

THE ETHICS OF ANTI-MORALISM IN MARX'S
THEORY OF COMMUNISM
An Interpretation

Koen Raes

In discussions on the ethical stand of Marx's work, the question whether or not Marx's notion of communism was based on a precise 'communist concept of justice' was extended toward the very question whether any specific 'morality' was to be found at all in Marx's work. This article is about the anti-moralism of Marx. It tries to develop some arguments in favour of his refusal to found his historical materialist project on a specific 'morality'.¹ No argument constitutes in itself conclusive evidence for the reasonableness of such an anti-moralistic standpoint, but as a whole I hope to offer strong support for this thesis.

The arguments are intended to show that anti-moralism need not be the same as ethical indifference, and that it is important to specify the meaning of 'morality' and a 'moral stand' in ethical discussions.

I should like to defend two main points of view: (a) communism is, within Marx's worldview to be interpreted as a non-moral society, that is, a society which is itself not based upon or structured by a specific moral pattern and (b) the revolutionary transformation of capitalist society into a socialist/communist society is not or cannot be the result of one specific moral motivation. Both points of view constitute the heart of the recent debate on Marx's ethical outlook. As far as interpretation of Marx's work is concerned, I agree with the main lines of interpretation offered by R.C. Tucker (1969), Allen Wood (1972, 1978, 1981), Allen Buchanan (1979, 1980, 1982) and Andrew Collier (1981). According to these authors, justice was not a proper criterium to Marx to criticise capitalism, nor could it be an ordering principle of a communist society or a

revolutionary motivation. A conception of justice (a) doesn't explain the foundations of capitalism, (b) isn't needed to analyse capitalism from an emancipatory perspective nor (c) to inspire revolutionary action.

According to Buchanan (1982), communism provides however the comparative evaluative outlook that allows Marx to dismiss prescriptions about rights and justice as obsolete, whilst Brenkert (1979) argues that Marx's basic evaluative perspective was a principle of freedom, encompassing autonomy, community and the allround development of the individual. The question here is what is meant by such an outlook. It certainly is not necessary to take it as an eschatological historical end-point, in order to have a relevant evaluative perspective. It can also be interpreted as an open reference-point, a regulative idea, intrinsically linked to Marx's theory of alienation and species-being, as well as to his theory of the working class, its activities and purposes. As such it is not a "communist theory of justice".

Marx denies the very need for a theory of justice and rights. This need arises as a consequence of specific social relationships, based on specific modes of production, and can be superseded in a society that no longer requires rules of justice or right to defend its existence. This approach is to Marx an attempt to go beyond the Hegelian idealistic synthesis of contradictions, which remains partial and inadequate. Marx rejects the social circumstances — the subjective and objective Humean 'circumstances of justice' which constitute the starting point of almost any theory of justice — that engender the contradictions in his view. The root sources of them are to be eradicated in order that a real synthesis can take place.

Hegels' social philosophy is an attempt to realize a synthesis of "Moralität" and "Sittlichkeit", of 'morality' and 'morals'. "Sittlichkeit" situates the real social agents within a framework of institutions, practices and laws. It refers to the various norms and standards of conduct which the social agent has internalized. "Moralität", on the other hand consists of the abstract and formal determinants which enable the individual to know what he morally ought to do. (Buchanan A. 1982, 3-4). Contrary to Kant, Hegel emphasises the necessary social, institutional setting for "Moralität" to be possible and proposes an ideal integration of the "Sittlichkeit" into the "Moralität" in his construction of the state. Marx, on the other hand, rejects the state as the moral guard of society and

considers "Moralität" to be bourgeois ideology. The "Sittlichkeit" of real social agents cannot be brought under a universal objective standard, because social relations are contradictory. Moreover, "Sittlichkeit" consists of alienated practice, prejudice and repression. Workers will have to free themselves from a "Sittlichkeit" conforming them to their lot.

To get a clear understanding of Marx's anti-moralistic stand, it is important to know what concepts of morality or justice are standing for. In the following I will distinguish between moralism, morality, justice and ethics (moral theory or, more generally, axiology)

- Moralism is the idea and the strategy that telling other people how they are to act and to order (their) values, is a necessary or most appropriate method to solve valuational conflicts between human beings. Moralism imposes a system of rules on human beings, determining what they ought to do.

- Morality is any specific hierarchically structured system or ordering of (ethical) values that is to be applied by (all) the members of a society. Morality is a code of rules of conduct, that is internally coherent. Such a code may include different rules for different social positions — as is the case in catholicism for the laity and the clergymen — in as far as they are part of the moral rule-structure itself. Morality is, in the following, to be understood in the Hegelian sense of "Moralität" : a code of rules conceived as universal and having the sanction of a specific point of view (God, conscience, man's moral nature, natural justice, the greatest happiness, and so on)

- Justice is the moral value that specifies the value-ordering, the basic structure of society has to take, to support and sanction (by mechanisms to be specified)

- Ethics or moral theory is any theory about, or study of ethical values, valuations, valuational distinctions, as opposed to aesthetical or epistemological valuations.

The discussion on the anti-moralistic and non-moral perspective of Marx's theory is not simply a discussion on the meaning of words. What is important is to know what is implied when using them². Marx rejected a specific, but widespread conception of morality or justice and this has to be elucidated. A vision from the vantage point of a morality — a "moral point of view" — is a vision from a pre-established division of the world, of human beings and their actions. It is not only, and evidently, a construction of the world, it is a

harmonized construction of it, a system of rules establishing universal harmony, for the sake of the intrinsic value of harmony itself. The critique of morality disputes the validity of these divisions and rules. Not by proposing an alternative system of rules, but by rejecting the very need for them altogether. Their negation is considered as essential, not the establishment of a new positive moral order. Not a different, but something different from morality is to be realized.³

To say that the relevance of Marx's critique of the concept of morality or justice is very limited, because it is based on an old-fashioned 19th century conception of justice and rights, or that his criticisms of these concepts all over his work only superficially resemble each other, will not do as an argument against Marx's anti-moralistic position. It is, I think, a profound insight into the very foundations of such concepts that inspired his anti-moralism consistently. Nevertheless, it is true that the argument is highly dependent on two *factual* suppositions within Marx's theory namely (a) the view that real social dynamics are tending toward an abolishment of capitalism and the establishment of communism and (b) the view that the working class can and will develop a genuine transparent "scientific" worldview, that will eventually inspire them in their revolutionary motivation. Because I do not accept both suppositions, I cannot accept the "final-solution-approach" to the problems of justice and morality either. Hence, I argued elsewhere in favour of a provisional, constructivist approach to problems of justice and morality, taking into account the "here and now-reality" of present day world problems (Raes, K. 1984) This does not, however, imply a rejection of many anti-moralistic arguments. Even if we ultimately reject much of what can be said against concepts of morality or justice, it should temper our enthusiasm for moral principles or conceptions of justice, for moral calls or the steady extension of more and more unyielding rules. (Cfr. Buchanan A. 1982, pp. 177 e.v.).

We have to keep in mind that some restrictions apply to the argumentation.

(a) First, the arguments are intended to stand on their own and to be as such not intrinsically dependent on Marx metaphysics of history and especially his eschatological perspectivism. Apart from it, arguments in favour of an anti-moralist standpoint can be developed, and I take most of the following course of argumentation to be valid, independent from such commitment.

(b) Secondly, the article is concerned mainly with social and political issues. Marx certainly rejected the division between the public and the private spheres of human action, especially in the context of the specific structuration of economic and political action in a capitalist society. Nevertheless I consider it to be a reasonable starting point that differences exist between evaluations of public and private action, which are important to rate the anti-moralist position at its true value. One of them is the relevance of motivations in valuing courses of action. If, from a private point of view, motivations and intentions often constitute the cornerstone of our evaluation of human beings and their actions, such is not the case as far as social or political actions are concerned, and where results and consequences of actions become of central importance. It is not immediately evident that arguments, directed against those who estimate political action or activists mainly in terms of their good/bad intentions, also apply from a private point of view. So, Trotsky argues in his *Their Morals and Ours* that in political (class) struggle "not the question of subjective motives but that of objective efficacy has for us decisive significance." (Trotsky L, 1979, 50). This does not exclude however that from another point of view, motives are important to evaluate *the actor*: "The assassinated Kirov, a rude satrap, does not call forth any sympathy. Our relation to the assassin remains neutral only because we know not what motives guided him. If it became known that Nikolaev acted as a conscious avenger for workers' rights trampled upon by Kirov, our sympathies would be fully on the side of the assassin." (Trotsky L. 1979, *ibidem*).

There is yet another sense in which the distinction between the private and the public is relevant. This is made clear by Marx in his introduction to *Capital I*, where he explicitly points out that he depicts the capitalist and landowner as personifications of economic categories, exponents of specific class-relations and interests. He further argues that it is not at all his intention to "make responsible the individual for relations of which he is the social product, however much he may think himself to be above them." (Marx K. 1974, xvi) From this approach, it does not only follow that the responsibility of the individual is not at stake in Marx's analysis and evaluation of capitalists and landowners within a capitalist society. We can also deduce from it that the rejection of capitalist ownership and of the capitalist himself does not imply a judgment on the personal qualities of a specific capitalist. And, at the same

time, that the plea for the overthrow of the capitalist class, for the removal of all legally controlling obstacles to the development of the working class, does not imply a moral condemnation of individuals who are capitalists. From a social point of view they are condemned as capitalists, whatever their personal qualities may happen to be from a private point of view. The latter question is not relevant for the former problem. The objective social relations and not the subjective ways by which people "fulfill" their social roles as capitalists or workers are to be taken into consideration in this context.

(c) Thirdly, the article will not once again review all the referential evidence in Marx's work in support of the arguments. I take it for granted that the main lines of interpretation offered in the bulk of the publications of the last ten years are generally known and anyway, it may well be that some arguments do not find direct support at all in Marx's work. But my main concern is not exegetical truth, but actual relevance, and I am convinced that the following argumentation can fit in with the marxian project.

II. In his everlasting search for a science of social dynamics, and in his historical project for a society of really free, transparent interhuman relations, morality was for Marx, although eminently engaged in the problem of justice, condemned to be a conservative force, an alienating conflict-stabilizer, an ideology of the past, the 'prehistory of mankind'. He ridiculed the language of justice and rights as "obsolete verbal rubbish and ideological nonsense" because he denied that it could explain anything or motivate the working class in its struggle against capital(ism). Not the quest for justice, but the struggle against the circumstances of justice is the driving, emancipatory force in history. Morality had not only to fail in solving the social conflicts it was pretended to solve, at the same time it offered a wrong idea about and approach toward social conflicts and their origins. Socially, morality is an instrument of domination, not of liberation, and the power of morality always justifies a morality of power.

Marx didn't believe that the *problem* of justice could get a real — that is historical — durable — that is conflict-solving — and emancipatory — that is non-alienating — solution in terms of some *conception* of justice. Of course, he was motivated by a fundamental revolt against the human misery, produced by capitalism, and he took sides with the oppressed, exploited and suffering human beings,

which constitute the great mass of the population in capitalist society. But, this doesn't mean that the conceptual tools and the foundation of his rejection of the capitalist mode of production as well as his communist commitment were therefore necessarily based on a marxist morality. Again and again he warns his readers to get rid of moral prejudices. There is, as G.A. Cohen remarks, indeed "a tension between the Marxist commitment to advancement of productive power and the Marxist commitment to those at whose expense that advancement occurs." (Cohen G.A. 1981, 16) But this tension was for Marx not caused by an "absence of a morality" nor could it be solved by the "realization of a morality". Marx expressed his great sympathies for Spartacus, whilst at the same time considering the slave mode of production a necessary step in historical development. Whilst it can easily be proved that Marx did not claim to develop a distinctively moral critique of capitalism, at the same time it can easily be established that he condemned capitalism for all the misery it produces. (Collier A. 1981) He must have had strong arguments to take such a counter-intuitive position, and these will be looked for in the following.

Defining the problem of justice as a *problem* does not as such imply a moral point of view. If so, it would not make any sense at all even to try an interpretation of Marx's theory as an anti-moral project. But, the observation that there exists, to put it in Rawls' terms, in any society "an identity of interests since social cooperation makes possible a better life for all than any would have if each were to live solely by his own efforts" as well as "a conflict of interests since persons are not indifferent as to how the greater benefits produced by their collaboration are distributed..." (Rawls J. 1971, 4) may be labelled a problem because historically we find that indeed many conflicts arise out of it. It is then a "problem" in exactly the same way as we call any question in social science "problematic". The question is not whether there is implied a moral dimension in the problem, but whether this dimension is intrinsically needed to consider it a problem at all.

If a definition of the problem of justice implies a moral judgment, that is, is essentially a moral problem, it would necessarily need a moral solution indeed. Morality would then prescribe in rules either *a way* to a solution or the *solution* itself.

For, if we define the morality of the problem, we already suggest the answer to it. That does not, however, imply that the *means* used need to be moral rules. They may be of a purely techno-

logical or political kind. But the “morality of the solution”, the ways the means are to be used, will then be laid down in the (existing or new) moral rules. Well now, many social problems have been and still are solved without the “help” of specific moral rules, even if the solutions imply or generate what people recognize as a “morality”. To say then that the solution of the problem of justice is or cannot be a moral one, is to say that there are more appropriate ways to deal with it and that these ways are themselves not part of a morality.

It is indeed one of the important criticisms Marx directs against any conception of justice that they cannot nor do solve the problem they intend to solve because they accept as given and unchangeable what is precisely the reason for their failure as well as for there being a problem; the so-called circumstances of justice. As long as the *terms* of the problem are conceptualized wrongly by social scientists or social actors, it cannot be ‘solved’ in any definite sense, just as it is impossible to find a solution to the “problem of lightning” in terms of religion or moral sin.

Defining a *conception* of justice is, on the other hand, evidently defining some morality which is, once again in Rawlsian terms, proposed to give institutional form to the ‘basic structure of society’ that is “a public system of rules defining a scheme of activities that leads men to act together so as to produce a greater sum of benefits and assigns to each certain recognized claims to a share in the proceeds.” (Rawls J. 1971, 84) Such a conception implies, in the words of Nozick the definition of some “end state” — defining a distributive structure — or “historical” — defining a process of interactions — *pattern*, in terms of which the distribution of the burdens and benefits of social life ought to be organized morally. Defining a conception of justice implies that rules are laid down, to which the social order has to correspond, that standards are provided according to which the distributive aspects of the basic structure of society are to be assessed, and that these rules and standards, constitute the final touchstone in evaluating the virtues of this social order.

Rawls’ differentiation of the “concept of justice” from “conceptions of justice” *could* alter this implication, if we interpret it out of Rawls’ own framework of thought. Even if people disagree about the specific content of what they consider to be just (their conception of justice), he argues, they still share the concept of justice, implying that institutions are just “when no arbitrary

distinctions are made between persons in the assigning of basic rights and duties and when the rules determine a proper balance between competing claims to the advantages of social life." (Rawls J. 1971, 5) For Rawls, such a concept requires that questions of "arbitrariness" or "proper balance" are to be settled by a morality, "assigning basic rights". This implication would once again be rejected by Marx, because he refuses to look at human actors as "moral agents" or "bearers of intrinsic rights". If, however, we interpret the "concept of justice" in the much broader sense of a "concept of ethics" this implication need no more be there. Questions of "arbitrariness" may be settled without a morality, and a "concept of ethics" can mean nothing but that valuations, valuational distinctions ask for argumentation and justification. If Marx does not need a "conception of justice" to explain and analyse capitalism and to promote proletarian action, he is nevertheless in need of a "concept of ethics" in order to *justify* his and the proletarians' positions.

The influence of the Historical School of Von Savigny certainly played a part in Marx's rejection of any legalistic worldview and of any project to restructure social wholes by legal or moral means. He considered communism as a result of a social class struggle, not based on a morality. Communism itself would not be organized according the moral principles or conceptions of justice. Neither the relations within the proletarian class, nor the relations between capitalists and proletarians can relevantly be grasped within a moral point of view. As a legitimating ideology, morality has the function to reproduce existing capitalist social relations, and as a 'contra-ideology' moral projects suggest not only (a) the bourgeois illusion that it is by morality that social relations and dynamics are guided, but it also creates (b) the illusion that a communist society can be defined in terms of moral rules, in terms of universally patterned moral principles of how a society has to be structured. Moral rules always simplify social reality, and such a simplification is never neutral. It expresses structures of domination and alienation. It expresses (new) interests to "rule" society in the name of an abstract concept.

The determinant mechanism toward the revolutionary transformation of society would have nothing to do with a morality at all. In the development of capitalism the contradiction between the growing possibilities of the productive powers and the conservative production-relations (backed by a state and a whole apparatus of legal and moral rules) would become so extreme, that the overthrow

of these production-relations would, in the awareness of the workers, be the evident goal of their activities, and this awareness would not be mediated or inspired by a morality. What Marx tried to develop was, in other words, a materialist theory of enabling conditions — the stages in the development of productive powers — and of enabling agents — a class of cooperatively integrated productive workers —. At a certain moment of history, workers will, induced by their living conditions, understand the historical process and ascertain the direction of change, casting off their role of unwitting participants and becoming conscious, revolutionary agents.

In his well known introduction to *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* Marx outlines the contradiction between the development of human productive powers and production-relations, and the result of this contradiction in descriptive, factual terms, as a contradiction between the effective possibilities of an economic system given its technology, of the real development of human productive capacities, and the institutional obstructions for their realisation and expansion. Capitalism cannot but collapse, workers cannot but strive after the socialisation of the means of production. These are necessary results of the unsurmountable contradictions, raised by capitalism. This combination of human purposive action and historical necessity is not contradictory: the concept of historical inevitability does not imply that human actions are causally determined. What is said is that given certain characteristics of human beings and social circumstances, certain consequences of collective action are predictable. (Wood A.W. 1981, 115).

The social formation, resulting from capitalist contradictions, will, on its turn, not be governed by a conception of justice. As may be deduced from Marx's remarks on the transitional mode of production (the first stage of communism) in his *Gotha-critique* it will be efficiency, in terms of productive output, rather than justice, that will be a guiding principle for production and distribution: by each according to his capacities, to each according to his contribution (or product) (Raes K. II, 1983) This transitional period is to be considered as a further advancement, a multiplication of human productive capacities. It is the period in which technology transcends (capitalist) economy. The ever-growing capacities of human productive agents will satisfy more and more human needs, *as a result and not as a moral intention*. That is; producers will not be motivated by the moral aim to satisfy needs, but by the tasks of their productive activities themselves. From Marx's point of view, it

doesn't make sense to organize production in terms of moral criteria. The only criterium to guide production is production itself. Moral criteria are inevitably situated outside the productive activities themselves, are *alien* to them and cannot therefore be considered appropriate guides for these activities. Production must, according to Marx, be inspired by the productive 'spirit' itself, and by nothing else. Its value is *intrinsic* to the human being. Where it aims at goals outside the activities themselves (goals such as profit, a wage or merit and desert) it is alienated, prostituted, de-humanised. This is, I think, the fundamental meaning of the communist adagium "by each according to their capacities, to each according to their needs". It describes a *factual feature* of communist society and is not a moral prescription. (Buchanan A. 1982) It was not meant to mean that production, the motivations of productive agents, should be organized *in order to* satisfy needs or should be aimed at satisfying them, it was meant to mean that *if people can develop their (productive) capacities freely, then the result will be that people can satisfy their needs freely.*

The idea of the possibility of an auto-regulative social ordering, in which the state, law and morality would "fade away" and in which social relations would become transparent, seems to be fundamental here. Any external authority, that governs over men, is to be abolished. The very nature of institutional arrangements such as the state, law and morality is contradictory: what they pretend to realize — freedom in the negative and the positive sense — they cannot realize and what they really are has nothing to do with their pretensions. In fact, their justification as systems of freedom is nothing but a fraud, because if they really had attained their proclaimed goals, they would have become superfluous, value-less. Marx's opposition to the contradictions inherent to capitalism was therefore not translated in a 'morality of harmony' which would reduce the contradictions. No, he considered them at the same time as (a) the motor of history (producing fundamental social changes) and (b) something to be abolished *within* the development of the contradictions themselves. There is no moral redeemer to harmonize or to stabilize them. Only knowledge, developed from within the productive and struggling activities of the working class is apt to learn people (a) the truth about capitalism and (b) the effective means to translate and to put into practice their opposition to capitalism.

As far as actuality was concerned, Marx identified the struggle

for socialism with the maximal deployment of the productive activities of the working class. They were in themselves the womb of socialism and constitute at present the driving force of history. Their internal structuring, which is essentially cooperative as against the antagonistic structure of production-relations, offers us the clues for the social relations in a socialist society. There is no need for an externally mediating morality. This is important for the polemic on whether Marx did proclaim 'solidarity' as a moral principle for inter-proletarian relations or not. Now I think that from Marx's point of view solidarity was not at all a moral prescription but an enabling, factual condition. It defined the real position of all workers in the labour-process, and it is this position of cooperation by integrated productive action that results in solidarity in the production-process and not a moral rule. It is in the rational self-interest of the workers to act in solidarity with each other. Rational, that is, if indeed it can be shown that it is in the self-interest of everyone as well as of all proletarians to overthrow capitalism. Here, Marx takes an objective point of view on class-structure, and not a subjective point of view on the ways actors can change their position individually within the said structure. It need indeed not be the case that individual and class interests coincide: an individual proletarian has a chance of becoming a capitalist or independent producer, and if this is his aim it is not in his 'rational self-interest' to overthrow capitalism. However, even if each individual proletarian stands a chance of escaping from being a member of an exploited class and of becoming a capitalist himself ("the American Dream") it is not true that all proletarians can become capitalists. (Cohen G.A. 1983, 3) For, capitalism would cease to exist then. There would be no more people left to exploit. On the other hand, class-solidarity is a necessary condition to overthrow capitalism; if no individual proletarian can overthrow capitalism, all proletarians can. Therefore, if from a *class* point of view, all proletarians share a rational self interest in overthrowing the capitalist mode of production, this *need* not be the case from an individualistic point of view, and this is the very reason why many marxist authors plead for class-solidarity as the (necessary) morality for working class members (Fisk, M. 1981) I do not think however that in Marx's eyes a morality could be the foundation of solidarity. Even if an individual worker becomes a capitalist he cannot, in his rational interest *as a worker* (a structural position and activity) accept capitalism. His objective position and activity within production relations is to be taken into account in

the issue of solidarity, not the subjective way an individual can possibly act within existing social structures. The enabling condition to overthrow capitalism was for Marx not the imposition of a morality, but (a) the acceptance by the working class of historical materialism as *its* worldview and (b) the factual development of the productive powers toward a destruction of production-relations. In Marx's theory there is an intrinsic link between growing knowledge and technology and growing proletarian consciousness.

I do not claim that Marx's point of view was the right one on this issue, I would only like to emphasise the coherence of this anti-moralist position. Anyway, even if Marx was wrong in that international proletarian solidarity did not evolve as the thought it would, he certainly was not wrong in searching for and founding solidarity or other enabling conditions to change social structures in the objective social positions of human beings instead of in an alien moral concept.

If the 'collective worker', as an actor in the socialised labour process and as the true bearer of productive technology engenders relations of solidarity, then the problem is rather to look which social ties capitalist economy produces and changes in the process of capitalist restructuration and market expansion. G. Therborn approaches the constraints upon working class collectivity from three angles: (a) the major source of wealth making — "capitalist economy dominated by industrial production and by the transport and storage of goods tends to produce working class collectivity; while, in contrast, capital accumulated in wholesale trade, banking and the capitalisation of ground rent... will produce far less proletarian unity or self-conscious organisation" — (b) the kind of labour force recruited and employed — "the more homogeneous the workforce, the more easily collectivity may develop out of it" — and (c) the socio-technical relations of the labour-process *per se* — "the space of autonomy available to workers as a collectivity in the labour process" —. (Therborn G., 1983, 42–43) Such-like research seems much more promising to elucidate class-solidarity, than the prescription of a moral rule, even if the conclusion of it *could be* that the solidary collectivity, necessary by overthrow capitalism appears no more to exist.

III. It is interesting to raise the question to those who defend a "marxist morality" what moral values, what moral rules, what moral view on mankind and its history are so intrinsically linked to

the historical materialist interpretation of history and its dynamics that they cannot be disassociated from the project. What is typically "marxist" in that morality, and what is typically "moral" in that marxism? It is useful to keep in mind that the "moral case" for socialism (in the marxian sense) can and has been made from various moral perspectives (Kantian, utilitarian, contractarian, aristotelian) as well as from various non-moral perspectives (technological, organizational). On the other hand, the opponents of Marx mainly criticized his scientific presumptions, his analysis of capitalism. If Marx's theory of capitalist exploitation would appear to be true, no Kantian or no natural rights moralist could possibly still justify the capitalist mode of production, where exploitation is precisely the treatment of people as solely a means.⁴ The 'subversive' nature of Marx's theory of society is situated in its descriptive features. He did not claim to develop a *distinctively* moral critique of capitalism, but at the same time he condemned the suffering, misery, irrationality, mental degradation, alienation, exploitation and oppression it produced. Capitalism was condemned from *any* perspective. So, Andrew Collier argues that marxist theory is (if it is true) normatively uncontentious and uncontroversial. If Marx's theory is true, nobody can doubt that socialism is in any meaning an objective improvement over capitalism. (Collier A. 1981) This standpoint can of course only be maintained within the range of axiologies in which powerlessness, submission, resignation of satisfaction or of human life itself are not made into (positive) values. Here we reach what Collier calls a "logical breakdown in the possibility of rational argument". The rejection of anti-naturalistic axiologies is indeed inherent to marxism and implies as such a value-judgment. It asserts no specific ends of human life, but it rejects values alien to the naturalistic ends of human beings, whatever these ends may be. This rejection is based on Marx's scientific worldview on what human beings are and feasibly can be. (McMurthry, 1978).

It follows from this approach that another question becomes fundamental. If it was his *intention* to search for a non-moral, theory of social reality and emancipation, it may be asked what the relevance of such a project can be today. Regardless of the words Marx used, he intended to develop a social science in which moral prescriptions do not play a founding part, and this precisely for the sake of human emancipation. Such an attitude is not incoherent. Growing knowledge may as such be considered a fundamental aspect of as well as an essential tool for human liberation and anyway, the

scientific nature of a work does not preclude ethical and other valuations. Even if Marx has not really freed himself from moral prescriptions, it does not follow that we do not have to nor may take seriously the scientific intentions of Marx, more specifically his intention to develop a genuine theory of mankind, history and society that is independent from a specific moral point of view. Where he has failed, the work can be carried on by others.

It is arguable that Marx's anti-moralism was inspired by reasons which do not give a total account of what morality is all about. This is true of many, if not most, critical standpoints. They reject a certain concept or practice because of what they consider to be their most typical, most essential characteristics or implications. It is true for instance for Marx's rejection of a Feuerbachian essentialist account of 'human nature' (Althusser L. 1965), for his critique of the concepts of 'rights' (Pachukanis, 1970) or 'interests' (Heller A. 1978) as well as for his rejection of the concept of justice. They were all condemned for their fetichist, reductionist implications. It is therefore important to detect *why* Marx rejected *certain* aspects or implications of a concept or practice in order to evaluate its "to the pointness" for the sake of argumentation and clarification. If we can draw a clear picture of what Marx thought to be the "paradigm case" of what a morality is, it *may* be relevant to try to propose a "morality" toward which his criticisms cannot be directed.

In what follows I will (very tentatively) in the first place try to deal with these last questions. The reason for this is that after the abberations of the Stalinist interpretation (and practice) of "scientific socialism", many marxists have stressed the rejection of this scientific project and directed their attention to the 'humanist' and 'moral foundations' of marxism. Whilst these intentions undoubtedly were to rescue Marx from totalitarian interpretation and abuse these projects have nevertheless (a) not solved the problem of the rational foundation of such a 'humanist marxist morality' and (b) overlooked too much that Marx — whatever the interpretation — had strong reasons to try not to found his theory on a specific moral outlook. One of them was precisely that he did not want to remake mankind from scratch or to define/impose a specific human good that anyone had to pursue. Such was the project of the 18th century French constructivist Enlightenment-philosophers (d'Holbach, Morelli, Rousseau) which Marx criticised for their over-estimation of the political in their designs of a "new man" and a "new society" (Cfr. his critique of Rousseau in MEW 1, 369). Many opponents of

Marx (Talmon J.L. 1952, Hayek F.A. 1979) suggest a direct line from these French rationalist constructivists toward marxism to condemn the latter for its totalitarian view on societal democracy. (Raes K. 1983, I, 218). Marx was, however, a political sceptic with regard to giving the political a central role in (re)building society. He was suspicious of moral constructivists and political pedagogues. So, contrary to many interpretations of Marx's work, the anti-moralistic stand and Marx's attempts to develop a "scientific socialism" can precisely be defended as intended to *avoid* such politico-pedagogical constructivism, and to take sides for the complete emancipation of *all* human senses and qualities, as it is put in *On The Jewish Question*. Intentions are of course bad arguments to save a theory from totalitarian interpretation but, anyhow, such an interpretation does not *only* follow from the scientific project. Much repression and human suffering may have been caused by scientific ideologies but *in any case* the same can be said of moralistic ideologies. For my part, I do not see very well why the other great anti-moralistic philosopher of the 19th century, Friedrich Nietzsche, is yet (rightly) a long time washed from the abuse made of his "beyond good and evil"-thinking by National Socialist ideologues in Germany (so as even to make him one of the important sources of inspiration of recent anarchist thought, as is the case for Foucault) whilst a same attitude toward Marx still seems open to the suspicion of totalitarian thinking. Is it Marx, or is it the scientific project per se that is suspect? And why are explicitly irrationalist social philosophies not the target of a similar vehement attack?

When we consider the debate on Marx's interpretation of conceptions of justice and morality, those who tried to reconstruct Marx's project on a non-moral base are, I think, more faithful to what Marx tried to develop than those who reconstruct it in terms of a "marxist morality". At the same time however, much of the debate in anglo-saxon analytical publications is somehow wrongly explicitated because (1) defenders as well as opponents of a scientific resp. moral marxism both use a strict is/ought-dichotomy, which was alien to Marx's worldview and (2) because the difference between a *moral foundation* and an *ethical outlook* is not clearly established.

The arguments for my interpretation are mainly based on an explicitation of what the opposition between the moral and the non-moral good implies within an ethical or axiological theory, and of what is meant by a morality or a "moral point of view". I want to

take seriously Marx's attacks of moralism and morality and to interpret literally the expression in the *Communist Manifesto* that the historical movement of communism "breaks the staff with all morality".

IV. It is important to note that the anti-moralist viewpoint of Marx (a) not only rejects the proposition to construct socialist/communist society, as well as the class consciousness of the proletariat on an alternative *moral* social structure or social attitude but (b) at the same time proposes to struggle *against* existing moralities considered to be alienating and oppressive ideologies, functional for the reproduction of existing social relations and functional *only* for them. This is not a defence of the individual "free rider" who takes advantage of the moral behaviour of others by being himself a-moral and who would no longer be able to take advantage of existing moral rules if others acted in the same way. Nor it is a defence of the Stirnerian kind of proprietarian lonely soul. It is a plea in favour of the liberation of all human beings from the false pretensions of moralities and moralists. According to Marx, communism will be a non-moral society, a society which is not based on nor ruled by or aiming at a specific morality, and this society will be the result of the non-morally inspired activities of the working class.

(1) this anti-moralism is not to be reproached that it intrinsically paves the way for the establishment of *total state power*. The struggle against existing moralities and against all those who are in power on behalf of them is a fortiori a struggle against a society where total state power proclaims to be and acts as if it is the moral consciousness of the people. An anti-moralist refuses to submit to moral rules for the sake of these rules, because he denies that the hierarchisation of values which is implicit in these rules corresponds to a reality, different from the interests of the ruling class. He cannot be but a pluralist. Not in the liberal-democratic sense of rights-based pluralism, favouring the dominance of exchange-values over all things, activities, human beings and their qualities, but in the sense, Marx refers to when he depicts the 'integral individualism' of communism: the "individual rich in needs" Agnes Heller analyses in her *The Theory of Need in Marx* (1978).

(2) Neither is *subjectivism* or *nihilism* implied in an anti-moralistic viewpoint. It is perfectly arguable to say on the one hand that ethical values are objective (qualities of things, actions or beings)

whilst denying that they can be ordered or structured within a definite morality, a definite system of moral rules. Using a well known distinction in moral theory we can defend a theory of the objective goods, while denying the possibility or desirability to establish a theory of the objective moral right. Such an approach could be called a relativist — or situationist — objectivism; values are objective, but their ordering — their rational ordering — is relative to the nature of the situation, the actors, their purposes and so on (Apostel L. 1984, 203). An objectivist axiology or ethics does not preclude anti-moralism or include an objectivist ‘morality’. Robert Nozick, for instance, writes in his *Philosophical Explanations*: “Although the individual values themselves are objective, we do not suppose there is one uniquely correct objective ranking of them, one optimal (feasible) mix of them, one fixed desirable schedule of trade offs among them. There is some open range within whatever partial rankings of value are objectively correct. Individuality is expressed in the interstices of the objective rankings of value, in the particular unified patterning chosen and lived; this itself will be objectively valuable but not objectively ranked in relation to other comparable patternings.” (Nozick R. 1981, 448) Moreover, if there exists, in the nature of things, no universally hierarchised value-structure arising from “human nature”, if any individual and any situation is in one relevant aspect indeed unique, isn’t such a ‘relativist objectivism’ then not the only really coherent form a naturalist objectivism can take? A naturalist ethics cannot offer us invariant rules — that is; a morality — because reality isn’t invariant. Hence, invariant hierarchisations of value are necessarily idealistic; real actions cannot be grasped within a universal structure of rules or, in any case, cannot *yet* be grasped in it, by lack of knowledge about what human beings, and the circumstances in which they live really are. A moral construction of the world of human action and value is apt to destroy potential human capacities and needs about which we do not have yet grounded knowledge.

However, an individualist objectivism, like the one Robert Nozick defends, overlooks in the “here and now” one fundamental fact: that in the actual world of specifically socialized and dominated people, the “uniqueness of any individual or situation” is largely irrelevant — also from their subjective point of view — either because it has been repressed or because it has developed in structures that are socially canalized, and frustrate or negate the very ‘uniqueness’ of the individual. In a world situation where an overwhelming part

of the population is equalized by living conditions of hunger, starvation and the absence of the most minimal qualities of life, the statement that individuality is unicity sounds like a cynical unfulfilled truth. Relativist objectivism and the statement about the uniqueness of any human being can therefore only be considered "potential truths": if conditions would be so that any individual is able to develop his own potentialities freely, then individual uniqueness could relevantly be defined by "the particular unified objective ranking of value be chosen and lived". Consequently relativist objectivism necessarily involves the struggle against all social conditions — among which the state, morality and law — frustrating the realization of what people really are potentially. Here, the anti-moralist is in a somewhat-difficult position; the existence of morality is, in his view, caused by specific social relations of oppression and alienation. However, is it rational to reject the consequences and to think this will lead to a solution of the "problem"? We do not reject medical health care *because* we reject illness, don't we? The anti-moralist will argue here that morality is not only a consequence of frustrating social relations, it is also a fundamentally frustrating mechanism itself, not curing the fact of repressive social relations but causing their reproduction.

(3) This brings us to the issue of *ethical relativism*. We must discern normative from meta-ethical relativism, apart from descriptive relativism which defends the uncontentious thesis that there are, in fact, in history as well as in different parts of the world, diverse and conflicting moralities. Normative relativism defends the thesis that "an action X is morally right in a society S if and only if X is permitted, approved or obligatory by the institutions of S". Meta-ethical relativism may imply the thesis that (a) there is no unique rational method for resolving ethical disputes (because (a₁) there is no rational one or (a₂) there is more than one) or (b) there are several, objective bases or methods for resolving ethical questions, each with a historically restricted validity or (c) there is a single rational method for resolving ethical disputes, but it doesn't resolve all competing ethical claims. (Shaw W.H. 1981, 24–25).

Now, as far as the marxian 'sociology' of *morality* (and justice) is concerned, it certainly is committed to the thesis that valuations of moral rightness are relative to a certain historical social formation; an action X is just in society S if and only if it accords with the institutional practices that are appropriate for S's mode of production. (Shaw W.H. 1981, 43) For Wood, the sense of what it

means to say something is morally right or just is, from a marxian perspective, objectively laid down by the structures, inherent to the dominant mode of production (exploitation is just under capitalist relations, slavery is just in a slave mode of production) even if people in these societies think that they mean something else, when they call a practice right or just, e.g. express a universalistically intended claim about what is morally right or just. In a sense, this is the Thrasymachean interpretation of the meaning of justice, Plato develops in his *Republic* (Cfr. Pitkin H. 1974, 175) A standard of justice can for Marx, as Wood has made perfectly clear, only be meaningful from within the mode of production in which it arises and to which it corresponds and hence, the wage relation between workers and capitalists is just according to the only relevant standard of justice which applies. And under capitalism, this standard is the equal exchange of commodities: labour force and wage. Capitalism is a just society, capitalism is a moral society according to its own standards of justice and morality, and these are the only relevant points of view from which issues of justice and morality can be interpreted. If actions within a capitalist society happen to be unjust, this judgment implies only that this action is deficient by capitalist standards of justice. It is not a condemnation of capitalism as capitalism. An appeal to our sense of justice or our commitment to rights is an attempt to motivate us to act in support of existing social structures, in support of the terms of a social contract, not to overthrow them. (Barrington Moore, 1978, 476) From this point of view we could say that the most consequent theory of justice for a capitalist society is the one F.A. Hayek developed in his *Law, Legislation and Liberty*. (1978)

Concerning the functionality of standards of justice and morality, two standpoints can be developed: (a) they are functional for the dominant class, or for the hegemonic fraction of the dominant class; (b) they are functional for the reproduction of the capitalist mode of production. As in marxist theories of the state, it is not always clear what the functionality-thesis implies. (Cfr. Cohen G.A. 1978). If we take the second functionality as fundamental, we could defend a proletarian ideological struggle, pressing the bourgeois class, or fractions of it, to "keep its word". In this way, Adorno argues that critique of the principle of capitalist exchange must be in terms that take the ideals of equality and freedom — inherent to the ideology of capitalist exchange — seriously, so that the capitalist character of exchange-relationships will be

abolished. To take bourgeois moral principles seriously to the utmost is defended by Adorno as a means to transcend the capitalist worldview. (Adorno T. 1966, 148). A similar plea is developed in Habermas' theory of legitimation. Whilst the universalistic ideology of equality and freedom fits the reproduction of the capitalist system and its state, at the same time it alludes to values, which have nothing to do with capitalism at all. Functionality is, within a global social system a dynamic notion. Ideology does not bind empty pods to the system, but real human beings, and they have to recognize one way or the other the values ideology appeals to. There must be some 'reality' in a moral system, in order that people submit to it. According to Habermas, bourgeois ideology is not *but* an illusion, an instrument of domination. It only functions because in fact it refers — in whatever alienated forms — to real needs and capacities of human beings. (Habermas J. 1973, 131). They are to be brought on the foreground within the morality itself. Two remarks need to be made here. (a) First we do not need to accept the moral system, in order to struggle ideologically within the system of references of the morality. (b) Second, we do not need a morality in order to accept some of the values this morality defends. On the contrary, I will argue further, when I clarify the distinction between moral and non-moral goods, moralities suggest that it is only from *within* their rules that values exist or can be guaranteed, but that is, in fact, not true at all.⁶

Is Marx's anti-moralism committed to a normative relativist point of view? I do not think so. Marx says that there is nothing else to say on the matter of morality or justice *but* these assessments, but that does not mean that when he calls the wage-relation under capitalism "just", he approves of it. He analyses the 'meaning' of justice, but he himself does not accept the relevance of it. Justice has no meaning in his system of thought, it is "nur der ideologisierte verhimmelte Ausdruck der bestehenden ökonomischen Verhältnisse" as Engels expressed. (MEW 18, 277) As was mentioned above however, that doesn't imply a relativism toward values. Marx is committed to the thesis that no independent or autonomous moral standard exists from which to evaluate the rightness of actions, but not to the thesis that there are no criteria to evaluate the rightness of actions. These criteria and this value-judgment are not particularly moral however. To say that the killing of a specific human being in a specific situation is a bad action is quite different from saying that it is morally bad. G.A. Cohen consequently

commits a mistake when he argues in a defence of the concept of justice *within* marxism that there is indeed something like “natural rights”, that is, rights that are not deduced from a positive authority (a state). He quotes the following example to argue his case: if the government forbids protest actions against its nuclear defence policy on legal grounds, then I nevertheless have a *right* to protest, and since this right is not a legal one, it is evident to call it a natural one. He concludes: “The language of natural (or moral) rights is the language of justice, and whoever takes justice seriously must accept that there are natural rights.” (Cohen G.A. 1981, 12) The latter statement may be true (Cfr. Nozick R. 1974, Van Dun 1983) but the former is, I think, false. Cohen does not distinguish between the question whether or not my protest is *right*, and whether or not my protest is *based on rights*. It is not because a course of action is a right one to pursue, that it must necessarily be based on rights. Of course, social philosophers may consider such protests to be right and therefore consider them to be based on moral or natural rights (Marx would certainly not have thought about it that way and would have shared Bentham’s position that talk about natural rights is nothing but ‘nonsense, nonsense on stilts’) but from this it does not follow (a) that people who protest act this way because they “have” such a right or (b) that a moral rights-based (“proprietary”) discourse is necessary to evaluate these protests. People do not protest because they “have” a right — whatever its source — to do so, they protest — maybe — because they consider the nuclear defence policy of their government to be against their interests, their needs as human beings and so on. And this evaluation may be analysed in terms that do not imply a concept of justice or of natural rights. The language of natural rights is dangerously obscuring, because it suggests that people need the bliss of moral authorities for their actions to be the right ones. The choice is not between a ‘positive’ moral authority (a state) and a ‘natural’ moral authority, the choice is whether or not such an authority exists.

To consider persons essentially as bearers of rights, as proprietors of entitlements, is to consider them from an alienating perspective. This is not to say that the goods, protected and structured by rights are themselves not worth protection. But their rights-based protection — if a protection at all — and the conception of persons as bearers of rights need not be the only possible approach in order to value goods, persons or actions. Is it only, as is suggested in natural rights-doctrines, *because of* these rights, *because of* persons

being bearers of rights, that "legitimate" claims can be raised?

What about meta-ethical relativism? Its claims are, I think, not specifically related to historical materialism in so far as the search for a rational method or rational methods for resolving ethical disputes and establishing valuational distinctions certainly fits with it. Anti-moralism is directed against moralism and morality, not against valuing. Yet there is one important sense in which it is committed to a version of meta-ethical relativism, and this has to do with alienation. As long as human beings are alienated from their true being, their fellowmen and their environment, it may be impossible to establish a rational method for resolving ethical disputes⁷. Only within "transparent inner, external and social relations" can objective ethical valuations take place. (Cfr. Cohen G.A. 1972) It is not the object of this article to go much deeper into this matter, but it should be noted that Habermas' project to construct a communicative, dialogical ethics, is precisely an attempt to construct an "ideal speech situation" in which ethical disputes could be settled because alienation would be abolished. (Habermas, 1972). Although there is much I would defend in Habermas' project, it remains an open question whether Marx would have accepted an approach in which the material being of man and his productive activities in the world are totally absent from the ideal communicative situation and whether he would not have condemned such an attempt as historically irrelevant⁸. Nevertheless Habermas' starting point is precisely Marx's critique of alienated practice, and his project is to construct from the historical insights of Marx as well as from the biographical insights of Freud and Piaget the discursive conditions from non-alienated valuing.

(4) Finally, *scientism* has often been associated with the marxian 'totalistic' approach, and certainly Marx believed in the liberating implications of scientific research. Hence, the anti-moralist stand is committed to a scientistic worldview, in that it identifies the seeking after truth with human emancipation. For all that it is important to distinguish between different meanings and implications of "scientism". On the one hand it may refer to an ideology that justifies total power of scientists and their scientific views over society as was the case with Comte's — and much of Saint Simon's — technocratic vision on societal organisation. Habermas has rightly attacked such "scientism" because the function and the results of "positivist" scientific research are in it absolutised. Problems which are fundamentally political are translated into a

pseudo-neutral language, masking and justifying what are in fact relations of power and domination. Such-like ideology is also implicit in E. Pachukanis' depiction of communism. According to him, legal institutions are to be replaced by medical and psychiatric ones, people who oppose the "true" society of communism are not *guilty*, they are *ill*. When social conflicts arise, questions of responsibility or guilt are to be replaced by questions of "treatment", "therapy" or "social defence". As is well-known from the work of Michel Foucault, here, as elsewhere, science and scientific discourse are as a matter of fact used to hide a reality of total state control, leaving the individual without any power of ("legal") defence. Medicine replaces criminal law, but the state is not demolished nor the authoritarian legal decision-procedures.

So, even if it is in fact not an easy task, it is necessary not to identify the thesis on the intrinsic emancipatory implications of the scientifically seeking after truth with (a) the thesis on the neutrality of the organization of science, scientific production and its applications, uses and abuses and (b) the false pretensions of the scientific community that their methods and results are politically neutral and that they are the only possible ones to seek after truth. The "scientism" of Marx is not committed to a positivist truth-concept nor to a justifying stand with regard to the scientific community. Marx was fighting the *false pretensions* of morality and hoped that social problems could be settled by knowledge about the reality of social life and the real causes of social conflicts. It does not follow that his project could not include the fight against the false pretensions of science as well, and in fact, this is how the Frankfurt School has developed his thought.

(5) The strongest argument against anti-moralism is, I think, that a non-moral (non-alienating, transparent) society is, seen from within any realistic historical perspective, impossible, undesirable or unfeasible, because of the nature of human beings, the circumstances in which they live, the problems they are confronted with and so on. True as this objection may be, it offers no *conclusive* evidence in favour of a moralist standpoint and for a defence of some form of moral society. Although I am inclined to take sides with this objection, it has to be admitted that the same argument can be directed against most of the proposed alternative moral societies; many of the 'oughts' they proclaim to be necessary obligatory, objective or universal lack any basis in what people really are or feasibly can be either. (Cfr. Fisk, M., 1980, xiii) So anyway, it is not

evident to think of a 'moral society' as inevitably a 'higher' form of social organization than a 'non-moral society', and the moral project has to be justified as well as the non-moral one in terms of its complete non-moral consequences.

V. Some brief remarks remain to be made before developing further evidence. (a) First, to reject morality as a proper guide for conduct, for the structuring of social relations or as the necessary foundation of an emancipatory social science does not at all imply that the anti-moralist approves of anything moralities condemn. The same things or actions may be condemned on non-moral grounds. As Allen Wood puts it: "To think that one must believe in morality in order to oppose ... atrocities is a superstition; a first cousin in fact of the superstition that one must believe in God in order to be morally good." (Wood A.W. 1983, 27).

It is, as Loring writes, "a peculiarity of our culture that every voluntary act we perform, from the cradle to the grave, which is not inspired by hate, cruelty, or greed, is in danger of being placed to the credit of the moral Ought... (What) is perhaps worst of all in the long run is the effect on the belief, nourished by constantly reiterated moral exhortations, that there is something 'unnatural' about good will and kindness... The moral or dutiful act is by definition never the act that we wanted to do, and in stressing that it is our Duty to be kind the Moralists inevitably implies that we cannot *want* to relieve others' distress or promote their happiness." (Loring L.M. 1966, 186—187) Workers who oppose oppression and exploitation do not necessarily oppose it for moral reasons. It may be reasons of self-interest. You can feel great sympathy for the oppressed without having a specific moral motive for it. You can oppose racist moralities on the basis of a universalist non-racist morality, but you can oppose them also by showing that their presuppositions are false and untrue, that is, by factual evidence. Moreover, historical materialism proved many times that from the point of view of the capitalists, the slave mode of production was not fought against (at a specific moment in history) for moral reasons (as they pretended) but only (and in as far as) economic interests were, and are, determinant. Their so-called moral condemnation was a 'rationalisation' of their economic interests. Here, once again, a tension may exist between moral norms, functional to the ruling class and moral norms, functional to the reproduction of the social system. But that there is a derivative relation between the development of moral

norms and material interests cannot be denied (Cfr. Ossowska M. 1971).

When I use therefore the word "moral" in this article, I use it in a *neutral* sense, not in the often used sense in which moral is evidently identified with something good.

(b) Secondly, it is true that to condemn a thing or an action from a moral point of view necessarily implies the suggestion that the solution of the problem, an alternative course of action is at our disposal *within* the morality, the moral rules themselves. Condemning an action morally is suggesting a moral solution for the problem. I cannot coherently say that I morally condemn something, whilst at the same time saying that it is morally obligatory or permitted. If it is condemned morally, a course of action is an immoral one, and the immoral cannot be permitted from a moral point of view.⁹ Can I say coherently that I morally condemn something, whilst nevertheless saying that it was unavoidable? I do not think so. If a moral ought implies a can, I cannot morally condemn what is (or was) factually unavoidable; no other course of moral action was open. Can I morally condemn something and say that the only way to solve the problem is situated in non-moral means and non-moral results? This too seems to me contradictory. Not only because of the final character of moral valuations, but also because it would reveal the superfluity of morality. If morality can condemn but not solve or propose a moral solution, what is it for? If moral norms are not absolutes and can always be overridden by other considerations, what is then specifically moral in them?

(c) Thirdly, to defend an anti-moralist position does not imply a defence never to follow the moral rules of a society. An anti-moralist may well argue that it is often good for people to follow the precepts of existing moralities. But he will deny that the reasons to do so are specifically moral ones. It may be reasons of fear, of prudence, of ease or opportunity, and undoubtedly these reasons are *in fact* much more typical for so-called "moral behaviour" than is conceded by moralists. What the anti-moralist claims is that we do not need a moral point of view in order to behave in socially livable conditions. But he can, for tactical purposes work with the dominant moral ideology, knowing however, that it is false.

(d) Finally, the anti-moralist is, as has been said, not opposing ethical argumentation and justification. But he denies that such argumentation must take the form of a justification, showing the conformity of specific actions to a pre-established moral system of

rules.

VI. -Moralism— Morality can be considered as a normative source that authoritatively tells people how they have to act. Such *moralism* is rejected by Marx at the level of *description* — a legitimate authority that ‘can’ tell people how they have to act does not exist — as well as at the level of *effectiveness* — such prescriptions will have no effect (not the intended effect or only an alienated effect) if they contradict the real circumstances in which people live and the real action-processes in which they are involved — and at the *normative* level — telling other people how they have to act is an assault on what they are. Marx’s theory provides no moral model for solving conflicts within the existing society nor a moral way for allowing individuals to choose between courses of action within a capitalist society. It proclaims no moral imperatives. Marx does not ascribe autonomy to some “moral point of view” or other and rejects the project aimed at developing an independent moral theory, considered to be inevitably divorced from the realities of actual human beings, social relations and conflicts.

Marx directs this anti-moralism in the first place against all those moral teachers and preachers who consider it to be their task to “moralize” the working class; this class can know better than anyone else what its real purposes and interests are. It is from their own concrete actions and struggles against the capitalist class, it is from their concrete productive activities and from their becoming aware of the purposes of their actions and of the obstructions to develop them further, that their “class consciousness” will arise, not from moral authorities. The norms of working class actions are situated within the activities of the workers themselves. They have no need for an outside authority to determine their goals.

On the other hand, ‘moralising’ the capitalist class by standards alien to their interests, will have no effect either. It would be an illusion to think that capitalism can be changed by an appeal to some morality, however universalist and reasonable it may be.

As a social scientist, Marx was convinced of the revelatory character of his findings, concerning several unacknowledged conditions of proletarian action. His struggle was against lay beliefs, often resulting in oppression and resignation. The universality, inevitability and rationality of the capitalist worldview was tackled by him. At the same time he presumed that the worldview of the proletarian class, being negated in and by the capitalist worldview,

would become 'scientific' and truly emancipatory because of its social position in the production relations and in the production process.

This constitutes the core of Marx's 'scientific socialism'. He does not offer the oppressed a new morality, but scientific knowledge that could help and inspire them in their actual struggles. (Collier A. 1981, 134) Their acceptance of the historical materialist worldview will prove the truth of this worldview, and it will be accepted (according to Marx) because it is true. Marx thought that the practical effect of his scientific socialism would be, that given the *fact* that the proletariat inevitably *is* engaged in a political-economic warfare, that it *is* struggling in order to defend its interests, that it offers the proletariat strong reasons for engaging in, and understanding their struggle as the struggle to overthrow capitalism and replace it by socialism; that is, for comprehending their struggle as *class struggle*. "Given what you, proletarians *are*, given what you do in fact, what you need and what you can, if you would share in your praxis the knowledge and insights I developed in my scientific theory of historical materialism, you cannot but struggle to overthrow capitalism and realize socialism". There is undoubtedly a strong, but defensible Enlightenment-optimism implied in this approach. To show the truth being the best means to realize a truer society. Since human liberation and truth are intrinsically linked, and since Marx joined the option for human liberation, he encouraged policies which can bring about the abolition of an un-free society, and he discouraged policies which could inhibit such a result. Since for Marx *moralism* inhibits and could inhibit such a result, it had to be discouraged.

VII. -ineffectiveness- What can be meant by saying that 'moralising' must remain ineffective? The argument is conditional: if it can be proved that motivating people in accordance with a morality, stimulating a desired state of affairs, is possible, the argument is annihilated. The ineffectiveness-argument can imply various theses:

(a) First, it can mean that there is no such thing as moral motivation. In reality, the causes of people's actions have nothing to do with moral motivations. This is the determinist thesis, that can be backed with a genetic or an environmental theory about the causes of human action; morality as an autonomous source that guides human action does not exist.

The rejection of morality and of imposing a morality by

denying its factual basis, may be argued from the thesis that freedom of the will does not exist or that what really determines actions and practical judgments is not moral reasons at all, but biological drives and needs. If morality is a system of rules and principles which generate within given circumstances reasons for or against doing certain things, and if it is to work by way of the emergence in supposedly rational beings of dispositions to give disinterestedly and without external force due weight to such reasons, then we could maintain that this is not really possible, that it presupposes a kind of human being that does not exist in reality. (Warnock G.J. 1976; 152) For historical materialism, morality or, more broadly speaking, ideology, is not a "material force" in history nor a driving force in human action. But, why then are actual societies, according to Marx, that much in need of ideology in order to reproduce themselves? And moreover, if moralities cannot affect the course of history, why can science — historical materialism itself — do so? Even if the thesis of determinism can be partly true, it cannot be totally true; it must in any case accept that knowledge can change the course of history or the actions of human beings, and this is indeed the central idea of Marx. By definition, science is not unrealistic and does not presuppose a human being that does not exist. Making the motivations of people "scientific" is what is to be done, not moralising. Similarly, Guyau argues in his *Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction* : "L'esprit scientifique est le grand ennemi de tout instinct; c'est la force dissolvante par excellence de tout ce que la nature seule a lié. C'est l'esprit révolutionnaire: il lutte sans cesse contre l'esprit d'autorité au sein des sociétés, il luttera aussi contre l'autorité au sein de la conscience." (Guyau J.M. 1935, 132)

(b) Second, it can mean that it is impossible to change the moral ideas people happen to have. As a child, the individual has been conditioned into certain moral attitudes and these cannot be changed. If this would be true, it is true for anti-moralism as well, and it does not offer a decisive argument against moralism. On the contrary, it may be precisely an argument to start moralising by alternative standards from early education and socialisation onwards.

(c) Third, it can mean that to propose moral rules that do not correspond with the factual circumstances people live in, will fail in practice. Here, the problem of effectiveness falls apart in two arguments.

(c₁) First it can be said that it is impossible to realize the rules

of a morality in a totally consequent or coherent way. Moral rules may always be overridden by other considerations. True as this obviously is, this does not offer a definite argument against the effectiveness of a morality. There still is a fundamental, if not a conclusive difference between *mostly* following the rules of a morality and *never* following them. Moreover it could be argued that it is necessary to motivate people according to unrealisable rules, in order that they realize part of them.

(c2) Second it can be said that it is impossible to realize the rules of a morality, if they lack a firm basis in what people really are already and in the real problems they are confronted with. Morality can never be "above" the material possibilities of social actors. This thesis, however true, is no conclusive evidence against morality either. It may, on the contrary, be used to value the realism/irrealism of moral codes even if — cfr. c1 — the 'realism' of rules of conduct cannot very easily be established.

The ineffectiveness-thesis implies then that moralities can only be realized *if combined* with real, factual tendencies. That is: the moral rules themselves are not the prime motivational determinant. It remains possible that moral rules, "fitting" those tendencies make them stronger, more articulate, more efficient, but they are no autonomous inspirers of human conduct.

Here, the sociology of morality offers strong support for the ineffectiveness-thesis; moral stands, transcending factual relations of *social interdependence*, raise to any moralist the dilemma of ineffective moralising or cynical indifference. As Singer argues in *The Expanding Circle*, our reactions to news of a famine in Africa or of cruel murdering in Latin America are not proportional to what moralists would request. "Those of us who care at all may send a donation to one of the agencies trying to help: ten dollars, or fifty dollars, or perhaps even a hundred dollars. Any more would be a rare act of generosity by the standards of our society. Yet those of us fortunate enough to live in Western Europe, North America, Australia or Japan, regularly spend as much or more on holidays, new clothes, or presents for our children. If we cared about the lives and welfare of strangers in Africa as we do about our own welfare and that of our children would we spend money on these nonessential items for ourselves instead of using it to save lives? (Singer P. 1983, 31) Of course, we dispose of a lot of 'rationalising' answers, taking account of all the sophistication of the "logic of collective action" in order to repress the dissonance between the morality we pretend to accept

and to follow, and our real behaviour. It will be argued that individual deeds of solidarity are irrelevant — maybe even conservative — in the process of changing international relations of exploitation. It will be argued that international charity-organizations cannot be trusted or that the responsibility for the problem of world-hunger is to be found by the owners of capital or by politicians. Nevertheless such attitudes directly imply the refusal to rescue some concrete helpless children from starvation. Ted Honderich has called this, in *Violence for Equality* (1980) the problem of “moral omission”.

Why do people act like this? Why don't they even follow the minimal requirements of Kant's fourth maxime, “the duty to help people in distress, when you can do it without much harm to yourself”? A real sense of identification seems lacking here. For charity, philanthropy or solidarity to develop there is needed a situation of real social interdependence, and an awareness of it. Without the establishment of a network of social relations the moral call for solidarity will remain in vain and ‘sentimental’ for lack of an agency that can solve the dilemmas of collective action. Identification with and recognition of one's fellowmen takes place within a (sometimes expanding, sometimes contracting) social universe, and only where many mutual relations and socio-economic ties exist, will an identification evolve of the wealthier with the poorer.

Contrasted with the strong requirements of moral codes, this makes them look rather vain indeed, and not particularly important.

The arguments on the ineffectiveness of moralizing remain however all open to empirical testing, and do not offer as such conclusive evidence for rejecting moralizing unconditionally. If they give us strong support to reject any non-naturalist, abstract and unconditional morality on practical grounds, they do not prove definitely that an other kind of morality is not possible. Moreover, as arguments within an emancipatory perspective, they are situated within a contrast between moralism and anti-moralism. Both are conscious, *motivational* strategies to change the world. The critique of moralism could fundamentally change if moralism is to be contrasted with apathy, indifference, and undoubtedly, this is a relevant problem for *this* historical period. Marx's anti-moralism was argued within a context of factually developing revolting behaviour, motivated proletarian struggle. But what if indifference develops to be the dominant attitude? Is moralism then not an appropriate strategy to evoke political action?

VIII. - authoritarianism- Morality is authority, it may be argued and authority cannot be accepted. When we are taught a morality, most teachers give us the impression that it has the backing of the highest authority. In moral discourse anonymous authorities are invoked, and it is suggested that people stand in some unconditional relation to them. Morality creates an impersonal 'sense of duty'. Each moral principle is, we come to think, a command from above. Such an impression is deepened all the more by the fact that those who instruct us in moral codes are for us figures of authority themselves: parents, school teachers, political leaders. And they use their authority in the teaching of moral rules to convey to us the idea that these principles are backed by something stronger than even their own authority. (Fisk M. 1981, 20). Morality is the language of the Super Ego, made up of social rules which are derived through conditioning influences of people with authority. Moral rules, imposed on the child, are subsequently interiorised by it. The source of them is eventually repressed, so that it seems as if the child is guided in its actions by an autonomous conscience.¹⁰

From this angle, morality is nothing but *false consciousness*; the individual is ignorant of the underlying source of his moral attitudes. It seems *as if* his moral convictions arise from autonomous decision making whilst in fact they arise from his Super Ego, a source of rules which he does not control. This is typical for an ideological belief e.g. a belief (a) whose believer remains ignorant of the reasons for or the causes of his holding it and (b) which would not be held if the believer ceased to be ignorant of these reasons or causes. (Shaw W.H. 1981, 36).

It could be objected that nevertheless, from the fact that rules are imposed by authoritarian means it does not follow that these rules *could not* be accepted by a person in a situation of full knowledge. Knowledge too is often "pressed on the child" by authoritarian means. If ignorance is considered to be fundamental in what makes a belief an ideological one — and this was certainly an essential part of Marx's critique of ideology — then the test of these beliefs — moral and others — is in a situation without such ignorance, that is, a situation of truth. We may refer here to Habermas' *Herrschaftsfreie and transparent test on norms* as well as to Ackerman's dialogical process of legitimation backed by a "perfect technology of justice and truth" (Cfr. Raes K. 1984, 284).

Possibly as this may be, it does not take away (1) that morality in fact does not function this way and (2) that it may be that it is

impossible to realize or conceptualize a situation of truth, of total transparency. Moreover isn't it more plausible that in an imaginary *Herrschaftsfreie* situation no *moral* rules would be established because they simply would be superfluous in such a situation ?

The authoritarianism of moralism also appears clearly when we look at its implications at the political level. If, as historical materialism maintains, men are the products of their circumstances, then men — and their ideas — will change if circumstances are changed. If it becomes however the purpose of a group of politico-moral educators to change the moral convictions of people in order to change the circumstances, a contradiction arises: how did these educators change their convictions ? What circumstances changed them ? Marx would certainly have rejected the opposition (implicit in Lenin's theory of the revolutionary party) between the undetermined educator and the determined educated. It assumes a false dichotomy and leads in political reality mostly to the opposition between the free and undetermined political or moral leader and the unfree and determined mass. (Cfr. Piven & Cloward 1977) This leads directly to a form of paternalist socialism, treating others — the working class — as the passive effects of causes beyond their control — and considering the socialist leaders as undetermined "above" such causes in a realm of illusory freedom that is otherworldly and causeless. For Marx, men's changing circumstances cause them to act otherwise than they would have done if those circumstances had remained the same, and these circumstances will have in their turn effects upon succeeding conditions. He elaborated a notion of reciprocally developing self-determination, which was politically developed further by Rosa Luxemburg, and rejected the old static dilemma according to which men are either unilaterally determined/changed by external circumstances or either determined/changed only by their own will. Self-determination was for Marx not a question of "will", but as well a question of knowledge about circumstances and individual potentialities.

Moralism fails in two ways to take into account this insight. (a) First it maintains the idea that morality is an undetermined set of principles and rules, living a life of its own. (b) Second it suggests the undetermined (objective, autonomous) status of the moral educator, who knows as an impartial spectator what is good for others. But a person cannot be 'obliged' to act contrary to the course his character and the circumstances inevitably determine him to take, and there is no point in obliging him to act in accordance with this

course for he will do so in any case. (Kamenka E. 1972, 96).

As long, and in as far as the moral educators do not think themselves to be determined by circumstances and their character, as long as they think themselves to be "above" the causalities assumed to determine the actions of others, their moralism is more likely to be an expression of their social circumstances and their interests, then what they suggest their intentions to be.

If morality takes its interest in the adjustment of conflicts, such an interest cannot be "higher" than specific, socially determined interests. There is no impartial, objective form of conflict-resolution which stands above specific interests. This thesis can still imply two statements: morality pretends to be for the common good or for the universal right but in fact (a) there is no such good or (b) it is not true that this morality is — subjectively as well as objectively — in the common good. If the latter position is maintained, it is factually, but not conceptually a revolutionary statement. (Warnock G.J. 1976, 156) Not the principles and concepts of morality as such are attacked, but only the specific moral conclusions that are conditionally accepted in particular societies. Marx however maintained (a) as well; social contradictions in society prevent a common good from existing: class interests are that opposed that they cannot be brought under or within a common good-standard.

This last thesis can only be comprehended, if we interpret it as a rejection of morality as a guard of a "common good". From a non-moral point of view, there may exist a "common" good, even if this good cannot be deduced from the sum of factual goals people pursue. 'Common' *need* not be the same as "for all" (as is suggested in utilitarian morality). It is not incoherent to say that the overthrow of capitalism is a 'common good', a 'public interest' (Buchanan A. 1979). The common good can be against the interests of a certain class, and define a non-moral, revolutionary interest. In fact, Marx defined in his earlier work the proletarian class precisely as a universal class because it was the bearer of the future.

IX. -alienation- The authoritarianism of moralism is backed by its alienating implications. Morality is to us an alien set of demands, distant and disconnected from the real concerns of human beings. It is alienating in the Feuerbachian sense that we are to follow, to obey objective rules because of the characteristics of the rules themselves, their impartiality, objectivity, universality or whatever else.

It represses the facts of social reality from a non-social or pre-social point of view.

This can be demonstrated from the fact that any moral theory that proposes to elaborate a justification for specific moral precepts and rules, starts from a pre- or non-social, rational, abstract individual from which specific, morally determined, interpersonal relations are deduced. The moral point of view answers the question why I should have to follow a proposed set of rules and precepts, by introducing a non- or pre-social "I". The starting point of justification is to be found in an argumentation, meant to show that morality is a good strategy for some abstract man or that it "pays" the rational, economic or natural-right-man to act morally. From a pre-social point of view social relations are moralised, as if justification mainly lays in "altruism", not in "egoism", in "universalism", not in "particularism". Sociability is to be justified, not individuality. The "is" is identified with some abstract individual, whilst the "oughts" are directed towards others, as if others are fundamentally nothing but constraints on the development of the "I". Such an approach cannot be *but* alienated, because it rejects a priori the social, and changing aspects of being an "I". The problems it aspires to solve are false problems because they are badly formulated to start with, because they start from an "I" which is unreal, ideological, alien from the "I's" which exist, from the relations into which an I comes into existence. Moral society, as well as political or legal society are alienated societies, standing above the human actors and recognizing them only in the form of moral, political or legal subjects.

X. - counterfinality - Another argument that could help explain Marx's aversion to interpreting socialism as a just or moral society is of the following, "social-dialectical" nature. (Cfr. Elster J. 1978) Many preferred forms of social organisation, many preferred human characters are and/or can be the unintended results of complex classes of courses of action. In order to realize a society into which the free individuality of any human being can flourish, it is not evident to say that this society and the motives of its actors, must be intentionally organized to achieve this goal e.g. that anyone has the duty to strive after it.

As is well known, Marx situates — contrary to Hegel — the sphere of the (possibility to realize) the public interest in civil and not in political society. He rejects the schizophrenic idea that only

the formal sphere of the political is apt to give content to universality. It is the essence of civil society to give content to the public interest, because the actions of individuals which constitute it are directed toward it, whatever their intentions may be. Their actions are social in nature, whatever the ideas individuals may have about their relations and activities in civil society. The evils of civil society cannot be mediated by a moral beacon that reigns over it. We can only get rid of them, by getting rid of the capitalist structure of civil society itself. Precisely for this reason, Marx rejects the division between political and civil society, as because of this division, the sphere of the real public interest is separated from the sphere that is proclaimed to be in the public interest. So, Marx does not follow Hegel who accepts the separation of bourgeois society, organized around the competition of egoistic men, and political society, organized around the moral behaviour of political men.

It is from within bourgeois society that the public interest is (to be) developed. This approach has some similarities with the ideas of Mandeville and Smith. According to these authors the public interest is not to be conceived as the result of intentional political-ethical action, but as the unintended consequence of a collection of egoistic actions. This idea is not to be confused with the idea of the natural identity of interests, developed by the French Physiocrats and the Utilitarians; the invisible hand is *not* a hidden hand. It is a consequentialist, and not an intentionalist notion.

I do not want to suggest that Marx would have accepted the morality of "private vices, public benefits" proclaimed by Mandeville in his *Fable of the Bees*, but the idea that the public interest must be approximated as a causally determined consequence, rather than as a morally intended goal, certainly did play an important role in Marx's social and dialectical theory. Moreover he was committed, as these authors to the view that society itself can establish auto-regulative mechanisms, and that social control by an *external* force (a state) was not only factually not as autonomous as is suggested (the political remains dependent on the economic logic) but was also something that in his view would disappear during the transition period to communism; society would be autoregulated and institutional goal-directed powers *over* society would fade away. We can, it is true, discern a certain tension in Marx's work on the nature of such an auto-regulation by society. What is meant by saying that "society regulates the general production"? On the one hand, there are his discussions on the Paris Commune in *The Civil War in France*.

Here Marx approves of the aims of the Commune to democratise military, political, economic and social apparatuses totally by a system of direct election. On the other hand there is his depiction of communism in *The German Ideology* as a spontaneous harmony of cooperatively associated producers. I think that the latter consists of his fundamental view on communist society, the former being emphasised as an instrument to overthrow class-rule. In his criticisms on Proudhon's wage-egalitarianism in *The Poverty of Philosophy* as well as in his criticisms of the "Juristen-Sozialismus" of Lassalian policies in the *Gotha-Critique*, he attacks political-moral societies because of their counter-productive consequences.

As was mentioned above, the description of communism as a society in which anyone acts according to his capacities, and gets the goods, necessary to satisfy his needs must be interpreted in a consequentialist way. Approaching communist society from a moral or legal perspective would imply an over-estimation of the role of moral motives in changing and reproducing social structures; the fallacy of mentalism on the one hand and of voluntarist legalism on the other. Intentions to realize some ideal scheme of distribution do not guarantee that this scheme will be achieved in practice, and it may well be that the intentionally goal-directed ordered structure of social organization is the very reason why the intended goals are not attained.

If we had to choose between a society A, in which all or most social planning, and in which all or most individual action is directed toward the realisation of moral good X, but in which X is not attained, and a society B, in which all or most social decisions and all or most individual action are not at all directed toward the realization of the good X, but in which X is attained in fact, which society is to be preferred? In society X, motivations are in agreement with the prescriptions of a morality and anyone acts from a sense of duty, but the consequences are not in agreement with the motivations. In society B, on the other hand, motivations are not in compliance with a morality at all, but the goods which the failing morality of society A aimed morally at realizing are in fact attained. Is the moral society A a better society than the non-moral society B? From a moral point of view, it certainly is, but why should we accept this point of view?

Of course, the above-mentioned argument could be used in a defence of a technocratic instrumentalism: we influence motivations of people in order to realize X, even if people do not know this to

be the purpose of their motivational behaviour. This however is not what the argument intends to say. What it says is that even the moralists will have to prove the value of morality, and this from a point of view outside the morality; he will have to prove that morality is worth imposing on human beings. It may well be that the strong requirements, any morality imposes on human conduct are not worth its consequences, because they are not at all a guarantee for them. Is it not indeed the case that the price of morality, the prize of imposing a sense of duty, in terms of unavoidable social and psychological conflict and repression, is actually so high, as to cancel or make nugatory the hoped for dividends? (Warnock G.J. 1976, 155) Is it so evident that morality is needed in order that some goods would be guaranteed, when we know that moral behaviour is always, for reasons that concern the logic of collective action, apt to fail? As P.H. Nowell-Smith noticed; "Many of the worst crimes in history have been committed by men who had a strong sense of duty, just because their sense of duty was so strong". (Nowell-Smith P.H. 1954, 247).

The argument on the counter-finality-possibility is, however, only half of an argument. The critique of concepts of justice and morality which have the intention to order social relations by legal or moral rules is that such concepts could have, because we cannot predict future social developments, conservative if not regressive or counterproductive tendencies. Proclaiming principles of justice or morality to define communist society could have anti-emancipatory, destructive consequences. This argument has, for instance, also been put forward by Popper and Hayek against socialist revolutions, as intentional projects to restructure social wholes; if you want to 'moralize' 'social wholes' which you do nor can know totally, this will lead to totalitarian regression and repression rather than to emancipation.

The problem with such an argument is that even if it can be true that socially established moral rules *can* have anti-emancipatory consequences in an "open future", it is equally true that actual, factual tendencies in societies that are not "morally ruled" can have these consequences as well. "Moral interference" is not to be compared with socially spontaneous harmony, it is also to be compared with other kinds of interference, and this is precisely the reason why a critique of moral patterning, as the one Robert Nozick developed in his *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1974) will not do; a non-morally patterned society can, by the logic of collective action

develop toward a society that is undesirable from *any* point of view, just like this can be the case with a morally patterned one.

However, the counter-finality-argument remains valid in that it once again shows that a moral system of rules cannot be a final or the "highest" arbiter and that the imposition of a moral sense of duty, from whatever source it arises from, is not at all an evident means to attain certain preferred states of affair. The attempts to create or impose moral rules-respecting institutions will always be doomed to failure. Moral rules are inevitably violated, even if everybody lives up the rules, embodied in institutions. To value societies we need non-moral standards, and morality can only be accepted if it is not ultimate. (Cfr. Miller R.W. 1981, 339) Once moral rules are concretely defined it can easily be shown that they may lead in specific situations to the frustration of human capacities and needs, and this can never be a goal per se. The ultimate goal of social life is not whatever moral rule that can be proclaimed, but the promotion of the greatest possible variety and quantity of non-moral goods.

XI. - morality - As has been stated above, the fundamental character of any concept of justice or morality is that they are rule-based, theories of "the right". Justice or morality do not define the factual goals or qualities human actors happen to pursue, they define the ways by which these, or some specific goals ought to be pursued. Justice or morality do not make obligatory what people already do pursue.

With Rawls — and with Marx — I think that morality is indeed not typically a collection or class of values called 'good' but that it typically proposes/imposes a *system* of hierarchically structured value-rankings from which an unconditional sense of duty can be derived. Such rankings may be of a teleological (as in utilitarianism) deontological (as in kantianism) or even lexicographical (as in rawlsianism) kind, but this hierarchical characteristic is shared by all moralities. A moral justification takes the form of showing how some decision or action fits into the prescribed hierarchisation of values. It is because of such an ordering that a value becomes a *moral* value, and that moral *rules* can be established. To be moral an act must be performed on principle. "The distinguishing mark of a moral action is not that it does good or even that it is intended to do good, but that the agent believes it is his moral Duty to do it, regardless of its results." (Loring L.M. 1966, 1). In the teleological

morality of utilitarianism, all courses of action are valued from the standard of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. What is morally right is here derived from a right-independent standard of the good. It is from the point of view of the as such non-moral value of pleasure-or-happiness-maximization, that courses of action are morally valued. Utilitarianism not only reduces all relevant aspects of individual values to the one standard of pleasure/happiness, at the same time it reduces all individual pleasure/happiness-functions to the moral standard of the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Whether total or average utility is at stake, or whether a cardinal or ordinal method of ranking is applied does not change this fundamental characteristic of utilitarian morality. Not only the reduction of individual value-seeking to the one and only value of pleasure, but also the reduction of all individual utility-functions to the greatest-happiness-standard is what makes utilitarianism a specific theory of morality. Any action can — in principle — be judged in terms of the overall satisfaction it brings about. In the deontological morality of kantianism, on the other hand, a specific view of human nature, or the human essence is the very basis from which to value actions. Here, the standards of moral goodness are dependent on standards of moral rightness; there is no one moral good, from which the moral right can be derived. The kantian judges actions on their conformity with principles that are validated on a specific conception of human nature. Such a conception places bounds on the ends that can be regarded as moral goods and in this manner also realizes a specific value-hierarchisation that is considered an overriding argument in evaluations. Deontological theories of morality argue that there is a single set of principles or right action, and that the consequences of action cannot change or affect the validity of these principles. (Fisk M. 1981, 80).

The problem whether the moral life is constituted in the first place by “obedience to principles of rightness” or by “striving after (the maximisation of) goodness” is a traditional issue in moral theory and developed at length in Ross W.D. *The Right and the Good* (1930) Frankena W.K. *Ethics* (1963) and Brandt R.B. *A Theory of the Good and the Right* (1979) We need not go much deeper into the highly sophisticated arguments on the interrelations between deontology and teleology in moral theories, but the resulting thesis that it is “the right” which constitutes the most specific moral standard from which the sense of duty is derived is fundamental for a good understanding of anti-moralistic thinking,

and its distinction between the moral and the non-moral good, which is present in all ethical theories. The statement that an action is *morally* good always implies that this action is also morally right, but to say that an action is a good one, does not involve at all that it is a morally right action.

Utilitarianism (we concentrate here on the classic act-utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham) is a theory in which morality — as a theory of the right being dependent on the (maximisation of the) good — is considered as a system of rules promoting the non-moral value of pleasure, happiness or utility. Here, (the moral theory of) the right is made dependent on the good; it is the quantity of good that settles problems or disputes about value-hierarchisations: we are to act always so as to maximise total or average happiness. It is the tendency of an action to promote this non-moral good that determines its moral rightness. Kantianism, on the other hand, rejects the idea that valuations in terms of moral rightness are dependent on the good that happens to result from actions, and Kant has very clearly established the distinction between the good and the moral good. According to Kant, the principles of morality, the principles of the right are independent from considerations on the quantity of good, actions happen to realize. Moral rightness is an autonomous and, at the same time definite standard of valuation. Acting morally is acting on the principle of duty, because of the principle itself. For Kant, a moral good is in no way associated with normal human goods. It is derived from a transcendent ideal which was to be approached through the suppression of all natural impulses, and beneficent or benevolent action was for Kant not moral action at all.

In a specific, but important way utilitarianism is apt to share some characteristics with a non-moral standpoint, not only in that it implies the view that morality is not the highest principle of human life (it is a means toward the realization/maximisation of a non-moral value) but also in that it proclaims the rule that people have to value their actions in terms of their results. Utilitarianism can indeed be interpreted as a theory in which not the above-mentioned “striving after the maximisation of goods” as an *intentional* device is made the supreme criterium, but the real *consequences* of actions. Then it is a consequentialist theory in which neither moral intentions nor moral principles are fundamental but only results of actions. Not the moral qualities of the wants themselves are evaluated, but only their quantitative consequences;

whether pleasure is maximised by pigeon-shooting or creative activity does not matter to the utilitarian. Moreover, when the utilitarian claims that justice is nothing else than that state of social organization in which indeed total — or average — happiness/pleasure/utility is maximised, a resemblance is to be remarked with Marx's critique of the concept of justice as nothing else but a functional standard to value actions from the measure of their conformity to the existing production-relations. To both, justice is not a final or a first virtue of social institutions. It derives its "moral rightness" from its being functional for the realization of other ends.

Nevertheless, in other points, utilitarianism differs considerably from the non-moral approach which is explained here. Contrary to utilitarianism this approach denies (1) that 'the' human good can be defined in a universal structure of moral values, (2) that the human good can be reduced to the one and only value of pleasure, happiness or utility, (3) that the aggregation of all individual pleasure-functions is a definite standard to value consequences of actions in terms of (moral) rightness and (4) that a system of moral rules, a hierarchy of values is the best way to guarantee or maximize the human good. According to Marx, the pursuit of non-moral goods cannot be guaranteed in a specific moral system of right actions without destroying other non-moral goods and values people pursue or happen to develop. Even if the utilitarian would be right in reducing all ethical values to the standard of pleasure, he still has not solved the problem how to weight for instance ethical and aesthetical values in cases of conflict; a plurality of values is anyhow to be accepted. The plea for a maximal deployment of a maximal plurality of values can therefore not be identified with the utilitarian reductionist program. Marx was not the utilitarian, Engels made him look like. Not the material 'how much' is a definite criterium of the scarceless society communism would be, even if the growth in material wealth is a necessary condition for a scarceless society to come into existence. But non-scarcity is rather to be interpreted as a society of free individuals 'rich in needs and capacities' where dependence and alienation are abolished and where any individual can freely choose and live according to his plan of life, than as a utilitarian society of material plenty. (Cfr. Kamenka E. 1972, 82, Heller A. 1978; Brenkert G.G. 1981, 193; Fisk M. 1981, 57).

It is from the point of view that morality constitutes a social hierarchy of values, that we must conclude that the ethical theory of Moore's intuitionism in *Principia Ethica* does not constitute a

morality, because even if Moore considers ethical values to be irreducible to non-ethical values and considers them to be objective, he does not offer us a ranking of them or a method to rank them. Intuitionism proposes a classification of ethical values, not an ordering of them. As Rawls writes in *A Theory of Justice* in his polemic with intuitionism: "The assignment of weights (in a plurality of values, K.R.) is an essential and not a minor part of a conception of justice" (Rawls J. 1971) Rawls accepts the intuitionist position that a plurality of irreducible values exists (against utilitarianism) but at the same time he takes sides with utilitarianism where the fundamental problem of value-ranking is at stake. (Cfr. Wolff R.P. 1977) This is what leads him to his plea for a lexicographical ordering of values in his conception of justice.

From the moral hierarchy of values, rules can be deduced, and these rules form the foundation of the 'sense of duty' that is fundamental in any moral point of view. In *Five Types of Ethical Theory* G.D. Broad brings out very sharply the divergencies between what I would call the *moralities* of Butler, Kant and Sidgwick — dealing in the concept of an ultimate criterium of moral duty, deduced from a hierarchy of values — and the ethical theories of Hume and Spinoza, which lack such an ultimate categorical imperative. "Butler believed in a faculty called Conscience or 'the principle of reflection' which it is man's Duty, as well as his interest, to obey. Kant's moral law is the ultimate criterion for morally Right action, which excludes all interest as a motive. Sidgwick's conception of Duty is based on the intuition that happiness Ought to be promoted." (Loring L.M. 1966, 37).

The search for universal value-rankings seems indeed to be the fundamental issue for any moral philosopher who develops a 'foundation of morality'. Even the pragmatist Rescher writes in his inquiry for an empirical foundation of morality in *The Primacy of Practice*: "Empirical inquiry about human values and purposes is more than a mere listing of discrete items. Above all, it requires information regarding the relative role played by these values and purposes in situations of mutual conflict. Internal relations of weight and precedence ("higher and lower") must be taken into due account. Our purposes are not created equal: some are in a dominant or controlling position vis-à-vis others. What is thus at issue is not just a schedule (or list) of purposes and values, but a *structure*. Within such a structure, an internal comparison of relative equation is definitely possible". (Rescher N. 1973, 137).

The fundamental question becomes therefore *whether some structure or hierarchy of values can claim to be universal.*

The humanist psychologist A. Maslow proposed such a value-hierarchisation, arising from human nature, in his *Motivation and Personality*. According to Maslow "the organism itself dictates hierarchies of values" (Maslow A. 1970, 97) and these hierarchies reveal to be the same for all human beings. If this would be true, a naturalist morality, based on human nature could be established.

The anti-moralist however claims that a universal value-hierarchisation, derived from human nature, cannot (yet) be established. We do not know enough about the human being to claim universality for it and, moreover, it seems implausible, given the diversity of human beings and the diversity of situations they live in. The proclamation of such a universal hierarchy is therefore apt to frustrate and annihilate numerous patterns value-structures can take. The doctrine of a universal human nature is considered to be metaphysical in its claim that each member of the human kind must have an 'essence' that is just like that of any other member of the kind.

In his book *Marx on Human Nature* however, Norman Geras defends a "concept of human nature, encompassing at once the common needs and the general and distinctive capacities of human-kind" (Geras N. 1983, 106) and claims that it is neither idealistic, ahistorical or individualistic. Here, it is important to remark that Geras does not make any statement about universal priorities in values, nor does he express an opinion on the question in which way we "have" to weight the different values people, and different people pursue. Geras does not say that we can establish a 'morality' from the concept of human nature, nor that human nature is "moral". Of course, without any concept of human nature why, and for whom struggle for socialism? How to make sense of the concept of alienation without it? If socialism is worth something, it is worth something for someone, and if alienation is to be abolished, someone has to be freed. But, the problem is whether socialist/communist society is a society based on a new social hierarchisation of values. Geras, as McMurthry (1978) sums up a whole range of typical human needs and capacities. What he (rightly) does not do is order them according to some "essential" quality of human kind. In a moral concept of human nature, I think, that is precisely what happens. Therefore, it may be useful to discern "moral" from "non-moral" concepts of human nature, and to discern the *fact* that today the great bulk of the people are *forced*

into a similar value-hierarchisation, from the communist *alternative* in which this would no more be the case, by lack of a social need for it.

We can even make use of the concept of a "human essence" if we may get rid from any moral connotation. In *A Theory of Possibility* Rescher distinguishes five definitions of "essentials". (1) A property is essential if it is deduced from a preferred description of the individual. (2) A property is essential if it is necessary to preserve the particularity of the individual, distinguishing it from all others. (3) A property is essential if it is derived from a property of the specific properties of natural kinds to which the individual belongs. (4) A property is essential for an individual if it persists during his existence. (5) A property is essential if it stays invariant under a certain number of transformations. (Rescher N. 1975, 38) As Apostel argues the first definition must be rejected for its pure conventionalism, whilst the fourth must be rejected because such an essence may be but accidental. The third implies that laws can already be established. (Apostel L. 1982, 662–663). The second and the last remain as possible candidates. The second gives form to the plan of life, an individual chooses and lives, whilst the fifth formulates precisely what is at stake in the discussion about a "universal human nature". It can establish a minimal combination of needs and capacities but is at the same time establishing the variety in human 'essences' according to definition (2). Because it is of the "essence" of human nature that it is open (except for what is defined by (5)) only a non-moral society is able to realize circumstances in which anyone can live according to his own nature.

Although Marx very often criticizes the contradictions between capitalism and human nature — condemning capitalism for its dehumanizing, alienating, exploitative and destructive implications — he is not judging capitalism from the vantage point of a fixed and elaborated concept of the human essence. Marx's concept of human nature is materialist, social and historical. Human capacities and needs are rooted in human's natural constitution(s), their material embodiment in nature. Certain of them are relatively invariant (food, shelter, sex) but the forms of gratification which they take in different societies and different situations are quite variable. Marx rather talks of human agency, abilities, needs, capacities, potentials and so on. He does not construct a "socialist human nature" that would have to conform with a "socialist moral structure of society".

XII. - the moral and the non-moral good - The distinction between moral and non-moral values was explicitly introduced to interpret Marx's non-moral stance by Allen Wood. He writes: "Social relations may promote or inhibit freedom, community or self-actualisation (the non-moral values Wood sums up together with truth, pleasure, love, security, physical health, comfort ... K.R.) but the content of these three is not determined by the correspondence to prevailing social relations of what people are to do. Justice, right and other moral standards, however, have no meaning or content apart from that which is given them by their function as norms within a given mode of production." (Wood A.W. 1972, 283 and 1980, 149) I would prefer to discern moral and non-moral *goods*, instead of *values*. The realms of value include ethical, epistemological, aesthetical ... values. That beauty is a non-moral value, no one will oppose, but the position defended here is that ethical values — goods — need not be moral.

In *Two Kinds of Values*, L. M. Loring develops similar insights from the distinction between what she calls "ethical and non-ethical (or basic) values". She writes: "There are in common use two distinct systems of evaluation, *both applicable to conduct*. These I describe as (a) *ethical* and (b) *non-ethical* (somewhat arbitrarily but, I argue, justifiable). By my classification *ethical* evaluation is based on the idea of *Duty*, in the Kantian sense, and on the closely associated ideas of *absolute* 'rightness' and 'wrongness' and the categorical 'Ought'. The system of *non-ethical* evaluation I am concerned with here is based on ideas of *benefit* and *harm*... It is possible so to distinguish between these two methods of evaluating conduct that *ethical* 'goodness' and 'badness' — or moral 'rightness' and 'wrongness' — are recognized as essentially independent of ideas of what is *beneficent* or *harmful*; whilst *non-ethical* goodness and badness — or beneficence and harmfulness — are essentially independent of what is, *ethically-speaking*, 'good' or 'bad' — i.e. morally 'right' or 'wrong'. Non-ethical evaluation in terms of beneficence and harmfulness is universally applicable not only to conduct, but to *any things or events as they are seen to affect human interests*." (Loring L.M. 1966, 1). She characterizes non-moral (in our sense) basic-value statements as following. (1) They do not get their meaning from a belief about the *essential nature* of "the good" or a belief about a "world of values" corresponding to the "world of things". (2) They do not use value terms as expressions of personal liking or aversion, approval or disapproval, etc. (3) They

are objective statements, and whilst they cannot all be confirmed or falsified by empirical tests, some such tests may be relevant to a discussion or investigation of whether the thing stated to be good or bad really is so. (4) They are not moral statements or judgments. No part of their significance is derived from any conception of the morally right, of Duty, moral obligation, or what *ought* to be. (5) They are not relative statements, in that to say that something is good (beneficent) does not *mean* that it is better than something else or that it approximates to something better than itself. (Loring L.M. 1966, 22).

Similar distinctions between moral and non-moral evaluation can be found in Hare's *The Language of Morals* (1952, 140) Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* (1971, 395) Baier's *The Moral Point of View* (1958, 28) and many other works.

For Marx, the realization of non-moral goods and values in general, of capacities and needs of men, is not and cannot be guaranteed by morality, ordering goods categorically in hierarchical structures, but only by the realization of a society in which the contradictions between human natures and social structures can be abolished. For Marx, as for Luhmann (1978), morality arises from social structures, from the social-historical "condition humaine" and not from "human nature". Marx derived this conception of morality from Hegel, for whom the norms of morality are the demands a social order makes on individuals in order to sustain its structure and impart its rational form to the world. (Wood A.W. 1983, 10). Morality is the social condition for the individual to attain, according to Hegel, rational autonomy and self-mastery. For a historical materialist this means that morality expresses nothing but the demands of a prevailing mode of production and its ruling class. The only justification for morality is that it contributes, from the workers' point of view, to controlling one's behaviour in a way that promotes some alien and antagonistic interest.

Contrary to Hegel, Marx did not search for the enabling conditions to realize the non-moral goods of human beings by proclaiming a morality. Instead he searched for these conditions in factual developments. That Marx identified the elimination of antagonistic social relations (class relations) with the elimination of social problems as, for instance, the need to distribute things (the problem of justice) may have been a mistake. This need is indeed not founded on social antagonisms, but on the *fact* that individuals are separate, distinct human beings. One way or the other, every person lives his

own life. Nevertheless, it does not follow that the need to distribute things is evidently a need for a morality or a conception of justice. Even if the elimination of antagonistic social relations does not eliminate the fact and the problem that things are to be distributed, it may be interpreted as the elimination of the obstacle to *solve* the problem. (Reiman 1981, 316). Nothing as such implies that the solution is in a morality or a concept of justice. Justifications of the distribution of things may be very variable, changing, relative to circumstances and actors. Most men and women are 'in need of' a or some partners to live their life with, and for the moment this is even a fundamental prerequisite for the procreation of human beings. So there is, in every society, a "problem of partner-choice". Does it follow from this that therefore every society is in need of a "distributive principle of partner-choice"? True, in every society such moral or legal principles exist to some extent (concerning the quantity, the sex, the age... of partners) but it is not at all evident that there always will have to be such principles (in fact if not legally in western countries the tendency is to weaken the principles) The need to "pattern" partner-choice, and to establish moral rules and principles about this choice need not be universal, and it is very well arguable that this need arises from removable social conditions.

If we reflect on the goods — self-control, friendship, love, pleasure and so on — to be promoted, then we find that the moral right is only valid in as far as its rightness is, and can be proved to be, a means to or a guarantee for those goods. Whilst for moral philosophers the moral good takes, in cases of conflict, always precedence over the non-moral good, the anti-moralist denies such a viewpoint. It is John Rawls, who defends a deontological theory of justice as fairness, who makes this clear in his analysis of the good in *A Theory of Justice* and in his distinction between (non-moral) actions and (moral or institutional) practices in *Two Concepts of Rules* (1955). His theory on the primacy of justice is intended to 'liberate' the choice of goods, pursued by individuals, from moral or institutional constraints. The "just society" is to guarantee a maximal deployment of the "good society", and his conception of justice protects the distribution of 'primary social goods' (rights and liberties, powers and opportunities, income, wealth, and the social bases of self-respect) in order that all other goods can be pursued in a free institutional setting. (Rawls J. 1971, 62). A "just basic structure" is the necessary condition to make choices of goods by individuals in their plans of life as free — as unpatterned by social

constraints — as possible. The *morality* of social structure, the institutional rules that constructively order the basic structure, are what is needed for a plurality of goods to flourish. In this approach Rawls is apt to be criticised by those moralists who condemned democracy as a-moral, because the formality of its institutions allow them (in theory) to serve people with diverse beliefs and purposes.¹¹ Since truth and good can be subject to dispute too, there is no unchanging moral telos implied in democracy. (cfr. Habermas' *Herrschaftsfreie Dialog*) Rawls' approach of the good for individuals is indeed explicitly non-moral; the morality of their choice of goods is laid down in the principles of right and justice, not in the goods themselves: "... this moral neutrality of the definition of good is exactly what we should expect" he argues. "The concept of rationality (that plays a role in establishing a rational plan of life for the individual, K.R.) by itself is not an adequate basis for the concept of right, and in contract theory the latter is derived in another way. Moreover, to construct the conception of moral goodness, the principles of right and justice must be introduced." (Rawls J. 1971, 404) Goods become moral goods, because of their ordering by principles of right and justice. These principles make it possible to value actions morally, by looking whether they fall under the moral rules or not. Not ordered by such principles, these goods remain non-moral.

Non-moral goods exist independent from there being a moral ought. Of course they may be — and almost always are — moral values within the moral point of view, but this point of view is not *needed* to make them valuable. Love exists, independent from there being rules of love, but justice cannot exist without there being rules of justice. The *rules* are *constitutive* for the practice of justice to exist and this is true for any moral practice. To say that someone is free happy or sympathetic is not to say, on the other hand, something explicitly moral.

Moralities *suggest* (as earlier religions) that it is only from *within* their rules that goods or values exist or can be guaranteed. In fact however, the freedom of Kantian morality is not the freedom of real human beings and neither is the pleasure of utilitarianism their pleasure. To say that goods or values are lost if we renounce morality (as was once said that anything would be permitted without God) simply is not true. On the contrary, it is because moralities *refer to* goods and values, people happen to pursue, that they can realize themselves, and are recognized as social systems of rules.

Not the goods, moral systems refer to are to be rejected, but the ideology that these systems themselves are what makes these goods, goods.

For Rawls, the 'morality' of goods is specified by structural criteria, called "the formal constraints on the concept of right": "a conception of right is a set of principles, *general* in the form and *universal* in application, that is to be *publicly recognized* as a *final* court of appeal for *ordering* the conflicting claims of moral persons (Rawls, 1971, 135, my underlining) Similar criteria can be found in *Ethicologie* of Jaap Kruithof. Where he is in search of the typical features of ethical principles, he argues in favour of their being objective, general, ultimate, hierarchised, autonomous, unabolishable, categorical and total principles, applying with some pressure. (Kruithof J. 1973, 156) These too are *formal* constraints on goods, in order for their being moral goods.

The anti-moralist rejects morality as a final, objective, ultimate ... court of appeal to order goods. Its categorical character makes it a bad means to solve valuational conflicts between human beings. Moral teaching associates the notion of good action with that of duty and absolute rightness and fosters thus the belief that doing good is closely connected with self-sacrifice, which belief tends to discourage good action, the desire to benefit others. (Loring L.M. 1966, 173) Morality derives its principles not from the reality of people and the activities in which they are involved, nor from the real valuational problems they are confronted with, but from some distant, fixed and absolutised 'moral' point of view. The concept of moral rightness implies, it is true, a relation between a subject and an object, but in moral systems, this relation is elevated above the world and the source of moral obligation is darkened. Whilst ethical concepts of goodness refer to objective qualities of an object for a subject, the concept of moral goodness refers to a relation of rightness, that is considered to be constitutive for this quality.

Goods, activities, beings have value apart from the existence of a morality that values them. They are not dependent on moral rules in order to be called goods. From Marx' point of view, activities have their own intrinsic value, and if they are extrinsically valued — valued by a morality, a system of law, a market which force them in a system of rules — the result is a *loss of value*. He therefore rejects all value-standards, established from outside the activities people are involved, and pressed upon them. Such a society is a society of what he calls in the *Grundrisse* "universal prostitution". As the prostitute

cannot value the sexual act in itself but is forced to value it for the money she receives for it, so capitalist society degrades all activities by forcing them in the common standard of the market. Whilst love, truth, pleasure, creative production, beauty are values which may be pursued for what they really are, without there being an external goal or an external standard from which to value them, that is not true if these values are perceived as nothing but moral goods.

Sartre came to a similar insight, when he wrote in his *Cahiers pour une morale*: "Tant qu'on croit en Dieu il est loisible de faire le Bien POUR être moral. La moralité devient un certain mode d'être ontologique et même métaphysique auquel il faut nous attendre. Et comme il s'agit d'être moral aux yeux de Dieu, pour le louer, pour l'aider dans sa création, la subordination du faire à l'être est légitime. Car en *pratiquant* la charité nous ne servons que les hommes, mais en *étant* charitables nous servons Dieu... Il faut que la moralité se dépasse vers un but qui n'est pas elle. Donner à boire à celui qui a soif non pour donner à boire ni pour être bon mais pour supprimer la soif. La moralité se supprime en se posant, elle se pose en se supprimant. Elle doit être choix du monde, non de soi." (Sartre J.P. 1983, 11)¹²

It is very important to note here that the rejection of morality, of the universal necessity for socially hierarchised value-patterns, does not at all imply the (absurd) vision that people will not have to hierarchise values, nor that value-choices need not to be justified. Of course, every individual will always have to establish value-hierarchisations in his plan of life, at every moment. But it does not follow from the evident fact that any individual has to order values every moment of his life that any individual as a human being has to, or even can make the same hierarchisation of values. The latter claim is the claim of defenders of a morality, the former is a factual evidence, from which a theory of 'rational life-plans' can be developed. (Cfr. Rawls J. 1971, 407). "The giving of weights to values is not something we happen to do, it is necessitated by the pluralist nature of values." (Nozick R. 1981, 448). The need for a morality does however not follow from the need to order and weight values. There *is* no fixed, correct set of weights for acts of weighting values to track or converge upon. There is no universal patterning of values, arising from human nature or from an extra- or superhuman entity. The *need* for hierarchisations of values may be a universal human need, but that does not mean that a fixed, correct universal hierarchisation of values exists.

This is, I think, what Marx had in mind, when he wrote : “... (Luther) hat den Glauben an die Autorität gebrochen, weil er die Autorität des Glaubens restauriert hat. Er hat die Pfaffen in Laien verwandelt, weil er die Laien in Pfaffen verwandelt hat. Er hat den Menschen von den äussern Religiosität befreit, weil er die Religiosität zum innern Menschen gemacht hat. Er hat den Leib von der Kette emanzipiert, weil er das Herz in Ketten gelegt. Aber, wenn der Protestantismus nicht die wahre Lösung, so war es die wahre Stellung der Aufgabe. Es galt nun nicht mehr den Kampf des Laien mit dem *Pfaffen ausser ihm*, es galt den Kampf mit seinen *eigenen innern Pfaffen*, seiner pfäffischen Natur.” (MEW 1, 386).

The “priestly nature” of human beings consists of their moral consciousness, the authority that forces them to act according to principles alien from what they are, from the situations they live in. Struggling against this priestly nature is struggling against morality. It is struggling against man’s sense of duty to obey a divinely given law, and showing that this is not necessary in order to live a good life. It is struggling against the belief that it is unusual and difficult, ‘superhuman’ if not impossible, to be good of our own accord, and against the extreme pessimism that is implied in any moral view on human nature and the human predicament; people can be good without the imposition of supernatural laws, without the spiritual bullying of the moralists and their categorical courts. The objective good can be found in self-determination, in factual freedom and not in an abstract right to freedom. The moral good cannot be but heteronomous determination from alienating instances. If the working class must throw off anything that determines it from outside, it has to throw off morality. “The only way to achieve autonomy, is to renounce morality.” (Wood A.W. 1983, 2).

Xiii. A remark has finally to be made about the irreducibility of values, the thesis on the pluralist nature of the “realm of values”. To say that values are irreducible (to each other or some different entity) does not mean that they are not comparable or incommensurable. According to the pluralist defenders of the market for instance, values as love and welfare may not be reducible to each other, whilst nevertheless “trade-offs” between them can be fixed. The question of ordering values need not be settled by a cardinal method; an ordinal method may work as well. That is precisely what indifference-curves are expressing.

Nevertheless, a difficulty remains. It is clear that Marx opposed the one and only denominator of right and justice because he considered that it was eventually always linked to capitalist exchange-relationships. People, as well as any object or action, are brought under the same standard as exchange-values, commodities. Their *value* is determined by the capitalist market. In his *Allgemeine Rechtslehre und Marxismus* E. Pachukanis developed a general critique of concepts of right, justice and morality from this starting-point. Moral and legal values are in capitalism in fact exchange-values, proper to commodity-production. The 'libertarian' essayist Ayn Rand explicitly defends the market as the only objective value standard in her *Capitalism, the Unknown Ideal* (1967, 19). Therefore, the question arises whether from Marx's point of view, the establishment of a society in which exchange-value disappears as a determinant standard of value, and in which commodity-production would cease to exist, makes a standard as such disappear and superfluous? Marx never developed an elaborated theory of use-values. In his *Gotha-Critique* however, he argues in favour of criteria such as the "Ausdehnung" and the "Intensität" of labour (apart from the criterium of the labour-time) in order to measure it during the transitional period toward communism. (Cfr. Raes K. 1983, II, 432). Incidentally, these are criteria which Bentham developed extensively in his utilitarian theory! The need to measure labour is in this context, it is true, still related to a problem of incentives. The measurement is to guarantee that each worker — apart from a lot of payments for depreciations of capital, administration, social services and so on — receives exactly what he deserves for his contribution to the total product. There is an exchange, but it is not related to the capitalist market. Still, labour is measured from specific criteria. What in communism, where labour and any other activity would be performed without any relation to markets or exchange-values, but for their own sake? Would standards or criteria to measure these activities no longer exist, because there is no more 'economic' need for them? This seems irrational and arbitrary. *Alien* value-standards may disappear, but not the need to compare, measure or weight values. Value-choices, choices between different courses of action will have to be made anyhow and rational choices are to be preferred over irrational ones, certainly for Marx.

As far as it is possible to interpret Marx that far, I think he was not only committed to the view that in communism values would be really comparable (because of transparence) but also to the view

that in communism there would exist *one* pluralist 'realm' of value encompassing a maximal diversity of values and value-relations. Indeed, from Marx's aristotelian concept of the human being, as well as of the historical development of ever-growing productivity, knowledge and higher forms of social organization, we may deduce that for him the valuable is intrinsically linked to increasingly complex forms of life. This viewpoint does not differ from what Rawls formulates in his aristotelian conception of the good (Rawls J. 1971, 426) and Nozick develops a similar theory of value when he approaches value as an organic unity; the more organic unity an action, being or object incorporates, the more valuable it is. (Nozick R. 1981, 422). That higher degrees of complexity-integration, of organic unity, are a value to Marx can be deduced from his attacks against any simplistic, "primitive" communism or egalitarianism. (MEW 2, 44). Socialism/communism was in his view a "higher" form of social organization, not a regression or a reduction to a simplified social pattern of organization. It was certainly not a one-goal oriented, regressive "Red Khmer-Communism" he had in mind, but on the contrary a multiple goal oriented, integral pluralism. From the same idea, it could be argued that we can interpret the contradiction between production-relations and productive forces as a contradiction between the developing complexity and unity of the productive forces, and the stagnating and unadaptive production-relations. Property-relations are not fit for the complex forms of social organisation that develop within the productive forces. The contradiction between the rising complexity, diversification and integration of productive activities, and the conservative production relations and their reductive concepts or rights and justice, has been proposed by Leo Apostel as a new interpretation of Marx's theory. (Apostel L. 1984, 72). Communism is then not to be considered as a society in which transparency and the abolishment of alienation are realized by a primitive synthesis of men and nature but, on the contrary, as a society in which the greatest possible organic unity is realized within the greatest possible plurality of values.

Isn't this approach, after all, the core of Marx's ethics? And can't we deduce a "morality" from it: we are to hierarchise valuable actions, beings, objects so as to realize the greatest possible organic unity/complexity? Much can be said in favour of it. However, as a "morality" it will be a rather specific one. It is not by *imposing* it on human beings that it can be realized; only a situation of maximal freedom for all individuals can be a situation of maximal

(pluralist) diversity. No sense of duty but a sense of freedom is needed, in order that people will rationally realize, what in fact they pursue.

It is in *their* plans of life, *their* value-rankings, *their* activities and creations that goods, complex organic unities are realized. An important similarity is here to be remarked with the Rawlsian approach of the Aristotelian principle in rational plans of life." ... Other things equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realised capacities (their innate or trained abilities) and this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realised, or the greater its complexity." (Rawls J. 1971, 426). This principle is not a prescription. It formulates, according to Rawls, a deep psychological fact. If society can institutionally take account of this fact, so much the better for everybody, because this will stimulate productive activity, scientific research and artistic creativity. It is Rawls' point of view that only a just (basic) institutional structure of rights can guarantee that a maximal diversity of goods will be pursued by individuals. The just institutions have to *make it possible* for individuals to pursue their rational life-plan, but they *do not oblige* them to do so. Rawls is persuaded of the fact that under just conditions people will fulfill the Aristotelian principle, without a moral obligation.

This is the main difference between Marx's and Rawls' approach to the problem of justice. For Rawls, the enabling social conditions to establish a society of free individuals, rich in needs and capacities, are institutional: intended constructions of systems of rules. For Marx, the enabling social conditions are factual, unintended situations of non-scarcity and non-contradiction. Both share the idea that *conditions* are to be established in which individuals can live freely according to *their* rational plan of life and not, or not mainly, that motivations of individuals are to be changed morally in order that justice will reign. Not individual motivations, but social circumstances are "the primary subject of justice". For my own part, I argued elsewhere in favour of the Rawlsian approach. I think indeed that in order to "demoralise" individual choices of rational plans of life, we are to "moralise" basic social structures. (Cfr. Raes K. 1984, 165).

For Marx however, the Aristotelian "good society" was not a "just society". The maximal deployment of a plurality of goods cannot be guaranteed by a conception of justice or morality. They would curb the historical process toward a society of communist "plenty."

Although he shares much of Aristotle's eudaemonistic view on the good society, nothing could be further from Aristotle's hierarchisation of activities than Marx's view that the most desirable life is many-sided, expressing a diversity of intellectual, perceptual and manual activities and overcoming the distinction between mind-work and handwork. (Miller R.W. 1981). Whilst Aristotle situates the "essential" human activities in autarchy, independence, contemplation and artistic creation, Marx develops his theory without such a fixed view on what is essentially 'human', and rejects a universal hierarchy of values. What is typical for the human character may be valuable, but so may activities human beings share with animals, autonomy is valuable, but so is mutual interdependence, productive activity for its own sake is valuable, but so is pleasure. No *social* hierarchy of values would be needed in Marx's concept of communism.

If Marx was indeed committed to such an all-encompassing point of view, then we can interpret communist society as a society in which the realization/deployment of a maximal plurality of values and human beings conforms with the fading away of characteristic differences between what are now called aesthetic, epistemic or ethical values between the beautiful, the true and the good. The greatest organic unity is realised when these values no longer are considered as belonging to different realms, or as valuable from incomparable points of view. In communism, the objectivity of values would be really recognized, but their ordering would not be the same for everybody. An objectivist relativism would finally be taken seriously; for any person in any situation there is an objective good, but this good is intrinsically related to this person; knowledge about himself and the situations will lead this person to pursue his particular objective goods in a rational plan of life.

As a reference-point, communism is then nothing but the realization in a higher form of the mediaeval idea that "ens bonum, verum (et pulchritudum) convertuntur". The Hegelian sphere of the objective spirit will have disappeared; in a society of associated producers there are no more mediating moral, legal or political institutions. All interhuman relations will be objectively and immediately relations in conformity with the nature of human beings and the nature of circumstances. The problem of valuational distinctions will be a transparent problem and as such, universal spirit will be realised in *any human relation*, because everyone will act according to his generic nature, as a member of the human species.

Having rejected the concepts Aristotle analysed in the fifth book of the *Nichomachean Ethics* as commutative and distributive (or proportional) justice, what else could Marx have had in mind but a society where the Aristotelian universal justice would reign, and in which harmony and peace of total being would make concepts and principles of justice superfluous indeed ?

Rijksuniversiteit Gent

NOTES

¹I would like to thank Leo Apostel, Freddy Mortier and Jean Paul Van Bendeghem for their critical comments on an earlier draft of this article.

²Someone can reject these distinctions and proclaim that what is called here "anti-moralism" is, in fact, a specific kind of moralism or morality. Then, however, he will have to be explicit on the matter (a) of what is, according to him, implied in using these concepts as well as (b) of how, according to him, they fit Marx's historical materialist program. L.M. Loring uses, in her *Two Kinds of Values* (1966) the distinction between ethical and non-ethical for what I call the distinction between moral and non-moral valuing. Further, she reserves the term "moralism" for those theories which do not make a clear distinction between ethical and non-ethical values.

³According to E. Kamenka, Marx's critique of capitalism is based on "logico-ethical" grounds: contradictions realize unfreedom and alienation and are to be abolished in order that a true society can be established. In this interpretation, contradictions are fundamentally un-ethical. They have to be abolished in order that social harmony can establish the true freedom of men. (Cfr. Eugene Kamenka, 1979).

⁴Nozick's interpretation of Kant's categorical imperative is an attempt to reconcile it with capitalist production-relations. It is, however, a wrong interpretation. According to Nozick, people do not use each other as solely a means if "the other party stands to gain enough from the exchange so that he is willing to go through with it, even if he objects to one or more of the uses to which you shall put the good. Under such conditions, the other party is not being used solely as a means in that respect. (Nozick R. 1974, 31).

The Kantian question whether someone is treated as a means is not a question about mutual advantage, but about mutual respect, and respect is not a relation of material gain, be it mutual.

⁵ Conceptually, this approach to the concept of justice is not different from the system-theoretical approach to the problem of legitimation, N. Luhmann developed in his *Legitimation durch Verfahren* (1969); questions of legitimation can be settled by empirical investigation of the systems in which these questions arise. There is no room for substantial concepts like 'justice' standing outside these systems, their meaning — their function — is determined by the rules of the systems themselves, and can be analysed in terms of procedures of legitimation.

⁶ Our comparison of morality and the state is not simply a metaphor. First, as morality, the state appears to be the driving social subject, but in fact it is the object of diverse processes and forces at work in society. It is rather a result than a cause. Second, the state is involved in diverse and complex relationships with social classes. It is structured relatively autonomous with regard to ruling classes and their interests. Similarly, the relation between a dominant morality and ruling classes is not directly functional. Many moral precepts aim at the reproduction of the capitalist social formation, and apply strictly and authoritatively to capitalists as well. Elsewhere, I analysed the "principle of fair play" as a typical moral rule for interrelations between capitalists. (Raes K. 1984, 189). It prescribes forms of behaviour that are necessary for the reproduction of market-relationships and excludes "free-rider-egoism". The norms of bourgeois morality ask — because of the competitive nature of bourgeois relationships ("Hobbes-relations") — for strict compliance, and in this sense a certain "Bonapartism" is inherent to bourgeois "rule of law"-morality. From the relative autonomy of morality, as from the relative autonomy of the state, strategical devices may be deduced for working class action.

⁷ In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls is confronted with this problem too. His concept of "deliberate rationality" is precisely introduced to solve the problem from which point of view a person can establish his rational plan of life. To choose in deliberate rationality is to choose in an (imaginary) situation, where the person has total knowledge of all the choices open to him and of all their consequences. (Cfr. Rawls J. 1971, 417).

⁸Moreover, as R. Nozick remarks, investigations into the ethics and norms of communicative practice, that are in search for the 'immanent' values in these practices, leave open the question why these values are 'correct' or 'objective' and how correct values are possible at all. (Nozick R. 1981, 435).

⁹Therefore, it is a mistake of Allen Wood to label Marx's position as "immoralist", unless this is the evaluation of Wood from his moral point of view of Marx's position. (Cfr. Wood A.W. 1983)

¹⁰Loring writes: "It is so widely taken for granted that unless a child grows up with a strong sense of Duty he is certain to be an unreliable, unprincipled, and generally worthless member of society that any suggestion to the contrary is apt to be received as nothing but an irritating attempt to be 'clever'. Yet anyone who thinks for himself must surely at least recognize that the possession of a sense of Duty is not a guarantee of good behaviour, and that there may be other causes of good behaviour than the possession of a sense of Duty." (Loring L.M. 1966, 184).

¹¹According to Rawls there exists indeed a deep division in ethical and political philosophy "between conceptions of justice... (that) allow for a plurality of different and opposing, and even incommensurable, conceptions of the good, or (conceptions that) ... hold that there is but one conception of the good which is to be recognized by all persons, so far as they are rational." (Rawls J. 1982, 162). Fundamental for (his) liberalism is that it assumes "as a consequence of this presupposition, that it is a natural condition of a free democratic culture that a plurality of conceptions of the good is pursued by its citizens" (Rawls J. 1982, *ibidem*).

¹²In his *Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction*, J.M. Guyau develops similar arguments against (traditional) concepts of morality and the moral ought, as well as, of course F. Nietzsche in his *Zur Genealogie der Moral*.

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