

or could have foreseen. If he had had such foresight, he might have espoused a markedly different, and perhaps more pessimistic, philosophy of history.

FURTHER READING

- Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, chaps. 26–33, in (1977).
 Marx, *The Class Struggles in France*, and *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in (1974c).
 Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, in Marx (1974b).
 Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, pt. 1, in Marx and Engels (5/1976).
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| Ball and Farr (1984). | Fleischer (1973). |
| Berlin (1969). | Miller (1984). |
| Cohen (1978). | Shaw (1978). |

6 Moral philosophy: The critique of capitalism and the problem of ideology

POINTS OF CONTACT BETWEEN MARXISM AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

Marxism has made two major contributions to recent moral philosophy. The first has been to stimulate a deep and wide-ranging discussion of the moral status of capitalism, provoked by the attempt to determine whether the Marxian critique of capitalism is a moral critique and, if so, on what moral ideal the critique is based. The second has been to force moral philosophers to confront the problem of ideology. Before sketching out the shape of these contributions and the lessons they bring, let us briefly consider what it is about Marxism and about moral philosophy that makes each subject to the concerns of the other.

First let us look at Marxism, which aims to be a scientific theory of social systems. Although Marx devoted the major portion of his writings to the analysis of one type of social system – capitalism – he tried to develop a science of history, an explanation of how societies arise, persist, and decline. And Marx predicted that capitalism's day would end with a revolution that would supplant it with communism. But Marxism is more than observation, analysis, and prediction. Marx was no neutral observer, no scholarly wallflower. His allegiance was to the working masses whose efforts wring from nature the conditions necessary for the survival and flourishing of every society, and he matched his written work with political activism. Moreover, Marx's partisanship is inextricable from his theoretical writings. He sees capitalism as *exploitative*, a term that suggests moral condemnation, and in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels endorse the revolution that is to replace capitalism with com-

munism: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries, unite!" (Marx, 1974b: 98).

Marxism is an "engaged science," a theory that invites partisan political practice. This is not to say – as some Marxists and non-Marxists have thought – that Marxism starts with a moral rejection of capitalism and then theorizes about capitalism in order to support that rejection. Such a procedure is worse than intellectually dishonest; it is self-destructive. One cannot choose one's theory of how the world works in order to support one's preexisting moral beliefs about what should be done. That would be like a doctor deciding that a patient has a certain disease because it requires the treatment that the doctor prefers to administer. If we care about people enough to care about doing the right thing for them, then we must first find out what their real situation is before we can propose any course of action, be it revolution or nose drops. And Marxism is no exception to this. It tries to be objective science and then, in light of its findings, to promote those actions that will serve the working masses.

Marxism's practical and partisan nature is what brings it into contact with moral philosophy. First of all, moral philosophy is needed to determine whether the Marxian condemnation of capitalism is a moral condemnation. Sometimes (as with the term *exploitation*, already referred to) Marx's language strongly suggests moral condemnation, whereas other times Marx suggests that morality is irrelevant or worse (a veiled defense of the status quo). Does Marxism condemn capitalism because of a moral principle in terms of which capitalism could be held to be evil from a disinterested standpoint, or does the condemnation simply reflect concern for the self-interest of the workers? This question is of more than theoretical interest. If the condemnation of capitalism is moral condemnation, then we can expect that many who are privileged in capitalism (better-off workers as well as comfortable intellectuals) may be moved to work against it. If the condemnation is not based on a moral principle, however, but only on the interests of the workers, then it invites everyone to protect his or her own interests. And few people will be bad enough off to find it in their interests to risk what they have, in a violent revolution, based on a speculative future that they may not live to see.

Moreover, if it turns out that Marxism does base its practical

proposals on a moral principle, then moral philosophy will be needed to determine whether the principle is appropriate, the condemnation sound, and the practical implications validly drawn. And for this we shall have to know what sort of moral ideal the principle represents. Does Marxism condemn capitalism because it is unjust and call for communism because it is just, or does capitalism fail to reach and communism embody some moral ideal that is, so to speak, "beyond justice"?

Consider now how moral philosophy is vulnerable to the challenge of Marxism. Moral philosophy is the study of the logic and the foundations of moral principles. By *moral principles*, I mean propositions about what is morally right or wrong (to do) or morally good or bad (to bring about). (As the parenthetical phrases hint, *right* or *wrong* are normally used in regard to actions and *good* or *bad* in regard to outcomes. I shall, however, for simplicity's sake, generally use the positive terms interchangeably, and likewise for the negative ones.) "Thou shalt not kill," "do unto others as you would have others do unto you," "avoid harm," and "promote human happiness" are common examples of moral principles. But it remains to say what it is about such principles that makes them moral. Because that is what moral philosophers struggle at length to do and about which they continue to disagree, I shall not pretend to complete the job here. I shall instead limit myself to identifying two features of moral claims that are relevant to the link between moral philosophy and Marxism. We are helped by the fact that morality is something that everyone generally understands, even if he or she cannot define it.

If you think that you should not lie because lying is morally wrong, then you must normally think that you should not lie even if you will benefit from lying and even if you can get away with it. Appeals to morality are different, then, from appeals to self-interest. In fact, appeals to morality are generally thought to appeal, so to speak, *over the head* of self-interest. It is far from clear how this works, as people are generally inclined to pursue their own interests (in health or wealth or whatever else makes them happy). Nonetheless, people do seem to respond to moral claims frequently enough in ways that frustrate or sacrifice their interests. Somehow morality seems to strike at our conceptions of ourselves. There is something deeply wrong with being immoral; it seems to imply a kind of failure at being human – a failure that is different from, say, failing to

achieve some goal like losing weight or winning popularity. Somehow being immoral seems to mean that one is less worthy of respect or love, less worthy even of *self-respect* or *self-love*. Accordingly, morality is (or at least can often be) a powerful motivator, inspiring people to put aside or even sacrifice their own self-interest in the name of doing what is right.

But morality could not make a claim on us that overrides our own self-interest if it simply represented the self-interest of someone else, or even of some other group. For example, if you found out that someone was urging you to tell the truth only because he or she stood to benefit from information that he or she could thereby get from you, that would subvert the moral nature of the claim. If you learned that "Thou shalt not steal" was only a slogan promoted by store owners to reduce their losses from shoplifting, it would affect you no differently than would anything else that store owners did to increase their profit margins. Your own self-interest has as much claim as anyone else's. If you are required to sacrifice your own self-interest (say, by not stealing when you could get away with it), it must be for some better reason than simply to serve someone else's self-interest (by increasing his or her profits). For this reason, though they are voiced by individuals and though they may have the effect of serving some interests, moral principles must be disinterested – that is, they must be held to be required for reasons other than simply to serve some particular interest. When they represent or veil self-interest, they become something other than – perhaps even the opposite of – moral.

Suffice it to say, then, that morality is a powerful motivator capable of moving people to sacrifice their own interests and that a condition of its power is its disinterested nature. This is what makes moral philosophy susceptible to the challenge of Marxism. Marxian theory analyzes societies by focusing on their economic systems, based on the fundamental materialist insight that human beings are animals who cannot do much of anything unless they can assure themselves of a steady diet, a bit of clothing, and shelter. However, Marx understood that societies were more complicated than this. Crucial to Marxian theory is the notion that noneconomic social practices contribute to promoting and defending the existing economic arrangements. Among these supportive practices are those (education, religion, child rearing, and so on) that promote certain beliefs in the population. And among these beliefs are moral beliefs.

Marxism recognizes the enormous power of morality as a motivator and suggests that that power is normally harnessed to the protection of existing social and economic arrangements. Rather than disinterested ideals, moral principles are ideological: They bestow sanctity on the prevailing economic system ("Thou shalt not steal") and condition people against using violence to change that system ("Thou shalt not kill"). According to this view, the apparent disinterestedness of moral principles only hides the fact that they serve the interests of some at the expense of others, and this enables the principles to work all the more effectively. Because morality becomes something nonmoral – if not downright immoral – when it turns out not to be disinterested, it is a challenge that moral philosophers cannot ignore.

Marxism challenges moral philosophy to reflect on the asserted disinterestedness of moral principles, and moral philosophy challenges Marxism to determine whether – and if so, how – its practical commitments are moral commitments. There is an obvious tension between these two challenges. If moral principles turn out not to be disinterested, then they will lose their distinctively moral nature. But then this will apply to the moral principles that might underwrite the Marxian practical commitments (see Bottomore et al., 1983: 341–2). If Marxism is right in holding that moral principles reflect particular interests, that will disqualify it from claiming that capitalism is morally wrong. If Marxism is wrong in holding that moral principles reflect interests, then moral principles will have an independence that leaves open the question of whether capitalism is morally wrong even if the Marxian scientific analysis of capitalism is basically correct. We shall see that this tension places novel theoretical demands on both Marxism and moral philosophy. Consequently, after considering the problem of the moral status of the Marxian critique of capitalism and the problem of the ideological status of morality, I shall close this chapter by pointing out some ways in which neither Marxism nor moral philosophy can ever be quite the same after each has faced the challenge of the other.

MORALITY AND THE MARXIAN CRITIQUE OF CAPITALISM

Much recent discussion by Marxist moral philosophers has focused on determining whether Marx thought that the transformation of

capitalism into communism was a good thing on moral grounds. And if so, did Marx think that the appropriate moral grounds were those of justice or of some other moral ideal? Now, when we try to figure out what Marx thought, we must recognize that Marx's own written testimony is our only evidence. Marx could be mistaken about what he thought or about how best to characterize it, and indeed, this is precisely G. A. Cohen's wise and wily conclusion: "At least sometimes, *Marx mistakenly thought that Marx did not believe that capitalism was unjust*, because he was confused about justice" (Cohen, 1983b: 444; italics in original). I shall say more about this intriguing assertion later. For the present, let us turn to a series of questions that must be answered.

Before we can evaluate a Marxian moral critique of capitalism, we must determine whether that critique is rightly understood as moral. This question itself comes in two stages. First, we must ask whether Marxism entails a normative critique, and if it does, we must ask whether the norm appealed to is a distinctively moral one. The first of these questions is answered negatively by those who think that Marxism is simply a science of history that attempts to predict the necessary and inevitable breakdown of capitalism and its replacement, via revolution, by communism (or, more generally, first by socialism to be followed eventually by communism). If this is what Marxism is, then norms, moral or other, are irrelevant, and Marx's penchant for inserting them into his writing must be discounted as intemperateness. That Marx may have approved of the changes he took to be necessary is an interesting fact for Marx's biographers or Marx trivia fans, but truly beside the point.

This interpretation of Marxism comports with such pronouncements of Marx's and Engels's as "The communists do not preach morality at all" (Marx and Engels, 5/1976: 247), as well as Marx's and Engels's criticisms of contemporary socialists who urged the adoption of socialism because of its moral superiority to capitalism. Marx and Engels called such socialists utopian and distinguished it from their own, which they called *scientific*, because it tried to show the necessity of socialism as the outcome of actual tendencies of capitalism (Engels, 1967: 185–225). However, this is not a very satisfactory interpretation of Marxism for the following reasons.

First, if the replacement of capitalism by communism is a necessary event, there seems no point in anyone's lending a hand to the

development, as such participation is likely to be risky and the outcome is inevitable anyway. But Marx himself felt moved to engage in political activity in support of the working class, and so he must have felt that things were not as inevitable as this account would suggest. And of course, Marx was only the first Marxist to engage in political activism. Large numbers of Marxists subsequently followed suit and now regularly view political activism as a natural extension of their theoretical views. Such practical activity makes sense only (1) if the replacement of capitalism by socialism depends in some measure on human actions and thus on the choices that move human beings to act and (2) if there are some norms that imply the appropriateness of action designed to help bring about the demise of capitalism and the institution of communism. Moreover, the events following Marx's death – in particular, the failure of revolutions in the advanced capitalist nations, where Marx most expected it, the coming of revolutions in largely precapitalist nations, such as Russia and China, and in general the rather surprising resilience of capitalism – all cast grave doubt on any claim of straightforward historical inevitability. To hold this view of the theory, then, is to consign it to implausibility.

I think that there is a kind of historical necessity in Marx's theory, but it is not of the sort that rules out an important role for free human action. The necessity is a necessity of preconditions rather than of inevitable outcomes. That is, for Marx (as present-day socialist nations are reluctantly learning), capitalism is a necessary precondition for socialism and communism. Capitalism provides for the rapid development of the technology that enables people to be liberated in socialism from unwanted toil, and it performs other services, such as creating a worldwide proletariat, cleaning away the cobwebs of irrational belief and hierarchy that characterize feudal and earlier periods, and generally subjecting social relations to a harsh but progressive rationalization. Marx wrote in *Capital*:

It is the historical mission of the capitalist system of production to raise these material foundations of the new mode of production to a certain degree of perfection. (Marx, 1981: 441)

It is one of the civilizing aspects of capital that it enforces this surplus-labour in a manner . . . more advantageous to the development of the productive forces [and] social relations . . . for a new and higher form.

(Marx, 1981: 819)

This, however, says nothing about capitalism's inevitably being supplanted by socialism or communism. And thus there is room aplenty for individuals to do what they can to help that process along, assuming they think that this is a good thing to do. It seems fair then to maintain that because Marxism is as much an invitation to practice as to understanding, it must appeal to some norm, some value capable of justifying that practice. It is not, however, clear that this norm must be a moral norm.

Not all norms are moral norms. Ideal body weight, high marks in school, health, efficiency, and cleanliness are examples of nonmoral norms. Allen Wood contends that Marx saw nothing morally wrong with capitalism and condemned it because it gives rise to nonmoral evils: It cripples human creativity and engenders alienation and servitude (Wood, 1981: 43; also 1972; 1979). In Wood's view, then, Marxism embraces a norm (the elimination of these evils), but it is not a moral norm or ideal. But, this is a questionable view, for a number of reasons. Most importantly, because people act against these evils collectively and often risk their well-being or lives to eliminate them for others, it is not at all clear why these are not moral evils and their correctives moral goods. Moral systems often take human flourishing and liberation from servitude as part of the good at which they think actions ought to aim. Likewise, it might be maintained that whatever value (other than self-interest) a person acts for above all else is a moral value for that person, in that that value has the importance and authority that characteristically mark moral values. At very least, such a person must believe implicitly that morality permits the actions that he or she performs (which, after all, may include violence) in the name of those values and that would seem to bestow a moral status on those values.

Wood's view here is intertwined with a related but different claim. Wood was among the first of recent philosophers to deny that Marx condemned capitalism as unjust. This is a position that can be entertained even if we agree that Marx does condemn capitalism on some moral grounds. Injustice – the denial or violation of people's rights – is not the only sort of moral ground on which a social practice might be condemned. Some moral views place the ultimate value on community or benevolence, where people neither press their rights on others nor govern their treatment of others by others' rights but, instead, voluntarily give of themselves and share what they have out

of love or fellow feeling. And of course, many traditional moral conceptions have no explicit place for rights of the sort dear to those concerned with the moral ideal of justice. For example, the Greeks placed the notion of virtue – a kind of individual excellence – at the center of their moral vision and made no reference to the rights of individuals vis-à-vis one another, and the Ten Commandments prohibit specific actions, such as killing, without suggesting or implying that what is wrong with those actions is that they violate someone's rights (this is why the commandment against killing condemns murder and suicide equally, whereas if rights were at issue, killing someone against his or her will would be drastically different in moral status from killing oneself voluntarily). I shall have more to say about alternatives to justice shortly; for the present, it suffices to note that justice is not the only ideal against which social arrangements can be morally judged.

Wood is able to support his claim with a variety of quotations from Marx, perhaps the most impressive being the following from *Capital*: "The value which its [the worker's labor power's] use during one day creates is double what the capitalist pays for that use . . . is a piece of good luck for the buyer, but by no means an injustice towards the seller" (Marx, 1977: 301). Later in the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Marx characterizes notions like that of "fair distribution" as "obsolete verbal rubbish" and "ideological . . . humbug so common among the democrats and French Socialists" (Marx, 1974c: 347–8). Moreover, in *Gotha* Marx offers a critique of rights that seems definitive. He contends there that rights invariably take people in a one-sided fashion (my right to my wage comes from viewing me as a worker and nothing else, such as a husband or a father), and because people are different in their various facets, this one-sidedness means that rights produce inequality (when a father of several children and a childless worker each receive the wage that is theirs by right due to their work, the effect is that the latter is richer than the former). On such grounds, Marx maintains that the worker's equal right to an amount of goods that took as much labor to produce as he has performed (which Marx puts forth as the imperfect distributive standard of the first stage of communism) is a right "of inequality, just like any other right," and goes on to assert that the final stage of communism will be governed by the principle "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" (Marx, 1974c: 347). Wood and others regard this latter

principle as neither concerned with equality nor with rights, and thus it is not a principle of justice at all (Wood, 1979: 292, cf. Reiman, 1983: 157–9).

Wood does not deny that Marx has a conception of justice. Rather, he contends that for Marx, justice is the correspondence between a transaction and the mode of production in which it occurs and that injustice is the lack of correspondence. Here Wood quotes Marx, again from *Capital*: "The justice of transactions which go on between agents of production rests on the fact that these transactions arise as natural consequences from the relations of production. The juristic forms in which these economic transactions appear as voluntary actions of the participants . . . cannot, being mere forms, determine this content. They merely express it. This content is just whenever it corresponds to the mode of production, is adequate to it. It is unjust whenever it contradicts that mode. Slavery, on the basis of the capitalist mode of produce, is unjust; so is fraud in the quality of commodities" (Marx, 1981: 339).

G. A. Cohen responded to this argument by pointing out that there are also passages in Marx's writings in which he characterizes the very same extraction of surplus labor that we saw him earlier calling "no injustice" to the worker as "theft of another's labour-time" (Cohen, 1983b: 443; Marx, 1974d: 705). Cohen writes: "Now since, as Wood will agree, Marx did not think that by capitalist criteria the capitalist steals, and since he did think he steals, he must have meant that he steals in some appropriately non-relativist sense. And since to steal is, in general, wrongly to take what rightly belongs to another, to steal is to commit an injustice, and a system which is 'based on theft' is based on injustice." Cohen then considers that Marx might not have realized that theft constitutes injustice, and he concludes that the relation between the two "is so close that anyone who thinks capitalism is robbery must be treated as someone who thinks capitalism is unjust, even if he does not realize that he thinks it is." And from this, Cohen ends with the epigraph just quoted to the effect that Marx thought capitalism unjust but mistakenly thought he did not.

Another version of the denial that Marxism presupposes an ideal of justice was put forth by Robert Tucker (Tucker, 1970: 42–53). Tucker argues that Marx's moral ideal is embodied in communism and that communism is an ideal beyond justice. The argument in

brief is that justice is an ideal for the settlement of conflicting claims that individuals make against one another. Rights generally limit what one person can do to another ("your right to swing your fist ends where my nose begins"), or they give one person a claim on another's action (e.g., rights to education or welfare), whether or not that other wants so to act. Accordingly, the very ideal of justice assumes that people will be pressing conflicting claims on one another, that they will stand in antagonistic rather than cooperative relations to one another. Communism, by contrast, is held to be an ideal of communal solidarity in which antagonistic relations have been overcome and people need no rights or justice to persuade others to cooperate with them.

Another way to state this view is the following: Both David Hume and John Rawls think of justice as a virtue in specific "circumstances of justice," namely, moderate scarcity and limited altruism such that people make conflicting claims and stand to benefit from some shared way of adjudicating those claims. But communism is held to be a society beyond the circumstances of justice. Believing that justice is the highest ideal a society can achieve, then, not only misses the true virtue of communism, it does ideological yeoman service for capitalism by carrying forth the notion that scarcity and limited altruism and conflict are the inevitable fate of human beings and that proposals for their elimination are utopian.

These views assume that the elimination of antagonistic social relations (which the ideal of communism surely represents for Marx) is equivalent to the elimination of the need to distribute things fairly among people once living in nonantagonistic relations. By "things" here, I mean not only material objects but also that which must be divided up in a society: living space, status, privileges and penalties, desirable and undesirable tasks, and so on. It is possible that the need to distribute such things fairly among people is based on something more fundamental than antagonistic social relations. It might be based on the fact that individuals are physically separate, mortal, and aware of it. This condition means that each person's experience, even if it is only the joy he or she takes in others' happiness, is his or her own. It means as well that each person's time, even if it is the time that he or she spends joyfully working for others, is his or her own finite time. As long as people recognize these things and care about them, as long as they care about how

their limited time is spent, then it may always be necessary to distribute fairly among them benefits and burdens, tasks and rewards.

Accordingly, human beings – even those living in harmonious relations, even filled with fellow feeling for one another – might always exist in the circumstances of justice because their physical separateness and mortality makes things count to them in ways that make the distribution of things matter. Moreover, because oppression can be the result of policies made with good intentions, justice and rights can be important safeguards against oppression, even among people whose antagonistic interests are at a minimum (Buchanan, 1982: 163–9). The view that communism is beyond justice might be a mistake that results from the more plausible notion that once antagonistic relations are eliminated, justice will be so taken for granted as not to become an issue. But this assumes that communism is just, not beyond justice. And even if communism is beyond justice in the sense that people freely share their time and possessions, a conception of justice will still be needed to determine what is theirs to share.

An earlier version of the argument that Marx's ideal of communism is beyond justice can be found in the writings of the great Soviet legal theorist, Evgeny Pashukanis (1978). Pashukanis argued that law (as we understand it) is simply a reflection of the social relationship of capitalist exchange. In capitalist exchange, people must treat one another as free to dispose of whatever they happen to own. This exists first as a material fact in any workable system of recurring economic exchange, and law is only the "reflection" or codification of this material fact. Accordingly, law has as its central feature the idea of the "person," the individual as bearer of rights, primarily property rights over whatever he or she happens to own, including his or her body. And legal relations are understood as the mutually rational terms of coexistence and cooperation of such persons. Persons are not only separate, but their relations are also conflictual because their interests are. Each wants what the other has, with the least sacrifice to himself or herself. Pashukanis argued that because socialism would eliminate such conflictual interests, it would eliminate law as well (a claim that helped get Pashukanis executed once Stalin began promoting law with a vengeance in the 1930s).

Pashukanis went further and argued that morality (by which he

meant a Kantian-style morality that takes as its central notions individual autonomous persons and the rules that are mutually rational to them) itself was a reflection of capitalist exchange and so would follow it into extinction. In its place, Pashukanis envisioned a kind of managerial utilitarianism in which collective satisfaction would be efficiently pursued, without individuals pressing rights on one another. The problems with this view are much the same as those with Tucker's. Even if the moral notion of individual rights arose with capitalism, it might nonetheless reflect important features of the human condition and provide important safeguards against well-intentioned oppression and thus might properly be thought of as among capitalism's lasting contributions (alongside technology) rather than among capitalism's ills.

Another version of the argument that Marx's moral ideal is beyond justice is Allen Buchanan's claim that for Marx the chief evil of capitalism is alienation (1982: 36–49). Primarily in his early writings, especially the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844, Marx speaks of capitalism as estranging the worker from his produce (the produce not only is owned by another but also adds to the other's power over the worker); estranging the worker from his labor (rather than a spontaneous and free expression of his creative powers, his labor – his very life activity – becomes a task shaped and imposed on him by the capitalist as the very price of his living at all); estranging the worker from his fellow human beings (worker and capitalist stand in hostile relations, and the workers themselves become adversaries as they are forced to compete for jobs) (Marx, 1975: 322–34). Buchanan accepts the arguments (summarized earlier) that attempt to show that Marx did not think capitalist exploitation was an injustice. Buchanan contends instead the wrong of exploitation is the fact that it is a form of alienation. Exploitation is a kind of harmful using of another person, and such using estranges workers from capitalists and ultimately estranges workers from their products and their activity as well.

There is little doubt that Marx thought that capitalism and exploitation were alienating in this way. The problem with Buchanan's view is that after his early writings, Marx no longer speaks as if this was the core evil of capitalism or of exploitation. Indeed, he largely retires the language of alienation after the 1840s, and it recurs only in the *Grundrisse*, which Marx chose not to have published. But

only if we agree that Marx did not view capitalism as unjust and yet believe that Marx condemned capitalism morally will we find plausible Buchanan's view that alienation supplies the ground for such moral condemnation. For this reason, rather than being an argument against the notion that Marx held capitalism to be unjust, Buchanan's view presupposes that argument.

There are other reasons to question the claim that alienation is the core evil of capitalism. First, because alienation happens not only between workers and capitalists but also among workers themselves and among capitalists themselves, a focus on alienation blurs the centrality of the class relation to the Marxian critique and undermines as well the characteristic Marxian emphasis on production. Buchanan, in fact, argues that alienation and indeed exploitation itself are not limited to production relations but occur in exchange and more broadly in all interpersonal contexts in capitalism. Second, an emphasis on alienation seems suspiciously "psychological" and thus out of step with Marx's materialism. I do not mean to suggest that alienation is not a real event in capitalism, but when Marx tells us that labor in capitalism is forced (because capitalists control the very means of earning a living and thus of living at all) or that the wage worker is a kind of slave (because he or she is forced to work in part for free), it seems that the core evil here lies in the coercion and the slavery, not in the sense of estrangement that coercion and slavery no doubt breed (see Reiman, 1987a).

Another argument, related to the alienation view, is made in different terms by Eugene Kamenka and by George Brenkert (Brenkert, 1981; Kamenka, 1969). Here the emphasis is not on the estrangement *per se* but on the fact that the products alienated from the worker stand against him as fetters on his freedom. The worker produces the factories and machines that the capitalist owns, and because the capitalist owns them, he is able to dictate the terms of the worker's labor and indeed to force the worker to produce yet more machines, and so on. According to this view, Marx's moral commitment is to freedom, to emancipating the worker from a system in which he has no choice but to forge his own chains. This has the advantage over the general alienation view of comporting with Marx's continued reference to capitalism as a form of slavery and to wage labor as forced. Moreover, insofar as force and freedom are material facts, the suspiciously psychological quality of alienation is

avoided. Though this view is put forth, in particular by Brenkert, as an alternative to the view that Marx condemned capitalism as unjust, I think that the two views are compatible. I shall say more about this later.

The best known of contemporary Marxist philosophers to defend the view that Marxism condemns capitalism as unjust is G. A. Cohen. I have already mentioned Cohen's argument for holding that this was Marx's view (notwithstanding Marx's possible confusion about what Marx believed). But Cohen argues independently that injustice is the proper ground for the Marxian condemnation of capitalism. The basic point is that even if owning the means of production gives the capitalist enough leverage to force the worker to work for him longer than the amount of labor time the worker gets back in his wage, this will not count as exploitation if the capitalist is justly entitled to own the means of production (Cohen, 1983a: 316; see also Buchanan, 1987; Reiman, 1987a; Roemer, 1982b; 1985). The exchange of more labor time for less is wrong only in a way that could support the charge that it is exploitation, that is, if the capitalist is not giving the worker something else. If the capitalist is justly entitled to own the means of production, then he is contributing to the worker's use of those means in return for the excess labor time, and so no charge of exploitation can be sustained. To this, says Cohen: "I would reply that the said 'contribution' does not establish absence of exploitation, since capitalist property in means of production is theft, and the capitalist is therefore 'providing' only what morally ought not to be his to provide" (Cohen, 1983b: 445). In short, exploitation presupposes that capitalist ownership is unjust.

This argument seems basically sound. Exploitation is clearly a morally freighted term. It might be stipulated to be nothing but the description of the extraction of surplus labor with no implied moral judgment, but that is an invitation to confusion. The term *exploitation* is too hot for that. It should be used only where there is the intention of pointing to an extraction of labor that is in some sense wrong. Otherwise, we will have to call it exploitation if we force criminals to work as punishment or if (to use an example of Cohen's) poor unemployed people force others to provide minimum support for them. If exploitation must be wrong in order to be exploitation, then it cannot be that exploitation is wrong because of its effects, such as alienation. Those effects cannot begin until exploitation has

itself begun, and it must already be wrong: The wrong then must be in the extraction itself, and because the extraction is a kind of taking of something by one person from another, the wrong seems to be of the sort that is appropriately thought of as injustice.

The problem with Cohen's argument, however, in my view, is that it slips too easily into the notion that the sort of injustice that exploitation must be (or must manifest) is a distributive injustice, an injustice in the distribution of property. It is here that I think the view that sees Marx as primarily criticizing capitalism for its coerciveness and its violation of freedom has an important role to play. In these terms, one might argue that Marx criticizes capitalism in the light of a conception of social justice, that is, a conception that takes as its ideal not some distribution of things but a certain social relation among persons. Following the condemnation of coercion and the valuation of freedom, we could think of this ideal social relation as one in which human beings stood to one another as "equal sovereigns," that is, as each freely able to direct his or her own destiny to the greatest extent compatible with a like freedom for everyone else. Not only would this make sense of Marx's condemnation of capitalism as slavery and forced labor, it also would make sense of Marx's positive view of capitalism as part of the historical process by which human beings gain control over nature. As Marx sees history as the complex interaction of developments in the relations of production and in the forces of production, so equal sovereignty is fed by two streams, the elimination of the subjugation of some people by others and the reduction of natural constraints.

IDEOLOGY AND THE MARXIAN CRITIQUE OF MORALITY

Marx believed that part of the explanation for the durability of exploitative societies, such as capitalism, is to be found in ideology. Ideology refers to ideas that represent a society in its best light, as if it were the highest expression of universal ideals. Because we are speaking of ideology in exploitative societies, those ideas must cover over the fact of exploitation and make what is unjust appear justified. Accordingly, ideology contributes to the preservation of exploitative societies by *misrepresenting* them as just. As Marx and Engels write in *The German Ideology*, "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the

ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling *material* force of society, is at the same time its ruling *intellectual* force." But we should not think of ideology as conscious lies or propaganda, for among other reasons, it seems that the ruling class believes its ideas. Rather, ideology is a reflection in ideal and idealizing terms of the society's material conditions. Marx and Engels continue: "The ruling ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas" (Marx and Engels, 5/1976: 59; italics in original).

The chief theoretical reason for not thinking that ideology is conscious deception is that Marxism is a materialist theory, one that understands social practices by tracing them to features of the dominant mode of production, rather than to features of people's psychology. The illusion in capitalist ideology must be a result of how capitalism actually presents itself to our view, just as the illusion that the sun goes around the earth is a result of how the heavens actually present themselves to our view. "It is not the subject who deceives himself, but *reality* which deceives *him*" (Godelier, 1977: 337; italics in original; see also Reiman, 1987b). Applied to moral notions, what we should expect from this is the following: The moral ideals in terms of which we judge capitalism arise from capitalism as an idealized version of what is actually there. Then, when we judge what is actually there in capitalism against those ideals, capitalism will approximate them and thus appear to be good and justified.

The best example of this process is the moral ideal of liberalism, the belief that freedom – defined as the absence of physical interference with people's actions – is the most important moral value in terms of which societies are to be judged. So defined, capitalism appears free and thus morally justified. Now, for Marx, this is in an important sense false: Marx held that capitalism is a system of "forced labour – no matter how much it may seem to result from free contractual agreement" (Marx, 1974b: 819). This appearance of freedom arises from the fact that for Marx, the force in capitalism is not physical interference but the leverage that owners of means of production have over nonowners. To understand how liberal ideology works, then, we need to understand how its conception of freedom as the absence of physical interference arises from what capitalism actually is.

Capitalism is free in the sense that labor power and other com-

modities are bought and sold by both parties to any transaction from which violence is excluded. (If this were not so, Marx's labor theory of value could not work: Things would trade not in proportion to the labor time that went into them, but in proportion to the size of the muscles and arsenals of the traders.) Because physical coercion is the most vivid threat to freedom and because it is one that people experience or fear from childhood onward, it is normal to see capitalist trades or exchanges as free. It takes a larger theoretical analysis of the sort that Marxism purports to offer to see that such exchanges are in fact subject to coercion at the level of the structure of ownership (much as it takes a larger theoretical analysis of the sort that Copernicus presented to see that it is the earth that is moving around the sun). Moreover, because exchanges punctuate all relationships in capitalism – that is, because the worker's tenure begins and ends with an agreement that the capitalist cannot violently force on him – it is as natural to see those exchanges as the basis for all capitalist relationships as it is to see the earth as the fixed ground against which other heavenly bodies are moving. Thus, it becomes natural for members of capitalist societies to view capitalism generally as free.

Furthermore, because capitalism requires freedom (in the sense of an absence of overt violence) in exchange, capitalism will survive only if exchange relationships are normally free in this way. Thus, members of capitalist societies will naturally come to see such freedom as the (at first, statistical) norm and to see overt violence as something to be resisted or corrected. As people come to expect it, the statistical norm will be subtly transformed into a moral norm. And then people will naturally assume that the content of the freedom they value is the absence of overt violence. With this, we have the main elements of a Marxian account of the doctrine of liberalism, with its characteristic definition of freedom as freedom from physical impediment or harm. The moral doctrine of liberalism is then arguably "read off" the face of capitalism. And then the ideological alchemy is complete. Because members of capitalist societies get their conception of freedom from capitalism, without, of course, recognizing that this is the source or that this is a particular and limited conception, they naturally find that capitalism matches their ideal.

Ideology infects morality by the way in which our moral beliefs are

shaped by the very system they are meant to judge. And we shall see that all the major contemporary moral ideals can be understood as reflecting features of capitalism. In fact – as we saw with liberalism – those moral ideals characteristically reflect features of exchange in capitalism and work by casting their glow from there to the whole capitalist mode of production. Marx says as much when he writes that the sphere of exchange

within whose boundaries the sale and purchase of labor-power goes on, is in fact a very Eden of the innate rights of man. It is the exclusive realm of Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham. Freedom, because both buyer and seller of a commodity, let us say of labor-power, are determined by their own free will. They contract as free persons . . . their contract is the final result in which their joint will finds a common legal expression. Equality, because each enters into relation with the other, as with a simple owner of commodities, and they exchange equivalent for equivalent. Property, because each disposes only of what is his own. And Bentham, because each looks only to his own advantage. (Marx, 1977: 280)

In addition to liberalism, the major contemporary moral doctrines are Kantianism, social contractarianism, and utilitarianism. In the remainder of this section, I shall briefly suggest how each might be viewed as embodying a moral ideal that is read off the face of capitalist exchange, with the effect that each such doctrine is congenitally biased in capitalism's favor. For ease of identification, I shall number the paragraphs in which each of the three ideals is discussed.

1. *Kantianism* assumes that autonomous persons – distinguished by their capacity to subject their behavior to their rational will – are the keystone of its moral teaching. Moral rules are those principles that autonomous persons can consistently will to be applied universally to all persons. For example, murder is immoral because a person cannot consistently will that all human beings have the right to kill their fellows at their discretion, as that would require one to will that others have the right to kill oneself and that would conflict with one's own will to stay alive, pursue one's purposes, and so on. I have already pointed out that Pashukanis regarded this moral doctrine as reflecting the actual position of capitalist exchangers. Each must deal with the other strictly as a bearer of rights, particularly the right to determine the fate of one's property. Because exchanges are free of violence, they are realized only when the wills of the exchangers converge in a

common will. Accordingly, the Kantian ideal is arguably an idealization of capitalist exchange relations, with the tendency to bestow on those relations the mantle of moral legitimacy.

What is more, because Kant's notion of rational will assumes a will that is independent of material obstacles and inclinations, emphasizing it has the effect of discounting the effects of material inequality on the relative power and thus the real freedom of individuals. This too reflects capitalist exchange, because as the passage just cited from Marx suggests, exchangers treat one another as equal in their freedom to dispose of what they own, and accordingly, their freedom is indifferent to the content of what they happen to own. This in turn supports capitalism by leading us to believe that in the morally important respects, the owner of nothing but labor power is equal in freedom to the owner of factories with whom he or she enters into contractual agreement.

Generalized to cover such issues as just punishment, this view naturally treats the criminal's economic deprivation as irrelevant to the freedom to commit a crime and thus to the deservingness of punishment. In an article, "Capital Punishment," in the *New York Daily Tribune* on 18 February 1853, Marx comments that "there is only one theory of punishment which recognizes human dignity in the abstract, and that is the theory of Kant," but he goes on to add:

Looking, however, more closely into the matter, we discover that German idealism [which includes Kantianism] here, as in most instances, has but given a transcendental sanction to the rules of existing society. Is it not a delusion to substitute for the real individual with his real motives, with multifarious social circumstances pressing upon him, the abstraction of "free will" – one among the many qualities of man for man himself? . . . Is there not a necessity for deeply reflecting upon an alteration in the system that breeds these crimes, instead of glorifying the hangman who executes a lot of criminals to make room only for the supply of new ones?

2. In its classical form, *social contractarianism* is the view that the principles of justice for societies are those that it would be rational for all human beings to agree to in a "state of nature." This state of nature is a condition in which human beings lack political institutions to resolve conflicts among them. People are thought of as self-interested and self-aggrandizing and thus prone to conflict with their fellows. Accordingly, it is rational for them to agree to some set of political insti-

tutions that would keep such conflicts from bursting into open warfare. Moreover, because they are self-interested, they are thought to find it in their interest to have some system of private property such that each is able to own the products of his or her own efforts. Consequently, the classical contractarians – Thomas Hobbes and John Locke – end up justifying the establishment of a society whose basic outlines are those of a state that protects people against violence from one another and establishes each person's right to private property.

But where do the contractarians get their notion that human beings in a natural setting are self-interested and self-aggrandizing? Marx held that capitalist societies are divided into public and private realms, the former being the state characterized by shared laws and common interests and the latter being civil society marked by the competitive pursuit of personal gain. People in capitalist societies lead two lives: They are citizens as members of the state, and they are egoistic individuals as members of civil society. And concerning this distinction, Marx says in *On the Jewish Question*, "Man as he is a member of civil society is taken to be the *real man*, *man* as distinct from *citizen*, since he is man in his sensuous, individual and *immediate* existence, whereas *political man* is simply abstract, artificial man" (Marx, 1975: 234; italics in original). Then, what the classical contractarians took as man in the natural condition is man as he appears in civil society, that is, as a participant in capitalist economic transactions. Human beings seen as naturally self-interested and self-aggrandizing are human beings as they appear in capitalist exchange, pressing their advantage, aiming at the best price for the least sacrifice or the most goods for the smallest cost, and the rest (see Macpherson, 1962). If the social contract reads its conception of human nature off the face of capitalism, it will be no surprise that the social system that social contractarians find ideally suited to human nature is capitalism.

3. *Utilitarianism* regards the satisfaction of people's desires as the best measure of goodness and thus it views arrangements that maximize the aggregate satisfaction of all people's desires as morally good and just. There are several ways in which this doctrine reflects aspects of capitalist exchange. First, as Marx's reference to Bentham (quoted earlier) indicates, utilitarianism has been characteristically formulated in tandem with a view of human motivation in which each person is thought to pursue simply what makes him or her –

understood as a separate individual – happy. This, we have already seen, is the view that follows from seeing human beings as they function in exchange as one’s model of human nature. It expresses a fundamentally asocial conception of the self in which interests of human beings are thought to be naturally in conflict (see Brenkert, 1981). Second, utilitarianism assumes that all human behaviors – no matter how unusual or particular – can be translated into a common measure: utility or satisfaction. And this is precisely what occurs in exchange, in which unique and particular human productive endeavors are literally resolved into a common currency: money. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels wrote:

The apparent stupidity of merging all the manifold relations of people in the one relation of usefulness, this apparently metaphysical abstraction, arises from the fact that, in modern bourgeois society, all relations are subordinated in practice to the one abstract monetary-commercial relation. . . . Now these relations are supposed not to have the meaning *peculiar* to them but to be the expression and manifestation of some third relation introduced in their place, the *relation of utility*.

(Marx and Engels, 5/1976: 409, italics in original)

One effect of this abstraction is that when capitalist relations are evaluated in the light of utility, all peculiarities of relations – boss-worker, rich-poor, master-(wage)slave – are dissolved. The social relations in which people stand are covered over with the abstract measure of quantities of utility or satisfaction, with the same blurring effect as would result from reducing relations between slave owners and slaves to a relation between two quanta of satisfaction.

In two additional ways, utilitarianism reflects and thus supports capitalism. When exchanges are free, we can assume that each party to the transaction agrees to it only if he or she believes that his or her situation will be improved by it. Although we cannot peer into people’s minds or hearts, we naturally assume that all free exchanges increase satisfaction for both parties. And from this, it is an easy step to conclude that to maximize satisfaction, we need only let people keep on trading voluntarily until no one thinks that he or she can improve on this by a further exchange. Suppose that we counter that exchanges improve people’s situations only when compared with their starting points and that we might thus produce even more satisfaction by altering people’s starting points (that is, by redistrib-

uting the initial assets that they bring to exchanges). The response will be that such redistributing will improve some people’s situations and worsen those of others, and we cannot know for certain that the result will be a net improvement. But what we can know for certain is that everyone will be improved (or think themselves improved) by free exchanges. Thus, utilitarianism naturally favors the continuation of exchange and noninterference with the initial distribution of wealth that forms the setting for that exchange.

Further, one thing that capitalism does do – as Marx recognized – is increase the amount of goods produced in a society. All such goods are produced with an eye to selling them, that is, to getting them into a successful exchange. Because such goods will be freely bought, we can assume that they will increase satisfaction for their purchasers, which is to say, that they will contribute to increasing the aggregate satisfaction of the whole society. That the goods produced may serve false needs (induced by advertising or competitive pressures), that there may be an alternative set of goods that are more socially useful (good schools, good hospitals, good public transportation) and that might increase the aggregate satisfaction even more is, again, compared with the actual goods that are produced and voluntarily purchased, mere speculation. Because the transactions that lead to these actual goods being produced and sold are free, everyone seems to think that they will be made better off by them. By contrast, to alter things so that a different set of more socially useful goods is produced is to force some transactions on some people (force some to pay by taxing, etc.), and this will make some unhappy in an amount that we cannot be sure will not wipe out the (already speculative) gains from the supposedly more socially useful goods. Again, utilitarianism supports capitalism because it is poured from the mold of capitalism.

These examples of how moral beliefs may function as ideological supports for capitalism because they have been unconsciously modeled on the relations that characterize capitalism could be multiplied. The general point is that if this is the case, then the moral beliefs at issue simply represent and legitimate the interests of those that benefit from capitalism. But as we saw at the outset of this chapter, when moral beliefs represent the interests of some at the expense of the interests of others, they lose their moral status. If morality is ideology, then it stops being morality. Consequently,

moral philosophy cannot establish the moral credentials of any putative moral principle without adequately defending it against the suspicion that it is ideology. Marxism then forces itself onto the agenda of moral philosophy.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

I have tried to sketch the points of contact between Marxism and moral philosophy and the general shape of the contribution that Marxian theory makes to contemporary moral philosophy. This amounts, in part, to an agenda of problems that Marxism raises for moral philosophy. I shall close by pointing to what I believe to be the main items on this agenda.

Marxist moral philosophers must develop a coherent and defensible moral theory with moral ideals that can account for the Marxian critique of capitalism as well as the Marxian endorsement of socialism and communism. This will require supplying Marxian moral ideals with an independent justification. That is, a Marxian moral theory cannot simply accept socialism or communism as its moral ideal – this would be to idealize these in the way that we saw other moral theories idealize capitalism. Capitalism is not evil simply because it is not socialism or communism, nor are these good simply because they are not capitalism. Rather, if capitalism is evil and socialism or communism is good, capitalism must fail, and socialism or communism must succeed at fulfilling some independently justified set of moral ideals. This has an implication that few Marxist moral philosophers appear to have recognized: If a Marxian moral theory is formulated with an open mind, it must recognize that the existing versions of socialism and communism are deeply flawed in ways that could make them less satisfactory than existing capitalism, even in the light of Marxian moral ideals. And once this is seen, it follows as well that really possible socialism (as opposed to the model on the drawing board) may be less satisfactory than is really possible capitalism. It is not sufficient to compare existing capitalism with the mere dream of a truly liberating socialism or communism.

Marxist moral philosophers must be able to explain how Marxism's moral theory – notwithstanding that it arises in the midst of capitalist societies (as Marx's scientific theory did) – escapes the taint of ideology. Frankly, I do not see how this can be accomplished

unless the apparently moribund project of establishing some moral doctrine as rationally necessary can be revived. Any basis for morality other than rational necessity must appeal to people's attitudes or intuitions or psychology, all of which are arguably reflections of the very social system that is to be judged. Any basis for morality other than reason, therefore, seems congenitally defenseless before the charge of ideology.

Because the problem of escaping the taint of ideology is a problem for any moral claim, this last task is one that is incumbent on all moral philosophers, Marxist or non-Marxist. It represents the most evident way in which Marxism has permanently altered the landscape of moral philosophy.

FURTHER READING

- Cohen, Nagel, and Scanlon (1980).
 Nielsen and Patten (1981).
 Paul, Miller, Paul, and Ahrens (1986).
 Pennock and Chapman (1983).