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## Local Dialects

April 23, 2018, offered a very Literary Club moment. In his maiden paper, Michael Meyer ended his portrait of Max Lilienthal, the Club's first Jewish member, by naming eminent locals who eulogized Lilienthal in 1882. Of one he wrote:

Judge John Bernhard Stallo was known as one of the so-called Ohio Hegelians ....

I posit there is no place else where the phrase "Ohio Hegelians" is just offered in passing. This term may be quotidian to Michael and other learned members. I first heard it on April 23, 2018.

Puzzled, I wondered if it was akin to what I call "flyover country superlatives," that is, superlatives that aren't all that superlative. You've heard these. The Rocky Mountains, the Mississippi River, and the Allegheny Mountains figure among key qualifiers here in the middle of things.

For example, South Dakota claims the highest mountain "east of the Rockies."

Lexington's Transylvania University claims to be the oldest "west of the Alleghenies."

The James Bookstore, housed for decades in the Doctors Building on Garfield Place, proclaimed in gilt letters on its back wall that it was the "oldest bookstore west of the Alleghenies." Our Union Terminal boasts it was the world's largest *half* dome.

You get the point. Maybe we're not really the biggest, best, most ancient and venerable, but we're pretty darn good.

So I wondered about Ohio Hegelians. Were they a sort of Hegelians junior-grade? After all, they lived on a recent frontier, only three score years after the Battle of Tippecanoe.

The term “Ohio Hegelians,” I discovered, was coined by Philosophy Professor Loyd Easton of Ohio Wesleyan University in a 1966 book profiling four nineteenth-century men.<sup>1</sup> Three were members of this Club. This paper will tell a bit about those, and offer thoughts about the look of their lives from today’s vantage.

Writing about Hegelians requires defining what a Hegelian is. That’s someone who follows, or is influenced by, German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who flourished in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Unfortunately for me, and perhaps for you, Hegel is notoriously difficult to follow, let alone grasp.

Faced with a daunting threshold challenge, I did what a modern writer would do. I asked Alexa. Before you dismiss that, consider this: I asked Alexa the question famously posed by Immanuel Kant, Hegel’s predecessor in German idealistic philosophy, namely “Are synthetic a priori statements possible?”

Alexa responded, “I’m sorry, I don’t know that one.” I put the same question to a brilliant UCLA professor, a doctor of philosophy, in philosophy. He replied: “Well, yes and no.” You judge who was more informative.

Alexa offered that Hegel is both “canonical” and “divisive” within Western philosophy. To illustrate the divide: a Hegel scholar opined that it is foolish to bemoan the difficulty of Hegel, and advised that the reader approach Hegel’s philosophy as “a spiritual bath, a

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<sup>1</sup> L. Easton, Hegel’s First American Followers: The Ohio Hegelians: John B. Stallo, Peter Kaufmann, Moncure Conway, and August Willich, with Key Writings (Ohio Univ. Press 1966).

baptism, which ravishes everything in its path and leaves nothing on earth or in heaven untouched.”<sup>2</sup> Bertrand Russell conceded Hegel had more than just historical significance, but believed almost all Hegel’s doctrines were wrong.<sup>3</sup> A 20<sup>th</sup>-century German writer whose opinion I value felt Hegel didn’t “count” in German literature, because Hegel’s German was “execrable.”<sup>4</sup> A current critic acknowledged Hegel may be a genius, but invoked this line of Walter Bagehot’s: “In the faculty of writing nonsense, stupidity is no match for genius.”<sup>5</sup> Hegel himself *may* have said that “Only one man has understood me, and even he has not.”<sup>6</sup>

Obscurity appears to be part of Hegel’s appeal. The writer of a forward to Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit, someone who presumably had plumbed Hegel’s works, called Hegel (like Shakespeare, of all people!) an “essentially rapt man,” whose style “makes one at times only sure that he is saying something immeasurably profound and important, but not [sure] exactly what it is.”<sup>7</sup>

Whether that’s due to Hegel’s offering a world-consuming spiritual bath, or execrable German prose, is a question beyond my competence. This look at our Ohio Hegelian brethren will therefore be a little backward. It will start not with Hegel, but our “Hegelians,” and will try to see how well their Hegelian label fits.

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<sup>2</sup> F. Weiss, Hegel, The Essential Writings at 1 (Harper Torchbooks 1974).

<sup>3</sup> B. Russell, The History of Western Philosophy at 730 (Simon & Shuster Touchstone ed.)

<sup>4</sup> R. W. Leonhardt, This Germany, The Story since the Third Reich, at 221 (Pelican 1966).

<sup>5</sup> Kimball, Roger, Lives of the Mind, The Use and Abuse of Intelligence from Hegel to Wodehouse at 126 ((Ivan R. Dee, 2002)

<sup>6</sup> Weiss at 16. Kimball, supra, points out that this quote may be apocryphal. See Kimball at 120,

<sup>7</sup> Findlay, J.N., Foreword to Phenomenology of Spirit, Oxford University Press, 1977, at xiii.

## 1. John Bernard Stallo

It's surprising the name John Stallo isn't better known here, in what was for many years his adopted home. He's one to call a polymath would short-change the "poly."

His origins weren't unusual for a Cincinnati of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Although his surname has an Italianate look, it was common in the part of the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg where he was born in 1823. His forebears were country schoolteachers. He studied math, Greek, Latin, English and French at home from his very early years, and attended a cost-free Catholic normal school near his birthplace. He had the talent to attend university, but his family couldn't afford it.

John's Uncle Franz had immigrated to Cincinnati in 1831, and later founded Stalltown, now Minster, in northern Ohio. John came to Cincinnati in 1839, and got a job teaching in a parochial school. To meet his students' needs, he wrote a German reader and speller. This impressed St. Xavier College's administrators, and Stallo began teaching German there in 1841. That's just ten years after the school's founding. He continued studying math, Greek, chemistry and physics, and later taught math at St. Xavier. In 1844 he began teaching physics, chemistry, and higher math at St. John's College in Fordham, New York, now Fordham University. That college had been founded only three years earlier. It was purchased by the Jesuit Order in 1846.

Easton asserts that in Stallo's four years at St. John's, he became a Catholic priest, and later hid that from his biographer (and presumably, but not necessarily, from his future wife and their five children.) Easton bases his assertion on Stallo's appearing in the St. John's catalog as "Rev. J. B. Stallo, A.M." ("A.M." likely stands there for "artium magister," "master of arts.") Easton doesn't say whether Stallo was styled "Reverend" in

only one catalog, or more. As you'll hear, Stallo didn't shy from controversy. That he became a priest, left the priesthood, and chose, and succeeded in, hiding that during a long public life, seems to me unlikely.

If Stallo was studying for the priesthood while teaching at St. John's, he was a busy fellow. After two years there, at twenty-five, he published The General Principles of the Philosophy of Nature, with an Outline of Some of the Recent Developments among the Germans; Embracing the Philosophical Systems of Schelling, and Hegel and Oken's System of Nature. It's a 520 page book now hard to find.

Stallo later regretted this work. Easton says that when it came out, Stallo had decided to become a lawyer. Stallo's biographer, Henry Rattermann (also a member of this Club) asked Stallo if reactions to the book led to that. Stallo said:

I had rather not discuss that. I found out that the American spirit was not yet ready for philosophy. I desired primarily to make sure of a secure living for the future so I came to Cincinnati. I wanted to become practical, as Americans are.<sup>8</sup>

Recall that when the work came out, Stallo was teaching at a Jesuit college. Easton contends Stallo was a priest. Stallo's book was Hegelian in asserting that the world is the function of Spirit. He rejected the notions of a static uncaused cause, and first mover, and asserted "The Deity, the absolute Mind, is the absolute intrinsic process, -- the substance which causes, produces itself, gazes into its own eye."

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Easton at 44.

It's tenable that Stallo realized (or was informed) that his published views wouldn't lead to career success at St. John's. Whether "get thee to a law office," was intuited, or actually heard, may be today beyond discovery.

Stallo read law in Cincinnati, and was admitted to the bar in 1849. He started Stallo and Kittredge with Edmund Kittredge. Stallo became a member here in 1855, as Kittredge did in 1858. Stallo was active in politics, and was appointed to the Common Pleas bench in 1853 when Club member Judge Stanley Matthews resigned. Stallo was later elected to that Court, but resigned in 1855 to return to his more lucrative practice. He continued to be known as "Judge Stallo."

He had a major case defending the Cincinnati School Board, which in 1869 voted to ban hymn-singing, and readings from the King James Bible, in its schools. Offended citizens sought a court order against the ban. Stallo, along with Stanley Matthews and Club member George Hoadly, who later became governor of Ohio, represented the Board.

The arguments before the Superior Court here in Cincinnati are online, and run hundreds of pages. (In that sense, they are certainly Hegelian.) Since it would be many years before the First Amendment of the US Constitution would apply to the states, the case turned on the Ohio Constitution, and Ohio Bill of Rights. Relying on their interpretation of those, the plaintiffs argued that the US was in origin a Christian nation, and that teaching of religion was useful, if not necessary, in forming good citizens. In their eyes, the Board of Education lacked discretion to ban prayer and bible reading.

Scholars debate what Hegel's true views of religion were, but Stallo's counter-arguments ring as much of Thomas Paine as of Hegel. Although it's a leap to ascribe a lawyer's

statements in advocacy to personal belief, Stallo's in this case seem so needlessly strident as to ring of felt passion. For example:

Every intelligent student of history knows that Christianity, as the architect of states, or mother of civilizations, has never, during the whole period of its ascendancy and vigor, either practiced or taught anything but despotism; that it has promoted the cause of freedom only by the violence of its attempts to repress it, which roused the irrepressible spirit of manly independence.<sup>9</sup>

Stallo and colleagues lost in the Cincinnati court. Club Member Alphonso Taft was on the three-judge panel, and dissented from that outcome.

The School Board later won in the Ohio Supreme Court. Although Stallo wasn't listed among counsel there, that Court's opinion in parts rings of toned-down Stallo:

United with government, religion never rises above the merest superstition; united with religion, government never rises above the merest despotism; and all history shows us that the more widely and completely they are separated, the better for both.<sup>10</sup>

Nine years after this case, Stallo published his magnum opus: The Concepts and Theories of Modern Physics. It was soon translated into French and German, and in 1960 it was reprinted by Harvard University Press as a "landmark of intellectual history." A first edition is in The Mercantile Library, whose records show I was the first to check it out.

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<sup>9</sup> Arguments, *Minor v. Board of Education*, at [https://books.google.com/books?id=QYMsAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA88&focus=viewport&output=html\\_text#c\\_top](https://books.google.com/books?id=QYMsAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA88&focus=viewport&output=html_text#c_top)

<sup>10</sup> Opinion reprinted at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=njp.32101068982766;view=1up;seq=44>

Stallo, in his preface, dismisses his earlier Philosophy of Nature as “written while I was under the spell of Hegel’s ontological reveries, and still seriously affected with the metaphysical malady which seems to be one of the unavoidable disorders of intellectual infancy.”<sup>11</sup> In his only other direct reference to Hegel, Stallo says “the foundation of Hegel’s ‘dialectic process’ is not even a phantom of reality;” he reviles Hegel’s concept of “Pure Being” as “simply the specter of the copula between an extinct subject and a departed predicate.”<sup>12</sup> Despite this strong language, Easton says Stallo’s divergence from Hegel in the book is “more apparent than real.” More on that later.

While practicing law, and generating books on physics, Stallo remained active in politics. In 1885, he was appointed ambassador to Italy. His diplomacy was aided by ability to speak Italian, French, and English, and to draft protocols in Latin. Stallo lost this post with Garfield’s 1888 defeat. He retired to Florence, wrote essays in German, and corresponded with Vienna physicist Ernst Mach. Mach’s views influenced development of the “positivist” school of philosophy – one far from Hegel.

So, this Ohio Hegelian could also be dubbed teacher, physicist, linguist, jurist, diplomat, politician, litigator, and philosopher. Possibly also ex-cleric. And of course, Literarian.

## **2. Moncure Conway**

Moncure Conway was born in Virginia in 1832, a scion of its first families: the son of a wealthy, slave-owning farmer-politician; the great grandson of a signer of the Declaration of Independence; and the nephew of a Supreme Court Justice. Raised Methodist, he attended the Methodist Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. After

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<sup>11</sup> Stallo, J.B., The Concepts and Theories of Modern Physics at 11 (1881).

<sup>12</sup> *Id.* at 158 -59.

graduating, he studied law with a Virginia practitioner. He quit that after seeing the lynching of a black man who was awaiting a court-ordered retrial. Influenced by that sight, and by Emerson's essays, Conway became a Methodist minister, riding the circuit in Virginia and Maryland. Racked by doubts over what he could honestly preach, he left that ministry to attend Harvard Divinity school, where he was taught by Emerson and Theodore Parker, another Transcendentalist, who was also an Unitarian minister.

After Harvard, Conway became pastor of the Unitarian Church in Washington, D.C. His abolitionist sermons got him sacked. He returned to Virginia, but had to flee there when rumors circulated that while in Boston, he had helped a fugitive slave owned by one of his Virginia neighbors.

Conway was in 1856 invited to the ministry of the First Congregational Church in Cincinnati, a Unitarian Church whose members shared his antislavery views. Conway expressed delight in his new city, calling it "the most cultivated of the western cities."

A year after coming to Cincinnati, Conway joined this Club. He called this "an admirable literary club, which met every week to converse and regale itself with squibs, recitations, cigars, and Catawba wine. To it belonged young men who afterwards became prominent figures in the world."<sup>13</sup>

Conway preached that he no longer believed in miracles, and lost a third of his congregation. He became more and more active in abolitionism, and left the ministry. He helped thirty fugitive slaves owned by his father reach the relative safety of Yellow Springs, Ohio. In 1863 he went to England to convince the British government not to support the Confederacy. While there he met with the Confederacy's representative to

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<sup>13</sup> Conway, M.D., Autobiography: Memories and Experiences at 255 (1904)

Britain, and offered that abolitionists would withdraw support for the war if slavery was abolished. The offer was rejected. News of Conway's unauthorized diplomacy led William Seward to consider cancelling Conway's passport.

Conway settled in England, eventually becoming leader of what became known as the South Place Ethical Society, now known as the Conway Hall Ethical Society, one of few surviving "freethought humanist" organizations. In London, Conway counted Dickens, T.H Huxley, Robert Browning, and Thomas Carlyle among his friends.

So, an interesting fellow; but how much of an "Ohio Hegelian?" First, a cavil on the "Ohio" part. Conway was a native Virginian who spent six of seventy-five years in Cincinnati. Much of his exposure to Hegelian thought was in Boston. And, of course, Cincinnati, like classical Athens, is a city-state, not really part of Ohio.

Professor Easton rests Conway's Hegelian tag largely on a few Conway speeches. In one he said:

We are all living in the Hegelian formulation, and this whether we understand that philosophy or not, and even if we reject its terms. For Hegel was a great vitalizing breath wafted from afar, beneath which, as under a tropical glow, latent seeds of thought were developed to most various results.<sup>14</sup>

In this, Conway says Hegel has influence, whether you agree with him or not – hardly the best footing for "Hegelian."

Easton also says that "Hegel's philosophy fully and adequately expressed Conway's philosophy of religion, his view that Deity is to be found within the processes of nature

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<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Easton at 137.

and history, not in a separate transcendent realm manifesting itself in miraculous, supernatural interventions.”<sup>15</sup> Those views mirror the Deism in Thomas Paine’s The Age of Reason.

Paine is apt: Conway wrote a two-volume biography of Paine. Conway’s autobiography, which runs near nine-hundred pages, contains no references to Hegel, and thirteen to Thomas Paine, including this remarkable footnote:

My large collection of Paine editions was some years ago purchased by the National Library in Washington. I possess still an oil portrait of Paine painted during his life ...., but my most curious relic is a bit of Paine’s brain, removed and preserved by Benjamin Tilly .... I paid £5 for this in London to stop its being hawked about.<sup>16</sup>

(Whether Thomas Paine’s reactions to his remains becoming relics would be better treated by a John Keats or an Edward Lear is a fit subject for Club table-talk.)

### **3. August Willich**

August Willich makes Stallo and Conway seem like boring stay-at-homes. Willich was born in 1810, in what was then East Prussia, nominally the son of a Prussian Hussar, perhaps the illegitimate son of the King of Prussia’s brother. Willich lost his legal father at age three, and went to live with a Friedrich Schleiermacher, a theology professor at the University of Berlin. (Schleiermacher was related to Willich by marriage.)

Hegel was teaching at Heidelberg at the time, but he and Schleiermacher managed to cross swords. Hegel famously dismissed Schleiermacher’s views on emotion in religion

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<sup>15</sup> Id at 137 -38.

<sup>16</sup> Conway Autobiography, v. 2 at 434.

by saying that if the feeling of absolute dependence were the mark of Christianity, “Then the dog would be the best Christian.”<sup>17</sup> Scandal ensued. Professor Easton elides this in his depiction of Willich as Hegelian, noting simply that Hegel and Schleiermacher “differed on fundamental issues.”<sup>18</sup>

Willich went to military school at twelve, and attended the Prussian Royal Military Academy when famed military theorist Karl von Clausewitz was its director. Easton describes Willich as a leader of the officers whose regard for the Prussian monarchy ebbed in the growing democratic fervor of the time. He writes:

Certainly Hegel’s view of the “spirit of the people,” his heavy restrictions on the power of the monarch, his analysis of the economic class struggle within civil society, and his provisions for individual freedom in a fully rational state could have contributed to such a result.<sup>19</sup>

That’s conjecture with baggage that bears unpacking. Hegel’s political philosophy is complicated. Some who’ve read it in the light of the last two centuries have erected Hegel as the spiritual father of both Marxism-Leninism and National Socialism. Bertrand Russell, writing during WWII, asserted that Hegel believed that citizens existed for the state, and not vice-versa, and that the monarch embodied the general will, enabling every kind of tyranny. Hegel’s defenders say by “state” he meant an ideal ethical society, not any extant government.

What Hegel actually wrote on politics was (no surprise) both prolix, and murky. The world to Hegel was a manifestation of Spirit and Reason (words that apparently have

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<sup>17</sup> See <http://scottish-hegelian.blogspot.com/2013/03/schleiermacher-and-polemic-against.html>

<sup>18</sup> Easton at 162.

<sup>19</sup> Easton at 163.

more solid meaning when, as in German, they're capitalized); history was the process of things moving to a more rational order.

Hegel's political science was in his words "nothing other than an attempt *to comprehend and portray the state as an inherently rational entity.*"<sup>20</sup> And that attempt is present-looking, not forward-looking. Philosophy comes too late to say how the world will be. In The Philosophy of Right, he famously put that this way: "[T]he owl of Minerva [the goddess of wisdom] begins its flight only with the onset of dusk."<sup>21</sup>

Here's a bit of snark: Hegel's statements above were published in 1820. Hegel became a professor at the University of Berlin in 1818, and had been lecturing on the state's role since 1817. Local political upheaval, and the resulting removal of some too-liberal Berlin professors, led to Hegel's revising his drafts before the 1820 publication of The Philosophy of Right, which describes hereditary constitutional monarchy as a highly rational form of state. Friedrich Wilhelm II had promised a constitution for Prussia in 1818, but none had issued.

Eighteen years earlier, in 1802, when Hegel was at the University of Jena, in the German state of Thuringia, he had hard words for Prussia, comparing it with France, with everything regulated from above. He wrote that Prussia's barren life "strikes anyone who enters the first village, or who observes its complete lack of scientific or artistic genius..."<sup>22</sup> When it came to Prussia, Professor Hegel was adaptable.

Back to Willich. If Willich were discussing revolutionary books with his fellow officers in the 1840's, they would likely have been those of a group called "Young Hegelians," or

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<sup>20</sup> *Id.* at 21.

<sup>21</sup> *Id.* at 23.

<sup>22</sup> "The Constitution of Germany," from The Philosophy of Hegel, at 537 (Modern Library 1954).

“Left Hegelians,” who were influenced not only by Hegel, but also by frustration that no constitution had come with the accession of a new Prussian king in 1840.

In any event, Willich became a socialist, and resigned the Prussian Army in 1846. He became president of the Communist League in Cologne in 1848. When the revolutions of 1848 came, Willich was a commander of revolutionary forces. In one unit, his adjutant was Friedrich Engels.

With the defeat of the revolutionaries, Willich, like many of his fellows, immigrated to London. He worked as a carpenter, and served with Marx and Engels in the Communist League there. In 1850, they and others formed a “World Society of Revolutionary Communists.” Willich helped draft the charter of the organization, which lasted seven months. It split over whether the time was ripe for revolution, (Willich’s view), or whether workers would have to endure decades of struggle to achieve power (Marx’s view). The rift was so hot that Willich challenged Marx to a duel.

Let that sink in: a member-to-be of this Club challenged Karl Marx to a duel, over Marx’s being too conservative. Marx ignored the challenge, but a young Marx associate, Conrad Schramm, insulted Willich, and the two duelled on the Belgian coast. Willich downed Schramm with a bullet grazing Schramm’s head. Schramm recovered, and Willich reported all participants “pleased with the happy outcome of the event.”<sup>23</sup>

In 1853, Willich moved to New York, and worked as a carpenter in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. He continued feuding with Marx in articles and pamphlets, with charges and

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<sup>23</sup> Easton at 174.

countercharges of secret cooperation with police agents. Marx wrote an ironic pamphlet entitled “The Knight of Noble Consciousness,”<sup>24</sup> with Willich the eponymous knight.

Willich moved to Washington, D.C., to work for the Coast Survey, then part of the U.S. Treasury Department. I wonder if an interview led to that: “What’s your experience in government?” “I served in the Prussian Army, then resigned and fought to bring down the Prussian government.” “You’re hired!”

In D.C., Willich met and befriended J. B. Stallo, who helped Willich land the role of editor of the *Cincinnati Republikaner*, published by the Social Workingman’s Club here. Professor Easton cites some of Willich’s writings for this paper as revealing Willich’s “attachment to the views of Hegel.”<sup>25</sup> Well, in the words of my philosopher friend, “Yes and no.” Hegel saw the ideal state as an engine of freedom, although he appears to say that perfect freedom exists when the impulses of the individual are in total harmony with the laws of the state. And he saw nationalities (“*Völker*”) as intrinsic to states. Willich saw actual states as engines of oppression, and saw trade-unionism as a force transcending peoples and states.

Despite that view, when the Civil War broke out, Willich recruited German-Americans for the Union, and himself joined the 9<sup>th</sup> Ohio, a unit so German it was known as “Die Neuner.” Willich was in months promoted to major, and after seeing action in West Virginia, was asked by the Governor of Indiana to take command of the 32d Indiana Infantry, also known as the First German.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://marxists.catbull.com/archive/marx/works/1854/01/knight.htm>

<sup>25</sup> Easton at 182.

On the second day of the Battle of Shiloh, now-Colonel Willich steadied his men, who were under heavy fire, by drilling them, and by ordering the regimental band to play the Marseillaise, the anthem of European revolution. The 42d then launched a bayonet attack.<sup>26</sup> Clearly, no movie can be made of Willich's life. Paul Henreid, aka Victor Lazlo, is no longer alive to play Willich.

Willich was after Shiloh promoted to command the Horn Brigade of Midwestern regiments, so called because Willich used bugle calls to position troops during battle. In late 1862, he was captured at Stones River in Tennessee, when his horse was shot out from under him. After five months in the infamous Libby Prison in Richmond, he was exchanged, and given command of a brigade of The Army of the Cumberland.

At the Union debacle of Chickamauga in fall of 1863, none of Willich's troops broke. A major under Willich described him bringing order to a regiment running wild in attack:

... Brigadier General Willich came forward, and, standing in front of the regiment and amid the shower of bullets poured into us, complimented the regiment for its impetuous advance, calmed their excitement, instructed them how to advance firing and maintain their alignment with the advance of the brigade, and by his own inimitable calmness of manner restored order and confidence in the regiment, and after dressing them and drilling them in the manual of arms for a short time, ordered them to advance about thirty paces to the edge of an open space. They did so in good order, [then] lay down and kept the enemy in check.<sup>27</sup>

At Missionary Ridge two months later, Willich was among the first Union commanders to order troops up the ridge. Grant's orders were to stop after taking the Confederate rifle pits at the base of the ridge, but once there, the Union troops took murderous fire from the ridge top. Willich sent them up (some had already started up) and other Union units followed. One of Willich's regiments was among the first to take the ridge top.

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<sup>26</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August\\_Willich](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/August_Willich)

<sup>27</sup> *Official Records*, as quoted in Cozzens, Peter, This Terrible Sound, The Battle of Chickamauga at 190 (U. of Illinois Press, 1996).

The Union's spontaneous capture of fortified higher ground still astonishes. Grant's memoirs made it sound like it was all according to plan.<sup>28</sup>

Willich's brigade took part in Sherman's Georgia campaign, and in May of '64, Willich was wounded at the Battle of Resaca, leaving him with a partially paralyzed right arm. He was assigned administrative roles, including in Cincinnati, and was promoted to brevet major general of volunteers in October of '65, about four months after the war's end. He then resigned the service.

"Brevet major general of volunteers" is good, but not as good as it sounds. A brevet promotion didn't carry the command authority, or pay and retirement, of the named rank. The title was an honor, akin to getting a medal. And volunteer-officer ranks didn't correspond to regular-Army ranks. This must have rankled the egalitarian Willich, who addressed his soldiers as "citizen."

In 1866, Willich published an essay entitled "The Army, Standing Army or National Army ..." <sup>29</sup> You can read a copy by asking reverently in the Cincinnati Room of the Main Library. Willich's piece excoriated what he saw as the military class-rule of professional soldiers and military academies. A sample: "[T]he military trade] may be easily mastered ... the main obstacle lies in the professional canonization of mere useless and stupid formalities." Willich may have read a similar essay at our Club in 1866. The only record is a minute saying "Interesting paper read by Gen'l August Willich on Military Art. B Sargent and H J Howe resigned." <sup>30</sup> No cause-and-effect intended, surely.

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<sup>28</sup> See Personal Memoirs of U.S. Grant, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4367/4367-h/4367-h.htm#ch43> (1885).

<sup>29</sup> Pub. A. Frey, Cincinnati.

<sup>30</sup> The Literary Club, Minute of May 12, 1866.

Encouraged by Stallo, Willich ran for Hamilton County Auditor, and won. Only conjecture, but I hazard Willich was the last Communist to hold that office.

Willich was visiting family in Germany when the Franco-Prussian War broke out. Sixty years old and one-armed, he volunteered to serve. He was rejected. The same year, he entered the University of Berlin, studied law, economics, philosophy, history, and physics, and received a certificate the following year. He returned to the US, and was active in a newly-formed "People's Party." He condemned the major parties as offering chaos on the one side, and special-interest capitalism on the other. He moved to Saint Mary's, Ohio, where he founded a Shakespeare society. He died there in 1878. Stallo was a pallbearer.

#### 4. If It Doesn't Fit ...

There are our three Literarian "Hegelians." A scientist-diplomat; a humanist clergyman; and last, the very model of a communist major-general. All those are admittedly reductions of these souls. Does "Hegelian" add to understanding or appreciating them?

It's an adaptable term. Hegel wrote with breadth and murk on metaphysics, history, politics, art, and logic. Define "Hegelian" broadly enough, and we're all Hegelians. Hegel influenced Marx, who influenced Lenin, who influenced Mao, and so forth. Easton acknowledged the Procrustean nature of the term by pointing out that the Battle of Stalingrad has been described as a battle between Left Hegelians and Right Hegelians. Try *that* observation next time your cocktail-party conversation lags.

Perceptive Literarians have gathered that I don't see "Hegelian" as an honorific. My final gloss of tagging our comrades with it will thus follow a method of criminal investigation. Did these three have motive, means, and opportunity?

Means and opportunity can be granted. Stallo was steeped in Hegel, and Willich was steeped in Marx, who acknowledged taking from Hegel. Both of them could read Hegel in the original, although it's not clear that would add to understanding. Conway did study with a Hegelian at Harvard, although he also studied with the vocally anti-slavery Emerson, and likely took more influence there.

That leaves motive, which for this purpose will be found by the question "Would they have accepted the label?" For each, that seems unlikely.

Stallo expressly rejected Hegel. Easton says that's more formal than real, since Stallo as physicist stressed the reality of universal motion, and that's – Hegelian. Yet Stallo's stated goal in his magnum opus was to free physics from traditional metaphysics. And Stallo taught mathematics, a discipline Hegel disprized, since it (in Hegel's eyes') focused on quantity, which he found unimportant.<sup>31</sup> Fortunately, Prussian philosophy professors weren't charged with designing bridges and dams.

As to Willich: his view of history was forward looking, and he saw himself with a role in forming it. Not Hegelian. "Monarchy" to him was a dirty word, not an ideal system.

That leaves Conway. The proof of his Hegelianism were references in a few speeches. Conway's lengthy autobiography, with no Hegel reference, seems more reliable. Conway might more aptly be called a Painean, but Thomas Paine held no chairs of philosophy, managed to honk off both royalists and revolutionaries, and was a nasty drunk to boot.<sup>32</sup> Worse yet – in some circles -- he wrote easy-to-understand prose. To use the term of our decade, Paine doesn't offer very good *branding*. Or perhaps, writing on Hegelians just makes one insensitive to Paine.

On the then-hot issue of separation of church and state, all three Literarians were far from Hegel, who saw religion, especially Protestantism, which he termed a "folk religion," as an adjunct lending "conviction" to the legitimacy of a state and its laws. <sup>33</sup> Hegel opposed establishing any particular religion, but he wrote that states "ought even to require all its citizens to belong to a [religious community.]"<sup>34</sup> That smacks of the

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<sup>31</sup> The Philosophy of Hegel, *supra*, at xxviii.

<sup>32</sup> See J. Lepore, "The Age of Paine," in The Story of America: Essays on Origins (Princeton 2012).

<sup>33</sup> See G.W.F. Hegel, "The Relationship of Religion to the State," in Hegel, Political Writings at 233 (L. Dickey and H.B. Nisbet, eds., Cambridge 1999).

<sup>34</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, Elements of the Philosophy of Right, §270. H.B. Nisbet, trans. (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991).

position of the plaintiffs in the Cincinnati School Board case, where Stallo argued so vehemently against it. Conway wrote that the U.S.'s tax-exemption of churches was establishment beyond that of the Church of England (whose disestablishment he somewhat surprisingly disfavored). He called that exemption "taxation without representation [of non-theists]." <sup>35</sup> Willich wrote that religion was a stage of human development surpassed by what he called "the free mind." <sup>36</sup>

Another distinction: these three freely expressed views unpopular to convention and power. Contrast Hegel, whose apologists explain his cozying up to the Prussian monarchy as just "a convenient accommodation whereby Hegel could be left alone for his work." <sup>37</sup> That mode doesn't describe our three Literary brethren.

Professor Easton's branding did lead to three remarkable souls. Most remarkable is their repeated reinvention of themselves, and the scope of reinvention their times allowed. There may be, for example, former math professors in Cincinnati who argue constitutional cases, *and* write tomes on theories of physics, but I haven't met them.

These three lived in the pre-Internet, pre-cell-phone-camera age, when it was possible to start over. A (perhaps) ex-priest became ambassador to Italy. A German revolutionary became Hamilton County Auditor. A Virginian from slave-owning stock became a London humanist. Such "reinventiveness" would *almost* make you want to be ... an Ohio Hegelian.

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<sup>35</sup> M. Conway, Autobiography v. 2 at 320.

<sup>36</sup> See Easton at 316-17.

<sup>37</sup> Id. at 227.

Addendum and correction to “Local Dialects,” delivered Sept. 16, 2019.

Although I’ve found 2 sources describing August Willich ordering his regimental band to play “The Marseillaise” on the second day of the Battle of Shiloh, neither cites contemporary sources.

On reflection, a regimental band playing amid the smoke and noise of a pitched battle seems unlikely. I believe the “Marseillaise” story is internet apocrypha.

However, the underlying picture of Willich calmly drilling his troops under fire to bring order was confirmed by General Lew Wallace:

Then at the last moment, it seemed, from a corner of the field in the south a body . . . began to file out of the forest. Who was it? Friend or foe? Shortly the strangers gave me a sight of their flag, at which my heart gave a great leap; for through the glasses I could see the stars in the dark blue union . . . and I confess to having forgotten everything else so intent was I watching the upcoming strangers. They were but a regiment; yet at sight of them the enemy halted, about faced and returned to his position in the woods. Then he struck out with a fire so lively that the newcomers halted and showed signs of distress. Then an officer rode swiftly around their left flank and stopped when in front of them, his back to the enemy. What he said I could not hear, but from the motions of the men he was putting them through the manual of arms— notwithstanding some of them were dropping in the ranks. Taken all in all, that I think was the most audacious thing that came under my observation during the war. The effect was magical. The colonel returned to his post. . . and the regiment steadied as if on parade and actually entered the woods . . . I dispatched an orderly to the colonel of the unknown regiment, with my compliments, and asking his name, 'August Willich, of the Thirty-Second Indiana volunteers.' was the reply brought me.

Barnet, James, Willich’s Thirty –Second Indiana Volunteers,  
<http://library.cincymuseum.org/topics/c/files/civilwar/chsbull-v37-n1-wil-049.pdf>, quoting  
 Wallace’s Autobiography.

Paul Franz