

## JUSTICE AND IDEOLOGY: JUSTICE AS IDEOLOGY

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*After formulating a conception of radical egalitarian justice, Professor Nielsen questions whether such a formulation is based on ideological rhetoric. He argues that it is not. He provides a moral picture of the world where all human beings, irrespective of desert, have a right to equal respect and autonomy. This moral picture, he claims, is necessary for there to be a general understanding of what is in the class interest of the proletariat. The socialist conception of justice must involve an amalgam of moral and empirical claims.*

### Justice et idéologie: la justice comme idéologie

*Le professeur Nielsen formule d'abord une conception de justice égalitaire radicale et essaie ensuite de déterminer si une telle formulation est basée sur une rhétorique idéologique. Il prétend que non. Il esquisse un tableau moral du monde selon lequel tous les hommes, quoi qu'ils méritent, ont droit à un respect et à une autonomie égaux. Ce tableau moral, affirme-t-il, est nécessaire pour qu'il y ait une compréhension générale de l'intérêt du prolétariat. La conception socialiste de la justice doit combiner des revendications morales et empiriques.*

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#### I

I have argued that if we are committed to the belief that all human beings, irrespective of merit or any special entitlement, have a right to equal respect and autonomy, then we must adopt an egalitarian conception of social justice.<sup>1</sup> Marxists and Anarchists are essentially right in their belief that liberty is impossible without equality and equality is impossible without liberty. The liberty of libertarians is liberty, and a rather limited one at that, for the few. Moreover, since justice requires equal liberty, justice requires equality as well.

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<sup>1</sup> See Kai Nielsen, "Class and Justice" in John Arthur and William H. Shaw, eds., *Justice and Economic Distribution* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1978), "Radical Egalitarian Justice: Justice As Equality" (1979), *5 Social Theory and Practice* 209 and "Impediments to Radical Egalitarianism", *Amer. Phil. Q.*, (1981).

The links do not stop there. I would also argue that equality requires democracy and, that, in modern life conditions, democracy is impossible without socialism. If the achievement of equal respect is a fundamental moral *desideratum*, something that morality requires among its most central *desiderata*, then we have, for people living in industrial societies, an indissoluble link between justice, equality, liberty, democracy and socialism. Given Marx's attitude towards democracy and liberty and given his understanding of socialism, this would also seem to be a belief he too should have been driven to. And it squares well with the egalitarianism of many Marxists.<sup>2</sup> Yet Marx also claimed that justice-talk is ideological-talk, distorting our understanding of social reality and, in effect, working as a device to reinforce the *status quo* and to divert the proletariat from revolutionary activity.<sup>3</sup>

I shall argue that if all moral notions in general and all conceptions of justice in particular, including the notions that inform a socialist consciousness, are simply ideological notions, expressive of false consciousness, then socialism and Marxism themselves are, in tolerably important ways, undermined. A reading of historical materialism, I shall argue, which has, as one of its conclusions, the statement that all moral notions are through and through ideological and must be expressions of false consciousness is either a mistaken reading of historical materialism or historical materialism is itself in error and at least needs revamping. Marxists and socialists are, and must remain, committed to a certain scheduling of values, to a certain moral picture of the world.

I have tried elsewhere to say something about what I think this picture comes to, particularly on the side of justice.<sup>4</sup> I shall be concerned here to meet the objection that such talk must come to ideological twaddle. But I do want briefly just to express what might be targeted as ideological twaddle by

<sup>2</sup> This egalitarianism is well represented in Richard C. Edwards, Michael Reich and Thomas E. Weisskopf, eds., *The Capitalist System: A Radical Analysis of American Society*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1978), c. 8 & 14, Martin J. Sklar, "Liberty and Equality and Socialism" (1977), 7 *Socialist Revolution* 92, and Barry Clark and Herbert Gintis, "Rawlsian Justice and Economic Systems" (1978), 7 *Phil. and Pub. Affairs* 302.

<sup>3</sup> This is perhaps best documented by Alan Wood in his "Marx on Right and Justice: A Reply to Husami" (1979), 8 *Phil. and Pub. Affairs* 267. But see, as well, William L. McBride, "The Concept of Justice in Marx, Engels and Others" (1975), 85 *Ethics* 204; Andrew Collier, "Truth and Practice", [1973] *Radical Phil.* 5 and "The Production of Moral Ideology", [1974] *Radical Phil.* 9; and Tony Skillen, "Marxism and Morality", [1974] *Radical Phil.* 8 and *Ruling Illusions: Philosophy and The Social Order* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1978).

<sup>4</sup> See references *supra* n. 1 as well as Kai Nielsen, "On the Very Possibility of a Classless Society: Rawls, Macpherson and Revisionist Liberalism" (1978), 6 *Political Theory* 191.

stating, though not elucidating, what I take to be a formulation of a socialist conception of justice, or at least the conception of justice I think should be operative in socialism, if it requires any conception of justice at all. With some trepidation, since silly versions have been created as strawmen to knock down, I have called it 'radical, egalitarian justice'.<sup>5</sup> I shall first give four formulations of such a radical egalitarian conception of justice: formulations which, if there is anything like a concept of social justice, hopefully capture something of it, though it is more likely that such a way of putting things is not very helpful and what we have here are four conceptualizations of social justice which together articulate what the Left takes social justice to be, where it does not regard all justice-talk as ideological verbal mystification. I shall follow that with a statement of what I take to be the two most fundamental principles of radical egalitarian justice.

#### Four Conceptions of Radical Egalitarian Justice

1. Justice in society as a whole ought to be understood as requiring that each person be treated with equal respect irrespective of desert and that each person be entitled to self-respect irrespective of desert.<sup>6</sup>
2. Justice in society as a whole ought to be understood as requiring that each person be so treated such that we approach, as close as we can, to a condition where everyone will be equal in satisfaction and in such distress as is necessary for achieving our commonly accepted ends.<sup>7</sup>
3. Justice in society as a whole ought to be understood as a complete equality of the overall level of benefits and burdens of each member of that society.<sup>8</sup>
4. Justice in society as a whole ought to be understood as a structuring of the institutions of society so that each person can, to the fullest extent compatible with all other people doing likewise, satisfy her/his genuine needs.

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<sup>5</sup> For some standard samples of egalitarianism first made into a strawman and then deftly demolished see generally, H. J. McCloskey, "A Right to Equality? Re-examining the Case for a Right to Equality" (1976), 6 *Cdn. J. of Phil.* 625, Robert Nisbet, "The Pursuit of Equality", [1974] *Public Interest* 103, & Hugo A. Bedau, "Radical Egalitarianism" in Hugo A. Bedau, ed., *Justice and Equality* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1971). I think I show in my essays, cited *supra* n. 1, how an account of radical egalitarian justice can be formulated which does not fall prey to such criticisms.

<sup>6</sup> David Miller, "Democracy and Social Justice" (1978), 8 *Brit. J. of Pol. Sc.* 1.

<sup>7</sup> Ted Honderich, *Three Essays on Political Violence* (Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell, 1976), 37-44.

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Ake, "Justice as Equality" (1975), 5 *Phil. and Pub. Affairs* 69.

These conceptualizations are, of course, vague and in various ways indeterminate. What counts as 'genuine needs', 'fullest extent', 'complete equality of overall level of benefits', 'as close as we can', 'equal respect' and the like? Much depends on how these notions function and in what kind of a theory they are placed. I will not pursue these matters here except indirectly in responding to the charge of ideology. I take it, however, that these conceptualizations will help us locate social justice on the conceptual and moral map.

I now want to state two principles of justice, more egalitarian than Rawls's, which square with the above four conceptualizations and would play a role in a moral theory similar to Rawls's principles, though I hope not a role in ideologically shoring up the liberal Welfare State. I shall state them in a form similar to Rawls's for ease of comparison.

### **Radical Egalitarian Principles of Justice**

1. Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties and opportunities (including equal opportunities for meaningful work, for self-determination and political participation), compatible with a similar treatment of all. (This principle gives expression to a commitment to attain and/or sustain equal moral autonomy and equal self-respect.)
2. After provisions are made for common social (community) values, for capital overhead to preserve the society's productive capacity and allowances are made for differing unmanipulated needs and preferences, the income and wealth (the common stock of means) is to be so divided that each person will have a right to an equal share. The necessary burdens requisite to enhance well-being are also to be equally shared, subject, of course, to limitations by differing abilities and differing situations (natural environment, not class position). (In allowing for differing needs and preferences, this 'allowing for differences' must be constrained by a concern that everyone's compossible needs and preferences be, to the fullest extent possible, satisfied.)

I leave these principles as hopefully succinctly specifying the form of radical egalitarianism I wish to defend and turn now to the central endeavour of this essay. That endeavour is to show how the above moral conceptions, or something rather like them, which I believe should inform a socialist consciousness, are not, at least in any damaging sense, ideological. I shall try to establish, that is, that they are important elements in socialist consciousness and are not ideological twaddle, unwittingly supporting the ruling illusions of advanced capitalism. I have, as I remarked initially, elsewhere tried to show the plausibility of this radical egalitarianism. Here I want to free it of the ghost

of ideology and show that it has a modest but legitimate role in the articulation and defense of socialism.

## II

What I want to know is why, or indeed whether, my, at least self-designated, conception of socialist justice should be regarded as ideological twaddle expressive of false consciousness. How is it that such a conception is a distorted conception of social reality? Is my conception really a class-bound conception with a set of principles merely expressive of the interests of one class — in this case the proletariat? Or is there self-deception which is even deeper? Perhaps they merely give expression to the interests of the petty bourgeoisie? *Perhaps* such talk of equality really functions, though, of course, in a disguised way, to sanctify the freedom and equality of wage earners to contract as they will in bourgeois production relations?

One place from which a critique surely would come is over my various general formulae expressing what I take to be the concept of radical egalitarian justice and which, I hope, expresses that concept or at least gives expression to a distinctive range of related conceptions of justice which have such an egalitarian thrust. It is certainly understandable that they might be thought to be too general, too contextless and to make the mistake of talking about the justice of society as a whole, while we actually can only meaningfully speak of the justice of certain institutional arrangements within a society and from the point of view of that society. The radical egalitarian conception allows (putatively allows) one to speak of the justice of a whole society, for example capitalist society, the Christian social order, feudal society and socialist society and even allows the possibility of ranking societies according to how nearly they come to satisfying the criteria set out in these various conceptions. But this, it could be responded, is precisely what we cannot do. At least it appears that this is what Marx is at least sometimes saying. It is plainly what some Marxists are saying and, if William McBride's, Allen Woods's and Allen Buchanan's reconstructions of Marx are near to the mark, we must take it as a central Marxist claim that a thoroughgoing Marxist critique of the capitalist system cannot rely on the claim that the capitalist system is unjust.<sup>9</sup> Such justice-talk is

<sup>9</sup> See generally, William L. McBride, "The Concept of Justice in Marx, Engels and Others" (1975), 85 *Ethics* 204; Allen W. Wood, "The Marxian Critique of Justice" (1972), 1 *Phil. and Pub. Affairs* 244 and his "Marx on Right and Justice: A Reply to Husami" (1979), 8 *Phil. and Pub. Affairs* 267; and Allen Buchanan, "The Marxian Critique of Justice and Rights", *Cdn. J. of Phil.*, forthcoming. Buchanan will allow that a certain internal critique is possible. Cf. for a powerfully stated alternative view Gary Young, "Justice and Capitalist Production: Marx and Bourgeois Ideology", (1978), 8 *Cdn. J. of Phil.* 421.

ideological rhetoric, what Marx once called "obsolete verbal rubbish" and "ideologic nonsense". Such egalitarian talk of justice gives us the ideological illusion that one can attain such an Archimedean point, such an 'eternal justice'. Actually, however, or so the objection goes, justice-talk only has a determinate sense within a given socio-economic system and that sense is principally to give support, though in a disguised way, to the relations of production of that system. Sometimes there are some conflicting ideologically subordinate conceptions of justice which reflect new relations of production struggling to come into existence. But they, no more than the dominant conceptions, give us an Archimedean point for assessing whole social constructions such as capitalism, feudalism or socialism.

I am inclined to think that talk here of eternal justice is a red herring. I am claiming that such egalitarian conceptions of justice, with their correlated principles of justice, come into play only under conditions of relative abundance. Earlier they could serve only as heuristic ideals. They can only find instantiation in a society of abundance where what G.A. Cohen has called the capitalist mentality was a thing of the past and where the production relations of what Marx called "a higher phase of communist society" were entrenched.<sup>10</sup>

If it is said, alternatively, that they are incompatible with historical materialism, or at least those aspects of historical materialism which are at least plausibly so, I shall challenge that. Historical materialism crucially embodies the claim that (1) people's perceptions, ideas, conceptions and beliefs and their associated social practices are determined or at least strongly conditioned by their material situation, and (2) that the relations of domination involved in the relations of production determine which of the different perceptions, ideas, conceptions and beliefs will be dominant.<sup>11</sup> But my conception of egalitarian justice is perfectly compatible with those claims. I am not concerned to deny, and indeed would not deny, that such conceptions and principles arise, at least as a social force, only when certain relations of production are struggling to

<sup>10</sup> The reference to Marx is, of course, to his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. Gerald A. Cohen characterizes the capitalist mentality as that of questing for exchange-value where that quest "is not controlled by a desire for use-value, or not, at any rate, by a desire to exchange it for use-value" (see p. 300). It is a mentality engendered by social structures where, what Cohen calls the *capitalist principle*, is in place; namely, that we are to use exchange-value to increase exchange-value. Gerald A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 300.

<sup>11</sup> Göran Therborn, *Science, Class and Society: In the formation of Sociology and Historical Materialism* (London, England: New Left Books, 1976). See also Robert Ware, "Critical Notice" of Therborn (1979), 9 *Cdn. J. of Phil.* 185.

come into being and I am certainly not making any claim, indeed I am saying just the opposite, that such conceptions and principles will, while corporate capitalism rides high, be the dominant ethical conceptions of the society.

I am not claiming that society can be moved by using them even if socialist militants throw them vigorously into various ideological battles. To think they should have such a causal effect seems to me thoroughly unrealistic and to rely on them in that way is to act in a way which in effect is counter-productive for socialism. Similarly, they are not meant to be something which has explanatory value for coming to understand the structure and mechanisms of capitalist society.

It is fair enough to say that they are ideological in that they reflect certain relations of production that are being struggled for and that they express the interests of the working class and their allies and perhaps even, in a more crystalized and heightened form, their aspirations, though they are not only expressions of the interests of the proletariat but of all persons except those of a miniscule portion of the people (2% to 5% in the great bourgeois societies) who presently control the society. But they are not ideological, as far as I can see, in that they express false beliefs, false consciousness and a distorted conception of social reality. They would be if we attributed to them causal powers to transform society or took them to be important elements in explaining how our society got to be the way it is or in what sustains it or claimed that we know that these moral principles articulate objective truths (if that is not a pleonasm) or claimed self-evidence for them or some cosmological backing. But nothing even remotely like any of these things is being claimed in my defense of egalitarian justice and, as far as I can see, they are not required for a defense of egalitarianism. I am not even claiming that such egalitarian commitments are required by reason or are what rational persons, in such a situation, must choose, if they set aside their particular moral sentiments or any such moral considerations and just consider what is the rational thing to do or the most reasonable thing to do. Appealing to reason, unless 'reason' is persuasively defined in terms of certain contestable normative notions, does not determine uniquely which conceptions of justice, or for that matter of morality generally, are correct. In short, there is no deduction of morality from rationality.

I think those egalitarian principles are *consistent with* principles of rationality, but I am not trying to show, what I do not believe can be shown for any substantial principles of justice or of morality, that they are required by these principles of rationality. Moral theories and principles are underdetermined with respect to reason. Rationality is too weak a foundation for any morality. It is possible to make consistent articulations of at least several of the major moral (normative ethical) theories, all of which are equally

compatible with the principles of reason or what have been called the demands of practical reason. Reason alone will not establish or disestablish these fundamental moral claims or major moral theories. But this does not show them to be ideological for in this respect scientific theories are in the same position. And science, for Marx, is not ideology.<sup>12</sup>

### III

Some Marxists might take my remarks as question-begging when I maintain that there are certain notions of justice which would inform a socialist consciousness. I maintain that Marxists and socialists must remain committed to a certain scheduling of values and to a certain moral picture of the world. Presumably, someone accepting the notion that moral conceptions and theories are ideological through the through, would say that Marxists do not have an ideology and, as moral-talk is ideological talk, and as such expressive of false consciousness, Marxists' cannot be committed to any moral picture of the world or any scheduling of values. Their picture of the world is scientific and not ideological.

However, this last remark itself reflects a very unMarxist bifurcation of facts and values and while, if historical materialism is true, base (the economic structure) finally determines superstructure, and the forces of production determine the relations of production, still, Marx and Engels, in programmatic statements, and in practice, both claim and show how base and superstructure (including ideology) interact. Indeed, as G.A. Cohen has powerfully argued, while still defending a technological deterministic interpretation of historical materialism, bases need superstructures and superstructural elements cause changes in the base.<sup>13</sup> It is only in the last analysis (whatever exactly that may mean) that base determines superstructure. Thus, while technically speaking all moral-talk *may in a way* be ideological, since it is not a productive force or a production relation, that is not to say that some ideological-talk, including some moral-talk, is not sometimes important in *praxis*: in building and defending socialism. Moreover, we have yet to see in what way, if at all, conceptions of egalitarian justice must be expressive of false consciousness.

In much of socialist thought there is a close link between

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<sup>12</sup> I have tried to defend this in my "Reason and Sentiment" in Theodore F. Geraets, ed., *Rationality Today* (Ottawa: Univ. of Ottawa Press, 1979), 249-279. Also see L. W. Sumner's "Critical Notice" of Alan Donagan's *The Theory of Morality* in (1979), 9 *Cdn. J. of Phil.* 185.

<sup>13</sup> Gerald A. Cohen, *supra* n. 10, 231 - 234 & 278 - 296. Also see William H. Shaw, *Marx's Theory of History* (Stanford: Stanford U. Press, 1978).



conceptions of liberty, equality, democracy and socialism.<sup>14</sup> What is at issue here embodies empirical claims and seems to be in no way ideological, unless the whole idea of democracy is a myth in which case socialism is itself undermined. It is not unreasonable to claim that the rationale for socialism is not solely economic growth but social equality and the abolition of the wage relationship with worker's control of the means of production. And this emphasis will be proportionally greater as the level of abundance grows higher. (The truth behind Brecht's "Eats first, morality afterwards".) This very notion carries with it a certain scheduling of values. It is for the abolition of classes, as Engels put it, and plainly against a world in which there are hierarchical work relationships with bosses and bossed, employers and employees, a sharp dichotomy between those who do *manual* work and those, ultimately running the show, who do mental work. It is for democracy in the work place and for all the changed human relationships that would make for and finally constitute the withering away of status society. There is plainly a *Weltanschauung* here with its moral picture of the world.

The commitments I have been talking about — to put the matter somewhat more abstractly — involve just the commitment to liberty and equality I mentioned initially. The reason for the concern for democracy, for classlessness, for meaningful work, indeed for socialism itself, is that they provide us ways of organizing our lives so that finally we, as human beings, will be able to attain liberation; we will, that is, understand our condition and finally control our own lives. We will, under full communism, finally, for the first time in human history, have achieved, as a species, moral autonomy — equal moral autonomy, though we must not forget that this will be a collective control, where each will count for one and none will count for more than one, and this means that people will have to come to think in terms of 'us' and 'we' and not, so exclusively, in terms of 'me'. But people have done this before and they can come, quite rationally, without anything like a 1984 situation, to do so again.

Implicitly here is an ideal of equality that is also an ideal of justice. The ideal is that such justice in society as a whole requires that each person be treated with equal respect irrespective of desert. There is a conception of fair play operating there, that requires that there be, as far as this is possible to achieve, an equality in the over-all level of benefits and burdens and that we approach, as close as we can, a

<sup>14</sup> For a contemporary example see Martin J. Sklar, "Liberty and Equality and Socialism" (1977), 7 *Socialist Revolution* 92. The overall impression of this is conveyed massively and convincingly by the body of writings in Richard C. Edwards, Michael Reich and Thomas E. Weisskopf, eds., *The Capitalist System: A Radical Analysis of American Society*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1978).

situation where everyone will be equal in satisfaction and in unavoidable distress. Behind this lies, I believe, the deep underlying moral conviction that all human beings, irrespective of desert, have a right to equal respect and autonomy. In this respect, morally speaking, we must have the same treatment. (As things stand in class societies, we, of course, do not have anything like this.) This is a moral picture of the world and it is one to which socialists are committed. Having such a moral picture is necessary but not, in all circumstances, sufficient for there to be a general understanding of what is in the class interest of the proletariat.

One reason for thinking that a Marxist should have no truck with anything like that is that it is not scientific. The beliefs or principles here hardly can serve as theorems of 'scientific socialism' or as axioms or even as regulative principles. However, aside from this being a rather scientific way of talking, making Marx sound much more generally positivist in orientation than he actually was, it is also fighting with a strawman. These moral conceptions are not put forth as being scientific, though it does not follow from that that they are anti-scientific or unreasonable. And it is not claimed that they can be established by anything called 'the scientific method', assuming we know what that is, though from this it does not follow, as our talk about the relation of liberty to equality brought out, that empirical-cum-theoretical investigation is not relevant to the support of these fundamental moral claims. But they are not put forward as scientific claims and the fundamental principle of equal respect is not put forward as something that can be known to be true or proved or in any way established as probably true or required by reason or anything of that sort. As far as I can see, they are just guiding conceptions that, in trying to decide what kind of human being you want to be, in trying to decide what your order of incentives are, or what you are going to be committed to, you will subscribe to if you want to be a certain kind of person. The person who does not so commit herself need not be any less reasonable than you are. Justification will come to an end in any domain and it seems to me that it has come to an end here, though surely further clarifications can still be in order; for example, just what do we mean by 'equal respect', 'equal self-respect', and the like.

Certainly, Russell, Ayer, Hare and Hägerström have said things like that and such claims have been historically linked with non-cognitivist meta-ethical theories, but there is no reason that they need be and no such linkage is intended here. Unless she takes a very Luddite view of historical materialism, I see no reason why a Marxist cannot and should not make just such moral claims in just that manner.

Some might say that one reason why she should not is that such claims are saturated with natural law or natural rights

claims and that this makes them thoroughly unacceptable given the utterly discredited, unmaterialistic cosmological background in which they are embedded and find their rationale.

It should be replied that the fact, if it is a fact, that these moral beliefs come trailing such clouds of dubious glory, does not mean they need presently be so linked. One could regard natural rights talk, in Bentham's famous phrase, as 'nonsense on stilts' and still assent to the moral picture of the world I have set out. Whatever may be their historical connections, which may be of some value in maintaining a sense of continuity of culture, validity, Habermas notwithstanding, is still in some straightforward sense independent of origin.<sup>15</sup> These egalitarian views are not grounded in a natural law or natural rights tradition, make no cosmological claims at all about how much we are or are not alike and make no claims which conflict with materialism or a scientific view of the world. (Talk of 'a scientific view of the world' is, I suspect, only a useful metaphor and will remain a useful metaphor only as long as there is something like 'a religious view of the world' or 'a magical view of the world' to contrast with it.)

These egalitarian conceptions and principles of justice are not scientific views and, if simply to be non-scientific is to be ideological, then these views are indeed ideological. But how are they ideological in the sense of distorting our understanding of ourselves, of social reality, of the class struggle, of the need to fight for socialism and the like? How are they ideological in the sense of supporting the *status quo* or being just in our class interests or the interests of the capitalist class? How are they socially pacifying devices, as moralizing often is, which would dampen down or discourage our militancy or question its moral appropriateness?

If anyone is serious about these moral principles and has any tolerably decent understanding about how things are in his society and thinks, as a Marxist would, that some change is possible, the having of these moral principles would, I believe, tend to strengthen his militancy. The flagrant injustice of many things in his society, with the concomitant constant undermining of self-respect and self-fulfillment, would never be far from his consciousness. A person, with such moral beliefs, but without a Marxist perspective about the workings of society, might be in a state of utter despair about whether society could be transformed. He might, for a variety of reasons, be firmly convinced that our condition of life cannot be improved. We can only re-arrange the evil. In such a circumstance, like Kierkegaard, he might be quite passive

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<sup>15</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society, 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1963) and his *The Long Revolution* (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1961).

before the evil of the capitalist order without losing his moral integrity. But, if he had those moral convictions and were not, as he indeed easily could be, paralyzed by fear, and had, as well, a certain sociological awareness and did not so despair, it is difficult for me to see how he could be anything other than a militant socialist (where this is taken to include being a social anarchist). With certain sociological beliefs — the inevitability of some form of class society, the corruptibility of human nature, the impossibility of democracy in an industrial world — one might hold the fundamental principle of equal respect and be a non-socialist and indeed even be consciously passive before the *status quo* (any *status quo*).

However, having such passivity engendering beliefs, along with the conviction that all persons should receive equal respect, is not to have the moral picture, the *Weltanschauung*, that I have been characterizing and which I ascribed to the socialist. The socialist conception is an amalgam of values and factual beliefs and it is not evident that either would make much sense if they were pried apart, assuming, what is also not evident, that that is possible. The cultural pessimist who shares the equal respect axiom with the socialist lacks other convictions about the capacity of humans for autonomy, for a rational understanding of their condition and for their capacity to sustain integrity and achieve classlessness. The cultural pessimist and the socialist do not have the same factual-cum-moral picture of the world. However, the moral beliefs, taken, as I take them, with another picture of human possibilities, has a very different *praxis*-effect indeed. What becomes important is to try to ascertain what is the most plausible thing to believe about the empirical claims (putatively empirical claims) embedded in that picture, though what the order and strength of one's convictions are will also effect the weighting given different beliefs about the facts. Having the moral picture of the world I ascribed to the socialist would not at all dampen down his will to take part in the class struggle. It is only when some conceptions, which are quite foreign to socialism, are attached to select parts of that moral picture that it has the pacifying effects of a moral ideology.

If one is a sufficiently Neanderthal Marxist to think that the achievement of socialism is inevitable — a historical inevitability — then, realizing that such moral talk has little explanatory value and will not be of much value in transforming society, one might take little interest in such moral notions.<sup>16</sup> However, if one is a Marxist who eschews talk of historical inevitability and believes instead, as does Bertell Ollman (to take an example), that socialism is a *historical possibility*, a reasonable hope, that one might struggle to

<sup>16</sup> It would be a Neanderthal view as John M. McMurtry shows in his *The Structure of Marx's World-View* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton U. Press, 1978), 170 (esp. fn. 25) & 239-246.

achieve without knowing that it must obtain, then this moral picture is valuable in ideological struggles, and even perhaps sometimes in one's own motivational struggles.<sup>17</sup> That is to say, while its explanatory-value is nil its justificatory-value is considerable.

We can see socialism as a necessary means to an end which is recognized to be of profound moral value. But if all talk of certain ends having profound moral significance is through and through ideological and is not the sort of thing that could reasonably be believed, then one's commitment to socialism would be arbitrary. (We should remember something that philosophers are prone to forget, namely that not everything that is reasonably believed is believed for a reason.)

To the question "Why socialism?", one cannot only show, as one also must to answer that question affirmatively, that it is a reasonable non-utopian possibility, one can show as well that it is something which is morally speaking required, if we take seriously the claim that all human beings should be treated with equal respect and concern and, if we further believe, that certain states of affairs do obtain. Socio-economic investigation will establish that those states of affairs do obtain (facts about exploitation, class power, meaningful work and the like) and will lay out the historical possibilities (probabilities). When that account of the facts is secured, and set within a comprehensive and soundly reasoned theory about the possibilities of social change, a moral commitment, which the socialists' interlocutor over the question "Why socialism?" is very likely to share, should then carry the day intellectually for socialism. Claiming that Marxism views all moralizing, including all talk of justice, as ideological twaddle can only muddy the waters intellectually and humanly. It is bad theory and bad *praxis*.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Bertell Ollman, *Alienation: Marx's Conception of Man in Capitalist Society*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1976) and Ollman, "Marx's Vision of Communism: A Reconstruction", [1977] *Critique: A Journal of Soviet Studies and Socialist Theory* 5.

<sup>18</sup> I think that it is tolerably clear that Marx himself viewed moralizing and moral philosophy as an ideological activity and that he thought that preoccupation with it was, for the socialist, counter-productive. It is, in this dimension, enough for the socialist intellectual to try to help the working class to gain a better understanding of what is in their own collective self-interest and to recognize their own power. Allen Buchanan contends that Marx would even take talk of equal rights as "ideological nonsense and outdated verbal rubbish". In looking for what would be an effective revolutionary motivation, we will not, Marx believed, find it in the "individual's sense of justice or commitment to rights". As the contradictions of capitalism grow more intense, it will become increasingly evident to proletarians, where they see poverty and bad working conditions in the midst of over-abundance, that it is in their interest and in the interest of the vast majority of the people to overthrow capitalism. Principles of justice or moral principles of any kind are practically-speaking otiose. All

that is required by way of motivation is a firm sense of self-interest and class interest and a belief that they can, in a prolonged class struggle, win. The bourgeoisie in the French revolution needed a moral ideology to portray their own special interests as universal rights, but the proletariat, as the vast majority, do not need to portray their interests as a set of universal rights, for they are the interests of all but a tiny minority. Talk about justice, as distinct from talk about collective interests, will be divisive, for the concept of justice is much more problematic than the concept of collective interests. It is, quite possibly, an essentially contested concept. The concept of collective interests, by contrast, is more straightforward, though it is not as straightforward as many have taken it to be. But it is not likely to be essentially contested. There will be deep, and possible intractable, dispute, even among socialists, as to what justice is and that will tend, if arguments about justice are stressed in popular agitational literature, to confuse the working class and will tend to divert and dissipate their revolutionary activity.

I think that we should be cautious about making such general claims. The proletariat is not always the same everywhere. In North America at present it is surely asleep. Whether we should make a general claim like the one made in the previous paragraph may very well depend on the circumstances. However, where there is reasonable proletarian class consciousness — as in France or Italy — the above may well be true in terms of evoking and sustaining revolutionary activity, though even there it does not hurt to have a sense that what is in your own class-interest is right and just. However, whether socialists like it or not, such moral-talk will be in the air. A clear establishment of the moral viability of socialism will help in motivating intelligentsia into taking the standpoint of labour and it will provide, to the extent that these egalitarian moral claims can be seen to be justified, an important weapon in ideological battles with the bourgeoisie. To show the reasonableness and non-ideological nature of *such principles* of justice, if this can be shown, will strengthen the case for socialism in such ideological battles. This may well be important, given the bamboozlement of the working class. Moreover, it can and should be argued both that socialism is in the interests of the working class *and* that these principles of justice, embedded in socialism, are justified. There is no need at all to make a choice here and the separation of morality from questions concerning interests, particularly collective interest, should be viewed with suspicion.

It may very well be that the dispute between the socialist and the bourgeois is really over social science, over the correct account of society, and not over fundamental principles of justice. It may well be that the moral differences between them are rooted in differences in belief about what society is like, what it can be like, what human beings are like, what they can be like and about what our historical possibilities are.

How difficult it is to attain a proper understanding of what Marx's views are here can perhaps best be garnered from a study of Alan Wood, "Marx on Right and Justice: A Reply to Husami" (1979), 8 *Phil. and Pub. Affairs* 244, Wood, "The Marxian Critique of Justice" (1972), 1 *Phil. and Pub. Affairs* 244, Ziyad I. Husami, "Marx on Distributive Justice" (1978), 8 *Phil. and Pub. Affairs* 27 and, perhaps best of all, from a careful study and comparison of the at least *prima facie* conflicting accounts by Gary Young and Allen Buchanan in Gary Young, "Justice and Capitalist Production: Marx and Bourgeois Ideology" (1978), *Cdn. J. of Phil.* 421 and Allen Buchanan, "The Marxian Critique of Justice and Rights", *Cdn. J. of Phil.*, forthcoming.