Remarks on Marx

1. Background
    a. Karl Marx died in 1883, in London, in exile from his native Prussia (which had by then played the lead role in constituting a newly united Germany). As a young man he was drawn to philosophy, but the development of his own philosophy would lead to wide-ranging political and economic consequences, both during his lifetime and (even more so) after his death.
    b. The brand of philosophy Marx fell in with was that of the Young Hegelians. To generalize: these were a younger generation of German-speaking intellectuals, most of whom were left-leaning and all of whom were taken with the philosophy of G.W.F. Hegel. (d. 1831) What they took from Hegel's thought was, first and foremost, his characterization of the history of thought as dialectical. Over the course of its history, the human intellect has not just been coming up with a few ideas and holding them benignly side-by-side. Ideas instead crash into one another, coming into fruitful conflicts that lead to new and higher levels of thought. These higher levels of thought negate what came before, but in doing so they preserve and redeem some element of what's been negated. In this way, dialectical thinking is able to progress through the history of philosophy, all the way up to the modern critical thought that flourished after Kant.
    c. But, unlike Kant, Marx did not consider himself an idealist. Taken also by the thought of Ludwig Feuerbach, Marx declared himself a materialist. Feuerbach had argued that the next stage of intellectual progress for humanity would involve humankind's self-recognition as a material animal. Key to this self-recognition was a critique of religion, which posited that the essence of religion—Christianity included—could be explained by tracing religious ideas back to earthly human concerns. (Christianity, for example, might be boiled down to its essence as a move towards a universal human community; the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Trinity would simply be ideas helping humanity to realize that goal of universalism.)
    d. Putting these dialectical and materialist approaches together, Marx would come to practice what would be called dialectical materialism. This new way of thinking would allow him to bring the heights of modern philosophy to bear upon concrete problems of labor, poverty, and injustice in everyday society.
2. *On the Jewish Question* (1843)
    a. Background
        i. This is a difficult text that can lead many readers into confusion. Its strength is that it can introduce us to the central goal of Marx's thought, especially early on: human emancipation. Its weakness is that it's a complex text, wading into an already-developed discussion in the nineteenth-century world of German intellectuals. The language spoken in that world was, unhappily, plagued by prejudicial slurs surrounding Jewish people and Jewish religious practice. For example: *Judentum*, the word for Judaism or Jewish-ness, was also used to mean "capitalism, bargaining, huckstering" (usually in a pejorative sense). By entering into this discussion, Marx is taking up those fraught terms and reworking them to his own purposes. While he is in no way to be exonerated for his abuse of language here, we should try to focus less on this abuse and more on the political point he's trying to make.

ii. That point, as already suggested, has to do with human emancipation. The "Jewish Question" referred to here has to do with the debate over the political emancipation of Jews in nineteenth-century Prussia. Political emancipation, in this case, has to do with the removal of certain hindrances to civic involvement on the part of Jews. In various regions of Europe, Jews could be barred from key offices, occupations, or political functions, simply because they were Jewish. Many people, both Jews and non-Jews, sought to change this state of affairs. But how best to accomplish political emancipation remained a question, and the Young Hegelians decided to weigh in with their own two cents.

iii. Before Marx published his own views on this, his colleague Bruno Bauer had had his say. Bauer wrote at least two key works on this matter: "The Jewish Question" and "The Capacity of the Present-Day Jews and Christians to Become Free." Marx's essay is a hot-off-the-presses response to both of these works. Because of this, we as readers should be attentive to when Marx is recapitulating points made by Bauer and when he is speaking in his own voice.

iv. When Marx himself weighs in on the question, he turns a critical eye to the very idea of "political emancipation." In his view, this is a red herring that can distract us from what the real goal of all people—Jews and Christians and everyone else—should be. This is human emancipation, which will turn out to have something to do with overcoming the common distinction we assume between (1) the egoistic person in civil society and (2) the person as an abstract citizen in the state.

b. Political Emancipation

i. "The German Jews seeks emancipation. What kind of emancipation do they want? Political emancipation." (26) This is the conflict Marx is wading into in this essay. But before laying out his own views on the subject, he wants to clarify those of his interlocutor, Bruno Bauer. Bauer's reply to the German Jew who wishes to be set free is this: "In Germany, no one is politically emancipated." (26) Since Germany is not yet a free and democratic society, no one is truly free—at least politically speaking. Jewish Germans should, then, focus not on their own plight, but on the general plight of the whole German populace. The goal should be political emancipation for all, not a relatively more emancipated state for one particular group.

ii. Bauer's answer to the 'Jewish question' is then this: "we have to emancipate ourselves before we can emancipate others." (28) But the general emancipation of society is hindered by many factors. Not least among these is the role of religion. It is religious opposition which lies at the heart not just of the Jews' oppression, but also of an oppressive society overall.

iii. In order to overcome these social oppositions, then, we will have to overcome religion. In this, Bauer and Marx seem to agree. But, for Bauer, Jewish Germans are in a more difficult position here. They have to rise above religion to arrive at a more universally human way of thinking, but they are stuck in the idea of religious particularity. According to him, German Jews want to become politically free (as citizens in a general sense) while remaining essentially particular (as Jewish people). But this contradiction cannot last. Bauer's notion of political progress dictates that

Jews must first overcome their particular religion for a more universal religion (namely, Christianity). This universal Christianity can then, in turn, be overturned in favor of a truly universal human society (leaving behind the old divisions, especially religious ones). (28-29)

iv. For Bauer, then, the call for 'Jewish' emancipation is misguided because true political emancipation has to get beyond all particularities and thereby reach toward the universal. Real politics begins when the old divisions end and a universal human citizenry comes into being.

c. Human Emancipation

i. While Marx does not entirely reject Bauer's dialectical line of thinking, he certainly thinks Bauer doesn't go far enough. As Marx puts it: "It was by no means sufficient to ask: who should emancipate? Who should be emancipated? The critic should ask a third question: *what kind of emancipation* is involved?" (29-30)

ii. For Marx, Bauer's problem is that he failed to critically reflect upon the idea of 'political' emancipation and what it would achieve. Instead, says Marx, we should be turning our attention to the idea of *human emancipation*.

iii. Bauer's error is that he "subjects only the 'Christian state,' and not the 'state as such,' to criticism, that he does not examine the relation *between political emancipation and human emancipation*, and that he, therefore, poses conditions which are only explicable by his lack of critical sense in confusing political emancipation and universal human emancipation. Bauer asks the Jews: Have you, from your standpoint, the right to demand *political emancipation*? We ask the converse question: from the standpoint of *political* emancipation, can the Jew be required to abolish Judaism, or man be asked to abolish religion?" (30)

iv. It turns out, in fact, that political emancipation goes hand-in-hand with the survival of religion, although in a newly private form. Here Marx turns to the examples of France and America, both of which he deems superior to Germany's retrograde state. France is certainly more free, more politically developed than Prussia, but it is the USA that stands nearest to the state "in its completely developed form." (30)

v. And in America—as both we and Marx learned from Tocqueville—religion is alive and well. It has merely moved over to the sphere of the private and the domestic. It survives in *civil society*, as both Tocqueville and Marx would agree. While the American government has (unlike Prussia) no official religion, American civil society remains deeply religious. This stands as empirical evidence, in Marx's mind, that political emancipation—so complete in America—does not bring about the abolition of religion.

vi. And yet—for both Bauer and Marx—religion remains something that must be transcended if universal humankind is ever to become free to set its own path into the future. The overcoming of religion would accompany not merely political liberation, but total and utter human liberation. Here again Marx reframes the question: "The question of the *relation between political emancipation and religion* becomes for us a question of the *relation between political emancipation and human emancipation*." (31)

1. Here Marx also draws on the issue of private property in his portrayal of the state's dialectical development. In a politically developed state

(like America), the state has in some sense overcome both private property and religion. It has done by so by eliminating property requirements for holding public office, as well as by refusing to select an official religion. In both cases, however, this detachment from certain values has led them to flourish free of state control. In America, there are no property requirements for office, but people chase after private property all the more. Likewise, even though there is no required religion, everyone is quick to choose their own religious stance and build their lives around it. (32-33)

2. For Marx, this is an unfortunate but necessary step in the development of politics. The goal of the state is, in his framework, to become universal. By detaching from property and religion, it is able to assert its own universality over all of the particulars of private life in civil society. There are many forms of property and many religions, but only one state to rule over them all.
3. But that is not the end of the story. The next step would be to overcome property and religion more fundamentally, by cancelling them out from society altogether. But to do this, the state would need to expand its political power over civil society so completely that we could no longer distinguish between the 'public sphere of politics' and the 'private sphere of civil society.' And so…

d. Political Community vs. Civil Society
   i. Key to Marx's diagnosis of society is that humankind lives a kind of double existence. We are at once citizens in the public sphere and private individuals in civil society. We vote en masse but choose our own bedspreads. Marx writes: "Where the political state has attained to its full development, man leads, not only in thought, in consciousness, but in reality, in life, a double existence—celestial and terrestrial. He lives in the *political community*, where he regards himself as a communal being, and in *civil society*, where he acts simply as a *private individual*, treats other men as means, degrades himself to the role of a mere means, and becomes the plaything of alien powers. The political state, in relation to civil society, is just as spiritual as is heaven in relation to earth." (34)
      1. Can we map this distinction on to Toqueville's dichotomy of laws (politics proper) and mores (civil society)? Or is that too simplistic?
   ii. The problem of the religiously particular person, who wants to be part of a universal political society without giving up their particularity, is merely a superficial manifestation of a deeper problem. The deeper problem is how the developed state is going to be able to overcome this persistent contradiction in our double lives: we are at once political citizens and *bourgeois* individuals, as Marx might say.
   iii. Here Marx is working out a series of linked terms, which we might map out by way of the following parallels:
      1. Religious Devotee → Political Agent
      2. Celestial → Terrestrial
      3. Particular → Universal
      4. Person as Private Individual → Person as Species-Being

5. *Bourgeois* → *Citoyen*
6. Civil Society → Political Community

iv. Marx summarizes: "The contradiction in which the religious man finds himself with the political man is the same contradiction in which the bourgeois finds himself with the citizen, and the member of civil society with his political lion's skin." (34)

v. So while Bauer was still talking about religion as the problem, Marx sees it as the symptom of a bigger problem. The emancipation of religious groups is not the solution in and of itself, but rather an invitation to search for a bigger solution to a bigger question: how can human persons overcome their double existence? How can they tear down this divide between public politics and private predilections, so that they can simply be one with their political community, and thereby with the human species as a whole? That's where Marx wants to get us.
    1. We might pause to ask here: What if religion weren't relegated to the private sphere? What if it were part of the political state itself? Well, that's precisely the state of affairs in 'Christian' Prussia, at least in Marx's view. And that is certainly no better. While combining religion and politics might lead to a kind of 'universality' of power, this marks a retrograde stage in political development. Progress, for the state, means breaking free of those kinds of particular identifications (e.g., Christian vs. Jewish vs. Muslim) and asserting itself as a material, human community—full stop.
    2. That this retrograde situation is still the case in Protestant Prussia is especially contradictory, to Marx, since the Reformation was in large part an attempt to destabilize the conflation of religion and politics that ruled in the 'Catholic' Middle Ages. Again, the Reformation is important for its critical overthrow of the previous era, although Protestant society too will have to give way to revolutionary society—first to free democracy, then to human emancipation.
    3. Also, in these passages we can glean a sense of what Marx means by technical terms like bourgeois, species-being, etc. Bourgeois here means the person considered apart from their function as a political agent—not a citizen, but rather the private individual, with all of their property, tastes, modes of identification, etc. Species-being, meanwhile, is Marx's very materialist way of talking about human solidarity. Transcending religion is supposed to allow humankind to recognize itself in a material community. Humanity isn't something that lives 'in' a community; humanity is that community of material beings. It is the being of itself as a cohesive species.

vi. Marx adds: "*Political* emancipation certainly represents a great progress. It is not, indeed, the final form of human emancipation, but it is the final form of human emancipation *within* the framework of the prevailing social order." (35)

vii. And: "The division of man into the *public person* and the *private person*, the displacement of religion from the state to civil society, the *displacement* of religion from the state to civil society—all this is not a stage in political

emancipation but its consummation. Thus political emancipation does not abolish, and does not even strive to abolish, man's *real* religiosity." (35)
"Thus the political drama ends necessarily with the restoration of religion, of private property, of all the elements of civil society, just as war ends with the conclusion of peace." (36)

e. The Human Core of Religion
    i. So if political emancipation merely displaces religion into the private sphere, and if religion continues to hold back the progress of humanity toward its universal goal, then—what are we to do? Here Marx builds on one of his early favorites: Feuerbach, for whom all religions were but expressions of a human essence or meaning.
    ii. In this case, the essence of Christianity turns out to be universalism. Christian theology is humanity's poetic way of exploring the idea of its own universal reach, its own transcending of old boundaries of particularity and specificity and identity.
    iii. The political realization of Christianity, then, is not some Christian theocracy. No, it would be realized if its human core—universalism—were to be put into living practice. The political result of this would more likely be an atheistic state—no longer torn apart by religious divisions, nor even tolerating a diversity of religions, but transcending all particularity, religion included. (36-37)
    iv. The end-goal of the dialectical, spiritual progress of humanity is then to pass through religion and arrive at a newly human, post-religious phase of political organization: "The religious spirit can only be realized if the stage of development of the human spirit which it expresses in religious form manifests and constitutes itself in *secular* form. This is what happens in the *democratic* state. The basis of this state is not Christianity but the *human basis* of Christianity." (39)
    v. But Bauer's Jewish question is still stuck at the level of religious squabbling. Such religious oppositions, to Marx, merely point the way to the ultimate overcoming not just of religious divisions, but of religion itself. And this can only happen if humankind transcends the distinction—as it stands in places like America—between politics and civil society. Marx writes: "The contradiction in which the adherent of a particular religion finds himself in relation to his citizenship is only *one aspect* of the *universal secular contradiction between the political state and* civil society." (39)
    vi. And again: "We do not say to the Jews, therefore, as does Bauer: you cannot be emancipated politically without emancipating yourselves completely from Judaism. We say rather: it is because you can be emancipated politically, without renouncing Judaism completely and absolutely, that *political emancipation* itself is not *human* emancipation." (40)
        1. To structure the situation otherwise:
            a. Germany: confusion of politics with religion, universal with particular (politico-religious subjects)
            b. USA: separation of politics from religion—the universal (citizenry) extends over all particulars (civil society)…
            c. Emancipated State: transcending religion, collapsing the particular back into the universal (species-being)

f. Beyond the Rights of Man
    i. In a sense, Bauer agrees that 'religion' must be overcome, but he doesn't really understand this in the same way Marx does. For Marx, remember, religion stands in for particularity as such—the private life of the individual consumer, as opposed to the communally aware life of the public citizen. So when Bauer says that religion must be overcome in favor of the 'rights of man,' Marx pauses to explore this latter category. What are these rights? And which man are we talking about here?
    ii. Following Marx's analysis of a number of political documents that speak of the rights of man, it seems clear that these are distinct from the rights of the 'citizen.' So says Marx: "A distinction is made between the rights of man and the rights of the citizen. Who is this *man* distinct from the *citizen*? No one but the *member of civil society*." (41)
    iii. The rights of 'man' are, for Marx, merely the rights of man as a "self-sufficient monad." (42) These are the rights to personal liberty, to private property, and so on. The blindness of the rights of man lies is that it cannot see how fundamentally communal humans are as a species. This sense of community is what should determine questions of right and liberty—not the other way around.
        1. Contra Mill, obviously! But we might also be reminded of Constant's comments on ancient and modern liberty (not to mention Rousseau). The freedom of a community to prosper is one thing; the liberty of a private individual to live experimentally is something else.
    iv. Writes Marx: "It is a question of the liberty of man regarded as an isolated monad, withdrawn into himself. … But liberty as a right of man is not founded upon the relations between man and man, but rather upon the separation of man from man. It is the right of such separation. The right of the circumscribed individual, withdrawn into himself." (42)
    v. All of civil society is founded on such self-interested notions as liberty and property. The 'rights of man' are its anthem: "The right of property is, therefore, the right to enjoy one's fortune and to dispose of it as one will; without regard for other men and independently of society. It is the right of self-interest. This individual liberty and its application form the basis of civil society. It leads every man to see in other men, not the *realization*, but rather the *limitation* of his own liberty." (42)
    vi. Again: "None of the supposed rights of man, therefore, go beyond the egoistic man, man as he is, as a member of civil society; that is, an individual separated from the community, withdrawn into himself, wholly preoccupied with his private interest and acting in accordance with his private caprice. Man is far from being considered, in the rights of man, as a species-being; on the contrary, species-life itself—society—appears as a system which is external to the individual and as a limitation of his original independence." (43)
    vii. All of politics is then instrumentalized in the service of civil society, which is (rather paradoxically) the undermining of community in a higher sense: "The matter becomes still more incomprehensible when we observe that the political liberators reduce citizenship, the *political community*, to a mere *means* for preserving these so-called rights of man; and consequently, that the

citizens is declared to be the servant of the egoistic 'man,' that the sphere in which man functions as a species-being is degraded to a level below the sphere where he functions as a partial being, and finally that it is man as a bourgeois and not man as a citizen who is considered the *true* and *authentic* man." (43)

viii. By founding itself on these 'rights of man,' the political revolution leaves us with our confused sense of double existence. The political revolution Marx refers to here is essentially the emancipation of the common person from the old chains of feudal society. Under feudalism, on this view, we essentially had a lordly civil society postulating itself as a political reality. Popular revolution splits this up into two spheres—the political (general) and civil (specific). The result is this that political emancipation leaves us with a deceptive dichotomy: (1) the person in civil society and (2) the person in political abstraction. This is an 'advance' on feudalism, since our political life is no longer reduced to the civil society of interaction between lords. But—according to the dialectical progress of history—Marx holds that this dichotomy of modern politics will eventually be overcome as well.

ix. After political revolution and political emancipation, there remains work to be done: "Thus man was not liberated from religion; he received religious liberty. He was not liberated from property; he received the liberty to own property. He was not liberated from the egoism of business; he received the liberty to engage in business." (45)

x. As he re-poses the problem: "The *political revolution* dissolves civil society into its elements, without *revolutionizing* these elements themselves or subjecting them to criticism." (46) So we might need a revolution that would be more than political—a human revolution? Perhaps only a human revolution could lead to a fully human emancipation.

xi. In other words: "Political emancipation is a reduction of man, on the one hand, to a member of civil society, an *independent* and *egoistic* individual, and on the other hand, to a *citizen*, to a moral person. Human emancipation will only be complete when the real, individual man has absorbed into himself the abstract citizen; when as an individual man, in his everyday life, in his work, and in his relationships, he has become a *species-being*; and when he has recognized and organized his own powers as *social* powers, so that he no longer separates this social power from himself as *political* power." (46)

g. Overthrowing the New Gods

i. So: if Bauer was wrong, if the question of emancipation isn't even really a religious issue anymore, then—what is it that we have to overcome? What would a human revolution overthrow? What would human emancipation have to transcend?

ii. Here Marx's language becomes especially difficult. Playing on the disturbing—yet popular—stereotypes about Jews in his society, he reframes the question of overcoming Judaism-as-religion into the question of overcoming 'Judaism'-as-capitalism. Though this is predicated on the claim that Jewish members of society are linked to the world of moneymaking, Marx's point is not to reaffirm this stereotype. Rather, he is using it to draw his readers' attention to the money-loving character of his society as a whole.

iii. In fact, it is Christian society that (in Marx's view) has perfected this moneymaking ethos. Commerce or commercialism has "perpetuated itself in Christian society and has even attained its highest development there." (50)
iv. This emphasis on money as central to human life is most clearly seen in the private sphere—in the bourgeois lifestyle and in civil society: "*Practical need*, *egoism*, is the principle of *civil society*, and is revealed as such in its pure form as soon as civil society has fully engendered the political state. The god of *practical need and self-interest* is *money*." (50)
v. This is a crucial passage. Money has become God, according to Marx. Bickering about religious identities now just misses the point. The religion that must be overcome is not ancient theology, but the religion of commerce, where money is the divine ruler. Under the spell of this religion, we humans see ourselves only in monetary terms. Money is the subject; we are the objects. Money is what determines value; we are what is valued. Marx will use words like objectification and alienation to describe our sense of self-worth in this money-loving civil society.
vi. Marx elaborates: "Money abases all the gods of mankind and changes them into commodities. Money is the universal and self-sufficient value of all things. It has, therefore, deprived the whole world, both the human world and nature, of their own proper value. Money is the alienated essence of man's work and existence; this essence dominates him and he worships it." (50) And: "The mode of perceiving nature under the rule of private property and money is a real contempt for, and a practical degradation of, nature…" (50)
vii. And again, though Judaism is problematically associated with all this, it Christianity that ultimately puts money on the throne of God: "civil society only reaches perfection in the *Christian* world. Only under the sway of Christianity, which *objectifies all* national, natural, moral, and theoretical relationships, could civil society separate itself completely from the life of the state, sever all the species-bonds of man, establish egoism and self-need in their place, and dissolve the human world into a world of atomistic, antagonistic individuals." (51)
    1. [Think here of the strangely specific identity-games we find all over the internet: "You know you're an 80s kid from South Jersey when…" What is happening there? You are being singled out—objectified, perhaps—as a consumer of a special kind. You have your own identity-markers, which can be looked at from the point of view of money and ultimately turned to the purposes of money's replication. And yet, in the eyes of money, you remain a consumer just the same. The diversity of civil society plays into the hands of what's truly universal—the god that is money; the force that keeps everything in circulation, whether on Gawker or on Jacobin… The parallel with Christianity is this: all Christians are truly Christians in the abstract, but their day-to-day bourgeois life is determined in large part by being Latino Christians, self-hating Christians, etc. Diversity flourishes, but one force dominates by virtue of that very diversity.]
viii. Christianity, then, is what paved the way for the contemporary money-economy. It did so by theoretically developing religion's main functions: to

alienate humanity from itself—to estrange us from ourselves. To hide ourselves from ourselves by projecting an imagined mind that 'looks down on us' and judges our society, sets our goals, etc.

ix. And so it was Christianity that perfected "the alienation of man from himself and from nature." The money-economy could then "turn alienated man and alienated nature into alienable, saleable objects, in thrall to egoistic need." And so we are no longer merely alienated from ourselves, but fully objectified as consumable things: "Objectification is the practice of alienation." (52) Overcoming this state of affairs would require overcoming the divisions within ourselves that allow us to be both the sellers and the buyers of ourselves-as-commodities. We'd need to overcome double existence, collapse civil society back into material politics. We'd need to emancipate ourselves from money and what it practically stands for—alienation, objectification, self-deception.

1. Judaism-as-religion, for Marx, alienates humanity from itself by positing an alien God. The gaze of this God is what determines our human worth or value. We are not judged on a human standard, but on a divine one.
2. Christianity, then, takes up this sense of alienation and brings it to completion. It does so by making God into something of a man—as in the doctrine of the Incarnation. But by raising man to the level of a God, Christianity sets the stage for humanity's awakening of its own powers, its own sense of self-determination. Eventually—in nineteenth-century Germany, say—humankind comes to sense that there is no longer an alien God determining our social world.
3. But instead of doing what Marx does and trying to refound humanity in a sense of its own inherent self-worth as a species, modern society has instead merely substituted money into the role of God. Now we are still alienated, still objectified—but no longer by a 'theoretical' being. Instead, we are alienated by way of a purely 'practical' reality—the circulation of money in an industrial economy. This is what we judge ourselves in light of; this is the criterion for our valuation of ourselves.
4. The religion of money might mark the most advance stage of human self-alienation, since it has at least arrived back at the material basis of human life. We are a material species with material standards. But money—though it is material—has taken on a value that is more than material. It has become quasi-divine, as can be seen by the way it dictates our lives, especially in civil society.
5. And so the god of money, too, must be overcome. This is the next stage for the transcendence of religion. It's what Bauer couldn't see, caught up in issues of religious opposition and political emancipation. For Marx, though, the next step is a human revolution that would lead to human emancipation—not from this or that religion, not from this or that god, not from this or that source of alienation, but from alienation itself!
6. (Thus we would have to collapse the distinction between public and private, political state and civil society, and so on. Humankind would

no longer think of itself as alien. It would no longer think of itself as split into subject {god, $} and object {children of god, producer-consumers}. It would simply be humanity, human community, species-being.)

3. *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845)
    a. Background
        i. Though these theses come a few years after the essay on the Jewish question, they might in some senses seem more fundamental to Marx's early thinking. This is in large part because of their aphoristic, almost prophetic character. Here Marx pulls no punches. His goal is to advocate not just for dialectical philosophy and radical politics, but also for a deep-seeded materialism that means to undermine the religious and cultural traditions of his contemporaries. In Ludwig Feuerbach's naturalistic and humanistic critique of religion, Marx thinks he has found a way to bring most of his philosophical and political goals together into one project.
        ii. Though Marx's Hegelian influences might have marked him as an 'idealist,' his favoring of Feuerbach made it clear that he was more of a materialist than anything else. Human life was a fundamentally material thing, and so human thinking should be rooted in that materiality. But what materialism lacked was the sense that humans, precisely because they are material, can shape their material surroundings in very decisive ways. This power to shape the world was something that idealists knew well. And so, in a sense, what Marx is trying to do here is bring a strength of idealism—its sense of humankind's power to shape its world—into the service of a wide-ranging materialist view of that world.
    b. Practical Materialism
        i. As Marx puts it: "The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism—that of Feuerbach included—is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of *contemplation*, but not as *human sensuous activity, practice*, not subjectively." And so even Feuerbach "does not grasp the significance of 'revolutionary,' of practical-critical activity." (I.143)
        ii. Even truth has to do not merely with thinking, but making: "Man must prove the truth, that is, the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice." (II.144)
        iii. "The materialist doctrine that men are products of circumstances and upbringing, and that, therefore, changed men are products of other circumstances and changed upbringing, forgets that it is men who change circumstances…" (III.144)
            1. Cf. here Mill on the role played by social conditions in shaping 'human nature.' Would Mill agree with Marx's emphasis on human agency here?
    c. Beyond Religion
        i. The rigor with which we question religion—as Feuerbach did so doggedly—must be carried over into our critique of secular society. It is correct to say that religion is a superficial phenomenon that is built on deeper, materially human foundations. But we can't stop being critical once we get back to material humanity! We have to see how the basic contradictions in human society—the same tensions that give rise to religious abstraction in the first

place—remain after the demise of religion. And then we have to critically interrogate and even resolve those contradictions within secular society itself! (Feuerbach merely stops once he has reduced the immaterial to the material; but it's in material tensions that real change happens…)

ii. In a sense, this is what Marx was trying to do in his essay on the Jewish question. Bauer, like Feuerbach, only went as far as to critique religion and gesture toward political emancipation from religiosity. But the point is to carry over the critique of religion into the critique of politics itself! The secular, material reality of human community is not immune to critique—or transformation.

iii. Marx writes that Feuerbach's "work consists in resolving the religious world into its secular basis. He overlooks the fact that after completing this work, the chief thing remains to be done. For the fact that the secular basis detaches itself from itself and establishes itself in the clouds as an independent realm can only be explained by the cleavage and self-contradictions within this secular basis. The latter must itself, therefore, first be understood in its contradiction and then, by the removal of the contradiction, revolutionized in practice." (IV.144)

iv. The 'essence' or residue left after religion has been critiqued is not some idealized sense of 'humanity,' but real humanity living in material community: "Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human essence. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations." (VI.145)

v. "Feuerbach, consequently, does not see that the 'religious sentiment' is itself a social product, and that the abstract individual whom he analyses belongs in reality to a particular form of society." (VII.145)

d. Human Revolution

i. Again, just as in the earlier essay, Marx wants us to think beyond the contemporary political situation, wherein we have a private sphere of civil society and a public sphere of political engagement. It's not a question of particular individuals with their particular essences (whether religious or cultural or otherwise). It's a question of the material totality of humankind as a species. And this kind of human materiality is not like a rock that has to be classified and preserved; it's more like a machine that takes raw material and shapes it into something new, something unforeseen, something—better.

ii. So, says Marx, let's get beyond bourgeois individualism, no matter how 'materialistic' it may appear: "The standpoint of the old materialism is '*civil*' society; the standpoint of the new is *human* society, or socialized humanity." (X.145)

iii. Instead, he concludes, let's remake the whole mass of materiality in accordance with a newfound sense of freedom—as an emancipated humanity would do: "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it." (145)

iv. …

v. …

vi. …

vii. …

viii. …

4. *Economic & Philosophic Manuscripts* (1844)
    a. Background
        i. Written during the same general period as *On the Jewish Question* and the *Theses on Feuerbach*, these manuscripts demonstrate some of the intellectual underpinnings of Marx's overall program. His call for socialist revolution was rooted not just in concrete criticisms of industrial practices, but also in a theoretical analysis of humanity's conception of itself and its own history.
        ii. Drawing again on Hegel and Feuerbach, Marx's aim is to ground his analysis of humanity in a process of self-alienation or self-estrangement. As we saw earlier in the *Judenfrage* text, this process of alienation can be found in both the religious and economic spheres. While many of his contemporaries had focused on critiquing the religious face of this process, Marx has by now become convinced that it's the economic aspect of alienation that is most in need of our critical attention.
        iii. According to Marx, humankind's conception of itself is mediated not only by the notion of God as an alien mind, but also by the reality of the money economy as an alien force that 'gives value' to our lives. Religiously speaking, we see ourselves in the light of divine beings we produce through our own reflective activity. Economically speaking, we see ourselves in light of the quasi-divine force of wage-labor.
        iv. But whereas religious alienation takes place primarily though our mental activity, economic alienation occurs in the physical world of material production. Marx wants to say that our concrete manufacturing of objects for the market is the material realization of the more general way we 'go out of ourselves' in order to recognize ourselves. Labor is, in other words, how we make ourselves into 'objects.' Under religion, we become objects to a divinely alien Subject; under capitalism, we become objects for the marketplace—and for those who control the means of production in that marketplace…
    b. Critiquing the Critics
        i. As we saw in his earlier writings, Marx is concerned with 'critiquing' the contemporary situation. Here he is again entering into a previous philosophical conversation, one that has valorized the idea of 'critical' thinking at least since Kant. But the kind of critical thinking at stake here is not some vacuous mode of 'thinking hard' about some topic.
        ii. Instead, the goal is to actually critically reflect on the positions we take. This should be the case even when we have already 'criticized away' some previously problematic state of affairs. Think here of what Marx said about religion: contra Bauer, it was not sufficient to simply critique religion again and again. The goal was to (first) critique religion and (then) critique the secular situation that resulted, which turned out to be full of a kind of quasi-religious residue. Real critique, for Marx, must doggedly pursue any state of affairs down to its foundations.
        iii. The so-called 'critics' of his own time are to Marx mostly misguided frauds. They are still caught up in questions of theology—again, cf. Bauer—and they operate by abstraction. Marx, meanwhile, presents his own critical project as rooted in concrete economic reality: "my results have been won by means of

a wholly empirical analysis based on a conscientious critical study of political economy." (67)

iv. The reason for this insufficiency of the cultural critics is that they haven't fully reckoned with the philosophical underpinnings of their own position. They think they're thinking critically, but they're still holding on to old ways of thinking—abstract ways of thinking—which are in turn holding them back in their critique. And so Marx here sets himself the task of reckoning with that philosophy, so that critical thought can move beyond its philosophical limitations and provide a critique of humanity's actual, historical situation.

c. Estranged Labor

i. Moving on to the substance of his analysis, Marx first reminds us again that he is rooted in political economy itself. Critical thought about modern society must proceed on the basis of its own economic structure. This structure, he tells us, is made up of two competing classes: "the whole of society must fall apart into two classes—the property-*owners* and the propertyless *workers*." (70)

ii. We can, of course, divide society up in any number of other ways. But those other distinctions are, for the most part, economically meaningless. It matters little what kind of work a worker does or what specific means of production an owner owns. Their economic functions—of owning and of laboring—are what define the situation, at least as far as political economy is concerned.

iii. Yet political economy, like criticism and philosophy, is not without its blind spots. It too tends to take too many of its categories and problems for granted, rather than explaining them all the way down to their historical cores. And so perhaps Marx wants to both enrich philosophy with the wealth of the economists and reinforce economics with the insight of the philosophers.

iv. Marx then moves ahead by trying to connect an economic 'fact' to a philosophical interpretation of that fact. First, the facts: "The worker becomes all the poorer the more wealth he produces, the more his production increases in power and range. The worker becomes an ever cheaper commodity the more commodities he creates. With the *increasing value* of the world of things proceeds in direct proportion the *devaluation* of the world of men. Labor produces not only commodities; it produces itself and the worker as a *commodity*—and does so in the proportion in which it produces commodities generally." (71)

v. Then, the interpretation: "This fact expresses merely that the object which labor produces—labor's product—confronts it as *something alien*, as a *power independent* of the producer. The product of labor is labor which has been congealed in an object, which has become material: it is the *objectification* of labor. Labor's realization is its objectification. In the conditions dealt with by political economy, this realization of labor appears as loss of reality for the workers; objectification as *loss of the object* and *object-bondage*; appropriation as *estrangement*, as *alienation*." (71)

vi. Modern production practices thus lead to the same kind of self-alienation that we saw with religion. Marx reminds us of this here: "the worker is

related to the *product of his labor* as to an *alien* object. For on this premise it is clear that the more the worker spends himself, the more powerful the alien objective world becomes which he creates over-against himself, the poorer he himself—his inner world—becomes, the less belongs to him as his own. It is the same in religion. The more man puts into God, the less he retains in himself. The worker puts his life into the object; but now his life no longer belongs to him but to the object. […] The *alienation* of the worker in his product means not only that his labor becomes an object, an *external* existence, but that it exists *outside him*, independently, as something alien to him, and that it becomes a power of its own confronting him; it means that the life which he has conferred on the object confronts him as something hostile and alien." (72)

vii. Political economy can describe this situation, but it does so in a fairly superficial way. It doesn't theoretically describe what's happening in the production process, and so it misses out on the centrality of alienation. Writes Marx: "*Political economy conceals the estrangement inherent in the nature of labor by not considering the direct relationship between the worker (labor) and production*." (73)

viii. According to Marx, then, there are four aspects to human self-estrangement contained in the contemporary modes of production. The human being who labors undergoes:

1. Estrangement from the product of their labor
    a. This we've already seen above. The product of the worker's labor is not seen as an extension of the worker's life and activity, but as an external object belonging to another (the owner) and subject to external forces (the market).
2. Estrangement from their own laboring—and therefore from themselves
    a. It's not just that the worker becomes estranged from the product of her labors, but also that she becomes estranged from 'her own' activity of laboring. This activity too ceases to belong to her in any meaningful sense. Her sense of ownership is relegated to the sphere of civil society—of identity politics, of purchased private property, and so on.
    b. "The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself." (74)
    c. "the external character of labor for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone's else's, that it does not belong to him, that in it he belongs, not to himself, but to another." (74)
3. Estrangement from their own species-being
    a. The worker loses touch with that it means to be human. For Marx, building off of Feuerbach, to be human means to seize upon humanity's species-being: to see oneself as universal and free, while seeing nature as the "inorganic body" of humankind, which is to be used in the expression of human life-activity. (75)
    b. But estranged labor perverts the worker's species-being by making their life's work into merely a means of subsisting—a

way to survive. Rather than naturally reshaping nature, the worker's relationship to nature is instrumentalized for the purposes of the market and its capitalist participants. This skewing of the worker's relationship to nature is also a deforming of the worker's humanity, their species-being.

c. "The whole character of a species—its species character—is contained in the character of its life-activity; and free, conscious activity is man's species character. Life itself appears only *as a means to life*." (76)
d. "in degrading spontaneous activity, free activity, to a means, estranged labor makes man's species life a means to his physical existence." (77)
e. Estranged labor turns "*man's species being*, both nature and his spiritual species property, into a being *alien* to him, into a means of his *individual existence*." (77)

4. Estrangement from one another, from other people
    a. Estranged labor, finally, also leads to an estrangement between people: "The estrangement of man, and in fact every relationship in which man stands to himself, is first realized and expressed in the relationship in which a man stands to other men." (77) Here again we can see Marx's resolute commitment to grounding his arguments in the social reality of human life.
    b. Whereas religion involved the positing of another kind of being, a god that would stand as alien above humankind, economic estrangement doesn't make such cosmologically rich claims. Its alienation would have to involve an 'alien' force that was much more anthropomorphic.
    c. "If the product of labor is alien to me, if it confronts me as an alien power, to whom, then, does it belong?" (77)
    d. "The *alien* being, to whom labor and the produce of labor belongs, in whose service labor is done and for whose benefit the produce of labor is provided, can only be *man* himself." (78) But again—who?
    e. "Through *estranged, alienated labor*, then, the worker produces the relationship to this labor of a man alien to labor and standing outside it. The relationship of the worker to labor engenders the relation to it of the capitalist, or whatever one choose to call the master of labor. *Private property* is thus the product, the result, the necessary consequence of *alienated labor*, of the external relation of the worker to nature and to himself." (79)
    f. Private property and wages are thus the manifestation of estranged labor in modern society. Slight modifications of them—through moderate redistribution of property or a raise in wages—would not at all solve the fundamental problem of human self-alienation.

g. The only solution to this intensifying process of estrangement would lie in the emancipation of the workers—their actual liberation from the regime of capitalist ownership, private property, wage-labor, and so on. But this is not, Marx reminds us, because the workers constitute the only class of humanity that matters. Rather, their exploited situation lies at the heart of the problem of alienation for every human being. So not just the political emancipation of one class, but total *human emancipation* itself hangs on the fate of the workers: "the emancipation of the workers contains universal human emancipation—and it contains this because the whole of human servitude is involved in the relation of the worker to production, and every relation of servitude is but a modification and consequence of this relation." (80)

d. Private Property & Communism
   i. The current situation thus consists in a *contradiction* between labor and capital. But what will resolve this contradiction? What's to be done about it?
   ii. In short, for Marx, the answer is "communism." But that term could mean many things. Here Marx wants to distinguish his own approach from some of the other 'communitarian' movements of the nineteenth-century, as well as from vague moral sentiments about 'sharing ownership' and such.
   iii. He's also interested in presenting the transition to communism as a dynamic process. It's not like we flip a switch and estranged labor turns into human emancipation. At first, then, we might simply need to cancel out the power of private property by extending it to everyone: "*communism* is the *positive* expression of annulled private property—at first as *universal* private property." (82)
   iv. In this case, 'we' would own 'everything.' But the problem here is that we'd simply make an abstract notion of Society into an uber-capitalist that claims everything as its property. This way of 'overcoming' private property wouldn't really be an overcoming at all—it would simply flatten out property so that everyone could share in it. But, to Marx, this would still miss the point of actually revolutionizing how we relate to our task as natural human beings.
   v. The further goal of communism would be to overcome estrangement in all its forms—to overcome both religion and the economy, at least. And this would have to be a more extreme revolution than simply a broader sharing of property.
   vi. Writes Marx: "*Communism* as the *positive* transcendence of *private property*, or human self-estrangement, and therefore as the real *appropriation of the human* essence by and for man; communism therefore as the complete return of man to himself as a *social* (i.e. human) being—a return become conscious, and accomplished within the entire wealth of previous development. This communism, as fully-developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully-developed humanism equals naturalism; it is the *genuine* resolution of the conflict between man and nature and between man and man—the true resolution of the strife between existence and essence, between objectification and self-confirmation, between freedom and necessity,

between the individual and the species. Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution." (84)

vii. And again: "The positive transcendence of *private property* as the appropriation of *human* life is, therefore, the positive transcendence of all estrangement—that is to say, the return of man from religion, family, state, etc., to his *human*, i.e. *social* mode of existence." (85)

viii. Under this kind of communism, perhaps, the human person would be able to become truly 'social.' This doesn't mean that 'man' and 'society' would be merged together, but rather that humankind would be able to recognize itself as already fundamentally and naturally social.

ix. Marx: "Only here has what is to him his *natural* existence becomes his *human* existence, and nature become man for him. Thus *society* is the consummated oneness in substance of man and nature—the true resurrection of nature—the naturalism of man and the humanism of nature both brought to fulfillment." (85)

x. Again: "What is to be avoided above all is the reestablishing of 'Society' as an abstraction vis-à-vis the individual. The individual *is the social being*. His life, even if it may not appear in the direct form of a *communal* life carried out together with others—is therefore an expression and confirmation of *social life*." (86)

xi. "In his consciousness of species man confirms his real social life and simply repeats his real existence in thought…" (86)

xii. But even if this solution involves thought, it is by no means simply a 'theoretical' matter. Marx is convinced that the theoretical problems of modern society—especially the contradiction of labor and capital—can only be solved through practice: "the resolution of the *theoretical* antitheses is *only* possible *in a practical* way, by virtue of the practical energy of men. Their resolution is therefore by no means merely a problem of knowledge, but a *real* problem of life, which *philosophy* could not solve precisely because it conceived this problem as *merely* a theoretical one." (89)

xiii. So what does the practical resolution to humanity's theoretical contradictions look like? Should we look to art? Religion? Pure politics? No, says Marx—we should look to industry.

xiv. "We have before us the *objectified essential powers* of man in the form of *sensuous, alien, useful objects*, in the form of estrangement, displayed in *ordinary material industry* (which can be conceived as a part of that general movement, just as that movement can be conceived as a particular part of industry, since all human activity hitherto has been labor—that is, industry—activity estranged from itself)." (90)

xv. Again: "*Industry* is the *actual*, historical relation of nature, and therefore of natural science, to man. If, therefore, industry is conceived as the *exoteric* revelation of man's *essential powers*, we also gain an understanding of the *human* essence of nature or the *natural* essence of man. … The nature which comes to be in human history—the genesis of human society—is man's *real* nature…" (90)

1. Cf. here all of our questions about human nature, where it comes from, whether it's historical, and so on… (Wollstonecraft,

Tocqueville, Mill…) If Mill was historicizing human nature, perhaps Marx was naturalizing human history…

2. Marx is resolute in his naturalization of history: "History itself is a *real* part of *natural history*—of nature's coming to be man." (90-91)

xvi. Refusing to get caught up in abstraction, then, the way forward must pass through this kind of practical, material work, in which humankind can come to see itself as natural and social. The next step would be communism, but communism would not be the end goal. Socialism—or, perhaps better, 'real life'—would hit closer to that mark, since it would no longer merely be the negation of private property. Communism is the kind of work that needs to be done if humanity is ever (one day) going to come to terms with its own species-being.

1. Put simply, the revolutionary process might have to play out something like this:
    a. Atheism → Communism → Socialism

xvii. Marx: "*Atheism*, as the denial of this inessentiality [of nature and man], has no longer any meaning, for atheism is a *negation of God*, and postulates the *existence of man* through this negation; but socialism as socialism no longer stands in any need of such a mediation. It proceeds from the *practically and theoretically sensuous consciousness* of man and of nature as the *essence*. Socialism is man's *positive self-consciousness* no longer mediated through the annulment of religion, just as *real life* is man's positive reality, no longer mediated through the annulment of private property, through communism. Communism is the position as the negation of the negation, and is hence the *actual* phase necessary for the next stage of historical development in the process of human emancipation and recovery. *Communism* is the necessary pattern and the dynamic principle of the immediate future, but communism as such is not the goal of human development—the structure of human society." (92-93)

e. Human 'Requirements'

i. But, as Marx is quick to admit, the current situation is not one of communism, let alone socialism. The modern mode of production centers on money and competition. Writes Marx: "the need for money is therefore the true need produced by the modern economic system, and it is the only need which the latter produces." (93) So it's not just that money is a tool to be used to keep production going. Money has become something like the dominant need in our lives, rivalling even our basic survival needs—precisely because it controls our access to meeting those needs.

ii. This shift in the notion of 'need' also affects our relationship to others. We play a strange game of stoking desire in others so that we can sell them things they didn't know they needed (cf. advertising, but also commodification in general). At the same time, we decrease our emphasis on what would seem to be natural human needs—clean air, water, and so on are no longer prioritized, especially in the case of the worker's quality of life. (94-95)

iii. A kind of industrial asceticism comes to be the norm for the population of workers. While the capitalist may enjoy the spoils of luxury, the worker must scrimp and save just to make ends meet—just to survive. The worker's focus

should be on his 'savings'—his own meagre capital. Going out and trying to accomplish things is discouraged if it doesn't contribute to profit, the increase of capital. The resulting ethos of capital is this: "The less you eat, drink, and read books; the less you go to the theatre, the dance hall, the public-house; the less you think, love, theorize, sing, paint, fence, etc., the more you *save*—the *greater* becomes your treasure which neither moths nor dust will devour—your *capital*. The less you *are*, the more you *have*; the less you express your own life, the greater is your *alienated* life—the greater is the store of your estranged being." (95-96)

iv. Money can, of course, buy almost everything. But its tendency is to replicate itself above all. It tends to become a commodity itself. Marx says: "money, which appears as a means, constitutes true *power* and the sole *end*…" (100)

v. The political economist can explain how this proliferation of money occurs, but he reserves judgment on whether or not it is a welcome development or not. That he leaves to the external sphere of 'ethics.' Marx, we'll recall, is interested in overcoming these kinds of distinctions. He wants to be serious about political economy, but he wants to be equally serious about the effects of political-economical realities on humanity's way of life. This latest economic situation is, after all, merely another chapter in the history of human self-estrangement. The modern era has already seen some imperfect attempts at overcoming this estrangement—Hegelian philosophical dialectic, French political egalitarianism, English practical materialism—but Marx is wagering that he can do them all one better. And the key, again, is practice, practice, practice: "In order to abolish the *idea* of private property, the *idea* of communism is completely sufficient. It takes *actual* communist action to abolish actual private property." (99)

vi. As it stands, though, the political economists and their peers are held back by their sense of society as merely 'civil society.' (Cf. here the critique of civil society in the *Judenfrage* piece…)

vii. And so Marx concludes this section: "*Society*, as it appears to the political economist, is *civil society*, in which every individual is a totality of needs and only exists for the other person, as the other exists for him, insofar as each becomes a means for the other. The political economist reduces everything (just as does politics in its *Rights of Man*) to man, i.e., to the individual whom he strips of all determinateness so as to class him as capitalist or worker. The *division of labor* is the expression in political economy of the *social character of labor* within the estrangement. Or, since *labor* is only an expression of human activity within alienation, of the living of life as the alienating of life, the *division of labor*, too, is therefore nothing else but the *estranged, alienated* positing of human activity as a *real activity of the species* or as *activity of man as a species being*." (101)

f. The Power of Money

i. Just as in his earlier writings, here Marx reminds us that money has come to occupy the role of god—the alien, even divine force that mediates our relationships to ourselves and to others: "By possessing the *property* of buying everything, by possessing the property of appropriating all objects, *money* is thus the *object* of eminent possession. The universality of its *property* is the omnipotence of its being. It therefore functions as the almighty being.

Money is the *pimp* between man's need and the object, between his life and his means of life. But that which mediates *my* life for me also *mediates* the existence of other people *for me*." (102)

ii. Marx expresses this godlike power of money in a somewhat surprising way: he turns to literature. Citing liberally from Goethe and Shakespeare, he gives us some florid passages expressing the divine power of money even in the early modern period. "Thou visible god!" Shakespeare has one of his characters apostrophize money. (103)

iii. And this mediating power of money has a very real effect on our relation to our own identities: "that which is for me though the medium of money—that for which I can pay (i.e., which money can buy)—that am I, the possessor of money. […] Money is the supreme good, therefore its possessor is good." (103)

iv. Money, then, is what binds and loosens. Through money, I can become whatever I want to become—I can even become what I am not. Money overturns individualities in favor of pure exchange. As Marx puts it: "money is thus the general overturning of *individualities* which turns them into their contrary and adds contradictory attributes to their attributes." (105)

v. And: "money, as the existing and active concept of value, confounds and exchanges all things, it is the general *confounding* and *compounding* of all things—the world upside-down—the confounding and compounding of all natural and human qualities." (105)

vi. And finally: "As money is not exchanged for any one specific quality, for any one specific thing, or for any particular human essential power, but for the entire objective world of man and nature, from the standpoint of its possessor it therefore serves to exchange every property for every other, even contradictory, property and object: it is the fraternization of impossibilities. It makes contradictions embrace." (105)

g. Critiquing Philosophy

i. After working his way through these nitty-gritty details of political economy, Marx finally returns to where he began: the question of critique and the overcoming of Hegel's philosophy. For all of the talk of criticism among his contemporaries, Marx thinks that most of them have an uncritical attitude toward themselves. Happy to critique religion, they have failed to critique the philosophy that stands as their own foundation.

ii. Yet "philosophy is nothing else but religion rendered into thoughts and thinking expounded… another form and manner of existence of the estrangement of the essence of man." (107-108)

iii. Taking dialectic away from Hegel is all well and good, but it won't get you far unless you give up his idealism for a post-Feuerbachian materialism—so says Marx, anyway. All of the negations of negations that make up 'history' for Hegel seem to take place in the realm of thought. They have to do primarily with consciousness, self-consciousness, reason, and so on. But Marx wants to take dialectic out of this spiritual realm and examine it as it plays out in what he calls the "*real* history of man…" (108)

iv. It's not just that Hegel got things wrong, though. The whole history of philosophy, insofar as it makes use of speculative or abstract thought, is the history of human estrangement. Marx repeats this any number of ways:

1. "the philosophic mind is nothing but the estranged mind of the world thinking within its self-estrangement—i.e., comprehending itself abstractly. Logic… is mind's *alienated* thinking, and therefore thinking which abstract from nature and from real man: *abstract* thinking." (110)
2. "The whole *history of the alienation-process* and the whole *process of the retraction* of the alienation is therefore nothing but the *history of the production* of abstract (i.e., absolute) thought—of logical, speculative thought. The *estrangement*, which therefore forms the real interest of this alienation and of the transcendence of this alienation, is the opposition of *in-itself* and *for-itself*, of *consciousness* and *self-consciousness*, of *object* and *subject*—that is to say, it is the opposition, within thought itself, between abstract thinking and sensuous reality or real sensuousness." (110)

v. Hegel's dialectic, then, gives us the tools to critique this estrangement—to critique religion, to critique wealth, etc.—but he doesn't go far enough. He isn't able to overcome the estrangement embedded in abstract philosophy itself.

vi. Whereas the alienation of the worker takes place through physical labor, the alienation of the philosopher occurs through mental labor: "Labor is man's *coming-to-be for himself* within *alienation*, or as *alienated* man. The only labor which Hegel knows and recognizes is *abstractly mental* labor." And so the essence of philosophy remains, even for Hegel, "the *alienation of man in his knowing of himself*, or *alienated* science *thinking itself*…" (112)

vii. If Hegel runs the risk of reducing everything to a projection of self-consciousness, then Marx's solution is to embed humankind ever more firmly into a material, natural environment. For him, the dialectical process of humankind's self-alienation—and the overcoming of that alienation—takes place in the concrete world of action, where humankind's essential powers unfold in their activity.

viii. Marx writes: "Whenever real, corporeal *man*, man with his feet firmly on the solid ground, man exhaling and inhaling all the forces of nature, *establishes* his real, objective *essential powers* as alien objects by his externalization, it is not the *act of positing* which is the subject in this process: it is the subjectivity of *objective* essential powers, whose action, therefore, must also be something *objective*. A being who is objective acts objectively, and he would not act objectively if the objective did not reside in the very nature of his being. He creates or establishes only *objects, because* he is established by objects—because at bottom he is *nature*. In the act of establishing, therefore, this objective being does not fall from his state of 'pure activity' into a *creating of the object*; on the contrary, his *objective* product only confirms his *objective* activity, establishing his activity as the activity of an objective, natural being." (115)

ix. Here Marx's naturalism comes more fully into view: "only naturalism is capable of comprehending the act of world history. *Man* is directly a *natural being*." (115) Moreover: "To be objective, natural, and sensuous, and at the same time to have object, nature, and sense outside oneself, or oneself to be object, nature, and sense for a third party, is one and the same thing." (115)

x. Going-outside-of-oneself is not an accident that befalls a purely internal subject. It is the way of being for natural beings. (Perhaps estrangement can only be appreciated as a necessary process in this way?) Marx writes: "A being which does not have its nature outside itself is not a *natural* being, and plays no part in the system of nature. A being which has no object outside itself is not an objective being. A being which is not itself an object for some third being has no being for its *object*; i.e., it is not objectively related." (116)

xi. But Hegel would not agree. According to Marx, this is because Hegel lets self-consciousness masquerade as if it were itself responsible for the natural world—as if it lay behind the natural world as its source. To Marx, that is dissimulation: "consciousness (knowing as knowing, thinking as thinking) pretends to be directly the *other* of itself—to be the world of sense, the real world, life—thought overreaching itself in thought. (Feuerbach)" (118)

xii. By doing this, by pretending to be nature, self-consciousness ends up only finding itself when it looks into nature. It is because of this that Hegel's project falls short of true critique. Real critical thought would not look to confirm itself—its own knowing and thinking—in the natural world. This leads only to a covert reestablishment of the status quo: "Thus, for instance, after annulling and superseding religion, after recognizing religion to be a product of self-alienation, he [self-conscious man] yet finds confirmation of himself in *religion as religion*. Here is the root of Hegel's *false* positivism, or of his merely *apparent* criticism: this is what Feuerbach designated as the positing, negating, and re-establishing of religion or theology—but it has to be grasped in more general terms." (118)

    1. That is to say: we have to carry this extreme critique out not only with regard to religion, but also with regard to the whole history of humankind's self-alienation. We can't let certain economic presumptions about the status quo work their way into the dialectical working-out of humanity's self-recognition. (E.g., we can't let ourselves think that certain historical phenomena—'market forces' and so on—are hard-wired into our nature as a species…)
    2. Perhaps real critical thought would instead have to leave itself open to change—to undergoing change, to being surprised when it looks into nature. There it would find not its own mental image, but rather the more fundamental reality of humankind as historically embedded in nature.

xiii. By overcoming abstraction and putting nature first, Marx thinks we can achieve what he calls a "positive humanism." This would be a project that allows humanity to come to know itself—not merely in terms of intellectual development, but through its real reworking of the material world. Atheism and communism might not be the final stages in this process, but they are nevertheless key steps away from the realm of abstraction.

xiv. Writes Marx: "atheism and communism are no flight, no abstraction; they are not a losing of the objective world begotten by man—of man's essential powers given over to the realm of objectivity; they are not a returning in poverty to unnatural, primitive simplicity. On the contrary, they are but the first real coming-to-be, the realization, become real for man, of man's essence—of the essence of man as something real." (121)

xv. Meanwhile: "But abstraction comprehending itself as abstraction knows itself to be nothing: it must abandon itself—abandon abstraction—and so it arrives at an entity which is its exact contrary—at *nature*. Thus, the entire *Logic* [of Hegel] is the demonstration that abstract thought is nothing in itself; that the Absolute Idea is nothing in itself; that only *Nature* is something." (122)

xvi. Perversely, the abstract think thinks he is confirming his thought when he looks out at Nature and recognizes himself in it. In fact, his thought was itself merely abstracted out from nature: "Or, to talk a human language, the abstract thinker learns in his intuition of nature that the entities which he thought to create from nothing, from pure abstraction—the entities he believed he was producing in the divine dialectic as pure products of the labor thought forever weaving in itself and never looking outward—are nothing else but *abstractions* from *characteristics of nature*." (124)

xvii. The final error of the abstract thinker, then, is to see nature's self-externalization—its 'going-out-of-itself,' its objective decenteredness—as a defect to be compensated-for by thought. Yet this self-externalization of nature is the very process in which humankind comes to be—in which we find our species-being by tapping into our essential powers of world-shaping.

1. The naturalist thinker, meanwhile, not only sees and understands this process of self-externalization—of a kind of 'material dialectic'—but also sees that she must practically engage it. The overcoming of alienation—of estranged labor, private property, money, etc.—can only be accomplished through this practical engagement in the natural activity that is social, human activity. This would be the natural culmination of what Marx earlier called 'human emancipation.'

5. The *Communist Manifesto* (1848)
   a. Background
      i. Published a few years later than the other texts we've been focusing on, the *Manifesto* still shows continuity with many of the concerns of the 'early Marx.' Here concepts like alienation and estrangement find their practical realization in Marx's clear construal of class struggle as the core of human history. The tension between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, as well as the effects of the commodification of labor, also rise to the fore in this text, which sees Marx putting his theories into practice.
      ii. To Marx, a document like the *Manifesto* would have to stand in stark contrast to the 'abstractions' of the philosophers and critics he attacked in the *EPM*. Moving out of the lecture hall and the drawing-room, the conversation would have to take place in the factories and workers' halls. The roots of the political 'communism' referred to in the title did not lie in utopian theories, but rather in workers' groups—like the Communist League, which grew out of the earlier League of the Just—which had to meet secretly in order to evade capture by the authorities.
      iii. The practical, historical situation of the *Manifesto* can be seen even more clearly when we look at the multiple prefaces Marx wrote as new editions continued to be printed. In his 1872 preface, Marx reflects on some of the long-term after-effects of the Revolutions of 1848 that had rocked much of

industrial Europe. He makes especial note of the Paris Commune, which he sees as a very temporary victory for the proletariat. Seizing a city like Paris and running it on communalist principles (if only for a brief time) could certainly serve as a sign of things to come, but it was not in itself the broader historical revolution envisioned by Marx. For such a revolution to be successful, the transformation of society would probably have to be far more fundamental than simply a transfer of ownership of the means of production. (470)

iv. In his 1882 preface, Marx turns his gaze away from Paris and Berlin and even London, instead pointing to Russia and the United States as the new frontiers for social change. (This was not an unprophetic thing to say.) Yet here Marx's theory faced a practical problem. For: "The Communist Manifesto had as its object the proclamation of the inevitably impending dissolution of modern bourgeois property." (471) In Russia, however, the transition from feudal monarchism to bourgeois democracy (and its attendant regime of private property) had not even come to pass. So here Marx faced a difficult question: must Russia "first pass through the same process of dissolution as constitutes the historical evolution of the West?" (472) In other words: was Marx's dialectical vision of history, passing through stages mandated by underlying economic tensions in society, entirely non-negotiable? Or could the Marxist message prove malleable, able to shape itself to different forms of social transformation (e.g., one that flips straight from absolute monarchy over to proletariat rule)?

1. In the U.S., meanwhile, progress was occurring so rapidly that an extremely advanced bourgeois marketplace and industrial economy were already in place. But class tensions were still being alleviated by the inherent ability of America to open up new markets—especially in the still-expanding Western states. And so the U.S. had, so far, been able to enjoy much of the prosperity of bourgeois life without facing up to the difficulties entailed by class struggle.

v. Finally, in the 1883 preface, it was Engels who aimed to provisionally structure our engagement with the *Manifesto*. He did so less by situating it within a new historical context than by summarizing its core message for us. As Engels put it: "The basic thought running through the *Manifesto*—that economic production and the structure of society of every historical epoch necessarily arising therefrom constitute the foundation for the political and intellectual history of that epoch; that consequently (ever since the dissolution of the primeval communal ownership of land) all history has been a history of class struggles, of struggles between exploited and exploiting, between dominated and dominating classes at various stages of social development; that this struggle, however, has now reached a stage where the exploited and oppressed class (the proletariat) can no longer emancipate itself without at the same time forever freeing the whole of society from exploitation, oppression, and class struggles—this basic thought belongs solely and exclusively to Marx." (472)

b. Bourgeoisie & Proletariat

i. Marx begins the *Manifesto* proper by framing it as a response and a clarification. The idea of 'communism' has already been set loose upon

modern industrial society, but no one is quite clear on what that idea actually entails in practice. Instead, it is used as a sort of bogeyman to scare workers away from acting in their own best interests, usually by casting communism as a return to despotism or a destruction of traditional values (like family, etc.). Or, as Marx puts it more eloquently: "A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of communism." (473)

ii. To begin his clarification and defense of communism, Marx turns to the historical background of the modern situation. And he begins boldly: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles." (473)

iii. The two most common outcomes to such struggles are revolution or ruin. (Seemingly 'reaction' would tend toward the ruin of both parties, in Marx's view.) But whereas the ancient and medieval 'epochs' featured a multiplicity of classes—e.g., lords, vassals, guild-masters, serfs, etc.—the modern situation has simplified its class structure down to two main groups: "Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat." (474)

iv. Colonial expansion has led to the development of a globalized market and the spread of the bourgeois to (almost) every corner of the map. Progress in industry and technology are only intensifying this process. Everything is trending toward the dominance of the bourgeoisie state: "the bourgeoisie has at last, since the establishment of Modern Industry and of the world-market, conquered for itself, in the modern representative State, exclusive political sway. The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." (475)

v. Under this new bourgeois regime, all values and all relations are reduced to their cash value. Free trade, pure exchange, and brutal exploitation are now the order of the day. Almost all occupations are now understood primarily in terms of wage-labor, while even familial relations are being reduced to financial bonds. National borders are disappearing, while the centralization of wealth in the hands of the wealthiest capitalists goes hand-in-hand with the centralization of political power.

vi. So—is the bourgeois revolution all bad, then? Not exactly—the bourgeoisie's revolutionary effect on humanity is that it has shown us what we can do, what we can accomplish. The brutality of the factories has nonetheless made evident our essential powers as a species. And even the money-economy's relativization of all traditional values has brought with it a new clarity; we're now able to see the brute reality of who we are: "All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind." (476)

vii. Yet the outcome of the bourgeois revolution—in all of its liberating terror—might ultimately be to overthrow the bourgeoisie itself. In Marx's view, each epoch of history sows the seeds of its own destruction. In fact, it is the dominant class that does this most of all, by engendering an underclass and bringing into effect productive forces that unsettle its original social context. Feudal society proved fertile for the flourishing of the early bourgeoisie, but these bourgeois merchants ended up being the vanguard for a revolution that

changed all of society. Now the proletariat is doing the same thing to the bourgeoisie, whose industrial development created the proletariat class in the first place.

viii. As Marx discusses it: "The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them. And how does the bourgeoisie get over these crises? On the one hand, by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented. The weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself. But not only has the bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men who are to wield those weapons—the modern working class—the proletarians." (478)

ix. And who are these proletarians, again? "A class of laborers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labor increases capital. These laborers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, are a commodity, like every other article of commerce, and are consequently exposed to all the vicissitudes of competition, to all the fluctuations of the market." (479)

x. The proletariat consists of an increasingly large 'industrial army,' divided according to the division of labor, well-trained and well-oiled by the mechanisms of modern industry. There is a tendency toward subsistence-level wages, which are all too quickly reabsorbed back into 'capital' through the purchases of food and supplies, the payment of rent, etc. So there is little hope that the worker can actually use his compensation to rise to the level of the owner: "No sooner is the exploitation of the laborer by the manufacturer, so far, at an end, that he receives his wages in cash, than he is set upon by the other portions of the bourgeoisie, the landlord, the shopkeeper, the pawnbroker, etc." (479)

xi. This proletariat class continues to grow and grow, in accordance with a number of factors:

1. The nature of industrial development increases demand for new markets and new workers to produce commodities for those markets.
2. The *petit bourgeois*—those on the lower end of the ownership-class—will tend to decline financially, eventually falling down into the proletariat, while capital is consolidated at the top.
3. The political needs of the bourgeoisie will need to make us of the proletariat—who outnumber them, of course—in order to consolidate their power. Because of this, they will inadvertently arm the proletariat with the power they need to overthrow the bourgeois state.
    a. The bourgeoisie "sees itself compelled to appeal to the proletariat, to ask for its help, and thus, to drag it into the political arena. The bourgeoisie itself, therefore, supplies the proletariat with its own elements of political and general education, in other words, it furnishes the proletariat with weapons for fighting the bourgeoisie. Further, as we have already seen, entire sections of the ruling classes are, by the

advance of industry, precipitated into the proletariat, or are at least threatened in their conditions of existence. These also supply the proletariat with fresh elements of enlightenment and progress." (481)

4. As the situation worsens, certain members of the ruling class will cut themselves off from the bourgeoisie and join with the proletariat, since they will theoretically grasped the historical movement that's underway. (480-481)

xii. So what's to be done? Can we mitigate the suffering of the working classes by bringing in aid programs and other forms of minimal progress? Can the proletariat be pacified? Not for long, says Marx. Pacification (e.g., a welfare state) may delay the confrontation between the classes, but it cannot do so inevitably—not so long as the underlying conditions of production remain the same; not so long as the minority, with all of its values and prejudices, continues to dominate the majority. (482)

1. Here Marx demonstrates much less concern about 'majority rule' than we saw in Mill and Tocqueville. His primary concern is not the preservation of minority liberty—especially when that minority owns the means of production—but rather the emancipation of the majority itself. (482) This turns the issue of 'majority rule' somewhat on its head.

xiii. The existence of the bourgeoisie, then, has become incompatible with the ongoing survival of society. This can be most clearly shown by the inability of the ownership class to feed its own slaves: "The modern laborer… instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth. And here it becomes evident that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an overriding law. It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state, that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him. Society can no longer live under this bourgeoisie, in other words, its existence is no longer compatible with society." (483)

xiv. And so: "The essential condition for the existence and for the sway of the bourgeois class is the formation and augmentation of capital; the condition for capital is wage-labor. Wage-labor rests exclusively on competition between the laborers. The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the laborers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association. The development of Modern Industry, therefore, cuts from under its feet the very foundation on which the bourgeoisie produces and appropriates products. What the bourgeoisie, therefore, produces, above all, is its own grave-diggers. Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable." (483)

1. In other words: Competition between laborers → Wage-Labor → Capital → Bourgeoisie → Advance of Industry → Laborer Association & Solidarity → Revolution

c. Proletarians & Communists
    i. Communism, then, situates itself within this historical development, as part of the overthrow of existing (bourgeois) property relations. And it does so not entirely within the realm of invented theories, but by being rooted in actual relations. The Communist party, therefore, supports this historical movement both theoretically—by seeing the scope of the development which the proletariat is moving forward—and, more important, practically—by creating the conditions for the proletariat to exercise its full force (politically). Put most simply, the rallying cry of the Communists is this: Abolish private property! (484)
    ii. So the movement is already underway: "The abolition of existing property relations is not at all a distinctive feature of Communism. All property relations in the past have continually been subject to historical change consequent upon the change in historical conditions." (484)
    iii. But what does the abolition of private property really mean? What is at stake in it? Is it a question of taking away 'our right' to our own personal toothbrush, etc.? No—Marx is primarily concerned with property as capital, as the kind of property involved in the exploitation of one's alienated labor by another. So we shouldn't focus on the question of minute personal belongings, but rather on the ownership of the means of production, of the products produced, and of productive labor itself. All of these, of course, can become the ownership of the capitalist—the owner of capital—in the bourgeois economy.
    iv. Writes Marx: "But does wage-labor create any property for the laborer? Not a bit. It creates capital, i.e., that kind of property which exploits wage-labor, and which cannot increase except upon condition of begetting a new supply of wage-labor for fresh exploitation. Property, in its present form, is based on the antagonism of capital and wage-labor." (485)
    v. So 'capital' is not just any property (or money, etc.) whatsoever, but property that is used to further a certain kinds of relations of production. It is a social category, an economic category, perhaps even a political category: "Capital is, therefore, not a personal, it is a social power. When, therefore, capital is converted into common property, into the property of all members of society, personal property is not thereby transformed into social property. It is only the social character of the property that is changed. It loses its class-character." (485)
    vi. The point of abolishing private property, then, is not to end all 'appropriation' through production. That is: it's not to end the reality of humans making stuff and then laying claim (in some sense) to what they've made. Rather, abolishing private property in the bourgeois-industrial economy means ending exploitative appropriation—ending the 'surplus value' that the capitalist extracts from out of his workers' life-activity. Abolishing private property means ending the subjection of labor to capital. Communism doesn't mean an end to appropriation; it means an end to the subjugation of others' labor by means of appropriation.
    vii. Marx, of course, realizes that many will be scandalized by his call for an end to private property. He knows many will see this as a threat not only to personal belongings, but also to the idea of the individual as such. But he

thinks these concerns are irrevocably tainted by specifically bourgeois ideals of who the 'individual person' is. (Cf. his critique of civil society…)

viii. Writes Marx: "You must, therefore, confess that by 'individual' you mean no other person than the bourgeois, than the middle-class owner of property. This person must, indeed, by swept out of the way, and made impossible. Communism deprives no man of the power to appropriate the products of society; all that it does is to deprive him of the power to subjugate the labor of others by means of such appropriation." (486)

ix. By 'individual rights,' then, the anticommunist really means bourgeois rights—and bourgeois property, law, culture, etc. Just as with the Rights of Man, all of these values are smuggled in as universal when, in fact, they are merely historically specific prejudices founded on historically changing relations of production. But bourgeois ideology aims to hide that fact and to present its own values as timeless: "Your very ideas are but the outgrowth of the conditions of your bourgeois production and bourgeois property, just as your jurisprudence is but the will of your class made into a law for all, a will, whose essential character and direction are determined by the economical conditions of existence of your class. The selfish misconception that induces you to transform into eternal laws of nature and of reason the social forms springing from your present mode of production and form of property—historical relations that rise and disappear in the progress of production—this misconception you share with every ruling class that has preceded you." (487)

x. Here Marx applies a kind of 'historicism' to the history of values that we've seen Mill flirt with—and that Nietzsche will drive even further toward its limit. Asks Marx: "Does it require deep intuition to comprehend that man's ideas, views, and conceptions, in one word, man's consciousness, changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life?" (489)

xi. Again: "But whatever form they may have taken, one fact is common to all past ages, viz., the exploitation of one part of society by the other. No wonder, then, that the social consciousness of past ages, despite all the multiplicity and variety it displays, moves within certain common forms or general ideas, which cannot completely vanish except with the total disappearance of class antagonisms." (489)

d. Implementing Communism

i. So, given all that, what's to be done? Here, at the end of the section on the Proletariat and Communism, Marx turns to some more practical maneuvers. First of all, he writes, the Communist Party must lead the proletariat to "win the battle of democracy." (490) Then, once it has seized democratic power in the name of the majority, the proletariat as a class can work to centralize capital and the means of production, while at the same time maximizing production.

ii. Although the seizure of power is described as democratic, the proletariat may then have to proceed by means of "despotic inroads," if it is indeed going to abolish private property and transform the relations of production. These might not go quietly into the night.

iii. More specifically, Marx outlines the steps to be taken (490):

1. Abolish land-property & socialization of rent
2. Establish progressive income tax
3. Abolish inheritance rights
4. Confiscate property of those who rebel or flee
5. Centralize capital in the State via a monopolistic national bank
6. Centralize communication and transportation in the State
7. Expand State's industrial and agricultural output capacity
8. Establish industrial armies (all must labor!)
9. Combine agriculture with industry (overcome urban-rural divide)
10. Establish public education and rethink 'child labor'

iv. Though this certainly sounds like a 'dictatorship of the proletariat,' the ultimate goal of this program is to dissolve all class antagonisms whatsoever, and to do so by overcoming alienation through abolishing private property and all of its corollaries. So it's not about the proletariat ruling everybody else; it's about a classless society.

v. Writes Marx: "In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all." (491)

e. The Variety of Socialisms

i. Marx concludes the Manifesto with a brief run-through of the various other groups heavily critical of modern industrial society. He is not the first to spot the problems inherent in the prevailing economic system, and he knows this. But he also thinks that many of the critics who've gone before him have been off-base or, at best, only partially correct in their analysis. While it can be difficult to judge how fair Marx's reading of other 'socialists' is, his views of the alternatives can still help us catch a clearer glimpse of how he sees his own solution fitting into the broader spectrum of anti-capitalist positions and parties.

ii. Reactionary Socialism

1. Feudal Socialism

a. The first branch of what Marx terms 'Reactionary Socialism' has to do with the aristocracy's strategy of appealing to the working classes in order to gain leverage against the revolutionary bourgeoisie. Here aristocracy feigns to be the protector of the poor laborer against the predatory advances of capitalism. In fact, however, this is just a cynical ploy aimed at maintaining the ancient and outmoded aristocracy's hold on power. (491)

b. But there can be no return to the feudal economy or feudal values. The epoch of aristocratic rule gave birth to its own destruction, mostly through its (often colonial) avarice, which gave rise to the burgeoning bourgeoisie. But now the bourgeois society is succeeding in consolidating the proletariat as a class, which has nothing in common with the old feudal order of dedicated serfs owing loyalty to their lords. The proletariat is something other than the peasantry. (492)

   c. Interestingly, it is in this section that Marx swears off any turn to religiously fueled socialism. Though in our time we might continue to link religious morals to questions of 'social justice,' for Marx clerical socialism could only be a smokescreen in service of the same old aristocratic powers.
2. Petty-Bourgeois Socialism
   a. Just as the aristocracy can try to make use of the proletariat to stave off the increasing power of the bourgeoisie, so can those who seem to occupy an intermediary position within the class system. Between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, there can sometimes be a group of individuals who serve as a supplement of the bourgeoisie, owning some means of production but not so much as to count as real power.
   b. Marx refers to these 'in-between' classes as the *petit bourgeois*—the petty or small bourgeois. (Think of our own term 'small-business owner.') Though they supplement the function of the bourgeoisie, they also fluctuate between that ownership class and the proletariat. Many are forced down into the working classes due to the effects of a competitive wage-labor system. Their existence as 'in-betweens' is a sign not of hope, but rather of the tightening-up of the class structure into a simple dichotomy.
   c. So the petty-bourgeois appeal to the proletariat, while it may indeed stumble upon some correct criticisms of how the bourgeoisie proper operates, is also a reactionary attempt to preserve something of the pre-bourgeois status quo, which featured so many more 'levels' of classes. The petty-bourgeois appeal to the worker only to save their own position and thereby avoid falling down into the horrifying fate of the worker. (492-493)
3. German or 'True' Socialism
   a. With his section on German Socialism, Marx returns to his critique of an overly philosophical approach to the social situation. (Recall the final section of EPM.) The problem with 'the Germans,' as Marx sees it, is that they turn the brute facts of socioeconomic revolution into occasions for mere philosophical or literary reflection. Says Marx: "They wrote their philosophical nonsense beneath the French original." (494)
   b. By trying to approach 'socialism' from this abstract philosophical angle, the Germans failed to see the historically and economically specific foundations of the bourgeois state—and its impending overthrow at the hands of the proletariat. They try to import the reality of the French situation—proletariat fervor rising in response to the bourgeoisie's overcoming of the old feudalism—into the German situation, where what was for Marx a crude monarchy remained in place. Socially and economically, the

German philosophers lacked the actual foundations to understand the proletariat movement, since they were still stuck in the realm of abstraction and suffering a feudal hangover. Because of this, their abstract philosophizing ends up merely ratifying and reinforcing the retrograde—or better, reactionary—status quo.

i. Here cf. Nietzsche, who sees much of philosophy—especially but not exclusively German—as a reinforcement of the status quo and customary values, only in the guise of 'intellectual honesty.'

c. What's worse, the Germans' attempt to co-opt France's revolutionary movement in philosophical terms led them to treat bourgeois conceptions of humanity as if they were universally true. This is the same error made by those who get caught up in talk about the 'Rights of Man.'

d. As Marx puts it: "to the German philosophers of the eighteenth century, the demands of the French Revolution were nothing more than the demands of 'Practical Reason' in general, and the utterance of the will of the revolutionary French bourgeoisie signified in their eyes the law of pure Will, of Will as it was bound to be, of true human Will generally." (494)

iii. Conservative or Bourgeois Socialism

1. For Marx, the next major category of faulty socialism is that which tries merely to broaden out the features of bourgeois life to everyone, including the working classes. Ideally, this could take form as the notion that everyone would live out a bourgeois lifestyle—which is economically impossible under the competitive conditions of the bourgeois economy. Less radically, this could take the form of moderate reforms aimed at lessening the burden of the proletariat. (Think of the welfare state, etc.)
2. In the first case, we'd have a "bourgeoisie without a proletariat." (496) In the second, we'd recite this mantra: "the bourgeois is a bourgeois—for the benefit of the working class." (497)
3. Neither of these constitutes true socialism, precisely because they aim to preserve the current relations of production rather than overcoming them. But the point of socialism, in Marx's view, is indeed to change the prevailing modes of production. Trying to mitigate the effects of the bourgeois economy on the proletariat might be ethically alluring, but it will not at all achieve this goal of social transformation. Instead, it will only 'conserve' what it can of the current system.

iv. Critical-Utopian Socialism & Communism

1. Finally, Marx makes it clear that, though his brand of communism takes its lead in many ways from the critical and utopian traditions, he thinks most critical-utopian forms of socialism have also missed the mark. This is primarily because they tend to fall into the realm of

ideal fantasy, of pseudo-religious notions of a heaven on earth, rather than on the concrete, historical agency of the proletariat.

2. These utopians, according to Marx, would prefer not to get mired in the gritty reality of class struggle. They'd like to stand above the fray in order to preach tolerance, sharing, and general cooperation. Marx is not against those things, but he doesn't think real social change will happen merely by preaching such values. The transformation of society can only happen through class struggle, and so the proletariat must be seized upon as the forceful agent of such change. What is needed is not a new social gospel, but a political program and a plan of action. (497-499)

v. Distinctiveness of the Communist Party

1. Marx ends the Manifesto by once again clarifying the role of the Communist Party, both in the class struggle and in the revolutionary transformation of society and its economic structure. Though he has been critical of middling reforms that mitigate the workers' suffering in half-hearted ways, he nevertheless does want to advocate for workers in the here and now. But, at the same time, the Communist Party would have to keep in view the long-term historical process at play.
2. Marx puts it this way: "The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement." (499)
3. Though the Party might make strategic alliances with various groups in different national scenarios, the main goal will be to instill class consciousness everywhere. Writes Marx: "they never cease, for a single instant, to instill into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat," even when (as in Germany) the Communists have strategically allied themselves with bourgeois revolutionaries. (500)
4. In many cases, then, the Communist Party will have to support social change and developmental progress even when the social situation is extremely reactionary and regressive. If that means supporting bourgeois industrialists in overthrowing a feudal monarchy, then so be it: "In short, the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things." (500)
5. But even as they make this seeming devil's bargains, the Communists will have to distinguish themselves by ceaselessly proclaiming their core principles: the abolition of private property ("the property question"); the rise of the proletariat; the transformation of the dominant relations of production; and yes, even the eventual seizure of the means of production themselves (of capital itself).
6. Concludes Marx, rather forcefully: "The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communistic

> revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!" (500)

6. From Marx to Nietzsche
    a. Transitioning from Marx to Nietzsche can be approached as a deepening of our ongoing investigation into the question of value. The problem of alienation was, in some sense, the problem of where we get our 'own' values or sense of value from. What do we 'evaluate' ourselves in terms of? God? God's law? Religious practice? Or money? Economic laws? Financial success?
    b. Nietzsche is less explicitly concerned with the economic particulars of alienation in the industrial reality of his own time. He read his Mill, but he's not quite a political economist. Still, he is very concerned with the question of how we evaluate ourselves in terms of traditional terms and concepts. If Marx wants to make us think about where our sense of economic value comes from, Nietzsche asks us to consider where our sense of any 'values' at all comes from. And so his next step is not to engage in political economy, but rather to perform a 'genealogy' of our moral values, trying to show the hidden assumptions and obscure forces that have shaped our modern sense of good and bad.
    c. In a sense, then, Nietzsche too can be read as an author writing about and even against alienation. Just as Marx will talk of socialism as the ultimately positive self-consciousness of humanity, so Nietzsche will end up calling for affirmation rather than ongoing critique (or 'negation'). But the question that faces us when we read both Marx and Nietzsche is this: after all this critique of our values, what is it that we should be positing or affirming?