

Marxism and Sticking with *the*, or *a*, Moral Point of View

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I

Richard Miller, in his *Analyzing Marx*, argues powerfully that Marx rejects in political domains appealing to *the* moral point of view or *a* moral point of view. Miller is aware, of course, that Marx evaluates institutions according to how they affect the well-being of humans. But he is also aware that it is “potentially misleading . . . to say that Marx recommends social arrangements according to their tendency to enhance people’s lives” (Miller 56). What we need to see, for that not to be misleading, Miller argues, is that “there are diverse standards of enhancement, leading to different choices of social arrangements, possessed by actual rational people. None is uniquely reasonable, just as none is uniquely fair” (Miller 56).

Perhaps we can best see what is at issue here by contrasting for a moment George Brenkert and Richard Miller on Marx and freedom. A study of Brenkert’s *Marx’s Ethics of Freedom* seems to cut against what Miller says as I just quoted above. Brenkert sees as an underlying but implicit standard in Marx a commitment to the promotion of freedom. However, Miller counters by claiming that freedom has different aspects and while “every aspect of freedom is *an* intrinsic good for all humans, or at least all sane ones,” different people and different cultures “rank these aspects differently, and arrangements favoring the rankings of some violate those of others” (Miller 57). Caring about freedom is to care about

it being the case that people have the resources to realize their goals and to be self-directed. But people who care about freedom also care about noninterference and some will care about the zest of competition. This leads Miller to the following observation:

Some care about the latter aspects enormously, so much so that their goal of freedom may be violated when the goal of others is fulfilled. If the moral point of view is to be a perspective from which such differences can be judged, there must be a neutral way of deciding among these rankings. I have argued, and Brenkert does not argue to the contrary, that this neutral method does not exist for Marx (Miller 57).

I find this unpersuasive. Unless there is so little unity to our concept of freedom that the aspects of freedom have so little in common that there is nothing determinate there to be maximized, we can, and indeed should, speak of maximizing freedom. We can in such a circumstance appeal to something like John Rawls's equal liberty principle. Miller has not shown that the concept is so utterly lacking in unity. To be free is to have control over your life and that requires that you not be subject to external or internal impediments and this requires on your part rationality and the opportunity to do what you want, subject, if the equal liberty principle is being observed, to the condition that your doing what you want doesn't violate others, subject to the same constraints, being able to do likewise. The rationale of the equal liberty principle is that everyone, as far as this is possible, is to live in a world (to have conditions) that make for freedom. But the freedom of some (here a few) must not be attained at the expense of the many. The autonomy we may rightly exercise is an autonomy constrained by the right, where this is possible, of everyone to exercise a similar autonomy. This 'is possible' is constrained by conditions of the following type. If we have a world of four people and, given the circumstances and the interests and the desires

of the four people, not all four can do what they want (where in no instance does doing what they want involve oppressing the others and the like), it is *ceteris paribus* better for it to be the case that three can and one can't than one can and three can't where their interests are the same. Better the frustration of one person's interests and thus a lessening of that person's freedom than the frustration of three person's interests and freedom. (I am assuming here that they are all in a similar situation and belong to the same class and I am also remaining mindful of the fact that someone's being constrained does not mean she is oppressed.) It is not only that there is likely to be a greater aggregate utility here but that so acting is fairer.

For those who stress non-interference, and have a taste for competition as well, they, like everyone else, if they take non-interference to be an intrinsic good, must universalize (if non-interference is good for me, it is good for you).¹ The universalization of the intrinsic value of non-interference plus some not too arcane socio-economic facts yields a recognition that unrestrained competition will give rise to an undermining of the freedom of many. Libertarians should take note of that. There must be some interference in some aspects of the lives of some in order to make stably possible a greater non-interference in the lives of many others. This should not be problematic. The interference with a particular person in order to enhance the domain of freedom is something which must be acknowledged and seen to be justified. Given an acknowledgement that non-interference and self-direction are intrinsic goods, the acknowledgement of *universalizability*, the recognition that we are all alike in wanting non-interference and the recognition that most of us have a rudimentary sense of fairness, we should also recognize, if we reflect on those things, that sometimes with

the interference with a particular person there will be less interference with people all around and we will also see that in such circumstances so interfering is morally appropriate.

I do not see that the moral point of view requires neutrality here. Indeed (*pace* Miller), I do not see that it requires neutrality, period, though it does require impartiality. But (a) impartiality is not violated here and (b) how could a person with any sense of fairness at all knock impartiality or interfering with one person to prevent interference with the lives of many?

II

I agree with Miller that to confine one's principled reflection about what is to be done to concern for ultimate goals or even for the discernment of the best future society "is to be the sort of utopian Marx condemns as writing recipes for the kitchens of the future . . ." (Miller 58). There should be instead, as we have learned from John Dewey, a continued concern with both means and ends and their interrelations (Miller 57). The ends we should strive to realize should not be settled independently of a concern for the means we must use to achieve them and the feasibility of their achievement and in turn what means we take to be acceptable depends on the worth of the ends in view. In moral deliberation, ends and means should be taken as a package. We should indeed distinguish between them but, except for special purposes, we should not isolate them and examine them in isolation. In moral deliberation they should be treated as essentially interdependent.

However, all this could and I believe should be readily accepted without believing morality needs rejecting. It could also be accepted without giving up the notion that societies can be ranked, that there are general norms or that there are a cluster of fundamental goods

(among them freedom) that are absolutely fundamental to the design of a truly human society (a morally exemplary society). To have some idea of the more ultimate desiderata of our strivings is not to be committed to the kind of utopianism that Marx criticized or indeed to any kind of repressive moralism or moralism of any kind. One indeed could share John Anderson's contempt—a contempt derived from Marx—for that (Anderson 202-374).

What we need is not the rejection of morality or its replacement but the rejection of a form of moral deliberation *à la* Kant and Sidgwick which focuses on general principles, engages in ideal ethical theory and does not attend to, or only attends to in the most superficial way, the complicated business of empirical instrumentalities. Miller rightly claims that there should be utilized a method of practical deliberation which moves back and forth from “the general to the specific and back to the revision of the general” (Miller 59).² If we are going to revitalize moral philosophy (assuming such activities have a point) we need to learn to do that in a subtle empirically informed way. That so proceeding is “utterly foreign to the academic theory of choice and decision” shows something about the poverty of that standard theory (Miller 59). That Marx had, and rightly, no desire to revitalize moral theory is not to the point here. He had better things to do. But in a rational reconstruction of Marx it is possible to elicit views from Marx here, views that are implicit in his theory and which, at least for philosophical purposes, might be valuable (Cohen 1978, ix-x; Cohen 1983, 195-222).

Miller's Marx—his reconstruction of Marx—tells us that Marx is committed to a catalog of general goods: freedom, reciprocity, well-being, the avoidance of suffering and the like. Still, such a “catalog of general valuables, together with acceptance of his empirical

arguments, would not, Miller claims, make a particular answer to the question ‘What social arrangements are best at present?’ rationally compelling for all” (Miller 60).

Stated just like that, and taken strictly, I would agree with that, my above criticisms of Marx to the contrary notwithstanding; we do not know enough now to make such strong claims about what detailed social arrangements are best. What I have tried to argue is that it does not follow from that that, starting from the catalog of general valuables (that motley, as Miller on occasion calls it) and getting a firm grasp of the relevant empirical facts, perspicuously displayed and explained by Marxian social theory, it would not be possible in some humanly central circumstances to get reasonably determinate and morally defensible answers to key social-moral questions. For there to be such a justification there would have to be an extensive understanding of Marxist social theory. It is not just any consensus that I am talking about but a consensus of people starting from those considered judgments (Miller’s motley of general goods) and that knowledge of the facts filtered through that theoretical understanding. Whether Marxist social theory itself is a good approximation to a true account of social reality is itself (*pace* Popper) *not* a matter of morals or moral theory or (for that matter) of ideology. If it is such an approximation and if you have people in the above circumstances, I believe it is reasonable to expect a reflective consensus on key matters of social morality. This would also, if I have got the empirical considerations roughly right, be a rational, responsible and morally justified consensus. Moral claims require consensus for their justification, but not all *consensi* are morally justified. It is here where the method of wide reflective equilibrium seems so vital for an understanding of the methodology of the justification of moral beliefs (Nielsen 1985, 13-41; Nielsen 1982, 109-18).

III

Am I taking, as appropriate *sans phrase* and *a fortiori* appropriate for Marxism, a too instrumental standard? Would Marx go along with such thoroughly instrumental reasoning? Miller thinks not (60-61). What Miller takes Marx to be doing instead is “recommending his conception of the workers’ movement both as something that effectively creates socialism and as something with positive value in the context of capitalism” (Miller 61).

However, to get a balanced appraisal here we need to keep the fact firmly in mind that Marx did not believe that the goal of socialism excused everything. He plainly would not have justified or excused, say, “five generations of enormous avoidable suffering, with widespread intentional brutality and self-brutalization” (Miller 61). He would not have accepted such an extreme and coarse instrumentalism. He would not accept, just like that, without careful qualification any condition setting the dictum that “losses in the intermediate future are outweighed by the long term gains” (Miller 61).³ Yet he will clearly accept extensive self-sacrifice and some unintentional bad effects. In making a socialist revolution—something that Marx plainly does not shrink from—suffering will occur. That Marx, Lenin and Trotsky all accepted. It will, though not of conceptual necessity, involve violence and disruption and the socialist revolutionaries must not pull back from taking the “necessary measures for intimidating the mass of the bourgeoisie” (Marx 318). But this will not for a moment justify excesses. What the workers’ movement is justified in doing is taking the means necessary for protecting their revolution, though what the means necessary are will vary from case to case. A revolution is not a tea party.

Marx, as Miller points out, believes that their revolutionary process will enhance “the lives of participants on balance, because of the way in which solidarity and self-respect are heightened and broadened” (Miller 62). Miller then remarks that this:

...overall assessment is not dictated by some general ranking of goods and evils. It is a response to the actual complexities of the case, like the choice of socialism as I described it. In short, the workers’ movement is to be promoted not just because of the society, or the general goods it produces, but on account of its internal and specific value” (Miller 62-63).

I agree that one should make the assessments one makes in response to the actual complexities of the case. That is a necessary part of the method of going from general to specific to general again. But it is also evident to me, unless our actions are simply to be arbitrary, that we must, fallible and tentative though it not infrequently will be, make some ranking of what will be the expected levels of well-being, equality, autonomy, satisfaction and the like. We are not going to have anything very sure here. But that does not mean we can have no reasonable beliefs here at all. Having them is very necessary.

Humanly speaking, the difficult thing is that here under conditions of very considerable uncertainty we have to not infrequently chance our arms very momentously about the future when the whole matter is fraught with peril and insecurity. What makes it even nastier is that there is no sitting on the sidelines and making no choice. (Sartre is right about the impossibility of this in such contexts.) You can take the standpoint of labor or you can side against labor and, in one way or another, do your bit to try to undermine or preserve the capitalist order. But if you sit it out you are in effect doing your bit, though hardly an active bit, to preserve that order. This is all too easy to rationalize ourselves out of taking

action. (This is particularly evident for those of us who are intellectuals. But we should have no Hamlets at the barricades.)

IV

The above issues, broadly speaking, were methodological issues. I now want to raise a substantive issue. To the anguish of the Left, the proletariat in North America, Western Europe and Japan (key industrialized societies) remains a sleeping giant.⁴ The character traits that Marx described and advocated seem not to have become character traits that characterize the contemporary proletariat in such societies. There is not—across the broad mass of the proletariat—that keen sense of solidarity, a class consciousness and clan identity, reciprocity, hatred of oppression, truculence before and contempt for the oppressors that Marx, Trotsky and Brecht so admired and thought would increasingly come to characterize the proletariat; there is not, unfortunately, that resoluteness—the sense that if they stick together in firm resistance to the class enemy and in extensive cooperation between themselves that they can and will win. There is, instead, cynicism, apathy and passivity, a suspicion of all things political, a tendency to blame big government or the Russians and not the bosses for their woes, a belief that socialism adds up to totalitarian state control and, not infrequently, there is as well racism and sexism standing in the way of worker solidarity. There is among workers a pervasive sense that nothing can really be done. With the passivity and sense of futility that goes with that attitude, there is linked to it either the belief that the way we have it now is about the best we can get of a rotten deal or the belief that it is a rotten deal, period, which cannot be overcome. The belief that that is just the way things are and always have been and always will be.

I hope that I am overstating the extent of a defeatism and passivity of workers in the last half of the 20th Century and the first third of the 21st Century. Workers are giving up, generally believing that they are not getting a square deal and that things for them and their children are not fair and indeed are getting worse. However, even if I have in some respects overstated the case, it is the case that in the societies enumerated above we do not have a proletarian class that is militant and that has the character traits that Marx deemed essential for militant socialist struggle. The industrial workers are diminishing and those that are left are less militant. (I do not mean that it is equally bad everywhere. Italian, Brazilian and Greek workers are more militant than American or English Canadian workers.) There seems in the advanced industrial societies to be little in the way of solidarity or a sense of reciprocity or of a class consciousness that would provide a secular psychological basis for militancy and extensive resistance to capitalist class domination.

A sense of things being unjust is not a sufficient motivating force to get people to act given the dangers and how much they have to lose in the society if they chance their arm for the possibility of an uncertain future. It is perhaps the in effect 'genius' of welfare states such as Norway and Sweden, and *ersatz* welfare states such as the United States and Canada once were, that workers now have (or had before neo-liberalism became hegemonic) a stake in the world they live in in a way that was not true during Marx's time.⁵ Where workers have a home, a car, a paid vacation, typically a pension, health insurance and the like, they are unlikely to be revolutionary. Still, life for workers, even under welfare capitalism, is becoming increasingly difficult. Life is pretty grubby, even with the welfare floors but they do have some things their parents or at least their grandparents did not and they see—looking beyond their societies—that there is a world out there in which what they take for

amenities cannot at all routinely be taken for amenities (compare a worker in Denmark with a worker in Paraguay) and those workers in welfare states are understandably worried that any serious departure from the way—including the perceived unfair way—in which things are actually ordered might lead to their losing of what they do have. It is hardly surprising that people will in such circumstances hold on to nurse for fear of finding something worse. The very social structures that Miller points to do not have a chance to build up in such circumstances. Still, it is clearly better to be a worker in Sweden than Saudi Arabia. But the rollback of the welfare state has made things worse everywhere.

The passivity and a grudging acceptance of things as being the best we (that is, most of us) can get in an imperfect world is powerfully, though indirectly, reinforced through the mass media. It comes out crudely in more or less veiled talk of the 'evil empire' but it functions more subtly in driving home a picture of all the failures of 'existing socialisms': the image of drab bureaucratic social orders where the worker has no say concerning his condition and is even significantly worse off than the workers under capitalism. This is part of workers' consciousness, particularly in North America. In the past this was even fueled by a fear on the part of workers of a communist takeover—'Nicaragua today; tomorrow the Western Hemisphere'—and a fear that communism would enslave them and destroy everything that is dear to them.

This is a familiar story well stamped in by the propaganda of our culture industry. But it does seem to give us reason for being skeptical about whether the kind of motivational structures that Marx speaks of are going to obtain in contemporary capitalist societies. It is understandable—or so at least many come to believe—that the development of the contemporary proletariat leaves little reason to believe that there is in their condition (a

condition partly induced by the propaganda mechanisms of their societies) firm motivational mechanisms which will propel people to struggle for socialism, though, as neo-liberalism rolls along repeatedly rolling things back, things get harder and harder.

V

Miller might respond by arguing, as I have above, that we get a broadening of the scope of the argument in a way that he did not intend. He wanted to start from a problematic where, generally speaking, workers do think that socialism is a good thing and where they believe that it is something that can be obtained. But in the world Miller assumes they also realize that fighting for socialism is a risky business. While it is in their collective interests to struggle for it, and it is not infrequently even seen by them to be in their collective interests, it very well might *not* be in their individual interests to do so. There is the free rider. Socialist solidarity does not come easily and it can be knocked out and paralyzed in various ways by fear. Indeed, individual interests often very likely come to an undermining of collective interests. Miller does not ask the question the Frankfurt School, with its deep pessimism about the proletariat, so persistently asks. He asks instead the more limited question: what could motivate a worker who was also rational to struggle for socialism under such conditions? My above remarks, however much they are to the point about present proletarian apathy, hardly, it could well be argued, speak to Miller's consideration. Where workers do have firm beliefs the motivational structures still will emerge in the way Miller describes and they will be neither self-interested ones nor, Miller has it, moral motives at work here. For Miller's problem we require a situation where workers quite unequivocally see socialism to be a good thing but are also fully aware of the risks for them

in struggling for it. My description of the sleeping proletariat is of a proletariat who has no such conception of socialism. They know that under the present system they are getting screwed but they have no conviction about anything else being much better and they are full of fears about a changed world.

Perhaps we could get at what is at issue if we proceed in the following way. Suppose proletarians (Western proletarians) came to change their views about socialism. Suppose they came to no longer hold the stereotyped Cold War picture of socialism/communism but came to see it as a democratic thing in which workers would finally come to have control over their own fate in a world in which everyone way, will be or is a worker. Suppose they came to believe that such a world for them and for others would contain both more freedom and more abundance. Would such people not develop motivational structures that would lead them to risk their arm for socialism? That is the problem that Miller seeks to get us to face. I guess what remains, if my depressing picture of the proletariat is near to the mark, is the disheartening belief that Miller has stated his problem in a social vacuum, and that we have very little reason to believe that workers in the developed capitalist societies are any time soon going to come to have that picture of the desirability of socialism. But having that picture of socialism is a necessary condition for Miller's motivational problem to arise.

Perhaps things, after all, are not that bleak. Perhaps this is too much a view from North America. The following scenario seems to me a possible one; one that might in time come to obtain. Workers presently see that they do not get fair treatment from the capitalist system. (They may not see it as the capitalist system but just as the system of things under which they live and are poorly treated.) They at first make mild reformist justice-based requests for redress but the changes that are forthcoming are cosmetic. While this is going

on, actually existing socialisms become more credible. They deliver better economically and they gradually cease being barbaric and autocratic. More democratic control actually flows to the workers. (That is, they come closer to being what socialism is supposed to be.) It, under such a circumstance, becomes increasingly difficult for the capitalist consciousness industry to whip up hatred and fear of communism. Socialism also becomes increasingly an attractive alternative.

However, the workers' reformist requests are rebuffed or otherwise deflected in ways in which an increasingly wary workforce comes to see are designed to protect the power and privileges of a wealthy few. This makes the workers increasingly bitter and frustrated but they also see that what gains—welfare type gains—they have made in the past have been as a result of their cooperation as a class and their resoluteness in opposing capitalist interests.

Here we have emerging quite naturally the socio-psychological basis that Miller speaks of for the growth of solidarity, reciprocity, resoluteness and truculence in the face of the bosses. As the working class makes some advances but also suffers some defeats, it, in this very struggle, comes eventually to hate the oppressing class and the class system under which they live as they see the capitalists as the self-interested source and blocker of their attaining justice and a better, fuller life. Frustration with capitalist intransigence increases militancy. With greater militancy goes greater brutality from the police and armed services of the capitalist state and with that grows ever greater hatred of oppression and, where they see other workers united with them (resulting from a reciprocity and solidarity developed earlier), this will in turn lead to even greater militancy and resoluteness with a firm sense of class consciousness developing. That is to say, they will come to see each other as comrades

and the capitalists as class enemies and there will also be an awareness of their own strength. We will, at last, have produced proletarians who are socialist men and women.

So, starting from where we are, we can see how the psychological mechanisms Miller speaks of could come into place. This is, of course, only a possible scenario. It may not turn out to be the actual scenario; things might not turn out that way. Skeptics will, of course, say it is another Marxist fairytale and a product of wish fulfillment. Well, perhaps. Workers may continue to feel very powerless. And then again, perhaps not. At a minimum, have we not shown that if Marxist theory is in the main correct we can explain, against Allen Buchanan's criticism, how revolutionary motivation can arise and be stably sustained (Buchanan 86-102)?

VI

Marx surely had a Promethean urge—an urge that remained with him all his life—to transform the world into a genuinely human dwelling place where human beings could and would flourish. His hatred of the bourgeois order rested on his awareness that it was that order which now stands as the central obstacle to making what by now is a genuine empirical possibility into a reality. Marxists with varying degrees of commitment have followed Marx here.

Linked with this Prometheanism—and indeed as a part of it—are the themes of moral heroism and the heroic virtue of committed revolutionaries. These themes are plainly present in some of Marx's writings. His remarks about Spartacus, Müntzer and above all about the militants of the Paris Commune call attention to this. But here (*pace* Miller) he was

not talking of non-moral motivation but of moral motivation and commitment. There was a struggle here for a more decent and more humane social order,

Miller rightly stresses that this was a deep commitment of Marx's and while the heroic revolutionaries of whom Marx spoke stood for much else they did stand resolutely for those values. But it is passing strange to call them non-moral values, as both Richard Miller and Allen Wood do (Wood 123-56). There is something fishy about drawing a line between morality and decency or of speaking of a commitment which was humane but rejected morality. Miller's efforts to the contrary notwithstanding, there is a genuine conceptual incongruity in speaking of a 'human rejection of morality'. Marx's concerns, as portrayed by Miller, about caring, love, reciprocity, humaneness, if they do not constitute a morality constitute an important fragment of one. It is only by some arbitrary stipulation that 'morality' is so used that those concerns constitute the non-moral concerns of someone rejecting morality and replacing it with a set of humane beliefs or attitudes that are non-moral. Marx—and Miller stresses just that—sees, as going along with the development of capitalism and explicable in its terms, a growth in the proletariat of a commitment of self-sacrificing concern for others. It could, of course, be denied as an empirical fact that such a growth has occurred, but it seems to me that that denial is in fact quite mistaken.⁶ If we are looking over whole epochs, it is quite clear that such a growth has occurred; we are less ethnocentric than we once were and in some ways less racist and sexist. The values of the Enlightenment have dug deep. To deny that there has been such a growth of moral commitment is to fly in the face of the sociological facts about moral behavior.

VII

What I think has gone wrong here is that Richard Miller, like his colleague Allen Wood, is operating with too narrow a concept of morality.⁷ Miller's account is not as narrow as Wood's but it is still too narrow. To be reasoning morally, according to Miller, is to be reasoning in accordance with norms of equality, norms of unrestricted generality and norms of universal rationality. Given his reading of these conceptions, a person who reasons morally and does not reject morality must be so impartially motivated that he has an altruistic equal concern for all. He takes equal concern for all as a defining feature of morality. Armed with that, Miller shows that at least in certain ways Marxist revolutionaries cannot and should not have such an attitude of equal concern for all and, consistently with his conception of what a morality is, he concludes that people committed to Marxism should reject morality (Miller 15-97).

This, however, is too strong a claim to make for anything that could count as a morality. 'Morality' should be treated as being more like Wittgenstein treats 'game'. It should be treated, that is, as not having such determinate essential characteristics. We should expect certain determinate features generally to go with a morality but we should beware of the claim that they always go with morality so that we have with them something that constitutes a part of the essence of morality. We should, if we want an empirically adequate account of morality, avoid talking about and conceptualizing things in this way.

I think that very early on Miller in effect shows some awareness that there is something problematical here when he remarks that ". . . my main interest is to present plausible arguments for a radical departure from the moral point of view, *at least as*

philosophers have conceived it" (Miller 16, italics mine). But that last qualifying phrase takes the iconoclastic sting out of Miller's remarks and makes them much less interesting. (Remember Austin's quip about philosophers: first they say it and then they take it all back.) What Miller shows is that if we develop, like Kant or Sidgwick, a morality of supreme moral principles—the sort of morality Marx was rejecting, at least for class divided societies—that in class divided societies we have good grounds for rejecting such a conception of morality. Still, much of the basis for such a rejection of morality is itself moral.

This is not the idiom Miller uses but the above is what he in effect shows. The virtues he sees as necessary virtues for class conscious proletarians are themselves, at least in a Greek sense, moral virtues. Because he insists on an overly narrow conception of morality, Miller is faced with trying to explain away the paradox of a 'humane rejection of morality' and the paradox of Marx rejecting morality. While Marx was no Gandhi, he was no Smerdyakov either. In construing what a morality could be—what can count as a morality—Miller has been fed a one-sided diet and a side effect of that is to obscure from us what Marx adds to morality and to a nuanced understanding of our moral life more tied to an understanding of the social realities of class, oppression, the development of the productive forces and the broadening of human productive power that goes with that development. What Miller impressively shows but misleadingly describes as a rejection and replacement of morality is, I believe, better understood as a conception of what a sociality morality would come to. What he gives us is a better conception of our morality set in clear contrast with theirs.⁸ (Here I, of course, speak from the inside as a socialist and not in the more neutral idiom of philosophy.)

I do not want to be misunderstood. I do not claim that we have unearthed an implicit moral *theory* in Marx or shown that Marxism requires moral foundations or that historical idealism is true and we can change the world by clearly and with force moralizing at it or anything at all like that.⁹ What I think we have shown instead is that behind Marx's Promethean urge to transform the world and his powerful hatred of the capitalist order, mixed with his recognition of its sometimes necessity, is a powerful moral vision molded by a hard and astute understanding of the world: an understanding that sees both its seamy underside and its revolutionary potential, where Marx never lets his firm understanding of the former turn his compassionate understanding into cynicism.

VIII

Let me finally turn this back to the narrower question of revolutionary motivation. Miller's Marx sees the socialist revolutionary as developing character traits of resoluteness, truculence, solidarity, reciprocity and a deep hatred of oppression. But *part* of the mechanics of that is in coming to see that the way they are being treated is bloody unfair. Surely many workers, and indeed others as well, see that they are not getting a fair deal and that things for them and for their children are not fair. They are exploited where this, in the extraction of surplus value, comes to treating them as means only.¹⁰ They sell their labor as a commodity and the buyer not unreasonably tries, given the logic of capitalism, to get it as cheap as he effectively and profitably can. A considerable part of a worker's hatred of capitalism comes from her seeing it as an exploitative system in which she and her children and her spouse are ground down and treated as expendable commodities where the capitalists can profitably get away with doing it. If she/he rejects the or a moral point of

view, seeing such talk of fairness and unfairness as being class relative, confused ideological notions (ideological twaddle), *some* of the steam may be taken out of her/his indignation at or contempt for their oppressors, their hatred of the capitalism order and their resolution to join with their comrades to fight that order. And perhaps they will lose a verbal edge in their disputes with capitalists in a world in which part of the class struggle is an ideological struggle, part of a practice is a theoretical practice. But even so, conceptions of unfairness and exploitiveness seem to me to be generally useful and intellectually sustainable in moral argument. They still sting. They need not be wheels that turn no machinery in the fight for socialism.¹¹ Seeing moral responses, ours as well as the capitalists', to be often ideologically infected *may* weaken our responses. But not necessarily so or justifiably so. It may instead strengthen them and not unreasonably so. Don't expect non-contingency here or elsewhere.

Notes

¹ I am letting it stand here but it is not entirely clear that non-interference is an *intrinsic* good.

² This seems very much like the appeal (utilized by Rawls, Daniels and Nielsen) to considered judgments in wide reflective equilibrium.

³ But where is the stopping place here? Presumably, he would accept some sacrifices. It may be mistaken in such a domain to expect any fixed answer to that. When exactly is it correct to say a person is bald? We have clear cases on either side but no sharp criteria for when people are bald. But we get on alright in practice for all of that. Indeed, we would not want a sharper criterion. Can we sharpen, in some non-arbitrary way, our criteria about when sacrifices are justified? Do we need to? These questions are no meant to be rhetorical.

⁴ The Frankfurt School in particular stressed this. See the discussion of this by Tom Bottomore, *The Frankfurt School*, 33-49.

⁵ See the discussion of the *ersatz* welfare state in the United States in Andrew Hacker, "'Welfare': The Future of an Illusion," 3-43. See also Robert Kuttner, *The Economic Illusion: False Choices between Property and Social Justice* and Neil Gilbert, *Capitalism and the Welfare State: Dilemmas of Social Benevolence*.

⁶ For a novel that powerfully shows this, see Ousmane Sembane, *God's Bits of Wood*.

⁷ This comes out in the passages cited by Allen Wood on pages 123-56 of his *Karl Marx* and in his articles reprinted in Marshall Cohen, et al., eds., *Marx, Justice and History* and in the critical response to them in the same volume. See also G. A. Cohen's review of *Karl Marx* in *Mind*.

⁸ Leon Trotsky does this in a powerful way in a neglected essay, *Their Morals and Ours: Marxist versus Liberal Views of Morality*.

⁹ A clear recognition of the weakness of historical materials is vital here. See Miller 12-15, 108-09, 117-22 and 142-49.

¹⁰ See Andrew Levine, *Arguing for Socialism*, 65-77.

¹¹ I have argued for this in my *Equality and Liberty: A Defense of Egalitarianism*. Andrew Levine also argues for such a conclusion in a sustained and powerful way in his *Arguing for Socialism*.

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