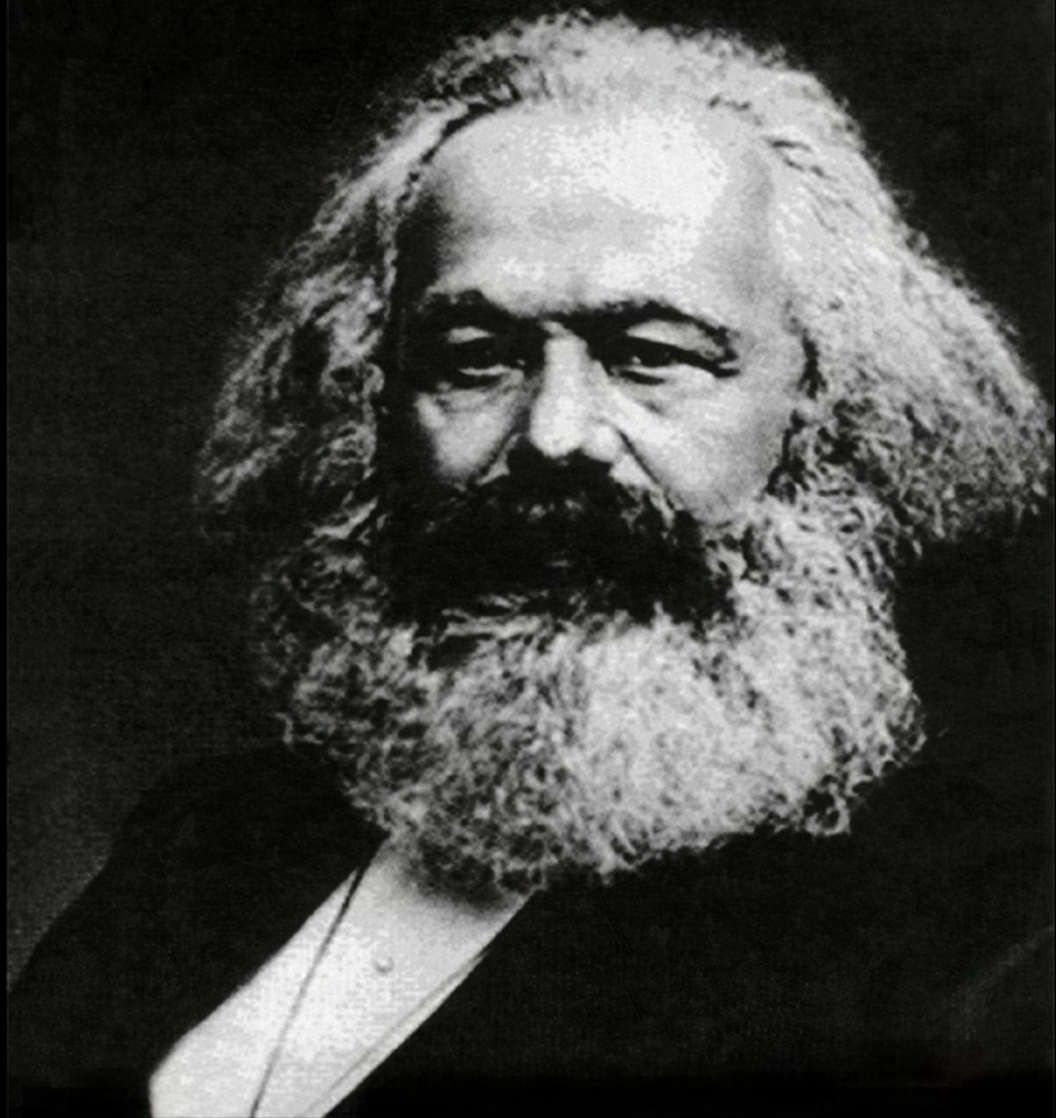


Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought



# Marxism and Human Nature

Sean Sayers

## MARXISM AND HUMAN NATURE

'Sayers' book is an articulate, sophisticated and clear discussion of human nature as a historical phenomenon.'

Professor David McLellan, University of Kent

Is there such a thing as human nature? In *Marxism and Human Nature*, Sean Sayers defends the controversial theory that human nature is a historical phenomenon. Those who disagree with this theory counter that it leads to forms of scepticism and relativism which are at odds with morality; Sayers argues that this need not be the case. Drawing on the work of Marx and Hegel, he develops a historical account of human needs and powers which provides the basis for a distinctive form of Marxist humanism.

According to this view, human beings are not merely passive individual consumers: they are active, social and productive beings. The first half of the book explores the essential role work plays in our lives and how it contributes to our fulfilment. The moral and social implications of these ideas are analysed in the second half in the context of current work by both analytic and post-modernist thinkers.

*Marxism and Human Nature* gives an ambitious and wide-ranging defence of the Marxist and Hegelian historical approach. In the process, the book engages with a wide range of work at the heart of the contemporary debate on social and moral philosophy. Clearly and engagingly written, *Marxism and Human Nature* will illuminate the debate for anyone engaged in politics or philosophy. It will be especially relevant for researchers studying Marx, Hegel or Gorz.

**Sean Sayers** is Reader in Philosophy at the University of Kent at Canterbury. Well known for his work on Marx's philosophy, he is the author of, among other books, *Reality and Reason* (1985) and *Hegel, Marx and Dialectic* (1994). He is also a founding editor of the journal *Radical Philosophy*.

ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN SOCIAL AND  
POLITICAL THOUGHT

- 1 HAYEK AND AFTER  
Hayekian liberalism as a research programme  
*Jeremy Shearmur*
- 2 CONFLICTS IN SOCIAL SCIENCE  
*Edited by Anton van Harskamp*
- 3 POLITICAL THOUGHT OF ANDRÉ CORZ  
*Adrian Little*
- 4 CORRUPTION, CAPITALISM AND DEMOCRACY  
*John Girling*
- 5 FREEDOM AND CULTURE IN WESTERN SOCIETY  
*Hans Blokland*
- 6 FREEDOM IN ECONOMICS  
New perspectives in normative analysis  
*Edited by Jean-Francois Laslier, Marc Fleurbaey, Nicolas Gravel and Alain Trannoy*
- 7 AGAINST POLITICS  
On government and order  
*Anthony de Jasay*
- 8 MAX WEBER AND MICHEL FOUCAULT  
Parallel life works  
*Árpád Szokolczai*
- 9 THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND HUMAN RIGHTS  
*G.B. Madison*
- 10 ON DURKHEIM'S ELEMENTARY FORMS  
*Edited by W. Pickering, W. Watts Miller and N.J. Allen*
- 11 CLASSICAL INDIVIDUALISM  
The supreme importance of each human being  
*Tibor R. Machan*
- 12 THE AGE OF REASONS  
Quixotism, sentimentalism and political economy in eighteenth-century Britain  
*Wendy Motooka*
- 13 INDIVIDUALISM IN MODERN THOUGHT  
From Adam Smith to Hayek  
*Lorenzo Infantino*
- 14 PROPERTY AND POWER IN SOCIAL THEORY  
A study in intellectual rivalry  
*Dick Pels*
- 15 WITTGENSTEIN AND THE IDEA OF A CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY  
Giddens, Haberman and Bhaskar  
*Nigel Pleasants*
- 16 MARXISM AND HUMAN NATURE  
*Sean Sayers*

# MARXISM AND HUMAN NATURE

*Sean Sayers*



London and New York

First published 1998  
by Routledge  
11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

This edition published in the Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003.

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada  
by Routledge  
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

© 1998 Sean Sayers

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*  
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data*

Sayers, Sean.

Marxism and human nature/Sean Sayers.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Socialism. 2. Humanism. I. Title

HX36.S385 1998

335.4-dc21 98-11835

CIP

ISBN 0-203-20041-1 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-203-26572-6 (Adobe eReader Format)  
ISBN 0-415-19147-5 (Print Edition)

To the memory of my mother  
Tana Sayers (1909–1990)



# CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	viii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	ix
<b>PART I</b>	
<b>Work and human nature</b>	<b>1</b>
1 Introduction: human nature as a historical phenomenon	3
2 Two concepts of human fulfilment	14
3 The need to work	36
4 The role of leisure	60
5 Alienation and economic development	79
<b>PART II</b>	
<b>Values and progress</b>	<b>93</b>
6 The actual and the rational	95
7 Analytical Marxism and morality	111
8 Moral values and progress	130
9 Marxism and human nature	149
Appendix: Gorz on work and liberation	169
<i>Notes</i>	179
<i>Bibliography</i>	189
<i>Index</i>	198



## PREFACE

In this book I am attempting to work out some of the social and moral implications of the historical approach of Marx and Hegel. Although the book has been a long time in the writing, I am aware that it is still tentative and exploratory in nature. It records a set of interim results rather than a fixed and finished theory. I hope to resume work on these issues in better times and a more hospitable intellectual climate.

In the course of writing this book I have received valuable help and encouragement from many people. In particular I would like to thank the members of the Hegel reading group in which I participated for many years for their intellectual stimulus and support: Chris Arthur, Andrew Chitty, Filio Diamanti, Susan Easton, David Lamb, Joe McCarney and Joan Saffran. I am also grateful for comments and criticisms over many years to generations of students; to colleagues including David McLellan, Tony Skillen, Richard Norman, Anne Seller and Simon Glendinning; and to friends, particularly George Márkus, Danny Goldstick, Peter Caws and Caroline New. I would also like to thank Carole Davies for typing up some of the manuscript so cheerfully and efficiently. I owe a special debt of gratitude for help and support of all kinds to my wife Janet. The original inspiration for these ideas was planted long ago by my mother, Tana Sayers, to whose memory this book is dedicated.

Canterbury  
October 1997

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Some of the chapters of this book are revised versions of pieces which were first published as follows. They are reprinted with permission of the original publishers.

Chapter 2: 'Higher and Lower Pleasures', in B.Lang, W.Sacksteder and G.Stahl (eds), *The Philosopher in the Community*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984, pp. 112–29.

Chapter 3: 'The Need to Work', *Radical Philosophy* 46, 1987, pp. 17–26.

Chapter 4: 'Work, Leisure and Human Needs', *Thesis Eleven* 14, 1986, pp. 79–96.

Chapter 6: 'The Actual and the Rational', in D.Lamb (ed.), *Hegel and Modern Philosophy*, Oxford: Croom Helm, 1987, pp. 143–60.

Chapter 7: 'Analytical Marxism and Morality', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Supplementary Volume*, 15, 1989, pp. 81–104.

Chapter 8: 'Moral Values and Progress', *New Left Review* 204, 1994, pp. 67–85.

Appendix: 'Gorz on Work and Liberation', *Radical Philosophy* 58, 1991, pp. 16–19.



## Part I

# WORK AND HUMAN NATURE



# INTRODUCTION: HUMAN NATURE AS A HISTORICAL PHENOMENON

In this book I develop and defend a historical account of human nature and explore its moral and social implications. The main source for this account is the work of Marx and Hegel, and I present it as an interpretation of Marx's philosophy. However, my primary concern throughout is with the ideas I am discussing rather than with questions of Marxist or Hegelian scholarship.

The concept of human nature is controversial these days, and the view that Marxism involves it is doubly so. On the one hand, it is sometimes said that we should reject the notion altogether and adopt an 'anti-humanist' or 'anti-essentialist' stance. Others argue that this leads inevitably to a disastrous sort of relativism. We must hang on to traditional enlightenment humanism, they insist, for social theory and critical values can be defended only on the foundation of universal and timeless features of human nature. Often these are presented as the only alternatives, and the attempt is made to force Marxism into one or other of these pigeonholes.

However, neither is satisfactory, either as an interpretation of Marxism or as an account of human nature. Marxism involves a Hegelian historicist account of human nature. This abandons the enlightenment project of looking for foundations in universal human nature; but it is not simply a sceptical, negative 'anti-humanism' which rejects the concept of human nature. Rather, Marxism involves a historical and social account of human needs and powers, and this leads to a historical form of humanism. My main purpose in this book is to develop and explore these ideas.

According to them, human beings are not the mere passive, individual consumers of so much liberal social thought: they are active, social and productive beings. Through their productive activity

they not only bring about changes in the natural world, they also transform their social relations and their own natures. Human beings are both the subjects and objects of their own social productive activity (Lichtman 1990:14); and human history is the story of this process of human self-creation. ‘The whole of what is called world history is nothing more than the creation of man through human labour’ (Marx 1844a:357).

It is often thought that an account of this sort necessarily leads to scepticism and relativism. For by seeing human nature in a purely historical fashion, it is said, it abandons any hope of finding universal and fixed standards of what is human in terms of which we can assess present social conditions or advocate alternatives. This fear of relativism is perhaps the greatest barrier standing in the way of a proper appreciation of the historical approach. Throughout this book, and particularly in Part II, I argue that this fear is unwarranted. Far from undermining the possibility of a critical perspective, the historical approach gives moral values a determinateness and specificity lacking in traditional, ‘essentialist’ moral and social thought. It provides a concrete and realistic basis for an ideal of human fulfilment and self-realization which is fundamental to the moral vision of Marxism.

As a way into these issues, I begin with a discussion of Mill’s dictum that it is ‘better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied’ (Mill 1863:9). This embodies the idea that we have ‘higher’ needs, and that human fulfilment is a matter of what Mill calls ‘self-development’. These notions cannot be reconciled with the simple hedonist assumptions of utilitarianism, which Mill also professes. Nevertheless, Mill gives one of the best accounts of a certain non-utilitarian strand of thought about human nature and human fulfilment, which also underlies Marxism.

However, there are also other and less satisfactory aspects to Mill’s philosophy which Marx’s approach usefully illuminates. As is often noted, Mill’s dictum involves an élitist opposition of mental to manual activities. Mill puts a one-sided value on the mental and cultured activities of the likes of Socrates, and he denigrates the physical and sensual life of the ‘fool’. Marxism, by contrast, involves an ideal of all-round human development involving both of these kinds of activities. It puts forward a notion of human fulfilment which includes the full development and exercise of all our powers and capacities.

The cultivation of all the qualities of the social human being, production of the same in a form as rich as possible in needs, because rich in qualities and relations—production of this

## INTRODUCTION

being as the most total and universal social product for, in order to take gratification in a many-sided way, he must be capable of many pleasures, hence cultured to a high degree.  
(Marx 1858:409)

Moreover, in Marx's hands this notion of human development is not a merely theoretical ideal. For according to Marx's theory of history, the conditions for its realization are being created by actual historical developments, by the growth of capitalism and modern industry. In this way, Marxism involves a social and historical approach to moral issues which provides a concrete account of their real content, and which, I argue throughout, is the great innovation and distinctive strength of the Marxist approach to moral issues.

Mill attempts to develop his moral philosophy within a utilitarian and hedonist framework. According to this, human beings are primarily consumers, mere creatures of need. Marx, by contrast, portrays human beings as essentially active, social and productive creatures. This has profound implications for ideas about the role of productive activity in human life. These are the topic of the next two chapters.

Starting with a discussion of the empirical evidence about attitudes to work in Chapter 3, I explore and defend the idea that we are essentially social, productive beings. Again the stress is on the historical and changing character of these attitudes. In modern society the need to work has become integral to our nature, not just in the sense that we are creatures of need who must work to live (which has always been so), but in the sense that it is now increasingly the case that people need work as an element of fulfilment and as an end-in-itself. For in the modern world, I argue, self-realization has increasingly become a need, which is satisfied mainly in and through work. These ideas are extended in Chapter 4 through a discussion of the role of leisure. Leisure in its modern form (as distinct from mere idleness and rest) exists and has value only as a complement to work. The human need for it is also a historically developed phenomenon.

In the discussion of work and leisure I am arguing on two fronts. In the first place, I am taking issue with the utilitarian and hedonist view that we are mere consumers, mere creatures of need, for whom work is a painful necessity, a mere means to an end which we would avoid if we could. To many people this still seems common sense, but it is hard to square with the empirical evidence about attitudes to work. By contrast, I argue that work is a basic human need.

By work in this context I mean a job, employment. I thus also take issue with a growing body of utopian and romantic—'post-industrial'—



social thought which claims that jobs can never be fulfilling. My main protagonist here is André Gorz. I concentrate on him because he gives such a lively and thought-provoking presentation of this philosophy.

Gorz is not a hedonist, he recognizes that productive and creative activity is a necessary part of human fulfilment. He maintains, however, that work which takes the form of a job is a mere means to the end of earning a living, and it is inevitably alienating. What people want is 'liberation from work' (in the sense of employment), an expansion of free time for 'autonomous creative activity' (Gorz 1982, 1985) or 'work for oneself' (Gorz 1989).

The papers upon which the chapters in this volume are based were originally written in the 1980s. I considered revising them to take account of the discussion they have provoked as well as other more recent literature on this topic. However, it would have been impossible to do so without completely rewriting them. Instead, I will briefly respond here to some of these criticisms.<sup>1</sup>

A number of writers have criticized me for misrepresenting Gorz by attributing to him the view that employment is inevitably alienating (Bowring 1996:112–22; Little 1996:115–16; Lodziak and Tatman 1997:102–3). Gorz writes in a flamboyant and polemical style which often sacrifices precision for effect, and it is not always easy to know exactly what he intends. But it is difficult to avoid this interpretation when one reads his works of the early 1980s, with their call for a 'liberation from work' (Gorz 1982, 1985). At the time, moreover, I was by no means alone in this reading of Gorz (Frankel 1987:91; cf. Bowring 1996:112–13). Indeed, such views had widespread support from many other writers during this period (Pahl 1980, 1984; Robertson 1985, etc.; see Frankel 1987 for a contemporary survey). Since then Gorz's views on this topic have evolved. I chart some of these changes in 'Gorz on Work and Liberation' (Appendix; cf. comments on this by Bowring (1996:102–3); Little (1996:133–6); Lodziak and Tatman (1997:105–8)). In short, it is not my account of Gorz's views which is at fault, but his views that have changed.

However, my main concern is not to give an account of what Gorz may or may not have really meant, but is with the moral and social issues about work and human nature that he raises. Bowring correctly identifies the fundamental point at issue when he writes

Sayers is fundamentally committed to the Marxist project of reconciling the productive with the lived meaning and intentions of creative workers whereas, according to Gorz, socialism cannot hope to eliminate the inertia and rigidities

## INTRODUCTION

of the system and its apparatuses.... The separation of the fruits of human labour from the...personal intentions of workers could only be reversed by a return to the kind of premodern, self-sufficient communities that both Gorz and Sayers regard as regressive. This is why Gorz believes that genuinely autonomous activity requires freedom from work.  
(Bowring 1996:114)

In Gorz's view, in short, social relations just as such are necessarily hostile to individual liberty. For liberty is pure individual autonomy, which can be achieved only in the absence of any social constraint.

I do indeed question these views. They involve an extreme form of individualism, reminiscent of Sartrean existentialism.<sup>2</sup> It is quite wrong to conceive of society as a purely hostile and alien imposition, always and necessarily limiting and restricting what would otherwise be our spontaneous and free individual development. On the contrary, we are inherently and essentially social beings. We develop our natures—our individuality and freedom—only by participating in society, only in and through social relations. For liberty does not exist merely in the absence of social constraint; it is not a purely negative phenomenon. It requires also the presence—the positive existence—of the social conditions in which we can actually develop and use our powers and capacities.

In other words, and paradoxical as it may at first appear, freedom and individuality are social products. They do not exist despite social 'constraint' but only because of it. Social constraint—or better, social influence—is the necessary precondition for all genuine freedom and human development. Most basically, the individual not 'constrained' by others would simply perish; for at birth the human infant is entirely dependent on others for its survival. Sociality is inscribed in our very biology. As Geertz puts it, at birth we are 'incomplete or unfinished animals who complete or finish ourselves through culture' (Geertz 1993:49). And if an infant somehow did manage to survive and grow up without any social contact, it would become a mere member of the human species without the distinctively human characteristics of freedom and individuality. In short, 'there is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture' (ibid.: 49). Freedom and individuality are social phenomena. We acquire them only by entering into social relations, by participating in social life.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, to insist that we are social beings is not to deny that social relations (and particularly those involved in work) are often also hostile to the development of individuality and liberty. However,

it is to deny that social relations are ever simply and solely negative or that the negative features of work can be attributed to its social character simply as such. For social relations provide the necessary framework within which alone human nature can develop and be realized. Social relations thus both make possible the development of human nature, and at the same time limit it. And in so far as they limit it, they have become fetters and constraints on capacities that they themselves have helped to create.

It is these ideas which underlie the argument of Chapter 5, which deals with the human effects of economic and social development. Writers in the individualist philosophical tradition, like Gorz, portray the development of the market and modern industry as inherently oppressive and inhuman. It is true, of course, that capitalist development is often destructive; and no one describes this aspect of it more powerfully than Marx. For all that, however, Marx does not regard the human impact of capitalism as purely negative; he sees that there is a more positive aspect to it as well. As a result of the growth of industry and commerce under capitalism, working people are brought into new activities and relationships, their consciousness is extended and their natures transformed. Involuntarily and unconsciously, Marx believes, capitalism is ultimately creating not only the objective economic conditions for its own supersession but also the subjective conditions—the subjects, the agents—who will bring this about, its own ‘grave-diggers’ (Marx and Engels 1848:45). This is what he calls the ‘civilizing mission’ of capitalism (Marx 1894:819). In this way, the forms of human nature which Marx believed to be the necessary precondition for socialism are being produced by the actual processes of present history. ‘Universally developed individuals...are no product of nature, but of history’ (Marx 1858:162).

In the second part of this book, I explore some of the metaphysical foundations of these ideas. These lie in Hegel’s philosophy. According to Hegel’s historicism, values are not timeless theoretical ideals, they have their foundation in historical reality. Hegel sums up his approach in the notorious saying, ‘what is rational is actual and what is actual is rational’ (Hegel 1821:10). How Marx appropriates this approach—what he accepts and what he discards of it—is the topic of Chapter 6.

A very different account of Marx’s method is contained in the work of ‘analytical’ Marxism, which has dominated recent philosophical discussion of Marxism in the English-speaking world. Running through the writings of this school is a hostility to the Hegelian aspects of Marx’s thought, and the attempt to interpret Marxism within the non-dialectical (and often positively anti-

dialectical) framework of analytical philosophy. Much of the second part of the book is taken up with a critical engagement with the work of this school.

I focus particularly on the role of moral values in Marxism. Marxism is often said to have contradictory views on this topic. On the one hand, Marxism claims to be founded on a theory of history, the primary aim of which is to understand social development rather than to judge it morally; but equally, as I have been arguing, Marxism involves a humanist critique of capitalism based on a moral ideal of self-realization.

Analytical Marxism has tended to interpret these claims through the prism of a rigid and exclusive fact–value dichotomy which renders them incoherent. For the result is that Marxism is dissected into separate and incompatible aspects: a value–free social theory on the one side and, on the other, an ethical outlook which, whatever Marx may have said to the contrary, is supposed to appeal to a set of transhistorical moral values based on universal characteristics of human nature or timeless principles of reason.

Marxism cannot be understood in these terms. It claims to be both a social theory and an evaluative perspective, and to contain both of these within the unity of a single whole. It involves an immanent critical method which holds that existing conditions themselves contain the basis for a critical perspective. The existing social order is not simple and static it contains tensions and conflicts. It includes negative as well as positive aspects; tendencies which oppose and negate it, as well as forces supporting and sustaining it. That is to say, negative and ‘critical’ tendencies are *in the world*. They do not have to be brought from outside, they are already contained immanently within existing conditions. This is the vital insight of the Hegelian dialectical approach.

Moreover, conflict gives rise to change. The social order is not static and fixed; it eventually perishes and is superseded. History takes the shape of a development through distinct stages. In the normal course of development, according to Marx, feudal society is followed by capitalism which, in turn, will give way to socialism. At each stage, the conditions for the emergence of the next stage gradually take shape within the present stage. Thus the process of historical change is not an arbitrary succession of merely different forms. Each stage initially constitutes a progressive development relative to the conditions which it supersedes. Yet each is only a passing form which will ultimately be succeeded by the still ‘higher’ and ‘more developed’ form which will develop within it and emerge out of it.

This theory constitutes the framework for both Marx's account of history and his critical method. Marxism does not condemn capitalism according to trans-historical standards. Rather, its critique is immanent in character; it is based on standards which are historical and relative, and is all the more realistic for that. Relative to feudalism, which precedes it, capitalism is a progressive historical development. However, as the conditions for socialism develop and become immanent within it, capitalism increasingly becomes a hindrance to further development and no longer progressive.

In this way capitalism can be criticized, not on the basis of timeless and universal standards, but on the basis of the tendencies towards socialism which are immanent within it. Moreover, on this view, socialism is not simply an ideal based on transcendent or absolute values, it will be the real outcome of forces at work in present, capitalist society (at least if Marx is right). 'Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things' (Marx and Engels 1845:56–7).

These are the terms with which Marx criticizes capitalism and pictures socialism. As with Hegel's philosophy, this approach relies crucially on the concept of historical progress. Scepticism about this notion is common. It is argued, for example, that it merely disguises the philosophical problems inherent in the historical approach without resolving them. If the term 'progress' is used purely descriptively to mean 'whatever comes next', then this approach provides no basis for the value that is put on progress. Alternatively, the concept of progress tacitly embodies values. In that case, these values must be justified; and this cannot be done simply on the basis of a theory of history. For such value judgements cannot be deduced from any purely factual theory. Marx is thus accused of confusing facts and values and committing the 'naturalistic fallacy' (Popper 1966: ch. 22; Nielsen 1989; Geras 1992).

In Chapter 8, I respond to this argument and give an extended discussion of the concept of progress. Marxism is indeed, I maintain, a form of moral naturalism; but it is not thereby fallacious. More specifically, as I have been arguing, it is a form of historicism, which rejects the exclusive distinction of facts and values which this line of argument presupposes. For Marx's theory of history, and the concept of progress which is integral to it, has *both* a descriptive and an evaluative meaning. Capitalism is not only the stage after feudalism, it is also a 'higher' and 'more developed' stage than feudalism.

## INTRODUCTION

In the final two chapters, I give an account of these notions. They need not lead to relativism or scepticism, I argue. In Marx's hands, on the contrary, they lead to a historical form of humanism founded on the historical account of human nature I have been developing, and involving the ideas of self-development and self-realization which were introduced in Chapter 2 and which I have been expounding throughout.

Only a few years ago I would probably have ended this Introduction at this point and embarked upon the main argument. Marxism then had an unquestioned status as one of the world's most influential philosophies, and no preliminary explanation or justification was needed for writing about it. Now things are different.

The main reason for the change is the dramatic collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, but there have been profound social and economic changes in the capitalist world also, which have led to a rapid decline of Marxist socialism there as well. It is clear, I think, that these developments cast doubt on many aspects of traditional Marxist social theory and necessitate a fundamental rethinking of some of its basic tenets. However, they do not warrant the conclusion that some of its critics have tried to draw: that Marxism is refuted and no longer has any application in the modern world.<sup>4</sup>

For example, the collapse of Soviet and East European communism is sometimes said to signify the complete and permanent triumph of the free market and liberal democracy: the 'end of history' no less. If that is true, then Marxism will indeed have been refuted. If we are really at the 'end of history'—if no forces arise to challenge capitalism, if the free market really constitutes the final form of human economic development—then Marx's theory of history must indeed be rejected.

But there are no valid grounds for believing that this is the situation. The social and economic conditions which, in the past, drove capitalism into crisis have not ceased to exist. The contradictions which, Marx argues, are inherent in capitalism are still quite evidently present. The capitalist world continues to be torn by conflicts and crises. These are most apparent in the developing world, where large numbers of people live at, or even below, subsistence level and where the conditions for revolution are ever present; but these conditions exist in the most advanced industrial societies as well.

There is no good reason to think that this is the end of history. Forces of opposition to capitalism will surely emerge. This is the faith of socialism. I call it a 'faith' since there are no significant revolutionary forces in evidence at present. But it is not blind faith

or mere dogma. On the contrary, it is the rational belief, grounded in the Marxist theory of history, that the goal of socialism is not a mere ideal but the actual tendency of history itself.

These claims are often disputed, of course. The great changes that have occurred in the capitalist world, it is said, mean that Marxism is irrelevant and outdated. We are entering the 'post-industrial' era, in which we must bid 'farewell' to the working class and to the old Marxist idea of socialism.

It is true that the character of the classes that make up capitalist society has changed greatly since Marx was writing in the nineteenth century. Without a doubt this is an aspect of Marxism which needs basic rethinking in the light of contemporary social reality. But there is no good reason to believe that class division and conflict have ceased to be fundamental features of contemporary society. And Marxism continues to provide by far the most powerful and comprehensive theoretical framework by means of which we can grasp and comprehend the modern social world, as well as giving a set of values to guide efforts to change it for the better.

Another major challenge to Marxism comes in the area of environmental issues. Marxism, it is said, is incapable of acknowledging the reality of environmental problems. It is even committed to a productivist philosophy which is responsible for creating them. For example, it is said that Marxism is a form of social constructionism which cannot acknowledge the existence of natural limits to economic growth. I criticize this account at length in Chapter 9. I show that the Marxist historicist approach is, in fact, a form of materialism which does not have these idealist implications.

To the charge of being a form of 'productivism', however, Marxism pleads guilty. It does maintain that the development of human productive activity is at the root of human social and moral progress and, potentially at least, a primary human good. However, Marxism is also a form of humanism. It does not advocate production simply for the sake of production. Of course, it recognizes the devastation that has been caused to the natural environment and hence to our world by our economic and social activity. However, it rejects the romantic response, which is sceptical of the very possibility of developing human productive powers for human good. Returning to a simpler and less developed level of production is not a practical answer to environmental problems. These problems can be met only by the development and use of our powers, not by artificially curtailing and denying them.

## INTRODUCTION

In short, this book is written in the conviction that although Marxism does need to be rethought and revised in many fundamental respects in the light of changing social reality if it is to remain a living philosophy, it has not been refuted. However, I am not going to do much of that rethinking and revising here. My purpose in this book is more modest. It is to restate, and to clarify and defend, a fundamental and central strand of Marxist philosophy which, I will argue, continues to have great relevance and importance: the historicist account of human nature.

The topic of human nature is one about which there has been much controversy and, I believe, confusion, in recent years. In spelling out and defending the Marxist historicist approach to it, I go out of my way to bring this into relation and dialogue with other contemporary philosophical positions and to show its relevance within the context of the wider current philosophical debate. I thus try to show how Marxism involves what will be, for many contemporary readers, an unfamiliar and I hope illuminating approach to problems which appear intractable from within a more traditional and familiar philosophical perspective.



## TWO CONCEPTS OF HUMAN FULFILMENT

The main purpose of this book is to develop an account of human nature and human fulfilment based on Marxism and to explore its implications. I shall introduce these themes via a brief discussion of John Stuart Mill's account of them. This will serve as a familiar and useful point of comparison and contrast with that of Marx.

Whatever Mill's virtues as a philosopher, it is generally agreed that consistency and rigour of thought are not among them. He declares himself a Utilitarian—a follower of Bentham—who adheres to the Greatest Happiness Principle, the simple creed 'that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness' (Mill 1863:6). He adopts the basic principles and terms of utilitarianism and develops his moral thinking within this framework, in both *Utilitarianism* and elsewhere. Yet it is evident that he wants to use these terms and this framework to express ideas and attitudes which are quite foreign to and incompatible with Bentham's philosophy. As Berlin says, 'in John Stuart Mill's writings...the letter remains; but the spirit—the old, tough-minded Benthamite view...the true utilitarian spirit—has fled' (Berlin 1969:181).

The 'old, tough-minded' view is evident in Bentham's account of happiness, the central term of utilitarian morality. Bentham's philosophy is the simplest form of hedonism. For him, happiness is identical with utility—pleasure and the avoidance of pain—and this he equates with 'good...profit...convenience...advantage, benefit [and] emolument' (Bentham 1789:31). All pleasures and pains, Bentham insists, can be put on a single scale of quantity and measured against each other. The aim of life is to maximize the quantity of pleasure: more pleasure is better than less, regardless of the particular quality or kind of pleasure involved. 'Quantity of pleasure being equal, pushpin is as good as poetry' was Bentham's slogan (MacIntyre

1967:234). Considerations of quality thus played no part in his thought, and he aimed to reduce morality to a 'calculus'—a simple accounting procedure involving mere quantities of pleasure and pain.

As is well known, Mill rejected this view of happiness. Bentham, he writes, 'committed the mistake of supposing that the business part of human affairs was the whole of them' (Mill 1838:74). Mill attempted to broaden and deepen the utilitarian account of human life by insisting that the quality—the kind—of pleasure, and not just its quantity, must be an essential ingredient of moral thought. He distinguishes 'higher' from 'lower' pleasures, and argues that a life involving the higher pleasures is preferable, as such, to a life confined to the lower pleasures: 'better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied' (Mill 1863:9).

Mill's distinction has been almost universally rejected by subsequent philosophers. The unanimity is striking. Objections have come not only from writers like Bradley (1927) and Green (1906) whose approach is opposed to utilitarianism, but also from philosophers within the utilitarian tradition such as Sidgwick (1907) and Moore (1903) (cf. Martin 1972). The criticism made by all these writers is essentially the same: Mill's distinction between higher and lower pleasures cannot be reconciled with his utilitarianism. To quote Moore, 'Mill's admissions as to quality of pleasure are either inconsistent with his Hedonism, or else afford no other ground for it than would be given by mere quantity of pleasure' (Moore 1903:78).

In other words, either Mill must give up the Principle of Utility or his distinction of qualities of pleasure reduces to a merely quantitative one and he is saying nothing different from Bentham. Bradley makes the same criticism.

If you are to prefer a higher pleasure to a lower without refer-ence to quantity—then there is an end altogether of the principle which puts the measure in the surplus of pleasure.... To work the sum you must reduce the data to the same denomination. You must go to quantity or nothing: you decline to go to quantity and hence you can not get any result. But if you refuse to work the sum, you abandon the greatest amount of pleasure principle.

(Bradley 1927:119)

These criticisms are, in my view, valid, and it is not my intention to try to defend Mill against them. It is indeed impossible to reconcile Mill's account of higher and lower pleasures with the Principle of

Utility. However, it seems to me that these criticisms have unduly dominated the discussion of Mill's distinction. Critics have concentrated almost exclusively on the formal point that Mill is inconsistent. The inconsistency between Mill's distinction and his utilitarianism is pointed out, but there, too often, the discussion stops. The result is that minimal attention has been given to the *content* of Mill's distinction and to the points which Mill is trying to make with it. This is unfortunate, because Mill's discussion involves fundamental moral and social issues of great interest and importance. Moreover, in the course of making his distinction, Mill expresses ideas and attitudes which are characteristic of his thought and which are echoed and repeated elsewhere in his work. In this chapter I shall first try to bring these issues to light, and then introduce some ideas from Marx in order to raise critical questions about Mill's handling of them.

### **'Better Socrates dissatisfied'**

Mill makes his distinction between higher and lower pleasures in an attempt to defend utilitarianism against a charge that is commonly brought against it in its purely quantitative version. For Bentham, there is no reason to prefer poetry to pushpin if you get the same amount of pleasure from each: no reason to prefer the higher activities to the lower ones. This philosophy is therefore accused of reducing human nature to its lowest animal level. In response, Mill insists that people are capable of different and higher kinds of satisfaction and pleasure than mere animals. 'Human beings have faculties more elevated than the animal appetites, and when once made conscious of them, do not regard anything as happiness which does not include their gratification' (Mill 1863:7).

The higher faculties, for Mill, are the mental faculties, which include 'the intellect...the feelings and imagination'; and he contrasts these with the lower faculty of 'mere sensation' (ibid.: 7). Now it is Mill's argument that people prefer a life which satisfies their higher faculties and which leads to the higher pleasures, even if this involves some sacrifice of mere quantity of pleasure experienced. 'Less of a higher kind is preferable to more of a lower' (quoted in McCloskey 1971:66), he says; and, 'a being of higher faculties requires more to make him happy...than one of an inferior type; but...he can never really wish to sink into what he feels to be a lower grade of existence' (Mill 1863:8). Mill sums up his position with the well known slogan, 'it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied' (ibid.: 9).

A similar point is vividly made by Huxley in *Brave New World*, which is quite explicitly and directly an attack on simple hedonism of the Benthamite sort. The novel portrays a society of the future, guided by supposedly scientific principles and dedicated to the pursuit of 'happiness'. The people in it have been bred and rigorously conditioned since before birth to accept their allotted positions in society and the prevailing values without question. Sensual pleasure is the main aim of life, and everything which stands in the way of it has been eliminated. Critical thought, which might give rise to doubt and discontent, is regarded as dangerous and has been suppressed; and so, too, have art and literature (apart from the pornographic 'feelies') since they may stir up complex and powerful responses. All emotional upset, anxieties and other forms of pain, if and when they arise, are banished by means of the hallucinogenic drug 'soma'. In short, the inhabitants of *Brave New World* live the lives of satisfied pigs and fools—their physical contentment and sensual pleasures assured. And yet this Benthamite world, in which pleasure is maximized and all pain and problems eliminated, is not an ideal one. On the contrary, it is a nightmare; and, for all its anxieties and discontents, life in our present civilization is preferable.

Mill, too, believed that there are higher and more worthwhile ends in life than mere physical contentment and sensual pleasure. Moreover, it was his conviction that this is the unanimously agreed view of those who have had experience of both sorts of pleasure and who are thus 'competent' to judge.

It is an unquestionable fact that those who are equally acquainted with, and equally capable of appreciating and enjoying, both, do give a most marked preference to the manner of existence which employs their higher faculties. Few human creatures would consent to be changed into any of the lower animals, for a promise of the fullest allowance of a beast's pleasures; no intelligent human being would consent to be a fool, no instructed person would be an ignoramus, no person of feeling and conscience would be selfish and base, even though they should be persuaded that the fool, the dunce, or the rascal is better satisfied with his lot than they are with theirs.

(Mill 1863:8)

Mill's basic purpose here is to insist that we must recognize something more in human nature than its merely physical part. The bodily and

sensual side of our nature constitutes the lowest level of conscious life—that aspect of our nature which we share with other animals. If this is taken to be the whole of human nature, then indeed the satisfied fool, the happy pig, the programmed product of Brave New World, would have the best of all possible worlds, with all their needs satisfied. Mill, however, insists that there is more to human nature than this. People seek something ‘higher’ than mere sensual pleasures, or, as Mill also puts it, mere ‘contentment’ (ibid.: 9). Human nature cannot be reduced to mere sensual pleasure-seeking. Genuine happiness, real human fulfilment, must be distinguished from mere pleasure and contentment. Surely Mill is right about this. Any adequate moral philosophy must recognize these points. And if they conflict with simple hedonism and utilitarianism—as they do—then so much the worse for those theories.

The conflict with simple hedonism is clear. The exercise of the higher, intellectual faculties does not necessarily lead to a life of greater pleasure and contentment. For example, it is common experience that education is not something merely pleasurable. On the contrary, it may well be disturbing and upsetting—indeed, perhaps it should be so. The study of philosophy, for example, is and ought to be responsible for encouraging doubts and problems where none were felt before. It should lead people to criticize and question their beliefs; it should introduce difficulties and a certain kind of discontent. Similarly, good literature and art rarely present the most comforting or pleasant picture of life. However, despite this discontent—*through* it, indeed—both philosophy and art can be avenues towards higher—richer and fuller—forms of experience, fulfilment and happiness.

This point is made graphically by Plato in the allegory of the Cave in the *Republic*. In it, Plato explains the process of education and knowledge by portraying the uneducated person as like a prisoner, chained up in a dark cave, who can see only the shadows of a puppet play projected on the walls of his prison. Naturally, the prisoner takes this dim show for reality. When he is released and led out into the sunlight and for the first time sees real objects in the full light of day, he is initially pained and blinded by the light.

Suppose someone were to drag him away forcibly up the steep and rugged ascent and not let him go until he had hauled him out into the sunlight, would he not suffer pain and vexation at such treatment, and, when he had come into the light, find his eyes so full of its radiance that he

could not see a single one of the things that he was now told were real?

(Plato 1945:515)

But once his eyes grow used to the sunlight, and his limbs to their new freedom, then he would come to appreciate his new found happiness, and ‘then if he called to mind his fellow prisoners and what passed for wisdom in his former dwelling-place [the cave], he would surely think himself happy in the change and be sorry for them’ (ibid.: 516).

The higher pursuits, in other words, are not necessarily immediately pleasurable. ‘Compulsion’ must be used, says Plato, and people ‘must be made to climb the ascent to the vision...which we called the highest object of knowledge’ (ibid.: 519). Only thus can people realize their natures to the full and reach genuine happiness, as opposed to mere superficial contentment.

The basic meaning of Mill’s distinction between higher and lower pleasures is similar. People have more than merely sensual and physical needs. Keeping people in slavery and ignorance while providing all the material goods of life may satisfy all their apparent desires and make them ‘content’. They may even mistake such contentment for happiness and be resistant to change, like Plato’s prisoner in the Cave. However, we also have other, higher parts of our nature—‘faculties more elevated than the animal appetites’ in Mill’s words—which give rise in us to the possibility of higher satisfactions and pleasures.

These points are, perhaps, almost commonplaces of moral thought; but nevertheless they remain true, and it is important to be reminded of them, particularly in the context of a philosophy like Bentham’s, which would seek to deny them. Whether or not it is compatible with utilitarianism, therefore, we can agree with Mill that people do have other than merely animal needs, and that the *Brave New World* life of mere pleasure is the antithesis of true happiness and of morality too. Yes, indeed, as Mill says, ‘better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied’.

### Mill’s élitism

Mill, then, was well aware that Bentham’s utilitarianism provided an unduly narrow and limited account of human nature and human happiness, and his distinction of different qualities of pleasure is a major part of his attempt to deepen and humanize the utilitarian

philosophy. But although Mill had a fine and sensitive appreciation of the need to develop the utilitarian vision of happiness, and although he sets about the task of broadening it with admirable courage and honesty, it cannot be said that he succeeds in providing a satisfactory alternative to the Benthamite account.

Part of the reason for this is undoubtedly the evident conflict between Mill's views on higher and lower pleasures and his continued adherence to the basic framework of utilitarian theory. As his critics have repeatedly said, the picture which Mill has of the genuinely happy life, as a life involving the use of the higher faculties even when this involves pain and discontent, cannot be reconciled with the principle of utility. Happiness—human well-being and fulfilment—is, for Mill, a much wider and more inclusive notion than that of the greatest sum of pleasures. Quite simply, Mill's higher pleasures are not mere pleasures at all. The notion Mill has is more akin to the non-hedonist notion of 'self-realization'; it involves the full development and active exercise of our highest faculties and powers.

Moreover, this conception of human fulfilment is not confined to his discussion of the higher pleasures in *Utilitarianism*. Such views are even more evident in *On Liberty* and particularly in Chapter 3, 'Of individuality as one of the elements of well-being'. There Mill departs entirely from the hedonism of traditional utilitarianism. 'In asserting the reality of human individuality', writes Anschutz, 'Mill denies its reducibility to pleasures and pains or to anything else; in asserting the absolute importance of self-development he identifies the well-being of the individual with a sort of well-doing very different from the passive happiness of Bentham' (Anschutz 1953:20). The paradoxical conclusion we reach, as Anschutz says, is that 'the utilitarianism in which Mill really believes has little to do with happiness and nothing at all with pleasure' (ibid.: 18).

However, the fact remains that Mill never abandoned the traditional utilitarian framework. The greatest happiness principle continues to be, he claims, the fundamental principle of his moral thought. He simply adds into this framework the non-utilitarian ideas of fulfilment that I have been describing. Inevitably, the result is vague, inconsistent and unsatisfactory. 'For all the woolliness of Mill's notion of individuality', writes Anschutz, 'it is certain that part at least of what he had in mind is both real and important. He failed...to develop it into a coherent system of ethics; and his attempt to graft it onto the system of utility ended...in utter confusion' (ibid.: 27). Bradley is more succinct: he says of Mill's philosophy, 'its heart is in the right place, but the brain is wanting' (Bradley 1927:115).

So one of the factors which prevented Mill from developing his ideas fully and clearly was that these ideas clashed with the traditional utilitarianism to which he was also strongly committed. The result is that characteristic mixture of illumination and insight with vagueness and inconsistency, which has been so widely remarked upon, and which makes Mill's writings so difficult to get to grips with. However, there are other problems with Mill's ideas. Quite apart from the defects of vagueness and inconsistency, the content of Mill's views is open to criticism, even from his own humane and liberal standpoint. In order to see this we first need to get a clearer picture of the content of Mill's philosophy.

No doubt Mill is vague in his account of the higher and lower pleasures, but the general thrust of his views is plain enough. He is putting forward a morality of education and culture. This involves a sharp contrast and opposition of mental and physical activity. Mental activity is valued and revered, while mere physical activity is regarded with disdain and contempt. The mental life is the highest form of life. The life of Socrates, the pursuits of the educated and cultivated intellect, are the most worthwhile and valuable of which mankind is capable. Everyone should aspire to this life, Mill says, and will do so, once they properly appreciate its character and its rewards. A life which does not involve a use of the higher faculties, on the other hand, a life confined to mere physical exertion and sensual satisfactions, Mill regards as low and unworthy, fit only for 'pigs' and 'fools'.

These attitudes are familiar ones, and they are not peculiar to Mill. Quite the contrary, they have a long and distinguished history in philosophy, going back to the Ancient Greeks. Indeed, it is in Plato and Aristotle that such views are to be found most clearly and fully expressed and developed. For both Plato and Aristotle regard the life of reason, the life of contemplation, as the highest and most worthy form of human life. And both have a similarly low regard for the life of mere physical activity and sensual pleasure. 'Anybody can enjoy bodily pleasures', says Aristotle (1941a:1177a6), 'a slave no less than the best of men.' But for Aristotle this only goes to show that physical pleasure is not the same as human happiness, since he regards slaves, like animals, as sub-human creatures: 'slaves and brute animals have no share in happiness or in a life of free choice' (Aristotle 1941b: 1280a33).

The way in which Aristotle here regards slaves as on a par with animals now seems shocking. However, at least one can say that Aristotle was living in a society founded on slavery and that he is



simply reflecting and endorsing the ideology of his day. But when Mill, living in nineteenth-century Britain, talks of the uncultured and uneducated as ‘pigs’ and ‘fools’, such excuses cannot so easily be found. Indeed, Mill’s language seems so extreme and so illiberal that one may be inclined to wonder whether he has not been carried away by his own rhetoric and whether he is not exaggerating for polemical effect. Unfortunately, however, what he says elsewhere will not support this comfortable conclusion. There is every reason to believe that these were indeed the terms in which he thought about the society of his day. There is an unmistakable and ineradicable strand of élitism in Mill’s philosophy. For him, the cultured and educated were not just the happier and more fortunate portion of society, but an altogether—morally and socially—superior group. By contrast, he had a fear and a horror of the mass of uneducated working people, whom he refers to as the ‘uncultivated herd’ (Mill 1873:168).

In mid-nineteenth-century Britain, the working class was pressing inexorably for political representation and a share of political power. Mill was perceptive enough to appreciate the inevitable outcome, but apprehensive of the consequences. And this fear of the coming power and influence of the uncultivated masses increasingly came to dominate his political thought. The older utilitarians—Bentham and Mill’s father, James Mill—had been radical in their political views: uncompromising egalitarians and democrats. ‘Everybody to count for one, nobody for more than one’ was Bentham’s principle of reckoning (Mill 1863:58). John Stuart Mill had originally adopted these radical views too; but gradually, as he describes in his *Autobiography*, his attitude became more cautious and conservative. Thus, speaking also for his wife, he writes, ‘we were now much less democrats than I had been, because so long as education continues to be so wretchedly imperfect we dreaded the ignorance and especially the selfishness and brutality of the mass’ (Mill 1873:167).

When Mill turned his attention to questions of parliamentary reform, in *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861), the pressures for a wide extension of the vote were mounting. He believed that all sections of the community should have a voice in political affairs. Indeed, he argued for universal suffrage at a time when the vote was restricted to men of property.<sup>1</sup> Mill writes

In this country, what are called the working classes may be considered as excluded from all direct participation in government.... The working men’s view...ought to be

respectfully listened to, instead of being, as it is, not merely turned away from, but ignored.

(Mill 1861:209)

However, the extension of the franchise threatened the possibility that the majority, the working class—‘a class, to say no more, not the most cultivated’ (ibid.: 277)—might elect a government which favoured its interests. This prospect was intolerable to Mill, and he sought a means of preventing it. He thus proposed a system in which the cultivated and educated would be granted multiple votes. ‘Though everyone ought to have a voice—that everyone should have an equal voice is a totally different proposition’ (ibid.: 283). For it seemed self-evident to Mill that those with education were wiser and more intelligent, and that their ‘opinion is entitled to greater weight’. ‘No one but a fool, and only a fool of a peculiar description, feels offended by the acknowledgement that there are others whose opinion, and even whose wish, is entitled to a greater amount of consideration than his’ (ibid.: 284). The voting system Mill proposed is quite candidly designed to preserve ‘the educated from the class legislation of the uneducated’ (ibid.: 286), and to ‘assign to education, as such, the degree of superior influence due to it, and sufficient to counterpoise to the numerical weight of the least educated class’ (ibid.: 287).

Mill, of course, was writing before the first Education Act (1870) made primary education compulsory in Britain, and before any uniform national examination system had been devised. In the absence of these, Mill faced the problem of how a person’s intelligence, and hence entitlement to multiple votes, could be assessed. His answer is revealing. ‘The nature of a person’s occupation is some test’, he argues:

An employer of labour is on the average more intelligent than a labourer; for he must labour with his head, and not solely with his hands. A foreman is generally more intelligent than an ordinary labourer, and a labourer in the skilled trades than in the unskilled. A banker, a merchant, or manufacturer is likely to be more intelligent than a tradesman, because he has larger and more complicated interests to manage.... The liberal professions... imply, of course, a still higher degree of instruction.

(Mill 1861:285)

Mill's assumption here is that those in higher social positions, those who work with their minds, are more intelligent and better fitted to rule than those who work with their hands. This assumption is highly questionable. It is necessary to distinguish—as Mill does not—between *education*, in the sense of the amount of schooling or 'instruction' received and skills actually acquired, on the one hand, and *intelligence*, in the sense of innate mental capacity to learn, on the other. For it is possible either to be intelligent but uneducated, or educated but unintelligent. Now it is true that those in higher social positions tend to be better educated, but this is not to say that they are the most intelligent. That would presuppose that the most intelligent receive the most education. But all the evidence suggests that education is distributed largely according to social background and class—to the children of 'the banker, the merchant, the manufacturer', etc., virtually whatever their basic intelligence; and this was certainly true, to an even greater extent, when Mill was writing. The higher one moves up the educational ladder, the fewer are the members of the working class, ethnic minorities, women and other socially disadvantaged groups to be found there. To assume, as Mill does, that these groups are thus shown to be less intelligent, is to assume that the existing class structure is the best possible social arrangement, entirely in harmony with people's natural abilities. These views are, no doubt, gratifying to the banker, the merchant and their friends, but have nothing else to recommend them.

Mill's specific political proposals are now of only historical interest, and I have dealt with them here for the light that they shed on his moral and social attitudes. These attitudes are revealed as class attitudes, explicitly conceived and expressed as such. Mill speaks as a member of the educated class, the bourgeoisie, fearful and apprehensive of the growing power and influence of the uneducated working class. This may not be so clear when Mill is discussing the higher and lower pleasures in abstract terms, and comparing the life of Socrates to that of pigs and fools. It becomes much clearer when one sees that, for Mill, Socrates represents the educated élite of Victorian Britain and that he regarded the working class as an 'uncultivated herd' of pigs and fools.

As we have seen, the morality which Mill is expressing with his distinction involves a sharp contrast between higher and lower, mental and physical activity, and, going along with this, a high evaluation of intellectual activity, and a corresponding disdain for physical activity and for those whose lives are devoted to manual labour. Nowadays, such views are rarely voiced as directly and as crudely as they are by

Mill, but nonetheless they are still widely held, and their influence continues to be felt. These attitudes are particularly noticeable in Britain, with its all-pervasive class system. They are less prevalent in the United States, though by no means altogether absent.

For example, British intellectual life is still marked by a disdain for practical activity—for anything which involves ‘getting your hands dirty’. The natural sciences and the technological subjects, especially the more practical ones, have a low status in Britain compared to the arts and the humanities. Theoretical work, in almost all fields, is regarded as superior to applied and practical work. The government, the higher ranks of the civil service and the armed forces, the management of industry and of the City are dominated by the products of the public schools which still focus their syllabus around the classics at the expense of the sciences and mathematics.

### **Mental and manual labour**

The distinction between higher and lower pleasures thus embodies a morality which has had an enduring place in the history of philosophy and is still influential today. The time has now come to criticize it. I shall start with Mill. The terms in which he presents his philosophy are, indeed, unsatisfactory. He draws such a sharp contrast between higher and lower activities that he seems almost to regard these as exclusive, either/or alternatives. His philosophy seems to present us with a choice between the opposite extremes of the life of Socrates, the life of pure intellect, on the one hand, and the piggish and foolish life of pure physicality and sensuality on the other.

To pose the question in these terms is to pose it falsely. These are not the only possible ways of life. Indeed, as exclusive and absolutely opposed alternatives, they are not real possibilities at all. In human life, higher and lower, mental and physical activity can never be entirely separated. Intellectual work always requires some physical activity; moreover, it cannot be pursued unless the basic physical needs are met. Conversely, human physical activity beyond the level of mere reflex response, requires some degree of intelligence and thought. Indeed, there are important areas of human activity, like art or skilled craftsmanship, where both mental and physical capacities are involved equally, and where Mill’s distinction is inapplicable.

Nevertheless, the distinction of higher and lower, mental and physical activity is not purely a product of Mill’s imagination. Although Mill’s higher and lower activities need not necessarily be the exclusive alternatives he presents them as being, in fact, in our

society, they almost invariably are so. For Mill's distinction reflects a real and all-pervasive feature of social life: the great divide between mental and manual labour. Those who work with their minds and those who work with their hands tend to be different groups, different classes, of people. Work which involves the use of the mind rarely involves great physical exertion; and physical labour rarely requires much use of the mind. The existing alternatives are, indeed, either a life of mental activity or a life of physical activity.

The division of mental and manual labour is not peculiar to present society. It was the first major basis of social division and of class differences generally. As Marx says, 'the division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears' (Marx and Engels 1845:51). From the earliest distinction of different social and economic roles, the division of labour, and with it class differences, has evolved and developed as society has progressed historically. But the rate of change has not been steady or even; and the development of modern industry under capitalism has led to an unparalleled extension and intensification of the division of labour.

Marx gives a brilliant and detailed account of this process in the central chapters of Volume I of *Capital*. He shows how the division of labour under capitalism has gone through two distinct stages of development. In the earlier period of capitalist production, the manufacturing period, which lasted from the mid-sixteenth century until the last third of the eighteenth century in Britain, the old handicraft trades were split up into their component operations and each separated and fragmentary activity was given to an individual workman as his life calling (Marx 1867:336). These separated activities were then brought together alongside each other in a workshop. In the earlier form of handicraft production, the individual craftsman had a knowledge and control of the whole work process. The worker used both his head and his hands. His work involved both skill and dexterity, and an all-round knowledge of a relevant (though limited) range of tools and materials. With the advent of the manufacturing system, however, the craftsman was replaced by the detail worker, condemned to a life-long repetition of the same simple operations, while the work of organizing and overseeing the whole process was taken over by the capitalist. This system, Marx says,

converts the labourer into a crippled monstrosity by forcing his detail dexterity at the expense of a world of productive capabilities and instincts.... The knowledge, the judgement

and the will, which, though in ever so small a degree, are practised by the independent peasant or handicraftsman... are now required only for the workshop as a whole. Intelligence in production expands in one direction, because it vanishes in many others. What is lost by the detail labourers is concentrated in the capital that employs them.

(ibid.: 360–1)

Through the division of labour and the cooperative organization of production in workshops, the elements of skill and knowledge are thus removed from the ordinary workman, and the distinction between mental and manual labour greatly increased. This process is taken still further in the second period of capitalist development, the period after the industrial revolution of large-scale machine industry. To quote Marx again,

The separation of the intellectual powers of production from the manual labourer and the conversion of those powers into the might of capital over labour is...finally completed by modern industry erected on the foundation of machinery. The special skill of each individual insignificant factory operative vanishes as an infinitesimal quantity before the science, the gigantic physical forces, and the mass of labour that are embodied in the factory mechanism and which, together with that mechanism, constitute the power of the ‘master’.

(ibid.: 423)

The result is that crafts which involve both mental and manual labour are destroyed. In their place arises, on the one hand, a mass of unskilled workers, who need no knowledge or understanding of the processes in which they are engaged and, on the other, a small group of trained and educated engineers, scientists and managers to design, plan, organize and supervise the production process.

These developments have been continuing and even accelerating since Marx’s time. With each new technological innovation, new fields of activity are subjected to mechanization and the division of labour is further extended. At present, indeed, we are living through what is sometimes dubbed the second industrial revolution—the computer revolution. Whole new areas of work, which previously required intellectual skills—such as office work, industrial design and craftsmanship, and even teaching—are being mechanized and revolutionized; and old areas, like car production, are being transformed (Braverman 1974).

The human and moral effects of these developments are clear to see. Marx describes them under the general headings of alienation and one-sided development.<sup>2</sup> For, as Engels says, 'in the division of labour man is also divided. All other physical and mental faculties are sacrificed to the development of one single activity' (Engels 1878:401). The division of human life into higher and lower, mental and physical activities, is thus a historical fact, a palpable feature of social life. Mill reflects this fact in his philosophy, but almost unconsciously and quite uncritically. He discusses these matters in the abstract terms of moral philosophy, and it is clear that he has only the dimmest appreciation of the concrete historical and social basis of the distinction he is making; but even the degree of historical awareness that Mill shows has been absent from most subsequent discussion. However, an understanding of this historical context is absolutely essential for an adequate critical response to Mill's views.

Mill, as we have seen, places a high moral value on education and culture, and regards a life which lacks them as one unworthy of human beings. Certainly, one must agree with Mill that a life of unintelligent and unskilled physical toil is brutalizing and degrading. This is particularly true of modern industrial conditions, which are alienating to an unprecedented degree, and which, as Marx says, 'mutilate the labourer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into hated toil' (Marx 1867:645).

To be sure, this is not a worthy form of life, nor the highest of which people are capable. It is a terrible indictment of modern industrial society that the majority of people are condemned to such a life, while large numbers of others are periodically forced into unemployment and social idleness. But Mill does not dwell on these matters. Although he expresses a humane and philanthropic concern for the plight of the working class, he sees no alternative to such conditions for the majority of the population. Towards the end of his life, he began to call himself a 'socialist'; but his socialism, as he made clear, was of the most watered-down kind, for he continued to be sceptical of the possibilities for radical social change. His vision of an ideal future society is a weak and insipid one—a mere reflection of contemporary conditions with some of the harsher aspects removed.

A well-paid and affluent body of labourers, no enormous fortunes, except what were earned and accumulated during a single lifetime; but a much larger body of persons than at present, not only exempt from the coarser toils, but with

sufficient leisure, both physical and mental, from mechanical details, to cultivate freely the graces of life, and afford examples of them to the classes less favourably circumstanced for their growth.

(Mill 1848:750)

However, it is not only the manual worker who is affected by the division of labour; and Mill's ideas that the life of Socrates, the life of education and culture, is the highest human good is also a questionable one. For the modern intellectual is equally a product of the division of labour, and equally a one-sided and stunted creature. The development of the mind through education and culture has become almost entirely a matter of theoretical activity and book-learning, divorced from practical affairs (cf. Marx 1867:482ff).

The educational system in general, and universities in particular, enshrine and embody this intellectual one-sidedness. Education is confined within educational institutions and separated from the activities of the wider society. Moreover, within these institutions, different areas of study are separated from each other and hermetically sealed up into different faculties and departments. The literary products of this system, which flow out every year in an endless stream of scholarly articles and books, are, for the most part, unreadable and unread: an unwanted flood of dry and narrow academic jargon. For modern scholarship has become a sort of intellectual 'detail work', and the modern academic is as confined and limited in his knowledge and sphere of activity as was the labourer in the old manufacturing workshop: all but entirely ignorant of fields outside his own minute specialism, and unable to communicate with academics in other areas, let alone with the wider public.

In the sphere of culture, too, similar processes are at work. 'High' art and literature have become increasingly 'avant-garde' and abstruse, divorced from social reality and remote from common experience. Pursued in this way, it is no exaggeration to say that modern high culture has become precious, irrelevant, meaningless and alien to the majority of even educated people, patronized and appreciated only by a small coterie of *cognoscenti*. Meanwhile, the mass of people make do on the bland pap served up by the television and movie companies and by the popular press.

The conclusion which follows from these observations is surely this. Mill is undoubtedly correct to regard education and culture as necessary for a full human life, and to view the life of mere physical toil as degrading and unworthy. However, the life of mere education



and culture, the life of the modern academic or artist, is not an adequate alternative. It is usually equally narrow, equally one-sided, equally stunting of full human growth and development. In short, neither the life of mere physical labour, nor the life of pure intellect, is ideally satisfactory; and it is wrong to counterpose these opposites to each other as if they were the exclusive alternatives, as Mill—reflecting present conditions—tends to do. The fullest human life demands the development and exercise of *all* our powers and capacities, the realization of all sides of our natures: both mental and physical. This is the ideal—but the whole present organization of society makes it an unrealizable ideal for all but a small and fortunate handful. So this ideal, if it is to be taken seriously as an ideal, must involve the diminishing and eventual abolition of the division of labour as we have it at present.

### Producers and consumers

So far, I have argued that Mill's distinction of higher and lower pleasures reflects and endorses the present division of labour, and I have criticized it for its one-sidedness and élitism. There is, however, a further and related aspect of Mill's moral philosophy which is important in this context. The current division of labour divides not only mental from manual workers, but also consumers from producers. And this latter division is also reflected—again unconsciously and uncritically—in Mill's thought, and particularly in the utilitarian theory of human nature that underlies it. For it is characteristic of the utilitarian theory of human nature to portray people as primarily and essentially consumers, and as producers only in a secondary and accidental fashion. In this way, utilitarianism embodies what has been called the point of view and ethic of the consumer.<sup>3</sup>

There is, however, an alternative and, I shall argue, more satisfactory tradition of thought about human nature, which expresses the point of view of the producer. The main body of socialist thought is in this tradition. Its major modern representative is, of course, Marx. According to this view, people are primarily and essentially active and productive beings. In developing this theme, Marx's philosophy contains ideas which help to support and amplify the conclusions I have reached so far, and which add an important further dimension to the critique of Mill's outlook and of utilitarianism generally.

The utilitarian theory portrays human nature as a mere collection of needs and desires. The satisfaction of these needs produces pleasure, their frustration pain. We are, in this view, pleasure-seeking,

painavoiding creatures. Moreover, pleasure and pain are portrayed as passive sensations—our mere reaction to external events. Activity is not an essential part of our nature. Strenuous physical exertion is painful and unwanted: work is unpleasant toil; leisure is the way to happiness. The ideal life, from this point of view, is well described by Hume as follows:

Let us suppose that nature has bestowed on the human race such a profuse *abundance* of all *external* conveniences, that, without any uncertainty in the event, without any care or industry on our part, every individual finds himself fully provided with whatever his most voracious appetites can want, or luxurious imagination wish or desire.... No laborious occupation required; no tillage, no navigation. Music, poetry, and contemplation form his sole business: conversation, mirth, and friendship his sole amusement.

(Hume 1751:183)

Note here how the individual is entirely passive, not active, in relation to the environment: a mere consumer, not a producer. Everything that he or she needs or desires is provided ready to hand with, as Hume says, ‘no laborious occupation required’.

Of course, Hume’s picture of the ideal life is fanciful. Nature is never so abundant. Even in the most luxuriant and tropical conditions, people must engage in some productive activity, if only in the minimal form of hunting and gathering. Nonetheless, Hume’s picture should not be dismissed as pure fantasy. Where nature fails, society can create this sort of paradise, at least for some of its members. For in the society, and only in society, as a result of the division of labour, it is possible to be a mere consumer, not involved in productive activity at all.

Nevertheless, the picture of humans as mere consumers cannot be an adequate picture of human nature in general. The life of mere consumption is possible only for a limited and dependent group in society, who must rely for the necessities of life upon the productive activity of others. Consumption presupposes the prior and more basic activity of production. Marx’s philosophy starts out from a recognition of this fundamental fact. People are not simply creatures of need—they also *act* in and on the world to satisfy their needs. Material, productive activity is, for Marx, the primary fact of human nature. He writes

The first premise of all human existence, and therefore of all history...[is] that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to 'make history'. But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. And indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life.

(Marx and Engels 1845:48)

Productive labour is thus, for Marx, the most fundamental and essential human activity, in the sense, first of all, that people must produce in order to consume and in order to live. However, there is a further and deeper point involved. For Marx also argues that it is through productive activity that we create new needs and develop our natures:

Labour is...a process in which both man and nature participate.... By...acting on the external world and changing it, [man] at the same time changes his own nature. He develops his slumbering powers and compels them to act in obedience to his sway.

(Marx 1867:177)

It is through the process of labour that we make ourselves into human and social creatures and transcend the conditions of mere nature. It is through labour that, in Gordon Childe's phrase, 'man makes himself' (Childe 1941).<sup>4</sup>

Thus productive labour should not be regarded, in the utilitarian and consumer fashion, as a merely painful and negative phenomenon in human life. On the contrary, it is the essential human activity, the primary avenue to development, self-creation and self-realization. Marx makes this point well in a passage criticizing Adam Smith (whose views on human nature were similar to those of Hume and Mill):

In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou labour! was Jehovah's curse on Adam. And this is labour for Smith, a curse. 'Tranquillity' appears as the adequate state, as identical with 'freedom' and 'happiness'. It seems quite far from Smith's

mind that the individual, 'in his normal state of health, strength, activity, skill, facility', also needs a normal portion of work, and of the suspension of tranquillity. Certainly, labour obtains its measure from the outside, through the aim to be attained and the obstacles to be overcome in attaining it. But Smith has no inkling whatever that this overcoming of obstacles is in itself a liberating activity—and that, further, the external aims become stripped of the semblance of merely external natural urgencies, and become posited as aims which the individual himself posits—hence as self-realization, objectification of the subject, hence real freedom, whose action is, precisely, labour.

(Marx 1858:611)

This is not to say, of course, either that *all* forms of labour are liberating, or that labour is the *solely* sufficient avenue to self-realization. Quite the contrary, in present conditions most forms of work are alienating and destructive, as Marx never fails to stress: 'in its historic forms as slave-labour, serf-labour, and wage-labour, labour always appears as repulsive, always as *external forced labour*, and not-labour, by contrast, as "freedom, and happiness"' (ibid.: 611). However, labour need not, should not and will not, in a rational society, have this alien character: it can become 'attractive work, the individual's self-realization' (ibid.: 611). Furthermore, the necessary social conditions for this transformation are being and will be themselves created as a result of human productive activity. Thus Marx, in contrast to the utilitarians, is putting forward a morality of the producer, which accords moral value and dignity to productive activity.

However, it would be a mistake to think that labour is the *sole* self-realizing and morally beneficial activity. For leisure is also a necessary part of a decent human life. In addition to productive labour, full human development and happiness require activity not aimed at any narrowly utilitarian ends—artistic activity, for example; and also, indeed, things done just for fun, relaxation and rest. Life should have its fun. Pleasure, including the 'lower' sensual pleasures, is an essential ingredient in human happiness. It is all too easy, when thinking about the loftier aims of life, to forget this; and it is not only thinkers like Mill who do so. Indeed, there has been a strong puritanical streak in much socialist thought, and socialism often sounds as though it would be no fun.

We are all familiar with the muscle-bound, hammer-wielding workers of socialist propaganda, radiating cleanliness, honesty and all the other

puritan virtues. But Marx's philosophy should not be confused with such images. It is wrong, I think, to interpret his philosophy and its producer ethic simply as a sort of socialist version of the Protestant work ethic (Skillen 1981). On the contrary, the mindless 'Hero of Labour', the socialist Superman of the propaganda posters, is a crude and debased expression of the Marxist idea—no more adequate as a moral ideal than his American comic-book counterpart.

The idea of socialist morality which such propaganda represents is simply the direct opposite of Mill's philosophy, and equally one-sided. In place of Mill's exclusive reverence for mental activity, it implies an exclusive reverence for manual labour. Marx's idea is quite different, as I have stressed: it is the idea of the all-round and universal development of all sides of our nature. And this implies *both* an unalienated and attractive work life, and also sufficient leisure to consume the products of labour and to develop ourselves in other ways. The necessary condition for such a life is, as we have seen, the elimination of the division of labour as we now have it.

These are the values and ultimate aims of socialism; and not only of Marxist socialism, but of socialism in many other forms as well. For the earliest Utopian socialists, like Fourier and Owen, had criticized the modern division of labour and its moral effects even before Marx was born, and this theme has continued to be a prominent one in subsequent non-Marxist socialist thought. Marx, however, unlike these other writers, did not confine himself to denouncing the crippling human effects of the division between mental and manual labour, nor did he spend time devising an ideal society from which these evils would be eliminated. What particularly characterizes Marx's socialism is the attempt to show, in detail, how the present division of labour is related to the present, capitalist, mode of production, and how this division of labour is destined to be superseded as the conflicts and contradictions inherent in present conditions work themselves out.

For Marx, the all-round and universal development of individuals must be based upon the all-round and universal development of their actual activities and relationships; and such a basis, he thought, was being created by the development of modern industry under capitalism. Marx's idea of socialism is the very opposite of the familiar romantic vision of a rural idyll, where craftsmanship still flourishes and people lead simpler and more 'natural' lives. 'Universally developed individuals, whose social relationships are subject, as their own communal relationships, to their own collective control, are the product not of nature, but of history' (Marx 1858:162).

For the old craft form of labour, although it involves both head and hands, is also narrowly specialized, confined to one field, and purely individual in character. The craftsman develops great skills—but only in a single direction, and thus at the expense of developing other skills in other directions. Craft labour, says Marx, ‘engenders...specialists and with them craft idiocy’. The same is true, Marx thought, of present-day artists (Marx 1847a:125):

The subordination of the artist to local and national narrowness...arises entirely from the division of labour, and also the subordination of the artist to some definite art, thanks to which he is exclusively a painter, sculptor, etc., the very name of his activity adequately expressing the narrowness of his professional development and his dependence on the division of labour.

(Marx and Engels 1845:109)

Wherever they are introduced, capitalism and modern industry sweep away such specialization and craft work, and create the alienating, crippling and humanly destructive form of the division of labour that Marx so graphically describes. This is the negative side. However, Marx also saw other and more positive tendencies inherent in modern economic conditions. For, according to Marx, modern industry is creating

a basis that consists in the tendency towards universal development of the productive forces—and wealth in general, also the universality of commerce and trade. The basis offers the possibility of the universal development of individuals.... The universality of the individual is not thought or imagined, but is the universality of his real and ideal relationships.

(Marx 1858:542, translation from McLellan 1973:109)

The gigantic development of the productive forces, the universal extension of the interdependence of individuals, and hence of cooperation and of social and economic relationships, through the development of the world market—these phenomena, Marx thought, are producing the necessary conditions for new forms of human life, in which people will be able to develop their capacities and powers in an all-round way.

## THE NEED TO WORK

My theme in this chapter is work. At a time when mass unemployment is a major social and political problem throughout the industrial world, it is a theme which needs little introduction. Nevertheless, I shall begin with some. For I must confess that work is a subject that did not much occupy my thoughts until recently. I have a steady and relatively congenial job teaching philosophy in a university. There is little danger of my losing it, and scant prospect of changing it. From my own immediate experience, therefore, I have had little occasion to think about the issue of work.

This complacency was gradually disturbed by the great British miners' strike of 1984–5. The strike was against pit closures—in defence of jobs and communities. The cause seemed doomed from the outset, for the miners were pitting themselves against economic forces beyond even the power of governments to control. Nevertheless, the months passed, and the miners stayed out on strike and even increased the intensity of their struggle—on their own, without significant support from the rest of the labour movement, and in the face of a concerted attempt to break the strike by the whole organized force of the state and the propaganda power of the media. As the extraordinary level of the miners' unity, determination and commitment to their cause gradually became evident, one began to wonder: why are they fighting so hard, what are they struggling for?

At one level the answer was clear enough. They were fighting for their jobs and their communities; they were fighting for the traditional socialist principle of the right to work. For socialism is based upon the view that social productive labour is an essential human activity and, potentially at least, the main avenue to human self-development and fulfilment. Beyond that, working people have struggled for a decent portion of leisure as equally a human need. These are the ideas that I will be seeking to explain and defend.

They are not, of course, peculiar to socialism. In particular, the idea that people need work, and that unemployment is a human evil and one of the greatest current social problems, is common ground amongst almost all shades of political opinion. Yet, at a more philosophical level, it is not always clear why this should be so. For work is very often conceived as unwanted and painful toil which people would avoid if they could.

This is how it is portrayed by an influential and pervasive social philosophy—the hedonist account of human nature, which underlies utilitarianism and classical economics. According to this theory, the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain are the sole motivating forces of human life. Work involves painful exertion and the deferral of gratification; we undertake it only because we are forced to, as a means to satisfy our needs. If we are fortunate enough to be able to meet our needs without working—to consume without the toil of producing—we will readily do so. So the hedonist theory has it.

Thus Russell (1935), for example, writes ‘in praise of idleness’. Ideally, he suggests, we would live a life of luxurious indolence. Hume, who shares this view, envisages this ideal as follows:

Let us suppose that nature has bestowed on the human race such a profuse *abundance* of all *external* conveniences, that, without any uncertainty in the event, without any care or industry on our part, every individual finds himself fully provided with whatever his most voracious appetites can want, or luxurious imagination wish or desire.... No laborious occupation required; no tillage, no navigation. Music, poetry, and contemplation form his sole business: conversation, mirth and friendship his sole amusement.

(Hume 1751:183)

Appealing and plausible as this vision may at first appear, there are good reasons to question it. Empirical studies reveal that people’s attitudes to work are more complex and contradictory than it suggests. They show that the great majority want work and feel a need for work, even when they find it unsatisfying in all sorts of ways: dull, repetitive, meaningless. Moreover, there is much evidence to demonstrate the harmful and destructive effects of unemployment.

At the simplest level a remarkably high percentage of people in work respond in positive terms if asked whether they find their work satisfying. In a British survey of this kind carried out in 1978, 75 per cent replied that they liked their work ‘a lot’. Figures were higher



among managers (81 per cent) than among skilled workers (73 per cent); but even 66 per cent of the unskilled workers said that they liked work 'a lot' (Jahoda 1979:311). Of course, caution is needed in interpreting such crude findings. It is clear that answers are given in the light of available alternatives, which are usually unattractive, as Kahn explains.

For most workers it is a choice between no work connection (usually with severe attendant economic penalties and a conspicuous lack of meaningful alternative activities) and a work connection which is burdened with negative qualities (routine, compulsory scheduling, dependency, etc.). In these circumstances, the individual has no difficulty with the choice; he chooses work, and pronounces himself moderately satisfied.  
(*Work in America* 1973:15)

Other studies, however, indicate that very few people would happily give up their work, even if the alternative meant no loss of income. They call into question the idea that what people want is a life of mere consumption and that they work only as a means to earn a livelihood. When a cross-section of Americans were asked if they would continue working even if they inherited enough to live comfortably without working, 80 per cent said they would keep working (*Work in America* 1973:9). Moreover, the percentage of people who say that they would work in such circumstances rises as people approach retirement age. This is a striking fact, as Marie Jahoda observes, 'for at the age of sixty-five the alternative to a job—no work—must be a highly realistic comparison, while for younger people the question invites fantasy' (Jahoda 1979:312).

Studies of the unemployed and of the retired, furthermore, suggest that the effects of the absence of work extend far beyond the financial sphere. An investigation among the unemployed workers of Marienthal in Austria in the early 1930s, for example, showed that

their sense of time disintegrated; having nothing to do meant that they became less able to be punctual for meals or other arrangements. Budgeting, so much more necessary than before, was progressively abandoned.... Family relations... deteriorated and family quarrels increased.  
(Jahoda 1979:309)

Many subsequent studies have confirmed these findings. They have

shown a lowering of self-esteem and morale, and increases in the suicide rate and the incidence of psychiatric treatment (*Work in America* 1973; Hayes and Nutman 1981; Jahoda 1982). In short, there is strong evidence that 'work plays a crucial and perhaps unparalleled psychological role in the formation of self-esteem, identity, and a sense of order' (*Work in America* 1973:4).

### Alienation

Yet people are sceptical of philosophies which tell them that they need to work or that they should find fulfilment in work; and not without some reason. For such philosophies seem grotesquely at odds with the reality of work as the majority experience it. Work is often routine, oppressive and stultifying. So, far from offering possibilities of fulfilment and self-realization, more typically it is alienating and destructive to soul and body. In Marx's well-known words, industrial forms of work 'mutilate the labourer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into hated toil' (Marx 1867:645). These highly charged words, though written more than 100 years ago about Victorian factory conditions, still apply today—and not only to factory work, but equally to a growing range of office and service sector jobs, which are being subjected to the industrial division of labour (Braverman 1974).

Evidence of the alienating and destructive effects of modern work has been extensively documented by social scientists in recent years. Much of this evidence is based upon personal accounts of the experience of work by workers themselves (Fraser 1968; Haraszti 1977; Terkel 1977). This sort of evidence is sometimes regarded as unreliable, as 'subjective' and 'impressionistic'. The overwhelming weight of it, however, means that it cannot be dismissed, even by the most unsympathetic writers. The term 'alienation' is one of the few theoretical concepts of Marxism that has passed into everyday currency; and this is because the features of work that it describes are experienced on a very wide scale. Alienation is a common feature of work as we know it.

Apparently less 'subjective' indications of the extent of alienation can be gathered in the form of statistics for rates of absenteeism, unofficial strikes and other forms of indiscipline at work. Such evidence is more readily quantifiable, but not necessarily better for that reason. For, like all evidence, its significance requires interpretation. At the end of the 1960s and in the early 1970s such

rates were increasing. At the time this was often cited as proof of the increasing alienation of workers and of the demise of the 'Protestant work ethic' (*Work in America*, 1973:11; Skillen 1977:60). We hear less of this theme these days. Such forms of indiscipline are now less prevalent; but it would be unwise to conclude from this that attitudes to work have changed fundamentally in recent years, or that alienation in work has significantly diminished. The threat of unemployment, as we all know, is a harsh task-master. 'Tranquillity is found also in dungeons but that does not make them desirable places in which to live' (Rousseau 1973:169).

There is no doubt of the alienation and dissatisfaction involved in much modern work. Does this refute the idea that there is a need to work? Not at all. To insist that there is a need to work, and a need for fulfilment in work, is not to say that these needs are adequately met in present society. On the contrary, it is only by recognizing these needs that we can understand the phenomenon of alienation and appreciate the critical force of this concept. For the concept of alienation *presupposes* that there is a need for work and for fulfilment in work that modern conditions of work deny. This point is well known and needs little emphasis. It is clear in the description that Marx gives of alienated labour, which consists of the fact that the worker

does not confirm himself in his work but denies himself, feels miserable not happy, does not develop free mental and physical energy but mortifies his flesh and ruins his mind.... His labour is therefore not voluntary but forced; it is *forced labour*. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; but a *means* to satisfy needs outside itself.

(Marx 1844a:326)

Implicit in the concept of alienation is the view that we are not mere passive consumers but active and creative beings. Productive work is 'the first premise of all human existence' (Marx and Engels 1845:48)—the most fundamental and essential human activity, and the basis upon which both human nature and society develop. And, although Marx never fails to stress that in present conditions most forms of work are alienating and humanly destructive, he entirely rejects the view that work is mere toil and that mankind has a natural and inherent aversion to it. Given the necessary conditions, labour can be 'a liberating activity', it can become 'attractive work, the individual's self-realization' (Marx 1858:611).

These ideas are not confined to the socialist tradition. Similar views are at the basis of the work of Maslow and other humanistic psychologists. They also underlie the 'job enrichment' school of industrial psychology. In opposition to the hedonist account, Frederick Herzberg and others have argued that people are active and productive beings for whom work can and should be attractive and involving (Herzberg 1966; Skillen 1977:68–9).

This approach helps to explain and illuminate the need to work. In the first place, and at the most abstract and general level, work requires activity. It is clear that people, in the modern world at least, have a need to be active. They are not, in fact, satisfied by a life of mere passive idleness with 'no laborious occupation required'. One of the great psychological problems of unemployment is coping with the inactivity it brings. Moreover, work not only demands activity; in the form of a job, at least, it imposes a time structure on the waking day. The absence of such a time structure is also usually experienced as a problem by those who are unemployed (Hayes and Nutman 1981:40–1; Jahoda 1982:22ff.).

Secondly, work is *productive* activity. The exercise of our powers to shape and form the objective world and appropriate it to our needs is in itself a satisfaction and a need. In Marx's words 'the object of labour is...the objectification of the species-life of man' in which he can 'contemplate himself in a world he himself has created' (Marx 1844a:329). Summarizing numerous recent psychological studies, the authors of *Work in America* report that 'through the...awareness of one's efficacy and competence in dealing with the objects of work, a person acquires a sense of mastery over both himself and his environment' (*Work in America* 1973:4). Moreover, work is essentially the exercise of these powers towards *useful* ends. The product is a use value: something that satisfies human needs.

Whatever his or her occupation the worker feels needed. Work roles are not the only roles which offer the individual the opportunity of being useful and contributing to the community but, without doubt, for the majority they are the most central roles and consequently people deprived of the opportunity to work often feel useless and report that they lack a sense of purpose.

(Hayes and Nutman 1981:43)

In the third place, work (in most of its modern forms, at least) is a social activity, both in its organization and in its product. In most

cases a job is a directly social activity. It takes people out of their homes and puts them into contact with others. In modern industry, indeed, the very process of work has become a cooperative one. As Marx says: 'The product ceases to be the direct product of the individual, and becomes a social product, produced in common by a collective labourer, i.e. by a combination of workmen' (Marx 1867:505). Moreover, the product, when it is destined for the market, is intended to meet needs beyond those of the individual or the immediate household.

For many people, work is the main basis of their social life, and also of their sense of identity and status. Indeed, in the case of large enterprises like mines or factories, it may be the basis for a whole community. In a wide review of attitude studies, Herzberg and his associates found that the social aspect is the most frequently mentioned source of satisfaction from work (Hayes and Nutman 1981:42). Conversely, as Jahoda says, 'case studies of the unemployed... repeatedly draw attention to the demoralising effect of social isolation' (Jahoda 1979:313). This is also, of course, a recurrent theme in the literature about women whose work is confined to the home.

### Women and work

So far I have implicitly been equating work with a job, with employment, and contrasting it with unemployment. It has been possible to do so because employment has become the predominant form of work in contemporary society. Nevertheless, it is clear that there are many kinds of work which do not take this form. It is particularly important to recognize this fact when talking about the issue of women and work.

Traditionally, women's work has been confined to the domestic sphere, and this has been reflected in the view that woman's 'place' is in the home. However, as has often been observed, work patterns are changing. Since the Second World War, at least until the recent recession, women have increasingly been drawn into employment outside the home. As a consequence, attitudes are also changing. 'In a society in which money determines value', writes Margaret Benston, 'women are a group who work outside the money economy. Their work [at home] is not worth money, is therefore valueless, is therefore not real work' (Benston 1982:195).

The modern women's movement is a product of, and a response to, these changes; and it has reflected the ambivalent attitudes to

work that I have been describing in a particularly clear and conscious way. Two distinct and opposed reactions are apparent within it. On the one hand, some women have resisted and rejected the pressures towards public employment. The world of work is a ‘man’s world’—an alienated world—where women can expect nothing but further oppression and exploitation. They have consequently sought to reverse the attitudes that Benston describes and ‘revalue’ the domestic, the female sphere.

The main tendency of the women’s movement, however, has been to accept—indeed, to affirm—the need for women to work outside the home, and to demand the conditions necessary to make practical and tolerable the fulfilment of this need. These conditions are, in the workplace, equal pay and opportunities, and the provision of crèches, nurseries, maternity leave etc.; and, in the home, an equal division of domestic labour. It is not here a question of opposing the domestic role to work outside the home, as though they were exclusive opposites. The strand of the women’s movement that I am describing has characteristically affirmed the need for *both*, with the implication that it must be the same for men.

No doubt the forces that have driven women out to work are mainly economic. Nevertheless, the women’s movement is an expression and an indication of the fact that quite apart from the economic motives, women feel a *need*—an inner need—for work: a need for a job as an end in itself, and not merely as a means to earn a livelihood.

Some of the psychological evidence for this conclusion is strikingly similar to the evidence about the psychological effects of unemployment in general which I have just described. Housewives increasingly feel constrained by the purely domestic role, and unable to use their talents and capacities to the full. Empirical studies show that the incidence of depression and psychiatric symptoms is higher among housewives than among women with jobs (Oakley 1982:75–81, reporting studies of G.W.Brown and T.Harris).

What this suggests is that the purely domestic role—no matter how fulfilling and productive aspects of it may be—is not a sufficient one for women in modern industrial society. This is the message of the main strand of the women’s movement. Long ago, in this context, Betty Friedan (1965: ch. 1) talked of ‘the problem that has no name’. But this problem does have a name, and that name is ‘unemployment’. In the modern world, that is to say, women just like men have a need for jobs, for employment, for work.

### Work and liberation

The criticisms that I have made of hedonism have been widely voiced in recent years; but the turn my argument has just been taking is likely to be less familiar and to provoke a more sceptical response. For many who would agree that we are essentially active and productive beings who in some sense need to work, would also maintain that work, in the form of a job, can never be fulfilling. A job is something we do only because we have to, in order to earn a living; satisfying productive activity can exist only outside the sphere of employment and jobs, in free time. Thus, it will be argued, a sharp distinction must be made between work in the world of employment and autonomous creative activity outside it. What people want and need is not employment, not jobs, but the very opposite. In Gorz's phrase they want the 'liberation from work'—a reduction of the working day to the inescapable minimum and an extension of leisure time (Gorz 1982, 1985).

The socialist principle of the 'right to work' is a demand for jobs. According to libertarian writers like Gorz, this demand is both reactionary and outdated. Reactionary in that the work ethic it embodies is, and always has been, a ruling-class ideology which is preached to working people in the attempt to get them to accept their work and do it without complaint. Until now, the lifelong labour of the vast majority has been a social necessity. However, the introduction of automation and new technology is rapidly creating the conditions that could free people from this need. We are on the brink of the 'post-industrial' age, in which the 'liberation' from work will be a real possibility, and in which the old ethic of work will be neither appropriate nor applicable.

Ideas and arguments like these are enormously influential at the moment, particularly on the left. Nevertheless, it is impossible to comprehend either present attitudes to work or their history on the basis of them. They are unsatisfactory in almost every aspect. That is what I will now argue.

In the first place, the widespread view that the work ethic is necessarily reactionary must be challenged. The history of ideas about work clearly reveals that a belief in the human value of labour has by no means always been the outlook of the ruling class. On the contrary, those who have been exempted from the need to work by their social position have often tended to look down upon work—and particularly upon manual work—and denigrate it as the lowest and least worthy of human activities.<sup>1</sup>

Historically, the idea of the dignity of labour is associated particularly with Protestantism. Nowadays, especially on the left, it is customary—almost obligatory—to sneer at the ‘Protestant work ethic’ and reject it as a piece of reactionary and oppressive ideology. I shall come back to the question of its present significance in due course. First, however, it is important to see that in its own time, in the hands of the early Protestants at least, it had a progressive and radical aspect.

It is well known that Protestant ideas about work helped to form the attitudes and to create the habits and discipline which were needed for the development of modern capitalism and modern industry (Weber 1905; Tawney 1938; Hill 1969: chs 4, 15). However, the initial development of capitalist industry was not the work of the ruling class of the time, and these ideas did not express its interests. On the contrary, they expressed the outlook and needs of what Christopher Hill, using a seventeenth-century phrase, calls ‘the industrious sort of people...yeomen, artisans and small and middling merchants’; in other words, ‘economically independent men, householders, to the exclusion both of the propertyless and the privileged classes’ (Hill 1969:130).

So far from being a ruling-class ideology, the views of the early Protestants were often aimed quite specifically against the ruling class of the day—the aristocracy and landed gentry—as an idle and parasitic class; and they formed the basis of the revolutionary ideas of the Civil War period. As Hill says,

a theory that dignifies labour is as double-edged as the labour theory of value which is its secularized counterpart, already to be found in the writings of Hobbes and Locke.... ‘They are unworthy of bread that in their deeds have no care for the commonweal.’ This was the lower-class heresy throughout the centuries. The propertied class had always been able to suppress it until the sixteenth century; but then it won its way to respectability, thanks in part at least to the growing social importance of the industrious sort of people.  
(*ibid.*: 135)

Subsequently, as capitalist relations of production were established, it was no longer so much a matter of persuading people of the virtue of the modern habit of work as of keeping them at it. As the nascent bourgeoisie won increasing economic power and political influence, the political implications of the Protestant work ethic were gradually



transformed. 'As the Nonconformists sloughed off their political ideals, so their emphasis on the duty of labour outweighed their emphasis on the rights of those who work' (ibid.: 140).

And yet, at the same time, the 'lower-class heresy' to which Hill refers lived on, and ideas of the dignity of labour continued to be 'double-edged'. Indeed, as I have argued, they remain at the basis of much radical and socialist political thinking, and form the basis of its critique of modern conditions of work.

In this connection, it is important to see that such ideas also underlie the libertarian outlook of writers like Gorz. Although he calls for a 'liberation from work', his position should not be confused with the hedonist theory I criticized earlier. Gorz is not writing in praise of a life of mere consumption and idleness. Quite the contrary: he advocates that our free time should be filled with creative and productive activities. For he, too, believes that people are essentially active beings, who can find fulfilment only through the exercise of their creative powers. However, he also argues that such fulfilment is possible only outside the sphere of employment, which is unavoidably alienating.

The question of whether alienation can be overcome in some future society is outside my present scope; but it is beyond question that much present work has alienating and unsatisfying features, as I have already stressed. Moreover, it is surely the case that there are some jobs that are so menial and degrading that most people would rather remain without work than do them. Nevertheless, it is a mistake to regard all forms of employment in a purely negative light. For the evidence, I have been arguing, shows that for most people work is a more complex and ambivalent experience. It shows that most people gain genuine and important satisfactions from their work.

No doubt these satisfactions—the satisfactions of the active and social exercise of our creative powers—can be obtained in ways other than through a job. Some people indeed do find them outside the structures of employment, as the report on *Work in America* recognizes:

Although *work* is central to the lives of most people, there is a small minority for whom a *job* is purely a means to a livelihood. To them a job is an activity that they would gladly forgo if a more acceptable option for putting bread on their table were available. What little evidence there is on this point indicates that for most such individuals the kind of jobs that they see open to them do little to provide the sense

of self-esteem, identity or mastery that are the requisites for satisfying work. These individuals turn to other activities (music, hobbies, sport, crime) and other institutions (family, church, community) to find the psychological rewards that they do not find in their jobs.

(*Work in America* 1973:10)

For most people, however, the experience of being without a job is a profoundly demoralizing and unfulfilling one. This is particularly so if joblessness takes the form of unemployment in its usual sense, but to a lesser extent it is also true of the experience of retired people and of women engaged solely in housework, as I have argued. Here it is worth noting Jahoda's striking finding that when they were made unemployed, the men she studies in Marienthal actually *decreased* their leisure activities, 'their attendance of clubs and voluntary organizations, their use of the free library, their reading' (Jahoda 1979:309; Jahoda *et al.* 1972).

No doubt it is possible to live a fulfilling life without a job. However, those who succeed in doing so constitute only a small minority, for the inner resources required are very great. Jahoda puts the point well:

It is true that nobody prevents the unemployed from creating their own time structure and social contacts, from sharing goals and purposes with others or from exercising their skills as best they can. But the psychological input required to do so on a regular basis under one's own steam entirely, is colossal.

(Jahoda 1979:313)

As Jahoda also notes, 'even with all their material and educational advantages, some academics, freed for a year from their regular time structure, flounder and feel lost' (Jahoda 1982:23).

### A false need?

This is what the bulk of the evidence indicates, and there is virtually none to the contrary. However, the writers I am criticizing are unlikely to be greatly upset by this. They do not seriously dispute the view that a majority, as a matter of fact, feel the need for a job. Rather, the crucial question for them is how this fact is to be interpreted. For they would argue that the supposed 'need to work' is ultimately a product of the training and moral conditioning to which we are

subjected. It is a 'false' and 'artificial' need, not a natural one: it is a social and historical product.

My main purpose so far has been to argue that people gain real and important fulfilment from work; that the need to work is genuine and real. But I do not mean to imply that this need is an inherent and universal feature of human nature. Protestantism, no doubt, involves such a view. It portrays work as the God-given duty and 'calling' of mankind. In more contemporary terms, moreover, it is often argued that human beings are endowed with a unique creativity, and that this is an essential feature of human nature which distinguishes us from the rest of animal creation. Man is *homo faber*, the productive species (Norman 1983: chs 8–9).

The socialist view of work has some similarity to these ideas, it is true. In its Marxist form, however, it differs fundamentally from them in rejecting the idea of a universal and eternal human nature. Human nature, for Marx, develops and changes historically. Human powers and human needs are a human and social product. In particular, they are a product of the essential human activity of labour. 'By acting on the external world and changing it, [man] at the same time changes his own nature' (Marx 1867:177).

Through the activity of labour, people develop their powers and capacities and create new needs—including the need to work. I have been arguing that this is a real and fundamental need in present society. However, there are reasons to believe that it has not always been so, and that attitudes to work have changed greatly in the course of history.

A frequently heard complaint of Western employers in the developing world is that the 'natives' make poor workers: they are 'unreliable', they are 'lazy'. These complaints are not new. Marx quotes an amusing example:

In *The Times* of November 1857 there appeared a delightful yell of rage from a West Indian planter. With great moral indignation this advocate, in support of his pleas for the reestablishment of Negro slavery, describes how the Quashees (the free Negroes of Jamaica) were content to produce what was strictly necessary for their own consumption, and looked upon laziness itself ('indulgence' and 'idleness') as the real luxury article alongside this 'use value'. They said that sugar, and all the fixed capital laid out in the plantations could go to hell; they smirked with ironical, malicious glee at the ruined planters.... They had ceased to be slaves, but were not yet wage-earning labourers

but only self-sustaining peasants working for their own necessary consumption.

(Marx 1858:325–6, translation from McLellan 1973:101)

The same complaints are still heard. Writing in 1961 about a group of South American hunters, the anthropologist Gusinde declares, more in resignation than anger,

the Yamana are not capable of continuous daily hard labour, much to the chagrin of European farmers and employers for whom they often work. Their work is more a matter of fits and starts.... Repeated irregularities of this kind make the European employer despair, but the Indian cannot help it. It is his natural disposition.

(Sahlins 1974:28)

Similar things were said about newly recruited Mexican mineworkers at the beginning of this century.

His lack of initiative, inability to save, absence while celebrating too many holidays, willingness to work only three or four days a week if that paid for necessities, insatiable desire for alcohol—all were pointed out as proof of natural inferiority.

(Thompson 1967:91)

It is absurd to talk of ‘natural’ characteristics in this way, and to regard these matters in purely moral terms. Nevertheless, this should not blind us to the real differences in attitudes to work that such judgements indicate.

These differences are strikingly confirmed by numerous anthropological studies. On the basis of a great deal of empirical evidence, Sahlins, for example, convincingly refutes the common idea that ‘primitive’—hunter gatherer—peoples have to work without cease in the constant battle to survive, and lack the leisure time needed to ‘build culture’.

There is nothing...to the convention that hunters and gatherers can enjoy little leisure from tasks of sheer survival.... The traditional formulas might be truer if reversed: the amount of work (per capita) increases with the evolution of culture, and the amount of leisure decreases.

(Sahlins 1974:35)

For example, the Arnhem Land aboriginals, according to Sahlins,

do not work hard, the average length of time per person per day put into the appropriation and preparation of food was four or five hours. Moreover, they do not work continuously. The subsistence quest was highly intermittent. It would stop for the time being when the people had procured enough for the time being, which left them plenty of time to spare. (ibid.: 17)

Similar patterns are found among other hunter-gatherer groups. 'Reports...suggest a mean of three to four hours per adult worker per day in food production' (ibid.: 35).

What do these peoples do with their free time? According to Sahlins, 'much of the time spared by the Arnhem Land hunters was literally spare time, consumed in rest and sleep' (ibid.: 19). If such 'primitive' societies fail to 'build culture', he concludes, it 'is not strictly from want of time. It is from idle hands' (ibid.: 20). The choice to avoid embarking on the path of civilized development, he suggests, may even be a conscious one: 'Why should we plant when there are so many mongomongo nuts in the world?' ask the Bushmen (ibid.: 27).

### **Industry and human nature**

Such attitudes are not confined to 'other cultures'. People of preindustrial Europe shared them. At the outset of the industrial revolution, working people strongly resisted the new work discipline required in the factories; and the early factory owners complained of the unreliability of their workers in precisely the same terms as do today's employers in the developing world. In the textile mills, for example, 'on the first introduction of the business the people were found very ill-disposed to submit to the long confinement and regular industry required of them' (Pollard 1965:161). Indeed, the first manufacturers faced not only technical and mechanical problems, they also had to find ways of 'training human beings to renounce their desultory habits of work and to identify themselves with the unvarying regularity of the complex automaton' (Ure 1835:15).

Moreover, initially at least, the inducements of higher wages and piece rates were ineffective. In the eighteenth century, the received wisdom had been that 'the hands work better the less they are paid'. Payment by results was an innovation of industrialism, introduced

only gradually as attitudes to work and its rewards changed (Pollard 1965:191; Thompson 1980:393). The pre-industrial worker, it seemed, lived with no care for the morrow: when he had earned sufficient he ‘returned to his village...[or] went on a drunken spree’ (Thompson 1980:392–3). As with the Quashees described by Marx,

ambitions to rise above his own idea of a ‘subsistence’ income by dint of hard work were foreign to him. He had to be made ambitious and ‘respectable’.... For unless the worker *wished* to become ‘respectable’...none of the other incentives would bite.

(Pollard 1965:195)

The inculcation of Protestant morality, with its emphasis on the virtues of work, regularity, orderliness, sobriety and thrift, no doubt played an important part in changing attitudes to work and its rewards. Likewise, schooling was a significant factor in training the young in the habits of the new industrial order. ‘Once within the school gates’, as Thompson (1967:84) says, ‘the child entered the new universe of disciplined time’. However, the role of preaching and schooling should not be over-emphasized. While work remained on a domestic and small workshop scale, such influences had only limited effect. It was the introduction of large-scale machinery that made the new discipline imperative and enforced it upon the workers. This was clear enough to the manufacturers, as their ‘philosopher’ Ure observes. In a workshop, he says, ‘when a mantua maker chooses to rise from her seat and take the fresh air, her seam goes back a little, that is all; there are no other hands waiting on her’. In a cotton mill, by contrast, ‘all the machinery is going on, which they must attend to’. And so, Ure stresses, it was ‘machinery [which] ultimately forced the worker to accept the discipline of the factory’ (Pollard 1965:184).

The first factory workers bitterly resented the new system; but the system eventually prevailed. The habits and attitudes it required were gradually accepted and internalized: human nature was transformed. ‘How superior in vigour and intelligence are the factory mechanics in Lancashire...to the handicraft artisans of London’, exclaims Ure in a typically ecstatic passage (Ure 1835:23); but the same changes were noted by other and more sceptical observers, including Marx and Engels.

By the standards of industrial society, people from pre-capitalist societies are ‘unreliable’ and ‘lazy’, they lack ‘discipline’ and ‘energy’. These are facts noted by writers of the most widely differing moral

perspectives. It is not illuminating to see these matters in moral terms, however; for what these observations make clear is that attitudes and habits of work are ultimately a product and a reflection of the mode of production in which they occur. In particular, the modern need to work that I have been describing is a product of the historically developed conditions of modern industry. The ‘habit of industriousness’, as Hegel calls it, is a product of work itself. ‘Practical education, acquired through working, consists first in the automatically recurrent need for something to do and the habit of simply being busy’ (Hegel 1821:129). Likewise according to Marx, it is the ‘historical destiny’ of capitalism to create ‘such a development of needs that surplus labour above and beyond necessity has itself become a general need’, and also through ‘the severe discipline of capital, acting on succeeding generations’ the development of ‘general industriousness’ in these new generations (Marx 1858:325).

Rousseau was one of the first of the modern writers to make such points. He recognized and described with great insight and originality the way in which our needs—and, in particular, the modern needs to be sociable, active and productive—have developed historically. Man ‘in the state of nature’—‘primitive’ man—he argues, is a creature of few needs and no concerns beyond them. ‘He desires only to live and be free from labour.... Civilized man, on the other hand, is always moving, sweating, toiling, and racking his brains to find still more laborious occupations’ (Rousseau 1973:104).

‘Primitive’ man, says Rousseau, is ‘indolent’. However, he repudiates the moral condemnation usually implied by that term. He does so by simply *reversing* the customary moral judgement. For he regards the ‘laziness’ of earlier people as the ‘natural’ condition of humankind, and the modern needs to be busy and productive as ‘artificial’ and ‘false’ needs—harmful and corrupting developments of human nature.

Sahlins, in common with many other recent writers, is inclined to take the same view. Thus he warns against judging the work habits and attitudes of the hunters and gatherers he describes ‘from the anxious vantage of European compulsions’ (Sahlins 1974:63); and he suggests that ‘the more appropriate deduction from the cultural differences might have been that Europeans are overworked’ (ibid.: 51).

Such ideas provide the basis for much of the currently fashionable scepticism about the human value of work. Gorz’s outlook is similar, as we have seen: for he, too, argues that the need to work is a false and artificial creation of modern industrial society. In other, nonindustrial societies we see different—truer and more natural—

attitudes to work; and it is these that provide the touchstone for his criticisms of the attitudes that I have been describing.

However, there is another view we can take of these matters. The developments that I have been describing provide no basis for the romantic idea of a 'natural' attitude to work. Rather, they indicate that, in this area at least, human nature is social and historical through and through. Attitudes to work, *all* attitudes to work—those of pre-industrial societies just as much as contemporary ones—are social and historical products. They are created by and reflect the mode of production in which they occur. Thus the modern need to work, although it is undoubtedly a historically developed need, should not be judged 'false' or 'artificial' simply for that reason. On the contrary, it is a real and ineliminable feature of contemporary psychology. For in the course of the historical developments that I have been outlining, new habits, new attitudes, new needs have been created and old ones relinquished. Human nature itself has been transformed.

### The need for leisure

As well as needing work, it is clear that we also need time off work—leisure—both for rest and relaxation, and also for the pursuit of activities and needs not fulfilled in work. Gorz puts strong emphasis on this point. He even quotes some evidence for it: namely a large European survey of 1977 which found that a majority (55 per cent) of people in work, if granted the choice, would prefer a reduction in their working hours to an increase in wages (Gorz 1982:140). Moreover, the reduction of working hours is something for which working people have long struggled, although it is important to stress that this has usually been in the context of the demand for full employment. As Jahoda says, the labour movement has traditionally taken the view that 'leisure hours are a complement to work hours, not a substitute for them' (Jahoda 1982:24).

Gorz, by contrast, sees leisure precisely as a desirable substitute for work. As we have seen, his view is that work is a coercive necessity and freedom consists in the 'liberation from work'. In a well-known passage, Marx contrasts the 'realm of necessity' (the realm of 'labour... determined by necessity and mundane considerations') with the 'realm of freedom' which involves 'that development of human energy which is an end in itself (Marx 1894:820). Gorz makes much of this passage. He talks of the autonomous, creative activities—arts and crafts, hobbies, sports and recreation—which the liberation from work will allow. However, his account of this 'realm of freedom' is



just as questionable as his account of the psychology of work. Although he sees well enough that work is a socially conditioned need, he writes as if autonomous and creative leisure activities will flourish quite naturally when we are freed from the coercive need to work. He fails to see that the desires and needs for these activities are equally social and historical products.

No doubt I will be thought to be misrepresenting Gorz at this point. After all, he says quite explicitly that a reduction of work time is not in itself 'intrinsically liberatory', and that it will bring freedom only if there exists a network of 'collective facilities'—community centres and workshops—and of 'local, non-market, collective services', etc. (Gorz 1985:103–4). What this suggests, however, is precisely that the *need* for 'autonomous' activity is present naturally; all that is required for it to flourish are the *means*—free time and the appropriate facilities. It is this view that I am questioning.

More free time, even with a network of cooperatives and so on, is something quite different from the realm of freedom as Marx describes it. The need for the positive and active use of non-work time is, in fact, a modern phenomenon: it hardly exists in pre-industrial societies. Rousseau describes how his 'natural man', once he has satisfied his few basic needs, simply falls asleep under the nearest tree. The abundant free time of hunter-gatherers, as we have seen, involves little that can properly be put under the heading of the 'development of human energy as an end in itself. The ceremonies and rituals which are often a well-developed feature of the life of such societies tend to be as coercively necessary for their members as mundane labour, and bear little relationship to Gorz's 'autonomous creative activity'. Moreover, as E.P. Thompson writes, popular culture before the industrial revolution in England was 'in many ways otiose, intellectually vacant, devoid of quickening' (Thompson 1967:93). This conflicts, I know, with the picture of people in pre-industrial communities spending long hours in conversation, in singing and dancing and in other convivial pursuits; but we must beware of romanticizing these societies. The truth rather appears to be that their autonomous non-work activities are desultory and limited, and not for lack of free time.

The extensive active, free and creative use of non-work time by working people is a development of modern industrial society (Burns 1973; Cunningham 1980; cf. Chapter 4 below). The growth of public leisure activities began in the eighteenth century and has continued steadily until it has become, today, the basis of huge and still expanding areas of industry. Of course, a great deal of modern leisure

activity involves people only as consumers, in a passive fashion. The developments I am describing are still in process: their general direction, however, is unmistakable.

What these observations indicate is that the ‘realm of freedom’ is not attained simply by having free time—although free time is, to be sure, a necessary pre-condition for it. Rather, the active and creative use of free time is a historical development. It is itself a *need*, the development of which is gradually transforming non-work hours from being a time of mere torpor and idleness into a sphere in which they will truly be a time of free human development of the sort envisaged by Marx. In short, the ‘realm of freedom’ is best seen as a *development* of the ‘realm of necessity’—its complement and not its mere opposite.

### The politics of work

I have been defending the view that work and leisure are real and fundamental, though historically developed, needs in the modern world. These ideas, as I have stressed, are central to the socialist outlook. However, they are widely dismissed as conservative attitudes which have ceased to have any application to contemporary politics. In conclusion, I will argue that there is no basis for these charges.

We are frequently told, for example, that the ‘work ethic’ is in decline, although it is seldom clear just what this means. However, it seems likely that work attitudes are changing. Young people in particular, it appears, are becoming more demanding in relation to work: they are less willing to submit quietly to arbitrary authority, and they want fulfilment from their work. The idea that work of whatever kind is a duty and a virtue is passing—if, indeed, it was ever widespread. However, if the arguments that I have been giving are at all correct, it would be wrong to imagine that this is because people are coming to deny the importance of work in their lives. On the contrary. The evidence, as I have shown, points in quite the opposite direction: it demonstrates that people are coming to regard work no longer as a *duty* but rather as a *need* which has become an essential part of human nature.

Libertarians like Gorz, by contrast, put a very different interpretation on these developments. They celebrate the ‘demise of the Protestant work ethic’ as proof that people are at last coming to appreciate that the need for work is a false and unnatural compulsion produced by modern society. This is often presented as though it was the most far-reaching and radical critique of industrial capitalist society (Willis 1977; Anthony 1978; Gorz 1982, 1985). It is nothing

of the kind. Such scepticism tells people that their desire for work and for fulfilling work is a delusion, the artificial product of social conditioning, which they should discard. In effect, in present circumstances, this is to tell the unemployed to reconcile themselves to unemployment; it is to tell alienated and dissatisfied workers to renounce their desire for fulfilling work as illusory and put up with their lot; it is to tell women to keep to their domestic 'place'.

A similar message is expressed in entirely different terms and from an entirely different quarter: not by would-be radicals, but by politicians who like to think that they are facing the current situation in the most hard-headed and realistic terms. The prospect now, in much of the Western world, is of high levels of long-term mass unemployment. In this context, we hear talk (even from some trade union leaders) of 'training for leisure', where 'leisure' is a euphemism for unemployment. The idea is that unemployment is inevitable; people must be trained to accept the fact and adapt to it (Jenkins and Sherman 1979).

It may seem that the view that I have been presenting gives some encouragement to the idea that people can be trained to accept unemployment. If the need for work is socially created, then surely it can be uncreated by social means—by education, by training? This does not follow. Indeed, what I am saying is directly opposed to such views. When I talk of the need to work in modern society as a *real* need, and when I stress that it is an outcome and a product of modern industry, I mean precisely to deny that it is a product simply of education, or that it is a purely ideological phenomenon. On the contrary, it is a need which arises out of the most basic *material* conditions of modern society, and which cannot therefore be altered by the methods of indoctrination alone.

### Socialism and work

The need for work, and the need for leisure too, I am arguing, is ultimately an aspect and an expression of the development of modern industry; it is a product of the productive forces. These have developed within the framework of capitalist relations of production. Increasingly, however, the development of industry is coming into collision and conflict with these relations of production. 'From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters' (Marx 1859:363).

These conflicts and contradictions have never been more clearly apparent. The gigantic forces of production developed by modern society lie underused and even idle: not only factories and machinery

but, even more importantly, people—millions of men and women with their socially developed habits and skills. And not because the capitalist system is incapable of mobilizing and employing them. Even when they are employed, as Marx says,

everything seems pregnant with its contrary. Machinery, gifted with the wonderful power of shortening and fructifying human labour, we behold starving and overworking it. The new fangled sources of wealth, by some weird spell, are turned into sources of want.... All our inventions and progress seem to result in endowing material forces with intellectual life, and in stultifying human life into a material force. This antagonism between modern industry and science on the one hand, modern misery and dissolution on the other hand; this antagonism between the productive powers and the social relations of our epoch is a fact, palpable, overwhelming, and not to be controverted.

(Marx 1856:359–60)

The productive potential of modern industry is immense, and so is its potential for human liberation. In a rationally and humanely organized society, it could be used not only to meet the real needs of the most basic kinds—the real poverty and want which still exist, even in the most economically advanced societies—but also to create more humane conditions of work, including a reduction of the working day. But such statements are likely to arouse scepticism in many quarters. For people are fearful and apprehensive of the productive power of modern industry, and inclined to reject such views as naïvely ‘productivist’ ones (Gorz 1982:33).

To this charge socialism pleads guilty, for it is quite avowedly a ‘productivist’ philosophy—not in the sense that it recommends production simply for the sake of production, but in the sense that it regards production as our essential activity and as a primary human and social value. Its fundamental criticism of capitalism follows from this. Capitalism is no longer able effectively to employ the productive forces—the means of production and the labour power—which it itself has brought into being. It is not able to meet the needs—including the needs for fulfilling work and leisure—which it itself has created. What socialism demands, therefore, is not the liberation of people from work—capitalism is already doing that all too successfully by throwing millions onto the dole—but rather the

liberation of work, of the productive forces (including people), from the stultifying confines of the capitalist system.

As for what a possible future society may hold in store, we have learned to be cautious and sceptical of utopian visions. The problems of what used to be called the ‘actually existing’ socialist societies are a sufficient warning. Marx, too, was notably restrained when it came to ‘dreaming up recipes for the cookshops of the future’ (Marx 1867:17). In one of his few attempts to envisage the character of a future communist society, he talks of labour becoming ‘life’s prime want’ (Marx 1875:24). This has often been dismissed as one of his more utopian and fantastic ideas. But is it really so? The arguments that I have been presenting raise this question—and not only on the basis of what can be envisaged for an ideal future, but on the basis of what we can see in the present. According to Lenin:

The feudal organization of social labour rested on the discipline of the bludgeon, while the working people, robbed and tyrannized by a handful of landowners, were utterly ignorant and downtrodden. The capitalist organization of social labour rested on the discipline of hunger.... The communist organization of social labour...rests...on the free and conscious discipline of the working people themselves who have thrown off the yoke both of the landowners and the capitalist. This new discipline does not drop from the skies, nor is it born from pious wishes, it grows out of the material conditions of large-scale capitalist production, and out of them alone.

(Lenin 1919:171)

Lenin was writing at a time when Russia was still predominantly a peasant-based agricultural society. His words must have seemed as utopian and as distant from reality as Marx’s.<sup>2</sup>

If today, in our society, they still seem so, it is for different reasons. We live in a capitalist society, based upon large-scale industry where for most people work is in many respects an alienating and oppressive experience. The spur that drives them to it may no longer be the threat of hunger as such, but certainly the threat of material deprivation plays its part. There is no question but that there are material incentives to work. And yet the evidence, I have been arguing, shows that work (at least of any but the most repulsive and degrading sort) is also now felt subjectively as a need. It may not yet be ‘life’s *prime* want’, but it is a vital want, a need,

nevertheless. So, far from being a utopian dream, Marx's vision is increasingly becoming a fact of modern psychology. That is to say, the *subjective* conditions for a more satisfactory and rational organization of the work of society are developing here and now. What is lacking is the *objective* framework of economic and social relations, and the objective organization of work, which would allow this need to be satisfied.

## THE ROLE OF LEISURE

With the return of long-term, mass unemployment to many parts of the Western world, issues of work and leisure are topical again. In the aftermath of the Great Depression, and particularly in the period of post-war reconstruction, a consensus committed to policies of full employment emerged. This was to be achieved on the basis of steady economic growth, which was also to provide for a rising standard of living and a gradually increasing amount of leisure time.

In recent years, however, a growing chorus of voices has been questioning these ideas. Automation is bringing about the 'collapse of work' (Jenkins and Sherman 1979). The traditional idea of full employment is no longer applicable: according to André Gorz 'there can no longer be full time waged work for all' (1985:34).

These developments, it is said, herald the advent of the 'post-industrial' age, which will involve profound changes in the places of work and leisure in human life. 'Socially useful labour...will cease to be anyone's exclusive or leading activity. Instead, people's major occupation may be one or a number of self-defined activities' (Gorz 1982:3). Traditional attitudes are also changing. According to Gorz, a life centred on work is no longer either possible or desirable.

An inversion of the scale of priorities, involving a subordination of socialized work...to activities constituting the sphere of individual autonomy, is underway. 'Real life' begins outside of work, and work itself has become a means towards the extension of the sphere of non-work, a temporary occupation by which individuals acquire the possibility of pursuing their main activities.

(ibid.: 81)

Work, in the sense of socially necessary productive activity, cannot be a source of liberation or fulfilment: it is inevitably alienating. Work is a mere means to freedom, which can come only outside of work in free time. Work is unfreedom, leisure is liberation.

My aim in this chapter is to question these views. My focus will not be upon the economic and social prophecies about 'post-industrial' society (questionable as these are), but rather on the rethinking of moral attitudes to work and leisure which these are claimed to involve. For I shall argue that work is, and remains, a fundamental and central activity in human life. It is the basis upon which human nature develops and, potentially at least, is a fulfilling and liberating activity. In this context, I will then seek to clarify the role of leisure.

### The realm of necessity

The idea that work can be a liberating activity is, of course, a central theme of Marx's philosophy, and of Hegel's too. As is often noted, however, Marx's pronouncements on the human meaning of work are not free of ambiguity (Arendt 1958:105–15; Berki 1979). In particular, in a well-known passage, Marx describes labour as activity in the realm of necessity, and he contrasts it with the true realm of freedom which 'begins only where labour which is determined by necessity... ceases' (Marx 1894:820). These phrases are often taken to imply that work, because it is a necessary activity, is therefore unfree and inescapably alienating; and they are accordingly seized upon by writers like Gorz in support of their case (Gorz 1982:95f, 1985:59f.).

My concern is not with Marx's ideas as such, and I have no wish to rescue him from the charges of ambiguity or contradiction here. Whatever Marx may have meant by these words, however, I do wish to argue that the necessity of work does not automatically imply its unfreedom.

That work is a human necessity is undeniable. We are creatures of need and we must work to satisfy our needs. From this evident truth it seems but a short step to the conclusion that work cannot be a liberating or fulfilling activity. According to Gorz, for example, 'work is an imposition, a heterodetermined, heteronomous activity.... Work is only a means of earning money and not an activity that is an end in itself.... Work is not freedom' (Gorz 1982:1–2).

However, the necessity of work does not entail such conclusions. Quite the contrary. The feeling that one's work is useful and necessary is one of the major aspects of the fulfilment that work can bring. It



can, to some extent, compensate for all sorts of other unsatisfactory and unpleasant features of work: long hours and low pay, difficulty and danger (as in the case of nurses and miners, for example). In saying this I must stress that I am not trying to suggest that some people will or should tolerate—still less enjoy—menial or degrading work simply because it is useful. This is what is implied by the familiar socialist propaganda figure of the heroic worker happily and tirelessly toiling away at the most unappealing tasks simply for the good of society. My point is not so fanciful. Of course, there are useful jobs which are intrinsically unpleasant, and which people shun despite their utility. It is quite possible to acknowledge this, however, without denying the point that I am making: namely, that the usefulness and necessity of work is often an important source of its satisfaction.

Conversely, where work is felt to be useless or unnecessary it becomes demoralizing and even hateful. Such feelings should be familiar, for doubts about the need for one's work are a particular occupational hazard for philosophers and other academics, as well as people in advertising, the media and others not directly engaged in the production of necessities. At the extreme, the lack of a useful social role is one of the greatest problems facing the unemployed; and retired people also suffer in this way. In the army, indeed, pointless exercises, like digging holes and filling them in again, are used as a cruel and unusual form of punishment.

These well-known facts about the psychology of work and the lack of it call into question the view that work, simply because it is necessary, is thereby experienced as a coercive imposition. Hegel and Marx recognize these aspects of work at a more theoretical level. Thus Hegel, in the 'Master-Slave' section of his *Phenomenology*, focuses upon the element of 'service' in the slave's labour; and in *The Philosophy of Right* he describes how work in its social form must be 'strictly adapted...to the pleasure [i.e. needs] of other workers' (Hegel 1821:129). But, far from regarding these as purely negative and unfree features of work, he portrays them as essential to its self-formative and liberating character. Likewise Marx. In unalienated labour, he writes, 'I would have the *immediate* satisfaction and knowledge that in my labour I had gratified a *human* need, i.e. that I had objectified *human nature* and hence had procured an object corresponding to the needs of another *human being*' (Marx 1844b:277).

Furthermore, work is necessary not only in that its purpose is to satisfy needs, but also in the activity it involves, in the *means* which it must use to this end. For the activity of work is, in large measure, set by its ends, and by the nature of the materials and the tools through

which these ends are to be achieved. Thus, as Marx says, the worker's purpose 'determines the mode of his activity with the rigidity of a law and he must subordinate his will to it' (Marx 1867:178, translation as in Marx 1976:284). This is also a Hegelian theme, as Lukács explains:

in the Hegelian view of labour one of the crucial dialectical moments is that the active principle...must learn to respect reality just as it is. In the object of labour immutable laws are at work, labour can only be fruitful if these are known and recognized.  
(Lukács 1975:324–5)<sup>1</sup>

Again, however, this does not entail that work is unfree. For it is by working on the world, by overcoming the obstacles that it presents and achieving our purposes in and through it, that we develop our capacities and powers and realize our freedom. Marx is particularly clear upon this point.

Certainly, labour obtains its measure from the outside, through the aim to be attained and the obstacles to be overcome in attaining it. But...this overcoming of obstacles is in itself a liberating activity—and...further, the external aims become stripped of the semblance of merely external natural urgencies, and become posited as aims which the individual himself posits—hence as self-realization, objectification of the subject, hence real freedom, whose action is, precisely, labour.  
(Marx 1858:611)

Simone Weil makes this point in a powerful passage which is worth quoting at length.

Perfect liberty cannot be conceived as consisting merely in the disappearance of...necessity.... An existence from which the very notion of work had pretty well disappeared would be delivered over to the play of the passions and perhaps to madness; there is no self-mastery without discipline, and there is no other source of discipline for man than the effort demanded in overcoming external obstacles.... Even the apparently freest forms of activity, science, art, sport, only possess value in so far as they imitate the accuracy, rigour, scrupulousness which characterize the performance of work, and even exaggerate them. Were it not for the model offered

them unconsciously by the ploughman, the blacksmith, the sailor who work *comme il faut*—to use that admirably ambiguous expression—they would sink into the purely arbitrary. The human body can in no case cease to depend on the mighty universe in which it is encased; even if man were to cease being subjected to material things and to his fellows by needs and dangers, he would only be more completely delivered into their hands by the emotions which would stir him continually to the depth of his soul, and against which no regular occupation would any longer protect him.

(Weil 1958:84–5)<sup>2</sup>

In its modern forms, moreover, work is a social and cooperative activity. It is socially organized, socially coordinated, and governed by an increasingly complex and extensive division of labour. According to Gorz, this is a further respect in which work is inevitably an unfree and alienating activity. Work, he argues, has ceased to be an ‘autonomous’ activity in which the worker can exercise individual control and initiative in the production process. It has become a social process which imposes itself upon the individual worker in an external and coercive fashion.

Heteronomous work is the inevitable outcome of the socialization of the productive process.... The co-ordination of a vast number of specialized tasks demands pre-established rules and procedures, leaving no room for individual improvisation or inventiveness. The social productive system can only operate like a single gigantic machine, to which all separate activities must be subservient.

(Gorz 1985:50–1)

It is true, of course, that the particular forms of the social organization of modern industrial work are often incompatible with the development of individuality and freedom. They involve a division of labour which concentrates expertise and control in a select group of engineers and managers, and condemns the vast majority of workers to operations and tasks from which all aspects of skill and knowledge, and opportunities to exercise initiative and independence, have been deliberately and systematically eliminated. Moreover, it is by no means clear how far such forms of the division of labour can be altered within the context of modern industrial work. However, there is no need to resolve these issues in order to see the inadequacy

of Gorz's position. For Gorz's argument involves an extreme individualism which would make short work of such questions. According to it, all forms of the division of labour (beyond the immediate household or small group level, at least) are incompatible with the development of individuality and freedom. Socially organized work—in itself and just as such—is alienating.

These views are untenable. Freedom and individuality are not innate human attributes which flourish naturally and despite 'society' and its 'constraints'. On the contrary, human nature—including human freedom and individuality—is a historical product. It develops only in and through society. The activity of work, moreover, is crucial and central to this development. For, as Marx says, 'by...acting on the external world and changing it, [man] at the same time changes his own nature. He develops his slumbering powers and compels them to act in obedience to his sway' (Marx 1867:177).

This is a profound and fundamental insight. In work people develop and exercise their powers and capacities; and in doing so they develop and extend them. They thus acquire new skills and abilities; and these are the real bases, the real contents, of freedom and individuality. Moreover, as far back as we can trace them, these developments occur always within a social context.

Once more, these ideas have a Hegelian origin. The 'importance... and final result' of Hegel's philosophy, writes Marx, is that he

grasps the nature of *labour* and conceives objective man—true, because real man—as the result of his *own labour*.... The realization of himself as a real species-being, i.e. as a human being, is only possible if he really employs all his *species-powers*—which again is only possible through the cooperation of mankind and as the result of history.

(Marx 1844a:386)

In short, the fact—and it is a fact—that social cooperation in work constrains and necessitates the actions of individuals, so far from ruling out freedom and autonomy, is the very condition for their development.

### The development of needs

By working in the world we not only satisfy existing needs; we exercise and develop our skills and powers and create new needs. As Marx says, the production of new needs is 'the first historical act' (Marx

and Engels 1845:49), for it sets mankind on the path to historical development. The 'realm of necessity', the sphere of needs, expands; but so, too, do our productive powers and our ability to satisfy them. Capitalism and modern industry, in particular, promote a gigantic increase in production and a corresponding growth of needs.

There are two different ways of reacting to these developments. On the one hand, the growth of human needs may be looked upon as an essentially negative and undesirable phenomenon. This is often thought to be Rousseau's view. Mankind, he is taken to argue, is at its freest and happiest in the early stages of its historical development, when needs are minimal. With social development, our needs expand more rapidly than our ability to satisfy them. The growth of needs is thus an evil—a cause of suffering, a sign of want and lack within us. The greater our needs, the weaker and more dependent, the more enslaved and unfree, we become. The sphere of needs constitutes an ever-increasing realm of unfreedom (Rousseau 1973).

Such a picture of human need also underlies the position of Gorz and other 'post-industrial' writers; and their social recipes follow from this. Modern industry has created a whole array of 'false' needs for its products. The way to freedom and happiness is not through an increase in production and an expansion of needs. Quite the reverse, Gorz insists, we should not only 'work fewer hours', but also 'consume less and have fewer needs': 'The voluntary, collective limitation of the sphere of necessity is the...only way to guarantee an extension of the sphere of autonomy' (Gorz 1982:122, 124).

Hegel and Marx, as we have just seen, have a quite different view. They regard the growth of human needs as an essential aspect of the development of human nature. In general, it is beneficial and positive—the pathway to human freedom. For human nature is social and historical in character. Human nature—human needs and human freedom—grows and develops historically. As regards needs, what are luxuries for one generation become necessities for the next. And we now take for granted many things which would have been beyond the power of earlier generations even to conceive.

This is not to deny that 'false needs' are engendered in modern society. However, it is to insist that the distinction between 'true' and 'false' needs must always be conceived in historical and relative terms. And it does involve rejecting the romantic attempt to circumscribe a fixed sphere of 'natural' or 'true' needs, and condemn as harmful and corrupting all developments of human nature beyond this basic level.

This, at least, is Hegel's view. Thus he responds to the Rousseauian position by first insisting, as I have, upon 'the moment of liberation

intrinsic to work'; and second by arguing that the simple and primitive life of the 'state of nature' is the very opposite of genuine freedom. Rather it is an animal-like and *merely* natural condition. 'To be confined to mere physical needs as such and their direct satisfaction would simply be the condition in which the mental is plunged in the natural and so would be one of savagery and unfreedom' (Hegel 1821:128).

Such talk of 'savagery' may upset modern sensibilities, but this should not be allowed to obscure the point that Hegel is making. It is shared in its essentials by Marx as well. For Marx, needs are not a purely negative feature of human life, they are not something merely suffered. Springborg has an inkling of this when she observes that 'it is a curiosity of Marx's theory of human nature that there is a close association between the concepts of needs and powers' (Springborg 1981:98). However, this association is much more than a mere 'curiosity'. It is a central feature of Marx's theory. Needs are the negative side of what exists in a positive form as human powers and capacities. As our powers and capacities develop, so new needs emerge; and, in turn, the growth of new needs is the spur to the development of new powers and capacities. Needs and powers are two different, negative and positive, sides of the same process—the growth of human nature. Márkus makes this crucial point when he writes that, for Marx,

man's nature is a 'totality of needs and drives', and in this living unity of the real personality 'passive' wants and 'active' capacities reciprocally presuppose each other and mutually transform into each other.... For man, on the one hand, is an *active* being, i.e. he can satisfy his wants only by developing and exercising his abilities and, on the other hand, the once-formed capability demands some scope for itself, i.e. it appears as a specific need for activity.

(Márkus 1978:63–4)

Moreover, the development of human nature does not remain confined to the sphere of purely material needs and capacities. For the growth of material needs and activities leads to the emergence and development of 'higher', mental and cultural, needs and abilities, and hence to the development of the sphere of autonomy and freedom.

In this way, the development of needs, so far from corrupting and enslaving mankind, is the essential basis for human liberation. For real freedom is a positive and not a merely negative phenomenon. It is not the mere antithesis of necessity. It is attained not through a

restriction of needs or a limitation of the realm of necessity, as writers like Gorz maintain. It requires, rather, the fullest possible extension and expansion of this sphere and hence of human nature, involving, in Marx's words,

the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces, etc.... The full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as humanity's own nature. The absolute working out of his creative potentialities.

(Marx 1858:488)

### A Protestant ethic?

In short, work is, in various ways, a necessary activity; but it is not thereby inevitably alienating and unfree. On the contrary, its very necessity is at the basis of its potentially liberating character. That is what I have been arguing. In doing so, I am bound to be accused of putting forward a version of the 'Protestant work ethic'. It is true, no doubt, that the views I have been defending constitute a 'work ethic', for they give work a central place in human life. However, it is important to see that this work ethic differs fundamentally from the traditional Protestant version.

Protestantism characteristically involves what Weber calls an 'ascetic' morality (Weber 1905). At the same time as it extols work as the God-given duty and 'calling' of mankind, it adopts a forbidding attitude towards leisure, and particularly the pleasures of consumption and the satisfaction of needs, which it looks upon as mere 'idleness' and 'indulgence'. In this way, the Protestant ethic opposes work to leisure, production to consumption, activity to idleness, and values the one to the exclusion of the other.

It is evident that a strong puritanical streak also runs through some versions of socialist morality. For example, leisure and pleasure have no place in the life of the heroic Stakhanovite worker of Soviet propaganda, whose sole satisfaction seems to consist in the performance of socially useful labour. The view that I am defending is quite different from this. For there is nothing puritanical about the Marxist account of human nature, nor about the idea of socialism which follows from it. On the contrary, as we have seen, Marx's philosophy involves a vision of the full development of human nature—of our 'needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces, etc.'. The expansion of needs and their *enjoyment* is as much a part of this

picture as the growth of production. Indeed, it is rather Gorz and others who criticize 'consumer society' in a romantic fashion who can rightly be charged with asceticism and puritanism. For they want to limit the development of our needs and constrict the pleasures of consumption (Ignatieff 1984: ch. 4).

### The need for leisure

To argue that work is a central and potentially satisfying activity is not to say that it is, or ever could be, the *sole* source of fulfilment or self-development. It is clear that we cannot be active, let alone at work, all the time. The question which then arises is: what is the place of nonwork, of leisure, in human life?

In the first place, apart from activity, we also need inactivity: rest and sleep. These are natural, physical and bodily needs, even though the specific amount of rest and sleep required shows considerable historical, social and individual variation. There are good grounds for thinking that the need for rest is connected with the demands of work. When people are made unemployed they tend to sleep more than when they were in work. Moreover, people in industrial societies tend to be more energetic and active, they rest and sleep considerably less than people from pre-industrial societies (cf. Chapter 3 above). This is a theme in Mrs Gaskell's *North and South* (1855), where we see the northern industrial town of 'Milton' through the eyes of the Hales, newly arrived from the still agrarian south of England.

After a quiet life in a country parsonage for more than twenty years there was something dazzling to Mr Hale in the energy which conquered immense difficulties with ease; the power of the machinery of Milton, the power of the men of Milton, impressed him with a sense of grandeur.

(Gaskell 1855:108)

Secondly, people in modern society need not only rest but also activities and satisfactions outside work. They need leisure. It is worth noting that Marx was not properly aware of this in his earliest works, where he tends to focus exclusively on the division of *labour* and its overcoming. In *The German Ideology*, for example, he imagines a society in which we could 'hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, breed cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner' (Marx and Engels 1845:53). This suggests that all activities apart from rest (but including 'criticism') can be considered under the heading of 'labour',



as aspects of the division of labour. In his later works, however, he comes to recognize the need for free, non-work time, 'which is both idle time and time for higher activities' (Marx 1858:712).

When Gorz and other advocates of 'post-industrial' society speak of leisure replacing work as being central in people's lives, it is clear that they do not mean mere rest and sleep. Gorz talks of a sphere of 'autonomous activity' which, he insists, 'is not based upon a mere desire to consume, not solely upon relaxation.... It is based, more profoundly, upon activities unrelated to any economic goal which are an end in themselves' (Gorz 1982:80)—hobbies and craft work, sports and recreation, cultural, artistic and social activities. The characteristic feature of leisure, as thus conceived, is that it is not work, not in 'the realm of necessity', not undertaken from economic compulsion but as an end in itself.

### The growth of leisure

Unlike rest and sleep, however, such activity is not a natural need and not a natural part of human life. On the contrary, it is a historically developed sphere of activity. It is important to stress this, for there is a strong tendency in writers like Gorz to look back nostalgically to the pre-industrial period and portray it as a time of more 'natural' attitudes to work and leisure. Thus, 'in all pre-capitalist societies', according to Gorz, leisure activities

were embedded into productive work. Work was given its rhythm by festivals and celebrations, with their songs and dances; the tools were beautifully decorated.... There was... a genuine 'popular art' which integrated work and life to create a way of living that had meaning and value.... There was no separation between work, culture and life.

(Gorz 1985:48-9)

It is true that in the earliest communal forms of society, based on hunting and gathering, it is not possible to distinguish clearly between work and leisure, either in society as a whole or in the lives of individuals. Virtually all members of the community (apart from young children) participate in the necessary labour of society (though normally subject to a division of labour by sex), and there is little provision for the support of unproductive members: infanticide is common and senilicide is sometimes also practised (Sahlins 1974:34). Work and what, by modern standards, would be regarded as 'leisure'

are intermingled in the course of daily life. On a Tikopian working party, writes Firth, 'the whole atmosphere is one of labour diversified by recreation at will' (quoted in *ibid.*: 57). However, as Sahlins reminds us,

the periodic deflection from 'work' to 'ritual' by peoples such as the Tikopians...must be made without prejudice, for their linguistic categories know no such distinction, but conceive both activities sufficiently serious as to merit a common term...the 'work of the Gods'.

(*ibid.*: 64)

The Yir Yiront, an Australian Aboriginal group, do not even draw a distinction between 'work' and 'play'.

In such societies, needs are few, life is simple and work leisurely by modern standards, not only in its pace and rhythms, but also in its duration. As Sahlins shows,

a good case can be made that hunters and gatherers work less than we do; and, rather than a continual travail, the food quest is intermittent, leisure abundant, and there is a greater amount of sleep in the daytime per capita per year than in any other condition of society.

(*ibid.* 1974:14)

If the mere absence of work is sufficient to constitute leisure, we should have to look back to these societies for our models of the 'leisure society'. But this would be a mistake. For if their work is leisurely, it is also the case that their 'leisure' is necessary. Indeed, to talk of 'leisure' in this context is problematic: for much of the non-work activity of such peoples is not 'free' or 'autonomous', not undertaken as an end in itself. The arts and crafts, the rituals and ceremonies, of such societies form an essential aspect of the necessary labour of subsistence. As Sahlins says,

it would be insufficient to suppose that production is... subject to arbitrary interference...by other obligations, themselves 'non-economic'.... These other claims—of ceremony, diversion, sociability and repose—are only the complement or, if you will, the superstructural counterpart of a dynamic proper to the economy.

(*ibid.* 1974:65)

The growth of a sphere of leisure, distinct from work, goes together with the emergence of classes and groups exempt from necessary work. The economic basis of this development is the distinction between necessary and surplus labour. Necessary labour is the work needed to reproduce the working portion of society at its given, historically developed, level of subsistence, while surplus labour is production above and beyond this, which creates the basis for a privileged group of non-workers. 'The creation of surplus labour on one side corresponds to the creation of minus-labour, relative idleness (or *nonproductive* labour at best) on the other' (Marx 1858:401n). So, too, it creates the basis upon which 'higher' leisure activities have developed. 'The labour of the mass has [been]...the condition for the development of general wealth, just as the non-labour of the few [has been the condition] for the development of the general powers of the human mind' (*ibid.*: 705).

### Capitalism and modern leisure

Capitalism, in particular, is ruthlessly geared towards the expansion of surplus labour. In the first stages of industrialism, this was achieved partly by lengthening the working day and enforcing more regular habits of work. The separation of work and non-work time was completed in this period (Thompson 1967), though it would be wrong to talk of 'leisure' in this context, since the work day was so extended that workers had insufficient time even for adequate rest and recuperation. Subsequently, however, the major part of the expansion of surplus labour has been achieved by increasing the efficiency and productivity of labour. The continual drive to improve productivity, through the introduction of new machinery is, indeed, a characteristic feature of capitalist development: 'the bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production' (Marx and Engels 1848:36).

It is all too easy to think that greater production must involve more hours of work; and conversely, that a reduction in work must entail producing and consuming less. Gorz, for one, tends to make these equations. As we have seen, he thinks that we should both 'work fewer hours' and 'consume less', and he often writes as if the two went hand in hand. However, one of the revolutionary effects of modern industry has been to break this connection. 'To the degree that large industry develops, the creation of real wealth comes to depend less on labour time and on the amount of labour employed

than on the power of the agencies set in motion during labour time' (Marx 1858:704).

The gigantic increase in production that has been achieved during the last 150 years has provided the basis *both* for a steadily rising standard of living and growth of needs among the working population as a whole; *and*, at the same time, for a gradual decrease in work hours—in the United States, for example, from an average of about 70 hours per week in 1850, to 41.5 hours in 1956 (Zeisel 1958). The resulting free time, coupled with the growing needs and capacities of working people, has created the basis for the modern phenomenon of mass leisure. Leisure in its modern sense—as a sphere of positive non-work activity enjoyed by the mass of working people—is thus a modern phenomenon and a product of modern industry. Crucial to its development is not only the reduction in hours of work but also the development of needs and capacities for leisure activities. It is these which give modern leisure its distinctive character, and make it not simply a time of passivity and idleness, but a sphere of activity and creativity.

These leisure activities include what Gorz calls 'autonomous creative activities'—gardening, do-it-yourself and craft work etc. No doubt working people were productively active in such ways long before the modern period (Pahl 1984). However, except in situations of unemployment, these activities now have the character of leisure activities: they are outside the sphere of economic necessity and engaged in primarily for the pleasure of the activity itself (though often, to be sure, their utility is a part of the pleasure).<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, education has been extended. The rise of the mass media—TV, newspapers, popular literature and music—has brought about a great increase in people's cultural experience. It is common to decry the debasing effects of these developments on the contents of popular culture; but at the same time the mass media have helped to inform and educate, widen horizons and introduce an unprecedented range of art and culture into people's lives. Recreation and sports are now widespread. Social life has been enhanced, with the growth of pubs, clubs and restaurants. Opportunities for holidays and travel have extended (Dumazedier 1967: chs 1–2).

I stress these developments not to endorse uncritically the particular forms that modern leisure takes, but rather to emphasize the profound changes which have occurred in the last 100 years in patterns of nonwork activity. Though a reduction in work hours from the extreme lengths reached in the early years of the nineteenth century was a necessary condition for these changes, none would have happened

through a reduction of work time alone. All have equally required the growth of needs and capacities, institutions and facilities, of one sort or another.

All, moreover, involve people as consumers to a greater or lesser extent; and developing consumer needs has become an important and quite deliberate part of the work of capitalist industry. In this respect, its characteristic strategy and attitudes have changed profoundly. In the early stages of industrialism, a puritanical attitude to both consumption and leisure prevailed. The churches and industry together campaigned against the pleasures and recreations of the working class. They aimed to curb drinking, both on and off the job; and they sought to limit the fairs, festivals and holidays which were the main popular forms of leisure and enjoyment (Pollard 1965: ch. 5; Thompson 1967).

Nowadays, by contrast, we are encouraged to consume, to develop and indulge our pleasures and enjoyments. Capitalism is anything but puritanical in its attitude to leisure. It is rather Gorz, and others like him who hanker after the plain and simple life, who are the new puritans. For they want an increase in leisure without the expansion of consumer needs and capacities for activity and enjoyment which economic development brings. Marx's idea was different. There is nothing puritanical about it. He welcomed the massive growth of production brought about by capitalism as one of its 'civilising aspects' (Marx 1894:819), not only because it permits an expansion of leisure time, but also because it creates the needs and capacities required to make this time truly a 'realm of freedom'.

Real economy—saving—consists of the saving of labour time...but this saving [is] identical with [the] development of the productive force[s]. Hence in no way [is it] *abstinence from consumption*, but rather the development of power, of capabilities of production, and hence both of the capability as well as the means of consumption.

(Marx 1858:711)

### The relation of work and leisure

Leisure is a modern phenomenon which has come to occupy an increasingly important place in life. According to Gorz, indeed, the 'sphere of autonomy' is now our main priority, and work is regarded simply as a means to it. But this, I now want to suggest, is a one-sided way of interpreting these developments. Certainly, economic

development has created free time—Gorz is right about that. It has also led to the growth of the needs and capacities required for the active enjoyment of it. These are the large-scale trends of the last 150 years, and there is every reason to expect that they will continue. However, although it is true that leisure plays an increasingly large role in people's lives, there are grounds to be sceptical of the view that it has replaced work as the central human priority and goal.

Gorz would have us bid 'farewell to the working class' and to Marxism, while he presents his own views as if they were the latest thing in 'post-industrial' thought. But there is nothing novel, let alone 'post-industrial', about the idea that work is a curse and leisure the main good. Quite the contrary. In most class societies up until now there has been a privileged leisure class, which has monopolized education and culture, and embodied the ideals of the highest and most worthy forms of life (artist, scientist, statesman, warrior and so on). A notable feature of the modern period, however, is that alongside the rise of mass leisure, there has been a significant decline of the purely leisured class of the idle rich. According to Henri Lefebvre, 'a man of my age has with his own eyes seen, between 1880 and 1940, the final fall of the man who does nothing, does no work, the "*rentier-idler*"' (quoted in Dumazedier 1967:35). As the idle rich decline, so too does the aristocratic, non-work ethic. Wealthy men—and increasingly women, too—more and more feel obliged to engage in some sort of work-like activity. Even the British Royal Family are expected to 'work' for their (very considerable) income, and are criticized when it is felt that they are not performing a sufficient number of public functions. Contrary to what Gorz and other prophets of 'post-industrial' society suggest, the view that the ideal life is one of pure leisure is ceasing to have application or real basis in the modern world.

Rather, it is felt increasingly that leisure has value only in the context of work, as a complement to work; whereas when it is divorced from work, and made an exclusive activity, it loses its value. The most dramatic demonstration of this is the experience of unemployment. By Gorz's standards, unemployment, as a total 'liberation from work', should constitute the complete realization of leisure, autonomy and freedom. But it would be grotesque to think of unemployment in these terms. For it is a quite different phenomenon to leisure or freedom, and not just because of the economic hardship it so often involves (Jahoda 1979, 1982).

Leisure activities, like reading, gardening, knitting, watching TV or meeting friends in the pub, are pleasurable and fulfilling in the context of a life or work; but on their own, and outside that context,

they are not capable of providing a satisfactory filling for life. What may be enjoyable and rewarding as a hobby or spare time activity is insufficient as the central activity of life. For such pursuits have value primarily in contrast to work—and precisely because they are not work, not necessary activities, but engaged in simply for the pleasure they bring.

One's own pleasure is not a sufficient end or purpose in life. People—virtually all people—want and need something more than this. They want and need activity which achieves something in the public realm and which contributes usefully to society. In short, they want work as well as leisure. By way of illustration, I will mention a conversation I had recently on these topics with an acquaintance. He has a son in his mid-twenties. The son had been to college, but his studies had not engaged his interests and he had not done well. After college he did not get a job. He had a talent for music—he played the drums—but he was repelled by the commercialism of the world of professional music, and felt he would have to make too many compromises to make a career in it. At present he is living on social security, slowly fixing up a derelict house, and playing music with his friends. He didn't want a job. He was happy, his father told me, and presented the story as a refutation of the argument I have been defending.

Such stories are now quite common, at least among a particular group of people in the Western world. Gorz's philosophy, indeed, generalizes them and seeks to justify, in theoretical terms, the attitude to work and leisure that they illustrate. To what extent do they cast doubt upon the argument I have been presenting? The young man in question is evidently an educated and relatively privileged person, in a better position than many unemployed people. That is not without significance. One could quote a good number of less happy stories of unemployment. But leaving that point aside and staying with this story, the question still arises: is this an ideal or even a satisfactory life?

Music as a hobby is one thing. In that case it is a complement to work and a relaxation from it: something that is pursued for pleasure, self-expression and self-cultivation, with no more asked of it than that. But if it is to be the central activity of one's life, then it takes on a different character and one is likely to put different demands on it. For few people find mere self-cultivation a sufficient end in life; nor is the work of the artist usually a matter of mere self-expression. The young man that I have just mentioned is not necessarily a refutation of this. For it is one thing to 'drop out' when one is young, but the evidence suggests that few remain content with such a life as they grow older (*Work in America* 1973).

Of course, there are exceptions to this generalization. Some artists pursue their art purely out of a driving inner and purely personal need for self-expression, but they are rare.<sup>4</sup> More often, artists want to create something which satisfies not just their *own* inner needs, but also the needs of *others*.<sup>5</sup> They generally want to *communicate*; they want their work to find an audience and be appreciated. For they are engaged in a creative, productive activity, which, like all productive activities, is ultimately completed and brought to consummation only in consumption. Marx makes this point in general terms when he writes,

a product becomes a real product only by being consumed. For example, a garment becomes a real garment only by being worn; a house where no one lives is in fact not a real house; thus the product, unlike a mere natural object, proves itself to be, *becomes*, a product only through consumption.  
(Marx 1858:91)

When it has this communicative character, art can be among the highest activities. However, it also then has the character of a productive activity. On the other hand, if its only purpose is individual pleasure and self-cultivation, then it is reduced to the level of a mere hobby and pastime, which, although it may be valuable and rewarding in the context of a life of work, is not sufficient in itself.

In the allegory of the Cave in the *Republic*, Plato describes how the philosopher, once he has struggled out of the Cave—once he has reached the sunlight and achieved a knowledge of the Form of the Good—must return into the darkness of the Cave and impart his knowledge to the prisoners still confined there. Plato argues that the philosopher must do this in the social interest (Plato 1945:514A-521B). However, what I am suggesting here is that it is equally in the philosopher's *own* interest to make this return journey. For philosophy, like art, music and other creative activities, is realized most fully when it meets *social* and not merely individual needs. In the context of a life productive in other areas, one may not demand or even wish so much from philosophy. But if it is the central activity of one's life then one surely will. For productive activity—activity which meets needs and is in the sphere of necessity—is fundamental to human fulfilment.

I have been criticizing the ideas of Gorz and other advocates of 'post-industrial' society. Against them, I have argued that work is and remains the central activity of human life. I am well aware that



for many people today these ideas will be of little comfort. A large number of people are currently unemployed or facing the prospect of unemployment. This is a human tragedy: that is the implication of what I am saying. I have offered no practical solutions or remedies. However, I write with the conviction that it is better to recognize these problems for what they are than to hold out the false hope that the advent of 'post-industrial' society will somehow render unemployment acceptable as a way of life.

## ALIENATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We have been living through a period of major economic development, a time of dramatic—even traumatic—industrial and social change. The result has been, on the one hand, a modernization and streamlining of the economy and a growth in efficiency and productivity. At the same time, however, these developments have had a profoundly disruptive and destructive social impact. The lives of countless individuals, of communities, and even of whole regions have been transformed, often in devastating ways. Millions have been thrown out of their jobs, or found themselves subjected to tyrannical new forms of work in which their skills are devalued and their autonomy and initiative eliminated.

Reactions to these developments are apt to polarize into two opposite positions. On the one hand, the proponents of these changes tend to think of the issues they pose in purely economic terms. They appear to be fixated on economic indices; they seem almost oblivious to the human impact, the moral dimension, of what is happening. By contrast, however, critical concern is expressed almost exclusively in moral terms which ignore economic considerations, and often involve an attitude of romantic hostility to modern conditions of life.

Neither response is satisfactory. Although I will defend the values of modernization and progress, this will not be simply in economic terms. For the critics of modernization are surely right to stress that its moral and human impact is a vital factor and must not be ignored. However, I also want to question the widespread view that the moral impact of the market and modern industry is purely negative. Rather there is a positive as well as a negative side here: industrial development has a *contradictory* human impact. Marx understood this well. His thought in this area, I shall show, provides a philosophical framework for thinking through these issues which

avoids the one-sidedness of the economic approach on the one hand and the romantic approach on the other.

### Marx on economic progress

It is well known that Marx is a powerful critic of the human effects of the development of capitalism and industrial development in nineteenth-century Britain. In graphic and uncompromising terms, he describes the crippling and destructive impact of industrialization. He demonstrates how, at the beginning of the capitalist era, the economic forces of the market increasingly came into conflict with the autonomous and relatively self-sufficient, rural, peasant household which was at the basis of medieval society. These growing market forces eventually dissolved and swept away this form of rural life, together with its associated social bonds and relations. In their place it put the 'cash nexus', the hostile and competitive world of the market.

The rural population was thus dispossessed of the means of independent production. It was driven out of its homes and communities, herded into industrial towns and cities, forced into factory work and other sorts of employment—and unemployment. The terrible impact of these developments, the miserable and inhuman conditions which prevailed in the early industrial towns and factories, is too well known to require description (Marx 1867).

Moreover, although the introduction of large-scale industry led to an immense expansion of the material productivity of human labour, initially at least, little of the benefit of this was enjoyed by working people. As far as ordinary people were concerned, the early years of the industrial revolution brought little or no improvement in material standards of living. Indeed, these may even have declined. Certainly, this was the view of many contemporary observers, including Marx and Engels. 'In our days', wrote Marx in 1856, 'everything seems pregnant with its contrary. Machinery, gifted with the wonderful power of shortening and fructifying human labour, we behold starving and overworking it. The new-fangled sources of wealth, by some weird spell, are turned into sources of want' (Marx 1856:359).<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, industrial and especially factory work meant an end to autonomous and individually controlled and defined forms of work. Work became a directly social and cooperative activity, involving the extensive coordination of the activities of many workers. It is not hard to see why many observers—both at the time and since—regard these developments as harmful and destructive.

No one describes these negative features more powerfully than Marx. For all that, however, he does not treat these developments as purely and exclusively harmful or evil, for he is aware that there is also another and more positive aspect to them. By destroying the self-sufficient peasant household, by shattering its autonomous existence, its members are forced out of the seclusion and isolation, the unchanging rhythms and patterns of rural life. They are liberated from their bondage to the land. By dissolving the traditional pattern of ties and relations, they are freed from the fetters of serfdom, liberated from subservience to the feudal lord.

Furthermore, the impact of the market and modern industry meant not only the dissolution and disorganization of traditional social forms and relations, it led also to the creation of new, larger and more developed patterns of relationship. People were concentrated in towns and cities, they were brought together and their activities coordinated in factories, they were put into contact and communication. Their horizons were extended, their consciousness widened, their energies increased (cf. Gaskell 1855). Ordinary working people are, for the first time, brought into the social world and ultimately onto the political stage.

The chief product of capitalist industry, says Engels, is the modern working class, the proletariat.<sup>2</sup>

In order to create the modern proletariat it was absolutely necessary to cut the umbilical cord which still bound the worker of the past to the land.... The English proletarian of 1872 is on an infinitely higher level than the rural weaver of 1772.... Only the proletariat created by modern large-scale industry, liberated from all inherited fetters, including those which chained it to the land...is in a position to accomplish the great social transformation which will put an end to all class exploitation and all class rule.

(Engels 1873:563-4)

Quite clearly, there is a strong streak of romanticism and idealization in this picture of the working class. Subsequent history has cast doubt upon the revolutionary character of the proletariat. Indeed, the idea that we should bid 'farewell to the working class' as a revolutionary force is now a political commonplace. All this raises fundamental problems for some central aspects of Marxism; but they are not the issue here. The point I am making is simpler and more basic. Even if Marx's political expectations for the working class have not been fulfilled,

he is correct to think that the impact of industry on working people has not been entirely negative. Despite all the misery and degradation involved in its early development, it has brought ordinary working people into the public world and onto the political stage. Whether or not as the agents of revolution, it has, as Engels puts it, drawn ‘into the whirl of history the last classes which had remained sunk in apathetic indifference to the universal interests of mankind’ (Engels 1845:39). It has meant for them an unprecedented expansion of their horizons and consciousness, of their social relations, of their sphere of activity and hence of their real freedom (see also Sayers 1992).

### The British rule in India

These ideas—which derive ultimately from Hegel—run throughout the entire span of Marx’s work. They are expressed, in particularly uncompromising terms, in his articles on the British rule in India, written in 1853. At that time, the destructive influence of the British in India was all too apparent—indeed, this was the only aspect that was then evident. ‘England’, Marx writes, ‘has broken down the entire framework of Indian society, without any symptoms of reconstitution yet appearing’ (Marx 1853a:346). Moreover, this destruction, Marx emphasizes, was not only, or even primarily, the result of political or military oppression; it was mainly the work of commerce and industry. It was achieved ‘not so much through the brutal interference of the British tax-gatherer and the British soldier, as to the working of English steam and English free trade’ (ibid.: 350).

And yet, for all that, Marx foresaw that capitalism and industry were ultimately destined to have a *contradictory* impact, with both a negative and a positive aspect. ‘England has to fulfil a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating—the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia’ (Marx 1853b:353). For Marx could see that the introduction of free trade and modern industry—especially in the shape of the railways—would transform Indian society in opposite ways: dissolving its traditional basis, and with it the old division of labour and the caste system, and yet also, in the process, propelling India into the modern world.

All the English bourgeoisie may be forced to do will neither emancipate nor materially mend the social condition of the mass of the people, depending not only on the development of the productive powers, but on their appropriation by the

people. But what they will not fail to do is to lay down the material premises for both. Has the bourgeoisie ever done more? Has it ever effected a progress without dragging individuals and peoples through blood and dirt, through misery and degradation?

(ibid.: 356)

Again, no doubt, Marx must be criticized for being too optimistic and for idealizing the impact of the West on the third world. In India, the caste system and traditional patterns of life have proved far more resistant to the corrosive effects of steam and free trade than Marx ever imagined. Nevertheless, in 1857, just a few years after he wrote these articles, the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny heralded the beginning of the struggle against British rule, which reached its successful conclusion with Independence in 1947. In its main outlines Marx's account has been remarkably vindicated.

In short, Marx's view is that capitalism and large-scale industry have a contradictory impact. There are not only negative but also positive aspects to their development. It is only in these terms that we can understand the character of capitalism and envisage the possibility of a progressive development beyond it. For if the impact of capitalism were simply and solely negative and destructive for humanity, it would be impossible for either the conditions for socialism to develop, or the agents who could bring it about to appear. 'If we did not find concealed in society as it is the material conditions of production and the corresponding relations of exchange prerequisite for a classless society, then all attempts to explode it would be quixotic' (Marx 1858:159). In this way, although it drags people through 'misery and degradation', the development of industry is ultimately a progressive and liberating force.

### **The labour process**

So far I have considered the large-scale social impact of capitalism and modern industry. However, similar points also apply when we look at their effects on the individual within the labour process. Braverman's work in this area has been particularly important (Braverman 1974). He argues that the introduction of large-scale industry under capitalism has brought about a division of labour in which the mental and manual aspects of work are increasingly divorced from each other. Conception and execution are separated in the work process and assigned to different individuals as their life calling. The

old unified forms of craft work are divided into fragmentary parts—broken down into a series of simple and often routine operations, which can be performed by unskilled detail workers.

Thus the production process has been subjected to a division of labour in which, on the one side, there is a mass of unskilled operatives—mere ‘hands’ who need know nothing of the processes in which they are engaged; and, on the other, a small group of scientists, designers, engineers and other technicians and managers who design, plan, organize and supervise the whole operation. In this way, argues Braverman, the work of the majority of workers is progressively and systematically ‘deskilled’, cheapened and degraded; while knowledge, expertise, skill, power and control are concentrated in the hands of a small educated élite of managerial and technical personnel. According to Braverman, in short, the human impact of capitalist industrialization on most working people is purely destructive and negative.

Braverman’s work has had an enormous influence and deservedly so (Thompson 1989: chs 3–4). However, I want to suggest that matters are more complex than it portrays. The impact of industry is more contradictory than Braverman recognizes: there are positive as well as negative aspects to it. In the first place, Braverman takes as his starting point handicraft forms of work (Wood 1982). These are treated as the standard and ideal against which subsequent developments are measured and judged. This provides a clear enough yardstick in the earliest phase of capitalist industrialization, but it becomes an increasingly problematic basis for assessment as the process proceeds.

Braverman bases his account closely on the brilliant and detailed description that Marx gives of the process of industrial development under capitalism in the central chapters of *Capital*, Volume 1. Marx shows how the division of labour under capitalism has gone through two distinct stages of development. In the earlier period of capitalist production, the manufacturing period (which lasted in England from the mid-sixteenth century until the last third of the eighteenth century), the old handicraft trades were split up into their component operations, and each separated and fragmentary activity was given to an individual workman as his sole activity. These separated activities were then brought together alongside each other in a workshop. This is the stage of the division of labour in the pin factory famously described by Adam Smith at the beginning of *Wealth of Nations* (Smith 1776: Bk 1, ch. 1).

In handicraft work the craftsman has knowledge and control of the whole work process. With the advent of the manufacturing system,

the all-round craft worker is replaced by the detail worker, condemned to a life-long repetition of the same simple operations, while the work of organizing and overseeing the whole process is taken over by the capitalist. In other respects, however, handicraft processes and methods remain unchanged. The operations and tools employed are not significantly altered, only the social organization and distribution of the work are affected. For this reason, the notion of deskilling has clear application here. The system, as Marx says, 'converts the labourer into a crippled monstrosity by forcing his detail dexterity at the expense of a world of productive capabilities and instincts' (Marx 1867:361).

The second period of capitalist development is inaugurated by the industrial revolution. Machinery is introduced and large-scale industry develops. Braverman, I think, tends to run these two periods together and ignore their differences. He looks upon mechanization and automation as mere extensions and refinements of the processes begun in the manufacturing period. But more is involved in them than this.

With the introduction of machinery, the process of production itself is radically transformed. New and different factors come into operation. On the one hand, a variety of new and extremely routine and repetitive operations are created, now under the tyranny of the machine (machine minding, machine feeding and so on). But also much routine, repetitive and heavy manual work is taken over by machines. In the prophetic words of Hegel, echoed by Marx, man is increasingly 'able to step aside and install machines in his place' (Hegel 1821:129; cf. Marx 1858:705). Moreover, as well as a further process of division and simplification of tasks and a further elimination of craft skills, a contrary process makes its appearance. New areas of skill are created. Whole new fields of expertise are needed, particularly in engineering and the sciences, and whole new branches of knowledge are brought into being. In short, there is a process of reskilling and upgrading, as well as of deskilling and degrading.

It is not easy to assess the overall outcome of these contrary processes or the overall impact of industrialization upon levels of skill. For the concept of skill, which at first seems such a clear-cut and objective one, proves upon examination to be an extremely elusive and relative notion. It is often assessed in terms of the length of training required. But this takes as given the skills of the 'unskilled', the level of skill with which people normally enter the workforce. This can vary dramatically in different societies and in different periods.

Consider, for example, the gradual replacement of horses by cars for transport during the course of this century. In the early years of the century horses were common and many people still grew up in



conditions where learning to manage horses was a standard part of their upbringing. As a result, the ability to handle horses was not regarded as a special skill. On the other hand, cars were rare and the ability to drive constituted a significant skill. Today the situation is almost completely reversed. However, these conventional judgements have little to do with the contents of these tasks and they do not tell us whether the work of driving a car requires more or less skill in some absolute sense than the ability to ride a horse (Braverman 1974:432ff).

It seems clear, however, that the impact of industrialization is not entirely negative with respect to skill. Except, possibly, for the earliest period of industrialization, working people are not the mere passive victims of industrial conditions; they have not been made into a deskilled and degraded mass. Perhaps the best indication of this is the steadily increasing educational level among working people which has everywhere accompanied industrialization. No doubt Braverman is right to insist that increases in length of education are not necessarily a direct response to the needs of work. He exaggerates greatly, however, when he suggests that schooling has lost all connection with occupational requirements, and become only an immense 'teen-sitting' operation designed to keep young people off the streets and out of the unemployment statistics (*ibid.*: ch. 20).

On the contrary, in the longer view it seems evident that there has been a real and significant rise in the educational level of working people. And this is only one part of a wider picture. For it has gone along with a steady increase in the participation and activity of working people in all areas of public life, and with the growth of the capacities and abilities which this requires. All this is quite incomprehensible given the view that industrial work has a purely negative, deskilling and degrading, human impact.

### **Progress and happiness**

No doubt these arguments will still seem strange, however. In the first place, it may well seem paradoxical to describe the impact of capitalism and industry as morally beneficial for working people, and even stranger to attribute such views to Marx. There are two points which may help to mitigate this air of paradox somewhat: the first is a relatively straightforward matter of clarification; the second is more philosophical.

First, then, I must make it clear that when I say that the development of capitalism and industry has resulted in human

progress, I do not mean to suggest that it has led to an increase in individual happiness, or material well-being. I have been stressing, rather, the broadening range of activities and relationships, the growth of social activity and consciousness, which result from the development of the market and of industry. But there is little reason to think that their development leads to an increase in happiness, particularly in their initial impact. One has only to recall the dreadful conditions in the early industrial towns, or the suffering and dislocation created in countries like India by the impact of capitalist industry.

A number of writers have argued that social progress does not necessarily lead to increased happiness; and none more clearly than Durkheim. A greater range of activity and consciousness, he argues, means that the individual can experience a wider variety of satisfactions; and perhaps it may heighten their intensity. By the same token, however, it also increases the range and intensity of the pains and discomforts experienced.

There are certainly many pleasures open to us today that more simple natures are unaware of. Yet on the other hand we are prone to much suffering that is spared them, and it is by no means sure that the balance is in our favour.

(Durkheim 1893:186–7)

A similar point is made by Mill with his distinction between higher and lower pleasures in *Utilitarianism* (Mill 1863; see Chapter 2 above). Like Mill, Durkheim believes that there has been progress. Unlike Mill, however, he questions whether it can be measured in utilitarian terms.

Pleasure, like pain, is essentially a relative matter. There is no absolute happiness, objectively determinable, that men come nearer to as they progress.... The happiness of lower societies cannot be ours, and *vice versa*. Yet one is not greater than the other. For we cannot measure their relative intensity save by the strength with which they bind us to life in general and to our style of life in particular. Now primitive peoples cling just as much to existence, and to their own particular existence, as we do to ours.... Thus there is no connection between the variations in happiness and the progress in the division of labour.

(Durkheim 1893:194)

In short, Durkheim does not conceive of progress in utilitarian terms (cf. Durkheim 1897:366ff.). In the historical process there has been a development of human activities and relations, of needs, powers and capacities, he believes; but whether this has resulted in an increase of happiness is questionable. Nevertheless, to look upon these changes as progressive is to imply that the historical developments I have been describing are both necessary and, even with all the degradation and misery they have involved, humanly valuable. There is no question of going back to an earlier and more primitive stage. The present form of civilization, even with all its discontents, is preferable to what went before.

### **The fall of man?**

Even so, the idea that such a destructive phenomenon as capitalism could be progressive will probably still seem paradoxical, and rightly so, for there is indeed a paradox here. The impact of capitalism is contradictory. So too is the form of progress it involves: it is achieved only by dragging people through exploitation and alienation. However, this alienation is a necessary stage; and, as such, it cannot be regarded as a mere evil. This is what I have been arguing.

This is not, I know, the usual interpretation of Marx's concept of alienation. However, this concept must be interpreted in this way if it is to be fitted into the wider context of his theory of history. Perhaps this will seem somewhat less strange when it is seen that, interpreted in this way, Marx can be seen to be developing a characteristically Hegelian line of thought.

Hegel, like Marx, has a strongly progressive view of history. He believes in the benefits of economic development. There is little of the romantic in Hegel—he does not hark back to a situation of primitive simplicity. Hegel, moreover, gives a clearer account than Marx of the philosophical and metaphysical dimensions of these views. He cites the Biblical story of the Garden of Eden as an expression of the idea of an earlier, simpler and more natural state of life, in which mankind lived in harmony with itself and with nature. By contrast, the civilized condition after the Fall is one of disharmony and disunity, of self-alienation and alienation from the world about us.

According to the Biblical story, Adam and Eve were placed in a garden, where there grew a tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God had forbidden them to eat the fruit of this tree. The implication of this seems to be, says Hegel, that the primitive state of mankind is one of innocence and simplicity. Moreover, the story appears to

suggest that this innocent state is the ideal to which we should aspire. Hegel, however, takes issue with this interpretation. Certainly, the situation after the Fall, the condition of disharmony and alienation, is not an ideal one. It is true, says Hegel, that

the disunion that appears throughout humanity is not a condition to rest in. But it is a mistake to regard the natural and immediate harmony as the right state.... Childlike innocence no doubt has in it something fascinating and attractive: but only because it reminds us of what the spirit must win for itself. The harmoniousness of childhood is a gift from the hand of nature: the second harmony must spring from the labour and culture of the spirit. And so the words of Christ, 'except ye *become* as little children' etc., are very far from telling us that we must always remain children.

(Hegel 1830:43)

Humanity, according to this view, starts from an original and simple condition of natural unity. Its development then takes it through a phase of disunion and alienation, towards a higher form of unity. At present, we are in the alienated and disharmonious phase: that is where we now find ourselves. We cannot go back, it is no longer possible to regain our original simplicity and innocence. Rather, 'this position of severed life has in its turn to be suppressed, and the spirit has by its own act to win its way to concord again' (ibid.: 43).

Moreover, Hegel, like Marx, sees the activity of labour as playing a key role in the process of human development and self-transformation. Work is God's 'curse' on Adam, it is not necessary in the natural simplicity of life in the Garden of Eden. 'The beasts have nothing more to do but to pick up the materials required to satisfy their wants: man on the contrary can only satisfy his wants by himself producing and transforming the necessary means.' However, 'the hand that inflicts the wound is also the hand which heals it.' And so, 'as to work, if it is the result of the disunion, it is also the victory over it' (Hegel 1830:44). That is to say, even though it is an alienating activity, work is also the means towards the overcoming of alienation.

Hegel is here expressing, in metaphysical and mythical terms, ideas similar to those which underlie Marx's account of alienation. Neither Marx nor Hegel regards the state of alienation and disharmony as a purely negative one. Both see this condition as a stage in the process of human development and self-realization, and as a necessary part of the process, since we achieve development only in and through it.

### Political implications

I have been discussing these issues in general and theoretical terms. To conclude, let me briefly consider some of their current political and social implications. Britain emerged from the Second World War, unified by the war effort, as a relatively peaceful and harmonious society. This is portrayed—no doubt in an exaggerated and idealized, but still quite recognizable way—in *Dixon of Dock Green* and the early Ealing comedies like *Passport to Pimlico*.

The free market policies of the Conservative governments of the 1980s destroyed all that. Thatcherism shattered the post-war political consensus. It unleashed economic forces which have devastated many traditional and long established communities, thrown millions out of work, and laid waste to whole regions. As a result, by the mid-1980s Britain had become one of the most divided, decrepit, polluted, coercive and riot-torn societies in Europe.

The left was thrown onto the defensive by these developments and, not surprisingly, it often saw only their negative side. There was a strong tendency to regard industrial development as a purely destructive and inhuman phenomenon; and to look back longingly to the immediate post-war era, to the *Dixon of Dock Green* world. The left thus seemed to be defending traditional institutions and opposing change, while Thatcherism by contrast appeared to be the modern and forward-looking outlook.

Given the devastating impact of Thatcherism, such conservatism on the left was understandable and perhaps even inevitable; but nevertheless it is ultimately unrealistic and unsatisfactory. There can be no return to the *Dixon of Dock Green* world. Edward Heath understood this well enough back in 1973 when he said,

the alternative to expansion is not, as some occasionally seem to suppose, an England of quiet market towns linked only by trains puffing slowly and peacefully through green meadows. The alternative is slums, dangerous roads, old factories, cramped schools, stunted lives.

(Wiener 1985:162)

Of course, there is also a negative and destructive aspect to the changes which have been occurring—that is evident enough. But what is harder to see, and what I have been trying to bring out, is that there may also ultimately be another side to them. For economic development not only destroys social bonds and relations, it also eventually gives rise to new ones, as new activities develop.

Free market economic policies have proved very good at destruction; they have wiped out large sections of manufacturing industry and, with them, the communities which depended on them. They have proved much less successful at the positive task of revitalizing and reconstructing the economy and society. These policies should be criticized in these terms: in a forward- and not backward-looking way; not so much for the way in which they have been uprooting the past, but rather for the way in which they have failed to bring forward the future.



## Part II

# VALUES AND PROGRESS





## THE ACTUAL AND THE RATIONAL

*What is rational is actual and what is actual is rational.* On this conviction the plain man like the philosopher takes his stand, and from it philosophy starts its study of the universe of mind as well as the universe of nature.

(Hegel 1821:10)

These words, from the ‘Preface’ to Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, are among his most notorious and controversial. Ever since their first publication, they have been attacked, ridiculed and dismissed as implying an extravagant idealism and an uncritical sanctification of the *status quo*. Hegel himself was surprised by the outraged response to what he called ‘these simple statements’ (Hegel 1830:9), which he took to be stating views shared by ‘the plain man’ and ‘the philosopher’. For the most part, he thought the opposition to be based upon simple confusions and misunderstandings of his meaning; and sympathetic commentators have, by and large, agreed. Thus Hegel is at pains to insist that he distinguishes mere ‘existence’ from what is ‘actual’, and that he is not justifying all that *exists* as rational. Nor is his philosophy to be equated with any simple sort of subjective idealism. With these points many commentators have also rested content (Avineri 1972:115–31; Kaufman 1964: ch. 6).

There has been a tendency, then, to greet Hegel’s doctrine either with uncomprehending outrage or with uncritical sympathy. Neither response, I shall argue, is adequate. The reactions of outrage are not without their basis. For Hegel’s words most certainly have conservative implications, which he welcomed and emphasized; and they also express the extreme idealism of his philosophy. Equally, however, there are profound and important ideas involved in these assertions, which are still of great relevance. It is these upon which I will be focusing. My concern is not

primarily with Hegelian scholarship, but with the issues that his philosophy raises. I will be approaching this in the critical fashion that is necessary to all those who are prepared to 'avow themselves the pupils of that mighty thinker', and will be seeking to discern and distinguish the 'rational kernel' from the 'mystical shell' of Hegel's thought (Marx 1867:19–20).

### The scientific attitude

When Hegel talks of the rationality of the actual, his first and most general purpose is to specify what he takes to be the scientific attitude, and this is a basic and important element of the rational kernel of his thought. Hegel is saying that actuality—which, for the moment I shall take to refer to the world in all its aspects—is orderly in its forms and law-like in its behaviour. It is rational in the sense of being regular, coherent and comprehensible—explicable in rational and scientific terms.

Hegel is a strong defender of the realism implicit in the scientific approach. He rejects the Kantian idea that order and necessity are merely our 'way of seeing things', mere subjective forms, which we impose on the world through our use of the 'categories'. On the contrary, Hegel argues, species and kinds, laws and necessities, are objective features of reality which science seeks to discover and to understand (Sayers 1985: chs 2–3).

Hegel's philosophy is so widely regarded as an extreme form of speculative, *a priori*—even mystical—metaphysics, that it may come as a surprise to find it praised for being scientific and realistic. Of course, there are strongly speculative and unscientific aspects to Hegel's thought; but scientific and realistic themes are also present, though less often perceived or appreciated. In particular, philosophers, Hegel insists, should study actuality. The content of Hegel's work is thoroughly realistic, to a remarkable and unique degree for a modern philosopher. It covers a truly encyclopedic range of topics, treated in a thoroughly concrete and empirically detailed manner.

Moreover, Hegel extends this realistic and scientific approach to the study of society; and his work contains a notable defence of the idea of a social science. He rejects entirely the Kantian idea that the social world cannot be grasped in scientific terms, but must rather be approached morally and 'critically'. Philosophy, he insists,

must be poles apart from an attempt to construct a state as it ought to be...it can only show how the state, the ethical

universe, is to be understood.... To comprehend what is, this is the task of philosophy.

(Hegel 1821:11)

By the time Hegel was writing, the scientific attitude had largely prevailed in the study of the natural world; but there was, he observes, a great resistance to regarding the social world in this manner. Despite the immense growth of the social sciences since then, this is still true today. The social and the natural realms, it is argued, are fundamentally distinct and different. The laws of nature are objective, they operate independently of us; and, for this reason, they must be accepted as they are and viewed in a scientific and objective manner. Social laws, by contrast, have a subjective aspect: they are *our* product, the creations of human consciousness, will and reason. Therefore, to look upon the human world in purely objective terms is, it is argued, inappropriate and wrong: it is to be passive and acquiescent when an active and *critical* approach is required. For reason, in relation to the human world, has not only a theoretical but also a practical role. It can guide action and show us what ought and ought not to be.

Hegel takes direct issue with these Kantian views. It is true, of course, that the human world differs from the natural world, and that in it consciousness, will and reason can play a constitutive role. Hegel does not deny this (and nor does Marx, for that matter). However, Hegel rejects the idea that reason is a transcendent and absolute quality which distinguishes mankind from the rest of nature. He rejects the idea of an absolute gulf and divide between these two realms.

When Hegel talks of the unity of the actual and the rational, however, it is also vital to see that he is not merely reducing the actual to the rational or *vice-versa*. The relation between these opposites is conceived as a concrete and dialectical one. And, at least in the more rational parts of his work, Hegel is aware of the conflict as well as the harmony of these opposites. It was Hegel's great achievement to see human consciousness, will and reason in concrete and dialectical, social, historical and developmental terms. Practical—moral and political—ideals, he insists, are not the product of a transcendent reason operating *a priori*, nor are they purely subjective. On the contrary, they are historical products and arise out of and reflect 'the ethical world' (that is to say, social institutions and relations). He rejects the dualism which is presupposed by the Kantian philosophy. 'Reason is in the world', says Hegel, it is a social product, and does not need to be brought from outside by the 'critical' philosopher.

This is not to say that the scientific approach is necessarily ‘uncritical’. However, there is a clear sense in which the scientific attitude involves a measure of acquiescence to reality or, in Hegel’s words, ‘reconciliation’ with it. For being scientific implies that we accept objective conditions and adjust our ideas to them, so that our views correctly reflect these conditions, rather than imposing our ideas and ideals upon the world. This is the inherent nature of the theoretical and scientific attitude. However, it does not at all imply a passive or acquiescent attitude to the world when it comes to practice. On the contrary. A scientific and true understanding of the world and of its necessities is the essential basis for effective action upon it. To be sure, will and commitment are also necessary for action, but they are not alone sufficient to ensure success. For this the will must be guided by thought, by reason. We must understand the situation in which we act, and what is and is not really possible within it. Conversely, ignorance is the recipe for idle dreaming and for the construction of sterile utopias. The less a person knows, as Hegel says, ‘the greater is his tendency to launch out into all sorts of empty possibilities’ (Hegel 1830:203–4).

Hegel is not denying that Utopian and critical ideas have played a valuable and important role in social and political thought. He does insist, however, that if such ideas are to be more than mere wishful dreams, they must reflect and be disciplined by reality. For example, Hegel argues that Plato’s *Republic*—the greatest of Utopian works—is misunderstood if it is regarded simply as an ideal vision of how society ought to be organized. The *Republic* is rather Plato’s attempt to understand the conditions, the development and the problems of the society of his day. It is the attempt to grasp actuality in rational terms; for,

Philosophy is...the apprehension of the present and actual, not the erection of a beyond.... Even Plato’s *Republic*, which passes proverbially as an empty ideal, is in essence nothing but an interpretation of the nature of Greek ethical life.

(Hegel 1821:10)

### The mystical shell

Hegel, then, like Marx, advocates a realistic and scientific approach, and his account of society is historically concrete and dialectical. He rejects the Utopian and merely ‘critical’ attitude as a basis for political thought and action. These are important elements of the rational

kernel of his notorious principle. And yet Hegel's philosophy taken as a whole is far from being scientific or realistic. Its detailed contents are set within a philosophical system which purports not merely to understand and explain the world in a scientific fashion, but to rationalize and justify it. It is this which constitutes the mystical shell and which gives rise to the accusations of mysticism and conservatism.

These accusations are fully justified. Hegel is quite explicit—at times almost brutally so—about the conservative and idealizing implications of his philosophy (for example, in his bitter attack on Fries (Hegel 1821:5–6)). The recognition of reason in the world, he says, 'is the rational insight which reconciles us to the actual, the reconciliation which philosophy affords' (*ibid.*: 10). Philosophy gives not criticism but 'consolation' (Hegel 1830:209f.); it teaches us to give up the restless desire to condemn and repudiate the existing order.

Thus when Hegel talks of philosophy 'reconciling' us to the world, he not only means that we should approach the world scientifically and discipline our ideas to reality. He also means that we should regard the world as rational in the sense of 'ideal'. The world, Hegel insists, is as it ought to be. The desire to criticize and to change it is the error of 'youth' which imagines 'that the world is utterly sunk in wickedness and that the first thing needful is a thorough transformation' (Hegel 1830:291). The maturer and wiser view—the view, needless to say, embodied in Hegel's philosophy—is that 'actuality is not so bad and irrational, as purblind or wrong-headed and muddle-brained would-be reformers imagine' (*ibid.*: 201). 'The Good is radically and really achieved' (*ibid.*: 291), and our discontents are groundless: 'all unsatisfied endeavour ceases, when we recognize that the final purpose of the world is accomplished no less than ever accomplishing itself' (*ibid.*: 291).

For Hegel, then, not only is actuality rational, but rationality is actual, in the sense that it is actualizing itself in the world.

The actual world is as it ought to be...the truly good, the universal divine Reason is the power capable of actualising itself...God governs the world. The actual working out of His government, the carrying out of His plan is the history of the world.

(Hegel 1953:47)

World history is governed by Divine Providence—it is the realization of God's will on earth. The study of history and politics must take

the form of a justification of God, of a 'theodicy' (ibid.: 18). There is no place here for criticism—no need for it. For evil, from this perspective, is a mere subordinate and vanishing moment, and our reconciliation with it is achieved

through the recognition of the positive elements in which that negative element disappears as something subordinate and vanquished.... The true ultimate [rational and divine] purpose has been actualized in the world and...evil cannot ultimately prevail beside it.

(ibid.: 18)

Here is the 'mystical shell' of Hegel's philosophy in full measure: that aspect of it which seeks, in Marx's words, to 'transfigure and glorify the existing state of things' (Marx 1867:20). It leads to the grossly idealized and almost unrecognizable account of social life which Hegel gives in his political philosophy. The state is pictured as 'inherently rational' and as the 'realization of freedom', marriage as a harmonious union based on love, and so on. It is tempting to try to disregard these themes as loose exaggeration and rhetoric on Hegel's part (Kaufman 1964: ch. 6). Unfortunately, this is not possible. These views are, on the contrary, an essential ingredient of his philosophy and of his idealism, constantly reiterated as the ultimate and deepest significance of his thought. As such, they have been taken up and repeated ever since by 'old' and conservatively-minded Hegelians, who have wanted to legitimate and rationalize the *status quo* (Bradley 1927: ch. 5; Scruton 1980).

### The critical approach

It is a common view that the conservative and idealizing aspect of Hegel's thought is an inevitable and inescapable outcome of his identification of the actual and the rational. But this is not so. As Hegel himself insisted, and as the Young Hegelians were quick to point out, the unity of actuality and reason is a *dialectical* one, which includes within it conflict as well as harmony. Although Hegel often tends to take the side of conservatism and reconciliation in his later writings, his philosophy is more complex, more confused and contradictory—and also more profound and interesting—in its practical implications than this suggests. In the *Encyclopedia Logic*, indeed, Hegel repudiated the accusation that he was seeking merely to justify the existing order and to rule out any criticism of it. 'Who

is not acute enough', he asks, 'to see a great deal in his own surroundings which is really far from being as it ought to be?' (Hegel 1830:10).

The claim that the 'actual is rational' does not, he insists, mean that whatever *exists* is rational. 'Actuality' and 'existence' are both technical terms in his logical system. Of the two, existence is the lower grade of being. There are things which exist and yet which lack 'actuality' in Hegel's sense, for actuality is 'the unity of essence and existence, inward and outward' (Hegel 1830:200). An existing thing is actual only when its existence is in harmony with its essence; when its existence corresponds with its proper notion, function or idea. On the other hand, 'when this unity is not present, a thing is not actual even though it may have acquired existence. A bad state is one which merely exists; a sick body exists too, but it has no genuine reality.' (Hegel 1821:283).

Hegel's idea of actuality is closely associated with his account of truth, and usefully understood in relation to it. Truth is commonly regarded as a quality of propositions or ideas, which they possess when they correspond to their objects. For Hegel, however, this is merely the concept of 'correctness', and he distinguishes from it a deeper, 'philosophical' sense of truth, which refers to the correspondence of an object with its 'notion', 'concept' or 'idea'.<sup>1</sup>

Truth in the deeper sense consists in the identity between objectivity and the notion. It is in this deeper sense of truth that we speak of a true state, or a true work of art. These objects are true if they are as they ought to be; i.e. if their reality corresponds to their notion. When thus viewed, the untrue is much the same as to be bad. A bad man is an untrue man.

(Hegel 1830:276)

This may sound strange and unfamiliar, but, as Hegel points out, there are examples of this usage in ordinary language: 'thus we speak of a true friend: by which we mean a friend whose manner of conduct accords with the notion of friendship' (ibid.: 41).

To be rational, actual and true, the objectivity of a thing must, thus, correspond with its notion, its existence with its essence: it must be a harmonious whole, not infected with contradiction. To be untrue, not fully actual, not fully rational, on the other hand, means 'to be bad, self-discordant' (ibid.: 41). But the bad, to repeat the crucial point, although it lacks actuality, may nonetheless exist.



This distinction between actuality and existence puts the Hegelian view that the actual is rational in an entirely new light. Indeed, if ‘actuality’ is taken to refer only to fully rational existence, then Hegel’s principle becomes true by definition. This is, no doubt, part of the reason why Hegel and his followers have tended to brush aside objections to this principle. Once we grasp what Hegel means by ‘actuality’, we cannot but agree that the actual is rational, for this is simply a tautology.

The problem, however, has only been shifted elsewhere. Although the actual may be rational, by no means all that *exists* is rational and actual. The question remains of how far this tautological notion of rational actuality is applicable to the existent world around us. On this crucial issue Hegel is ambiguous and unclear.

In his political and historical writings, as we have seen, Hegel often tends to suggest that the state and society, as they have developed and as they in fact exist, are rational and actual. This is the basis of Hegel’s conservatism, and it is in these terms that he attacks would-be critics of society:

Reason is not so impotent as to bring about only the ideal, the ought, which supposedly exists in some unknown region beyond reality (or, as is more likely, only as a particular idea in the heads of a few individuals).

(Hegel 1953:11; cf. Hegel 1975:27)

In more metaphysical and logical contexts, however, we are told that nothing finite is fully actual or rational. Indeed, Hegel says that

God alone is the thorough harmony of notion and reality. All finite things involve an untruth: they have a notion and an existence, but their existence does not meet the requirements of the notion. For this reason they must perish.

(Hegel 1830:41)

All ‘finite’ things, therefore, are contradictory and to that extent irrational. They can be criticized for their ‘untruth’. Indeed, because of their contradictoriness—their irrationality and untruth—all finite things are destined to ‘criticize’ themselves in a practical fashion. They are ultimately doomed to change and to pass away. ‘Finite things are changeable and transient...existence is associated with them for a season only...the association is neither eternal nor inseparable’ (ibid.: 259).

This is the dialectical side of Hegel's thought. It was seized upon by the Young Hegelians, who saw in it the seeds of a radical and critical philosophy. For, if nothing but God is fully actual, fully rational—if everything finite is animated by contradiction and in the process of change—then what in fact exists is *never* ideal. One must equally say 'what is actual is irrational'. And so, for the Young Hegelians, the realization of reason is not an established fact, but rather a goal and a task. The world as it is, the existing state of things, must be criticized and transformed: reason must be realized, it must be made actual.

Engels, in his useful discussion of these issues, credits Heine with being among the first to appreciate the critical and revolutionary significance of Hegel's philosophy (Engels 1886: ch. 1). Heine expresses this charmingly in an imaginary dialogue between himself and Hegel, who goes under the title of 'the King of Philosophy'.

Once when I was put out by the saying: 'all that exists is rational' he smiled in a peculiar way and observed: 'it could also mean: all that is rational must exist.' He looked around hastily but soon calmed down, for only Heinrich Beer heard what he said.

(quoted in Plekhanov 1905:104)

I do not know who Heinrich Beer is, but it is clear that Heine's meaning is that Hegel was himself aware of the ambiguity and of the possibly revolutionary significance of his philosophy and that he was afraid to speak it. Whether this is a correct account of Hegel's intentions is unimportant here.<sup>2</sup> What is undoubted is that Hegel's philosophy contains strands and themes which, whether he intended them so or not, have a critical and revolutionary significance. It is these that were emphasized and developed by the Young Hegelians and by the young Marx.

Indeed, one of the clearest statements of this 'critical' interpretation of the Hegelian philosophy is given by Marx to Ruge in a letter of September, 1843:

Reason has always existed, but not always in a rational form. The critic can therefore take his cue from every existing form of theoretical and practical consciousness and from this ideal and final goal implicit in the *actual* forms of existing reality he can deduce a true reality. Now as far as real life is concerned, it is *precisely* the political state which contains

the postulates of reason in all its *modern* forms, even where it has not been the conscious repository of socialist requirements. But it does not stop there. It consistently assumes that reason has been realized and just as consistently it becomes embroiled at every point in a conflict between its ideal vocation and its actually existing premises.

(Marx 1843:208)

This is pure Young Hegelianism. In the existing political state, Marx is saying, we can discern a contradiction between its 'ideal vocation' and its actually existing form: there is a discrepancy between its notion and its objective existence. To that extent, the state is irrational and untrue, and may be criticized as such.

Moreover, such criticism, the Young Hegelians insisted, does not involve bringing either Kantian *a priori* or merely subjective ideals and values to bear on reality from outside. The ideals according to which the existing state is to be criticized, on the contrary, are supposed, in Hegelian fashion, to be the notion of the state: something which is intrinsic to the state—its very essence (Marcuse 1955). Again Marx puts it memorably:

This does not mean that we shall confront the world with new doctrinaire principles and proclaim: here is the truth, on your knees before it! It means that we shall develop for the world new principles from the existing principles of the world.

(Marx 1843:208)

### Some examples

This is the Young Hegelian, critical, approach. Like Old Hegelian conservatism, it derives from themes which are central and essential to Hegel's philosophy; and initially, at least, it seems to offer an attractive alternative. Ultimately, however, it too conflicts with the rational—the scientific and realistic—side of Hegel's thought, and cannot provide a satisfactory basis for the study of politics or society. Indeed, this critical approach represents precisely the sort of Utopian and subjective wishful thinking against which Hegel directs his polemics. The existing order is regarded as the imperfect and partial embodiment of the Notion or Ideal which is its real essence, truth and ultimate destiny. The established order is measured against this Ideal and found wanting. The scientific attitude of studying what is, is abandoned, and the world is judged and criticized in the light of how it ought to be.

I will illustrate these points with some recent examples; for the Young Hegelian approach has not been confined to Hegel's disciples of the 1840s. It has had an enduring influence, and appears in some unexpected places. For example, in the Marxist tradition; and even amongst the hardest of hard-liners, who would be horrified by the thought that they had much in common with the early Marx, let alone with Hegel! It is particularly evident in the discussion of what used to be called 'actually existing socialist societies', like those of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Bahro 1978). Often it is said that these societies were not 'genuinely' socialist, that they were not 'true' workers states. Of course, they existed in fact; but, in true Hegelian terms, what is being said is that they were not as they ought to have been, they did not embody the concept, the notion—the ideal—of socialism: they lacked 'actuality' and 'rationality'. Some people now say that since these societies had nothing to do with 'true' socialism, their demise has no implications for Marxism (Collier 1994:9).

The manifestly non-ideal character of 'actually existing' socialist states was, and is, one of the major problems for contemporary socialist thought. An all too common response on the left has been to try to evade this problem by discounting these societies as 'exceptions' in the ways described. But this is clearly not a satisfactory response. It involves abandoning altogether the scientific approach to history and adopting instead a purely moral one. There can, of course, be exceptions in history; but when history comes to be entirely composed of them they cease to be exceptions and become the stuff and actuality of history. The ideal is then revealed as unreal, utopian and subjective.

Not that this style of thought is any monopoly of the left. One of the stranger products of the American far right is a writer called Ayn Rand, who propounds an extreme and simplistic brand of *laissez-faire* individualism. Among her works is a book with the arresting title, *Capitalism: the Unknown Ideal*. However, the title is designed not simply to capture attention; it accurately reflects the theme of the book. The ideal of capitalism is 'unknown', she believes, because it has not yet been tried! The essence and the ideal of capitalism is the free market. Capitalism, as it has existed for all these centuries—'actually existing' capitalism—has never realized this ideal. *Laissez-faire* and the free market have always been restricted and compromised, she thinks, by excessive state interference under the influence of muddled and weak humanitarian do-gooders, etc. The destructive features of capitalism—the exploitation, stagnation,

alienation, oppression and misery associated with it—are all the mere aberrant and monstrous products of the mixed economy. Pure capitalism, the ‘unknown ideal’, would not be like this.

To write history in this way is, of course, absurd. Socialists, however, are in danger of precisely similar absurdities when they reject actually existing socialist societies as ‘exceptions’, and persist in thinking of socialism as an ‘unknown ideal’.

It is not the job of history or of the social sciences to criticize or condemn societies according to ideal standards: rather, they should seek to understand and explain the real world as it has in fact developed. The social sciences, that is to say, must reconcile themselves to the world, and avoid what Carr calls the ‘might have been school of thought’ (Carr 1964:96). Socialists, in particular, must confront the real world of socialism and come to terms with it, rather than dismiss it as an aberration. In saying this, I must stress, I am not suggesting that they should abandon all criticism, and simply endorse everything that has gone under the name of socialism. I shall now try to show how Marx distinguishes what is rational from what is mystical in Hegel’s principle and, on that basis, provides a method which is both scientific and critical.

### Marx’s method

Old Hegelianism seeks to legitimize the existing order, whereas Young Hegelianism is dedicated to criticizing it. At first sight they seem absolute opposites; but, as I have shown, they have in common the fact that they both adopt a moral rather than a scientific approach to the world. The basis for this moral approach, moreover, lies in the idealism which both share and which is a central feature of Hegel’s metaphysics.

As we have seen, Hegel’s philosophy involves an extravagant form of idealism. The actual is rational, he thought, because Reason, the Idea, the Ideal, is an active principle, expressing and realizing itself in the world. ‘Reason’, says Hegel, ‘is the soul of the world it inhabits, its immanent principle, its most proper and inward nature, its universal’ (Hegel 1830:37). Moreover, all this is given a theological interpretation, so that the objective world becomes God’s creation and history a ‘theodicy’. It is this idealism which gives rise to that paradoxically ‘inverted’ order so characteristic of Hegel’s philosophy. For Hegel, it is reason, the idea, the ideal that comes first, and which then specifies, concretizes and realizes itself in its particulars. As Seth says, ‘Hegel’s language would justify us

in believing that categories take flesh and blood and walk into the air...that logical abstractions can thicken so to speak into real existence' (Seth 1887:125).

Hegel's principle that the actual is rational is often identified as the locus and source of his idealism and, as such, rejected in favour of the dualist alternative. (For example, this is what Seth goes on to do.) It is certainly true that Hegel expresses his idealism through this principle; but we must proceed carefully at this point if we are to disentangle what is scientific and rational from what is mystical and idealistic in it.

In particular, it is vital to see that materialism also involves the idea of the unity of actuality and reason. Human reason is nothing transcendent—it is a product of natural and social evolution. For this reason, Marx does not reject or discard Hegel's principle. Rather, as he says, he turns it 'on its feet'.

For Hegel, the life-process of the human brain, i.e., the process of thinking, which, under the name of 'the Idea', he even transforms into an independent subject, is the demiurgos [creator] of the real world, and the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of 'the Idea'. With me, on the contrary, the idea is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human brain, and transformed into forms of thought.

(Marx 1867:19)

For Marx, that is to say, nature and society are not, as with Hegel, the products of reason; on the contrary, reason—ideas and ideals—are the outcome and creations of natural and historical development. 'The phantoms formed in the human brain are...sublimates of their material life process.... Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence' (Marx and Engels 1845:47). Ideas and ideals have no autonomy from social life. They are the subjective aspect of actual and existing objective social relations: they are social through and through.

Marx's materialism does not, then, involve any denial of the unity of actuality and reason; but it does, as Marx says, 'invert' the Hegelian and idealist interpretation of it. Instead of starting with ideas and ideals, and either criticizing or justifying reality in terms of them, Marx begins with social reality and explains ideas and ideals on this basis.

In direct contrast to German philosophy, which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven.... We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process.

(Marx and Engels 1845:47)

This sort of outlook has been enormously attractive and fruitful as a basis for social theory. However, it may well seem that such a straightforward kind of materialism is a reductive and crude philosophy which leaves unresolved many of the problems of the relation of reason to reality that I have been raising. In particular, it is often argued that such a philosophy is unable to do justice to the critical nature of thought. If reason were nothing but a product and a reflection of the established order, then, it seems, it could neither oppose existing conditions nor be critical of them. In order to acknowledge the critical power of reason, it is argued, reason must be viewed in a dualistic fashion as a force separate and distinct from the world.

Marx's materialism, however, is not reductive. On the contrary, it is a dialectical form of materialism which is not vulnerable to this argument. For a crucial aspect of the rational kernel that Marx retains from Hegel's philosophy is the dialectic. To the question: where do critical ideas come from?—Marx's response is clear and unmistakable. All ideas are social and historical products. All ideas are, in this sense, ideological. Critical ideas—just like uncritical ones—arise from and reflect social reality. In saying this, Marx does not deny that reason can oppose and criticize the established order. He does, however, insist that when it does so, that is a reflection of the fact that existing conditions are themselves contradictory. 'If theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc., come into contradiction with existing relations, this can only occur because existing social relations have come into contradiction with existing forces of production' (Marx and Engels 1845:52).

Criticism is not the prerogative of thought alone. Opposition, negation and contradiction are in the world: they are features of what is. For nothing concrete and determinate merely is. Nothing is simply and solely positive. Negation and opposition are essentially involved in all things. This is the first lesson of Hegel's logic, and the most vital principle of dialectic in all its forms. Mere being is an abstract and empty category. All concrete things are a unity of being and nothing, of positive and negative aspects; and these opposites

are synthesized in the process of movement and becoming. Everything concrete is contradictory (Norman and Sayers 1980). 'We are aware that everything finite, instead of being stable and ultimate is rather changeable and transient' (Hegel 1830:150).

Marxism is a dialectical philosophy. As such, it rejects the abstract, merely positivistic conception of actuality, according to which what is, merely is.

To materialized conception existence stands in the character of something solely positive, and quietly abiding within its own limits.... But the fact is, mutability lies in the notion of existence, and change is only the manifestation of what it implicitly is.

(Hegel 1830:174)

Thus negation, opposition and criticism do not need to be brought to the world by the thinking subject from the outside. The social world already contains negative, critical and contradictory forces within it. Nor is this criticism embodied merely in ideas or ideals. It exists first of all in *fact*. Only later is it apprehended by consciousness and reflected in thought. Thus Marx insists that 'Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things' (Marx and Engels 1845:56–7).

Marx, then, essentially agrees with Hegel's view that

dialectic is not an activity of subjective thinking applied to some matter externally, but is rather the matter's own soul putting forth its branches and fruit organically. This development of the Idea is the proper activity of its rationality, and thinking, as something subjective, merely looks on at it without for its part adding to it any ingredient of its own. To consider a thing rationally means not to bring reason to bear on the object from the outside and so to tamper with it, but to find that the object is rational on its own account.

(Hegel 1821:34–5)

What Hegel is describing here, albeit in the alien and metaphysical language which is so much his own, is nothing other than the scientific method. This approach undoubtedly involves a measure of 'reconciliation' to reality, as we have seen. It involves, as Hegel says,



not ‘tampering’ with the world, not imposing value and ideals upon it, but rather observing and understanding it as it is. However, in Marx’s hands at least, this method by no means entails a conservative attitude or the abrogation of criticism. For Marx does not set out to judge capitalism against any pre-established moral values, nor to posit an ideal socialist state of the future. Rather, he attempts to understand and explain in scientific terms the working of existing capitalist society. As Engels says, Marx ‘never based his communist demands upon this [moral principle] but upon the inevitable collapse of the capitalist mode of production, which is daily taking place before our eyes to an ever greater degree’ (Engels 1884:9).

In this way—by exposing, articulating and analysing the critical and revolutionary tendencies and forces already at work in the world—Marx provides the most powerful and effective critique of capitalism: a *scientific* critique.

## ANALYTICAL MARXISM AND MORALITY

In recent years, in the English-speaking world at least, philosophical discussion of Marxism has been dominated by the school of analytical Marxism. The project of analytical Marxism is to clarify, criticize and develop the theory of Marxism using the methods and techniques of analytical philosophy. Unfortunately, analytical philosophers have been noticeably reluctant to spell out in clear terms what these methods are. Reference is usually made to the standards of clarity and rigour which are supposed to characterize this style of philosophy. But such claims are little more than the advertising copy for this approach. Clarity and rigour are the virtues of *good* philosophy, of *good* thought in all fields. Analytical philosophy has no special monopoly of them. Indeed, there is plenty of obscure and cloudy work done in the analytical tradition, as a look through the standard journals will soon confirm.

If it is difficult to define the analytical approach in terms of its method, it is no easier to make significant generalizations about its content. Although analytical philosophy arises out of the empiricist tradition and remains predominantly empiricist in character, analytical philosophers have responded to this tradition in a variety of ways. In view of all these problems, it is tempting to give up the attempt to define analytical philosophy as a distinctive school of thought, and think of it rather as the shared style of a particular ‘philosophical community’ (Miller 1984: Introduction). But there is more to it than that. For there *are* shared assumptions and tenets in the analytical approach. This becomes apparent when it is applied to a philosophy like Marxism, which not only does not share them, but which actively questions them. The result then is not clarity and rigour, but rather systematic misunderstanding and misinterpretation. That is what I shall argue.

### Moral values in Marxism

To do so, I shall concentrate on the question of the role of moral values in Marxism. This has long been a controversial topic, and has been a major subject of debate among analytical Marxists.<sup>1</sup> For Marxism, it is often said, involves an ambivalent—paradoxical or even contradictory—attitude to moral issues.

Thus, on the one hand, Marxism claims to offer a scientific account of society. Its primary aim is to understand the social world and to analyse the laws governing it, rather than to judge it in moral terms or to put forward an ideal conception of how it ought to be. Indeed, according to Marx, moral outlooks and ideals must themselves be viewed as social and historical phenomena, as ideologies, as the products and reflections of specific social conditions. Marxism thus rejects the appeal to moral principles, in both its account of capitalism and its idea of socialism.

On the other hand, it is clear that Marx does not confine himself to describing and explaining capitalist society and predicting its future course: he condemns it and advocates socialism. His work is full of moral judgements, both implicit and explicit, and so too is that of subsequent Marxists. It is sometimes argued that Marxism is a 'value-free' or 'ethically neutral' sort of social theory;<sup>2</sup> but that view is untenable, and it is rejected by the great majority of writers on Marxism, analytical or otherwise. For Marxism is not only a social theory; it is also, and essentially, a form of *socialism*: it is a political outlook, in which practical and moral commitments play a fundamental role.

In this way, Marxism claims to be *both* a social theory *and* a political outlook, *both* a scientific account of history *and* a form of socialism. Moreover, it seeks to encompass these two aspects within the unity of a single outlook, not as independent and unrelated elements, but as equally essential parts of an integral whole. Its social theory, far from conflicting with its moral and political values, provides the basis upon which these are thought through in concrete, practical and realistic terms. In short, Marxism claims to be a scientific form of socialism.

These claims, however, appear confused and paradoxical to the great majority of analytical philosophers. For these philosophers attempt to interpret them within a framework of rigid and exclusive dichotomies which simply exclude them from view. Marx's social theory and his moral values are portrayed as entirely distinct and logically independent aspects of his thought. Thus Marxism is dismembered into separate and unrelated aspects and, in the process, distorted and falsified.

On the one hand, the social theory is portrayed as a value-free sociology which, when applied to morality, results in pure relativism. Marx's social theory is reduced to a form of 'anti-moralism' or moral scepticism, which has the effect of rejecting all values as mere 'ideological illusions' (Lukes 1985:3). On the other hand, Marx's socialism is interpreted as an ethical outlook which, whatever Marx may have said to the contrary, condemns capitalism on the basis of a set of absolute moral principles of justice, self-realization, or whatever, quite distinct and separate from any social theory.

### Analytical Marxism and justice

These assumptions run right through the huge flood of recent analytical work in this area. Much of the debate has focused on the pros and cons of various moral principles, and particularly on the question of whether Marx criticizes capitalism as unjust. Writers like Wood and Lukes argue that he does not. According to Wood, 'although capitalist exploitation alienates, dehumanizes and degrades wage labourers', and is condemned by Marx in these terms, 'there is nothing about it which is wrongful or unjust' (Wood 1981:43).

It is clear enough how Wood arrives at this view. He accepts the framework of assumptions I have just been describing. This imposes an either/or choice between pure relativism and moral absolutism. Quite rightly, Wood stresses that Marx regards justice and right as ideological notions and gives a social and historical account of them. These notions cannot, therefore, constitute absolute standards which have a universal or trans-historical validity. For Wood, however, this means that they are *purely* relative, entirely internal to the conditions which produce them, and thus incapable of providing a basis for criticism of these conditions. 'For Marx', writes Wood, 'the justice or injustice of an economic transaction or institution depends on its relationship to the prevailing mode of production. A transaction is just if it harmonizes with the productive mode, unjust if it contradicts the productive mode' (Wood 1980b:107).

On this account, the established order is 'just' and 'right' by definition. The standards of justice and right which prevail under capitalism are purely relative and internal to the capitalist system. They can be used to criticize only specific deviations from the norms of capitalist morality, like fraud and theft; but they cannot provide a basis by which the prevailing order itself can be assessed or criticized, nor can they be used to criticize other sorts of society. For that we need nonrelative standards, standards which transcend the established

order. According to Wood and Lukes, Marx finds these in the concepts of self-realization and emancipation. I shall return to this claim in due course; but such standards, they argue, cannot be found in the idea of justice.

In support of this account, Wood stresses that Marx himself explicitly and repeatedly repudiates the view that his theory relies on an appeal to principles of justice. Indeed, Marx is scathing about forms of socialism, like Proudhon's, which do so. Moreover, he goes to considerable lengths to insist that the wages contract, at the basis of capitalism, is 'just', in the sense that it involves the exchange of equivalents: the worker is paid in full for the use of his labour power (Wood 1980a).

The matter is not so easily settled, however, as writers like Cohen and Geras show. In opposition to Wood, they maintain that Marx does criticize capitalism for its injustice; and they have no difficulty in citing passages which seem to demonstrate this. For Marx does often appear to condemn capitalism in moral terms. For example, capitalist wealth, Marx writes, is based on 'the theft of alien labour time' (Marx 1858:705); and in numerous other places he attacks capitalism for involving 'robbery', 'usurpation', 'embezzlement', 'plunder', 'booty' and so on (Husami 1980).

Language such as this cannot be reconciled with the purely relativist account suggested by Wood; nor can it be discounted as loose and rhetorical. Marx, it appears, is prepared to condemn capitalism for its injustice, even if he does not regard it as his main purpose to do so. Evidently he does believe that there is a sense in which capitalism involves injustice. Moreover, it seems clear enough that most socialists regard capitalism as unjust and evil, and that conceptions of justice and right play an important part in the socialist outlook, even if Marxism has often had problems in dealing with these facts.<sup>3</sup>

For Cohen and Geras this is all that is required in order to prove that Marxism involves 'independent and transcendent standards of justice' in terms of which he judges and condemns capitalism. Indeed, according to these writers, Marxism is based on the principle that no one has the moral right to the private ownership of the means of existence, and this is asserted as 'in effect a notion of natural right' (Geras 1985:58, 77; cf. Cohen 1988a:13).

As an account of Marx's ideas this is quite absurd. Not only does Marx quite explicitly reject such views; but, more importantly, the central thrust of Marx's whole method—the historical and materialist approach—is in the clearest contradiction to them. Cohen and Geras are, of course, aware of this, but they brush it aside with an arrogant

disregard for such evidence which is, unfortunately, all too characteristic of the analytical approach: 'Marx did think capitalism was unjust', writes Geras, 'but he did not think he thought so' (Geras 1985:70; cf. Cohen 1988a:12).

Of course, it is quite possible that Marx contradicts himself, as Geras goes to some lengths to insist. Neither Geras nor Cohen, however, gives good reason to think he does so in this case, and in this particularly massive and glaring way. The far more likely hypothesis is that it is the views of Geras and Cohen which are mistaken.

The reasoning which leads them to their conclusion is set out particularly clearly by Cohen as follows:

Since...Marx did not think that by capitalist criteria the capitalist steals, and since he did think he steals, he must have meant that he steals in some appropriately non-relativist sense. And since to steal is, in general, wrongly to take what rightly belongs to another, to steal is to commit an injustice, and a system which is 'based on theft' is based on injustice.  
(Cohen 1983:443)

The premises here are not the problem. It is true that Marx uses the language of justice, equality and even rights in order to criticize capitalism. Certainly, that cannot be accounted for in the purely relative terms for which Wood argues. However, it simply does not follow that Marx must therefore be appealing to non-relative—universal and trans-historical—standards.

For here Cohen is presupposing that the only alternatives are either out-and-out relativism or absolutism. If standards of justice are historical and relative, then they are purely internal to the system which produces them and can be applied only within it. In order to assess whole social systems, absolute standards are needed. As we have already seen, exactly the same assumptions underlie Wood's arguments. It is just these assumptions that must be rejected, however, if Marx's approach is to be understood, for they simply exclude it from view.

### **The Marxist approach**

The Marxist approach is quite different. Marxism is primarily a form of social theory. It looks upon morality as a social and historical phenomenon, as a form of ideology. It sees different moralities as the products of different social and historical circumstances, and tries to

understand them in these terms. As we have just seen, this approach is standardly taken by analytical writers to be a form of moral relativism and scepticism. It is portrayed as a form of 'anti-moralism' which implies, in Lukes' words, that 'morality is a form of ideology, and thus social in origin, illusory in content, and serving class interests' (Lukes 1985:3).

This is a fundamental misunderstanding. The main purpose of Marxism is to analyse and understand the social significance of moral ideas, not simply to criticize and dismiss them. Marx thus portrays different moral outlooks as the products and reflections of specific historical conditions, and as the expressions of the needs, desires, interests and aspirations of the members of specific social groups and classes. Although it does indeed comprehend morality as a form of ideology, that is not to say that it regards it as pure illusion. For it is a mistake to think of ideology as mere illusion and 'false consciousness' (McCarney 1980; Sayers 1985: ch. 6).

This is particularly evident in the account of 'Socialist and Communist Literature' given in the *Communist Manifesto*, Chapter 3. The whole range of critical reactions to capitalism is there described and related to the class interests that they voice and reflect. There is no suggestion that these responses are thereby revealed as purely erroneous and illusory. Indeed, Marx and Engels apply the same method of analysis to their own views. They portray communism in exactly similar terms, as the conscious and theoretical expression of the developing working class movement.

The theoretical conclusions of the communists are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented or discovered by this or that would-be universal reformer. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes.

(Marx and Engels 1848:46)

In short, Marxism does not involve a moral approach to history; but rather a historical approach to morality. It cannot and does not appeal to universal moral principles or values; for the essential insight of Marxism is that morality is a social and historical phenomenon. As Engels says,

we...reject every attempt to impose on us any moral dogma whatsoever as the eternal, ultimate and forever immutable ethical law. We maintain on the contrary that all moral

theories have been hitherto the product, in the last analysis, of the economic conditions of society obtaining at the time.  
(Engels 1878:131–2)

Such ideas are clearly incompatible with the sort of moral outlook which most analytical writers try to impose upon Marx. According to these writers, if Marxist ideas are historical products, then they are purely relative, and can only reflect and endorse existing conditions. In so far as Marx criticizes the established order and advocates its transcendence, therefore, he must be appealing to moral principles which themselves transcend it.

The underlying assumption here is that society is a monolithic and homogeneous structure, which exerts only a single, uniform, 1984-like influence on its members. But things are not like that. On the contrary, society is full of tension and conflict. The existing social order contains not only forces which support and sustain it, but also forces which oppose and negate it. The established order is itself contradictory. Negative aspects and critical tendencies arise *within* it. For this reason, there is no need to look for a ‘transcendent’ basis for critical and negative ideas, an absolute moral standard outside existing conditions. ‘If theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc., comes into contradiction with existing relations, this can only occur because existing social relations have come into contradiction with existing forces of production’ (Marx and Engels 1845:52).

However, this account does not yet answer the problems raised by relativism. Indeed, it may even seem to exacerbate them. For it appears to suggest that there are a number of different and conflicting—but equally valid, equally possible—alternative outlooks, each embodying the point of view of a specific class. Socialism would then simply be one among these, with no more claim to truth than any of the others. In other words, the approach I have been describing seems to imply a simple relativism, which has the effect of undermining any claim that can be made for the validity or truth of the socialist outlook.

This would, indeed, be the case if these conflicting forces and outlooks merely differed and clashed without further result. However, these conflicts and contradictions are at the root of historical development. Because of them, the present order is in a process of flux and change. It is not stable and ultimate; and it is ultimately destined to perish and be superseded by a new and different form of society.

Moreover, this process of historical change does not consist of a purely arbitrary succession of social forms, each merely different from and incommensurable with the others. This is how it is



standardly regarded in the analytical literature; but it is not like this, according to Marxism. Rather, it takes the form of a *development through stages* and involves *progress*. These notions are crucial to the Marxist account of history. An understanding of them is essential if we are to grasp the Marxist response to relativism.

Historical development, according to Marxism, is divided into a number of distinct stages, or modes of production. Feudal society is followed by capitalism, which in turn gives way to socialism. Each stage arises on the basis of the previous stage, as a higher and more developed historical form. Every stage is therefore a necessary part of the process. Each initially constitutes a progressive development, justified in its time and relative to the conditions which it supersedes. By the same token, however, no stage is stable or ultimate. Each stage constitutes a merely transitory form, destined ultimately to perish and be replaced by a higher and more developed one.

Moreover, each particular stage is characterized by conflicts and contradictions. It undergoes change and development. In the process, the conditions for the emergence of the next stage gradually take shape within it. To the extent to which this occurs, present conditions cease to be progressive and become, instead, a fetter and a hindrance to the process of development. In this way, as Engels explains,

each stage is necessary, and therefore justified for the time and conditions to which it owes its origins. But in the face of new, higher conditions, which gradually develop in its own womb, it loses its validity and justification. It must give way to a higher stage, which will also in its turn decay and perish.

(Engels 1886:362)

The Hegelian origin of these ideas is evident (see Chapter 6 above). Of course, there are profound differences between Hegelian and Marxist accounts of history. However, a progressive outlook is common to them both. Its specifically moral implications are well summed up by Bradley. ‘Morality’, he writes, ‘is relative, but is none the less real.’

All morality is and must be ‘relative,’ because the essence of realization is evolution through stages, and hence existence in some one stage is not final.... On the other hand, all morality is ‘absolute’ because in every stage the essence of man *is* realized, however imperfectly: and yet again the distinction of right in itself against relative morality is not banished,

because, from the point of view of a higher stage, we can see that lower stages failed to realize the truth completely enough.... Yet...the morality of every stage is justified for that stage; and the demand for a code of right in itself, apart from any stage, is seen to be the asking for an impossibility.  
(Bradley 1927:192)

### The Marxist assessment of capitalism

This is the context in which Marx develops his assessment of capitalism. Contrary to the picture presented by the analytical account, he does not attempt to judge capitalism in an absolute fashion, according to universal principles. Rather, his account is thoroughly historical and relative, and all the more realistic and useful as a result.

Relative to the feudal society which preceded it, capitalism has been a progressive—indeed, a revolutionary—social development. It has resulted not only in gigantic economic development; it has also led ultimately to moral and political advances in equality and liberty, not only for the bourgeoisie but also for working people.

To be sure, these developments have occurred in an intensely contradictory and destructive fashion. They have involved an enormous toll of misery and degradation. During the course of the growth of capitalism in Europe, innumerable people were uprooted, their communities and means of livelihood destroyed. They were driven off the land and herded into industrial towns and into the miserable and slave-like conditions of factory employment (and unemployment).

However, as Marx insists, there are also other aspects to these developments. For in the process working people have been liberated from their bondage to the land and to the feudal lord, they are removed from rural isolation, brought together in factories and cities. Their horizons are widened, their consciousness and social relations are extended; and, ultimately, they emerge into the political world as the modern industrial working class. According to Engels,

that the situation of the workers has on the whole become materially worse since the introduction of capitalist production on a large scale is doubted only by the bourgeois. But should we therefore look back longingly...to rural small-scale industry which produced only servile souls? Only the proletariat created by modern large-scale industry, liberated from inherited fetters including those which chained it to the land, and herded together in the big cities, is in a position

to accomplish the great social transformation which will put an end to all class exploitation and all class rule.

(Engels 1873:564)

In this way, as Marx and Engels show, the capitalist system, quite unintentionally and unconsciously, creates both the material conditions for its own supersession, and also the agents who will bring this about—its own ‘grave-diggers’ (Marx and Engels 1848:45).

In short, relative to feudal society, capitalism must be judged progressive; but as the possibility of, and conditions for, a higher form of society emerge, it increasingly becomes a fetter to progress. From the standpoint of this higher form it can be judged to be irrational and immoral. Although these views are characteristic of Marx, the inspiration for them is, once again, clearly Hegelian. Progress, writes Hegel,

appears as an advance from the imperfect to the more perfect. But the former must not only be taken in abstraction as the merely imperfect, but as that which contains at the same time its own opposite, the so-called perfect, as germ, as urge within it.

(Hegel 1953:71)

### The Idea of socialism

Marx’s account of the ‘higher form’ of socialism arises out of the account of capitalism just described. For Marx regards socialism, just as he does capitalism, in historical and relative terms. He does not attempt to spell out an absolute and timeless ideal of how a future society ought to be, on the basis of universal principles. Rather, he portrays socialism as the outcome of forces and tendencies at work in present, capitalist society, and he envisages its character on that basis. ‘Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things’ (Marx and Engels 1845:56–7).

Marx’s own work is almost entirely focused on the attempt to analyse and understand the capitalist society of his day. His reluctance to try to predict the shape of the future in detail is well known. His only extended discussion of the character of socialist society occurs in the ‘Critique of the Gotha Programme’, written just after the experience of the Paris Commune. In that work, one of Marx’s main

concerns is to emphasize that his conception of socialism, unlike that of the Gotha Programme, is not a mere moral ideal. It is not based upon moral principles of ‘fairness’, ‘equality’ or ‘freedom’.

What we have to deal with here is a communist society, not as it has *developed* on its own foundations, but, on the contrary, just as it *emerges* from capitalist society, which is thus in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually, still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it emerges.

(Marx 1875:23)

Marx thus looks upon socialism as a real form of society, as the concrete historical stage beyond capitalism, hence as a contradictory and imperfect form, which will undergo its own process of change, and in which the conditions will develop only gradually for the passage towards a still higher phase of ‘full communism’ (Sayers 1990a).

In brief outline, these are the terms in which Marx assesses capitalism and conceives of socialism. His approach, as I have stressed, is historical rather than moral. Socialism is not portrayed simply as an ideal, but rather as the predicted outcome of real and present historical forces. At the same time, however, this account relies heavily on the notion of progress; and in doing so, it is often argued, a disguised moral element is introduced. In talking of the development of socialism as ‘progress’ and in conceiving of it as a ‘higher’ stage, it is said, value judgements are being smuggled in. Even if Marx’s historical analysis and predictions are correct, it does not necessarily follow that socialism is a desirable or preferable form of society. For these are value judgements which cannot be deduced from any purely factual historical theory. Marx’s approach is thus accused of confusing factual and evaluative judgements, and of committing the ‘naturalistic fallacy’.<sup>4</sup>

To this charge Marxism pleads guilty. It does involve a kind of naturalism; for it is a form of historicism. It regards morality as a social and historical phenomenon, and seeks to base its moral and political outlook on this understanding. It thus questions the idea that the political and moral values of socialism are mere subjective preferences, independent of social and historical theory. It rejects the view that naturalism is a fallacy, and the rigid fact—value dichotomy upon which this view is based.

For it is wrong to think of Marxism as a purely theoretical and contemplative outlook. It is not a purely explanatory and predictive science on the model of physics or chemistry. Marxism is also a form

of socialism—practical ends are integral to it. In this respect, a more illuminating comparison is with medicine. For medicine, too, is a practical science and, like Marxism, has a practical end: the promotion of health. Moreover, the end of health is not a purely subjective preference on the part of doctors. It is not an arbitrary value in medicine. On the contrary, it is something objective: it arises out of the very nature of the object which the doctor treats; it is inscribed in the living organism, in the body itself, as *its* end. Similarly, if Marx is correct in his analysis of capitalism, socialism is not simply the subjective preference of socialists; it is the objective tendency and proximate end of the historical process itself.

Thus Marx rejects the view that he is putting forward ideals or expressing subjective values, either his own or those of the working class; and it is for this reason that he insists that working people ‘have no ideals to realize, but to set free the elements of the new society with which the old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant’ (Marx 1871:523). This is also what Hegel is saying in more abstract and general terms when he writes,

dialectic is not an activity of subjective thinking applied to some matter externally, but is rather the matter’s own soul putting forth its branches and fruit organically. This development of the Idea is the proper activity of its rationality, and thinking, as something subjective merely looks on at it without for its part adding to it any ingredient of it own.

(Hegel 1821:34–5)

### Marxism and justice

These are familiar themes in the work of Marx and Hegel. They are well described by a number of writers: most notably by Lukács, and more recently Kolakowski. Even Popper—seldom the most sympathetic or sensitive writer on Hegel and Marx—is aware of their importance in Marx’s work, and captures their general drift (Popper 1966: ch. 22; Lukács 1972; Kolakowski 1978).<sup>5</sup>

Analytical philosophy, on the other hand, has long been characterized not only by its hostility towards such Hegelian ideas, but also by its ignorance of them. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is hardly any discussion of these themes—critical or otherwise—in the whole vast analytical debate about Marxism and morality. Instead, writers on all sides of this debate try to force Marx’s ideas

into the alien and anti-historical categories of analytical thought—categories which impose an either/or choice between fact and value, between absolutism and relativism, and which simply exclude from view the ideas I have just been describing.

When Marx judges capitalism to be unjust—as he does—he does not invoke absolute standards of justice. For he does not regard capitalism as absolutely unjust or immoral. Marx’s approach, I have been arguing, is a historical one. In relation to the feudal world, bourgeois society appears to constitute progress in justice and right. Which is to say that by the standards of bourgeois society, the feudal order, with its ranks and privileges, seems unjust, and capitalism seems a higher form. However, these standards, and the society which produces them, themselves come to seem limited and unjust, as the conditions for a new and still higher form of society—socialism—emerge, and as the morality associated with it becomes clearer.

Thus Marx does criticize private ownership, but not in terms of absolute moral standards. On the contrary, he makes the historical and relative basis of his judgement quite explicit. Thus he writes, ‘from the standpoint of a higher economic form of society, private ownership of the globe by single individuals will appear quite as absurd as the private ownership of one man by another’ (Marx 1894:776).

Strangely, Geras cites this passage to show that Marx believes in absolute criteria of justice. However, it is mainly the continuation that interests Geras, for Marx goes on:

Even a whole society, a nation, or even all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the globe. They are only its possessors, its beneficiaries, and, like *boni patres familias*, they must hand it down in an improved condition.

(ibid.: 776)

According to Geras, Marx is here condemning private property as unjust, on the principle that ‘there is no moral right to the private ownership and control of productive resources’ (Geras 1985:77; cf. Husami 1980:50). Although Marx’s language in these sentences is quite uncharacteristically moralistic, there is no basis for such an interpretation in the passage taken as a whole. For its theme is clearly the opposite of this. Marx is arguing that claims of ownership, although they may appear to be matters of eternal natural right, are in fact the product of social relations, they are ‘created...in the first place... [by] relations of production’ (Marx 1894:776).

Thus Marx's critique of capitalism does not appeal to absolute standards; but nor is it simply trapped within the capitalist order and tied to its standards in pure relativist fashion. It judges capitalism, as Marx says, 'from the standpoint of a higher economic form of society' (*ibid.*). However, such an account is simply excluded by the either/or scheme which Wood, Cohen and other analytical Marxists impose upon Marx. Wood is quite explicit about it. He dismisses the historical approach as follows:

Someone might think that capitalism could be condemned as unjust by applying to it standards of justice or right which would be appropriate to some postcapitalist mode of production. No doubt capitalism could be condemned in this way, but since any such standards would not be rationally applicable to capitalism at all, any such condemnations would be mistaken, confused and without foundation. The temptation to apply postcapitalist juridical standards (however they may be understood) to capitalist production can only derive... from the vision of postcapitalist society as a kind of eternal juridical structure against which the present state of affairs is to be measured and found wanting.  
(Wood 1980a:29)

The assumptions at work in this passage are characteristic of the analytical approach. Perhaps there would be something to be said for them if capitalism and socialism were entirely distinct and unrelated social systems. But they are not: socialism *develops out of* capitalism. Postcapitalist society is not, as Wood suggests, entirely external and alien to capitalism, but rather internally and essentially related to it.

As Marx shows, the conditions which make socialism possible, and the agents who bring it about, develop *within* capitalism, as *its* product. These forces, and the new social order which they presage, form the material basis for the socialist critique of capitalism. For once the forces which contradict the capitalist system and which will bring about its supersession begin to make themselves felt within it, and once the shape of the new society which will *in fact* supersede capitalism begins to become apparent, then a point of view becomes available from which present day conditions may be criticized. 'If we did not find concealed in society as it is the material conditions of production and the corresponding relations of exchange prerequisite for a classless society, then all attempts to explode it would be quixotic' (Marx 1858:159).

The analytical perspective adopted by Wood, Cohen and the others simply excludes these ideas. It is profoundly hostile to Hegelian and dialectical forms of thought (Sayers 1990b). Different modes of production are portrayed as entirely separate and self-contained systems, merely distinct from and unrelated to each other. Capitalism and socialism are separated from each other by a metaphysical wall. Such views are not merely unhistorical, they are positively *anti*-historical.

### Human needs and human nature

By contrast, Marxism, as I have tried to show, involves a historical approach to morality which avoids either an appeal to absolute values on the one side, or a collapse into pure relativism on the other. So far, I have focused particularly on the notion of justice in order to make this point. However, this approach is quite general, I will now argue, and applies to other forms of morality as well. This is disputed by a number of analytical writers, including Lukes and Wood. Although ideas of justice and right are inescapably historical and relative, they argue, the same is not true of naturalistic kinds of values.

Thus Lukes maintains that Marxism draws a sharp distinction between what he calls 'two kinds of morality'. On the one hand, there is the 'morality of *Recht*', which appeals to principles of justice and right. According to Lukes, this is rejected by Marxism as ideological and relative. On the other hand, there is the 'morality of emancipation' which underlies Marxism. This involves naturalistic values of 'welfare and happiness'; it looks forward to 'the overcoming of alienation and the realization of the human essence or human nature'; and it envisages the creation of 'harmonious social relations' (Lukes 1985:10). Marxism, argues Lukes, rejects only the former: 'it is the morality of *Recht* that it condemns as ideological and anachronistic, and the morality of emancipation that it adopts as its own' (ibid.: 29).

Wood makes a similar point by distinguishing 'moral' values, like justice and equality, from what he regards as 'non-moral' goods, like welfare and self-realization. Only the former, he maintains, are regarded by Marx as historical and ideological; whereas 'capitalism can be condemned without any ideological mystification or illusion by showing how it starves, enslaves and alienates people, that is, how it frustrates human self-actualization, prosperity and other non-moral goods' (Wood 1981:128).

Marx does, indeed, use terms such as these to criticize capitalism: they are a familiar feature of his work. Moreover, such naturalistic values are no doubt more congenial to the materialist and realist



approach of Marxism than notions like justice and right. That is not to say, however, that Marxism adopts an entirely different attitude to these two sorts of moral outlook, or that naturalistic values are in some way non-ideological and non-relative, as Lukes and Wood maintain. For such values are based upon standards of human need and human nature; and these are social and historical phenomena.

That, at least, is Marx's view. In producing to satisfy our needs we also create new needs. In exercising our powers and capacities, we develop new powers and capacities and, in the process, human nature develops. 'By...acting on the external world and changing it, [man] at the same time changes his own nature' (Marx 1867:177). These ideas recur throughout the entire span of Marx's work. The theme, however, is a Hegelian one, as Marx acknowledges: 'Hegel conceives the self-creation of man as a process...he...grasps the nature of *labour* and conceives objective man—true, because real man—the result of his *own labour*' (Marx 1844a:386).

Human nature cannot provide an absolute and trans-historical moral yardstick. When conditions are criticized for being 'inhuman' or 'degrading', it is an inescapably historical and relative judgement that is made. Current standards of what is human and worthy of mankind, or inhuman and degrading, are in part at least a product of current conditions. They are based on needs, aspirations, forms of relationship, etc., which have themselves been created and developed by capitalism and modern industry. There is no question, therefore, of holding capitalism up against an absolute and ideal conception of what is 'human' and finding it wanting.

Indeed, Marx's judgement of capitalism and industry is not a onesided and purely negative one. Even in his early work, he recognizes that they have a *contradictory* human impact. 'Industry...is the *open* book of the essential powers of man', he writes, and it 'has prepared the conditions for human emancipation, however much its immediate effect [is] to complete the process of dehumanization' (Marx 1844a: 355).<sup>6</sup>

To all this, philosophers like Lukes and Wood will no doubt respond by insisting that they are not denying the social and historical character of needs, abilities and other aspects of human nature. For the essential point they are making is the naturalistic one, that human nature *as currently developed* can provide an objective—a real and existing—basis for values, which ideas of justice and right lack. Wood even suggests that naturalistic considerations can provide a self-evident and uncontroversial basis for Marx's criticisms. Marx, he writes,

is evidently persuaded that the obvious non-moral value of the goods to which he appeals is sufficient...to convince any reasonable person to favour the overthrow of a social order which unnecessarily frustrates them and its replacement by one which realizes them.

(Wood 1981:127)

There are, of course, obvious and indisputable cases of need, like starvation, where a person's very biological survival is threatened.<sup>7</sup> It is important to be reminded that such cases are still a familiar spectacle in the capitalist world; and that serious material deprivation is widespread, even in its most advanced parts. Nevertheless, it is clear that Marxism goes far beyond this in its criticism of capitalism. Lukes and Wood are well aware of this. They focus mainly on values like self-realization, emancipation and community. However, the claim that these are genuine human needs is by no means self-evident.

Although it is clear that new desires and wants emerge as society develops, the view that these constitute *needs* is rejected by many philosophers, and particularly by the opponents of Marxism, often on the basis of their social and historical variability (Soper 1981; Braybrooke 1987). Some deny the very notion of needs beyond the survival minimum, and insist that such wants are nothing but subjective, individual preferences, without any further moral significance. Others see these wants as socially created 'false' needs—unnecessary desires, artificially induced by the pressures of consumer society. This outlook leads to criticism of industrial society, but in a romantic way which harks back to earlier and simpler conditions.

Marx's position differs from both of these. He, too, portrays such desires as socially created, but he does not regard them as artificial and false simply in virtue of that. On the contrary, he regards the historical transformation of human nature in positive terms. He sees it as a progressive process, as a growth and a development of human powers and needs, and of human nature generally.

Again these ideas have Hegelian origins, even if a recognition of their critical and revolutionary implications is distinctively Marxist. For Hegel, too, regards the growth of human nature as progressive, and he criticizes the romantic idea that it involves only a proliferation of false needs and unwanted powers. 'To be confined to mere physical needs as such and their direct satisfaction would simply be the condition in which the mental is plunged in the natural, and so would be one of savagery and unfreedom' (Hegel 1821:128).

This is not to deny that ‘false’ needs and desires are also engendered in modern society. However, it is to reject the attempt to confine the sphere of ‘true’ needs to the survival minimum, and it is to insist that the distinction between ‘true’ and ‘false’ needs must always be conceived in a historical and relative fashion.

Only when the growth of human nature is conceived in these terms does it provide a progressive basis for the critique of capitalism, and point towards a future socialist society. Only then does the emergence of the needs mentioned by Wood and Lukes—for emancipation, self-realization and community—point towards a ‘higher stage’ of historical development, in which these needs are recognized *as* needs, and in which the meeting of them becomes a basic priority of social life.

Such views raise large and important issues about human needs and human nature, but it is beyond my scope to explore them further here. For my present purpose is only to show that the criticism of capitalism in terms of its impoverishing and inhuman effects is no less problematic for the analytical outlook than the criticism of it for its injustice. An appeal to human needs and human nature is no better able to provide a trans-historical and non-relative criterion for Marxist morality than are principles of justice and right. Standards of human nature and needs, just like those of justice and right, are inescapably historical, relative and, in that sense, ideological. That does not mean that these standards must be dismissed and rejected; but it does mean that judgements based upon them must be historical and relative ones.

In emphasizing the historical and relative character of morality, I am not seeking to undermine or reject it as illusory; nor am I suggesting that Marxism does so. On the contrary, Marxism, I have been arguing, involves not only a social theory, but also a practical—an evaluative, a moral and political—stance. So far from regarding these as incompatible aspects, Marxism seeks to ground its values and its criticisms on its social theory, and thus to give them a sound—objective and scientific—rather than purely utopian and moralistic basis. For the great achievement of the Marxist and Hegelian outlooks is to show that it is possible to recognize the historical and relative character of moral values, without descending into mere relativism and scepticism.

My purpose has been to explain these ideas, and to show how the analytical approach simply excludes them from view. Certainly, these ideas are not without their problems; but I have not dwelt upon these here. For in order to recognize these problems and explore

them, it is first of all necessary to acknowledge and understand the ideas that give rise to them; and for that we must move beyond the framework offered by analytical Marxism.

## MORAL VALUES AND PROGRESS

How does Marx criticize capitalism? On what basis does he advocate socialism? Marx's own account of these matters at first seems puzzling. On the one hand, he claims to be putting forward an objective and 'scientific' theory of history, a fundamental tenet of which is that moral values—including those of Marxism itself—are social and historical products. On the other hand, Marxism does not claim to be a 'neutral' or 'value-free' approach. It quite explicitly condemns capitalism and advocates socialism; a critical perspective is integral to it.

As we have seen in the last chapter, there has been a huge amount of controversy about these claims among 'analytical Marxists' in recent years (Geras 1985, 1992; Lukes 1985). Whatever their other differences, however, the great majority of these writers are agreed that these two aspects of Marx's thought are incompatible. A social account of moral values of the kind given by Marx, it is said, leads inevitably to a form of social relativism which undermines the very possibility of a critical perspective. Marx's condemnation of capitalism *must* involve an appeal to trans-historical values, whatever Marx himself may have thought. Then what we are offered in this literature are various 'rational reconstructions' of what trans-historical values Marx would have appealed to had he shared these views.

But he does not. Marx's critical method is an immanent and historical one. It is based on the premise that the grounds for a critical perspective are to be found in existing social conditions themselves. For actual societies are not harmonious unities. They contain within them conflicting groups and forces. Some of these support the established order; others oppose it. Social reality is contradictory. Negative and critical tendencies exist within it, they do not need to be brought from outside in the form of transcendent values: they are immanent within existing conditions themselves. Thus Marx's social theory, far from undermining his critical perspective, provides the

basis on which it is developed and justified. My aim in this chapter is to defend these ideas against some of the philosophical criticisms commonly brought against them.

### **The historical approach**

Marx's theory of history is familiar enough; nevertheless a brief reminder of it will be useful here as a prelude to the discussion that follows. According to this theory, social conflict gives rise to historical change. The existing social order is not stable or ultimate: it is destined eventually to perish. History takes the shape of a development through different stages, or modes of production. In the normal course of development, Marx maintains, feudal society is succeeded by capitalism, which will in turn give way to socialism. These stages are not simply a succession of different, discontinuous and incommensurable social forms. Rather, each new stage arises on the basis of the previous stage, as a result of forces and tendencies which have taken shape within it. Each new stage initially constitutes a progressive development, necessary for its time, and relative to the conditions which it supersedes. Yet each is only a transitory form which, in its turn, will ultimately perish and be replaced by the new, 'higher' and 'more developed' form which emerges out of it and on the basis of the conditions and as a result of the forces created by it.

This theory not only constitutes the framework for Marx's account of history, it also provides the basis for his critical method. This does not appeal to transcendent standards; it is immanent, historical and relative in character. Relative to the feudal conditions which it replaces, capitalism constitutes a progressive, indeed revolutionary, historical development. From the perspective of capitalist society, feudal society, with its fixed hierarchy of ranks and privileges, appears oppressive and unjust. As the conditions for a higher socialist form of society take shape within it, however, capitalism increasingly becomes a fetter to further development. From the standpoint of this higher society—whose conditions are immanent in the present and increasingly make themselves felt—capitalist social relations appear to be a hinderance to human development and unjust. This standpoint—which emerges only with the development of capitalist society and is relative to it—provides the basis for Marx's critique.

Marx's conception of socialism is similarly historical and relative. It does not attempt to envisage an ideal future society on the basis of transcendent principles. For it does not regard socialism as the realization of a moral ideal, but rather as a concrete historical stage

which will supersede capitalism, and which will be the outcome of forces which are at work within present capitalist society. 'Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things' (Marx and Engels 1845:56–7; see also Chapter 7 above).

### Progress and its problems

There is a standard objection to this approach, and it runs as follows. A theory of history of this sort cannot provide a valid basis for moral values. To imagine that moral conclusions can be derived from a theory of historical progress is to commit a version of the 'naturalistic fallacy': the fallacy of trying to get evaluative conclusions from factual premises (Popper 1966: ch. 22). Geras puts the matter clearly as an either/or choice. Either Marx's concept of progress is a 'neutral' notion, equivalent to 'what will come next'; in which case it is a 'morally vacuous notion' that carries no evaluative implications. 'That something is going or probably going to happen, does not show why, or that, it should be valued or fought for. It may be, and historically all too often is, spectacularly unpleasant' (Geras 1992:43). Alternatively, the idea of progress is a morally substantive one, in which case it must tacitly embody certain values. These values, if they are to enable 'comparative historical evaluations' to be made, must appeal to 'trans-historical criteria', 'universal evaluative standards', for these are 'an obvious requirement of any morally substantive concept of progress' (*ibid.*: 44).

Neither of these alternatives is satisfactory, either as an account of Marx's ideas or of the historical realities they describe. For Marxism, and, indeed, the whole Hegelian tradition in which it is located, rejects the metaphysical gulf between facts and values which is presupposed here. There is *both* a factual *and* an evaluative dimension to Marx's theory of history and the concept of progress it involves.

Taking Geras's either/or alternatives as a starting point, the first can be rapidly dealt with. When Marx describes a particular historical stage or mode of production as 'progressive' relative to the previous stage, or as 'higher' than it—as he constantly does—he clearly does not mean only that it comes later in time. History is not a bare succession of events. What just happens to come next may well be 'unpleasant', even 'spectacularly' so. Marx does not deny this. He does not suggest that history is a continuous and uninterrupted process of improvement. He is perfectly well aware that there can be

reverses and retro-gressions in history. In the longer term, however, and through all the unevenness of historical change, a larger pattern can be discerned.<sup>1</sup> The delineation and explanation of this pattern is the purpose of Marx's theory of history.<sup>2</sup>

Whether or not later stages are 'higher' and constitute 'progress' depends on *what* comes later, it depends on the *content* of this pattern. For 'higher' here means not just 'later' but something like 'more developed' or 'more fully evolved'; and these notions have an evaluative dimension. This brings us to the second of Geras's alternatives. Geras, and many others who argue like him, simply assume at this point that the values involved in the notion of progress *must* have a trans-historical basis, whatever Marx may have believed to the contrary; and then, without further ado, they proceed to describe the trans-historical values that Marx is supposed to have held. Thus we get Marx the utilitarian, Marx the philosopher of self-realization, Marx the adherent to eternal principles of justice, etc. Though each of these 'reconstructions' captures an aspect of Marx's thought, none is satisfactory. For the values involved in Marx's theory of history are immanent and relative, as I shall now explain through a discussion of these alternative accounts.

### Utilitarianism

For Marx, it is clear, the fundamental index of historical progress is the development of the productive forces. Why should this be regarded as progress? Why should it be valued? Utilitarianism gives perhaps the simplest and most familiar answer. The human being is *homo economicus*: a creature of unlimited needs and desires. Economic development is of value because it leads to an increase in material wealth, to the more abundant provision of 'the necessities and conveniences of life' (Smith 1776:104), to the greater satisfaction of needs and desires, to greater happiness. This philosophy is often used to defend capitalism. According to what is usually called the 'economistic' account, Marx's critique of capitalism and idea of socialism have the same basis.

Marx does, indeed, value economic development. He regards the immense expansion of production to which capitalism has led as part of its progressive and 'civilizing' aspect (Marx 1894:819; 1858:409); and socialism, he insists, is possible only on this economic basis. He envisages socialism not as a primitive condition, but rather as an industrially advanced stage 'beyond' capitalism. Nevertheless, his reasons for these views are not utilitarian.



For Marx does not abstract the economy from the rest of social life and treat it, in utilitarian fashion, as a mere external means to satisfy given human needs.<sup>3</sup> Rather, with economic development, human needs—human nature itself—alter and develop. ‘By...acting on the external world and changing it [man] at the same time changes his own nature’ (Marx 1867:177). Thus the *homo economicus* of utilitarianism and classical economics is not universal human nature. On the contrary, the theory that people are creatures of unlimited needs and desires depicts a form of human nature and a set of attitudes to material wealth which are distinctively modern, and which are produced by and peculiar to capitalist society.<sup>4</sup>

In short, needs are historical and changing. They cannot provide a trans-historical criterion by which historical development can be assessed. In so far as economic development is valued because it meets needs—and Marx does so value it—it is not the needs of a universally given human nature which are in question, but rather historically developed needs. This is not to deny that there is a relatively unchanging core of purely biological needs, the minimal satisfaction of which is essential for the survival of the human organism. Moreover, it is an all too familiar fact that these minimum needs are not met in many parts of the world, and that serious material deprivation is still widespread even in the most advanced societies. Nevertheless, Marx’s condemnation of capitalism does not focus on such facts alone. What constitutes poverty and need, he maintains, is a historical and relative matter: ‘our desires and pleasures spring from society; we measure them, therefore, by society and not by the objects which serve for their satisfaction. Because they are of a social nature, they are of a relative nature’ (Marx 1847b:94). And he criticizes capitalism, not just because it fails to satisfy universal biological needs, but also because it fails to meet the needs that it itself has created. His standard of assessment here is relative and not absolute.

But why should we value such historically created needs and regard their satisfaction as a mark of progress? Only our biological survival needs, it is sometimes argued, are ‘natural’ and ‘true’ needs. With social development, our desires expand more rapidly than our ability to satisfy them. Modern society thus creates a panoply of ‘unnecessary’ desires and ‘false’ needs: desires whose satisfaction is not necessary for life, and whose development leads to an increase in want and suffering. (Such views are often attributed to Rousseau, though it is doubtful that his philosophy is correctly interpreted in these terms.)

By contrast, for Marx, I am suggesting, not only desires but also needs grow historically. What are luxuries for one generation become

necessities for the next. Some, at least, of these new needs are ‘true’ needs relative to the social conditions in which they arise, in that their satisfaction is necessary for a minimum standard of social life and for happiness. This is not to deny the distinction between ‘true’ and ‘false’ needs altogether. It is to insist that this distinction is a historical and relative one, and thus to abandon the attempt to use the fixed core of ‘natural’ needs as a standard by which all development beyond it may be judged.

According to the historical view, the growth of needs and desires is one aspect of the development of human nature in general. This should not be seen as a purely negative or undesirable phenomenon. Rather it is the subjective aspect of the growth of human powers and capacities. With the development of our powers and capacities new needs emerge; and the growth of new needs spurs the development of new powers. Marx makes these points, in relation to the development of the senses, as follows:

The most beautiful music has *no* sense for the unmusical ear, because my object can only be the confirmation of one of my essential powers.... For this reason the *senses* of social man are *different* from those of non-social man. Only through the objectively unfolded wealth of human nature can the wealth of subjective *human* sensitivity—a musical ear, an eye for beauty of form, in short, *senses* capable of human gratification—be either cultivated or created.... The cultivation of the five senses is the work of all previous history.  
(Marx 1844a:353)<sup>5</sup>

The development that Marx is here describing takes the form of a growth of human nature, of human powers and capacities; but this cannot be construed as a progress in utilitarian terms that leads to an increase in human pleasure or happiness. For there is no clear way in which the happiness of different ways of life can be compared. As Durkheim argues, greater powers and capacities, a greater range of activity, means that the individual can experience a wider variety of pleasures and perhaps it may heighten their intensity. By the same token, however, it also increases the range and intensity of the pain and discomfort experienced.<sup>6</sup>

Happiness does not increase because activity becomes richer, but is the same wherever it is healthy. The most simple creature and the most complex one experience the same

happiness if they both equally realize their own nature. The average savage can be just as happy as the normal civilized person.

(Durkheim 1893:188–9)

Marx's attitude, I am suggesting, is similar. He does not recommend economic development in utilitarian terms, but rather because of the development of human nature, the development of human powers and capacities, which it involves. He makes this point, in the most visionary terms, in the course of contrasting ancient and modern attitudes to wealth. The ancient view, in which production is geared directly to meeting existing needs, at first seems 'loftier' than the modern view—the utilitarian view—which regards material wealth as the goal of production. 'In fact', Marx says,

when the limited bourgeois form is stripped away, what is wealth other than the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc.... the full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as of humanity's own nature? The absolute working out of his creative potentialities, with no presupposition other than the previous historic development, which makes this totality of development, i.e. the development of all human powers as such the end in itself, not as measured on a *predetermined* yardstick?

(Marx 1858:488)

### Self-realization

These ideas cannot be understood in utilitarian terms. They suggest, rather, a second, and quite different, 'Aristotelian'—eudaemonistic rather than hedonistic—interpretation. According to this, the criterion of historical development is the growth of human capacities and powers, the actualization of human potentialities: self-development and self-realization.

These themes are usually discussed under the heading of alienation and its overcoming, and Marx's critical approach is often taken to be rooted in them. Capitalist social relations are criticized for the alienation they involve: particularly the alienation of the worker from his or her work and its products; and the alienation of 'man from man', of the individual from his or her fellow men and women and from the community.<sup>7</sup> In both cases, what are human products appear

as hostile and alien forces working against the individual. Aspects of human life and human activity which could—and, it is clear, for Marx should—realize and confirm human powers are experienced as hostile and alien to them.

What is the concept of human nature—of human powers and potentialities—involved here? In much of the literature on alienation, Marxism is assumed to involve the notion of a universal ‘human essence’: an unchanging set of human potentialities, whose realization is denied in conditions of alienation. Alienation is thus conceived as an entirely negative phenomenon, the pure opposite of self-development and self-realization.

However, the view of human nature that I have just been describing points towards a different picture. According to it, not only needs but also powers and potentialities are in a process of social and historical development. When Marx criticizes capitalism for preventing the realization of human powers and potentialities, these are ones which have been developed within capitalism itself. Here again the basis for Marx’s approach is historical and relative, not trans-historical and absolute. Moreover, understood in this way, alienation is not a purely negative and critical concept, the mere opposite of self-realization. On the contrary: it constitutes a stage in human self-development which is necessary and progressive relative to the stage it supersedes.<sup>8</sup>

That is to say, human nature in general is a historical product. The self is a social creation.

The more deeply we go back in history, the more does the individual...appear as dependent, as belonging to a greater whole: in a still quite natural way in the family and...clan; then later in the various forms of communal society.... The human being is in the most literal sense a *zoon politicon* [political animal], not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society.  
(Marx 1858:84)

This process of individuation occurs by stages with changes in social relations. In ‘traditional’, ‘pre-modern’—i.e. pre-capitalist—societies people ‘enter into connection with one another only as individuals imprisoned within a certain definition, as feudal lord and vassal, landlord and serf, etc.’ (ibid.: 163).<sup>9</sup> The individual’s place in the community, his activity and role, his powers and capacities, are regarded by him and by others as intrinsic to his ‘nature’, inseparable

from his identity, fixed and determined by birth. 'A nobleman always remains a nobleman, a commoner always a commoner...a quality inseparable from his individuality' (Marx and Engels 1845:84).<sup>10</sup>

The autonomous individual subject of enlightenment social thought, to whom a universal range of potentialities seems open, is a distinctively modern creation. 'Only in the eighteenth century...do the various forms of social connectedness confront the individual as a mere means towards his private purposes' (Marx 1858:84). This new form of individuality comes with capitalism and the commercial market relations it imposes.<sup>11</sup> These undermine and destroy the fixed hierarchy of traditional society and, with it, the forms of self-identity it involves. The individual worker, deprived of the means of production through the 'enclosure' of common land or by other means, becomes a 'free labourer', obliged to sell his labour as a commodity on the market. This, according to Marx, is the social and historical basis of the modern individual.

The classical economists and the individualist philosophers of the enlightenment welcomed the destruction of the traditional community as a liberation of the supposedly naturally autonomous individual from the restricting customs and traditions of feudal society. Rousseau, and other contemporary critics of these developments, saw things in a different light. Community, they believed, was being destroyed and modern society made into a warring collection of separate, self-interested individuals (Walzer 1990).

Marx's writings on alienation are often thought to be in this tradition as well; but they cannot properly be understood in these terms. Both Rousseau and the philosophers he is criticizing see capitalism as having only a negative social impact, dissolving the traditional community into a mere collection of atomic individuals. Undoubtedly it does have a destructive effect. Under its impact, in Marx's well known words, 'all fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts in air' (Marx and Engels 1848:37).

However, as Marx sees, there is also a positive and constructive aspect to this process. At the same time as traditional social relations are destroyed, new ones are created. The agrarian household of precapitalist society was virtually a self-sufficient unit, producing almost everything it required for itself. The activities of its members, their relations with the outside world, their horizons, barely stretched beyond the boundaries of its own patch of land and immediate locality. With the advent of the market, the members of the household

produce goods for exchange, to meet the needs of consumers outside it. At the same time, its members themselves become consumers who depend on the goods produced by outsiders and obtained through the market.

Capitalism thus dissolves the isolated, self-sufficient pre-capitalist household; but the result is not a mere collection of separate individuals. Rather, it is a new and wider network of relationships. For through the market, the work and needs of many people are linked together within a common system and made interdependent.<sup>12</sup> Initially, such connections are purely economic. They do not appear to be social relations, relations between people, at all. They take on the alienated appearance of relations between commodities, relations between things (Marx 1867: ch. 1, sec. 4). Nevertheless, Marx insists, it is a mistake to see economic relations as the negation of social relations. They *are* social relations, but in an alienated form; and they gradually have an impact on every aspect of social life: changing its patterns and extending its horizons by drawing people out beyond the confines of the household into the wider world.

In this way, there is a positive as well as a negative side to the impact of capitalism and the alienation it brings with it. To be sure, it destroys the traditional household and community, and the established bonds and relations they involved. It breaks the ties that bound people to the land and to the feudal lord. It forces them out of the isolation of traditional rural life and the fixed patterns and rhythms it involves. It drives people off the land. In so doing, however, it brings them together in a far wider network of relations. With the growth of commerce and industry, people are concentrated in towns and cities, factories and offices. Their activities are coordinated, their consciousness widened, their energies increased. Ordinary working people are, for the first time, brought into the social world and public life. The modern worker, says Marx, is ‘as much the invention of modern time[s] as machinery itself (Marx 1856:360). And in this way, he believes, capitalism is creating not only the conditions for a higher form of society, but also the agents who will bring it about: the working class.<sup>13</sup>

Undoubtedly, Marx had exaggerated expectations of the working class. In the advanced industrial societies, at least, it has not been the revolutionary force he predicted; and, with the rise of other radical movements, even the claim that it is the primary force for progressive social change is much questioned. All this poses the most fundamental problems for Marxism as a historical and political theory. Nevertheless, there is an important element of truth in Marx’s account

which should not be lost from view. For capitalism is not and has not been a purely destructive phenomenon. Ordinary working people have made enormous advances under it, not only materially but also in terms of their mental and moral (i.e. self-) development. Marx's account of alienation, so far from denying this, is a part of his attempt to explain and understand it.<sup>14</sup>

This aspect of it is essential to his critique of capitalism and his idea of socialism. For it is the conviction that the forces for a new world are taking shape within the old one that provides the foundations for his critique. This new form of society is valued not just because it will be a more productive and wealthier society, but also because it is a society in which the individual's social products and social relations will no longer confront him as alien forces, and in which the potentialities for self-development and self-realization created by the growth of the productive forces in present society will be realized. This pattern of development entails that alienation is a necessary historical stage of human development, progressive relative to the social relations which it supersedes. That is to say, paradoxical as it may sound, alienation must be regarded as a historical *achievement*: as a stage in the process of self-development and self-realization, not as their mere opposite.

It may help to mitigate the apparent paradox here to see that, interpreted in this way, Marx's philosophy embodies a characteristically Hegelian theme. Hegel presents it through an account of the Biblical story of the Fall of Man. For Hegel, the myth of the Garden of Eden embodies the idea that, originally, human beings led a simple and innocent life in harmony with themselves and with nature. Historical development and civilization mean the end of this innocent state. With the Fall comes a condition of disharmony: of self-alienation and alienation from the natural world. In the Garden, according to the story, grew a tree of the knowledge of good and evil, whose fruit God had forbidden Adam and Eve to eat. The lesson seems to be that the condition of original innocence and simplicity is the ideal to which we should aspire; but this is not Hegel's interpretation.

The disunion that appears throughout humanity is not a condition to rest in. But it is a mistake to regard the natural and immediate harmony as the right state.... Childlike innocence no doubt has in it something fascinating and attractive; but only because it reminds us of what the spirit must win for itself. The harmoniousness of childhood is a

gift from the hand of nature: the second harmony must spring from the labour and culture of the spirit.

(Hegel 1830:43)<sup>15</sup>

Our present condition of disharmony and alienation is not ideal; but there is no question of going back. The true content of the idea of a harmonious life lies in the future; and it can be attained only by going through a necessary stage of division and alienation.

### Justice and right

I have been arguing that Marx sees historical development as progressive because it has involved the development of the productive forces and this, in turn, involves the growth of human capacities and powers. But is that all? According to writers like Geras, Cohen and Elster, Marx regards socialism as a 'higher' form of society than capitalism also because it is fairer and more just. Is there, then, also moral progress? If so, what form does it take?

In 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', as Geras and Elster emphasize, Marx describes the socialist principle of distribution according to work as an 'advance' over capitalist principles which allow a person to live by mere ownership; and he evidently believes that a further advance will be achieved in the 'higher' stage of communism, when goods are distributed according to need. It is not clear, however, that this thought can be generalized into the view that standards of justice develop progressively throughout history. For later in the same work Marx says that 'in a higher phase of communist society...the narrow horizon of bourgeois right [can] be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs' (Marx 1875:23–4). These well known words are often taken to imply that, with conditions of abundance, the need for principles of right will be transcended altogether.

This case is well argued by Lukes, who maintains that Marx's views should be located in a tradition of thought about justice whose best known representative is Hume (Hume 1751:183ff.; Lukes 1985). According to Hume, principles of justice are not a feature of all societies. The need for them arises only in certain circumstances: in conditions of relative scarcity. Marx, it seems, is thinking along similar lines, although the 'circumstances of justice' which he identifies include those of class division.<sup>16</sup> On this account, principles of justice develop only with the emergence of class divisions and the state; and



they are destined to perish when such divisions are finally overcome in the communist society of the future.<sup>17</sup> The history of justice culminates in its supersession.

This account does not exclude the idea of moral progress, but it does rule out the picture of it implied by writers like Geras, Cohen and Elster. For they believe that Marx has a ‘trans-historical’ and ‘universal’ idea of justice which is increasingly realized in the transition from capitalism to communism. As an account of Marx’s thought this is quite untenable. Not only does Marx himself explicitly and repeatedly repudiate such a conception of justice: it is entirely alien to the historical approach. For the latter entails that there is no single, universally right social order. Different social forms, governed by different principles of justice, arise in different conditions and in different times, and are necessary and right for their specific conditions and times; and with time they also lose their necessity and rightness, as the conditions for a new social order develop. Principles of justice and right are social and historical phenomena.

This is clearly the case with the principles which these writers cite as ‘universal’ and ‘trans-historical’ and attribute to Marx (though it is noteworthy that each holds a different view about the content of these supposedly ‘universal’ principles). According to Geras, for example, it is a universal principle that those who labour are ‘entitled’ to the product of their labour, on the ground that ‘it violates a principle of moral equality if the efforts of some people go unrewarded whilst others enjoy benefits without having to expend any effort’ (Geras 1985:160–1).<sup>18</sup> These are distinctively modern ideas. They would have been quite alien in the ancient world and, indeed, throughout the pre-capitalist period. Almost the opposite principle is defended by Aristotle. The fruits of labour, he argues, should in the main be enjoyed by those who do *not* work to produce them. For labour, Aristotle thought, renders the worker unfit to appreciate its products: the full human capacity for enjoyment requires leisure and a life free from work.<sup>19</sup>

These aristocratic attitudes now seem monstrous and unjust; but they are characteristic of much ancient and medieval moral thought. They seemed self-evident and right, not only to Aristotle but to countless others over a period of several millennia. To suggest that all these people were simply mistaken, and that the eternal principles of justice were not rightly understood until modern times is absurd; to ascribe such views to Marx is doubly so. Something like this is implied by Geras, however, when he insists that the principle of justice that he attributes to Marx has a trans-historical ‘reach’, and that it

can be applied unproblematically to ‘virtually all history’ (Geras 1992:57–8, cf. 44).

It is quite possible, of course, to apply current moral standards to different societies and periods; but one should be aware that this is what one is doing. As Engels says,

It is very easy to inveigh against slavery and similar things in general terms, and to give vent to high moral indignation at such infamies. Unfortunately all that this conveys is only what everyone knows, namely, that these institutions of antiquity are no longer in accord with our present conditions and our sentiments, which these conditions determine. But it does not tell us one word as to how these institutions arose, why they existed, and what role they played in history.  
(Engels 1878:250)

Slavery, Engels argues, constituted the necessary basis for the development of ancient Greek and Roman civilization. ‘It was slavery that first made possible the division of labour between agriculture and industry on a large scale, and thereby also...the flowering of the ancient world.’ When judged relatively, in the context of its own times—which for Engels is the only appropriate way to judge it—‘we are compelled to say—however contradictory and heretical it may sound—that the introduction of slavery under the conditions prevailing at that time was a great step forward’, not only for society as a whole but even for the slaves themselves. For slaves in the ancient world were generally captured in war and previously would have been put to death (*ibid.*: 249–50).

Coming closer to the present, similar issues are raised when the attempt is made to apply absolute standards of justice to capitalism. Cohen usefully explores these issues, which is to his credit since they pose considerable problems for his position. Like Geras, he too maintains that Marxism involves a trans-historical notion of justice, according to which it condemns capitalism as inherently unjust for the exploitation it involves. On the other hand, as Cohen points out, Marx argues that, in its initial stages, capitalism (and the exploitative social relations it involves) is a necessary condition for the development of the productive forces from their low level under feudalism to the level required for the creation of a ‘just’ (non-exploitative) socialist society. As Cohen puts it, ‘exploitation was not only unavoidable for productive progress, but unavoidable *tout court*. Justice without progress was not an historically feasible option,

because justice [i.e. Cohen's absolute conception of it] was not an historically feasible option' (Cohen 1988b:304).

Given this, to insist on a morality of justice is to adopt the attitude *fiat justitia, pereat mundus* (let justice be done even if the world perishes). Some philosophers have defended this principle.<sup>20</sup> Cohen does not go so far, yet he says,

I hope that, had I been around in, say, 1820.... I would have joined the fight against capitalism, doubtful that it would succeed to a liberation-defeating extent, but...being determined to continue to fight even if that doubt should have turned out to be misplaced.

(Cohen 1986:321–2)

This paradoxical position—*fiat justitia* but hopefully it will not lead to *pereat mundus*—is forced upon Cohen by his adherence to an absolute standard of justice. There are no grounds for suggesting that Marx reflects his views on this. For Marx, as I have been arguing, maintains that conceptions of justice are historical and relative, and arise only when the social forces whose aspirations they express have already taken shape in society.

Cohen, Geras and other recent adherents to the view that Marx believes in trans-historical principles of justice are silent about the way in which these principles are to be justified. Historically, however, this has been the greatest problem for this view. Fundamental principles of justice are sometimes held to be 'self-evident' (as in the US Declaration of Independence, for example), but that is not tenable; what appears self-evident at one time may well not do so at another (cf. the example of Aristotle discussed above). Self-evidence is a historical and relative matter.<sup>21</sup>

The appeal to a universal standard of reason to settle moral disputes is not, in the end, any more satisfactory. As Hegel argues against Kant, the attempt to justify principles of justice on purely rational grounds is doomed to failure. For if, as Kant believes, reason is purely formal and abstract, then it cannot produce principles with a content; whereas if reason has a content, it is one which develops and changes historically (Hegel 1821: §135ff.). Reason, too, has a history; it is not a universal and eternal court of appeal. In MacIntyre's words, 'rationality itself, whether theoretical or practical, is a concept with a history.... There are rationalities rather than rationality...just as...there are justices rather than justice' (MacIntyre 1988:9). In short, principles of justice are not eternally self-evident or rational; they are historical and relative.

Such an account, it is often said, must lead to a pure relativism which excludes any idea of progress. But there is another possibility. Writers like Hegel and MacIntyre maintain that modern liberal conceptions of justice constitute an advance relative to those which prevailed in earlier times and served to justify slavery and serfdom, but not because they come closer to an eternal standard of rationality or right. Thus MacIntyre argues that different conceptions of rationality and justice are parts of a continuous tradition, and that

standards of rational justification themselves emerge from and are part of a history in which they are vindicated by the way in which they transcend the limitations of and provide remedies for the defects of their predecessors within the history of that same tradition.

(ibid.: 7)

Thus for MacIntyre, as for Hegel, the succession of different forms of justice and rationality is itself rational and progressive in that sense.

This view is not open to Marxism, and it diverges from Hegelian philosophy at this point. For it questions the idea that the history of ideas of justice can be understood in terms of the logic of those ideas themselves; rather we must look to the development of the social forms which give rise to them.<sup>22</sup>

This may appear to rule out the idea that justice and reason develop progressively, but it does not necessarily do so. What it does rule out is the Hegelian, ideological view that reason is the motive force of their development. Historical development has, in the main, been the result of non-rational causal processes. These have created the material and social conditions of modern life 'in the same way as geological revolutions have created the surface of the earth'. The result of those processes, however, is an increasing development of reason, and conditions in which human beings need not simply submit to the material and social conditions of their life as to a 'natural' and externally imposed fate. For people collectively are gradually developing the means to exert a degree of conscious and rational control over the conditions of their lives; and the circumstances are being created in which we will at last be able to 'master the modern powers of production and subject them to common control' (Marx 1853b:358).<sup>23</sup>

### The value of progress

Marx thus portrays history as a progressive process in the sense that

it involves the growth of human productive powers, and hence the development of human nature in all its aspects: needs and desires, powers and capacities, freedom and reason. This theory provides the basis on which he criticizes capitalism and envisages socialism. It does not appeal to universal or trans-historical values in the sense assumed by the writers I have been criticizing—either of human nature or of morality and justice. Nor is it a ideological theory: it does not posit an ultimate end towards which history is heading. It assesses the present and values the future on the basis of criteria which are historical and relative, and which emerge from forces and tendencies which are active and immanent in the present.

The following objection can be anticipated at this point. Even if this account of history is accepted, it will be said, it gives no reason why human development should be valued and regarded as progress. On the contrary, such development has simply been assumed as a universal value by which historical development can be assessed.

This involves a misunderstanding of the character of Marx's thought. Its aim is not to try to prove that human development *ought* to be valued, but to show that it *is* so. But even granted this—even given that human development is as a matter of fact valued—it will be objected, we can still ask whether it ought to be. What reasons are there for valuing it and regarding it as progress? At this point one can only reply in naturalistic terms, as does Mill when he insists that 'the sole evidence it is possible to produce that something is desirable is that people do actually desire it' (Mill 1863:32).

People do actually desire self-development. On that, Mill and Marx are agreed, but for very different reasons. Mill's philosophy is based on a utilitarian conception of human nature which portrays the desires for economic and human development as universal. For Marx, by contrast, these desires and values are socially and historically developed. They are explicitly repudiated by Aristotle, Plato and many other philosophers of antiquity, who regard economic growth as a threat to the social order, and the growth of needs and desires beyond traditional and established limits as incompatible with individual happiness. Universal social and individual development as ends in themselves are distinctively modern values.<sup>24</sup> Since the eighteenth century they have increasingly come to dominate social thought: not just that of Hegel and Marx, but also the main tradition of modern liberal philosophy, of which Hegel and Marx are, in this respect, heirs.

To regard such values as historical products is not to suggest, I must stress, that they are for that reason arbitrary. Their adoption is not simply a matter of one sort of moral 'discourse' or 'vocabulary'

replacing another, still less of mere subjective preference. On the contrary, such values give expression to some of the most fundamental material aspects of society. The very structure of ancient society was, indeed, threatened by the forces unleashed by commercial expansion, and ancient attitudes to economic growth arise out of and reflect this fact. Plato and Aristotle had a largely correct understanding of it, even if they mistakenly believed that the conditions of ancient Greek society were universal and natural. As Marx says, 'all previous forms of society...foundered on the development of wealth. Those thinkers of antiquity who were possessed of consciousness therefore directly denounced wealth as the dissolution of the community' (Marx 1858:540).<sup>25</sup> Modern society has the very opposite basis. It positively requires constant expansion and is threatened by stagnation; and this is reflected in the values which have come to dominate modern social thought.<sup>26</sup>

The desire for universal human development has thus emerged and developed with modern, capitalist, society. And, according to Marx, it is the inability of capitalism to satisfy this desire which points the way beyond capitalism, towards a 'new' and 'higher' form of society in which the human potentialities developed by capitalism can be more fully realized. This is the basis on which he criticizes capitalism and envisages socialism.

### **The end of history?**

I have tried to explain Marx's critical method and defend it against a line of philosophical criticism which is often brought against it. It may well seem, however, that it does no service to Marxism to interpret it in this way. For Marxism is thereby tied to an empirical theory of history, and thus hostage to the actual course that history takes. This appears to have turned decisively against Marxism and socialism more generally in recent times. The very idea of a stage beyond capitalism is an illusion, we are often told: capitalism and the free market constitute the final stage of social development, the 'end of history'.

In this context it is not difficult to see the attractions of the view that Marxism is a form of ethical socialism based upon transcendent values. For that view can comfort itself with the belief that even if Marx's theory of history, with its prediction of the supersession of capitalism, turns out to be entirely mistaken, the values of Marxism and its vision of socialism are unaffected and retain their validity. However, the problems caused for socialism by the course that history

has recently been taking are objectively real and it is no help to Marxism to try to evade them in this fashion.

Values and ideals are hostage to empirical reality whether we like it or not. Socialism cannot avoid the problems this presents. If no movements emerge to oppose capitalism and create an alternative society, if we really are at the end of history, then Marxism will indeed be refuted. But there are no good grounds for believing that to be the case. Marxism provides a theoretical framework for understanding the capitalist system which remains both applicable and illuminating. The capitalist world continues to be torn by conflicts and crises, and it is clear that free market nostrums are no solution to the economic and social problems of the ex-communist world either. It is impossible to believe that this is the end of history; forces of opposition to capitalism will surely emerge. This is the faith of socialism. It is a 'faith' at present in that one cannot point to the actual existence of significant forces of this kind. But that is not to say that it is a blind faith. Nor is it a faith based on transcendent ideals. Rather, it is the belief—rationally grounded in a theory of history—that the aspiration towards a higher stage of society is not a mere ideal but the movement of historical reality itself.

## MARXISM AND HUMAN NATURE

Does Marxism have a theory of human nature? Often it is said to reject the very notion, but at best that is misleading. As we have seen, Marxism is a form of historicism. It does, indeed, reject the essentialist approach of Enlightenment social philosophy. For it abandons the project of seeking for foundations for social theory and moral values in a universal and timeless notion of human nature. However, Marxism is not mere anti-humanism. It gives a historical account of human nature—of human needs, capacities and powers. This derives from Hegel and provides the essential basis for both its social theory and values. Thus Marxism involves a historical form of humanism. These are the claims that I will now explain and defend.

Of course, the idea that human nature varies socially and historically is not peculiar to Hegel or Marx. Philosophers have long been aware that human needs and powers differ from society to society and from epoch to epoch. They have also long known that it is possible to identify certain human characteristics which are universal and historically invariant, as distinct from those which are the result of particular, local and transient social conditions.

The liberal philosophers of the Enlightenment attempted to discover secure and certain foundations for social thought on this basis. Operating with a rigid and exclusive contrast between the natural and the social, they sought to distinguish a set of universal and timeless human attributes, and separate them from those which are merely social, contingent and inessential. They aimed to identify ‘natural’ and ‘essential’ human characteristics which could serve as the foundations for social explanation and moral values—foundations which were thus supposed to be universally applicable and authoritative.<sup>1</sup>

Historicist philosophers since Hegel have criticized and rejected this essentialist approach. They have argued that it is not possible to distinguish and separate what is natural from what is social in this



way, for in concrete reality the two exist in unity. Human beings are essentially social beings. Human nature necessarily exists in a specific social and historical context, and social relations are always the result of specific and historically determined forms of human nature. The notion of a universal and timeless human nature is an abstraction from this context which cannot provide a determinate foundation for social theory or values. Human beings are social and historical beings through and through.

### Universal human nature

It is important to be clear about precisely what is involved in these historicist arguments. For in recent years they have been taken up by a wide variety of post-structuralists, post-modernists and other such schools, who often present them in loose and careless ways, designed, it seems, as much to scandalize and shock as to enlighten and illuminate.

In particular, the historicist approach is often described as a form of ‘anti-humanism’ which denies the very concept of human nature. According to Rorty, for example, ‘ever since Hegel...historicist thinkers have...denied that there is such a thing as “human nature”...Socialization goes all the way down, there is nothing beneath socialization or prior to history which is definatory of the human’ (Rorty 1989:xiii).

Althusser’s account of Marxism in these terms has been particularly influential. After an initial ‘humanist’ period, Althusser maintains, Marx ‘broke radically with every theory that based history and politics on an essence of man’ (Althusser 1969:227). Marx’s mature theory is a ‘theoretical anti-humanism’ (ibid.: 229). According to this, people are mere ‘supports’ for social relations (Althusser 1976:202). They are in effect mere *tabula rasa* without any inherent characteristics. Human nature is a social construct, with no constraint or limit to the construction. As Rorty puts it, people are ‘children of their time and place, without any significant metaphysical or biological limits on their plasticity’ (Rorty 1992:148–9).

Views such as these are constantly met with these days; but they are untenable both as an account of human nature and of the Hegelian historicist approach. As Lichtman says,

the very notion of human nature as a *tabula rasa* is self-contradictory. Even a blank slate must have such properties as will permit the acceptance of the chalk, as the wax accepts

the stylus, the inscribing tool. The issue is not whether there is a common innate nature, but what precisely that nature is.  
(Lichtman 1990:15)

It is quite evident that there are certain needs and other characteristics which are common to all human beings, pretty well regardless of their particular social or historical situation, and it is equally evident that Marx recognizes this. For example, the need for food is clearly a human universal. A certain minimum intake of food is necessary simply to live. It is not easy—perhaps it is not even possible—to specify precisely what this minimum is; but it is certain that there is a level below which human survival for long ceases to be a physical possibility. This basic need for food is not a historical phenomenon, it is a universal and relatively unchanging feature of the human condition due to our biological constitution.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the basic need for food sets a natural limit to the plasticity of human nature. Even though the particular food that is regarded as appropriate varies greatly from society to society and from epoch to epoch, it cannot vary without limit. Only certain things can count as food; and this constraint is imposed by the material character of the need itself (cf. Geras 1983:113). In other words, it is clear that there are universal and trans-historical, relatively unchanging human characteristics and, in that sense, a universal human nature.

It is equally clear that Marx, too, held these beliefs. Since the Althusserian claim that Marxism is a form of ‘anti-humanism’ which rejects the concept of human nature has been so influential, it is useful to be reminded of this, as Geras does in *Marx and Human Nature* (1983). It is a fundamental tenet of Marx’s philosophy that human beings are material, biological beings, creatures with physical needs. Even in his early works, Marx holds that the human being is a ‘natural being’, ‘a suffering, conditioned and limited being’ (Marx 1844a: 390), dependent for its very life on objects outside itself. Hegel shares this view. Despite his idealism, he is also a realist who in no way denies that humans are material beings with objective physical needs.

The same point is made in the more robustly materialist language that Marx begins to adopt in the *German Ideology* when he writes that ‘the first premise of human existence’ is ‘that men must be in a position to live in order to “make history”’. But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things’ (Marx and Engels 1845:48). These needs are a universal feature of the human condition. They are due to our physical

constitution, and they set natural limits to the plasticity of human nature. In short, it is evident that there is a universal human nature; and though there may be philosophers who deny this, it is clear that Marx and Hegel are not among them.<sup>3</sup>

### The development of human nature

However, according to historicism, this is only the simplest and most basic point that needs to be made on the subject of human nature. There is more to be said. For human beings are not merely natural beings, they are not only biological organisms; they are also, and essentially, social and historical beings who change and transform themselves through their social activity.

Marx makes this point in the passage from the *German Ideology* just quoted. The productive activity we undertake to satisfy our needs leads to the creation of 'new needs' (Marx and Engels 1845:43), and this activity always occurs within a context of social relations which are themselves ultimately determined by such needs. These new needs in turn lead to the development of new forms of productive activity and new productive powers. Thus there is a dialectic of needs and productive powers in which each develops in relation to the other (see especially Marx 1858:90ff.). 'By acting on the external world and changing it, [man] at the same time changes his own nature' (Marx 1867:177).

Needs thus vary according to the social conditions in which they are satisfied. Although the need for food is a universal need, a biologically given need, it is always satisfied in particular social conditions by which it is modified. 'Hunger is hunger, but the hunger gratified by cooked meat eaten with a knife and fork is a different hunger from that which bolts down raw meat with the aid of the hand, nail and tooth' (Marx 1858:92).

Within the limits imposed by our biology, the need for food takes a different specific form in different social conditions. And it must always take some specific and determinate, socially developed form. The bare universal—the purely 'natural' or 'biological' need for food as such—is an abstraction, in the sense that it never exists or operates on its own. For the idea of a pre-social or non-social condition—a 'state of nature'—which runs through the social contract theories of the Enlightenment must be rejected as myth. As Geertz says, 'men unmodified by the customs of particular places do not in fact exist, have never existed...could not exist' (Geertz 1993:35). Human beings are always and essentially social beings.

In short, there is both a universal and a particular, a natural and a social, aspect to human nature. This is the most basic point which needs to be made on the topic of human nature, and it is relatively uncontroversial. It is not seriously disputed by either historicists or essentialists. The more difficult question is how these aspects are related, and what role the concept of human nature plays in grounding social explanation and values. This is where the significant philosophical differences between these approaches really lie.

Thus, defenders of traditional essentialism, such as Geras and Nussbaum, do not dispute the view that human beings have socially and historically developed desires and preferences. What they do maintain, however, is that these can be entirely separate and distinguished from our purely natural and biological needs. For the essentialist approach rests upon a sharp metaphysical distinction between the categories of the natural and the social. These are treated as distinct and exclusive of each other: natural, biological needs are one thing and socially developed preferences quite another.

These distinctions embody what Geertz calls the 'stratigraphic' model of human nature, in which the natural (material, biological) and the social aspects of our make-up are treated as quite separate and distinct levels, only externally related to each other (Geertz 1993:37). Geras, for example, treats 'minimal biological needs' as though they were entirely distinct from what he calls 'other' needs ('historically developed needs and potentialities, self-realization and the like' (Geras 1995a:156)). He insists that universal features of human nature can be completely separated from socially developed needs, at least in theory (Geras 1983:114–5), and that only the former can provide a satisfactory ground for social theory and values.

According to the historicist approach, by contrast, it is not possible to distinguish what is natural and what is social in this way. There are not two distinct and externally related components here: a universal need on the one hand and a series of socially developed preferences on the other. There is only one thing: a socially modified need. Moreover, our needs are always modified by our social lives. They exist only in this socially developed form, and are mere abstractions apart from it. The natural and social aspects of our being always exist in concrete unity.

There is thus an important sense in which Rorty is right when he says that we are social 'all the way down' and that there is nothing 'beneath' socialization—not because (as he claims) 'there is no such thing as human nature', but rather because this whole 'stratigraphic'

model is unsatisfactory as a way of thinking about the relation of the natural to the social.

The natural and the social do not form separate layers or aspects of our make-up which are external to each other as this picture suggests. We are simultaneously both natural (biological) and social beings; and we are both of these things through and through. If we are social beings 'all the way down', then we are, at the same time and equally, natural and biological beings 'all the way up'. Even our most basic biological functions occur in a social context by which they are modified; and even our highest and most socially developed achievements are the activities of the biological organism that we, as human beings, are. Human beings are natural-social beings. Our biology and our sociality interpenetrate, and it is impossible to separate them out and oppose them to each other as essentialism attempts to do.

For example, hunger always takes a social form. It is not possible to isolate a universal and general need for food, which is then only contingently and externally supplemented by a separate set of specific, socially created preferences. It is true, of course, that every human being needs a certain minimum quantity of food. This universal specifies what all human beings have in common; and it is arrived at by abstracting away all specific differences. But it would be quite wrong to think that there is distinct need for a certain minimum quantity of nutrition actually at work in every human being (a specific need for so many calories and vitamins, so much carbohydrate, fat etc.), and in addition to that—on top of it so to speak—a set of particular preferences for this nutrition to be in certain socially and locally determined forms.

Even in conditions of starvation it is particular, socially developed needs which are involved. Benton makes an important observation when he notes that,

neither for humans nor for other species can we simply equate the mere satisfaction of nutritional requirements with the feeding activity characteristic of the species. The distorted or pathological relation to food induced by starvation in humans is not an animal-like relation to food, but a specific distortion or pathology of *human* feeding.

(Benton 1990a:265)

Indeed, the possibility of treating as food anything that satisfies nutritional requirements is not a purely biological or 'natural' form of need, but rather a specifically human form (and not necessarily

pathological, it seems to me) which is the result of our historical development. Whereas a cat, as the saying has it, would starve to death on a heap of corn.

### **Human nature as a foundation**

The significance of these issues becomes clear when one sees the foundational role that essentialism wants to give to universal human nature in social explanation. Geras particularly stresses this. His entire emphasis is on the explanatory role that universal needs are supposed to play in Marx's method. For example,

a concept of human nature, encompassing at once the common needs and the general and distinctive capacities of humankind plays a quite fundamental explanatory role...in accounting for those specifically human social relationships that are production relations and for that specifically human type of process of change which is history.

(Geras 1983:106)

Universal needs indeed play a vital role in Marx's social theory. Marx invokes them in order to explain the fact that all human beings, whatever particular society they belong to, must engage in some form of activity to satisfy their material needs and that they enter into social relations of production accordingly. These observations form the starting point of Marx's theory of history, the foundation of his materialism. Marx calls the notion of 'production in general' a 'rational abstraction' on this basis (Marx 1858:85). The same can be said of the notion of human nature in general.

However, these notions are abstractions. They constitute only the abstract and philosophical starting point for Marx's social theory. To understand specific social conditions it is necessary to move beyond them. In concrete reality, as Marx says, 'there is no production in general' (Marx 1858:86), only the specific productive activities of specific people in specific social and economic conditions. To understand these in their specificity, Marx insists, it is essential to attend to 'production at a definite stage of social development—production by social individuals' (Marx 1858:85).

Similarly, in concrete conditions there is no human nature in general. The bare abstract concept of human nature in general, or universal human nature, is not a sufficient basis on which to understand concrete social conditions in their specificity. As Geertz

says, 'to say marriage is a mere reflex of the social need to reproduce, or that dining customs are a reflex of metabolic necessities, is to court parody' (Geertz 1993:42). To explain social activity in terms of the needs that are satisfied by it, it is essential to refer to particular, concrete, socially developed needs, to a specific, socially developed human nature.<sup>4</sup>

What we have to deal with are 'social individuals', says Marx at the beginning of the *Grundrisse* (Marx 1858:85). And throughout his work he stresses the social and historical character of his approach. Geras is oblivious to the main thrust of Marx's position in this respect. He continually focuses on the concept of universal human nature in a one-sided way and ignores the essential role of the social development of needs in Marx's social thought. Historical materialism, he says, 'rests squarely upon the idea of a human nature. It highlights that specific nexus of universal needs and capacities which explains the human production process' (Geras 1983:107-8). This is a fundamental misinterpretation of historical materialism, which in effect denies its historical character *ab initio*.

I have been concentrating on the function of the concept of human nature in social explanation, but similar points apply about its role as a foundation for moral values. This has been the main area of concern in recent debate. The historical approach, it is said, rejects the idea of a universal and timeless human nature. It thus abandons any standpoint from which one can justify values, and opens the floodgates of relativism and scepticism (Benton 1990b; Nussbaum 1992; Geras 1995a, 1995b).

Again, it must be conceded, there may be philosophers who deny that there are any objective needs or such a thing as a determinate human nature, but neither Marx nor Hegel do so. And, as I have just been arguing, there is nothing in their historicism which entails that they should. Of course there are certain minimal needs which all human beings share simply as human beings, regardless of their particular society or place in history. And of course these can be used as the foundation for a set of universal values to the effect that people do not want to be starved, tortured, or otherwise seriously abused or harmed.<sup>5</sup>

All too frequently in the world today even these minimal needs are not met. Even in the wealthy industrial nations there is a high incidence of serious material deprivation and need. An indictment of contemporary social conditions need go no further than this. A social critique can be based simply on the fact that, despite the enormous productive power which has been developed under capitalism, a

considerable proportion of the world's population still lives in conditions of poverty, disease and ignorance. Such a critique does not need to invoke any special values. It does not need to appeal to anything beyond the most evident and obvious universal needs and features of human nature in order to ground its condemnation of capitalism.<sup>6</sup>

Much socialist social criticism takes this form; and there is no reason to find fault with it for this. Of course capitalism should be condemned for failing to meet the most basic and minimal human needs. But if social criticism is based on these alone it is confined to the lowest common denominator of requirements for bare life; and it is important to see that the Marxist historical approach, and the critique of capitalism and concept of socialism which flows from it, involves much more than this.

For Marxism does embody a distinctive moral perspective. This is based upon a humanist ideal which goes far beyond the minimal naturalistic idea of a condition in which basic needs are satisfied. For beyond that, Marxism envisages a society in which human beings can fully develop and realize their powers and capacities, an unalienated society which promotes all-round human development. This involves an ideal of the fullest possible development of human powers and potentialities, the vision of the human being 'rich in needs'.

Moreover, the historical approach does not lead to a crippling relativism which rules out the possibility of such a humanist moral perspective, as writers like Geras and Cohen and so many others suggest. On the contrary, as I shall now argue, Marx's humanist vision is a historically specific one which is based on and arises out of his account of the historical development of human nature.

### Human flourishing

Many philosophers have been influenced and inspired by the humanist themes in Marxism. Although she is not a Marxist, Martha Nussbaum may serve as a currently influential example. In fact, the main inspiration for her work comes from Aristotle. Following Aristotle's dictum that human beings seek not just 'life', but the 'good life', she argues for a broad humanist conception of human nature which is not confined to mere survival needs (Nussbaum 1992, 1995).

Nussbaum also takes issue with 'anti-humanist' and 'anti-essentialist' arguments of the sort put forward by philosophers such as Rorty. Like Geras, she maintains that we must hang on to an essentialist concept of universal human nature—a trans-cultural and transhistorical concept of human being and human functioning—if



we are to retain any grounding for ethical values which have application beyond our own particular local situation.<sup>7</sup>

She attempts to specify such a concept of human nature by listing what she claims are the ten ‘most basic human needs and human functions’ (Nussbaum 1992:205). These range from ‘being able to live to the end of a complete life’, to ‘being able to live one’s own life and nobody else’s’. These are presented as universal features of human nature which are to provide criteria for assessing social and political institutions across cultures and historical epochs.

The needs and functions that she lists, as she acknowledges, are specified only very vaguely and often in evaluative terms. What constitutes a ‘complete life’, for example, is not spelled out in any detail. The list is an attempt to give what she calls a ‘thick vague theory of the good’ (ibid.: 214), and it is supposed to provide the basis for a universal account of human flourishing.

Nussbaum is aware that our needs and powers are always satisfied in particular and specific social and historical conditions, by which they are formed and modified. Her account, she claims, is capable of acknowledging the facts of human historical variation and cultural difference. Thus the items on her list are described in a way that ‘allows in its very design for the possibility of multiple specifications of each of the components’ (ibid.: 224). For example, according to Nussbaum, individual autonomy is a dimension of human functioning which must be catered for in all human societies, but different societies have different ways of doing so.

That human beings have needs and capabilities beyond those of mere biological survival—i.e. ‘higher’ needs—is surely true (as I have argued in Chapter 2 above). At a sufficient level of vagueness and abstraction such needs may be regarded as human universals. As in the case of our more basic material needs, there is no reason why a historicist theory like Marxism should deny this; and, indeed, it does not do so. However, this universal aspect must not be regarded in isolation as a pure timeless essence, for human nature is also something which has developed historically. ‘As everything natural must *come into being*, so man also has his process of origin in *history*.... History is the true natural history of man’ (Marx 1844a:391).<sup>8</sup>

As Nussbaum stresses, the basic capacities which she describes are realized differently in different societies and different historical epochs. They have what she calls ‘multiple specifications’. Given this, it is doubtful whether her list of universal human needs and capabilities can provide the determinate criterion for values that she claims for it. Once all specific local differences have been abstracted

away, the resulting universal is so vague and general that it is no use either as a ground for social explanation or as a criterion of value. For this, as with the basic material needs discussed above, what is required is a notion of concrete needs and capacities as they have developed and been realized in social individuals who are the product of a specific society at a particular period.

Here again then, the historicist approach, properly understood, does not deny that there are universal human characteristics of the sort that Nussbaum describes; and indeed it would be a mistake to do so. The historicist criticism is, rather, that the essentialist account of human nature, so far from providing a determinate basis for values as it claims to be able to do, is too abstract and general to fulfil this role. Conversely, the historicist approach does not undermine the possibility of a criterion of moral values, as Nussbaum suggests. On the contrary, it alone can provide a determinate and specific basis for them.

A frequent criticism of the historicist approach is that it leads to relativism and makes any cross-cultural judgements impossible. According to Nussbaum, for example, the historical approach makes it impossible for outsiders to criticize taboos and other such practices in other cultures, even when these obstruct the treatment of diseases like smallpox which can be cured by Western medical techniques. For such criticism, she argues, must rely on an appeal to universal standards which the historical account denies (often in the name of the need to respect cultural 'difference').

Again we must be careful not to throw out the baby with the bath water. There may be forms of anti-essentialism around which have such implications, and Nussbaum is right to criticize them as she does.<sup>9</sup> To repeat, however, Marxism is not among them; and there are no grounds for the suggestion that all forms of historicism just as such must necessarily lead to these absurdities. It is simply an error to believe that in order to defend the view that life and health are universal human values, it is necessary to reject what is one of Marx's most fundamental and fertile insights in social theory: the social and historical character of human nature.

### **The conventionalist account of society**

Marxism, then, involves a Hegelian historicist approach. This is not mere 'anti-humanism'. It does not reject the notion of universal human nature. So far from being mere scepticism, it is rather a form of humanism which gives moral values a realistic social and historical foundation. However, many people will be sceptical of the very idea

that any sort of stable foundations can be found in the social and historical realm. For social and historical phenomena, it is often thought, are conventional, changeable and arbitrary.

A conception of social relations as purely conventional is at work here, which is intimately associated with the essentialist conception of human nature that I have been criticizing. Indeed, these are simply different sides of the same coin. Both result from a rigid and exclusive distinction between the natural and the social. On the one side this creates the idea of a universal human nature not subject to social variation, as we have seen. On the other side it leads to the view that social relations transcend the natural world and are purely conventional and arbitrary: the products of pure unfettered will.

This 'conventionalist' picture of social relations has exercised a profound and enduring influence on Western thought. It can be traced back to the Sophists, who used it to cast sceptical doubt on the Platonic and Aristotelian notion of a natural social order; and it has dominated modern liberal social theory since the Enlightenment. Perhaps the clearest expression of it is in traditional social contract theory. This rejects the ancient and feudal notion of a predetermined or God-given social order and holds that society is a human creation—the outcome of human agreement or contract—made according to human will and changeable by human decision.

Negatively, as critique of the notion of a fixed social order, this marks a great step forward in social understanding; but its positive theory, that social relations are simply matters of convention and choice, is less satisfactory. This at least is the view of Hegel and Marx, who both hold, though in different ways, that social relations and historical change are governed by laws and principles of their own.

The aim of Marx's theory of history is to give a philosophical account of these principles. The basic terms of this theory are well known. In accordance with the materialistic approach already described, forms of social life are conceived in economic terms, as modes of production (Marx 1859). The specific character of social relations at any particular time is not a matter of mere convention or choice. It is determined, 'in the last instance', by the level of the development of the productive forces.

Are men free to choose this or that form of society for themselves? By no means. Assume a particular level of development of men's productive forces and you will get a particular form of commerce and consumption...a corresponding social system...a political system appropriate

to it.... It is superfluous to add that men are not free to choose their productive forces—which are the basis of all their history—for every productive force is an acquired force, the product of former activity.

(Marx 1846:156)

Or, more pithily, ‘the hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill society with the capitalist’ (Marx 1847a:95).

This is a bold and sweeping generalization designed to summarize the central theme of Marx’s materialism. In the present context, however, some qualification of it is required. For it would clearly be wrong to suggest that human will and choice never play any role in the determination of social relations. Of course they do.

According to the historicist account, however, the ability to exercise will and choice in social matters is one which has changed and developed historically. Contrary to the social contract picture and enlightenment social theory more generally, the capacity for conscious social and historical activity is not a timeless human universal. It is one which develops historically through a process in which human beings acquire the ability to become aware of the forces governing their social lives and to exercise some control over them, rather than being at their mercy.

Initially, at least, social relations are not the result of ‘convention’ or agreement. In the main, rather, they are the outcome of habitual and customary modes of activity. These evolve, gradually and by mostly unconscious processes, in response to material and social pressures which are often beyond human control. Only gradually and still very partially are these processes being brought within human social control.

The conventionalist account of social relations thus has things upside down. It sees the human will as the cause of social phenomena, whereas it is a result of historical development, still realized only partially and imperfectly. It thus portrays what is in fact a specific and particular historical phenomenon as a universal and eternal feature of human nature; and what is in reality an aspiration and an ideal as something already present and actual.

### **The growth of human powers**

According to the historicist account, then, human nature develops with the growth of human productive power. Such growth and development have certainly been uneven, with periods of regression

as well as periods of advance. Nevertheless, it seems clear that in the longer term human history has, as a matter of fact, witnessed a growth of human productive powers.<sup>10</sup> Why this has been so and what value we are to put on it are more difficult questions.

The idea that an inherent tendency towards economic development is the result of universal human nature is a familiar one. It is embodied in the utilitarian assumptions of the classical political economists. Man is a rational economic agent: *homo economicus*. Cohen puts the basic tenets of this outlook clearly and attributes them to Marx: human beings are 'somewhat rational' and they are subject to 'compelling' and, it would seem, ever expanding needs (Cohen 1978:152).

Such views are quite foreign to Marxism, which does not attempt to derive its account of history from universal human nature in this way. As I have been arguing, Marxism gives a historical account of human nature, human needs and, indeed, human rationality.<sup>11</sup> If history is a result of the operation of human nature (as it is), then human nature is also a result of history. Social, productive activity leads to the development of human nature, which in turn leads to new forms of productive activity. In Lichtman's words, 'we are simultaneously the subject and object of our own activity', we are 'self-constituting' beings, we make ourselves (Childe 1941; Lichtman 1990:14).

There is a dialectical process here, a process of interaction between social activity and human nature in which neither is fixed and unchanging, and in which both enter into a process of development and are transformed. In the Hegelian view this is a rational process, a teleological process. For according to Hegel, history is the process of the coming of spirit to self-consciousness and freedom, the progressive realization of reason. Historical development, for Hegel, is aimed towards an end. That end is present throughout the process as its determining purpose and goal; and progress towards it can be measured by the degree to which the process approximates to its end.

There can be no doubt that Marx was strongly influenced by this Hegelian and teleological picture of history. His fascination with it is evident throughout his work.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, Marxism need not involve a teleological account of history. Indeed, as I have been interpreting it, it gives a materialistic and causal explanation of the fundamental processes of history in which teleology plays no part. And it portrays the growth of human powers as a purely contingent outcome of these processes.

This is the account that Marx too gives in his more considered moments. In these, he explicitly rejects the Hegelian teleological outlook and portrays historical change as the result of the conflict

between the forces and relations of production. In so far as history does, as a matter of fact, move in the direction of increasing economic development and 'civilization', this is not its motive force. '*History does nothing...[it] is not, as it were, a person apart, using man as a means to achieve its own aims; history is nothing but the activity of man pursuing his aims*' (Marx and Engels 1844:93).

What Marx calls the 'civilizing mission' (Marx 1894:819) of capitalism consists in the fact that, by promoting the development of modern industry, it is creating the forces which will eventually lead to its own downfall and producing the conditions for socialism. But this is neither its aim nor its purpose. Rather, it is merely the blind and 'involuntary' result of a system the immediate aim of which is the maximization of profit (Marx and Engels 1848:45). Moreover, although socialism is the conscious goal of the socialist movement, this movement is also engendered by the causal forces at work in capitalist society.

### Human development as a value

Marxism is not only a theory of history, it is also a political programme. It does not simply predict the advent of socialism, it is committed to socialism as a goal and an ideal. It regards the development towards socialism in moral terms as a progress in 'civilization'.

As I have been stressing, the progress involved here cannot be understood in teleological terms. It is not a matter of approaching ever closer to some predetermined end point or ideal. Indeed the very notion of a final human end must be rejected. There is no absolute ideal of 'full human development' or self-realization or whatever, in terms of which historical progress can be assessed.

In this respect, Marx's account of history can be compared to Darwin's theory of evolution. Biological evolution follows a progressive path (or so Darwin and many biologists believe), but it is not a teleological process aimed at an end. The Darwinian explanation of evolution is a causal one, framed in terms of mutations followed by a process of natural selection. Evolutionary progress is not measured by approximation to an end; its criterion is purely relative. That the human being is a more highly evolved species than the ape implies no universal standard of evolutionary success, no end point towards which evolution is aimed. It is a purely relative judgement, made in terms of increasing complexity, adaptability and differentiation of function.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, historical progress can be assessed only relatively. In so far as it has been achieved, what can be said is that, relative to previous conditions, the present situation constitutes an improvement as judged by the standards of current needs; and that relative to the situation now, and on the basis of current needs, socialism would constitute an improvement in the future (cf. Chapter 8 above). These judgements are based on human nature as it has developed historically and as it exists currently. They are inescapably historical and relative. But no more absolute or universal standards are available, and they are valid and useful for all that.

### Historical humanism

On this account, Marxism judges human social and moral development in terms of its impact on the growth of human nature—of human powers, capacities and needs. Its central moral notion is one of human well being, which is spelled out in terms of notions of self-development and self-realization. It is thus a form of naturalism and humanism which shares a considerable amount of common ground with other such philosophies. However, it is important to see that Marx's idea of self-development is very different from traditional hedonist or utilitarian notions of happiness in terms of which Marxism is often interpreted and which are likely to be more familiar to English-speaking readers.

In the hedonist view, needs are regarded as a negative feature of human life. To be in need is to be suffering a lack, it is to be in a state of tension or pain. Happiness comes from the satisfaction of need and the relief of that tension. Marx's notion is very different. Human fulfilment, it implies, consists not simply in the satisfaction of existing needs (although of course it includes that), but also in the development of new needs. Fulfilment is not a condition in which all needs are stilled; rather it is a matter of developing a wealth of needs and desires. Paradoxical as it at first seems, the ideal is the human being 'rich in needs'. For on Marx's view this is equivalent to the development of human powers and capacities, the development of human nature.

It can be seen how the *rich man* and the *wealth of human* need take the place of the *wealth* and *poverty* of political economy. The *rich* man is simultaneously the man *in need*

of a totality of vital human expression; he is the man in whom his own realization exists as inner necessity, as need.  
(Marx 1844a:356)<sup>14</sup>

In other words, Marx's moral ideal is of the fullest possible human development. This idea—that true human wealth consists in the development of human nature—is expressed in a particularly visionary passage from the *Grundrisse* as follows:

What is wealth other than the universality of individual needs, capacities, pleasures, productive forces etc., created through universal exchange? The full development of human mastery over the forces of nature, those of so-called nature as well as of humanity's own nature? The absolute working out of his creative potentialities, with no presupposition other than the previous historic development, which makes this totality of development, i.e. the development of all human powers as such the end in itself, not as measured on a *predetermined* yardstick?

(Marx 1858:488)<sup>15</sup>

In capitalism, by contrast, 'this complete working out of the human content appears as a complete emptying-out, this universal objectification as total alienation, and the tearing-down of all limited, one-sided aims as sacrifice of the human end-in-itself to an external end' (Marx 1858:488).

These criticisms are clearly made from a humanist perspective. Capitalism is being condemned for its inhuman effects: for stunting human life and hindering the development of human powers and capacities (particularly but not exclusively those of the working class). But the standard which is being applied here—the conception of human nature which is being appealed to—is not a universal or transhistorical one. The judgement being made is not solely in terms of universal human needs, but also of needs and capacities which have been made possible and developed by the gigantic growth of productive power under capitalism itself.

The charge against capitalism is that human powers and capacities which have been developed by capitalism itself have become forces of alienation and oppression. As Marx says elsewhere,

In our days everything seems pregnant with its contrary.  
Machinery, gifted with the wonderful power of shortening



and fructifying human labour, we behold starving and overworking it. The new fangled sources of wealth by some strange weird spell, are turned into sources of want.... At the same pace that mankind masters nature, man seems to become enslaved to other men and to his own infamy.

(Marx 1856:359)

Marx's vision of socialism is of an unalienated society in which these 'wonderful powers'—the enormous productive resources of modern industry developed under capitalism—are used for the satisfaction of human needs and the all-round development of human nature.

Marxism thus involves a historical account of human needs and human nature, and this gives concrete and specific historical content to its notion of human fulfilment. This historical account of human nature and human needs does not undermine its account of moral values, as so many recent writers maintain. Quite the contrary, it is the essential basis for the Marxist conception of socialism, and the essential realistic and materialistic basis for its moral vision.

### **Productivism and the environmental crisis**

Nowadays there is much scepticism about this vision. Marx's 'productivist' faith in the progressive results of the development of the productive forces, it is said, has become untenable and outdated in a world which is faced with the threat of immanent environmental catastrophe.<sup>16</sup>

Marxism is, indeed, a form of 'productivism' in that it holds that the development of the productive forces is the main path to the development of human nature and hence a primary human value. However, that is not to say that Marxism advocates the development of the productive forces come what may, regardless of their environmental impact. That would be absurd.

In the past, it is true, Marxists were often slow to recognize the importance of environmental issues in their own right. They tended to subordinate these issues to a social and political critique of capitalism. Environmentally destructive industrial development, they argued, is due primarily to the operation of the free market, which is driven by an anarchic scramble for short-term profit. Long-term planning of industrial development to meet wider human and environmental needs is possible only when the market is curbed and economic forces are brought under social control.

Such arguments are sometimes taken to suggest that it is capitalism and the free market *rather than* industry which is responsible for the destruction of the environment. However, the antithesis here is a false one. It is not a matter of either/or. The critique of the market, though valid and vital, is not sufficient; and it need involve no denial of the reality of environmental concerns.<sup>17</sup>

Beyond that, however, it is sometimes argued that the theory of Marxism is incapable of acknowledging the reality of environmental issues since it cannot accommodate the notion that there are natural, environmental limits to economic growth (Walker 1979; Ryle 1988; Benton 1989, 1992; Grundmann 1991; Hayward 1995). This is similar to the charge, discussed above, that Marxism cannot recognize the existence of objective limits to the plasticity of human nature. And a similar response applies: the charge is without foundation. Properly understood, Marxism is a form of realism and materialism which starts from a recognition of objective, material limits in non-human as well as in human nature. Thus Marx insists that his theory of history starts from 'individuals...as they *really* are, i.e...as they operate, produce materially and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independent of their will' (Marx and Engels 1845:46–7).

Natural limits have always existed, and human beings have been coming up against them in their productive activity from the very earliest times. Indeed, it seems likely that prehistoric peoples hunted mammoths and a number of other species to extinction (Jones 1993:158–64). Marx and Engels were perfectly familiar with facts such as these (Walker 1979; Grundmann 1991). However, they were writing at a time when industrial development was not as great as now, and environmental issues did not loom as large as they now do. For until recently, human productive power has seemed puny and insignificant in its effects on the natural environment. Its impact was absorbed and lost in nature's vastness. Nature was looked upon as something alien: as an infinite and uncontrollable phenomenon, sometimes benign, at other times hostile and dangerous. It was regarded as entirely external and other to the human social world.

What is new in recent years is the enormous development of industry and the scale of its environmental impact, which is now global rather than merely local. Attitudes towards nature have been changing rapidly as a result. The threat posed by human industrial and social activity to the environment is now palpable. It is quite evident that the natural environment is not limitless, but on the contrary fragile and endangered by our activity.

What is new, then, is the scale of our impact on the natural environment and the problems this is creating. In earlier periods, when natural limits were exceeded and the natural basis of an old form of production destroyed, new forms of production were developed. When the mammoths were killed off prehistoric people learned to hunt other animals. Now, however, the scale of environmental destruction is so great, it is often argued, that such a 'technological fix' is not feasible (Trainer 1985: ch. 10) We cannot go on producing and consuming as we are at present in the wealthier parts of the world (let alone extend these to the poorer parts of the world) without threatening the very survival of human life on earth.

These are very real and urgent issues. No serious version of Marxism holds otherwise. It is a travesty to suggest that Marxism is a blind sort of 'productivism' which advocates the development of the productive forces come what may. Of course, productive activity, like every other human power, can be used for harm as well as for good. As I have been explaining, Marxism advocates the growth of the productive forces as the avenue to human self-development and self-realization. If a particular form of production threatens the environment and the very possibility of human life, then it is not valuable in these terms and should be curbed.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, Marxism *is* a form of productivism. It does maintain that the development of human productive power is the avenue to the development of human nature and thus a primary human and social value. And it rejects the romantic distrust of economic development, which has been a strong strand of much recent Green thought. According to this, the growth of human powers and the development of 'civilization' more generally have brought no good to humankind. We would be better off in simpler, less civilized and developed conditions.<sup>19</sup>

Marxism rejects such romantic pessimism. Although there can be no doubt that industrial development has often been humanly harmful, it is not always or necessarily so. Potentially, at least, the powers acquired through the development of production are a human good which can be used for human good. The challenge now is to develop and use these powers, consciously realizing the constraints of the natural environment, for human good. Marxism does not despair of the possibility of this and hanker after a romantic return to simpler conditions. Nor does it deny the reality and urgency of these issues. On the contrary, it provides what still remains the most comprehensive and illuminating framework in which they can be addressed and thought through.

# APPENDIX: GORZ ON WORK AND LIBERATION

Work is and always has been a central human activity; but only since the 1980s has it again become a major political issue. It has taken the re-emergence of mass unemployment to make it so. Even during the Great Depression of the 1930s and right up until the Second World War, the view that mass unemployment is intolerable in a civilized society was confined mainly to the left. However, the war required full economic mobilization, and the major industrial societies emerged from it committed to policies of full employment. The idea that work is a basic human need and right became a central part of the post-war political consensus. It was enshrined even in the United Nations 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' of 1948, Article 23.1 of which states that 'everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.'

In recent years, however, these ideas have increasingly been questioned—not only on the right, where they have always aroused suspicion and mistrust, but also on the left. One of the most important and interesting of these left critics is André Gorz. In a series of lively and thought-provoking books, he has challenged traditional socialist thinking in this area and helped to set a new agenda for debate (Gorz 1982, 1983, 1985). In his *Critique of Economic Reason* (1989) he extends this project, but also modifies it in some significant respects.

## The future of work

Gorz's basic position is now well known even to those who have not read anything he has written, since it has become part of the mainstream of debate about the future of work in industrial society. The introduction of new technology, according to Gorz, is leading to

a situation in which the old goal of full-time employment for all is no longer either possible or desirable. 'The social process of production no longer needs everyone to work in it on a full-time basis. The work ethic is no longer viable' (Gorz 1989:220).

The new technology has an enormous potentiality to reduce hours of work; but present policies, still oriented to the goal of full-time employment, are not having that effect. Rather, they are leading to the polarization of society into a core of well paid professionals in stable full-time work on the one side and, on the other, a growing number of people who are either in peripheral, insecure, servile, part-time jobs, or who are unemployed, marginalized and effectively excluded from social participation. What is required is a fundamental rethinking of the place of work in human life.

The full development of individuals can be achieved only through a 'liberation from work', where by 'work' Gorz means quite specifically a job, employment, 'work for economic ends'. Such work, he insists, is a mere means to earning a living. In modern industrial conditions, it cannot be a satisfying or self-realizing activity: it cannot be humanized, it is necessarily and ineliminably alienating. Such work must be reduced, and 'free time'—'time for living'—expanded, so that people can engage in various forms of productive and creative activity outside the economic sphere. In his previous books, Gorz puts particular stress on the importance of 'autonomous activities': that is, activities which are not primarily aimed at meeting needs, but which are ends in themselves, such as voluntary activities in the community, hobbies and artistic activities.

These are the views that Gorz defends in *Farewell to the Working Class* and *Paths to Paradise*. There are still many echoes of these views in his more recent work (Gorz 1989: part I). In some important respects, however, Gorz seems to be moving away from them and to be developing a line of thought which conflicts with them. The most dramatic change is in his views about the place of employment in human life. In the earlier books, employment was portrayed as an entirely negative phenomenon. The suggestion almost seemed to be that people should welcome unemployment as a 'liberation from work', particularly if no serious loss of income is involved. In line with this, in *Paths to Paradise*, Gorz flirts with the idea of a guaranteed income.

With or without a guaranteed income, however, there is an overwhelming body of evidence to show that people do not welcome unemployment. Gorz now recognizes this. Indeed, he even defends the idea that people have a basic 'right to a job'. For paid work in the public sphere, he acknowledges, is the essential basis of economic

citizenship and social inclusion. ‘It is by having *paid* work...that we belong to the public sphere, [and] acquire a social existence and social identity’ (Gorz 1989:13). Moreover, Gorz now firmly rejects the idea of a guaranteed basic income as ‘essentially an *unemployment allowance*’ (ibid.: 238), which amounts to ‘the wages of marginality and exclusion’ (ibid.: 205).

Going along with this, there has also been a significant shift in the direction of Gorz’s political appeal. The previous books were aimed primarily at marginalized and excluded groups: the unemployed, women, etc.—the ‘non-class of non-workers’ as he terms them in *Farewell to the Working Class*. It is these groups who are most oppressed by the dominance of the work ethic and who were to be the new revolutionary subjects of the ‘post-industrial’ age. Common as it is, however, the idea that the most oppressed in society will be the most revolutionary is a fallacy. At any rate, Gorz has given up his hope that these groups will accomplish the revolution he wants to see (ibid.: 92). His appeal is now directed mainly to the goodwill of the labour movement (ibid.: 98).

Gorz’s philosophy still involves a sharp distinction between work in the economic sphere, and other forms of work outside it. That much has remained constant. In the earlier books this contrast was drawn in black and white terms; but his new recognition of the human importance of employment seems to be pointing in a different direction. It suggests a quite different view of the relations of paid work to other forms of creative activity. For it suggests that both sorts of activity have an essential role and value in human life. This new perspective cannot easily be formulated in terms of the oppositions of heteronomy/autonomy, necessity/freedom, which dominate Gorz’s previous works, particularly when these oppositions are interpreted in terms of Gorz’s extreme individualism. New terms are needed.

### **Economic and non-economic reason**

Gorz begins to develop these in *Critique of Economic Reason*. The familiar dualism is still present, but now in the form of a distinction between economic and non-economic rationality. Economic rationality is the rationality of commodity production for the market. It is the rationality governing work which takes the form of a job, employment, work for wages. Work of this kind is purely a means to the end of exchange, of earning a livelihood—it is not undertaken to meet human needs directly, or as an end in itself.

Such work has become the predominant form of work in industrial societies. It is often treated, either explicitly or implicitly, as the sole significant form of work. However, here, as throughout, Gorz stresses that its predominance is relatively recent. There are, and always have been, other forms of productive activity, outside the economic sphere.

As in his previous works, Gorz talks of 'autonomous creative activities', but these now play a much less prominent role in his discussion of non-economic work. This is a welcome change. Gorz's 'autonomous activities' are not primarily aimed to meet needs; they are not part of 'the sphere of necessity': they are free and voluntary. For this reason, it is doubtful whether they should be regarded as forms of work at all. At least, if they are, then the distinction between work and leisure is abandoned, and work becomes synonymous with virtually all conscious and deliberate human activity.

In the present book, Gorz's main focus has shifted to what he terms 'work-for-oneself; that is, work that one does to meet directly one's own needs and those of one's immediate household. This was the normal form of work in earlier forms of society. Even in the modern world it still constitutes a very substantial sphere, not only in the developing world, where peasant agriculture still prevails, but also in the most advanced societies, particularly in housework and child care in the domestic sphere. Such work does not involve the production of commodities for exchange. It is not governed by economic rationality but, Gorz argues, by quite different principles based on personal relations, mutual concern and cooperation.

Gorz is particularly eloquent about the human value and importance of such work.

Work-for-oneself plays an essential role in the creation and demarcation of a private sphere. The latter cannot exist without the former. You can see this very clearly when all the jobs in the domestic sphere are taken over by external services: you cease to be 'at home' in your own house.... Work-for-oneself is, basically *what we have to do to takes possession of ourselves* and of that arrangement of objects which, as both extension of ourselves and mirror of our bodily existence, forms our niche within the sensory world, our private sphere.

(Gorz 1989:158)

This sphere is under threat of extinction. With the development of capitalism and the growth of commodity production, many tasks

which were previously done by the household for itself have been professionalized and converted into paid external services. This process is still continuing. The few remaining areas of creative and productive activity outside the market are being eliminated as more and more areas of work and life are subjected to economic rationalization and the logic of the market.

Traditional forms of work have inbuilt limits. They are governed, as Gorz puts it, by a principle of 'sufficiency'. When one is working for oneself, one produces only what is sufficient to meet one's needs and then one stops. The economic rationality of the market, by contrast, contains no inherent principle of limitation. Quantitatively, its aim is simply to produce the most for the least; unlimited growth becomes its end (Gorz 1989:120ff.). As members of various New Right think tanks keep reminding us, there are no areas of work and life to which economic rationalization cannot in principle be applied. Moreover, as Gorz notes, it is not only the free market right which welcomes this prospect. Until recently at least, most established forms of economic thought, including traditional socialism and Marxism, portrayed the extension of the market as a progressive development.

This must be resisted, Gorz argues: the market must be regulated, controlled, limited. But how? This is the question that Gorz's critique is designed to answer. The terms he uses in it have their immediate source in Weberian sociology, particularly the work of Habermas; but Gorz's project may also usefully be located in relation to the moral and romantic critiques of the 'commercial spirit' of capitalism by such nineteenth-century writers as Carlyle, Ruskin and Morris (Wiener 1985; Jay and Jay 1986). However, like Habermas, and unlike them, Gorz is not altogether opposed to the process of economic rationalization. He does not argue for a return to pre-capitalist conditions. Rather he advocates the *limitation* of the economic sphere, in order to preserve a sphere of personal relations and individual autonomy. The purpose of his critique is to spell out the principles by which this should be done.

According to Gorz, there is a clear and sharp distinction to be drawn between those areas in which the market is a satisfactory and effective form of organization, and those where it is not. The economic rationality of the market, he maintains, is the best and most efficient form for the production of basic material necessities. Indeed, market organization is necessary for the level of material production required in modern society.



### Domestic labour

With capitalism, however, economic rationalization is extended to areas where its impact is counterproductive and destructive. To make this point, Gorz considers two main examples. The first is domestic work: housework and child care. Such activity has been increasingly rationalized during the last 100 years or so. A great deal of the work that used to be done by women in the home as private, 'work-for-one-self', has been transferred into the public sphere. It has been converted into paid services and/or mechanized. At the same time, women have increasingly entered into paid employment in the public sphere.

Gorz's attitude to these developments is ambivalent. On the one hand, as he acknowledges, they have provided the major avenue of women's liberation. Nevertheless, a great deal of domestic work is still done in the home, mostly by women, and often on top of a full-time job. A part of the solution here must be a more equal division of domestic labour between the sexes, as Gorz argues. Many would also argue, however, that further rationalization and socialization of housework is also needed; the process is by no means complete.

Gorz opposes this. Domestic labour, he argues, cannot and should not be further rationalized. Such labour, he insists, is quite different from the instrumental activity of paid employment. It is a form of work which has 'no price, no exchange value...no "utility" and which consequently merges with the satisfaction its performance procures, even if [it] demands effort and fatigue' (Gorz 1989:136). Domestic work should not therefore be regarded as a mere imposition and chore. Rather it should be seen as 'a need and means of winning back a greater degree of personal sovereignty in the form of a greater sense of self-belonging within the private sphere' (*ibid.*: 157).

These views are surely untenable. In the first place, this rosy view of domestic labour is not generally shared by the women who, in the main, have to do it: 70 per cent of housewives, according to one recent study, said that they disliked housework as such (Oakley 1982:173). Moreover, Gorz's arguments on the subject are so sweeping that they offer no criteria for deciding where—if anywhere—the economic rationalization of housework is appropriate, and where it is not.<sup>1</sup> Instead, Gorz suggests that any further rationalization threatens to eliminate the private sphere altogether. But that is not the issue for most people. To be sure, a small number of wealthy people have already accomplished this with the help of servants, boarding schools and so on; but for most others, a great deal of housework is inescapable, and will remain so for the

foreseeable future. Reducing its burdensome aspects, however, would mean that more time at home could be devoted to the more worthwhile and fulfilling aspects of home life. To oppose this on the basis that housework is, or ought to be a 'labour of love', is reactionary and misguided.

### The caring professions

The second area that Gorz discusses raises similar issues. It concerns work which involves an essential element of personal care or assistance, such as that of doctors, teachers and the 'caring professions': nurses, social workers, therapists and the like. For such workers, Gorz argues,

the money they earn should be a *means* of exercising their profession and not its end. Somehow earning a living should not come into the bargain.... These jobs are only done well when they are performed out of a 'sense of vocation', that is, an *unconditional* desire to help other people.

(Gorz 1989:144)

In other words, such work cannot be economically rationalized: like housework and child care, it is governed by a quite different rationality—a rationality of personal care and concern. These two forms of rationality are absolutely opposed and exclusive of each other. 'Commodity relations cannot exist between members of a family or a community—or that community will be dissolved; nor can affection, tenderness and sympathy be bought or sold except when they are reduced to mere simulacra' (Gorz 1989:140–1). For this reason, Gorz argues, activities which involve personal care and concern are best carried out by volunteers. These jobs, he maintains, should be gradually de-professionalized: 'we must rethink all the activities which require us to give of ourselves with a view to developing self-organized, voluntary services' (ibid.: 145).

Much as one may sympathize with the attempt to develop a moral critique of the market, these arguments must be questioned. For it is simply not possible to draw a sharp line between activities which can and cannot be economically rationalized, as Gorz proposes. Gorz's argument that the work of doctors, teachers, and 'carers' relies on personal relations of concern and care which cannot be professionalized is surely false, as is his idea that such work is best organized on a voluntary individual, family or communal basis. These

views involve a gross romanticization of personal and community relations. In reality, such relations are very variable: sometimes they are, as Gorz suggests, warm and caring; but equally they can be bitter and hostile, weak, indifferent or even non-existent. Care and education provided on this basis, just because it depends on such relations—on friendships and family ties—is by its nature haphazard and variable. By making these activities into paid professional services, they can be standardized and regularized. Provision of medical care, education and welfare can be ensured and made universal; minimum standards in these areas can be specified and enforced.

None of this is possible while these activities remain on a purely personal and voluntary basis. That was the traditional way, the precapitalist way; but it has proved entirely incapable of meeting the needs of advanced industrial society. Thus voluntary and personal provision has gradually been replaced in education, health care and in other areas of welfare as well. Moreover, the pure free market has proved equally incapable of meeting these needs. Intervention and organization by the state is required if a satisfactory and universal provision is to be ensured. Thus welfare activity by the state has developed in all advanced industrial societies, not for ideological or political reasons, but because voluntary effort and the free market were both incapable of meeting basic needs.

According to Gorz, the welfare state is an attempt to substitute for 'the decay of social bonds and solidarity' which comes with economic rationalization. However, it can never succeed in this, he argues, 'the welfare state has not been, and never will be, a creator of society' (Gorz 1989:132). That may well be true, but it is beside the point. For what the state *can* provide—which the household or community cannot—is a satisfactory level of educational, medical and welfare services.

No doubt, as Gorz says, there are tensions and conflicts between the instrumental character of wage labour and the essential purpose of work in these areas, with which anyone who has worked in them will be familiar. These conflicts frequently interfere with and frustrate the relationships which such work requires; but they do not usually render care and concern impossible. However, with the professionalization of these activities, the character of that care and concern *is* altered. It loses its purely personal character, and becomes *universal*. As a doctor, teacher or social worker one cannot attend only to those with whom one happens to have a personal relation, one must attend to *all* of those in one's care. Such a universal attitude of care is quite different from the personal and family feelings which

Gorz so values. So far from being incompatible with professionalization, it is the outcome of it. Ideally, perhaps, caring (in common with other forms of work) would be undertaken voluntarily, and not just because it is the requirement of one's job; but it is an illusion to believe that this was the way in a bygone age, in some previous condition of 'natural' cooperation and mutual concern which capitalism has destroyed. On the contrary, this is an ideal for the future, and the way to it lies in and through professionalization.

In the present political climate, moreover, the idea of replacing professional with voluntary services is not merely mistaken, it is positively dangerous. For exactly the same ideas are voiced by the Thatcherite right in their attempt to dismantle the welfare state. Gorz disclaims any such intention; but it is difficult to read his philosophy in any other way.

### Economically rational work

Now let me turn to the other pole of Gorz's dualism—the sphere of work that can be economically rationalized, the sphere of material production. Gorz's account of this is equally questionable. For such work, Gorz maintains, is the absolute, polar opposite of caring work—it excludes any element of personal concern or involvement; it is *merely* a means to the end of earning a livelihood.

Widespread as such views are, they are surely mistaken. A measure of care and involvement is a part of all but the most routine and alienating sorts of work. Indeed, what is remarkable is the extent to which people *need* involvement in and satisfaction from their work, and the ways in which they manage to find it even in the most dreary and repetitive of jobs (Terkel 1977). This is not just the view of starry-eyed idealists or old style Marxists. It is also the view of an influential school of management thinking, which knows that people can be involved in their work; that they work best when they are; and which tries to 'enrich' jobs accordingly (*Work in America* 1973). No doubt conflicts and tensions inherent in the work situation often frustrate and nullify such schemes; but that should not be allowed to obscure the essential philosophical point here. It is simply wrong to believe that work for wages must necessarily be nothing but an alien and purely instrumental activity.

In short, it is not possible to draw a sharp distinction between activities which can and cannot be economically rationalized. It is not therefore possible to preserve the private sphere by specifying limits to the market, as Gorz proposes. Gorz claims that his is the

socialist approach. For he defines socialism, in terms taken from Polanyi, as ‘the subordination of the economy to society’ (Gorz 1989:130). True, views like these are currently influential on the left; nevertheless they are very different from socialism as traditionally understood. Indeed, the whole strategy of trying to defend a personal and private sphere by restricting the public and economic sphere is characteristic of liberal individualism. Gorz’s version, moreover, is conservative and even backward-looking, for its aim is to limit or reverse economic development.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to suggest that there is nothing in Gorz’s position. Undoubtedly it reflects a common experience. Alienation from work and the public sphere is a familiar feature of modern life. There are many people who get little from their jobs, who despair of finding any satisfaction in the public sphere, and who decide their best hope lies in a retreat into the private world of the home and family. However, this is a despairing philosophy, and it is an illusion to believe that it offers any real answers.

The home may sometimes serve as a refuge, as a ‘haven in a heartless world’, but it can never adequately compensate or substitute for the heartlessness and alienation of the public world. For we are essentially social beings, and if we give up hope of a satisfactory social sphere, we cut ourselves off from an essential and vitally necessary sphere of activity and potential fulfilment.

Socialism is the very opposite of this. It does not seek to *limit* the economy, it is not opposed to economic development. Rather it seeks to control and organize such development in the interests of working people. Traditionally, it has been a progressive philosophy, which criticizes the backward-looking romanticism of writers like Gorz. For, unlike Gorz, it does not regard work and other activity in the public sphere as inevitably alienating. It does not regard the split between the economic and the personal, between the public and private spheres, as eternal and unchangeable. These divisions, it believes, are historical and changeable; and the way beyond them is forward.

# NOTES

## 1 INTRODUCTION: HUMAN NATURE AS A HISTORICAL PHENOMENON

- 1 Unfortunately the criticisms of White (1997a, 1997b) have come to my attention too late for discussion of them to be included here.
- 2 Gorz was closely associated with Sartre in earlier years (Little 1996: ch. 1; Lodziak and Tatman 1997: ch. 1).
- 3 'Only in community with others has each individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; only in the community, therefore, is personal freedom possible' (Marx and Engels 1845:83).
- 4 This is not the universal view on the left. Some Marxists maintain that since Soviet communism was not 'truly socialist', its demise has no relevance for Marxism and no rethinking of Marxism is required (Collier 1994:9). This response is an example of the utopian and moral approach that I criticize in Chapter 6 (see also Sayers 1990a).

## 2 TWO CONCEPTS OF HUMAN FULFILMENT

- 1 Mill supported universal suffrage, but with a number of significant and noteworthy exceptions. 'It is wholly inadmissible', he writes, 'that any person should participate in the suffrage without being able to read, write, and, I will add, perform the common operations of arithmetic' (Mill 1861:280), and he suggested that a simple test be given to prospective voters to ensure that they had these skills (as used to be done in places like Alabama, with the predictable result that whole sections of the population were excluded from the vote). Moreover, Mill would have excluded from voting those who paid no taxes; and also anyone who had received welfare support during the previous five years, on the grounds that 'he who cannot by his labour suffice for his own support...abdicates his claim to equal rights in other respects' (ibid.: 282). That poverty, unemployment and so on might have been anything other than wilfully self-imposed conditions, seems not to have occurred to Mill. The 'old tough-minded' utilitarian spirit was not, it seems, entirely gone from his thought.

- 2 The division of labour offers us the first example of how...man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him. For as soon as the distribution of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape.... This fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up till now.  
(Marx and Engels 1845:53)
- 3 The contrast between 'consumer' and 'producer' morality is made by Georges Sorel (1961: ch. 7). However, he uses the terms to develop a romantic philosophy, rather different from the ideas I am expressing here.
- 4 'Labour...is the prime basic condition for all human existence, and this to such an extent that, in a sense, we have to say that labour created man himself' (Engels 1876:80).

### 3 THE NEED TO WORK

- 1 This view is familiar in the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, who both write from the point of view of slave owners in a society based upon slavery. However, these attitudes are echoed in more recent writing (Mill 1863; Arendt 1958; cf. Chapter 1 above). An important strand of medieval social thought about work tended to portray it as an unwanted necessity—the curse to which mankind was subjected at the time of the fall. However, there are also other and more positive aspects to this tradition. It is perhaps too simple to suggest, like Anthony (1978), that the 'ideology of work' is a distinctively modern phenomenon which emerges only with Protestantism; but there are surely some grounds for the view that work is given a distinctive moral emphasis in the modern era.
- 2 Lenin was well aware of this. 'It must be very clear to everybody', he wrote,

that we, i.e. our society, our social system, are still a very long way from the application of *this* (i.e. the communist) form of labour on a broad, really mass scale.... It will take many years, decades, to create a new labour discipline, new forms of social ties between people, and new forms and methods of drawing people into labour.

(Lenin 1920:289)

### 4 THE ROLE OF LEISURE

- 1 cf. Bacon's dictum, 'nature [cannot] be commanded except by being obeyed' (Bacon 1960:29).

- 2 It should be noted that Simone Weil here portrays the effects of work as primarily *negative* in character, as a matter of 'self-discipline', whereas Marx, as we shall see, is more conscious of the positive, self-developing aspects of labour.
- 3 'Hunting and fishing, the most important employments of mankind in the rude state of society, become in its most advanced state their most agreeable amusements, and they pursue for pleasure what they once followed from necessity' (Adam Smith 1776, quoted in Pagano 1985:21).
- 4 The central character in Somerset Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence* comes to mind. Maugham is supposed to have based him on Gauguin.
- 5 Objective and external demands are sometimes a necessary stimulus to creative activity. Writers often feel that they need a deadline—an external and even coercive demand—to unleash their pens.

## 5 ALIENATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- 1 Similarly, according to Engels, 'that the situation of the worker has become materially worse since the introduction of capitalist production on a large scale is doubted only by the bourgeois' (Engels 1873:564). The whole issue of whether there was a decline in the standard of living for working people in Britain during the industrial revolution has been a subject of extensive debate among economic historians (Hobsbawm 1964: chs 5–7; Thompson 1980: Part 2).
- 2 'The English working men are the first-born sons of modern industry... they are as much the invention of modern time[s] as machinery itself (Marx 1856:300).

## 6 THE ACTUAL AND THE RATIONAL

- 1 The German term that Hegel uses is *Begriff* which is translated by Wallace as 'notion' and by Knox as 'concept'.
- 2 Evidence for Heine's suggestion has come to light in an earlier draft of Hegel's lectures on the *Philosophy of Right* (Hegel 1818:134; Sayers 1997).

## 7 ANALYTICAL MARXISM AND MORALITY

- 1 Useful brief summaries of the history of these controversies are contained in Lukes (1985) and Kolakowski (1978). Geras (1985) surveys the analytical debate.
- 2 This view is usually associated with the name of R Hilferding. More recently, versions of it have been defended by Collier (1981) and Nielsen (1987).
- 3 Greatly over optimistic ideas about how rapidly the state would 'wither away' under 'actually existing' socialism have, I believe, been largely responsible for the disregard of issues of legality and rights by many Marxists (Sayers 1990a).
- 4 This argument goes back to the debates at the beginning of the century: see Lukes (1985: ch. 2) and Kolakowski (1978: vol. 2). The most



influential presentation of it remains Popper (1966: ch. 22). See Chapter 8 below for further discussion.

- 5 Indeed, Popper raises important difficulties for this whole approach, to which there are no clearcut answers, either in Marx's work or elsewhere. I make this point explicitly, lest I be accused of ignoring it. However, an exploration of these issues is beyond my present scope.
- 6 Some of the problems and confusion caused by the language of 'dehumanization' are evident here. For despite what Marx appears to say at the end of this quote, it is quite clear that he does not mean to suggest that the impact of industry is entirely negative. Marx's idea of socialism would be an impossible utopia were it so.
- 7 Even so, what constitutes 'subsistence needs' is by no means an unproblematic or self-evident matter.

## 8 MORAL VALUES AND PROGRESS

- 1 cf. Hegel's view that the 'actual is rational' does not preclude the 'existence' of irrationality (Hegel 1830:9–10), discussed in Chapter 6 above.
- 2 At times, Marx appears to describe this pattern of historical development in ideological terms, as a process which is aimed at an end. There is no doubt that he was attracted to this Hegelian way of thinking. A good account of these themes is given in Elster 1985: ch. 2 section 4. However, the main lines of his theory of history are not ideological. Not only does he explicitly repudiate the ideological approach; more importantly, he gives an account of historical development which is causal rather than ideological in form. In what follows I shall assume that his theory of history is not a ideological one.
- 3 'The history of industry is the open book of the essential powers of man.... Up to now, this history has not been grasped in its connection with the nature of man, but only in an external utilitarian aspect' (Marx 1844a:354).
- 4 A man does not 'by nature' wish to earn more and more money, but simply to live as he is accustomed to live and to earn as much as is necessary for that purpose. Wherever modern capitalism has begun its work of increasing the productivity of human labour by increasing its intensity, it has encountered the immensely stubborn resistance of this leading trait of pre-capitalist labour.  
(Weber 1905:60; cf. Marx 1858:325–6)
- 5 The same is true, too, of the development of sensuous *needs*.
- 6 Mill (1863: ch. 2) makes a similar point in his discussion of 'higher' and 'lower' pleasures, where he also makes the important point that self-development is a qualitative, not just a quantitative matter; but he does not see that the implications of his arguments are anti-utilitarian. See Chapter 2 above.
- 7 I include women not merely as a gesture of political correctness, but because—contrary to the impression that is often given—Marxism, and particularly Engels, was responsible for some of the pioneering

- theoretical work that underlies modern feminism. Marx standardly refers to humankind in the masculine and, to avoid undue awkwardness of style, I follow him in this.
- 8 It is necessary in that social conflict makes historical development inevitable; and social development beyond the traditional community, Marx argues, must occur in and through capitalism and the alienation it involves (cf. Cohen 1988b: ch. 10). That this constitutes progress relative to traditional communal relations is also Marx's view, as we shall see more fully below. Alienated social relations, he writes, are 'preferable to...a merely local connection resting on blood ties, or on primeval, natural or master-servant relations' (Marx 1858:161).
  - 9 The word of 'imprisonment' is mistaken and misleading here. It is rather that the individual has not yet emerged as autonomous and independent of these definitions and roles, which are still regarded as natural.
  - 10 In such societies,
 

the individual is identified and constituted in and through certain of his or her roles...I confront the world as a member of this family, this household, this clan, this tribe, this city, this nation, this kingdom. There is no 'I' apart from these.

(MacIntyre 1985:160–1)
  - 11 Human beings become individuals only through the process of history. [The individual] appears originally as a species-being, clan being, herd animal.... Exchange itself is a chief means of this individuation. It makes the herd-like existence superfluous and dissolves it.
 

(Marx 1858:496)
  - 12 One of the first writers to understand this clearly was Hegel. He describes the market as a 'system of needs' through which 'the *labour* of the individual for his own needs is just as much a satisfaction of the needs of others as of his own, and the satisfaction of his own needs he obtains only through the labour of others' (Hegel 1807:213).
  - 13 Marx criticizes the 'utopian' socialists for their failure to understand precisely this point. They regarded the human impact of capitalism and modern industry as a purely destructive one which reduced the working class to a downtrodden and degraded mass, 'without any historical initiative or any independent political movement' (Marx and Engels 1848:62). A great deal of contemporary social thought takes a similar line, whether by portraying modern society in a humanist way as purely 'degrading' and 'dehumanizing' (Braverman 1974), or in postmodernist style as an 'iron cage' suppressing and crushing the individual (Weber 1905). Marx, by contrast, believes that capitalism is producing 'its own-grave-diggers' (cf. Chapter 5 above).
  - 14 Universally developed individuals...are no product of nature, but of history. The degree and the universality of the development of wealth where *this* individuality becomes possible supposes production on the basis of exchange values as a prior condition, whose universality produces not only the alienation of the

individual from himself and from others, but also the universality and the comprehensiveness of his relations and capacities.

(Marx 1858:162)

- 15 For Hegel, it should be noted, the sphere of ‘spirit’ is the sphere of society and history. It is interesting to compare this passage with Marx (1858:111) where he talks of ancient Greece as humanity’s stage of ‘innocence’ and ‘childhood’. However, there is no hint of teleology in this passage from Marx, he acknowledges the ‘eternal charm’ of this stage without suggesting a future ‘second harmony’.
- 16 Geras (1985:60f.) questions this interpretation. He argues that Marx means only that *bourgeois* right will be overcome in communist society.
- 17 I am sceptical about this vision of communism, but it was undoubtedly held by Marx.
- 18 Marx specifically repudiates such views in ‘Critique of Gotha Programme’ and elsewhere. Cohen by contrast suggests that common ownership is a natural right. There is equally little basis for attributing this view to Marx.
- 19 Aristotle is not just talking about slave labour but about all ‘mechanical’ occupations, including handicrafts, music and the arts (Aristotle 1941b: Bk 8).
- 20 Notably Kant (1970:123). Engels (1873:565–6) explicitly rejects such a notion of justice as ‘reactionary’. Hegel says, ‘welfare without right is not a good. Similarly, right without welfare is not the good; *fiat justitia* should not be followed by *pereat mundus*’ (1821:87).
- 21 That this is itself now self-evident is also historical and relative. It is an insight arising out of the tradition of social thought inaugurated by Hegel and Marx.
- 22 This is what Marx means when he says, ‘morality, religion, metaphysics, [and] all the rest of ideology...have no history, no development; but men developing their material production and their material inter-course, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking’ (Marx and Engels 1845:47). Engels later adds an important and necessary qualification when he acknowledges that the development of ideas in any particular field can attain a degree of ‘relative autonomy’.
- 23 cf. Engels, ‘then for the first time man, in a certain sense...emerges from mere animal conditions of existence into really human ones.... Only from that time will man himself, more and more consciously, make his own history’ (1878:388–9). See also Carr (1964: chs 5–6).
- 24 This is not to suggest that human development and progress have become universally accepted as values. They have had, and will continue to have, opponents and critics.
- 25 Of course, other views and different values also existed in the ancient world. The Sophists, for example, developed a philosophy of individual self-interest, with affinities to the ideas of Enlightenment liberalism. However, the Sophist philosophy too must be seen as a response to existing economic and social changes. These were undermining the traditional communal order and creating the basis for the individualism that the Sophists welcomed. Nevertheless, in the 5th century BC the conditions for a fully commercial society had not yet developed, and the Sophists

- had no conception of how their social and moral ideas could be realized. In contrast to Enlightenment liberalism, their theories do not attain a positive and programmatic form, but remain negative and sceptical.
- 26 'Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions...distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all previous ones' (Marx and Engels 1848:37).

## 9 MARXISM AND HUMAN NATURE

- 1 This approach is evident in traditional social contract theories which seek to describe how human beings are in the 'state of nature' as distinct from how they become in society, and use the former as a standard of 'natural right'. It is also to be found in utilitarian theories which explain human activity and base values on a hedonist conception of universal human nature.
- 2 Although, as Geras rightly notes,
- of course, as the human species is itself a product of evolution, to refer to constant human make-up, permanent characteristics and so on, is not to talk in absolute terms. But *relatively*, within the temporal range of Marx's historical theory...the idea of permanent and general attributes of man is certainly valid.
- (Geras 1983:90)
- 3 I have insisted upon this explicitly and at length mainly because the historicist position that I am defending is so often said to deny it. On the strength of quotes like those above, Rorty seems to do so, and Geras criticizes him at length in these terms (Geras 1995b). However, Geras also shows that Rorty says much that contradicts this. In his eagerness to discredit historicism he makes little attempt to understand Rorty's position. Geras (1995a) also attacks me for denying the existence of universal human characteristics, though I do not do so. He simply assumes that the historical account of human nature must necessarily exclude the idea of universal characteristics. As we shall see, this is not the case.
- 4 This is the point Marx is making in his well known comments on Bentham's utilitarianism.

To know what is useful for a dog, one must study dog nature. This nature is not to be deduced the principle of utility. Applying this to man, he that would criticise all human actions, movements, relations, etc., by the principle of utility, must first deal with human nature in general, and then with human nature as modified in each historical epoch.

(Marx 1867:609n)

- 5 With a great show of self-righteousness, Geras (1995a) insists on these platitudes in criticism of my arguments in Chapters 7–8 above, as though

I denied them. Of course I do not. Moreover, Geras gives no grounds for his apparent conviction that the historicist position that I am defending implies their denial.

- 6 Cohen describes this sort of approach when he writes that he

thought that socialism was so evidently superior to capitalism from *any* morally decent point of view...that there was no necessity to identify the right point(s) of view from which to endorse it, no need to specify what principle(s) should guide the fight for socialism, and, therefore, no call to do normative philosophy for socialism's sake.

(Cohen 1995:3)

- 7 Or rather, she presupposes this, almost unconsciously it seems. Without any argument, she slides from the claim that we need a 'determinate' conception of human nature to ground values, to the claim that such a conception must be a 'universal' one (Nussbaum 1992:205). The identification of these claims is common. For example, Doyal and Gough equate 'objective' and 'universal' needs in a similarly unargued fashion (Doyal and Gough 1991: chs 1–3 *passim*). Geras does try to justify this identification and I criticize his arguments in Chapter 8 above. Historicism, I am arguing, maintains that human needs are historical yet also objective.
- 8 This was written in 1844, before Darwin had provided a naturalistic account of biological evolution, an account which Marx welcomed as consonant with his own philosophy. For a very illuminating Aristotelian account of Marxism which fully acknowledges its historical dimension, see Meikle (1985).
- 9 Nussbaum describes some encounters she has had at conferences with people who appear to fit this bill, and her anecdotes will ring bells with many readers (Nussbaum 1992:203–4).
- 10 Problems of how the development of productive power can be assessed are usefully discussed by Cohen (1978:55–62).
- 11 However, Cohen (1978:159) cites the following passage in which Marx appears to invoke a trans-historical drive for increased production which is not consistent with the historical account of human nature for which I have been arguing (and which is, I maintain, more characteristic of Marx's thought).

A change in men's productive forces necessarily beings about a change in their relations of production. As the main thing is not to be deprived of the fruits of civilization, of the acquired productive forces, the traditional forms in which they were produced must be smashed.

(Marx 1847a:107)

- 12 For example, he describes communism as 'the riddle of history solved' (Marx 1844a:348) which implies that it is the teleological end of history, a view that can be found in places throughout his work. More cautiously,

- however, he also describes communism as the end of human ‘prehistory’ (Marx 1859:364) and the beginning of a new phase of human development. See Elster (1985: ch. 2 section 4) for a useful survey of Marx’s conflicting statements on this issue.
- 13 Kuhn (1970:170–2) argues for a similar relative and non-teleological account of progress in science. For recent controversy about the notion of progress in evolutionary biology, see Dawkins (1986), Dennett (1996), Gould (1997), Ruse (1996).
- 14 cf.

The cultivation of all the qualities of the social human being, production of the same in a form as rich as possible in needs, because rich in qualities and relations— production of this being as the most total and universal social product for, in order to take gratification in a many-sided way, he must be capable of many pleasures, hence cultured to a high degree.

(Marx 1858:409)

- 15 It is a pity to have to quibble with such inspiring words, but it must be noted that the language of ‘full development’ does not sit happily with the non-teleological account of human development that I have been giving nor with Marx’s rejection of measuring by a ‘predetermined yardstick’. It would be better to talk of ‘the fullest possible’ human development.
- 16 A large number of other important issues to do with the environmental impact of modern society and industry have been raised by the recent environmental literature which, unfortunately, I have neither the space nor the competence to deal with here.
- 17 Although economic planning may create the possibility of introducing environmentally friendly policies, the record of ‘actually existing’ socialism demonstrates that this is not necessarily the outcome.
- 18 Marxism, as a form of humanism, makes humanity the standard of value in such matters. It denies intrinsic value to the non-human environment. Values are a human phenomenon. However, Marxist humanism does recognize that man is a natural being, who exists in unity with the rest of nature; and that nature is, in Marx’s words, man’s ‘inorganic body’ and of value as such. See Benton (1990a) and Collier (1994) for suggestive accounts along these lines.
- 19 Trainer (1985) gives a particularly thorough and well argued defence of such views, cf. also Gorz (1983). Such views are often associated with Rousseau, though it is doubtful that he held them.

#### APPENDIX: GORZ ON WORK AND LIBERATION

- 1 Gorz does give an economic argument which bears on this, but it is seriously flawed. ‘In the heroic age of capitalism or socialist industrialisation’, he writes, the aim of rationalizing domestic work was to reduce the time devoted to it ‘in order to employ that time, at a

## NOTES

far higher rate of productivity, in industry and collective undertakings' (Gorz 1989:154). Today, it no longer serves that purpose: it is aimed only at 'creating jobs' by employing personal servants. For no apparent reason, Gorz here simply ignores the possibilities of further socializing and mechanizing domestic labour.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Althusser, L. (1969) *For Marx*, London: Allen Lane.
- Althusser, L. (1976) *Essays in Self-Criticism*, London: Verso.
- Anschutz, R.P. (1953) *The Philosophy of J.S.Mill*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Anthony, P.D. (1978) *The Ideology of Work*, London: Tavistock.
- Arendt, H. (1958) *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Aristotle (1941a) *Nicomachean Ethics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, R.McKeon (ed.), New York: Random House.
- Aristotle (1941b) *Politics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, R.McKeon (ed.), New York: Random House.
- Avineri, S. (1972) *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bacon, F. (1960) *The New Organon and Related Writings*, Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Bahro, R. (1978) *The Alternative in Eastern Europe*, London: New Left Books.
- Benston, M. (1982) 'The Political Economy of Women's Liberation', in M.Evans (ed.), *The Woman Question*, London: Fontana, pp. 192–202.
- Bentham, J. (1789) *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, Darien CT: Haffner, 1970.
- Benton, T. (1989) 'Marxism and Natural Limits: An Ecological Critique and Reconstruction', *New Left Review*, 178:51–86.
- Benton, T. (1990a) 'Humanism=Speciesism?', in S.Sayers and P.Osborne (eds), *Socialism, Feminism and Philosophy*, London: Routledge, pp. 235–74 .
- Benton, T. (1990b) 'On the Limits of Malleability', *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, 4:68–71.
- Benton, T. (1992) 'Ecology, Socialism and the Mastery of Nature: A Reply to Reiner Grundmann', *New Left Review*, 194:55–74.
- Berki, R.N. (1979) 'On the Nature and Origins of Marx's Concept of Labour', *Political Theory*, 7(1):35–56.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Berlin, I. (1969) 'J.S.Mill and the Ends of Life', in *Four Essays on Liberty*, London: Oxford University Press.
- Bowring, F. (1996) 'Misreading Gorz', *New Left Review*, 217:102–22.
- Bradley, F.H. (1927) *Ethical Studies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd edn.
- Braverman, H. (1974) *Labour and Monopoly Capital: the Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, New York: Monthly Review.
- Braybrooke, D. (1987) *Meeting Needs*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Burns, T. (1973) 'Leisure in Industrial Society', in Michael A. Smith, Stanley Parker and Cynthia S. Smith (eds), *Leisure and Society in Britain*, London: Allen Lane.
- Carr, E.H. (1964) *What is History?*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Childe, V.G. (1941) *Man Makes Himself*, London: Watts.
- Cohen, G.A. (1978) *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defence*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Cohen, G.A. (1983) Review of A.W.Wood, *Karl Marx, Mind*, 92.
- Cohen, G.A. (1986) 'Peter Mew on Justice and Capitalism', *Inquiry*, 29: 315–23.
- Cohen, G.A. (1988a) 'Freedom, Justice and Capitalism', *New Left Review*, 126:3–16.
- Cohen, G.A. (1988b) *History, Labour, and Freedom: Themes from Marx*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Cohen, G.A. (1995) 'Introduction: History, Ethics and Marxism', in *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–18.
- Collier, A. (1981) 'Scientific Socialism and the Question of Socialist Values', in *Issues in Marxist Philosophy*, Vol. 4, Brighton: Harvester Press, pp. 3–41.
- Collier, A. (1994) 'Value, Rationality and the Environment', *Radical Philosophy*, 66:3–9.
- Cunningham, H. (1980) *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, London: Croom Helm.
- Dawkins, R. (1986) *The Blind Watchmaker*, London: Longman.
- Dennett, D.C. (1996) *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meaning of Life*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Doyal, L. and Gough, I. (1991) *A Theory of Human Needs*, London: Macmillan.
- Dumazedier, J. (1967) *Towards a Society of Leisure*, New York: Free Press.
- Durkheim, E. (1893) *The Division of Labour in Society*, trans. W.D.Halls, London: Macmillan, 1984.
- Durkheim, E. (1897) *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, trans. J.A.Spaulding and G.Simpson, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952.
- Elster, J. (1985) *Making Sense of Marx*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Engels, F. (1845) *Condition of the Working Class in England*, London: Panther Books, 1969.
- Engels, F. (1873) 'The Housing Question', in K.Marx and F.Engels (1958), vol. 1, pp. 557–635.
- Engels, F. (1876) 'The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man', in K.Marx and F.Engels (1958), vol. 2, pp. 80–92.
- Engels, F. (1878) *Anti-Dühring*, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1962.
- Engels, F. (1884) 'Preface to the First German Edition', in K.Marx (1847a), pp. 5–20.
- Engels, F. (1886) *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, in K.Marx and F.Engels (1958), vol. 2, 360–405.
- Frankel, B. (1987) *The Post-Industrial Utopians*, Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Fraser, R. (ed.) (1968) *Work* (2 vols), Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Friedan, B. (1965) *The Feminine Mystique*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Gaskell, E. (1855) *North and South*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970.
- Geertz, C. (1993) 'The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man', in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, London: Fontana, pp. 33–54.
- Geras, N. (1983) *Marx and Human Nature: Refutation of a Legend*, London: Verso.
- Geras, N. (1985) 'The Controversy About Marx and Justice', *New Left Review*, 150:47–85.
- Geras, N. (1992) 'Bringing Marx to Justice: an Addendum and a Rejoinder', *New Left Review*, 195:37–69.
- Geras, N. (1995a) 'Human Nature and Progress', *New Left Review*, 213: 151–60.
- Geras, N. (1995b) *Solidarity in the Conversation of Humankind: The Ungroundable Liberalism of Richard Rorty*, London: Verso.
- Gorz, A. (1982) *Farewell to the Working Class*, London: Pluto Press.
- Gorz, A. (1983) *Ecology as Politics*, London: Pluto Press.
- Gorz, A. (1985) *Paths to Paradise: On the Liberation from Work*, London: Pluto Press.
- Gorz, A. (1989) *Critique of Economic Reason*, London: Verso.
- Gould, S.J. (1997) *Life's Grandeur: the Spread of Excellence from Plato to Darwin*, London: Vintage (published in USA as *Full House*).
- Green, T.H. (1906) *Prolegomena to Ethics*, London: Oxford University Press, 5th edn.
- Grundmann, R. (1991) 'The Ecological Challenge to Marxism', *New Left Review*, 187:103–20.
- Haraszti, M. (1977) *Worker in a Worker's State*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Hayes, J. and Nutman, P. (1981) *Understanding the Unemployed: the Psychological Effects of Unemployment*, London: Tavistock.
- Hayward, T. (1995) *Ecological Thought: An Introduction*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Hegel, G.W.F. (1807) *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V.Miller, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977.
- Hegel, G.W.F. (1818) *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science: the First Philosophy of Right, Heidelberg 1817–1818, with Additions from the Lectures of 1818–1819*, trans. J.Michael Stewart and Peter C.Hodgson, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Hegel, G.W.F. (1821) *The Philosophy of Right*, trans. T.M.Knox, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942.
- Hegel, G.W.F. (1830) *Logic: Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, Part I*, trans. W.Wallace, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 3rd edn, 1975.
- Hegel, G.W.F. (1953) *Reason in History*, trans. R.S.Hartman, Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Hegel, G.W.F. (1975) *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction*, trans. H.B.Nisbet, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Herzberg, F. (1966) *Work and the Nature of Man*, Cleveland, OH: World Publishing Company.
- Hill, C. (1969) *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England*, London: Panther Books.
- Hobsbawm, E.J. (1964) *Labouring Men*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Hume, D. (1751) 'An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals', in *Enquiries*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1st edn, 1894.
- Husami, Z.I. (1980) 'Marx on Distributive Justice', in M.Cohen, T.Nagel and T.Scanlon (eds), *Marx, Justice and History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 42–79.
- Huxley, A. (1932) *Brave New World*, London: Granada, 1977.
- Ignatieff, M. (1984) *The Needs of Strangers*, London: Chatto & Windus.
- Jahoda, M. (1979) 'The Impact of Unemployment in the 1930s and the 1970s', *Bulletin of the British Psychological Society*, 32.
- Jahoda, M. (1982) *Employment and Unemployment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jahoda, M., Lazarsfeld, P. and Zeisel, H. (1972) *Marienthal: The Sociography of an Unemployed Community*, London: Tavistock.
- Jay, E. and Jay, R. (eds) (1986) *Critics of Capitalism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jenkins, C. and Sherman, B. (1979) *The Collapse of Work*, London: Eyre Methuen.
- Jones, S. (1993) *The Language of the Genes: Biology, History and the Evolutionary Future*, London: Flamingo.
- Kant, I. (1970) *Political Writings*, trans. H.B.Nisbet, ed. H.Reiss, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1st edn.
- Kaufman, W. (1964) *Hegel: a Reinterpretation*, Garden City, NY: Anchor Books.
- Kolakowski, L. (1978) *Main Currents in Marxism* (3 vols), trans. P.S.Falla, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Kuhn, T.S. (1970) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2nd edn.
- Lenin, V.I. (1919) 'A Great Beginning', in *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, vol. 3, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975:164–83.
- Lenin, V.I. (1920) 'From the destruction of the old social system to the creation of the new', in *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, vol. 3, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975:288–90.
- Lichtman, R. (1990) 'The Production of Human Nature by Means of Human Nature', *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, 4:13–51.
- Little, A. (1996) *The Political Thought of André Gorz*, London: Routledge.
- Lodziak, C. and Tatman, J. (1997) *André Gorz: A Critical Introduction*, London: Pluto Press.
- Lukács, G. (1972) 'Tactics and Ethics', in *Political Writings 1919–1929*, London: New Left Books: 3–11.
- Lukács, G. (1975) *The Young Hegel*, London: Merlin.
- Lukes, S. (1985) *Marxism and Morality*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- McCarney, J. (1980) *The Real World of Ideology*, Brighton: Harvester Press.
- McCloskey, H.J. (1971) *J.S.Mill: a Critical Study*, London: Macmillan.
- MacIntyre, A. (1967) *A Short History of Ethics*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- MacIntyre, A. (1985) *After Virtue*, London: Duckworth, 2nd edn.
- MacIntyre, A. (1988) *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, London: Duckworth.
- McLellan, D. (1973) *Marx's Grundrisse*, St Albans: Paladin.
- Marcuse, H. (1955) *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Márkus, G. (1978) *Marxism and Anthropology*, Assen, the Netherlands: Van Gorcum.
- Martin, R. (1972) 'A Defence of Mill's Qualitative Hedonism', *Philosophy*, 47:140–51.
- Marx, K. (1843) 'Letters from the Franco-German Yearbooks', in *Early Writings*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975, pp. 199–209.
- Marx, K. (1844a) *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, in *Early Writings*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975, pp. 279–400.
- Marx, K. (1844b) 'Excerpts from James Mill's *Elements of Political Economy*', in *Early Writings*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975, pp. 259–78.
- Marx, K. (1846) Letter to P.V.Annenkov, 28 December 1846, in K.Marx (1847a), pp. 155–67.
- Marx, K. (1847a) *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1955.
- Marx, K. (1847b) *Wage, Labour and Capital*, in K.Marx and F.Engels (1958), vol. 1, pp. 70–105.
- Marx, K. (1853a) 'The British Rule in India', in K.Marx and F.Engels (1958), vol. 1, pp. 345–51.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Marx, K. (1853b) 'The Future Results of the British Rule in India', in K.Marx and F.Engels (1958), vol. 1, pp. 352–8.
- Marx, K. (1856) 'Speech at the Anniversary of the People's Paper', in K.Marx and F.Engels (1958), vol. 1, pp. 359–60.
- Marx, K. (1858) *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973.
- Marx, K. (1859) 'Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*', in K.Marx and F.Engels (1958), vol. 1, pp. 361–5.
- Marx, K. (1867) *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. S.Moore and E.Aveling, Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1961.
- Marx, K. (1871) *The Civil War in France*, in K.Marx and F.Engels (1958), vol. 1, pp. 473–545.
- Marx, K. (1875) 'Critique of the Gotha Programme', in K.Marx and F.Engels (1958), vol. 2, pp. 13–48.
- Marx, K. (1894) *Capital*, vol. 3, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971.
- Marx, K. (1976) *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. B.Fowkes, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1844) 'The Holy Family', in *Collected Works*, vol. 4, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975.
- Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1845) *The German Ideology, Part I*, ed. C.J.Arthur, New York: International Publishers, 1970.
- Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1848) *Communist Manifesto*, in K.Marx and F.Engels (1958), vol. 1, pp. 21–65.
- Marx, K. and Engels, F. (1958) *Selected Works* (2 vols), Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House.
- Meikle, S. (1985) *Essentialism in the Thought of Karl Marx*, London: Duckworth.
- Mill, J.S. (1838) 'Bentham', in F.R.Leavis (ed.), *Mill on Bentham and Coleridge*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1967.
- Mill, J.S. (1848) *Principles of Political Economy*, ed. W.J.Ashley, London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1909.
- Mill, J.S. (1859) 'On Liberty', in Mill (1972), pp. 65–174.
- Mill, J.S. (1861) *Considerations on Representative Government*, in Mill (1972), pp. 175–393.
- Mill, J.S. (1863) 'Utilitarianism', in Mill (1972), pp. 1–64.
- Mill, J.S. (1873) *Autobiography*, ed. A.Briggs, New York: New American Library, 1964.
- Mill, J.S. (1972) *Utilitarianism, On Liberty and Considerations on Representative Government*, ed. H.B.Acton, London: Dent.
- Miller, R.W. (1984) *Analyzing Marx*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Moore, G.E. (1903) *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nielsen, K (1987) 'Coming to Grips with Marxist Anti-Moralism', *Philosophical Forum*, 19(1): 1–22.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Nielsen, K. (1989) 'Afterword: Remarks on the Roots of Progress', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Supplementary Volume*, 15:497–539.
- Norman, R. (1983) *The Moral Philosophers*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Norman, R. and Sayers, S. (1980) *Hegel, Marx and Dialectic: A Debate*, Brighton: Harvester Press.
- Nussbaum, M.C. (1992) 'Human Functioning and Social Justice: In Defence of Aristotelian Essentialism', *Political Theory*, 20(2): 202–46.
- Nussbaum, M.C. (1995) 'Aristotle on Human Nature and the Foundations of Ethics', in J.E.J. Altham and R. Harrison (eds), *World, Mind, and Ethics: Essays on the Ethical Philosophy of Bernard Williams*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 132–55.
- Oakley, A. (1982) *Subject Women*, London: Fontana.
- Pagano, U. (1985) *Work and Welfare in Economic Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Pahl, R.E. (1980) 'Employment, work and the domestic division of labour', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 4(1): 1–20.
- Pahl, R.E. (1984) *Divisions of Labour*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Plato (1945) *The Republic*, trans. F.M. Cornford, London: Oxford University Press.
- Plekhanov, G. (1905) 'Forewords and Notes', in F. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976.
- Pollard, S. (1965) *The Genesis of Modern Management: A Study of the Industrial Revolution in Britain*, London: Edward Arnold.
- Popper, K.R. (1966) *The Open Society and its Enemies*, vol. 2: Hegel and Marx, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 5th edn.
- Rand, A. (1984) *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, New York: New American Library.
- Robertson, J. (1985) *Future Work: Jobs, Self-employment and Leisure after the Industrial Age*, Aldershot: Gower.
- Rorty, R. (1989) *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rorty, R. (1992) 'Trotsky and the Wild Orchids', *Common Knowledge*, 1: 140–53.
- Rousseau, J.-J. (1973) *The Social Contract and Discourses*, ed. G.D.H. Cole, London: Dent, revised edn.
- Ruse, M. (1996) *Monad to Man*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Russell, B. (1935) *In Praise of Idleness and Other Essays*, London: Allen and Unwin.
- Ryle, M. (1988) *Ecology and Socialism*, London: Radius.
- Sahlins, M. (1974) *Stone Age Economics*, London: Tavistock.
- Sayers, S. (1985) *Reality and Reason: Dialectic and the Theory of Knowledge*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sayers, S. (1990a) 'Marxism and Actually Existing Socialism', in D. McLellan and S. Sayers (eds), *Socialism and Morality*, London: Macmillan, pp. 42–64.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Sayers, S. (1990b) 'Marxism and the Dialectical Method: A Critique of G.A.Cohen', in S.Sayers and P.Osborne (eds), *Socialism, Feminism and Philosophy*, London: Routledge, pp. 140–68.
- Sayers, S. (1992) 'The Human Impact of the Market', in P.Heelas and P.Morris (eds), *The Values of the Enterprise Culture*, London: Routledge, pp. 120–38.
- Sayers, S. (1997) Review of G.W.F.Hegel, *Lectures on Natural Right and Political Science*, *Radical Philosophy*, 84:51–2.
- Scruton, R (1980) *The Meaning of Conservatism*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Seth, A. (1887) *Hegelianism and Personality*, Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons.
- Sidgwick, H. (1907) *The Methods of Ethics*, London: Macmillan, 7th edn.
- Skillen, A. (1977) *Ruling Illusions*, Brighton: Harvester Press.
- Skillen, A. (1981) 'Worker's Interests and the Proletarian Ethic', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 7:155–70.
- Smith, A. (1776) *The Wealth of Nations*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970.
- Soper, K. (1981) *On Human Needs: Open and Closed Theories in a Marxist Perspective*, Brighton: Harvester Press.
- Sorel, G. (1961) *Reflections on Violence*, trans. J.Roth and T.E.Hulme, New York: Collier Books.
- Springborg, P. (1981) *The Problem of Human Needs and the Critique of Civilization*, London: Allen and Unwin.
- Tawney, R.H. (1938) *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, West Drayton: Penguin.
- Terkel, S. (1977) *Working*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Thompson, E.P. (1967) 'Time, Work-discipline and Industrial Capitalism', *Past and Present*, 38:56–97.
- Thompson, E.P. (1980) *The Making of the English Working Class*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, revised edn.
- Thompson, P. (1989) *The Nature of Work: an Introduction to Debates on the Labour Process*, London: Macmillan, 2nd edn.
- Trainer, F.E. (1985) *Abandon Affluence!*, London: Zed Books.
- Ure, A. (1835) *The Philosophy of Manufactures*, London: C.Knight, 2nd edn.
- Walker, K.J. (1979) 'Ecological Limits and Marxian Thought', *Politics*, 14(1): 29–46.
- Walzer, M. (1990) 'The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism', *Political Theory*, 18(1): 6–23.
- Weber, M. (1905) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. T.Parsons, New York: Scribners, 1958.
- Weil, S. (1958) *Oppression and Liberty*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- White, J. (1997a) 'Education, work and well-being', *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 31(2): 233–47.
- White, J. (1997b) *Education and the End of Work: A New Philosophy of Work and Learning*, London: Cassell.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Wiener, M.J. (1985) *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit 1850–1980*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Willis, P. (1977) *Learning to Labour*, Farnborough: Saxon House.
- Wood, A.W. (1980a) 'The Marxian Critique of Justice', in M.Cohen, T.Nagel and T.Scanlon (eds), *Marx, Justice and History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 3–41.
- Wood, A.W. (1980b) 'Marx on Right and Justice: A Reply to Husami', in M.Cohen, T.Nagel and T.Scanlon (eds), *Marx, Justice and History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 106–34.
- Wood, A.W. (1981) *Karl Marx*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Wood, S. (ed.) (1982) *The Degradation of Work?: Skill, De-skilling and the Labour Process*, London: Hutchinson.
- Work in America: Report of a Special Task Force to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare* (1973) Department of health, Education, and Welfare, prepared by W.E.Upjohn Institute for employment research, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Zeisel, J.S. (1958) 'The Workweek in American Industry 1850–1956', in *Mass Leisure*, Glencoe, IL: Free Press, pp. 145–53.



# INDEX

- alienation 28, 33–5, 39–43, 46,  
56, 58, 61, 64, 68, 88–9, 105,  
125, 136–41, 157, 165–6, 170,  
177–8, 180, 183, 184
- Althusser, L. 150–1
- analytical Marxism 8, 9, chapter 7  
passim, 130, 181
- Anschutz, R.P. 20
- Anthony, P.D. 55, 180
- anti-humanism 149–51, 157, 159
- Arendt, H. 61, 180
- Aristotle 21, 136, 142, 144, 146–  
7, 157, 160, 180, 184, 186
- artistic activity 17, 18, 25, 29–30,  
33, 35, 53–4, 63, 70, 71, 75–7,  
170, 184
- automation 44, 60, 84
- autonomous activity 44, 53–4, 60,  
71, 73–5, 170, 172
- autonomy 7, 60, 65–7, 80, 138,  
158, 171, 173, 183
- Avineri, S. 95
- Bahro, R. 105
- Benston, M. 42
- Bentham, J. 14–19, 20, 22, 185
- Benton, T. 154, 156, 167, 187
- Berki, R.N. 61
- Berlin, I. 14
- Bowring, F. 6, 7
- Bradley, F.H. 15, 20, 100, 118–19
- Brave New World* 17–19
- Braverman, H. 27, 39, 83–6, 183
- Braybrooke, D. 127
- Burns, T. 54
- capitalism 5, 8–12, 26–7, 34–5,  
45, 52, 55, 57–8, 66, 72, 74,  
80, 83–7, 105, 109, 112–28,  
130–4, 136, 138–10, 142, 143,  
146–8, 156–7, 163, 165–7,  
172, 177, 181, 183, 186, 188;  
as ‘civilizing’ force 74, 133, 163
- caring professions 175–7
- Carlyle, T. 173
- Carr, E.H. 106, 184
- Childe, V.G. 32, 162
- class division 12, 26, 141
- Cohen, G.A. 114–15, 124, 125,  
141–4, 157, 162, 184, 186
- Collier, A. 105, 179, 181, 187
- commodity production 172, 175
- communism 10, 58, 109, 116,  
120–1, 132, 141–2, 180, 184,  
187;
- collapse of 11
- community 36, 42, 80, 90–1, 119,  
127–8, 136, 137–9, 175, 179,  
183
- consciousness 81–2, 87, 97, 109,  
119, 139
- consumption 3, 5, 30, 31–4, 37,  
38, 40, 46, 55, 68–9, 70, 72,  
74, 77, 138, 168, 180
- contradiction 56–7, 79, 82, 88,  
100–4, 108–9, 115, 117–19,  
121, 124, 126, 130, 143
- conventionalism 159–61
- craftwork 25–7, 34–5, 51, 53, 70,  
71, 73, 84–5
- creative activity 6, 40, 44, 46, 53–  
4, 73, 170–3, 181

- critical method 9–10,  
chapter 6 *passim*, 113–14, 117,  
130–1, 146–7, 156–7, 159  
Cunningham, H. 54
- Darwin, C. 163, 186  
Declaration of Independence 144  
dehumanization 182, 183  
democracy 11, 22–23  
desires 121, 127, 146, 153–4  
deskilling 84–6  
dialectic 8–9, 97, 100–3, 108–9,  
125, 152, 162  
distribution 141  
division of labour 25–31, 34–5,  
39, 64–5, 70, 83–4, 87, 143,  
174, 180  
domestic labour *see* housework  
Dumazedier, J. 73, 75  
Durkheim, E. 87–8, 135
- economic: development 8, 11, 12,  
74, 79, 88–91, 119, 133–6,  
146–7, 162, 168; rationality  
Appendix *passim*; relations 139,  
178  
economics 37, 79, 162  
education 18, 21–4, 27–30, 47, 56,  
73, 80, 86, 176  
Elster, J. 141–2, 182, 187  
emancipation 114, 125, 126–8  
empiricism 111  
employment 5, 6, 36, 41–4, 46, 57,  
60–2, 76, 119, Appendix  
*passim*  
Engels, F. 8, 28, 80, 81, 82, 103,  
110, 117, 118, 143, 180, 181,  
183, 184  
enlightenment philosophy 138,  
149, 160, 185  
environment 12, 41, 166–8, 187  
equality 14, 22–4, 115, 119, 125,  
142, 179  
eudaemonism 136  
evolution 163, 185, 186, 187  
existentialism 7  
exploitation 113, 143
- fact and value 9–10, 103, 105–6,  
109, 121–2, 124, 132  
factory work 26–7, 39, 42, 50–1  
fall of man 88–9, 140–1, 180  
false consciousness 116  
false needs 48, 52–3, 55, 66–7,  
127–8, 134–5  
feminism 183  
*fiat justitia, perat mundus* 144,  
184  
Fourier, C. 34  
Frankel, B. 6  
Fraser, R. 39  
freedom 7, 33, 40, 44, 53–5, 57,  
61–8, 74–5, 82, 100, 119, 146,  
160–1, 162, 171; free time 46,  
50, 53–5, 57, 61, 70, 71, 73,  
75, 142, 170; free market 11,  
90, 105, 166–7, 176; *see also*  
market; free trade 82–3; *see also*  
liberty  
Freidan, B. 43
- Gaskell, M. 69, 81  
Geertz, C. 7, 152–3, 155–6  
Geras, N. 10, 114–15, 123, 130,  
132–3, 141–4, 151, 153, 155–  
7, 181, 184, 185, 186  
Gorz, A. 6–8, 44, 46, 52–5, 60–1,  
64–5, 66–8, 69, 70, 72, 74–6,  
Appendix *passim*, 187, 188  
Green, T.H. 15  
Grundmann, R. 167
- Habermas, J. 173  
happiness chapter 2 *passim*, 66,  
86–8, 133, 135–6, 164  
Haraszti, M. 39  
Hayes, J. 39, 41, 42  
Hayward, T. 167  
Heath, E. 90  
hedonism 5–6, 14, 17, 18, 20, 37,  
46, 136, 164, 185  
Hegel, G.W.F. 3, 8, 10, 52, 61, 62,  
65–7, 82, 85, 88–9, chapter 6  
*passim*, 120, 122, 126, 127,  
140–1, 144–5, 146, 149, 150,  
151–2, 156, 160, 162, 181,  
182, 183, 184  
Hegelian 8, 9, 63, 65, 100–6, 118,  
120, 122, 125–8, 132, 140,  
145, 150, 159, 162, 182  
Heine, H. 103, 181  
Herzberg, F. 41, 42  
Hill, C. 45

## INDEX

- historical: development 9, 10, 12, 66–7, 117–8, 128, 132–3, 136, 141, 162–3, 182, 183; progress 10, 26, 118, 163–4; stages 9, 10, 88, 118, 121, 131–3, 136, 139–41, 147–8
- historicism 8, 13, 121, 149, 150, 152–3, 156, 158–9, 161, 185, 186
- history: end of 11, 147–8, 187; theory of 9–12, 88, 105–6, 112, 114, 116, 118, 130–3, 140, 147–8, 155–7, 160, 163, 182, 185
- hobbies 47, 53, 70, 76, 170
- homo economicus* 133–4, 162
- household 65, 81, 138–9, 172–3, 178
- housework 43, 47, 172, 174–5, 188
- human essence 137, 153–5, 157–60
- human nature: as biological *see* human nature, universal; development of 4–5, 7–8, 32, 34–5, 48, 52–5, 61, 65–9, 73–5, 88, 126–8, 134–7, 140, 146, 152–7, 161–9, 184, 187; as foundation for social theory and values 153, 155–60; historical character of 4–5, 11, 13, 32, 34, 48, 52–6, 65–7, 97, 126, 134–7, chapter 9 *passim*, 185, 186; physical character of 150–2; social character of 4–5, 7–8, 65–6, 126, 137, 149–56, 159, 178; as universal chapter 9 *passim*, 185, 186
- human powers 3–4, 35, 41, 48, 63, 65–8, 88, 127, 135–7, 141, 146, 149, 152, 157–8, 161, 164–8
- humanism 3, 9, 11–12, 149, 150, 157, 159, 164–6, 183, 187
- humanist psychology 41
- Hume, D. 31, 32, 37, 141
- hunger 151–6
- Husami, Z.I. 114, 123
- Huxley, A. 17
- idealism 95, 99–100, 106–7, 151
- identity 42, 46, 138
- ideology 108, 112, 113, 115–17, 125, 128, 184
- idleness 5, 28, 37, 41, 45, 46, 48–52, 55, 68–75
- Ignatieff, M. 69
- immanent values 9, 10, 130–1, 133, 146
- India 82–3, 87
- individual 8, 20, 33, 35, 42, 64, 65, 83, 137–9, 156, 183, 184
- individualism 7–8, 65, 138, 171, 178, 185
- industry 5, 26–8, 34–5, 39, 42, 45, 50, 52, 56–8, 64, 66, 69, 72–4, 79–91, 119–20, 126, 139, 161, 163, 166–8, 181, 182, 183, 187, 188
- Jahoda, M. 38, 39, 41, 42, 47, 75
- Jenkins, C. 56, 60 *job see* employment
- Jones, S. 167
- justice 113–15, 123–6, 133, 141–5, 184
- Kant, I. 144, 184
- Kantian 96–7, 104
- Kaufman, W. 95, 100
- Kolakowski, L. 122, 181
- labour *see* productive activity law of nature 97
- Lefebvre, H. 75
- leisure 5, 31, 36, 44, 47, 49, 53–5, 56, chapter 4 *passim*, 142
- Lenin, V.I. 58, 180
- liberalism 11, 146, 149, 160, 178, 185
- 'liberation from work' 6, 44, 53, 57–8, 61, 75, 170
- liberty: positive and negative 7, 67–8
- Lichtman, R. 4, 150–1, 162
- Little, A. 6, 179
- Lodziak, C. 6, 179
- Lukács, G. 63, 122
- Lukes, S. 113–14, 116, 125–8, 130, 141, 181
- McCarney, J. 116

INDEX

- MacIntyre, A. 14, 144–5, 183  
 manual work 24, 25–30, 34, 44,  
 83, 85  
 Marcuse, H. 104  
 market 8, 11, 42, 79–81, 87, 138–  
 9, 173, 175; *see also* free  
 market Márkus, G. 67  
 Martin, R. 15  
 Maslow, A. 41  
 materialism 107–8, 114, 125, 151,  
 155, 160–1, 162, 167  
 Maugham, S. 181  
 medieval society *see* society, feudal  
 mental work 25–30, 34, 83  
 Mill, J. 22  
 Mill, J.S. 4, chapter 2 *passim*, 87,  
 146, 179, 180, 182  
 Miller, R.W. 111  
 Moore, G.E. 15 moral progress 12,  
 163  
 moral values 4, 9, 10, 79, 104,  
 107, 109–10, chapter 7–8  
*passim*, 184  
 Morris, W. 173  
  
 natural limits 167–8  
 naturalism 10, 121–2, 125–6, 146,  
 157, 164, 166, 186  
 naturalistic fallacy 10, 121, 132  
 necessity, realm of 53, 55, 61–2,  
 65–8, 70–3, 76, 77, 171–2, 180  
 needs 3–5, 19, 30–2, 36–7, 41–8,  
 53–6, 58–9, 61–2, 65–75, 88,  
 125–7, 133–7, 141, 146,  
 chapter 9 *passim*, 171, 186,  
 187; basic 127–8, 134, 151–9,  
 182; biological *see* needs, basic;  
 development of 152–9, 164,  
 182, 187  
 Nielsen, K. 10, 181  
 Norman, R. 109  
 Nussbaum, M. 153, 156, 157–9,  
 186  
 Nutman, P. 39, 41, 42  
  
 Oakley, A. 43, 174  
 Owen, R. 34  
 Pahl, R. 6, 73  
  
 pain 5, 14–15, 17, 18, 20, 30–31,  
 32, 37, 65–6, 87, 135, 164  
 Plato 18–19, 21, 77, 97, 146–7,  
 160, 180  
 pleasure 4, 14–24, 30–1, 33, 37,  
 68–9, 73–4, 76–7, 87, 134–6,  
 165; higher and lower 15–21,  
 25, 33, 87, 182  
 Polanyi, K. 177  
 Pollard, S. 50, 51, 74  
 Popper, K.R. 10, 122, 132, 182  
 positivism 109  
 post-industrial 5, 12, 44, 60–1, 66,  
 70, 75, 78, 171  
 post-modernism 150, 183  
 post-structuralism 150  
 poverty 57, 134, 156–7  
 preferences *see* desires  
 private property 123, 141  
 private sphere 172, 174, 177–8  
 producer 30, 31, 180  
 productive activity *see* work  
 productive forces 56–7, 72, 83,  
 133, 136, 140, 141, 143, 146,  
 160–1, 163, 165–8, 186–7  
 productivism 12, 166, 168  
 progress 9, 10, 12, 79–80, 83, 86–  
 8, 119–21, 123, 127–8, chapter  
 8  
*passim*, 162–3, 166, 173, 178,  
 184, 187  
 protestant work ethic *see* work ethic  
 providence 99–100  
 Proudhon, P.J. 114  
 public sphere 174, 178  
  
 Rand, A. 105  
 realism 96–9, 125  
 reason 21, chapter 6 *passim*, 144–  
 6, 162, 182; *see also* economic  
 rationality  
 relations of production 45, 56–7,  
 59, 80, 123, 163, 186  
 relative autonomy 184  
 relativism 3–4, 11, 66, 113–19, 123,  
 128, 130, 145, 156, 157, 159  
 revolution 11, 110, 139, 171  
 right 113–15, 123–6, 141–5, 179,  
 184, 185  
 right to work 36, 44, 169

- Robertson, J. 6  
 romanticism 5, 12, 34, 54, 66, 69, 79–81, 88, 127, 168, 175, 178, 180  
 Rorty, R. 150, 153, 157, 185  
 Rousseau, J.-J. 40, 52, 54, 65–7, 134, 138, 187  
 Ruskin, J. 173  
 Russell, B. 37  
 Ryle, M. 167
- Sahlins, M. 49, 50, 52, 70–1  
 Sartre, J.-P. 7, 179  
 Sayers, S. 82, 109, 116, 121, 125, 179, 181  
 scarcity 141  
 scientific approach 96–9, 105–7, 109–10, 112–13, 121–2, 128, 130  
 Scruton, R. 100  
 self 137  
 self-development 4, 11, 20, 32, 36, 69, 136–41, 146, 164, 168, 181, 182  
 self-interest 138, 185  
 self-realization 4–5, 9, 11, 19–20, 32–3, 36, 39, 63, 89, 113, 114, 118–19, 125, 127–8, 133, 136–41, 153, 163, 164–5, 168 Seth, A. 106–7  
 Sherman, B. 56, 60  
 Sidgwick, H. 15  
 Skillen, A. 34, 40  
 slavery 21, 48, 143, 180, 184  
 sleep 69–70  
 Smith, A. 32–33, 84, 133, 181  
 social contract 160, 185  
 social relations 4, 7–8, 119, 123, 137–40, 143, 159–61, 183, 187  
 social science 97, 106, 112–13, 115–16  
 socialism 6, 9–12, 28, 30, 33, 34, 36, 37, 58, 68, 83, 109, 112, 114, 117–18, 120–5, 128, 130–3, 140–1, 143, 146–8, 157, 163–4, 166, 169, 177–8, 182, 186, 188; ‘actually existing’ 58, 105–6, 147–8, 179, 181, 187  
 society: feudal 9–10, 58, 81, 118–20, 123, 131, 137–9, 143, 160, 180; pre-industrial 49–50, 51–2, 54, 67, 69, 70, 137; pre-capitalist 51, 70, 137–9, 142, 173, 182; *see also* capitalism; socialism Socrates 15, 19, 21, 24, 25, 29  
 Soper, K. 127  
 Sophists, the 160, 185  
 Soviet Union 11, 105, 179; *see also* socialism, ‘actually existing’  
 species being 41, 65  
 Springborg, P. 67  
 standard of living 181
- Tatman, J. 6, 179  
 Tawney, R.H. 45  
 teleology 145–6, 162–3, 182, 184, 187  
 Terkel, S. 39, 177  
 Thatcherism 90, 177  
 Third World 11, 48, 50  
 Thompson, E.P. 49, 51, 54, 72, 74, 181  
 Thompson, P. 84  
 Trainer, F.E. 168, 187
- unemployment 28, 36–8, 41–3, 47, 56–7, 60, 62, 69, 73, 75, 78–9, 86, 90, 119, 169–71, 179 Ure, A. 50, 51  
 utilitarianism 4–5, 14–22, 30, 32–3, 37, 87–8, 133–6, 146, 164, 179, 182, 185–6  
 utopian 5, 58–9, 97, 105, 179, 182, 183
- values: absolute *see* values, trans-historical; historical 119–20, 123–6, 128, 130–1, 134, 136, 142–7, 164–5; relative *see* values, historical; trans-historical 9–10, 97, 107, 113–15, 117, 123–6, 128, 130–4, 136, 142–4, 146, 149, 156, 158–9, 184  
 wages 42–3, 53, 61, 114, 171, 174, 176–7  
 Walker, K.J. 167

INDEX

- Walzer, M. 138  
 wants *see* desires  
 wealth 35, 72–3, 75, 133, 136,  
 140, 147, 164–6, 168, 174  
 Weber, M. 45, 68, 173, 182, 183  
 Weil, S. 63–4, 181  
 welfare state 176–7  
 White, J. 179  
 Wiener, M.J. 90, 173  
 Willis, P. 55  
 women: and work 42–3, 56, 75,  
 171, 174, 182  
 women’s movement 43  
 Wood, A.W. 113–15, 124–8  
 Wood, S. 84 work 2–8, 32, 41, 69–  
 71, 76–7, 80, 83–6, 89, 126,  
 136, 142, 152, 155, 162, 168,  
 Appendix *passim*, 183; attitudes  
 to 5–8, 24–25, 30–31, 33, 34,  
 chapter 3–4 *passim*, Appendix  
*passim*; discipline 45, 50–2, 58,  
 63–4, 72; as end in itself 5, 31,  
 41, 43, 52–3, 63, 77, 171–2,  
 174–5; ethic 34, 44–6, 48, 51,  
 55, 68, 170, 180; as liberating  
 33, 40, 57, 61–3, 66–7, 68; as  
 means 5–6, 31–2, 37–8, 40, 43,  
 46, 60–1, 74, 171–2, 174–5,  
 177; skilled 23–7, 35, 38, 84–6;  
 as social activity 41–2, 64, 65,  
 77, 80; time 41, 47, 49–55, 70–  
 74; unskilled 23, 27, 29, 38, 65,  
 84–5; voluntary 175–7  
*Work in America* 38, 39, 40, 41,  
 46–7, 76, 177  
 working class 12, 22–23, 24, 28,  
 29, 74, 75, 80–2, 86, 116, 119–  
 20, 122, 139–40, 165, 178,  
 181, 183  
 Zeisel, J.S. 73