

EDITORIAL PREFACE

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Renewed interest in the problem and the concept of justice developed when John Rawls published his *A Theory of Justice* in 1971. A year afterwards the article of Allen Wood on *The Marxian Critique of Justice* contributed much to the discussion on the ethical stand of Marx's work in Anglo-American academic publications. If we mention, furthermore, Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, published in 1974, we have summed up the three most influential and most controversial political philosophical works of the last decade in the United States.

Undoubtedly, the actual international economic crisis, coupled with the questioning of the welfare state in the west, were not neutral in influencing the sudden boom of publications on substantial ethico-political problems during the last ten years. Philosophical discussions about the problem and the concept of justice are therefore also of an utmost, immediate relevance for discussions about present-day world problems and vice versa.

This volume of *Philosophica* deals with specific questions resulting from different analyses of Marx's critique of capitalism and his communist project on the one hand, and of his often vehement attacks on concepts of justice and morality on the other. Some contributions are developing arguments in favour of a non-moral, anti-moral or even immoral interpretation of Marx's position. Others, on the contrary, are in search of the moral relevance of the concept of (marxian) exploitation. Questions of interpretation are combined with investigations into the rationale of Marx's historical materialist project, whilst other contributions are mainly attempts to re-actualize the marxian communist project for today's world.

Most of the following articles were, in a different or more compact version, the subjects of a colloquium, held at the University of Ghent, 23th–24th of March 1984 on "The Problem of Justice.

An emancipatory approach from a marxian perspective". This was the rather delayed contribution of the department of moral philosophy of this university, to the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Marx's death.

Somewhat arbitrarily, the different essays could be structured according to the following criteria. The three first contributions are dealing with the interpretation of Marx's position facing the concept of justice. Allen Wood's well known anti-justice interpretation of Marx is here developed in relation to his concept of class interest, Norman Geras offers a defence of the concept of justice within Marx's theory after a review of the main arguments in the debate whilst Agnes Heller analyses Marx's approach to the concept of justice from the angle of his concept of communist society. The fourth contribution by Ronald Commers is in search of the philosophical roots of the striking contradiction between Marx's anti-justice and justice-stand. The essays of Leo Apostel and Koen Raes try to present evidence for taking serious the non-moral project of Marx's approach to communism. Finally, the last two articles by Philippe Van Parijs and Robert Van der Veen are treating on the one hand the ethical relevance of the marxian approach, on the other a marxian approach that could be ethically relevant.

In his article, Allen Wood questions the relationship between Marx's concept of class interest and his rejection of concepts of justice. He argues his non-moral interpretation of Marx's historico-political stand further by investigating the possibility of an impartial or disinterested point of view as regards class interests *within* Marx's framework of thought. According to Wood there is no place for such a point of view in Marx's social theory. It is a theory which is explicitly situated on a working class standpoint. The interests of the working class are to be developed and these interests represent the future of the historical movement. Wood argues the consistency of Marx's approach from his materialist theory of history, more specifically his viewpoint that class interests and class struggle are the proximate driving forces of history. He analyses extensively the class interest thesis and the marxian conception of historical agency, and defends the thesis that it is incompatible with considering justice as a prominent aim of marxian action. He concludes with some suggestive considerations on why, in spite of the class interest thesis, nevertheless so many marxists care about justice.

Norman Geras, on the other hand, defends in an almost exhaustively argumentation with the recent diverse interpretations of

Marx's ethical stand the perspective of justice from within marxian theory. Though Marx did think capitalism was unjust he argues, he did not think he thought so. First he reviews profoundly what he recognizes as the fundamental arguments, used in the two main positions taken in the discussion about Marx and justice. The position denying that Marx condemned capitalism — capitalist exploitation — as unjust on the one hand, the position that he did so condemn it on the other. Geras argues that the starting point of both positions lies in two different, although not contradictory, angles of vision on the single phenomenon of capitalist exploitation; the equal exchange of the commodities labour power and wage on the one hand or the non-equivalent relationship between workers and owners/accumulators of capital on the other. He develops, in the second part of his essay a whole range of arguments in favour of a reconstruction of Marx's project on the basis of a concept of justice, not made explicit by Marx himself.

Agnes Heller considers the questions whether the concept of "a just society" is a rational one and, whether one can rationally conceive a society "beyond justice". She analyses Marx's critique of the notion of distributive justice from three interconnected perspectives; the dependence of distribution on the mode of production, the emptiness of the notion of (distributive) justice as such and the idea of communist society as a society beyond justice. She argues that Marx tended, in his brief remarks on the first stage of communism, to reduce the whole problem of organizing forms of life (the problem of democracy), to the question of production-relations, as if anything could be deduced from them. He therefore emphasises much more the principle "to each according to his needs" (a principle of inequality) to typify communist society, then the principle of the (equal) right to participate in social decision-making processes. Arguing that the former principle is, as the sole principle of societal life completely inadequate, Heller takes sides with some main ideas of the Rawlsian project to establish a radically democratic concept of justice, in which freedom is the value, justice should be related to.

Ronald Commers elucidates the glaring contradiction in Marx's work between its fundamental concern with the problem of justice and its explicit anti-justice stand, by situating his thinking in the history of ideas, more specifically in what the author recognizes as two traditions in European political thought. The first tradition has its roots in Thomas Hobbes' realistic — if not cynical — political

analysis of the concrete conflicts in early modern bourgeois society and in his legalist proposals to remedy them. This tradition, which inspired later political philosophers from Mandeville to Bentham is a matter-of-fact approach, rejecting moralizing in favour of a "wordly" treatment of the problem how to organize social life efficiently. Spinoza lies, among others, at the origin of the second tradition, emphasizing human virtue and the perfection of man, and situating the "summum bonum" in a human life, led by reason, self-government and temperance and in a social order, corresponding to the natural harmony reasonable men necessarily will live in. Commers argues, with a lot of referential evidence, that both perspectives are present in Marx's work; pure Hobbesian anti-justice points of view in the Gotha-critique, Spinozist depictions of communism as a society in which free individuality develops in the Grundrisse or the Deutsche Ideologie. According to the author, Marx tried with scientific means to unite both perspectives dialectically in a historical project in which Spinoza's ideal of man can be realized, after one has succeeded in fully working out Hobbes approach to rights and liberty.

Leo Apostel's contribution is about the problem of the axiological transformation within marxist theory, that is, the question on the relationships between marxism as a (theoretical) science and marxism as a (practical) ideology. What inspires a historical materialist to become a socialist, to take sides with the proletarian class? The author reviews three answers given to this problem in marxist theory (1) the determinist answer of Kautsky and Plechanov (2) the neo-kantian "ethical" answer of the Austro-Marxists and (3) the subject-object-dialectical answer of Luckacs and Korsch. Neither of these answers is entirely satisfactory but all seem, according to Apostel, to contain partial truths which can be combined. Refusing to search for rescue in one or other universal socialist ethics to be imposed on human actors in order that they act 'socialistically' the author pleads for the development of a dialogical action-theory, taking into account social counter-finalities, social alienation as well as the motivational structures which drive people to act in certain ways. If social actors want to live in a society they can know and understand, and if they want to discover their real values, then they will struggle against capitalism and in favour of a self-governing socialist society. Apostel offers several non-ethical arguments to struggle for such a society, arguments concerning (a) the passionate and irrational origin of the socialist commitment (b) the dynamics of

socialist rhetorics (c) socialism as a (more) self-knowing (transparent) society as far as social facts and values are concerned (d) the need for experimental space for different forms of life, value-patterns, value-choices and so on (e) the negative balance of capitalism in terms of simple self-preservation.

In my own contribution, I try to develop some arguments in favour of an anti-moralistic interpretation of Marx's ethical viewpoints. The article contains three major parts. In the first I try to argue why, and from what perspective it can be rational to take the anti-moralist position seriously, distinguishing moralism, morality, justice and ethics, and explaining what is and what is not implied in calling Marx's position anti-moralistic. In the second part I argue against moralism, because of its (a) ineffectiveness (b) authoritarianism (c) alienating and (d) counterfinal consequences. In the third part I analyse the concept of "morality" and try to make sense of the distinction between moral and non-moral goods. I conclude with some remarks about Marx's Aristotelian view on the communist "good society".

The last two contributions to this issue start from somewhat different angles. They are dealing with normative questions and not with the question of the moral stand of Marx as such.

Philippe Van Parijs tackles the concept of marxian exploitation and is, in vain, in search for an intrinsic moral argument to reject exploitation — capitalism — as defined by major marxist thinkers. What feature of capitalism, a social system with private ownership of the means of production and a free labour market, is (a) necessarily present in capitalism and (b) ethically unacceptable? As exploitation appears to be the most plausible candidate, Van Parijs starts from the simple concept of standard exploitation — the extraction of surplus labour — in order to question analytically the underlying ethical principles that are used to condemn exploitation intrinsically. Reviewing different approaches/definitions of exploitation as (1) expropriation (2) unequal exchange (3) disproportionality (4) endowment based inequality and (5) inequality of opportunities, he is driven toward the somewhat puzzling conclusion that if exploitation is wrong, it cannot be because of one of these specific reasons and, further, that if this list of approaches is an exhaustive one and if exploitation is indeed what's wrong with capitalism, there may be nothing wrong with capitalism as such at all.

Finally, Robert Van der Veen proposes an original approach to

the concept of justice that could combine — in a specific historical setting — the marxian ideal of a free communist society with principles of (distributive) justice for evaluating the basic institutions of society. Rejecting the ideal of total social harmony in which conflicts of interests are absent or spontaneously solved, the author considers principles of justice and conceptions of right, derived from them, indispensable for the structuring of social relations in even “advanced” societies, if it is the aim to guarantee the free development of all. Van der Veen illuminates the implications of the principles of (1) equal distribution of basic liberties (the immaterial means for securing the free development of all) and of (2) equal access to the means of production (the material means for securing the free development of all) implying (a) free access to educational and productive processes (b) an unconditional minimum standard of free consumption and (c) an equal access to the management of the social product. Within this social setting he offers another definition of exploitation (and what is wrong with it), as involuntary surplus labour, and emphasises the classless character of his justice-based alternative. In the second part of his contribution the author distinguishes Marx’s ideal of freedom as (a) freedom of mankind as the level of productive development (b) freedom of all individuals as the classless society guaranteeing equal access to the material means of production and (c) freedom of each individual as the individualisation of the economy of time.

The subjects treated in this volume as well as the ways different authors are approaching them may appear to have no connection with each other. This however is a mistake. In all the contributions there is a fundamental commitment to take serious the marxian project and to evaluate it, in the present day context of political and ethical philosophy, as on its merits. This is the best way to commemorate this social philosopher whose thoughts remain inspiring for philosophers as well as social activists, even after a hundred years.

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Issue 33 of *Philosophica* contains the first four contributions, issue 34 the second part.