

Marx: "On the Jewish Question"

in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, L. Simon, ed. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Key:

M = Marx

[] = my comment

() = parenthetical argument made by the author

Editor:

A liberal State can free people in the political sphere, but leaves their subjugation in civil society untouched 1

the question, for M, is the question of *real* emancipation 1

political emancipation = equality in the political/State sphere = equality insofar as we are citizens

this emancipation does not help us live a species-life as a communal being outside of the State sphere 1

it gives us the right to be self-interested individuals in civil society [which is what the bourgeoisie needs] 1

the essay exposes the [severe] limits of liberalism, which are that it leaves untouched the exploitation and alienation of labor in civil society [see the EPM1

Marx:

Bauer: legal freedom, i.e. all citizens are equal, does not solve the domination in civil society that comes with religious privilege [and economic privilege, M is straining to add] 4

M: we have to ask what kind of emancipation we are talking about 5

we need a critique of political emancipation [i.e. citizenship in the liberal State, more or less as it is conceived by Locke (and then subsequently the U.S. and French Constitutions)] 5

Bauer critiques only the Christian State and not the State as such 5

he fails to critique the relation between *political* emancipation and *human* emancipation 5

he confuses the two uncritically 5

full political emancipation is the full development of the [liberal] State 6

but for M political emancipation is incomplete emancipation, and so the [liberal] State must be incomplete as a life for people as well 6

political emancipation is lesser than human emancipation 7

a State can be a free State [and its citizens free citizens] without men becoming free men 7

political freedom as citizen is an abstract, limited freedom, confined to a strictly delimited [State] sphere 7

and man, to be freed in this limited way, as citizen, requires an intermediary, the State, people cannot do it themselves 7

for example, when the State abolishes private property politically, i.e. it waives the property qualification for citizenship, it overcomes private property *politically*, but at the same time it *presupposes* private property in civil society 8

distinctions of rank and class are abolished *in the political sphere*, but those distinctions are strictly off limits to State authority *in civil society*, they are thus de-politicized, they become non-political distinctions [M says in Critique of Hegel that they *were* political under feudalism] 8

we are all equal as citizens, and in the political sphere one's class is absent/not taken account of, and so the State is officially blind to class [and race/gender/sexuality/etc.] 8

all the presuppositions of egoistic, separated, competitive, alienated man in civil society, in which each uses others as a means, remain in place, [and, moreover, they are protected as *inviolable* by the State, and guaranteed by the State] 8-9

man leads a double life: free/equal/general/communal in the political sphere, unfree/unequal/particular/private in civil society 8-9

political society is like a caesura, a state of exception to the reigning way of life, which is civil society 9

the real man and his "political lion skin" [Snug the Joiner!] 9

civil society is the state of nature, literally the *bellum omnium contra omnes* 10

there are times when the State will assert itself into civil society, crisis moments when it feels the need to intervene, in order to constitute a reigning harmony, but it would only do this to protect itself [H talks about this goal of harmony in *Philosophy of Right*], but these times are limited: if they are not, if they become a general practice for the State [the result is totalitarianism], the State endangers its own existence 10

M mentions the democratic state, but I think it is used as = the liberal state 11, 13

man in capitalist society "is not yet an *actual* species-being" 13

under capitalism there is a separation, strictly maintained, between civil society and the political State 14

'universal rights of man' are political rights exercised in community with others, but they assume that community to be a community of isolated, independent individuals who threaten each other's freedom 16

they are the rights of man in civil society, and thus are different from the rights of the citizen in the political sphere 16

the rights of man: to property, to speech, to liberty, to equality, to security...16

right of property: dispose of property as one wishes, without regard to the needs of other men, or of society 16

right to equality views each man as equally an independent monad 17

right to security is the right to enjoy one's private monad life without threats from others [pure Locke] 17

in this imagination, men find in each other not the realization of their freedom, but a threat to their freedom 16-7

man here is separated from the community; man here is nothing like his species-being 17

a sad 'community' of people who share only their desire to be left alone, their desire to enjoy their property rights undisturbed 17

citizenship, membership in political community, thus becomes merely a means to preserve those private interests 18

the citizen is thus merely the servant of (egoistic) man; authentic man is man as bourgeois/civil-society/private man not man as public/communal citizen 18

the whole point of political association—as Locke made clear and the Declaration of the Rights of Man echoed—is to preserve the natural right of property (and life and liberty) 18

political emancipation also does something else: it enshrines the modern state, which separates civil society from the State sphere [this picks up on the discussion in the Critique of Hegel], and turns the distinctions in civil society, which had been political distinctions under feudalism, into a-political ones, protected from State/public intervention 18-9

it creates an abstracted political sphere, purified of civil-society entanglements 19

political emancipation thus is also the emancipation of the bourgeoisie in civil society, so they can operate free from the meddling of the State/public 19

the whole setup makes it OK to be private, self-interested, atomistic in civil society, that is what 'man' is 19

and then this 'man' (which is really just bourgeois man), the creation of the capitalist era, is taken to be natural, the pre-existing ground out of which the State establishes itself [through contract, in Hobbes] 20

this man is, in fact, the result of the active dissolution of feudal society by the bourgeoisie over the course of a long struggle 20

his rights, the rights of man, are taken to be natural rights, rights that were already there when the State grew out of civil society 20

this man is not freed from property [which the workers need], he is freed to own property [which the bourgeoisie needs] 20

not freed from alienation, but freed to alienate his free activity in the form of wage-labor 20

Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau all reiterate this whole way of thinking 20
for M, emancipation means restoring the human/social character of man, not only in the political sphere, but in all spheres, and *especially* in civil society, from which this social character has been purged by capitalist society 20

“Only when the actual, individual man has taken back into himself the abstract citizen...and become a *species-being*, only when he has...organized his own powers as *social* powers, so that social force is no longer separated from him as *political* power, only then is human emancipation complete.” 21