*) of the Hegelians. How a pupil of Hegel can say,

Heaven is also here on Earth. I can
Distinctly feel the God in me becoming Man,

is to me utterly incomprehensible, since Hegel distinguished the totality very sharply from the incomplete individual. — Nobody has done Hegel more harm than his pupils; only a few of them, like Gans, Rosenkranz, Ruge and others, were worthy of him. But an Oswald Marbach is truly the *non plus ultra* of all misunderstanders; such a godly fellow! — The Rev. Pastor Mallet, in the *Bremer Kirchenbote*, has declared Hegel's system to be "loose talk". [\[226\]](#) That would be serious, for if these blocks, these granite thoughts, fell apart, a single fragment of this Cyclopean building could kill not merely Pastor Mallet but all Bremen. If, for example, the thought that world history is the development of the concept of freedom were to fall with all its weight on the neck of a Bremen pastor — what sort of sigh would he give?

February 1. Today this letter must go off, come what may.



The Russians are beginning to become naive; they claim that the war against the Circassians has not yet cost as many human lives as one of Napoleon's lesser battles. I should not have credited a barbarian like Nicholas with such naivety.

The Berliners, I hear, are terribly furious with me. I have belittled Tholuck and Neander to them and I have not put Ranke among the *superos*, and that has made them mad. In addition I have written to Heuser divinely extravagant stuff about Beethoven. — I have read a very pretty comedy, *Weh dem, der lügt!* [*woe to him who lies!*] by Grillparzer in Vienna, which is a long way above the present common run of comedies. There shines through it now and then a free noble spirit to which the Austrian censorship is an intolerable burden. One can see how much trouble it cost the author to draw an aristocratic nobleman in such a fashion that the noble censor raises no objection. O temper, o moria, Donner und Doria [The well-known Latin *O tempora, o mores* is here distorted to rhyme with the German], today the fifth of February is here and it's a scandal that I am so lazy, but I cannot help it, God knows, I am doing nothing now. I have started several essays but they are not progressing, and whenever I want to write verses in the evening I have always eaten so much that I can't prevent myself from falling asleep. — This summer I terribly want to make a journey into the Danish country, Holstein, Jutland, Zealand, Rügen. I must see that my Old Man sends my brother [Hermann] here, then I'll take him with me. I have an enormous longing for the sea, and what an interesting travel journal I could make of it; then it could be published with a few poems. We are having such divine weather now, and I can't go out, I want so terribly, it's bad luck.

This is a fat sugar broker who is just leaving the house and whose standing phrase is “In my opinion”. When he has spoken to somebody at the stock exchange and is going away, he invariably says: “You fare well!” His name is Job. H. Bergmann.



There are touching people here. So I'll immediately draw you another picture from life:



This old fellow is drunk every morning and he then steps in front of his door and shouts, thumping his chest: “*Ick bin Borger*”, i.e., I thank Thee, God, that I am not like these Hanoverians, Oldenburgers, or worse, Frenchmen, but a Bremen *Borger tagen baren Bremer Kind!* [a burgher of Bremen, a true-born child of Bremen!]



The expression on the faces of the local old women of all classes is really horrid. In particular the one on the right with the snub nose is genuine Bremen.

The speech of Bishop Eylert at the festival of the Order [\[227\]](#) has one great merit: now we know what to think of the King [Frederick William III] and his perjury is official. The same king who in A. D. 1815, when he was feeling afraid, promised his subjects in a cabinet decree that if they got him out of the mess they should have a constitution, this same shabby, rotten, goddamned king now has it announced through Eylert that nobody is going to get a constitution from him, for “All for one and one for all is Prussia’s principle of government” and “No one puts old cloth on a new garment”. Do you know why Rotteck’s fourth volume [*Allgemeine Weltgeschichte für alle Stände*] is banned in Prussia? Because it says that in 1814 our majestic snotnose of Berlin recognised the Spanish constitution of 1812 and yet in 1823 sent the French into Spain to do away with that constitution and bring back to the Spaniards the noble gift of the Inquisition and torture. [\[228\]](#) In 1826 Ripoll was burnt at Valencia on instructions from the Inquisition, and his blood and that of 23,000 noble Spaniards who languished to death in prison for their liberal and heretic views is on the conscience of Frederick William III “the Just” of Prussia. I hate him, and besides him I hate only perhaps two or three others; I hate him with a mortal hatred, and if I didn’t so despise him, the shit, I would hate him still more. Napoleon was an angel compared with him, the King of Hanover [Ernst August] is a god if our King is a man. There never was a time richer in royal crimes than that of 1816-30; almost every prince then ruling deserved the death penalty. The pious Charles X, the vicious Ferdinand VII of Spain, Francis of Austria, that machine that was only good for signing death sentences and dreaming of Carbonari [\[229\]](#); Dom Miguel, who is a greater scoundrel than all the

heroes of the French Revolution taken together, and whom nevertheless Prussia, Russia and Austria gladly recognised when he bathed in the blood of the best Portuguese, and the parricide Alexander of Russia, as also his worthy brother Nicholas on whose abominable deeds it would be superfluous to waste another word — oh, I could tell you killing stories about how the princes love their subjects — I expect anything good only of that prince whose ears are boxed right and left by his people and whose palace windows are smashed by the flying stones of the revolution. Farewell.

Yours,

Friedrich Engels

[Marx/Engels Archive](#)