

# Dialectical Abnormality? Jewish Alienation and Jewish Emancipation between Hegel and Marx

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**Abstract:** Karl Marx’s “On the Jewish Question” (1844) has fueled discussions around his early intellectual development as a Young-Hegelian thinker as well as debates about an allegedly distinct form of anti-Semitism native to Left-Hegelian and later to left-thinkers in general, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. In this article, I argue that Marx’s assessment of contemporary Judaism is motivated by an underappreciated criticism of Hegelian historiography. Surveying the genesis of the Hegelian treatments of Judaism between Hegel and Marx, I distinguish Marx’s intervention as a reaction to non-materialistic teleological historiography. This historiography assumes dialectical movement and demands practical change from those considered foreign to the movement. In contrast, this article suggests that Marx’s primary target is the belief that Judaism has been sublated into Christianity, that the abnormality lies not in Judaism’s historical persistence, but in the Christian pretense that the material contradictions Judaism was a response to have been overcome. Against the teleological nature of all renditions of Hegelian historiography, including Marx’s later historical-materialism, his “On the Jewish Question” weaponizes a hitherto unrecognized anti-teleological argument against the assimilationist views it responds to, of the kind that should evoke Nietzschean genealogy.

Marx’s “On the Jewish Question” (1844) has fueled discussions around both his intellectual development in the footsteps of other so-called Young-Hegelians as well as a form of anti-Semitism native to Young-Hegelian and left-wing thinkers, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. Considering the Napoleonic reforms, especially the 1812 edict that raised questions about the extent and meaning of Jewish citizenship throughout the German territories, the following decades witnessed many theological and political assessments of European Jewry in the spirit of Hegelian critique. Although intended to defend the cause of Jewish civil equality, Marx’s contribution is riddled with eyebrow-raising claims about both Judaism and ‘the Jew.’ Many argue that Marx’s apparent intentions do not redeem him from harboring the same anti-Jewish sentiments as his opponents in the matter, especially evident in his identification of the Jew with money-handling, huckstering, and the spirit of self-interest.<sup>1</sup> Another interpretive tradition characterizes Marx prior to his identification of alienation with the social principles of capitalism.<sup>2</sup> Marx diagnoses the alienated course of civil society in its dichotomy between human and political activity. He points to the problem that political emancipation must occur, but is insufficient. This

1. See Pierre Birnbaum, *Geography of Hope Exile, the Enlightenment, Disassimilation* (Stanford University Press, 2008), 77; Hans Lamm, *Karl Marx Und Das Judentum* (Munich: Hueber, 1969); Léon Poliakov, *The History of Antisemitism*, (New York: Vanguard, 1975), 4 vols, here Vol. 3, 421–425; Paul Lawrence Rose, *Revolutionary Antisemitism in Germany from Kant to Wagner*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 298–299; Edmund Silberner, “Was Marx an Anti-Semite?,” *Essential Papers on Jews and the Left*, ed. Ezra Mendelsohn, (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 361–401; Robert Wistrich, *Revolutionary Jews from Marx to Trotsky*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 34–42.

2. See David Ingram, “Rights and Privileges: Marx and the Jewish Question.” in *Studies in Soviet Thought* 35 (1988), No. 2, 125–145; Joel Kovel, “Marx on the Jewish Question.” in *Dialectical Anthropology* 8 (1983), No. 1/2, 31–46; Artemy Magun, “Karl Marx and Hannah Arendt on the Jewish Question: Political Theology as a Critique.” in *Continental Philosophical Review* 45 (2012), No. 4, 545–568; Istvan Mezsáros, *Marx’s Theory of Alienation*, (London: Merlin, 1979), 28–33; Enzo Traverso, *The Jewish Question: History of a Marxist Debate*. (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 11–28.

This Jewish subject is not going to be emancipated in any meaningful way when public ideology and praxis contradict her private confession. The Christian subject suffers from the same predicament, although her alienation is not a matter of public scrutiny as she does not stand to be ‘emancipated’ to begin with.

This article argues that Marx’s assessment of contemporary Jewry is motivated by an underappreciated criticism of Hegelian historiography. Questions regarding Jews and Judaism are contentious for multiple reasons. First, it is not clear whether Jewish emancipation is necessitated by the immanent forces of German society, or whether it is an imposition burdening Prussia following a reform movement inspired by Napoleon’s 1806 victory in Jena. Second, it is unclear whether Hegel’s historiography allows for Jews to be identified as Europeans, and more menacingly, what their fate in Europe should be if they are not Europeans. Third, there is the theological issue that, for Hegel, Judaism is an incomplete Christianity and Christianity is the necessary step for the emergence of universal freedom. In the first section of this article, I review the reasons for which Hegel’s affirmation of Jewish emancipation remains problematic, unsure, and, at best, very cautious.

In the second section I review the evolution of the critique of Judaism among Young-Hegelians, among whom philosophical criticism leads the way to an assimilationist demand. Critical of both the Prussian state’s allegiance to a confession and the Jewish commitment to a spiritual particularity, Bruno Bauer’s criticism renders Jews incapable of self-emancipation, and therefore undeserving of emancipation being granted. Bauer’s rejection of Jewish emancipation based on the notion that the Jewish faith demands a subject short of self-consciousness, is defended on the further premise that philosemitic demands for reform take their cues from sources alien to Germany. Bauer contends that legal measures Jews had been granted theretofore were concessions the Prussian state had to make at moments of existential crisis. I suggest that Bauer condemns these calls for reform for precisely contradicting the historical telos of the State. If the reformist demand consists in an appeal to a notion of progress, then this could only indicate a retrospective attempt to explain the given moment of stress into one of breakthrough, achievement, and purposeful change. This genealogical argument helps Bauer carefully extract the cause for Jewish emancipation from any implication in the rational history of the German state, which had allowed Hegel to warily affirm the same cause.

In the final section, I review Marx’s response to Bauer’s assimilationist position, and suggest that Marx’s odious statements concerning Judaism and the Jews in “On the Jewish Question” are motivated by a criticism of Hegelian historiography that has been overlooked. Marx inverts Bauer’s critique to demonstrate that Christianity has not created a social reality transcending the circumstances against which Judaism emerged as a legalistic intervention.

Indeed, a reading of Marx's essay as internal to the genesis of Hegelian critiques of Judaism reveals that Marx's target is the social whole that is otherwise upheld as the teleological object of modernity. Marx's aim is to subject Christian civil society to the same critique to which Hegelian thinkers subjected Judaism. Given that Judaism and its persistence in contemporary Europe turned out to be the product of circumstances alien to the welfare of the modern state, Marx urges us to ask why Christianity failed to sublimate Judaism, its alleged dialectical precedent, and made it possible, and even necessary for Judaism to live on. What results is a heretofore unrecognized anti-teleological argument that rewrites the narrative that Judaism was a necessary precedent to Christian civil society, and renders Christianity an urgent excuse for Jewish alienation. Expanding the scope of genealogical critique from Judaism to Christian modernity, Marx's treatment of Judaism cannot be characterized by the teleological streak of the critiques that preceded it. If anything, historical change, the early Marx cynically argues, is to be understood as the maintenance of existing states of affairs despite emerging influences, rather than their overcoming in the interest of a rational purpose following the right of reason.

In distinguishing Marx's essay from the teleological accounts, this article aims to resuscitate a different conception of Judeo-Christianity than the dominant tropes that have persisted since Hegel and his secular reception. Against a Judeo-Christian God "who affirms life and being,"<sup>3</sup> Marx's intervention exposes a Judeo-Christian God who contradicts human vitality not by virtue of some imposed asceticism, but by binding believers to an alienated social system. Marx's response to the *Judenfrage* introduces a novel conception of Judeo-Christianity. His Judeo-Christianity explains Judaism not by appealing to its Christian supersession, but by virtue of its introduction of a legalistically mediated social system that Christianity has not overcome, but adapted, excused, and in fact, universalized. Perhaps, even Jewish readings of Marx's essay that have not recognized his critique of Christian modernity have been clouded, not only by Marx's very objectionable characterization of Jewish people, but also by contemporary adoptions of Christianity as the breeding ground of contemporary secularity. Avineri's reading that the essay is composed of a "radical critique of Judaism" along with an only "incidental" critique of Christianity has set the standard for readings following which Marx is yet another thinker wielding teleology against the outdated Jew, who has no place in a world shaped by her Christian critique.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Rotenstreich criticizes Marx for having reverted to a mythological view of human life and social groups that affords him the wholesale labeling of Jews as the sole representatives of modern capitalism.<sup>5</sup> If the way to our "modern neutral universe" can only unfold through Western Christianity,<sup>6</sup> and Marx contended the same, then his analysis will render Judaism the dialectical abnormality other Hegelians identified it as. Instead, Michael Mack's argument that Marx was providing a critical analysis of "pseudotheologies", that is, of "secularized

3. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 218.

4. Shlomo Avineri, "Karl Marx's Jewish Question(s)" in *Jewish Studies Yearbook*, 2011, 73–81: 80

5. Nathan Rotenstreich, *Jews and German Philosophy: The Polemics of Emancipation*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 100

6. Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 29

and politicized political theologies” puts us on the right path.<sup>7</sup> Christianity is no collateral target in Marx’s essay. In fact, it is both Christianity and its secularization which pose the Jewish question that warrant critique. In fact, it is both Christianity and its secularization which pose the Jewish question that warrant critique.

## 1 Hegel on Judaism and World-History

Hegel’s account of history aims to give every human tradition its due while endowing the Germanic world with the highest achievements of self-consciousness.<sup>8</sup> As such, for Hegel and Protestant philosophical theologians, Judaism and its presence in Europe posed an obstinate particularity.<sup>9</sup> The political expression of this achievement amounts to a State whose citizens are freely selfconscious, which is mediated by a public authority in autonomous exchanges of affect, labor and property. Laws do not dictate conduct, and authority does not impose itself on the conduct of citizens. Instead, “it is easy to say what someone must do and what the duties are which he has to fulfill in order to be virtuous.”<sup>10</sup> Individual conscience and public norms are united, and immediately known to the citizen as her practical motivation to participate in the social whole. Hegel suggests that this unity appears in and through the historical development of Protestant spirit. While monotheism places the universal idea beyond the world of human experience, trinitarian theology overcomes its alienation from the divine through the consciousness of its human mediation. In the age of “the modern church, the freedom of spirit in the shape of subjective knowledge” and “of subjective identity,” consciousness can reconcile itself with its purposive history.<sup>11</sup> Hegel’s notes on the Reformation conclude with the statement that “states are simply the appearance of the true content of religion.” Conscience and practical ethos ought to be identical. For Hegel, this ought is best satisfied in the Protestant state “[where] the constitution and the code, as well as their several applications, embody the principle and the development of the moral life, which proceeds and can only proceed from the truth of religion, when reinstated in its original principle and in that way as such first become actual.”<sup>12</sup>

7. Michael Mack, *German Idealism and the Jew: the Inner Anti-Semitism of Philosophy and German Jewish Responses*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 10; 12–16.

8. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, trans. Thomas M. Knox (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. Hugh B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); *Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Arthur V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); *Hegel’s Philosophy of Mind*, trans. William Wallace and Arthur V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2010); *Lectures on the Philosophy of History Vol. I: Manuscripts of the Introduction and the Lectures of 1822-3*, trans. Robert F. Brown and Peter C. Hodgson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: Vol I: Introduction and the Concept of Religion*, trans. Robert F. Brown, Peter C. Hodgson and Michael Stewart (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: One Volume Edition of the Lectures 1827*, trans. Robert F. Brown, Peter C. Hodgson and Michael Stewart (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

9. As Amy Newman argues, beginning with Hegel, philosophical accounts of the survival of Judaism point to the accidental nature of empirical reality rather than any contemporary ethical truth inherent to Judaism. Hegel marks a tipping point in the long tradition of such diagnoses, giving wholly secular explanations as to why Judaism is able to outlive its dialectical stagnation. See Amy Newman, “The Death of Judaism in German Protestant Thought from Luther to Hegel.” in *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 61, 1993, No. 3, 455–484: 471

10. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §150.

11. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 506

12. Hegel, *Philosophy of Mind*, §552

A motif throughout Hegel's critique of Judaism is its inability to align its legalistic framework with the conduct of its believers. Unlike the ethical community emerging under Protestantism, the Jewish commonwealth fails to identify these two spheres of practical freedom. Hegel's least charitable treatment of Judaism is found in his early theological texts. Though "The Positivity of the Christian Religion" (1795) assigns Judaism a more central role in human history than his lectures, it does so at the expense of antagonizing it to prepare the scene for Christianity. Jews were characterized by a "pedantically slavish spirit" that finds affirmation in blind obedience to rule.<sup>13</sup> If the Israelites had temporarily eliminated their subjugation in Egypt, they did not take long to replace it with a legalistic subjugation of one another in a spirit of "mechanical slavery" to the divine, who only demands law-bound action. The young Hegel reads Jewish law as a one-sided renunciation of nature and the restriction of the subject's natural tendencies, without any insight about what is to be achieved beyond this renunciation.

While his earlier, unsympathetic language no longer accompanies his Berlin lectures, Hegel's conviction that Judaism is characterized by an external authority that demands obedient conduct remains the fundamental premise of his critique. In the history lectures, Judaism is one of the many forms of 'oriental' religiosity to be sublated by the Greek world. For Hegel, though these religions of the ancient Near East seek to identify the human as the lasting subject of history, their religious consciousness is in fact limited to various deifications of nature.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, Judaism stands out from the cultural practices surveyed throughout these sections. Hegel concedes that it is the Jewish God that for the first time represents "actual being as thought," an achievement that anticipates the Christian mediation of the Concept.<sup>15</sup> He identifies in Judaism "the moment of the changeover from nature to spirit."<sup>16</sup> This is the reason that, in his 1827 lectures on religion, Judaism is introduced after the Greek religions of worldliness and beauty as the religion of sublimity, in contrast with its positioning in the history lectures as a primitive oriental spirituality.<sup>17</sup> In these lectures, the many deities of ancient Greece are "withdrawn from" their identification with the particular aspects of nature and are recognized as being in "spiritual unity" with "the name of God."<sup>18</sup> God's ontological positioning takes on the form of the

13. Hegel, "The Positivity of the Christian Religion", in *Early Theological Writings*, 67–181: 178

14. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 310–316.

15. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 332.

16. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 333

17. As Hodgson notes in his editorial introduction of the translation of the first volume of the lectures on religion, this point leads him to make revisions to his lectures in the later years. Hegel's 1831 lectures would reinstate the original positioning of Judaism in the history lectures. This speaks to the late Hegel for whom the talk of the State and its official spirituality would come to dominate all other treatment of cultural history. It is this Hegel that is the source of inspiration to the Young-Hegelians and their assimilationist demands.

18. Hegel, *Philosophy of Religion: 1827*, 357. It is because of such ambivalence one could not say, as Idit Dobbs-Weinstein claims, that for Hegel consciousness of freedom arises in the Greco-Roman world as opposed to the ancient Israelites. See Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion and Its Heirs: Marx, Benjamin, Adorno*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 49. It is evident that the notion of freedom upheld in classical antiquity is one of arbitrary, that is, lawless freedom which Hegel invests considerable amount of time in distinguishing from rational freedom throughout the *Philosophy of Right*. Where only "some are free" as in the rigid class societies of the Greco-Roman world, freedom is arbitrary, it applies lawlessly, and cannot institute an ethical community (Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 88).

argument from many to one, where the many appearances of the empirical world are sublated into the unity of one concept.<sup>19</sup> Judaism is credited with this universal idea in its religious guise: “As the supersensible it emerges only in Israelite representation as the universal God of thought that exists for itself [...] The God of Judaism (Judas) is this One, the universal, such that only the universal is what is ultimate.”<sup>20</sup> To the extent the Jewish religion raises the universal idea above nature, it also eliminates nature of all divine meaning, so “the world is now prosaic, it confronts us essentially as a collection of things, it is rendered profane.”<sup>21</sup> If Judaism highlights a higher unity of being into which all is sublated, it fails to identify this ideal with any concrete human-historical activity. Without any human element being identified with its universal vocation, as in Christian messianism, Jewish consciousness of the One comes to restrict the human subject.

As Sven-Erik Rose notes, Hegel’s interpretation of Judaism is intrinsically tied to his understanding of his own philosophical system as a response to Spinoza’s thought.<sup>22</sup> Hegel understands Christianity to be delivering a dialectical response to Jewish alienation, in an effort to identify the believer with the object of her belief. Only with Christianity is the worship of an object beyond human life replaced by human form in the body of Christ. Rotenstreich identifies the precise difference Judaism makes according to Hegel: without mastering the natural circumstances in which it finds itself, Judaism “sets itself as opposite to the circumstances.”<sup>23</sup> Hegel takes this opposition to be a one-sided renunciation of nature, which leaves an obstinately legalistic exchange with nature and a community built on collective subservience to the law rather than trust or recognition.<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, the prospect of any Hegelian defense of Jewish emancipation should be very unlikely. One might argue that the “portal of salvation” in relation to the Jews remains open to them insofar as they are willing to submit themselves to the theology of supersession.<sup>25</sup> Only by doing so would they overcome the epistemological and practical renunciation they impose on themselves with the messianic mediation of their alienated deity. This interpretation alleviates any charge of essentialism on Hegel’s part concerning Jews, since it indicates that the Jews can (and should) be assimilated into their Christian and Germanic actuality. Thus, Hegel’s affirmation of Jewish emancipation will not confront the particularity of Jews as Jews, but rather take a humanist detour around

19. Hegel, *Philosophy of Religion: 1827*, 358–359.

20. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, 452.

21. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: 1827*, 364.

22. Sven-Erik Rose, *Jewish Philosophical Politics in Germany, 1789–1848*, (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2014), 95.

23. Nathan Rotenstreich, “Hegel’s Image of Judaism.” in *Jewish Social Studies*, 1953, 33–52: 47

24. Hegel’s theological assessment of Judaism in this regard is so strict that it makes it into the *Phenomenology of Spirit* at §340 – not in any extensive discussion of Judaism or its role in the history of humanity, but rather in a discussion of an inadequate phenomenological state. The Jewish consciousness comes to be the paradigmatic form of a kind of reasoning which fails to identify with the universals it generates, falling short of the insight that the universals it seeks in the world mirror its own universal character, at once law-bound and law-generating: “Just so, it may be said of the Jewish people that it is precisely because they stand before the portal of salvation that they are, and have been, the most reprobate and rejected: what that people should be in and for itself, this essential nature of its own self, is not explicitly present to it; on the contrary, it places it beyond itself”. It would appear that the Jews have stalled at this, in terms of the *Phenomenology* advanced, yet in world-historical terms still primitive state of consciousness.

25. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, §340.

the same.

If the lectures discussed above take issue with Judaism's historical limitations, Hegel's views regarding contemporary Judaism and German Jews are much more complex. Hegel's humanistic defense of Jewish emancipation in the *Philosophy of Right*, on the basis that the Jews are "above all, men" has received praise from some commentators.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, we should note that Hegel introduces his defense as a contrarian position, according to which the failure to grant Jewish people civil liberties on humanistic grounds would make the State partially responsible for the civic isolation for which he argues the Jews themselves have been responsible. Moreover, Hegel believes that receiving these rights will be their motivation to abandon their Jewish particularities in exchange for civic recognition, and that "it is from this root, infinite and free from all other influences that the desired assimilation in terms of attitude and disposition arises."<sup>27</sup> Even if Hegel seems sympathetic to the Jewish cause, he is convinced that this would only be possible once the Jews overcome their particularity as Jews, and exalted themselves to the ethical universality of the State. Surely, Christians too must redirect their faith to the teleological trajectory of the State, but their route appears more direct – or at least not burdened by any "desired assimilation." So, at best, the cause for Jewish emancipation is justified by the historical purpose of the German state, and not by Jews themselves, or their capacity for self-determination in an ethical community. While Jewish emancipation can be justified in this manner, it is not a cause intrinsic to the State. Hegel's affirmation thus leaves open a blind spot to be exploited by his younger followers: unless Jews align themselves with the spiritual life of the State and thereby transcend particular spirituality, emancipation granted to them from without will not be theirs from within.

## 2 Young-Hegelians and Assimilationist Convictions

While Hegel identified himself as a thinker of actuality, his younger followers felt that philosophy had to do more than observe and comprehend the actuality of reason, and instead institute it where necessary. Hegel was willing to extend civil rights to the Jews on the grounds that the German state ought to respect the universal character of the human, even if, as he believed, the Jews themselves failed to grasp this obligation to universality. His followers went a step further and held that philosophical criticism must align all people with this obligation. Accordingly, they believed that Judaism had to be reconciled with the German actuality it was a part of. According to Feuerbach, the historical realization of reason is intimately tied to the emergence of the universal idea under its mythological cloak as God. It is the social-historical mediation of this universal idea that forms a human community in which natural egoism is

26. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, §270n. For empathetic interpretations of Hegel's account of Judaism, see Shlomo Avineri, "A Note on Hegel's Views on Jewish Emancipation," in *Jewish Social Studies* 25, 1963, No. 2, 145–151, *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 119–120; 170–171

27. Ibid.

28. In the preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel says: "To recognize reason as the rose in the cross of the present and thereby to delight in the present – this rational insight is the reconciliation with actuality which philosophy grants to those who have received the inner call to comprehend" (22). The philosopher does not instruct ought upon actuality, but observes historical change towards the satisfaction of the ought of the rational, while finding delight in the extent this ought has been met in the present.



overcome: “Solitude means being finite and limited, community means being free and infinite. For himself alone, man is just man (in the ordinary sense); but man with man – the unity of “I” and “You” – that is God.”<sup>29</sup>

So, if Judaism was lauded for its monotheistic comprehension of the universal idea, it was also condemned to the extent that it limited the universal idea to one community at the exclusion of the rest of humanity, that “[t]heir principle, their God, is the most practical principle in the world,— namely, egoism; and moreover egoism in the form of religion.”<sup>30</sup> Where monotheism, and paradigmatically Judaism, emerges with an apparent egoism degrading the universal idea to the interests of a particular community, Christianity transforms “the desire for earthly happiness, the goal of the Israelitish religion, into the longing for heavenly bliss.”<sup>31</sup> The promise of Christian redemption brings along universal obligations, mere faith in God becomes love of the universal idea, since “faith has God out of itself” whereas “[I]ove has God in itself.”<sup>32</sup> Monotheistic alienation can only be overcome in a post-Christian atheism based on a loving identification with the universal idea. Thus, Judaism cannot proceed by itself, but instead, must be guided by its Christian critique, since the Christian is “an esprit fort, a free-thinker” in relation to the Jew.<sup>33</sup>

As Judaism posits God so far beyond the subject, it is “the most complete presentation of Positivism in religion,” and must be critiqued far more fundamentally than Christianity itself.<sup>34</sup> Hegel thought that the necessary objectification of freedom in the Christian world was being posited in the form of institutions and laws underpinned by experiences of unfreedom and alienation. Feuerbach suggests that Judaism has no saving grace in this regard – beyond its theological critique in Christianity, Judaism has no means of being implicated in the movement of human history, except by resisting it.

Bauer shares Feuerbach’s vision for a modern ethical reality absolved of spiritual commitments: if the Prussian state enabled the spiritual ambitions of Christianity to materialize, commitment to Christianity as a conscientious practice would no longer be necessary. The result is not a naive separation of church from State, but rather the absorption of church into the State as the true spiritual institution of the people. Bauer held that the times demanded that a Christian state, in order to truly live up to its name, no longer be Christian per se. If concrete human freedom was actualized in the State, then a commitment to Christian myth, the myth of the human mediation of the divine, would turn out to be more anti-Christian than Christian. In 1843, Bauer published *The Jewish Question*, in an effort to address how this secular eschatology would

29. Ludwig Feuerbach, *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Manfred Vogel (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1986), §60.

30. Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (New York: Prometheus, 1989), 114.

31. Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 121.

32. Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 247–248.

33. Feuerbach, *Essence of Christianity*, 32.

34. Ibid.

accommodate European Jewry. Having previously defined the State as the expression of a collective capacity for self-consciousness,<sup>35</sup> Jewish statelessness became interchangeable with a Jewish lack of self-consciousness, as the assimilationist demand finds explicit articulation:

Judaism has not even been able to create a comprehensive history of itself. It has been unconscious of its own nature and will remain so. It would be able to give a clear description of itself only if it understood itself as a foundation for Christianity. It could understand its own nature only if it recognized itself as imperfect Christianity, and that its true dissolution is only possible in Christianity.<sup>36</sup>

Bauer frames the question against the liberal defenses of Jewish emancipation in the following way: The Christian state's treatment of Jews cannot be assessed in terms of what rights Jewish people can claim from it, but rather, as a fundamental modification of the Christian state itself. Since the State is the consummation of all historical mediation, cooperation, and recognition, it would rest on the Jew to assert herself into the universal Spirit rather than bemoan exclusion.<sup>37</sup> Bauer suggests that without assimilation, Jewish emancipation could only amount to the forced integration of a "special corporation" into civil society with privileged status.<sup>38</sup> Christians and Jews are both challenged by the same universal obligation in the historical quest for self-determination.<sup>39</sup> While neither the Jew nor the Christian can emancipate the other, the Christian has the upper hand, because she has moved past Jewish alienation, past the monotheistic relation to the universal idea.

How might we understand Bauer's contribution to the debate? Alexandros Chrysis has suggested that Bauer's work paves the path for Marxian political theory. He proposes a radical interpretation of the Hegelian view that "the real as the rational that already runs through the historical process" alerts us to our capacity to critique what exists, for "what exists deserves to perish."<sup>40</sup> If so, how do we move from Hegel's cautious affirmation of Jewish emancipation to Bauer's denouncement of the calls for reform as irrational? The call for assimilation requires Bauer to strictly disqualify Judaism from any expression of the rational in the form of the real. As the Jewish God does not mediate himself in human form, Bauer suggests that he does not lend himself to "rational development." Instead, God's only point of contact with human history is in the form of "outbreaks and vengeance" and "in the fixing of punishments."<sup>41</sup> Because of their exclusive commitment to a God that is not open to rational mediation and the universal nature of the human beyond the Jew, the Jewish people are burdened by a "lack of ability to develop with history."<sup>42</sup> If the real persistence of Judaism is of no

36. Bauer, *The Jewish Question*, trans. Helen Lederer (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1958), 90.

37. Bauer, *The Jewish Question*, 11.

38. Bauer, *The Jewish Question*, 61.

39. Bauer, *The Jewish Question*, 63.

40. Alexandros Chrysis, *'True Democracy' as a Prelude to Communism*, (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2018), 54.

41. Bauer, *The Jewish Question*, 41–42.

42. Bauer, *The Jewish Question*, 12.

consequence of the rational, how do the proponents of Jewish emancipation come to see their cause as rightful?

Bauer charges the proponents of reform with defending a false notion of progress, which consists in the response to moments of urgency. These responses are later given a rational character by being wrongly inserted into a teleological narrative about human history. Bauer's commitment to Hegelian teleology aside, he is wary about many modern causes being defended in this way. His attitude anticipates Friedrich Nietzsche's critique of moral historians in his *Genealogy of Morals*, and their naive assumption that the eventual nature of an historical phenomenon was rationally designed at the start.<sup>43</sup> Bauer's critique of the Jewish cause almost resounds in Nietzsche's assault on all historiographies based on "logical progressus": it would almost make sense that in the spirit of universal freedom, Jews, too, could participate in all aspects of Prussian civil society in their capacity as citizens. Bauer suggests that only a more sustained analysis of this peculiar social phenomenon reveals that the concessions made to the Jews by the State were necessitated by urgency, in "periods of stress" in response to "a need and danger of its life."<sup>44</sup> Bauer's cynicism towards reform finds fuller life in Nietzsche's disdain for all such modern demands, in his claim that "legal conditions may be nothing more than exceptional states of emergency, partial restrictions which the will to life in its quest for power provisionally imposes on itself in order to serve its overall goal: the creation of larger units of power."<sup>45</sup> So, concessions only proceed when the greater unit of power, the State, finds that it has to preserve itself – unless it is the case that, as we switch to a strictly teleological vision, the emerging state already inhered in the greater unit to begin with, and those concessions were already the seamless implication of the real as rational. Defenders of the Jewish cause are among those naive minds who read these moments of existential stress as ones of teleological progress. To the extent that it has been achieved, Jewish emancipation is a genealogical contingency inherited from such moments outside of the teleological scope of rational history. The genealogical argument serves to reduce the existence of a phenomenon to causes outside of that phenomenon's existence: the survival of Judaism is not to be explained by its own developmental trajectory, but rather by extraneous events that necessitated concessions to the Jews.

43. Nietzsche suggests that moralistic readings of history have conflated the "*causa fiendi*," an interpretation of history based on final causes, with the flux of preceding causes that gave momentary shape to a social phenomenon. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 57–58. Nietzsche's intellectual contact with Bauer is evidenced in his own statements in his late *Ecce Homo* in Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman (eds.), *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and Other Writings*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 69–152: 117. For an extensive study of Bauer's influence on Nietzsche, see Ernst Benz, "Nietzsche und Bauer" in *Nietzsches Ideen zur Geschichte des Christentums*, (Leiden, Brill: 1956), 104–121.

44. Bauer, *The Jewish Question*, 23.

45. Nietzsche, *Genealogy*, 57. For a broader discussion of the intellectual affinities between Nietzsche and Bauer, see Christian Emden, "The Uneasy European: Nietzsche, Nationalism and the Idea of Europe" in *The Journal of European Studies* 38, 2008, No. 1, 27–51: 29–34. Their shared disdain for "German liberalism and socialism" (32) points towards a larger critique of a degenerating culture as the source behind both forms of "herd instinct." The missing link here is their shared skepticism towards any anticipation of progress in the name of modernization. Both contend that historical change should be explained by the preceding factors that necessitated change. While Nietzsche rejects teleological explanations altogether, Bauer is willing to endorse them after following this stricture. For an extensive reading of Bauer in the period between Hegel and Nietzsche with particular focus on his influence on Nietzsche, see Karl Löwith, *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche: Der revolutionäre Bruch im Denken des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, (Hamburg: S. Fischer, 1969), 206–207; 377.

The views that the Jew is the dialectical precedent to the Christian mediation of the universal idea and that the Jew is alien to the historical purpose of the modern state are not simultaneously tenable in any simple way. The first premise allowed Hegel to affirm the Jewish cause in a limited way as previously discussed in the *Philosophy of Right*. Bauer does not agree with his old teacher, since incorporating the ahistorical character of the Jewish nation into the historically mediated telos of the State would amount to a privilege, one that perpetuates the myth of exclusiveness that renders Jews unable to transcend themselves. As I argue in the final section of the article, this is Marx's moment to intervene in the debate: if Christian civil society has developed by virtue of a necessity alien to the welfare of its members, then its survival must be questioned based on the conditions that made Christianity not only possible, but also a necessary component of civil life. Marx's inquiry pushes Christianity to the list of non-teleological developments retrospectively crowned as a moral achievement, and thus targets the Christian critique of Judaism. If both Judaism and Christianity can be explained away as genealogical contingencies, then the theological critiques of Judaism alone must be misguided.

### 3 Marx on the Jewish Subject of Modernity

This reading of Marx's essay does not fulfill two arguably desirable standards. First, it does not situate Marx's intellectual development within the ever-present history of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism. Robert Fine, for example, argues that one cannot reconstruct this text without engaging in an independent critique of how anti-Semitism informs it.<sup>46</sup> Undoubtedly, readings of this kind are not only warranted, but clearly necessitated by both the central figures of Marx's essay and the tasteless remarks that accompany the defense of their emancipation. Second, this article does not attempt to defend Judaism or Marx's Jewish contemporaries from the charges leveled against them on the basis of Talmudic literature, historical Jewish praxis, or empirical evidence regarding Jewish life in nineteenth century Germany.<sup>47</sup> This discussion does not dismiss the conclusions reached by such readings. My novel assertion is that Marx's characterization of Jewish people throughout the essay serves as an overarching critique of Hegelian historiography.<sup>48</sup> A reading of Marx's text as internal to the genesis of Hegelian critiques of Judaism reveals that Marx was making a completely novel case regarding the Jewish subject of modernity and European modernity as such, albeit accompanied by the unchanging vocabulary of anti-Judaism.<sup>49</sup>

46. Robert Fine, "Rereading Marx on the Jewish Question: Marx as a Critic of Antisemitism?" in Marcel Stoetzler (ed.), *Anti-Semitism and the Constitution of Sociology*, (University of Nebraska Press, 2014), 137–159:141.

47. For readings that critique Marx's assessment of Judaism under the terms of historical Jewish life, see Julius Carlebach, *Karl Marx and the Radical Critique of Judaism*, (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1978), 9–76; Gabriele Dietrich, "Das jüdisch-prophetische Erbe in den neueren revolutionären Bewegungen." in Walter Strolz (ed.), *Jüdische Hoffnungskraft und christlicher Glaube*, (Freiburg: Herder, 1971), 191–243.

48. That it contains a pre-materialistic critique of Hegel's political philosophy is evident and has been established elsewhere. See William Blanchard, "Rights and Privileges: Marx and the Jewish Question" in *Studies in Soviet Thought* 35, 1988, 125–145: 131–133; Idit Dobbs-Weinstein, Spinoza's Critique of Religion, 103–7; Artemy Magun, "Karl Marx and Hannah Arendt on the Jewish Question: Political Theology as a Critique".

49. I distinguish my argument from readings that treat Marx's anti-Semitic vocabulary as the expression of a hidden intention to in fact defend Jewish people from anti-Semitic sentiments and politics. See, for example, Helmut Hirsch, "Karl Marx zu 'Judenfrage' und zu Juden: Eine weiterführende Metakritik." in Walter Grab and Julius Schoeps (eds.), *Juden in Vormärz und in der Revolution von 1848*, (Stuttgart: Burg, 1983), 199–213: 208.

The aim of my reading is to demonstrate Marx's unique response to dialectical treatments of Judaism. If these were the premises for a criticism of Judaism, according to Marx, one must admit that European modernity had not actualized any true standards of human freedom, but merely universalized legalistic ways of being self-interested. The ability to justify self-interest through financial and legal venues has not elevated people to a universal standing in everyday existence. Instead, this justification has mistakenly sanctified human self-interest in a social world against other self-interested subjects, who are also entitled to the same notion of freedom. Against Hegel, Marx contends that the Christian and the Jew both suffer the same alienation the Jew is being critiqued for exclusively. Against Feuerbach, Marx defends the position that Christian Europe has not overturned the Jewish principle of monotheistic egoism but has instituted worldly devices at its service and has adapted a pretense of historical mediation. Against Bauer, Marx argues that the task at hand is not an exclusively political emancipation. An emancipation of this kind leaves the human subject to the mercy of the more or less arbitrary workings of law and money, which mediate self-interested relations between subjects without overcoming the vulgar principle of self-interest. Marx establishes that the unpretending Jewish subject is the paradigmatic subject of change because, unlike the Christian, the Jew has never arrogated to herself anything above her natural consciousness. If history has not overcome its Jewish alienation from the sublime being, and instead recreated it in the organizational principles of Christian civil society, then philosophical criticism must still address the Jewish actuality of the present and thereby overcome the Christian pretense of effective self-mediation.

Hegel's hasty reconciliation of the universal idea with the self-interested individual assumes a "pseudo-universal, an illusory universal class" of people, whose property-relations would not subject them to any treatment beneath this universality to begin with.<sup>50</sup> Money creates a guise of universality by quantitatively fixing the services and goods exchanged under the authority of the state, while the law defines the proper course of exchange.<sup>51</sup> Community can thus bind estranged individuals so long as they relate to each other through law and money. In the presence of both law and money, Hegel holds that exchange maintains the universality expected from the members of any rational community, as though "any particular tasks and services which an individual may perform come to be mediated through his own arbitrary will."<sup>52</sup> The arbitrariness of the will remains, but the implementation of a proper medium exalts it to normativity, as demanded by the State. For the young Marx, the person who already always affords this guise of universality is not tantamount to any social default. Given that this privilege belongs to a minority of people, its assumption as the default necessitates an inevitable alienation between the pseudo-universal citizen as grounded by the State, and the concrete member of civil society who is 'free' to pursue her self-interest against others.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, it is

50. Karl Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State" in *Early Writings* (London: Penguin, 1992), 57–198: 112

51. For Hegel's statements concerning money and the universality of the value judgments fixed by it, see *Philosophy of Right*, §299.

52. *Ibid.*

53. Marx, "Critique of Hegel's Doctrine of the State", 143.

not the case that Marx “misunderstands Hegel’s treatment of civil society” and thinks that civil society is an “opposing element” against the State.<sup>54</sup> Rather, in terms very much loyal to Hegel, Marx doubts the actuality of this sphere of universality and exposes it as a realm of self-interest. Self-interest is not confronted by a sphere of institutions to limit and discipline its pursuit. Instead, institutions justify and bolster expressions of self-interest as they falsely crown it with the appearance of universality in an effort to legitimate their own existence.

Bauer’s assessment of the Jewish cause takes its cue from this Hegelian notion: his question is formulated about the interaction of “a Jew towards the state,” between subjects who have ostensibly isolated themselves from “the movement of history” and the product of said historical movement in the German State.<sup>55</sup> Defying these assumptions, instead of treating Judaism as an antagonistic precedent to Christianity, Marx characterizes both Jews and the Christian state in terms of a religious opposition. Inasmuch as Judaism can be faulted for not living up to the universalism of Spirit, the Christian state can also be defined in terms of the antagonism that its particularistic praxis poses for non-Christians. Thus, both Judaism and Christianity (the State’s official confession) are mere “snake-skins cast off by history.”<sup>56</sup> For Marx, the jury is still out on whether the Christian state embodies the historical purpose attributed to it by the Hegelians. For an opposition to be alive, both parties require the other to remain in the binary relation in order to subsist as themselves. If so, what is it about Christian civil society that cannot afford to overcome this opposition against its dialectical precedent? What requires Christianity to maintain its already sublated praxis? Before addressing these questions, Marx emphasizes the factors that the State pushes out of sight while construing the myth of its sovereign subjects regardless of birth, rank, education, and property-relations.<sup>57</sup> When Bauer calls out “religious expression” as irrational, profane, and antiquated, he does not address these seemingly non-political distinctions that determine a subject’s social standing.<sup>58</sup> So long as the self-interested course of civil society is not aligned with the universalistic ethos claimed by the State, religious commitments remain the expression of alienation, both for the Christian and the Jew.<sup>59</sup> Political emancipation is no guideline for emancipation from conditions that prepare the unsatisfied member of civil society to commit to a spirituality alien to the State.<sup>60</sup>

If Marx had limited his discussion to these premises, his response to Bauer’s *Jewish Question* would have taken an unremarkable position in his early writings. It might have

54. Luca Basso. *Marx and Singularity: From the Early Writings to the Grundrisse*, (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 38.

55. Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question” in *Early Writings* (London: Penguin, 1992), 212–242: 213.

56. Ibid.

57. Marx, “On the Jewish Question”, 219.

58. Marx, “On the Jewish Question”, 221.

59. Marx, “On the Jewish Question”, 226

60. Marx, “On the Jewish Question”, 230.

even delivered him the acknowledgement of giving a rare defense of Jewish emancipation via a critique of the emancipation Bauer thought was impossible for the Jew. However, the second part of the essay describes the so-called “special position of Judaism in the enslaved world of today.”<sup>61</sup> Marx claims that need, self-interest, and its pursuit in the form of haggling constitute the “secular basis of Judaism,” before suggesting that these are the marks of a “universal and contemporary anti-social element” evidenced by Jews themselves.<sup>62</sup> Traverso cites external influences on Marx’s objectionable statements, such as Moses Hess’ positioning of the Judeo-Christian tradition in the development of capitalist production.<sup>63</sup> In Hess’ revolutionary re-writing of Hegelian teleology, Judaism and its legalism define and legitimize courses of exchange – Judaism prepares the scene for Christianity to universalize this mode of intercourse, resulting in a Judeo-Christian world of capitalistic convention. Current research overlooks the new, critical edge of Marx’s essay, namely his cynical rejection of historical teleology, like that usually attributed to Nietzsche for his notion of Judeo-Christianity.<sup>64</sup>

Marx suggests that money “estranged [the] essence of man’s work and existence,” and that the life-activity of the subject thus came to be measured in a nonliving object outside of this subject in terms of a “universal and self-constituted value of all things.”<sup>65</sup> Not only does money give self-interested subjects the ability to obtain services and resources mediated by monetary exchange, money also stands outside objects that have monetary value. In a non-dialectical relationship to such objects, money describes them under its false universality, a

61. Marx, “On the Jewish Question”, 236.

62. Marx, “On the Jewish Question”, 237.

63. Traverso, *The Jewish Question*, 17–18. Marx’s equation of money with the “jealous God of Israel” (Marx, “On the Jewish Question”, 239) is a persistent theme found throughout Hess’ works, most evident in Hess, “On the Essence of Money” in Alan Tapper (ed.), *Values and Evaluations: Essays on Ethics and Ideology*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 190; 204. There, Hess claims that money, like God, is a universal that binds subjects to forms of alienated intercourse. Hess identifies the development of this mode of social intercourse with the history of Judeo-Christianity: “The Jews, whose world historical mission in the natural history of the world of social animals was to evolve the predator out of mankind, have at last fulfilled the work they were called to. The mystery of Judaism and Christianity is revealed in the modern Jewish-Christian world of shopkeepers. The mystery of Christ’s blood, like that of the veneration of blood in ancient Judaism, appears here at last quite openly as the mystery of the predator. In ancient Judaism the blood cult was only a prototype; in medieval Christianity it became theoretically, ideally, logically realized: one really consumed the externalized, poured-out blood of mankind, but only in imagination the blood of the God-man. In the modern Jewish-Christian world of shopkeepers this besetting urge of the world of social animals has at last appeared, no longer symbolically or mystically, but in wholly prosaic form.” (Hess, “On the Essence of Money”, 203–204). The mediating function of money helps self-interested subjects to convene for the purposes of exchange under a “dead means of relation” (206), which conveniently pushes any bloodshed out of sight. Hess’ more developed, teleological account of history where Judaism marks the first step in the history of alienation is found in his *Holy History of Mankind* (1837), which would have been influential for the Young Marx’s contribution to the debate concerning the Jewish cause. See Adam Sutcliffe, “Ludwig Börne, Jewish Messianism, and the Politics of Money” in *The Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 57 (2012), No. 1, 213– 237: 233–235 for a more detailed overview of the Holy History.

64. I would argue that readings linking Marx’s text to later associations of Judaism with capitalism assume Marx’s notion of Judeo-Christianity to be teleological. For example, see Andrew K. Mcknight, “Reevaluating Marx and Spirituality: Emancipation and the Search for Meaning” in *Journal of Thought* 40.1 (2005), 61–78: 73–77; Ido de Haan, “Judenfrage” in *Krisis: Journal for Contemporary Philosophy* 2 (2018), 91–94: 92. These readings do not account for the fact that the primary target of Marx’s essay is the Christian source of the teleological critique of Judaism, which renders Judaism an exception to norm. If Christianity is an amplification of problematic Jewish ethics, Marx shows us that the isolated treatment of Judaism is meaningless.

65. Marx, “On the Jewish Question”, 239.

false God, “the god of practical need and self-interest.”<sup>66</sup> Judaism emerges as an immediate and therefore primitive legalistic effort to ground a social system of self-interest, where those bound by the law can initiate relations of alienated exchange. And yet, such immediacy has never been overcome in Christianity. Marx asserts that “Christianity overcame real Judaism only in appearance” and only “refined” the problem at hand.<sup>67</sup> In this genealogical conception of historical change, the problem is not so much the thing to be modified but its false modifications – the false pretense of Christian refinement while the material shackles remain unchallenged. As Christian intervention never resolved the secular problems to which Judaism responded, Judaism “managed to survive not despite history but through it.”<sup>68</sup> Thus, Judaism and its historical persistence are not the dialectical abnormality of this historiography. The Jew lives on in Christian civil society, because “[c]ivil society ceaselessly begets the Jew from its own entrails.”<sup>69</sup> The ethos of alienated exchange makes it both possible and necessary that the law, money, and other extrinsic tools take the place of recognition and trust. Marx contends that it was in response to an impetus “to do away with the crudeness of practical need” that Christianity sprang forth from Judaism.<sup>70</sup> A reactionary impulse that was subsequently crowned “by raising it into a celestial space,” Christianity simply theorized ongoing Jewish practice without transcending it.<sup>71</sup> Christianity was triggered into existence in Judaism and for Judaism, not to overcome it but to make Judaism and its characteristic alienation more palatable for the masses. Christian civil society both relies on and institutionalizes the use of alienated universals such as law and money under the notion that only such universals could mediate the true content of Christian salvation, that is, bourgeois freedom.

Rather than the Hegelian readings that have been imposed on Marx’s response to the *Judenfrage*, we should recognize a Nietzsche *avant la lettre* in the anti-teleological bend of his argument. According to Nietzsche’s genealogical critique of historiography, teleological explanations make moralistic excuses for states of emergency beyond human control. Marx’s argument foreshadows Nietzsche’s infamous views concerning Judeo-Christianity that the false veneer of Christian love grew forth from a Jewish resentment of unmitigated human strength and vitality, and made a lousy excuse for the same.<sup>72</sup> Marx contends that “Judaism reaches its peak with the completion of civil society; but civil society first reaches its completion in the Christian world,” meaning that the capitalistic social order first thoroughly articulated in Christian civil

66. Marx, “On the Jewish Question”, 239.

67. Marx, “On the Jewish Question”, 240.

68. Marx, “On the Jewish Question”, 238.

69. Ibid.

70. Marx, “On the Jewish Question”, 240.

71. Ibid.

72. For Nietzsche’s allegory of the tree of revenge, visualizing this genealogical relationship between Judaism and Christianity, see *On the Genealogy of Morals*, 20–21. According to Nietzsche, the ascetic ideals contrary to human vitality found a convenient excuse in Christianity, which is only a more appealing Judaism.



society has its origins in Jewish theology.<sup>73</sup> Thus, the problematic ethics that emerge in a commonwealth shaped by Jewish law have their clearest institutional articulation in Christian civil society. As such, it is the Christian social order that warrants explanation. Ideally, this explanation would be genealogical, which, rather than deferring explanation to eschatology, could examine the social conditions under which Christianity emerged to preserve them when Jewish alienation became unbearable, and along with it, Judaism itself untenable.

The same genealogical account takes a conspiratorial turn with Nietzsche, since Christianity, as a universalized offshoot of Judaism, propagates its anti-vitalist ethic and degrades the European to the stature of the Hebrew slave. Modernity marks the final stage of this degradation, with the Jews as the victorious party, who “know best of all themselves that a takeover of Europe or violence of any kind is unthinkable for them; but they know equally well that sometime or other Europe, like a fully ripened fruit, ought to fall right into their hand, which only ever so slightly reaches out to it.”<sup>74</sup> This is an indictment of European modernity and its ethical decay, though the Jew carries far more genealogical responsibility (and opportunity) as the progenitor of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Marx is clear that Judaism is too primitive (and therefore innocent) to proselytize humanity into a social system of alienated exchange, and that this was a result of the development of Christianity: “Judaism could not develop further as a religion, could not develop further theoretically, because the world-view of practical need is by nature narrow-minded and rapidly exhausted.”<sup>75</sup>

A teleological argument does not have to exclude a genealogical perspective. In explaining the gradual attainment of a predestined goal, the teleological explanation can very well provide a genealogical overview of discrete stages. This is how Hegel presented the distinct stages of world-history in his lectures. Nevertheless, the argument there is not genealogical, it is teleological: the explanation of historical phenomena is deferred to the necessity of a historical goal, the attainment of self-conscious freedom. However, a genealogical argument does not have to have a teleological commitment in that the discrete shapes of a phenomenon need not be bound by a predestined goal. This is the vision the early Marx shares with the

73. Marx, “On The Jewish Question,” 240.

74. Nietzsche, *Dawn: Thoughts on the Presuppositions of Morality*, trans. Brittain Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 152.

75. Marx, “On The Jewish Question,” 240. We can compare Marx’s genealogical impulse to Moses Mendelssohn’s distinction between “revealed religion” and “revealed legislation” as introduced in his *Jerusalem, or on Religious Power and Judaism*, (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 1983), 97. As a mere code of action, Judaism emerges to organize the relations both between members of a commonwealth and between the same members and outsiders to the commonwealth. As its existential motivation is pragmatic and free from eschatological ambitions, Judaism proves to be not merely reconcilable with the ideals of the Enlightenment, but a paradigmatic model of a social code for a tolerant and secular future. Christianity, as religion, pretends to edify “the unthinking, brutelike man” with the revelation of eternal truths absolved from his worldly existence (Mendelssohn, 97). In contrast, Judaism did not extend into such a sphere of spiritual delusion. This cynical moment in Marx’s defense of Jewish emancipation takes its cue from this Mendelssohnian move: in its primitive and merely prudent attempt at organizing human relations without any transcendental justification, Judaism is far more innocent than its Christian successor. A comparative reading of this kind between Marx and Mendelssohn has been offered by Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 231. Even though I agree that Marx is troubled by the ugly base of civil society which he characterizes with an unmediated praxis of Jewish commandments, the problem is not merely that “[t]he civil state is the Jewish state” (231), but rather that the civil state is the Jewish state that excuses itself via Christian eschatology.

later Nietzsche. If history has no immanent goal, we cannot impose such a necessity to explain Judaism by reference to what succeeded it. Thus, Marx can maintain his developing commitment to his materialistic teleology of the human subject, which is not central to the discussion in his response to the *Judenfrage*. Given that the ideological superstructure does not contain its own developmental principle, it does not have a native teleological process we can refer to in the transformation of ideologies. So at best, as the snake-skin that envelops the body of man, the emergence and transformation of ideologies is explained by a deterministic necessity to maintain a previously given state of affairs. This means that Christianity emerges to preserve the social system that formed under Judaism – following its configuration of the divine, its legalistic framework, and organization as a system of self-interest.

Marx's genealogical argument rests on the notion that ideologies only transform to preserve existing states of affairs, and only afterwards do we go back to make sense of them and impose a purposive developmental logic. In this instance, Christianity is merely a new name we give our false conscience to redeem our shared state of alienation.<sup>76</sup> I disagree with biographical judgments that Marx was under the influence of a *Zerrissenheit* between his own Jewish background and his family's conversion to Christianity when he penned his response to Bauer.<sup>77</sup> Marx was parodying the Christian source of the teleological criticisms leveled against Judaism by reducing Christian civil society to a genealogical contingency, in the same way Judaism was relegated to the same status by Bauer and others.

Marx's anti-Jewish expressions are inspired by a desire to expose commonly shared conceptions of history, and the thinkers who hold them with certainty, causing them to experience undeniable embarrassment. What would be more embarrassing for a believer, either of Christianity or of Hegel's account of history, than to know that Jesus was not a better revolutionary than Moses? What is perhaps more offensive is the fact that Marx's views concerning Judaism are not actually views concerning Judaism at all – they are a critique of non-materialistic models of historical change. Marx was not only a “non-Jewish Jew,” but also an anti-Hegelian Hegelian thinker.<sup>78</sup> At the intersection of these two self-different identities, Marx inevitably launched many controversies. His contrarianism would later be tamed by his own historical-materialist teleology of the human subject, following which he did not revisit theological debates on their own terms.

76. I agree with Elad Lapidot's reading that Marx is critical of the very concept of religion as it is indifferently applied to both Judaism and Christianity in *Jews Out of the Question: A Critique of Anti-Semitism*, (SUNY Press, 2020), 240. In its redemptive promise, religion launches a social program of purification that seeks to transcend the ground of “historical and worldly existence” (241). Because this aspiration finds its “purest,” or most aggressive form in Christianity, for Marx, it is in fact Christianity that proves to be more problematic than Judaism.

77. See Shlomo Avineri, *Karl Marx: Philosophy and Revolution*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 48–49.

78. Isaac Deutscher suggests that Marx was among Jewish intellectuals who crossed the boundaries of faith, nations, and empire in order to explain the human condition. See Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew*, (New York: Verso, 2017).

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