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From Bauer's Critique to Marx's Vision: Redefining Emancipation in "On the Jewish Question"

Bauer'in Eleştirisinden Marx'ın Vizyonuna: "Yahudi Sorunu Üzerine"de Özgürleşmenin Yeniden Tanımlanması

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Abstract: This study explores Karl Marx's "On the Jewish Question," positioning his arguments against Bruno Bauer as a broader critique of political emancipation's inherent limitations. Marx argues political emancipation is insufficient; the state relegates social distinctions to the private sphere without resolving deeper social alienation from egoism and property. He contrasts this with "human emancipation," a profound societal transformation to overcome alienation, private property, and class divisions, allowing genuine social self-realization. Marx's critique ultimately targets capitalism's commodity-centric nature.

Keywords: Karl Marx, Bruno Bauer, Jewish question, political emancipation, human emancipation.

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Introduction

Within Karl Marx's extensive oeuvre, his early works in particular are a laboratory in which his critical thought germinated and its basic concepts took shape. Among these early texts, his 1843 essay "On the Jewish Question" (Zur Judenfrage) is of critical importance for understanding the evolution of Marx's conception of freedom, his questioning of the dominant liberal paradigms of emancipation of the period, and the first formulations of many themes that would form the basis of his later work (Traverso, 2001, p. 29). This work is considered by some commentators as a turning point in the development of Marx's philosophical and social views, as it is argued that with this text Marx made a decisive turn away from a radical democratic and Hegelian conception of society towards materialism and communism (Maidan, 1987, p. 27). Although the title of the article seems to focus specifically on the question of the political rights of the Jewish people in Prussia, the text quickly transcends this specific context and offers a much broader theoretical ground for Marx: the nature of the modern state, the nature of "human rights" in bourgeois society and, most importantly, the fundamental distinction he makes between "political emancipation" and "human emancipation" in his own terminology (Peled, 1992, p. 464). Beyond a simple terminological choice, this conceptual distinction reveals a different understanding of what true human emancipation means and what kind of fundamental social transformations are necessary to achieve this goal, which underpins Marxist thought (Schmied-Kowarzik, 1998, p. 365).

The article, which corresponds to the early stage of Marx's intellectual adventure, is an important reflection of his intellectual dialogue and confrontation with Hegelianism, the dominant philosophical current of the period, and especially with the Young Hegelians, which differed from Hegel's conservative followers and developed radical criticisms (O'Malley & Davis, 2007, p. vii). "On the Jewish Question" was written specifically as a direct polemic and critical response to the writings of the Young Hegelian thinker Bruno Bauer, with whom Marx had a close relationship for a time. The article was written during a period of considerable political and social upheaval in Germany before the 1848 Revolutions. In this turbulent atmosphere, the issue of the acquisition of citizenship rights and the social

integration of Jews was at the centre of intense debates, especially among intellectuals and political actors (Rabinbach, 1988, p. 161). It is likely that historical developments such as the fact that the Rhineland region, where Marx spent his youth and where the effects of the French Revolution were more pronounced, had experienced a brief period of Jewish emancipation under Napoleon and that these gains were later taken back by the Kingdom of Prussia, shaped Marx's interest in and approach to the subject (Bloom, 1942, p. 5).

In his works, Bauer argued that as a precondition for the Jews in Germany to attain full political rights and citizenship status, they should renounce their particular religious identity and consciousness and adopt the universal principles of the secular state (Ingram, 1988, p. 130). For Bauer, religion was an obstacle to the modern, rational state and true freedom was only possible if the state was completely purged of the theological and dogmatic influences of both Christianity and Judaism (Peled, 1992, p. 468). At the heart of Bauer's argument was the premise that political emancipation inherently requires a universal conception of citizenship, independent of any particular religious affiliation, and therefore the protection of different religious identities in the public sphere would contradict the universalist demands of the modern state and citizenship (Traverso, 2001, p. 48). In Bauer's perspective, true political emancipation entailed the complete elimination of the visibility and influence of religion in the public sphere, reducing it to a private matter of conscience. This approach forced the Jews to face a fundamental dilemma: either to maintain their specific religious identity and practices and remain excluded from full political participation, or to renounce these religious and cultural differences in order to become fully integrated citizens of the modern state (Bloom, 1942, p. 7).

In addressing Bauer's basic thesis, Marx does not limit the discussion to the question of Jewish emancipation; on the contrary, he subjects Bauer's conception of political emancipation, the liberal theory of rights and the modern concept of the state on which this conception is based to a more comprehensive and fundamental critique (Bloom, 1942, p. 7). Summarizing Bauer, Marx moves beyond Jewish emancipation to a fundamental analysis of political emancipation's own nature and limits (Avineri, 1964, p. 445). As Peled (1992) points out, Marx's main aim was to "shift the

discussion of the Jewish question from theology to sociology", thus moving it from the abstract world of religious dogmas to the concrete sphere of social relations and material conditions (Peled, 1992, p. 464). In this context, the aim of this paper is to analyse in depth Marx's specific criticisms of Bauer in his essay "On the Jewish Question", to elucidate the fundamental distinction between "political emancipation" and "human emancipation" at the heart of these criticisms. It further aims to reveal the historical and intellectual context of these arguments in 19th century Germany, and to emphasise their enduring significance for Marx's later thought. In particular, it will be shown how Marx uses this conceptual distinction to expose the limits of the liberal state, civil society and the conception of human rights. and it will also be demonstrated how the conception of historical materialism (O'Malley & Davis, 2007, p. xv) first emerges in this early text.

Marx's Critique of Bauer's Thesis: The Secular State and the Existence of Religion

According to Bauer, in order for communities such as Jews and Christians to achieve full political rights, the determining role of beliefs in the public and political sphere had to be revised. Bauer argued that true emancipation could only be achieved if the state took a neutral position vis-à-vis all faiths (Ingram, 1988, p. 130). According to Bauer, there was no room for different religious identities in a secular state; civic consciousness should replace any particular religious affiliation. Marx raised a sharp objection to this basic assumption of Bauer's, namely that a secular state would necessarily exclude religion or that religion would inevitably lose its social significance in such a state. To justify his objection, he points to the USA, which he sees as the most advanced example of political emancipation at the time. Marx observes that although there is no official state religion in the USA, religion not only continues to exist in social life, but on the contrary, it develops in a very lively and widespread manner (Marx, 2007e, p. 33).

This empirical observation leads Marx to conclude that the secular state, instead of actively opposing or abolishing religion, by treating individuals in the public sphere in isolation from their religious affiliation, actually *assumes* and even protects the existence of religion in the private sphere (Marx, 2007e, p. 33). For Marx, the state's political emancipation of

the individual, does not mean that the individual is freed from the constraints and alienations arising from their religious beliefs or property relations *in real social life* (Maidan, 1987, p. 29). The political "abolition" of qualifications for citizenship status, such as religion, property, education, etc., does not mean that these qualifications actually disappear from the concrete social existence of individuals; it only means that the state ignores these distinctions from a political perspective (Marx, 2007e, p. 35). The state's recognition of individuals as politically equal citizens does not mean that religion, property and the inequalities arising from them in civil society have disappeared as a social reality. As Marx himself emphasises, "in the country of complete political emancipation, religion not only exists, but displays a fresh and vigorous vitality, that is proof that the existence of religion is not in contradiction to the perfection of the state" (Marx, 2007e, p. 33). Therefore, for Marx, the solution proposed by Bauer - the complete exclusion of religion from the political sphere - only touches the surface of the problem and overlooks its true origin (Ingram, 1988, p. 131). Moreover, the critical point for Marx is this: The political emancipation of the state from religion does not mean the *human* emancipation of the individual from religion (Marx, 2007e, p. 34). In a secular state, religion ceases to be a public or political matter and becomes an individual belief, a matter of conscience, and is thus relegated to the private sphere, that is, to the sphere of civil society (Marx, 2007e, p. 37). Marx believed that privatizing religion would not eliminate its social impact or divisive potential, and that religion would endure, even if secularized, as long as the material conditions (e.g., inequality, exploitation) fostering religious beliefs remained (Schmied-Kowarzik, 1998, p. 366).

Political Emancipation: Definition and Limits

Based on his criticisms of Bauer's arguments, Marx places the concept of political emancipation in a broader and more critical theoretical framework. He basically defines political emancipation as a historical process in which the modern state frees itself from feudal ties, medieval privileges and especially religious restrictions, and individuals attain formal political equality and citizenship rights within a secular state structure (Marx, 2007e, p. 33). From this perspective, political emancipation represents a historically progressive and important step forward from feudal or

theocratic state orders, where political rights and status were often tied to religious identity, land ownership or nobility (Avineri, 1964, p. 445). Marx does not deny this progress, but his main emphasis is that this form of emancipation is inherently *limited* and *inadequate*.

Marx's main criticism of political emancipation centres on the point that this form of emancipation operates within the framework of existing social structures, in particular capitalist relations of production based on private property, and therefore fails to address, and often even conceals or legitimises, deeper forms of alienation and inequality that persist in the social and economic spheres (Schmied-Kowarzik, 1998, pp. 365-366). For Marx, political emancipation does not mean "human emancipation", which is the complete and real emancipation of man; moreover, political emancipation itself can even constitute a kind of obstacle or illusion to the achievement of this ultimate goal (Fischman, 1989, p. 762). This is because political emancipation divides man into two different and contradictory existences: On the one hand, the "citizen", conceived as an abstract, equal and heavenly member of the political community; on the other hand, the "man" as a concrete, earthly, egoistic member of civil society, pursuing his own private interests, in competition with other individuals (Maidan, 1987, p. 31). Considering which social class's interests political emancipation serves makes its inherent limits even more apparent. The "liberation" of the state from religious or feudal constraints can, in practice, allow the rising bourgeoisie to more easily advance its own economic interests without having to take into account the concerns or welfare of other social classes. The emphasis on formal equality and rights in the political sphere can obscure the persistence of fundamental material and social inequalities in civil society, or create the impression that these are extra-political, "natural" or inevitable (Marx, 2007e, p. 35). Therefore, according to Marx, political emancipation does not eliminate the conditions that alienate man from his social powers; on the contrary, it reproduces and reinforces this alienation in its modern form by separating the state from civil society and dividing the individual into citizen/human (Mostov, 1989, p. 198).

Human Liberation: A More Comprehensive Vision of Liberation

While not underestimating the gains of political emancipation, Marx, is still aware of its inevitable limitations and the new forms of alienation it

creates. Thus he puts forward the concept of "human emancipation", a much more radical, profound and comprehensive vision of emancipation (Ingram, 1988, p. 131). Whereas political emancipation concerns only the transformation of the political status of the state and the individual, human emancipation goes far beyond the narrow confines of the political sphere and refers to the *actual* liberation of man from all forms of oppression, exploitation and alienation, encompassing the whole of his social and economic life (Mostov, 1989, p. 197). This is a radical transformation that must take place not only in laws or constitutions, but in the concrete, everyday life of individuals, in their work, in their social relations and in their sense of self. Human emancipation involves a process in which individuals no longer recognise and organise themselves as isolated, competitive, egoistic "monads" or abstract "citizens", but as *concrete social beings*, interdependent, cooperating, aware of their collective power (Marx, 2007e, p. 50). This ultimate goal requires a radical transformation of existing social relations, institutions and forms of consciousness. In particular, it requires the abolition of the basic conditions - primarily private property, commodity production, the dominance of money and the class distinctions and exploitation based on them - that alienate human beings from their own labour, the product of their labour, other human beings, and their own social essence (Maidan, 1987, p. 35).

Human emancipation is therefore a qualitatively different and much more comprehensive ideal than the purely political or legal freedoms or religious tolerance offered by political emancipation. While political emancipation takes the existing capitalist civil society for granted and grants certain rights and freedoms *within* this given structure, human emancipation aims to fundamentally transform this structure *itself*, namely the capitalist mode of production and the state-civil society distinction it creates (Avineri, 1964, p. 445). In Marx's words, this is the "restoration of the human world and of human relationships to man himself" (Marx, 2007e, p. 50). A true and complete emancipation, according to Marx, must include not only freedom from political oppression and restrictions, but also, and more fundamentally, freedom from economic exploitation, social alienation and all conditions that prevent man from realising his creative and social potentials (Schmied-Kowarzik, 1998, pp. 366-367).

Philosophical Origins of Human Emancipation and the Concept of "Species Being"

In order to fully understand Marx's concept of human emancipation and his critique of political emancipation, it is necessary to look at the philosophical background of his thought, especially his relationship with G.W.F. Hegel and Ludwig Feuerbach (Traverso, 2001, p. 51). Hegel's analyses of the state and civil society and the concept of alienation provided both a starting point and a philosophical framework for Marx to overcome. However, it was Feuerbach, one of the Young Hegelians, who directly influenced Marx's understanding of human emancipation. Feuerbach's criticism of religion, especially in his work *The Essence of Christianity*, left a deep impression on Marx (Marx, 2007d, p. 84). Feuerbach argued that religion is the process by which people project their essential qualities onto God, a transcendent being outside of themselves, and thus alienate themselves from their own human powers and potentialities (Marx, 2007a, p. 57). Therefore, for Marx, the overcoming of alienation and illusions was not only possible through a philosophical critique, but only through a radical change of the conditions of man's material life, social and economic relations (Schmied-Kowarzik, 1998, pp. 367-369).

At the centre of Marx's conception of human emancipation is the concept of "species being", again borrowed from Feuerbach and adapted to his own materialist framework (Maidan, 1987, p. 35). According to Marx, the main characteristic that distinguishes man from other animals is that he is a conscious, free, creative and social being. Humans not only satisfy their biological needs, but also make their own life activities the object of their conscious will and thought; they transform nature according to their needs and designs (labour); and in this process they realise themselves both as individuals and as part of a larger human community. As species beings, humans possess a universal potential: the potential to consciously and cooperatively create and transform the world according to their collective needs and capacities (Marx, 2007d, p. 75). However, in capitalist society, especially under conditions of *alienated labour* based on private property and the division of labour, people are unable to realise this species potential. Alienated labour alienates individuals from themselves in four fundamental dimensions: (1) *from the products* of their own labour; (2) from their

own *labour activity*; (3) from their own *species being*; and (4) *from other human beings* (Marx, 2007d, p. 76).

In this context, human emancipation implies precisely the overcoming of this multidimensional alienation and the full realisation of the social and creative essence of human beings as species. This implies such a social situation in which the individual powers and abilities of individuals are no longer recognised and organised as an alien political force (the state) or economic force (capital) separate from and dominating them, but directly *as social forces* (Marx, 2007e, p. 50). This points to a vision of a communist society in which individuals can both freely and versatile develop their various potentialities and engage in conscious and co-operative social activity for the common good, determining their own destiny and social life collectively, democratically (Mostov, 1989, p. 210).

Judaism, Capitalism and the Metaphor of "Judaization"

The second part of Marx's essay "On the Jewish Question" focuses on Bauer's specific theological analysis of Judaism and constitutes the part of the text that has been most discussed, criticised and subjected to accusations of anti-Semitism. Bauer saw Judaism as a more primitive stage of Christianity, based on external laws and therefore claimed that it would be theologically more difficult for Jews to renounce their religion than for believers in Christianity, a more internalised religion (Peled, 1992, p. 468). Marx flatly rejected Bauer's purely theological and speculative approach. According to him, in order to understand the historical and social reality of Judaism, it is not religious dogmas or theological subtleties but the *actual*, *worldly* practices of the Jews. Marx argues that the real "worldly basis" of Judaism is "practical need" and "egoism" (Maidan, 1987, p. 33). This "practical need" is concretely manifested in trade and the greed for money, i.e. the worship of the power of money.

Here Marx develops a highly provocative and problematic argument, consciously or unconsciously drawing on anti-Jewish stereotypes - the historical identification of Jews with commerce and finance - which were quite widespread in 19th century Germany and Europe (Bloom, 1942, pp. 7-8). According to Marx, this "practical spirit" represented by Judaism, i.e. egoism, the pursuit of self-interest and the "cult of money", where everything becomes a tradable commodity (Marx, 2007e, p. 52), is not a

phenomenon peculiar only to Jews; on the contrary, it has become the basic characteristic, the dominant principle of modern bourgeois society (Ruben, 1982, p. 216). In this line of reasoning, Marx concludes that not only Jews, but in fact the entire modern bourgeois society, including Christians, has been "Judaised" (Traverso, 2001, p. 50). With this provocative statement, Marx claims that Jewish religion need not disappear from society, since this essence (egoism, greed for money) already forms the basis of modern civil society. Therefore, what is required is not the assimilation or elimination of a particular religious group, but the liberation of the whole society, of all people, from this "Judaism", i.e. from the commodity- and money-oriented, egoistic, alienating spirit of capitalism (Marx, 2007e, p. 55).

Marx's arguments, and especially the language he used have been strongly characterised as anti-Semitic by many commentators (Fischman, 1989, p. 756; Kovel, 1983, p. 31; Maccoby, 2006, pp. 65-66;). Maccoby (2006) notes that Marx sees the modern commercial world as the triumph of Judaism and implies that the true God of this world is money, which is a modern version of traditional anti-Semitic themes (Maccoby, 2006, p. 66). Many commentators, such as Shlomo Avineri (1964), Solomon Bloom (1942), Enzo Traverso (2001), Yoav Peled (1992) and David Ingram (1988), argue that Marx's intention was not primarily anti-Semitism, but modern bourgeois society and capitalism, not Jews or Judaism. According to this interpretation, Marx used the term "Judaism" and its associated stereotypes as *a metaphorical* device to criticise the universalising commodity fetishism, atomising egoism and alienated system of capitalist society, where everything is measured in money (Bloom, 1942, p. 8; Peled, 1992, p. 476; Traverso, 2001, p. 50). However, critics such as David Ruben(1982) argue that this "metaphor" interpretation is also problematic, as Marx's reduction of Jews to a specific socio-economic function prevents him from seeing them as historical agents with their own history, culture and potential national identity, which in itself is a form of reductionism and ignorance (Ruben, 1982, p. 217). In the light of these different interpretations, it can be said that at the centre of Marx's analysis is not an attack on a particular religious or ethnic group, but a critique of the alienated set of social relations based on private property and the power of money, which he sees as

enslaving all humanity. In this framework, "liberation from Judaism" actually means "the liberation of society from Judaism" (Maidan, 1987, p. 33), namely from these egoistic and commodified relations created by capitalism. However, whichever interpretation is adopted, there is a broad consensus that the language Marx uses, the images he chooses and the stereotypes he employs in the second part of the essay are highly problematic, and they reflect the anti-Semitic prejudices of the time. Marx uses stereotypes without critical distance, and his language is therefore legitimately the target of anti-Semitic criticism (Kovel, 1983, p. 40).

Liberal Rights, Civil Society and State Criticism

Perhaps one of the most enduring and influential aspects of Marx's analysis in "On the Jewish Question" is his radical critique of liberal "human rights", which he sees as a product and carrier of political emancipation, and of the relationship between the modern state and civil society on which these rights are based. Marx analyses in detail the rights (liberty, property, equality, security) formulated in the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" declared after the French Revolution (Maidan, 1987, p. 31). His main thesis is that these rights, rather than reflecting universal human values or social bonds, are based on the atomised, egoistic, self-interested individual of civil society and are formulated as rights that separate and isolate this individual from other individuals and society (Marx, 2007e, p. 44)

For example, *the right to liberty* is defined as the right to do and enjoy everything as long as it does not harm others; this, according to Marx, is an understanding of liberty based on the separateness of man from other men, not on his connection with them. He sees the individual as "a monad isolated and withdrawn into himself " (Marx, 2007e, p. 45). *The right to property* is the most concrete practical application of this individual separation and egoism; it is the right of the individual to dispose of his own property arbitrarily, without regard to other people; it is "right to enjoy and dispose of one's wealth arbitrarily" (Marx, 2007e, p. 45). *The right to equality* means that these isolated individuals are only formally equal before the law; it ignores real social and economic inequalities. *The right to security*, on the other hand, is defined as the state's guarantee to protect the personality, rights and especially property of these egoistic individuals; that is, "the concept

of civil society protecting its own personality, rights and property", in short, the insurance of egoism (Marx, 2007e, p. 46).

Consequently, according to Marx, these liberal rights, instead of reflecting and strengthening the social bonds, cooperative nature and communal essence of man, legally reinforce and legitimise the atomised, competitive and egoistic structure of civil society (Marx, 2007e, p. 46). This system of rights is not based on the common bonds of solidarity that bind people together, but on the boundaries and conflicts of private interests that separate them. For this reason, liberal rights primarily serve to preserve the individualistic and competitive nature of modern bourgeois society and secure the interests of the isolated "egoistic man" (Fischman, 1989, p. 762), rather than promoting a true spirit of community or solidarity. This leads to a fundamental rupture in modern society, the dissociation between state and civil society, which Marx inherited from Hegel and critically transformed. In the public sphere, the individual appears as an abstract, equal "citizen"; in the private sphere, he exists as a concrete, egoistic "man" pursuing his own needs and interests (Mostov, 1989, p. 198).

As commentators such as Jean L. Cohen have pointed out, Marx sees this modern separation between the state and civil society as a form of *political alienation*, which means the estrangement of man from his own social forces and the confrontation of these forces with a political structure independent of him and dominating him. In this framework, formal democracy and the constitutional state, which are among the most important achievements of political emancipation, become an abstract, incomplete and potentially illusory form of freedom to the extent that they do not address, or even preserve, the fundamental relations of domination and power structures that lie deep within civil society (Mostov, 1989, p. 198). Marx argues that the state's declaration of distinctions such as religion, property and education as "irrelevant" in terms of citizenship rights does not in fact abolish these distinctions, but merely pushes them out of the visible sphere of politics into the "private" sphere of civil society, where their power and social influence continues unabated, even increasing (Marx, 2007e, p. 35). On the one hand, this separation creates an "abstract citizen" with equal rights in the state, while on the other hand, in reality, concrete individuals in civil society remain subject to the inherent

inequalities, competition and power dynamics of the capitalist economic system (Ingram, 1988, p. 132). As a logical consequence of this analysis, Marx concludes that the universal principles of freedom, equality and fraternity proclaimed by liberalist political emancipation cannot be fully realised on a social terrain dominated by private property and class antagonisms, where the state and civil society are separated from each other (Marx, 2007b, p. 10).

Marx developed and deepened this critique of liberal rights and the state, throughout his intellectual career, especially in works such as *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (1844), *The German Ideology* (1845-46), *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) and *Capital* (1867). While acknowledging that liberal rights represent a historical advance against feudalism, he argued that they often remain *formal*, that is, they do not adequately address the fundamental material inequalities and relations of exploitation that shape people's real lives, but rather often legitimise these relations (O'Malley & Davis, 2007, p. xv). From a Marxist perspective, these rights, in the final analysis, serve to consolidate the rule of capital by preserving the individualistic and competitive nature of bourgeois society and by sanctifying private property. Similarly, Marx saw the modern state in capitalist society not as an impartial arbiter or representative of the common will of the whole society, but as an *instrument of class domination* that primarily serves the interests of the ruling class, the bourgeoisie, maintaining and reproducing the conditions of capitalist accumulation and exploitation (Traverso, 2001, p. 47). Therefore, his vision of a communist society predicts that with the eventual abolition of classes and class antagonisms, the need for the state as a separate apparatus for oppressing people will gradually diminish and the state will gradually "fade away" (Mostov, 1989, p. 211).

Achieving Human Liberation: Reform or Revolution?

The question of how to achieve the comprehensive human emancipation Marx envisaged has been a central point of debate and divergence both in Marx's own thought and in the Marxist tradition that followed him. In particular, different approaches have emerged as to whether gradual reforms within the existing capitalist system or a radical, revolutionary overthrow of the system are necessary to achieve this goal. Historically, the social democratic tradition favoured gradual reforms for social

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improvement, while revolutionary Marxists argued that true human emancipation required a revolutionary overthrow of capitalism due to its inherent contradictions. Marx himself, especially in his works after "On the Jewish Question" (e.g. *The Communist Manifesto* or *The Class Struggles in France*), increasingly emphasised the historical necessity for *a revolutionary* transformation of the existing bourgeois social order and state in order to overcome the structural contradictions and exploitative nature of capitalism (Schmied-Kowarzik, 1998, pp. 365-368). Marx believed that only through the organisation of the proletariat with its own consciousness, its seizure of political power and its socialisation of the means of production by ending private ownership of them, could the preconditions for the abolition of alienation, exploitation and class distinction be created (Mostov, 1989, p. 208). Only through such a fundamental, revolutionary change, he believed, could the conditions be created for the abolition of alienated labour, for the realisation of man's species existence and thus for true human emancipation (Marx, 2007c, pp. 180-181).

The concrete practical consequences of Marx's ideal of human emancipation and his vision of a communist society, though often abstract and unelaborated, contain some core aspects. Achieving a society in which alienated labour is overcome, requires a radical restructuring of the existing economic system. This implies a shift from private ownership of the means of production to a kind of collective or social ownership, where the means of production come under the common control of the whole society (Schmied-Kowarzik, 1998, pp. 366-368).

The self-realisation of human beings as species beings, that is, in accordance with their social and cooperative essence, calls to mind a communist society in which competition and egoism are replaced by cooperation and solidarity, in which everyone's basic needs are met, and in which social production is consciously and democratically planned in accordance with the common needs of society rather than the anarchic forces of the market (Marx, 2007d, p. 80). Marx and many Marxist thinkers who followed him saw the revolutionary struggle, social movements and collective action of the modern working class, created by the capitalist system itself, as the primary historical subject and motor force for achieving this fundamental social transformation (Marx, 2007d, p. 69).

Critical Perspectives and Conclusion: Debating Marx's "On the Jewish Question"

Since its publication, Marx's essay "On the Jewish Question" has been the subject of numerous and often contradictory scholarly interpretations, criticisms and heated debates. One of the main points of divergence among commentators is over the actual focus of the article and Marx's intentions. Some scholars, such as Solomon Bloom, Dennis Fischman and Yoav Peled, argue that Marx uses the text, specifically the question of Jewish emancipation, as a kind of "lens" or occasion to examine and critique the more general and structural limitations of modern bourgeois society, liberal rights and political emancipation (Bloom, 1942, p. 8; Fischman, 1989, p. 758; Peled, 1992, p. 464). According to this interpretation, central to Marx's analysis are primarily issues such as the formal nature of political rights, the split between state and civil society, and the inability of political emancipation to address deeper social and economic inequalities. Peled (1992) goes further and states that Marx's original political intention *was to advocate* Jewish emancipation in Prussia, but that he did so within the framework of his own developing general social critique, and in the process did not hesitate to use the negative language of the time about Judaism (Peled, 1992, p. 484). In contrast, other commentators such as Enzo Traverso and David Ruben focus more on Marx's apparent assimilationist stance in the text. According to them, Marx seems to believe that true human emancipation requires Jews to abandon their particular religious and cultural identities and adopt an abstract "human" identity in a universal, classless society (Ruben, 1982, p. 217; Traverso, 2001, p. 54). This interpretation is also linked to the criticism that Marx did not pay enough attention to national or cultural differences.

The most persistent and sensitive debate about the essay "On the Jewish Question" revolves around its potential anti-Semitic implications and Marx's personal attitudes (Blanchard, 1984, p. 367). Numerous scholars and critics have pointed out that Marx's direct association of Jews with money, usury, egoism and self-interest in the second part of the essay repeats or at least uncritically uses traditional anti-Semitic stereotypes with a long and dark history in European history (Maccoby, 2006, p. 65). Names such as Robert Wistrich, Bernard Lewis, Hyam Maccoby and Joel Kovel have

characterised the article and Marx's position on this issue as explicitly anti-Semitic. In contrast, as noted earlier, other scholars such as Avineri, Bloom, Traverso and Ingram offer more contextualised and nuanced perspectives, arguing that Marx's language and arguments should be considered within the social and intellectual climate of 19th-century Germany, where such stereotypes and language were unfortunately prevalent (Bloom, 1942, p. 9; Traverso, 2001, p. 46). These commentators emphasise that Marx's primary aim was not to attack Jews, but to criticise capitalism and the limits of political emancipation, and that he used the "Jewish question" as a specific case study to concretise his broader theoretical arguments (Avineri, 1964, p. 446). However, some critics, such as Kovel (1983), argue that such "defensive" interpretations fail to adequately explain and trivialise the violence inherent in Marx's language, the blatant contempt for Judaism and the uncritical use of stereotypes (Kovel, 1983, p. 40).

Beyond the anti-Semitism debate, there are other criticisms of Marx's arguments in "On the Jewish Question". Some scholars have argued that his vision of "human emancipation" involves an excessive universalism that aims to transcend all particular identities (national, cultural, religious) and thus potentially neglects or suppresses the legitimate importance of these particular identities and cultural heritage for individuals and communities (Ruben, 1982, p. 220). Similarly, its strong emphasis on the eventual elimination of religion from public life has been criticised as potentially intolerant or insensitive to the deeply held beliefs and ways of life of religious individuals and communities, especially in the context of modern pluralistic societies. These criticisms and ongoing debates reveal the complexities, inherent tensions and potential limitations of Marx's early text on emancipation.

In conclusion, Marx's 1843 essay "On the Jewish Question," despite its specific historical and polemical context, transcends this context in its issues and arguments. It is a cornerstone in Marx's own intellectual development and an enduring reference point for modern political philosophy and social theory. The main achievement of the article is that it offers a profound and penetrating critique of political emancipation, revealing the structural limitations and inherent contradictions of this form of freedom in achieving true human emancipation (Maidan, 1987, p. 29). Marx found

Bauer's approach, which confined the problem to a theological framework, inadequate (Marx, 2007e, p. 32) and moved the discussion from the formal arrangements of the political sphere to the origins of material social relations and economic structures in civil society and the alienation arising from them. In this analysis, Marx argued that the secular state and political emancipation, far from solving fundamental social problems such as religion and private property, often reproduced and legitimated them by pushing them into the private sphere or by changing their form (Marx, 2007e, p. 35).

The culmination of this critical analysis and perhaps the most important theoretical contribution of the article is the sharp and fundamental distinction Marx makes between "political emancipation" and "human emancipation" (Avineri, 1964, p. 445). While Marx acknowledges that political emancipation, which includes elements such as formal political rights, the rule of law and a secular state, is a historical advance against feudalism and absolutism (Marx, 2007e, p. 37), he emphasises that it is not an ultimate goal, but rather a limited achievement. As long as political emancipation remains within the framework of liberal rights and representative state mechanisms, it cannot overcome the fundamental problems of modern society: the alienation of man from his own labour, product, nature and fellow human beings, the atomising egoism in civil society, and deep economic inequalities (Fischman, 1989, p. 762). In contrast, Marx's ideal of true and complete freedom, i.e. *human emancipation*, requires not only liberation from abstract political constraints or religious dogmas, but also, and more fundamentally, liberation from economic exploitation, social alienation and all material conditions that prevent man from realising his creative and social potential (Marx, 2007e, p. 50). This is a vision of a radical social transformation in which individuals are no longer isolated from each other, competitive, egoistic beings, but are able to realise themselves in conscious communal solidarity and cooperation, in which the dominance of private property, money and class distinctions is overcome, in which people collectively and democratically control their social power and their lives (Mostov, 1989, p. 210).

Although the article "On the Jewish Question", especially because of the language and arguments in its second part, has to be evaluated in the

context of the criticisms of anti-Semitism rightly levelled against it and the ongoing heated debates on this subject (Bloom, 1942, p. 3), these debates should not ignore the importance of other aspects of the text. The article is indispensable for understanding Marx's early intellectual development, the foundations of his lasting critique of liberalism, the modern state and the concept of human rights, and the first germs of his later materialist understanding of history and theory of alienation(Maidan, 1987, p. 27). The fundamental philosophical and political questions raised by Marx in this text about the nature of freedom, the tension between formal equality and real equality, the relationship between the individual and society, and the social conditions necessary for man to reach his full potential remain surprisingly relevant and provocative in contemporary debates about citizenship, human rights, the meaning and limits of democracy, social justice and the search for a more egalitarian world (Mostov, 1989, p. 196). This early essay forces us to look beyond merely formal political institutions and legal arrangements and to critically consider the deeper social, economic and cultural structures that profoundly shape human existence and determine or constrain the possibilities for genuine emancipation. For Marx, getting rid of the fallacy of seeing political freedom as an ultimate goal and exposing its limits constitutes the indispensable starting point for the struggle for human freedom, a more comprehensive and real freedom (Marx, 2007e, p. 37). For this reason, "On the Jewish Question", despite all the problematic aspects it contains, is a text that preserves its vitality within the tradition of critical thought and should continue to be reflected upon.

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Öz: Bu çalışma, Karl Marx'ın "Yahudi Sorunu Üzerine" adlı metnini, Bruno Bauer'e karşı geliştirdiği argümanları siyasal özgürleşmenin doğasındaki sınırların daha geniş bir eleştirisi olarak konumlandırarak ele almaktadır. Marx, siyasal özgürleşmenin yetersiz olduğunu savunur; devletin toplumsal ayrımları özel alana iterek egoizm ve mülkiyetten kaynaklanan derin toplumsal yabancılaşmayı çözmediğini belirtir. Bunu, yabancılaşmayı, özel mülkiyeti ve sınıf ayrımlarını aşarak gerçek toplumsal kendini gerçekleştirmeye olanak tanıyan köklü bir toplumsal dönüşüm olan "insan özgürleşmesi" ile karşılaştırır. Marx'ın eleştirisi nihayetinde kapitalizmin meta merkezli doğasını hedefler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Marx, Bauer, Yahudi sorunu, siyasal özgürleşme, insan özgürleşmesi.