

### 17.03. Introduction to Political Thought

**Lecture Outline: Marx, “On the Jewish Question” (pp. 26-52), “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844” (pp. 70-81), “Manifesto of the Communist Party” (pp. 473-491)  
(in *Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker)**

#### I. Why read Marx today?

#### II. Background

- A. Personal
- B. Intellectual
  - 1. Rousseau’s conception of liberty
  - 2. Hegel’s philosophy of history
  - 3. British political economy

#### III. “Jewish Question”

- A. What is the “Jewish Question”?
- B. Liberal solution
  - 1. Separation of religion and politics
  - 2. Rejection of liberal solution in Germany in favor of assimilation
- C. Bruno Bauer’s critique of the liberal solution
  - 1. Separating religion and politics won’t remove barriers to political emancipation of Jews
  - 2. Jews must renounce religion in order to become equal citizens
- D. Marx’s critique of Bauer
  - 1. Against Bauer’s idealism: religion is merely symptom of underlying material causes; emancipation from religion impossible without addressing underlying material causes
  - 2. Distinction between political emancipation and human emancipation: Jews should be given political rights (contra Bauer), but ultimate aim is human emancipation

#### IV. Marx’s critique of liberalism and his ideal of human flourishing

- A. Liberal view of the individual: egoistic, public-private distinction splits the psyche
- B. Liberal rights founded not on relations between human beings but separation between them
- C. Liberal focus on state cannot safeguard real freedom
  - 1. Must look to oppression in civil society
  - 2. Political emancipation is not full human emancipation
- D. Marx’s ideal of human emancipation
  - a. What distinguishes man from other animals: produce means of subsistence (*homo faber*)
  - b. Conscious activity
  - c. Collective activity

#### V. Alienation

- A. Structure of alienation under capitalism
- B. Four aspects of alienation
  - 1. From products of our labor
  - 2. From the activity of labor
  - 3. From our species being
  - 4. From other human beings
- C. How communist society ends alienation
  - 1. Abolish alienation by abolishing private property
  - 2. Marx avoids details of communist society

#### VI. Marx’s theory of history

- A. Influence of Hegel’s philosophy of history: accepts dialectical process but rejects content
- B. Materialism: not contradictions within systems of ideas but within modes of production
- C. Historical narrative from feudalism to capitalism to communism
  - 1. Every mode of production contains the seeds of its own destruction
  - 2. Division of labor shapes the evolution of the modes of production
  - 3. Proletarian revolution inevitable but not spontaneous, requires human action