

## COMING TO GRIPS WITH MARXIST ANTI-MORALISM

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. . . for most of the questions that need deciding, ethical considerations are multiple, complex, often cloudy, and mixed up with many others.

Radical disagreements about the basis of ethics is compatible with substantial agreement about what the important factors are in real life.

—Thomas Nagel

### I

I will articulate and defend a version of what has come to be called Marxist anti-moralism.<sup>1</sup> In particular I want here to elucidate, modify, and develop for my own purposes some arguments of Andrew Collier that (a) defend a Marxist conception of value-free (normatively neutral) social science and that (b) contend that there is no good reason to believe there is a distinctive set of fundamental socialist values that distinguishes socialists from others touched in some tolerably determinate way by modernity. There is no need, I shall argue, to go in search of some definitive socialist morality or moral theory to underpin the case for socialism. (I choose, as my point of departure, Andrew Collier's views, for his, to date, is the most sophisticated and nuanced statement of Marxist anti-moralism.)

These opening remarks are cryptic. In particular, my remarks about there being no need to believe in a distinctive set of socialist values are rather prone to mislead. They require, and they shall be given, a determinate reading, for read in one way the claim is false while read in another, more incisive way, such a claim is—or so I shall argue—true.

Collier does not deny, what is anyway perfectly evident, that Marx's work (*Capital* included) bristles with moral judgments, that Marx quite unequivocally condemns capitalism, that he was one of the great denouncers of all time, that he had through and through revolutionary commitments, that in his early work he engaged in a moral critique of capitalism and that he unflinchingly took the

standpoint of the oppressed. But that does not add up to the claim that Marx's mature critique of capitalism is fundamentally a moral critique or that there must be a systematic moral vision or systematic moral theory that underlies and underpins Marx's critique of capitalism.<sup>2</sup>

Collier takes the idea of *scientific socialism* seriously. He sees, rightly I believe, Marx and Engels as trying, in a systematic and sustained way, to provide the workers' movement with a science to use in their emancipatory struggles. Marx and Engels sought to provide a systematic empirical-cum-theoretical social science that would enable the working class and their allies to understand more clearly their situation and the workings of their society and with that understanding to have a powerful tool in their struggle for liberation from class society. But from the fact that Marx and Engels assumed the standpoint of the oppressed, it does not follow that the *content* of their social theory—their social science—is itself prescriptive or expressive of an ethical viewpoint.

First it is crucial to recognize that there can be empirical claims which are themselves normatively neutral but which still have moral import. That may sound like a mystifying having-it-both-ways. But I think when that is spelled out, it will be seen to be quite straightforward.

Marx not only spoke of the oppression of workers and of the oppressed, he also spoke in more technical terms of their exploitation. It will surely be said that "oppression" and "exploitation" are normative terms with an emotive and perlocutionary force. They surely are, Collier stresses, critical, non-neutral terms with an emotive force. But, Collier asks, in virtue of what do they get their *critical content*. He denies that it is merely a matter, or even principally a matter, of the emotive associations of the terms.<sup>3</sup> We do not, he calls to our attention, "condemn a community for exploiting its natural resources, a poet for exploiting the ambiguity of a word, or a card player for exploiting his opponent's weaknesses."<sup>4</sup> The term "exploitation" does not always in ordinary use have a negative emotive force. The term "exploitation," on Marx's account, has an objective technical sense "such that it would be possible, given enough factual information, to determine in any instance whether exploitation was going on, and to what degree."<sup>5</sup> Still the term will typically "have a pejorative perlocutionary force, because exploitation in this sense is contrary to the interests of the working class. . . ."<sup>6</sup> Indeed for someone who did not care about the fate of the working class the term "exploitation" would not in that linguistic environment have that force, though for the working class and their allies it surely would. Moreover, "substitute any other word for it, and that word will straightway acquire the same emotive connotations for a working class audience. The concept 'exploitation' is critical, not *in addition to* its cognitive function, but *by virtue of it*."<sup>7</sup> We should not see, Collier stresses, the class of statements with emotive/prescriptive perlocutionary force and the class of statements with objective illocutionary force as mutually exclusive. They are not.

If we look at some mundane non-political examples, this should become perfectly evident. If my doctor tells me I have colic, I will be quite differently affected than if he tells me I have cancer. Yet the two diagnoses can be equally objective and equally accurate. We should not confuse objectivity with neutrality. If we try to proceed scientifically in any domain, we will take it as a fundamental requirement of the very doing of science that we seek to make our scientific claims factually objective. Indeed to the extent they do not meet that requirement, they will fail as scientific claims. But the requirement that a science be factually objective, and the requirement that it can be neutral in its practical effect, may (and they often do) contradict each other. When a team of scientists reports their findings about the effects of smoking on lung cancer, their reports will typically have a rather strong emotive effect. To doctor them so that they would not have that effect would be to make them less objective, not more objective than they are with that action-guiding and emotion-evoking effect.

Collier firmly agrees with Max Weber that a scientist—though all sorts of values may have motivated his research—has an obligation to exclude value-judgments from the determinants of his findings. He must, if he is to remain true to his vocation, “bow before the objective facts however unwelcome.”<sup>8</sup> But, Collier goes on to add, “he has no obligation at all to so doctor his theories that they will have no emotive force or practical consequences; to do so would often be to falsify his findings.”<sup>9</sup> We should remember, as the short life of euphemisms attests, that the very facts themselves sometimes have an emotive force. Tell it like it is about starving in Ethiopia or about conditions of life generally in the Sahel and these very *facts* will have an emotive force. Indeed they will not only goad, they will probably also guide our actions.

To claim that the facts themselves can have such an action-guiding and attitude-evoking force is not to claim that we can derive an “ought” for an “is,” that, as Collier puts it, there is “a *logical* entailment of value-judgments by the facts.”<sup>10</sup> Collier, rightly I believe, is one with Hume, Moore, Popper, and Hare here.<sup>11</sup> Hume’s law holds. “It is,” as Collier puts it, “indisputable that the statement that the house is burning down does not logically entail the advice to get out of it; indisputable, but of little practical importance.”<sup>12</sup> Indicative factual propositions may give rational support to normative imperative propositions without entailing them. It is a mistake to believe, as many liberals do, as Weber did, and as even some Marxists do, that there are only *hypothetical* (means-end) imperatives (technical imperatives, if you will) of the form “If you want s, do y” and *categorical* imperatives telling you what you *must* do, your wants to the contrary notwithstanding. Science, on the standard view, concerns itself, with the former, and ethics with the latter, and they are such distinct domains that people could very well agree about what facts in the case are and still disagree about values, about what is the right thing to do.<sup>13</sup> Under the spell of such a

picture—a picture Jürgen Habermas refers to as a fact/value dualism—even the Marxist economist Rudolf Hilferding could believe that one could come, with perfect consistency, to accept the whole of Marxist science without the least commitment to socialism. And it no doubt is the case that Marxist science, if it has a proper value-free construction, does not *entail* any moral commitments, and thus does not entail taking the side of labor or siding with the proletariat in their class struggle with the bourgeoisie. But neither does the statement “Your house is on fire” entail “You should get out of it.” But in both cases the facts rationally support acting in a certain way.

Collier does well to remind us that Kant, moral autonomist that he was, divided the imperative map not only according to hypothetical imperatives and categorical imperatives, he has *assertoric* imperatives as well. An *assertoric* imperative is a conditional imperative whose antecedent may be asserted. Whenever everyone necessarily seeks something, as Kant thought everyone necessarily seeks happiness, the antecedent can be assumed without more ado, and we can simply assert the antecedent even though the imperative is not categorical.

Hilferding is right in seeing Marxist social science as normatively neutral. That is to say, it does not contain any non-eliminable moral imperatives or other similar imperatives.<sup>14</sup> He is also right in recognizing that such a science is of much more use to workers in their struggle for emancipation—in their freeing themselves from the yoke of capitalism—than are moralizing slogans or even systematic moral knowledge, even assuming, what indeed is certainly questionable, that there is such a thing.<sup>15</sup> But where Hilferding most essentially goes wrong is in his assumption that “Marxism contains two theories: a scientific account of the laws of motion of capitalism, which has no political consequences, and a moral theory that does.”<sup>16</sup> It is not, as Hilferding believes, “that Marxism criticizes capitalism in addition to providing knowledge of it,” *but that Marxism “criticizes it by providing such knowledge.”*<sup>17</sup> It is both desirable that it can work this way, and it is, as well, in fact the case that actions are guided and attitudes evoked and molded by a certain exacting statement of and a perspicuous representation of the facts. The facts themselves are not always cold facts devoid of perlocutionary force. The crucial criticisms of capitalism come in showing what it is really like and in showing what historically possible alternatives there are to it.

## II

Marxism has a political sociology which when properly construed is value-free, though it is, quite properly, often *not* stated in a normatively neutral vocabulary. But it does make empirical statements of fact embedded in a systematic analytical-empirical social theory which satisfies Weber’s methodological canons for what it is for something to be a scientific theory. A crucial bit of this

theory makes the following factual claims: (a) capitalism is unavoidably a system of class exploitation, (b) because of this, in such a society, there will be class struggle sometimes in a veiled form, sometimes in an open form, (c) in such struggles the workers will often be in a defensive struggle over their economic interests and (d) these struggles between classes, *i.e.* these class struggles, are not reconcilable within capitalist society. These propositions are indeed theoretically ramified empirical propositions, and they are, in certain respects, rather different than less theoretically ramified empirical propositions asserting simple empirical facts such as “Stalin had a moustache,” “There are more tanks stationed in West Germany than East Germany,” “Canada allows dual citizenship,” or “Cruise missiles were tested in Alberta.” By contrast, the above Marxist propositions are very theory-dependent propositions, but all the same, they are still empirical propositions and not moral imperatives, and their truth is determined by what the empirical facts are.

Whether they should be accepted or rejected does not depend on what we want or hope or what our moral commitments are, but on what the objective empirical facts are, however welcome or unwelcome they may turn out to be. What we could, and perhaps should, say is that when (a) what the facts are is not clear and (b) when what their most perspicuous representation is is not clear and (c) when it is not clear how to go about making what is at issue clear, then our hopes and moral commitments can, and indeed should, guide our hunches about lines of investigation and our theory acceptance until the factual situation is clarified. But when it is we must, if we would keep our moral and intellectual integrity, bow before the facts.

However, if the above factual assertions of Marxist theory are accepted, workers and their allies, finding themselves in a situation of class struggle in an attempt to achieve their liberation, will find such an empirical account of value in their struggles for liberation. They will, if Marxist theory is true, or approximately true, and they come to have some reasonable understanding of it, see better their situation. They will have a more adequate understanding of what oppresses them, and they will have a better idea how they can free themselves from the domination of their oppressors. Marxist empirical theory, if approximately true, gives them good reasons for engaging in revolutionary socialist politics. If it is true that exploitation and alienated labor cannot be ended within capitalist society and can be ended in a socialist society and that there will be more freedom in a socialist society than in a capitalist society, then workers taken as a group have good reasons for engaging in revolutionary struggles. It is not the take-it-or-leave-it thing that would go with technical hypothetical imperatives, which say, in effect to workers, “If you want it, go for it.” What is in the air are Kantian assertoric imperatives which say to the workers, as Collier puts it, “Given who you are, what you do, the interests and needs you have—

you have any sense, you will engage in the struggle for a socialist transformation of capitalist society.”<sup>18</sup> A value-free articulation of the facts gives a rational ground for people in a certain condition with certain needs and certain interests to act in a certain way.

If Collier’s argument is close to the mark, Max Weber and Charles Taylor, in spite of the fact that they are at odds, are both importantly right, though also importantly incomplete and misleading in their accounts of the place of value in social theory.<sup>19</sup> Weber is right in seeing that social science itself, where it is genuine social science, is free of moral imperatives and must, to remain true to its vocation, tell, or try to tell, it like it is in an objective empirical fashion. Taylor is right in denying that that leaves everyone, no matter what their situation, interests, and needs, free, as moral beings, to choose as they will what they are to do no matter what the facts are. If we are workers, and if Marxist value-free social theory is approximately correct, and we are rational and have a correct understanding of that theory, we will side with socialism in its struggle against capitalism.

However, as Collier nicely puts it, we are not thereby committing ourselves to a politics of *categorical* imperatives. It is not a matter of developing a normative ethical theory which tells people what they *ought* to want, or what, independently of their interests and needs and their own understanding of their interests and their needs, they categorically must do. We start with the existing class interests of workers and with an empirical account of their situation and an empirical-cum-theoretical account of what their objective possibilities are. The claims we are making here are claims which in a perfectly empirical fashion are either true or false.

We, operating with such empirical claims, try to work out—using our deliberative rationality, if you will—what workers and their allies should do if they are responding rationally to their situation, if their interests are what we take them to be, and if their situation and possibilities are what our social theory says they are. We do not need to tell them what their true interests or true needs must be.<sup>21</sup> There is no ground for any elitist or paternalistic proclaiming of “thou shalt” or “thou shalt not” from on high in some grand *a priori* manner or indeed in any manner.

### III

What has been called a Marxist anti-moralism or the rejection of a need for a Marxist ethic is a certain kind of generalization of the above line of argument. (I do not say it is the only generalization that can be made from such an argument. But it is a plausible one.) Collier puts it as follows:

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The fact that Marxist theory is reliant for its practical effects on the wants and the struggles of an already existing class, already engaged in class struggle, and that it transforms the aims of that class only by raising the level of its objective understanding of society, distinguishes it sharply from a moral theory or an ideal. It makes no claim to universality, addressing instead specific, objectively defined classes and groups. And it brings no new values, transforming the political practices of the oppressed, rather, by its new explanations of their oppression.<sup>22</sup>

Classical Marxism rejected the idea of constructing, *à la* Kant or Sidgwick, normative ethical theories. And they did not in some looser sense seek to articulate systems of ideals. They were instead proud of their freedom from ideals. They rejected utopian theorizing which started with postulated systems of ideals or with moral axioms instead of starting from where we are “with people’s existing desires and problems.”<sup>23</sup> Collier cites three classical texts to illustrate his point:

Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality (will) have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the now existing premise. (Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 1845, p. 49)

(the working class) have no ideals to realize, but to set free the elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant. (Marx, *The Civil War in France*, 1871)

And communism now no longer meant the concoction by means of the imagination of an ideal society as perfect as possible, but the understanding of the nature and conditions, and the general aims resulting therefrom, of the struggle waged by the proletariat. (Engels, *The History of the Communist League*, 1885)<sup>24</sup>

The ideals and moral commitments we have, and will continue to have, flow out of our concretely grounded need and interest structures, together with what we discover by critical and systematic empirical research.<sup>25</sup> This crucial sense, in which Collier argues that the classical Marxists did not, and that contemporary Marxists should not, base their case for socialism on values, helps fix his contrast of scientific socialism with utopian socialism, and it helps as well to reveal the rationale of his anti-moralism.

## IV

There are two further theses which are crucial, and we will turn now to a discussion of them. I shall discuss the first one now and the second in the next section.

What typically is at stake, Collier argues, in “arguments between different political tendencies is not a conflict of value judgments but conflicting explanatory hypotheses.”<sup>26</sup> Bourgeois ideology deflects our attention from that. Weber represented—as did Isaiah Berlin later—the conflict between competing political theories as a rationally intractable dispute between the warring gods, a deep moral conflict where competing or incommensurable arbitrary moral axioms were being appealed to and where no rational resolution of the conflict was possible. More generally, as Collier observes, it is most often the case that “liberal political theory is accompanied by a meta-theory about political arguments to the effect that they are ultimately about values.”<sup>27</sup>

Collier argues, powerfully I believe, that such a stress is an ideological distortion of the facts. In trying to locate the conflict between conservatives and liberals, between liberals and socialists, and between *laissez-faire* capitalists and social anarchists as ultimately disputes about values, liberals (Berlin and Popper are both paradigms here) find it necessary to construct values which they think might explain their opponents’ policies and fail to consider, or at least fail to consider adequately, areas of *factual* disagreement.<sup>28</sup> Socialists, by contrast with liberals, are thought of, by liberals, as giving so much weight to the collectivist values of equality, fraternity, and solidarity that they radically undervalue liberty. They fail to see, liberals say, how really vital it is to have a private sphere where people, where they are not harming others, can do their own thing free from interference by others. Socialists fail, it is claimed, with their collectivist obsessions, to see how being left alone to do what one wants, where one is not harming others, is essential for rational self-direction and that, in turn, is essential for living a meaningful life. Moreover, socialists are also portrayed, by not a few liberals and conservatives, as those who prefer a path of violence and intolerance to rational discussion, compromise, and peaceful reform. Socialists and liberals, liberals maintain, differ deeply over what fundamental values they are committed to.

Such a presentation of the case makes socialist “revolutionaries of any hue look like sick souls indeed—people who prefer violence to peaceful reform as a means of social amelioration.”<sup>29</sup> But when we look at the life and activities of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg, Bakunin, Mao, and Kropotkin, nothing like this emerges. There was, of course, a widespread belief that it was necessary, at least in most circumstances, to make a revolution to facilitate the transformation to socialism, and there was an unblinking recognition that that



revolution would, as a matter of empirical fact, involve violence. But there was no desire or liking or even casual acceptance of violence as something which was morally indifferent, let alone morally desirable because purificatory or something of that sort. That was more a value of the romantic right. What revolutionary socialists believed, and still do believe, is (a) that it is very unlikely that the capitalists will give up without a fight and (b) “that certain ends which capitalist societies have the material resources to realize, such as full employment, adequate housing and educational opportunities for all—ends which non-socialist parties also generally regard as desiderata—cannot *in fact* be achieved while capitalism remains with us.”<sup>30</sup> These are both empirical hypotheses and are argued for on empirical grounds in the socialist literature. They are empirically refutable, falsifiable as Popper would put it, but have “never been refuted by political events. . . .”<sup>31</sup> Given a commitment to human liberation, a commitment that is widely shared by non-socialists, socialist revolutionaries accept the violence of a socialist revolution—violence they seek to keep to a minimum—as a necessary evil to avoid still greater evil. But for them, as for other sane and humane people, there is neither indifference to violence nor love of violence.<sup>32</sup> Collier also illustrates his point by Lenin’s arguments about taking a parliamentary road to socialism. Lenin’s argument against taking such a road

is not based, as is often alleged, on impatience with parliamentary procedure, or contempt for reason, or love of violence, or disregard for the will of the majority. It is based on the claim that the structure of the bourgeois state is such that it can’t be used to implement socialism: a socialist majority in parliament would be impotent against the military and bureaucratic hierarchies. Once again, Lenin’s theory is argued, empirically refutable, and unrefuted. Many sincere socialists such as Allende who doubted it have paid a tragic price.<sup>33</sup>

We see here, by illustration, how very often political disputes of a very fundamental sort are at bottom empirical disputes: disputes about the facts and about what constitutes a perspicuous display of the facts in a good explanatory theory and about what is possible and what isn’t. They are not disputes about ultimate values, though they are often represented by liberal theorists as being disputes about ultimate values. But that very much looks like a bit of capitalist ideological apologetic.

Collier guards against an overgeneralization of his argument and points, as well, to some crucial features of it in the following key remarks:

I am not claiming that *all* political disputes are resolvable by reference to empirical facts, though I can’t imagine people with widely different political

views agreeing about the facts either; and I am certainly not claiming that it is always possible to arrive at an agreement by means of reason and evidence —no one who took seriously Marx's account of ideology and the class determinants of politics could think that. But I am claiming that differences about what is the case, and particularly about what is possible and compossible, are the main logical constituents of political disputes (*not* the main determinants of political opinions). Changing someone's values is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for changing their politics; changing their opinions about the way the world works is often both.<sup>34</sup>

Collier has a second argument for not basing the case for socialism on values. It is his argument for what he calls value elimination in the practice of social science.<sup>35</sup> Here he is in effect an intellectual comrade of Weber's though he does not relate his argument to Weber's arguments for a value-free social science.<sup>36</sup>

Collier is aware that many think, including many Marxists, that value-free restrictions in the social sciences are artificial and forced.<sup>37</sup> He wants to show that this belief is itself false and that being non-moralizing and non-normative is a feature of good scientific practice and that it is exemplified in the work of both Marx and Freud. The early work of Marx is indeed full of moralizing and metaphysical conceptions that, suggestive as they often are, are, all the same, replete with ill-defined and unclearly conceptualized notions.<sup>38</sup> (Consider, for example, his talk of human essence.) As Marx works toward *Capital*, his work becomes progressively less laden with such conceptions; and it also becomes more scientific. These things fit together like hand and glove. As his work becomes more and more scientific, there is a continued value-elimination. His mature work has a less direct humanistic appeal, but it attains a far greater scientific precision. "Productive labor" moves from a moral conception to an economic one with a determinate meaning in Marx's economic theory. A similar thing should be said for exploitation. Moreover, a socialist theory which never got beyond a utopian theory, utilizing a moral critique of capitalism, would never be a really critical instrument in working-class struggles. A moralizing economic theory which worked with the normative idea that capitalists flourish by paying less than fair value for labor would not provide the critical instrument that will aid us in transforming society, though it is a morally more appealing idea than Marx's conception of surplus value.<sup>39</sup> It is also crucial to realize that in socialist *praxis*, as in any other attempt to change the world, wishful thinking and mutual reinforcement of illusions are ready traps. What is crucial is to excise value judgments from one's empirical theory and to look critically at ill-founded factual beliefs which become articles of faith and as such come to have positive value. Marxists have not been immune to this. It is not just a disease of liberals, conservatives, and fascists. Collier cites as examples of this uncritical wishful

thinking “Marx’s belief in the spontaneous internationalism of the workers” and Lenin’s belief “in the inevitability of socialist victory. . . .”<sup>40</sup> What is necessary for any kind of adequate social science is a “strict scientific attention to facts, and deliberate elimination of values as determinants of factual beliefs. . . .”<sup>41</sup> Here the Marxist Collier makes common cause with Weber.

However, to return to a point we discussed earlier, value elimination from the social sciences should not be confused, as it frequently is, with a commitment to *neutral* descriptions. Sometimes the only way of telling something like it is—say, accurately describing the conditions of life in the shanty towns of the great cities of South America or the Manchester of Engels’s time or Black townships in South Africa—is to use descriptions which state facts which have an emotive force for people of normal sympathies *just in virtue of what they state*. A less emotive description would not be telling it like it is. But, whether emotive or not, the crucial thing is to have a social science which is descriptively accurate. That is to say, a science which accurately and comprehensively portrays the facts. But doing so “does not involve any attempt to couch one’s conclusions in emotively neutral terms.”<sup>42</sup> What the project of value elimination in the social sciences does commit us to is to having only those emotively charged terms in our account which get their emotive charge by virtue of their factual meaning. Where everything else is equal, the closer we come to this, the more adequate will be our social science.

This is important (a) because it squares with the internal norms of science, (b) because truth is just one of the things it is good to have, and (c) because having such a science is having an instrument which is of much more use to the working class in its struggle with capital than having a social science that gives us comforting myths or simply provides us with a moral vision.

## VI

There are Marxists who would agree that there should be an elimination of values and ideals from *social science*, including Marxist social science, but who still would argue that Marxism is not just a social science and a revolutionary doctrine but that it is also a world-view that gives voice to a distinctive set of social ideals and that indeed in Marxism there is a distinctive moral vision and underlying normative ethical theory. William Shaw is one such Marxist.<sup>43</sup> He argues, as does John McMurtry, that Marxism is not just a social science but is a distinctive world-view more comprehensive than any specific research program.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the argument will continue, when we consider what a world-view or *Weltanschauung* is, we will have to acknowledge that it involves a distinct set of ethical judgments and moral commitments. Indeed, Shaw goes on to claim, it is such normative concepts—the implicit moral vision—that attracts

many to socialism and Marxism in the first place. It is this, rather than its putative scientific credentials, which initially draws people to socialism and Marxism. Marxists, of course, believe that capitalism ought to be overthrown and that the long reign of exploitation of human beings by other human beings should finally be brought to an end. Marxists believe, as well, and connectedly, that socialism is preferable to capitalism because (among other reasons) it makes possible “a fuller development of the human personality,” it enhances, that is, human flourishing.<sup>45</sup> But these more specific moral judgments asserting the preferability of socialism are not derivable just from propositions asserting the value of the free development of all or the badness of human oppression and suffering. They are only derivable from such general moral propositions, when taken together with the acceptance of a Marxist empirical picture about how society works. It is this empirical picture, together with these very general moral premises, which gives us the judgment that socialism is preferable—many would add morally preferable—to capitalism.

Marxist anti-moralists such as Collier would respond that such very general moral judgments are not distinctively socialist, but are the values of many people as well who are not socialists. It is indeed true that the more specific value commitments that Shaw mentions are distinctively socialist, but they are values whose acceptability is dependent on accepting the socialist empirical picture of the world (Marxist social science). Some people who are committed, as much as are socialists, to the free development of all and to a resistance to human oppression and suffering do not accept the specifically socialist conclusions—the socialist assertoric imperatives—because they do not accept the relevant bits of the socialist empirical theory. That is the part that must be established to vindicate the distinctively socialist moral directives, directives that are grounded in the socialist empirical picture of the world. What we need, to vindicate such moral judgments, is not the elaboration of a Marxist ethical theory, or any ethical theory at all, but the establishment of the approximate truth of Marxist social theory. The more general moral propositions on which they are also based are moral propositions that are generally accepted by all those who accept the world-view inherited from the Enlightenment: the general value beliefs of the Enlightenment. What is actually distinctive is not the moral imperatives but the empirical conception of the world. To call this Marxist positivism is no more than name-calling.

Collier concedes in a postscript to his “Scientific Socialism and the Question of Socialist Values” that he takes it to be a deeply desirable “aim of an organization of society such that people would, so far as possible, control their own lives.”<sup>46</sup> This very general value judgment has a role not dissimilar to that of a general claim concerning the value of the free and full development of all. Both are expressions of fundamental moral ideals. But again we do not here have

values that are distinctive of socialism but we have values which would be widely shared by humanistically inclined people, including such paradigmatic liberals as J. S. Mill and Isaiah Berlin. The same is even more obviously true of the moral truism also assumed by socialism, that people would prefer to remove obstacles to their satisfaction. Again, to get to socialism, it is the socialist political sociology, a (when rationally reconstructed) purely value-free sociology, that carries the day, if indeed its claims are approximately true, rather than any distinctive socialist morality or distinctively Marxist values or distinctive scheduling of values. At least when we exclude racists and theocrats and other people without the broadly humanist values growing out of the Enlightenment, we are justified in claiming that the radical political differences and differences in moral commitment that divide socialists and non-socialists are not, as Weber or Berlin would have us believe, deep differences concerning ultimate values or ideals or moral principles, but are rather differences rooted in different empirical beliefs about what society is like and about what, as a matter of fact, is possible or impossible.<sup>47</sup>

## VII

C. J. Arthur and R. X. Ware have criticized Collier's account and presumably they would also object on the same or similar grounds to what I have pilfered from Collier.<sup>48</sup> What seems most deeply wrong to them is Collier's claim that there are no specifically socialist values. Arthur remarks that that claim flies in "the face of historical materialism which asserts the social specificity of values as well as the mode of production."<sup>49</sup> Every social formation has its distinctive moral ideology. With the coming in of capitalism and the waning of feudalism, the ideals of honor and service gradually lost their central role, and usury turned into thrift and making money work. And with the capitalist mode of production firmly in the saddle, we have in place the ideals of "citizen, not subject" and "'the individual and his rights' against the abnegation inherent in the traditional obligations to hierarchy."<sup>50</sup> It would, Arthur rightly avers, "be a poor sort of socialist revolution that did not give people a similarly new idea of themselves, their interests and their social relationships."<sup>51</sup> To abandon liberal welfare state capitalist conceptions for socialist ones is not just to come to have a new idea about how the economy works and what power relationships are like, but it involves as well an altered self-definition.

Ware's stress is slightly different. Ware believes there are very general "ideals embodied in classical Marxist thought." If his view is actually to succeed in conflicting with Collier's and my own, these ideals must, as well, be distinctive of it so that *only* socialists have these ideals. Indeed, Ware claims, Collier himself, inconsistently with his central thesis that there are no specifi-

cally socialist values, averts to, not unsurprisingly, the following traditional, though still unique, socialist goal: "Everyone is to have an equal share in the collective power over the resources of society."<sup>52</sup> This shows, Ware claims, that even Collier, against the thrust of his overall thesis about socialist values, in effect, realizes that there are some distinctive socialist values. What more generally we should realize, Ware gives us to understand, is that this is but one of several general ideals that are distinctive of socialism.

I would not deny that both Arthur and Ware make important points which deserve stressing on their own quite apart from any criticism of Collier and, as well, smoke out ambiguities in Collier's account. They make us see that we have made a mistake if we just say full stop and without qualification and explanation that there are no distinctively socialist values. We have, that is, uttered a proposition in the sociology of morals that is false. However, as I have been at pains to argue, what Collier should be taken to be claiming, and frequently does claim, is that between socialists and other Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment social theorists there are no ultimate disagreements in values that are not rooted in disagreements about what is the case or what can be the case. The distinctive socialist values or schedulings of values Arthur and Ware point to are derivative values. By that I mean that they are evaluative beliefs which are dependent on Marxist value-free social science such that, if that social science is accepted and some moral truisms are accepted as well—truisms shared by all Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thinkers—then these distinctive socialist values must also be accepted. But they are derivative values, values, that is, which are derivative from Marxist social theory—a social theory which, when rationally reconstructed (analytically cleaned up as it were), admits of value elimination and indeed requires value elimination. That is, in this respect, it conforms to Weberian methodological restrictions. But what we do not have is distinctive, non-derivative, socialist values which, along with the liberal and conservative counterparts, provide the materials for the ultimate moral disagreements so dear to the hearts of liberals. Liberals not infrequently tell us that such ultimate moral disagreements involve these different views of our social order: conservative, liberal, socialist. These different ideologies, on such an account, are thought to have different values or at least a different scheduling of values as ultimate values where their distinctive arrangement and ordering constitute the conflicting essential core of the distinctive world views of Marxists, conservatives, and liberals. Indeed, it is not atypical for liberals to characterize these conflicting moral perspectives as perspectives which are rationally non-adjudicable. These distinct moral perspectives, it is claimed, finally rest on diversely embedded and rationally irreconcilable, universal commitments.

Arthur, as we have seen, claims that Collier's account contradicts the historical materialist thesis of the specificity of values to a determinate mode of pro-

duction. I am not contesting that historical materialism does commit one to a belief in the specificity of values to a determinate mode of production, though I would want to give that thesis a certain reading.<sup>53</sup> But there is no need to go into that here. What is important here is first to concede that Collier did not state his thesis, or at least what I think should be his thesis, with sufficient care. But then we should go on to claim—and I think these are important upshots of a sympathetic reading of Collier's account—(1) that these socially specific values are derivative values—values, that is, which are what they are because of the mode of production which is dominant, (2) that the having of such values does not show that socialists, liberals, and conservatives, living during the epoch in which this mode of production is dominant, will have the ultimate normative disagreements so prized by liberal theorists and, (3) that the fact that there is a scheme of values distinctive of these various modes of production does not show that there are no basic values in these schemes which are not mode-of-production specific.

Arthur's observations about historical materialism in reality, if correct, would tend to confirm, and partially explain, Collier's claim that there are between liberals, conservatives, and socialists (Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment people) no ultimate moral disagreements. There are indeed, as Arthur points out, sharp ideological struggles over values, but these struggles will be rooted in evaluative differences which in turn are rooted in different perceptions about what is and is not possible. The sharp ideological struggles, which are an intellectual expression of class struggle, are not ultimate value conflicts, and they are not rooted in such conflicts.

Indeed, Arthur is right in believing that people socialized in capitalist social systems will tend not to think it fair to socialize the property of individuals and corporations without compensation. While for Marxists this is a tactical and pragmatic matter, there is on their part no general belief that capitalists ought to be compensated when their productive property is confiscated. Indeed, they will think just the opposite. That is to say, they will believe that there is certainly not anything here that is owed to the capitalists, though they will believe that in certain circumstances it is prudent to pay compensation.

This moral disagreement, however, will be rooted in various complex disagreements about the facts, such as disagreements about their respective roles in the production process. Socialists see the wage laborer as the principal source of productive wealth and thus do not see the confiscation of capitalist productive property as theft. Conservatives, by contrast, would see the inheritance of productive property as a vital incentive to the continued development of the productive forces. It is such disagreements, rather than disagreements over ultimate values, that divide socialists and conservatives.

Arthur rightly points out that every social formation has its own normative or

moral ideology. And he also is justified in saying that it “would be a poor sort of socialist revolution that did not give people . . . a new idea of themselves, their interests and their social relationships.”<sup>54</sup> Surely, this is right, and Collier must be mistaken in trying to undermine *any* socialist motivation to talk about socialist values. However, that does not touch the vital point in Collier’s analysis that I have been concerned to elucidate and defend, namely, that it is a mistake to accept the traditional liberal claim that fundamental political disagreements are rooted in fundamental, and perhaps unarguable, differences over ultimate values. The liberal claim is, that is, that when political argument is really pushed it turns into an unarguable difference over ultimate values: a disagreement either over what ones there are or over what weight to give them. By contrast, the moral conceptions of ourselves that Arthur talks about are conceptions of ourselves which are tied to a distinctive conception of what human possibilities there are, what human beings are like and can become and to a distinctive conception of what our situation is like. If socialists can convince liberals or conservatives that what socialists think the situation is like is indeed what the situation is like and that what they think are possibilities are genuine possibilities, then it is not implausible to believe that many non-socialists can be relied on to come, after some taking of the matter to heart, to have that rather concrete socialist scheduling of values, to become, that is, at least closet socialists. (In reality it cannot be quite that simple for we must also allow for self-deception, failure of nerve, and just a plain coddling up to the reigning powers. Prudent people in positions of security are likely to have some idea of what side their bread is buttered on. They will not, to switch the metaphor, bite the hand that feeds them. This is surely just as true of intellectuals as anyone else. Still, with such a theoretical view of things, a trend would be started.)

Three things—the picture of the facts, the conception of the possibilities, and the scheduling of values—go together, given the acceptance of some moral truisms, truisms shared by socialists, liberals, and conservatives alike. Individuals should indeed search for self-definition but in the search for this they need to be much more concerned about what the human possibilities are, given a clear understanding of what the world is like, than with an understanding of the exact structure of our ultimate moral evaluations. Where non-derivative values come in, in such practical disputes, moral truisms will suffice.

I can, to give a final example, illustrate this from Ware’s case. It is a distinctive goal of socialism that everyone is to have an equal share in the collective power over the resources of society. This is, of course, a claim that needs clarification and a more determinate reading, but it is, that notwithstanding, plainly a distinctive socialist ideal. But again, it is a derivative one. Socialists, like liberals and libertarians, and indeed, like almost everybody else, believe that autonomy is a good thing. That, in this situation, is the relevant moral truism. But



to have autonomy, one must in important domains have control over one's life. But, socialists believe, one's control over one's life, and hence one's autonomy, will be significantly diminished if one does not have some reasonable control over one's working conditions, control over what one produces, how one does it and under what conditions, and over what is done with what one produces. In contemporary conditions there can be little purely individual control, but in workers' collectives there can be a democratically ordered control. Without such control, socialists believe, the autonomy of workers will be severely limited. But under capitalism, where one sells one's labor power for a wage, one cannot have that control and that autonomy. All these claims are empirical claims, and they could be false in the standard ways in which empirical claims can be false. But it is because of these beliefs that socialists believe that everyone is to have an equal share in the collective power over the resources of society.<sup>55</sup> Without such control, they argue, autonomy will be curtailed. But this clearly shows that value judgment is a derivative moral judgment, dependent on the Marxist picture of what the world is like and what it can be.

The above is not only a fraternal dispute between Marxists—though it is a fraternal dispute between Marxists—for if one goes the general way Collier goes and I go, and we are justified in going that way, then one will not be faced with the spectre of Weber's warring gods.<sup>56</sup> That is to say, one will have no reason to believe that, with the ideological struggles between conservatism, liberalism, and socialism, one will just be faced with rationally irreconcilable fundamental moral disagreements. With ideological mystifications dispelled, the actual disagreements, deep as they are, and intellectually and morally taxing as they are, will be revealed to be largely empirical or empirical-cum-theoretical disagreements. This being so, there is some hope, if the tides of ideology do not run too high, that patient empirical examination and careful analysis will yield results: will count towards establishing one set of claims and against another. (I do not mean to suggest this can replace militant class struggle. It cannot, and it is through such struggle that proletarian emancipation and ultimately human emancipation will be achieved. But intellectuals, whether participants in the struggle or observers, will be able to see that it is not just the clash of irreconcilable interests, but that right and indeed reason may be more on one side than another.)

Such an analysis will also have good side effects. Marxists and other socialists will not have to go in search of an ethical theory to underpin their socialism. And that is a good thing for going in search of a foundational ethical theory may well be like going in search of the holy grail.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, if we really are activists in search of a grounding ethical theory—something which is more than an ideological instrument—not any old ethical theory will do. But if we start talking of a correct ethical theory or a set of true moral norms we have some-

thing, to put it minimally, which is very problematic indeed. Nobody, not even Henry Sidgwick or John Rawls, has found the grail. Fortunately, if the line of argument I have developed is approximately true, we do not have to do any such searching. All we need is a really good empirical social theory and a few moral truisms on which there is extensive reflective consensus. Moral philosophy, at least as traditionally conceived, simply drops out.

While socialism, like any other way of organizing social life, does indeed make moral claims, they are uncontentious *as normative claims*. Marx claims that socialism is an objective improvement over capitalism. But the basis for that claim is an empirical claim. The claim is that, as a way of organizing society, socialism "better fulfills human wants, aims and purposes, and it spells an end to poverty, degradation, exploitation, and the crippling of the human personality."<sup>58</sup> There are indeed general moral assumptions at work here, such as it is a good thing to have human wants and aims fulfilled and that living in poverty and degradation is bad. But these are uncontroversial moral truisms. They do not divide socialists and non-socialists who have at all been touched by the ideals of the Enlightenment. The claim here by Marxists is that socialism, given the present development of the productive forces, can deliver these moral goods far better than can capitalism. The truth of that claim, if indeed it is true, rests on a correct reading of the empirical facts. It does not depend on having any special set of distinctively socialist values or having to construct a Marxist moral theory, whatever that might be.<sup>59</sup>

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## FOOTNOTES

- 1 The key statements of Marxist anti-moralism are the following: Andrew Collier, "Scientific Socialism and the Question of Socialist Value" in Kai Nielsen and Steven Patten (editors), *Marx and Morality* (Guelph, ON: Canadian Association for Publishing in Philosophy, 1981), pp. 121-154; Andrew Collier, "Truth and Practice," *Radical Philosophy*, No. 5 (1973); Andrew Collier, "The Production of Moral Ideology," *Radical Philosophy*, No. 9 (1974); Andrew Collier, "Positive Values," *The Aristotelian Society* Supplementary Vol. LVII (1983); Andrew Collier, "Marxism and Ethics," *Radical Philosophy*, No. 36 (1984); Anthony Skillen, "Marxism and Morality," *Radical Philosophy*, No. 8 (1974); Anthony Skillen, *Ruling Illusions* (Sussex, England: Harvester Press, 1977); and Anthony Skillen, "Workers' Interests and the Strains in Marxian Anti-Moralism," in *Marx and Morality*. The following are critical responses to Marxist anti-moralism: Peter Binns, "Anti-Moralism," *Radical Philosophy*, No. 9 (1974); Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, "Moral Relations, Political Economy and Class Struggle," *Radical Philosophy*, No. 12 (1975); and Kai Nielsen, "Morality Marxism and the Ideological Functions of Morality," *The Occasional Review*, Issue 3/9 (Autumn 1978). See also my "Intro-

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- duction" to *Marx and Morality*, pp. 1-17; Richard Norman, *The Moral Philosophers*, (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 173-201; and Christopher Leafloor, *The Poverty of Moral Philosophy*, (M.A. Thesis: The University of Calgary, 1982).
- 2 Contrast Collier's view and Marxist anti-moralism generally with the views of Douglas Kellner and John McMurtry who believe that Marx provides us, even in his mature writings, with a moral critique of capitalism. Douglas Kellner, "Marxism, Morality and Ideology" and John McMurtry "Is There a Marxist Personal Morality?" both in *Marx and Morality*; and John McMurtry, *The Structure of Marx's World-View* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978).
  - 3 Collier, "Scientific Socialism and the Question of Socialist Values," pp. 135-36.
  - 4 *Ibid.*
  - 5 *Ibid.*
  - 6 *Ibid.*
  - 7 *Ibid.*
  - 8 *Ibid.*, pp. 136-7. See Max Weber's famous lecture "Science as a Vocation" in H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (editors), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 120-156.
  - 9 Collier, "Scientific Socialism and the Question of Socialist Values," p. 136.
  - 10 *Ibid.*
  - 11 Kai Nielsen, "On Deriving an Ought from an Is: A Retrospective Look," *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. XXXII, No. 127 (March 1979), pp. 487-514.
  - 12 Collier, "Scientific Socialism and the Question of Socialist Values," p. 136.
  - 13 This was Wittgenstein's view in his "Lecture on Ethics" and when he wrote the *Tractatus*. It is also the view of such vintage positivist meta-ethicists as A. J. Ayer, Charles Stevenson, Axel Hägerström, and R. M. Hare.
  - 14 Perhaps the statement in the text should be qualified by "at least as rationally reconstructed." There may be some elements in Marx's writings which would resist such a value elimination, but I think a sound case could be made for claiming that nothing in a thoroughly untendentious reading of what is *canonical* social science in Marx and Marxism would resist such a value elimination. An analytical philosopher carrying out the modest under-laborer's task could present a tidier version of what Marx had neither the time nor the inclination to provide while remaining completely faithful to Marx's conception of things and while realizing that rational reconstruction was a very modest achievement utterly parasitical on a far greater achievement. For important comments on and illustrations of what such a rational reconstruction would come to, see G. A. Cohen, *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1978), pp. ix-x; G. A. Cohen, "Reply to Four Critics," *Analyse & Kritik*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (December 1983), pp. 191-222; G. A. Cohen "Reconsidering Historical Materialism," in *Marxism, Nomos XXIV*, J. Roland Pennock and John W. Chapman (editors), (New York, NY: New York University Press, 1983), pp. 227-251; and Allen W. Wood, *Karl Marx* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).
  - 15 David S. Levin, "The Moral Relativism of Marxism," *The Philosophical Forum*, Vol. XV, No. 3 (Spring 1984), pp. 249-278.
  - 16 Collier, *op. cit.*, p. 138.
  - 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 138-9. See also his "Positive Values," *The Aristotelian Society Supplementary Vol. LVII* (1983), pp. 37-54.
  - 18 There still remain questions of individual motivation given the danger to workers if they revolt or seriously resist the capitalist order in other ways. For some important discussions of that general issue, see Allen E. Buchanan, *Marx and Justice* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982),

- pp. 86-102; Nancy Holmstrom, "Rationality and Revolution," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. XIII, No. 3 (September 1983), pp. 305-326; and William H. Shaw, "Marxism, Revolution and Rationality," in T. Ball and J. Farr (editors), *After Marx* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 12-35.
- 19 Charles Taylor, "Neutrality in Political Science" in *The Philosophy of Social Explanation*, Alan Ryan (editor), (London, England: Oxford University Press, 1973), and Charles Taylor, "Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," *The Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. XXV, No. 1 (September 1971). See also Kai Nielsen, "Social Science and American Foreign Policy" in *Philosophy, Morality and International Affairs*, V. Held, S. Morgenbesser and T. Nagel (editors), (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1974), Kai Nielsen, "The Myth of Neutrality," *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. X, No. 1 (October 1982), pp. 27-42; and Shabbir Akhtar, *A Defense of Value-Free Social Inquiry*, (M.A. Thesis: The University of Calgary, 1982).
- 20 Collier, "Scientific Socialism and the Question of Socialist Values," p. 139.
- 21 *Ibid.*, pp. 151-2.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 140. See also David S. Levin, *op. cit.*, pp. 249-278.
- 23 Collier, "Scientific Socialism and the Question of Socialist Values," p. 139.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 140.
- 25 Collier, "Positive Values," pp. 37-53.
- 26 Collier, "Scientific Socialism and the Question of Socialist Values," p. 140.
- 27 *Ibid.*, pp. 141-2. Isaiah Berlin's writings are paradigmatic here. See, most particularly, his *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1969) and his *Fathers and Children* (Oxford, England: The Clarendon Press, 1972).
- 28 Collier, "Scientific Socialism and the Question of Socialist Values," p. 142.
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 *Ibid.*
- 32 *Ibid.*
- 33 *Ibid.*, pp. 145-6.
- 34 *Ibid.*, p. 145.
- 35 *Ibid.*, p. 146.
- 36 Max Weber, *Methodology of the Social Sciences*, trans. and ed. by E. A. Shils and H. A. Finch, (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1949), pp. 49-112.
- 37 Lucien Goldman, *The Human Sciences and Philosophy*, (London, England: Jonathan Cope Limited, 1969), Hayden V. White and Robert Anchor, translators.
- 38 As Althusser thought, there was an epistemological break, so Collier believes that after 1844 there was an axiological break in Marx's work. Collier, "Scientific Socialism and the Question of Socialist Values," pp. 131-2.
- 39 Though how much in talking of exploitation we should use that scientific conception is a moot question. See G. A. Cohen, "The Labour Theory of Value and the Concept of Exploitation," in Marshall Cohen, Thomas Nagel, and Thomas Scanlon (editors), *Marx, Justice and History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 135-157; Nancy Holstrom, "Marx and Cohen on Exploitation and the Labour Theory of Value," *Inquiry*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (September 1983), pp. 287-307; G. A. Cohen, "More on Exploitation and the Labour Theory of Value," *Inquiry*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (September 1983), pp. 309-331; John Weeks, *Capital and Exploitation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981); John Roemer, *A General Theory of Exploitation and Class* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); and John Roemer "New Directions in the Marxian Theory of Exploitation and Class," *Politics and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (1982), pp. 253-288.
- 40 Collier, "Scientific Socialism and the Question of Socialist Values," p. 147.
- 41 *Ibid.*

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- 42 *Ibid.*, pp. 147-8.
- 43 William Shaw, "Marxism and Moral Objectivity," in *Marx and Morality*, pp. 19-44.
- 44 John McMurtry, *The Structure of Marx's World View*.
- 45 Carol C. Gould, *Marx's Social Ontology* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978) and George G. Brenkert, *Marx's Ethics of Freedom* (London, England: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983). A substantially similar view, more in the anti-moralist vein, is developed by David S. Levin, *op. cit.*, and the Tucker-Wood thesis is also relevant here. See here *Marx, Justice and History*, pp. 3-134, and *Marx and Morality*, pp. 7-12 (including footnotes) and 221-268.
- 46 Collier, "Scientific Socialism and the Question of Socialist Values," p. 151.
- 47 *Ibid.*, pp. 150-1.
- 48 C. J. Arthur, "Analytical Marxism," *Radical Philosophy*, no. 33 (Spring 1983), pp. 39-41, and R. X. Ware "Review of Issues in Marxist Philosophy IV", *Canadian Philosophical Reviews*, Vol. III, No. 6 (December 1983), pp. 296-7.
- 49 Arthur, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
- 50 *Ibid.*
- 51 *Ibid.*
- 52 Ware, *op. cit.*
- 53 This is well explained in David S. Levin's "The Moral Relativism of Marxism," pp. 249-279. But he would draw very different inferences from it than I would.
- 54 Arthur, *op. cit.*, p. 40.
- 55 Kai Nielsen, *Equality and Liberty: A Defense of Radical Egalitarianism*, (Totawa, NJ: Rowman and Allanheld, 1985), and Richard Norman, "Does Equality Destroy Liberty?" in Keith Graham, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 83-109.
- 56 That there can be no rationally irresolvable disputes over ultimate values would be a very difficult thing to prove. (It is hard to prove a negative existential statement. If I assert that there are no purple swans, it is very difficult to be confident that some place in the universe there are no such creatures.) What can be reasonably done is to take important putative cases of fundamental moral disagreements and show with respect to them that they do not saddle us with ultimate, rationally irresolvable disagreements over what is to be done—those sort of disagreements that reason can do nothing to resolve. Collier has gone some way toward doing this and I have tried to build on that. Here is another place where burden of proof arguments become vital.
- 57 Kai Nielsen, "On Needing a Moral Theory: Rationality, Considered Judgements and the Grounding of Morality," *Metaphilosophy*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (April 1982), pp. 97-117, and Kai Nielsen, "On Finding One's Feet in Philosophy: From Wittgenstein to Marx," *Metaphilosophy*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (January, 1985), pp. 1-12. See also William H. Shaw, "How to Do Ethics: A Question of Method," *Metaphilosophy*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (April 1982), pp. 117-130.
- 58 Andrew Collier, "Scientific Socialism and the Question of Socialist Value," pp. 142-3.
- 59 The familiar and ideologically convenient liberal picture is that what really most fundamentally divides socialists and Marxists is disagreements over ultimate values. I have resisted this picture and claimed it is disagreements about what *is* the case and what *can* be the case that most fundamentally divide liberals and Marxists and that it is an ideologically comforting and useful myth for liberals to believe that what most fundamentally is at issue between liberals and socialists are deep and rationally irreconcilable differences over values. It might be said, alternatively, that it is neither, for it is the having of different *ideologies* that set them apart and, though an ideology is not exactly a matter of moral concepts, nonetheless ideologies for those who are captured by them, have a strong tendency to block the effectiveness of empirical information. I do not disagree at all with any of this and indeed the scattered remarks about ideology in the text square with that, but to add here a systematic discussion of ideology, as important as the discussion is in its own right, would, I believe, tend to muddy the waters. Where someone, including

most members of a class, is held captive by an ideology, he is in thrall to a cluster of only partially true beliefs (misleadingly arranged), false beliefs, or incoherent (pseudo-factual) beliefs, or more typically a mix of all three. This package distorts his own understanding of his life, his understanding of human possibilities and with this, and through this false conception of the world and its possibilities, it distorts in various ways (sometimes subtly and sometimes not so subtly) his values or at least his understanding of how they can be realized or what would come or could come of realizing them. But having an ideology is having something which is at least putatively factual. It is having, to put it oversimply, a system of social beliefs, typically illusory beliefs, reflecting, typically in a disguised way, the interests of a determinate class. What may set the liberal and the socialist apart is their differing ideologies but then what is setting them apart—indeed putting them in conflict—is what they take to be differing factual understandings as to what the world (particularly the social world) is like and can become. But this is exactly the point I sought to make. This also relates, given the power and the pervasiveness of ideology, to how we ascertain whether a given social description accurately represents. It is commonplace by now to say that ideology does very often lead us down the garden path here. The cookbooks on social descriptions are very pervasive, *e.g.* the United States government and the American mass media on Central America. So how do we, facing that cultural situation, recognize when a social description is an accurate representation? How do we choose between two descriptions of So-weto? For practical reasons in some cases and for theoretical reasons in others, it is very hard, sometimes, though not always, to get such things straight, but, even given the usual things about the theory-ladenness of descriptions, still we can and should in the standard way seek empirical confirmation or infirmation of candidate social descriptions and seek to get them into a consistent and coherent whole that fits best with the available observations on their (in most instances) most straightforward construals. When an account is well confirmed and we, as well, have a reasonable sense of what could count against it, and it, better than similarly situated alternatives, puts the phenomena together into a coherent whole, then we have some reason, fallibilistic and defeasible, to believe that such social descriptions are telling it like it is or at least approaching that. We can reasonably believe that while thoroughly agreeing with Richard Rorty that there is and can be nothing like nature's own language which, if we would only at long last discover it, would tell us, once and for all, how things really are. See my "Social Science and American Foreign Policy," and my "Cultural Pessimism and the Setting Aside of Marxism," *Analyse & Kritik*, Vol. 7 (1985), pp. 75-100.