ALIENATION, FREEDOM & COMMUNISM

RAJEEV KUMAR SEHGAL

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Submitted for a Ph.D. in Philosophy

MM
ABSTRACT

G.A. Cohen poses the following three questions for Socialists. First, what do we want? What, in general, and even not so general terms, is the form of socialist society we seek? Second, why do we want it? What exactly is wrong with capitalism, and what is right about socialism? Third, how can we achieve it? What are the implications for practice of the fact that the working class in advanced capitalist society is not now what it once was, or what it was once thought to be?

In this thesis I provide some Marxist answers to these questions. I detail and defend the philosophy of Alienation Marxism. The thesis is divided into three main parts. In part one I argue that Marx’s most fundamental critique of capitalism is to be found in his early writings on the alienation. In part two I defend a Marxist account of freedom as self-realisation which, I argue, forms the positive counterpart to Marx’s negative (critical) writings on capitalism. In part three I relate arguments found in Marx’s later writings on history, economics and freedom to the goal of overcoming alienation, and I set out the economic, institutional and sociological development of a communism that progressively extends freedom as self-realisation to all.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have incurred a number of intellectual and personal debts, which enabled me to produce this thesis. First, I would not have conceived, let alone written, this thesis if it were not for the writings of G.A. Cohen. I disagree with Cohen on a number of issues within Marxist philosophy; however, I would not have arrived at my own positions if he had not set out his views to such a high degree of analytical rigour and precision. If I have anything new to contribute to Marxist philosophy then, to quote a cliché, it is largely a result of clambering onto, and standing on, the shoulders of a giant within contemporary political philosophy.

I owe a huge debt to my doctoral supervisor Jonathan Wolff. I thank him for having the stamina to bear the sometimes-sketchy formulations of my arguments through the years, and for driving me to think more deeply about my own views. This thesis would not have taken anything like the form it has without Jo’s suggestions and interventions, and the fact that I was able to subject my own ideas to his high intellectual standards. One of my aims in writing this thesis was to become a better philosopher. Jo has made me so.

I am grateful to Jerry Valberg for granting me the opportunity to undertake postgraduate study at University College London, Ted Honderich for an inspiring term of supervision in the early days my research and Veronique Munoz-Dardé for her support. I want to thank James Wilson for his comradeship. I discussed almost every aspect of this thesis with him, and he read and commented upon most of what I have written. James was both encouraging and usefully critical of my endeavours.

Finally I want to thank my brother Attul and my father Suraj for supporting my studies. This thesis is dedicated to the both of them and to the memory of my mother Sarla.
CONTENTS

PREFACE 6

PART ONE: THE CRITICAL BASIS OF MARXISM

*Three Approaches to a Socialist Critique of Capitalism: Efficiency, Justice & Alienation*

1.0 **Introduction** 14
1.1 **Efficiency** 16
1.2 **Justice** 21
1.21 Exploitation & Justice 23
1.22 Liberal Egalitarian Socialism 30
1.3 **Alienation** 40
1.31 ‘Abundance’ Under Communism 41
1.32 Marx on the *Dual* Aspect of Human Needs 45
1.321 Marx on the Alienation of Man from his Activity & Products 49
1.322 Feuerbach 51
1.323 Cohen’s Hegelian Criticism of the Alienation Marxist Philosophical Anthropology 59
1.33 Marx on *Self-Determination* & *Self-Actualisation* as Conditions for Self-Realising Production 62
1.331 Self-Determination: To Actualise in Something ‘One’s Own Purpose’ 62
1.332 Self-Actualisation: To Produce in Accord with the ‘Laws of Beauty’ 67
1.34 Some Contemporary Treatments of Marx on Alienation 69
1.341 Alienation & ‘Socialisation of the Means of Production’ 71
1.342 ‘Abolition’ or ‘Positive Supersession’ of Private Property in the Means of Production & Consumption? 83
1.4 **Conclusion** 86

PART TWO: FREEDOM, COMMUNITY & SOCIALISM

*The Alienation Marxist Sense In Which Socialists Must Defend Freedom & Be Communitarian*

2.0 **Introduction** 89
2.01 Negative Freedom & Self-Determination 90
2.02 David Miller on Socialist Freedom & Community 93
2.1 **Mill & Rawls on the Human Good** 99
2.11 Mill’s Aristotelian Utilitarianism: ‘Socrates Dissatisfied Is Better Than A Fool Satisfied’ 100
2.12 Rawls’ Aristotelian Principle 105
2.2 **Endogenous Preference Formation** 108
2.3 **Knowledge Concerning Human Needs and Capacities** 114
2.4 **The Spectre of Social Engineering** 119
2.5 **Consumer Society** 122
2.6 **Conclusion** 133
PART THREE: PRODUCTION, CONSUMPTION & THE SATISFACTION OF THE DUAL ASPECT OF NEEDS UNDER COMMUNISM

Technology, An Unconditional Basic Income and Associations of Producers

3.0 Introduction 135
3.01 Aristotle on Slavery, Marx on Economic Surplus & the Class Basis of Pre-Communist Freedom 139
3.02 Oligopolistic Capitalism: Global Capitalism without Capitalists 149

3.1 The Womb of Capitalism & Production Under Communism 167
3.11 Technology 172
3.111 The Marxian Technological-Fix: The Tendency for Labour Factors to be Replaced by Capital Factors 175

3.112 Fettering: Unemployment & Underemployment 202
3.1121 The Contradiction Thesis 213
3.1122 The Correspondence Thesis 239

3.12 Associations of Producers 263
3.121 The Paradox of Profit Argument: (i) 'Attractive labour & individual self-realisation' (ii) The 'Inverting' Power of Capitalist Free Market Exchange & Money (iii) Beyond Egoism & Altruism: The Demands of Morality & the Social Determination of the Self 273

3.13 A System of Associative Market Socialism 299

3.2 Conclusion 319

BIBLIOGRAPHY 321
PREFACE

In the preface to his book *History, Labour & Freedom* G.A. Cohen poses the following three questions for socialists:

First, what do we want? What, in general, and even not so general terms, is the form of socialist society that we seek? Second, why do we want it? What exactly is wrong with capitalism, and what is right about socialism? Third, how can we achieve it? What are the implications for practice of the fact that the working class in advanced capitalist society is not now what it once was, or what it was once thought to be?¹

In this thesis I aim to provide some Marxist answers to these questions. Answers to these questions cannot be easily read off the corpus of Marx’s writings, his writings are suggestive of a number of approaches. However, some approaches are better than others.

This thesis is divided into three main parts. In part one I contrast three approaches to developing a specifically Marxist critique of capitalism. I present and defend what I take to be the critical basis of Marxism, which centres on the claim that man is alienated within the capitalist mode of production. I label my own position Alienation Marxism because I believe that Marx’s early writings on alienation provide us with, firstly, a relevant account of what he took to be wrong with capitalism; secondly, the means to make best sense of his later writings on history, economics and freedom; and, thirdly, the key to understanding how Marx envisaged a viable post-capitalist communism. In developing my preferred ‘weapon of criticism’ I also undertake a ‘criticism of weapons’.² Thus, in my defence of Alienation Marxism I discuss and distinguish my views from those who champion, what I term, the Efficiency and Justice approaches to establishing a Marxist critique of capitalism.


Critique is not enough. Objections to any past, prevailing or potential social order must clue us into the aims of, and means to, a preferable social order.

Aims. As regards aims, in part two I discuss and defend a Marxian conception of freedom as self-realisation which, I argue, forms the positive counterpart to Marx’s negative (critical) writings on capitalism. Freedom as self-realisation centres on an account of the needs with which each of us are saddled and the capacities that each of us are able to develop, exercise and express in the course of our lives. Following Marx, I argue that there are general, universal and permanent features of human needs, which require each of us to have material security and meaning in our lives. At the most basic level human needs have a dual aspect or character. Each of us have material needs which stem from the fact that we are physical creatures of a certain kind who need to eat, be clothed and have shelter from the elements. In addition there are also needs which stem from the fact that we are peculiarly conscious beings. It is in virtue of the fact that we are conscious beings that our life is an ‘object’ for us which we need to experience as meaningful, fulfilling or valuable in some way. In the course of human history, and much to the chagrin of Marx, religious thought, instruction and practice has provided an answer to the human need for meaning. I argue that freedom requires us to have the means to meet (at least) our basic material needs as well as the ability and opportunity to occasion meaning and value in our lives through the development, exercise and expression of our generically human powers and capacities.

The alienation critique of capitalism and the goal of its overcoming is construed by some contemporary liberal socialists as perfectionist, and as issuing in authoritarian and paternalist politics. In part two I aim to defeat this objection to Alienation Marxism.
Means. As regards means it is evident from Marx’s writings that he believed communism to be a *post*-capitalist development. Marx believed that capitalism leads to communism, however he also believed that future communism needs the fullest development of capitalism. Part three sets out what Marx took this development to consist in, and how capitalist development provides for the material basis for production and consumption under communism.

As regards capitalist development Marx argues that there is a tendency towards the replacement of labour by capital factors of production. That is, prospects to perform stupefying and stultifying wage-labour within the primary, secondary and the tertiary sectors of the economy can, will and should diminish through developments in capital. As regards production for our mundane material wants, or what Marx terms production for the ‘realm of necessity’, Marx foresees circumstances in which ‘labour no longer appears so much to be included within the production process; rather the human being comes to relate more as a watchman and regulator to the production process itself’. Marx claims that capitalist development will eventually enable man ‘to step to the side of the production process instead of being its chief actor’.

Now I argue that such a development - the Marxian ‘Technological-Fix’ - has implications for the conduct of both consumption and production in a post-wage-worker and communist world.

As regards consumption, the prospect of capital-intensive production across the economy heralds the possibility of consumption without the compulsion of labour. For the first time in human history mankind will be able to provide for its mundane material needs without the need for the mass employment of labour. In such

---

circumstances wage-labour must cease to be the principal means by which one accesses the means of consumption. I argue that, in the face of such a development, entitlement to an unconditional basic income must come to take effect under a post-wage-labour communism.

As regards production, the advent of capital-intensive production frees man to perform those forms of production which are more worthy of his human nature, and which machines and computers cannot perform. Production for certain social needs requires the development, exercise and expression of our generically human powers and capacities. Thus, for example, the teaching of infants, the performance of surgery and the composition of music are forms of production which require (and will always require) the development, exercise and expression of an individual’s knowledge, skill and creativity. Furthermore, I argue that such production for such social needs are best served by having individual producers pursue (what Alisdair MacIntyre terms) goods ‘internal’ to the practices of teaching, medicine and music rather than capitalist profit.

Thus, in part three I argue that there are practical limits to a capitalist system of distribution in the means of consumption which is principally based upon the performance of wage-labour, and that there are normative limits to a system of production based primarily upon the pursuit and realisation of profit.

The Relevance of Marxism. Marxism has recently fallen on hard times. Two developments in the last century seem to speak against the relevance of Marx’s philosophy. The first is the rise, and subsequent demise, of Soviet Socialism and the nominally ‘Marxist’ regimes of the East. Secondly, in the Capitalist West (and as Cohen remarks above) we have witnessed the virtual disappearance of a mass politically organised (conscious) class of industrial workers.
The first development is seen as a refutation of Marx since it is commonly assumed that Soviet Socialism was Marxist philosophy in practice. However, there are three main reasons why we should be wary of identifying Marx’s philosophy with Soviet-style Socialism. First, as I remarked above, it is evident from Marx’s later writings that he believed communism to be a post-capitalist development in human history. Second, as I argue in part one, Marx in his early writings explicitly cautions us against the institution of Soviet-style Socialism. Third, what is arguably Marx’s central objection to capitalism - the alienation of man and the frustration of his freedom as self-realisation - is not overcome through the institution of Soviet-style Socialism. If anything, such a development makes matters worse.

The second development is seen as problematic for Marxists because it is thought that the rise of a politically conscious and organised mass of workers is required to effect revolutionary social change. According to the Communist Manifesto the development of capitalism to communism results from, firstly, the increasing ‘immisersation’ of the proletariat; secondly, the collecting together of proletarians and the coming to political consciousness of, and organisation for, their material interests; and thirdly, the ensuing ‘class struggle’ of workers against the class of capitalists and the eventual victory of the workers which issues in the ‘abolition’ of private property in the means of production, exchange and distribution and a ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’.

Now, I do not set much store by the prophetic, predictive and prescriptive claims of the Manifesto. I believe that the fact that there is no longer a class of workers which were thought necessary to effect revolutionary social change is irrelevant for the utility of Marx’s philosophy. I do not consider Marx as an ideologue.

---

4See section 1.341.
dedicated to furthering the material interests of a particular class of individual in society but as a philosopher of the human condition and as someone who theorised about history and economics with a view to securing the emancipation of mankind in general.

The Manifesto is an impassioned, inspiring and intoxicating read. However, I believe that its theoretical value is slight. It contains claims that plainly contradicts, obscures or simplifies what Marx argues for in his more sober, patient and considered works. The directives of the Manifesto have played a central role in the translation of Marx’s philosophy into political practice, not least of which in hands of Lenin and the ill-fated propagation of his Bolshevik brand of Marxism. The tendency to look to

---

^Eric Hobsbawn notes that the ‘virtual absence of early drafts... suggests that [the Manifesto] was written rapidly.’ Also that Marx and Engels wrote that document on behalf of the League of Communists who were already ‘committed to the object of ‘the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, the rule of the proletariat, the ending of the old society which rests on class contradiction and the establishment of a new society without classes or private property’.” See Hobsbawn’s introduction to The Communist Manifesto A Modern Edition (Verso, 1998), p.3ff. According to a biographer of Marx: “The Manifesto was a propaganda document hurriedly issued on the eve of a revolution. Marx and Engels considered in 1872 that ‘the general principles expounded in the document are on the whole correct today as ever’ though they would doubtless have modified radically some of its ideas - particularly (in light of the Paris Commune) those relating to the proletariat’s taking over of the state apparatus and the rather simplistic statements on pauperisation and class polarisation.” David McLellan Karl Marx A Biography (Papermac, 1995), p.165. In the 1872 Preface to the second German edition Marx and Engels write: “However much the state of things may have altered during the last twenty-five years, the general principles laid down in this Manifesto are, on the whole, correct today as ever. Here and there some detail may be improved. The practical application of the principles will depend, as the Manifesto states, everywhere and at all times, on the historical conditions... for that reason, no special stress is laid on the revolutionary measures proposed at the end of section II.” Karl Marx Selected Writings (Oxford, 1977), p.559. The end of section II contains proposals such as ‘the abolition of property in land and the application of all rents of land to public purposes’; ‘Centralisation of credit in the hands of the State, by means of a national bank with State capital and an exclusive monopoly’; ‘Centralisation of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State’; ‘Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the State; bringing into cultivation of wastelands, and the improvement of soil generally in accordance with a common plan’; and ‘Equal liability of all to labour. Establishment of industrial armies, especially for agriculture’. Karl Marx Selected Writings (Oxford, 1977), p.237. In this thesis I argue that the last proposal is especially at odds with Marx’s early writings on the alienation of man and his later writings on the use of technology within the production process and the end of the need for a mass of labour factors to work the land, factories and offices.

^Thus in the Manifesto there is the claim that communists seek ‘abolition’ of private property in the means of production whilst in Marx’s 1844 Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts he argues for the ‘positive transcendence’ of private property in the means of production (see section 1.342 for more on this point). Also, in the Manifesto there is the claim that ‘the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggle’ and yet in his 1859 Preface to a Critique of Political Economy Marx claims that human history must be understood in terms of the development of the forces of production. The Manifesto elevates ‘class struggle’ to a decisive role in the prospects for revolution and yet elsewhere Marx maintains that class struggle is a necessary but not sufficient condition for revolutionary social change (see p.38 for more on this point).
documents such as the Manifesto, and to the writings of Engels, for guides as to the practical implications of Marx’s philosophy is to a certain extent understandable. Engels was a long time friend, and sometime collaborator, of Marx and the goal of instituting Soviet-style Socialism is to be found within Engels’ own writings. However, whether or not Engels wrote with Marx’s authority on issues of future communism is debatable, especially since the Soviet-style Socialist aspirations of Engels contradicts what Marx himself turned out to write on the subject.

As regards the aims of, and means to, communism I make much of arguments which Marx sets out in his 1844 Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts and in his 1857/8 text the Grundrisse. Both of these works were unpublished in Marx’s lifetime. The 1844 Manuscripts only surfaced in the 1930s and were not translated into English until the 1950s. The Grundrisse did not come to light until the 1960s, and was not translated into English until 1973. Evidence suggests that Marx had both documents to hand when he was composing Capital.7 Also, Engels was apparently unaware of the existence of Marx’s Grundrisse.8

As I mentioned above it is not easy to read off how Marx envisaged future communism by looking to the corpus of his writings. Marx notoriously remarked that he was not in the business of providing ‘recipes for cookshops of the future’.9 However, to stay with this metaphor for the moment, Marx has stocked our philosophical stores with certain ingredients and it is incumbent upon us, as political

---

7See McLellan’s introduction to Marx’s Grundrisse (MacMillan Press, 1980 second edition), selected & edited by David McLellan, p.12. Marx spoke of the Grundrisse as ‘the result of fifteen years of research, thus the best period of my life’. This manuscript was misleading titled ‘Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Okonomie’, or ‘Groundwork to a Critique of Political Economy’, by its original editors. The sub-title of Capital is ‘A Critique of Political Economy’. As McLellan argues it is evident from the content of the Grundrisse, and from how Marx refers to the manuscript, that its scope and role in his thought is much more wide ranging than it simply being a ‘rough draft’ of Capital.


philosophers, to make best use of these ingredients so that mankind can come to feast on the finest available dishes. As political philosophers we must work to develop ideas and arguments which expand and refine the menu of social orders open to mankind. This task is necessary not least because developing capitalism is forcing changes upon human society, and such changes present both opportunities and threats to man's ability to service his needs and realise his freedom.

What ingredients has Marx left us? First there are reasons why he found capitalism to be objectionable. As I indicated earlier, I believe that Marx's early writings on the alienation of man within the capitalist mode of production, and a counterpart conception of his freedom as self-realisation, are central to understanding why Marx believed that communism must come to supplant capitalism. Marx believed that capitalism came and delivered to mankind its highest degree of alienation. Marx also believed that capitalism puts in place the economic basis of a society that consigns alienation to history. Marx argues that there are contradictions within the basic workings of capitalism that eventually 'fetters' the optimal use and development of capitalist productive forces; and that there are limits to how the capitalist profit motive can service human needs. I argue, along with Marx, that Communism is required to overcome these contradictions and limitations.

Marx had plenty to say on these issues and our intellectual and political history has not done him justice. As political philosophers it is incumbent upon us to analyse orthodox arguments and to challenge settled assumptions not simply to give Marx his due, but also because what Marx found to be objectionable about capitalism in the century before last finds resonance with us in the capitalism of today.
PART ONE

THE CRITICAL BASIS OF MARXISM

Three Approaches to a Socialist Critique of Capitalism: Efficiency, Justice & Alienation

Communism is the positive supersession of private property as human self-estrangement, and hence the true appropriation of the human essence through and for man; it is the complete restoration of man to himself as a social, i.e. human being, a restoration which has become conscious and which takes place within the entire wealth of previous periods of development. This communism... is the genuine resolution of the conflict between man and nature, and between man and man, the true resolution of the conflict between existence and being, between objectification and self-affirmation, between freedom and necessity, between individual and species. It is the solution of the riddle of history and knows itself to be the solution.  

1.0 Introduction

There are two distinct questions which any attempt to architect a viable (practical and desirable) Marxian Socialism must address. First, what are the ills of capitalism that Socialists seek to treat? And, second, what prescriptions are appropriate for such ills? Thus, we need to establish the critical basis of Marxian Socialism and then the positive goals, and programmes for concerted political action, which arise out of such a critique. This part of the thesis is mainly concerned with establishing the critical basis of a Marxian Socialism.

There are, broadly, three kinds of critique that Socialists have levelled against capitalism. The first critique centres itself on the claim that capitalism is inefficient; the second is that capitalism is unjust; and the third, that the capitalist mode of production alienates man. Proponents of each approach have sought to anchor their view within

---


11 Jon Elster in his book An Introduction to Karl Marx (Cambridge, 1986), p.41, and David Miller, in his paper 'In What Sense Must Socialism Be Communitarian?', re-printed in Socialism (Blackwell, 1989), also single out these three strands of critique within the tradition of Marxist and Socialist philosophy. Within the history of Socialist thought, particular thinkers have adopted one or more of three approaches to a critique of capitalism. I will use the terms 'Efficiency Socialists', 'Exploitation Socialists', 'Egalitarian
Marx’s writings. They have also sought to relate such ills to two traditional socialist remedies. The first is State ownership and control in the means of production, exchange and distribution (consumption) and the second is equality in the distribution of the social product (income and wealth).

In part one I argue, firstly, that the alienation critique of capitalism is the most fundamental critique of capitalism and that considerations of efficiency and distribution (justice) can only be understood once we command a perspicuous view of why Marx believed man to be alienated under capitalism and an account of freedom as self-realisation which forms the positive counterpart to Marx’s alienation critique. Secondly, I argue that Marx’s claims concerning the alienation of man under capitalism have only been partially diagnosed by certain contemporary political philosophers and that, as a consequence, the prescriptions that these theorists have suggested for the overcoming of man’s alienation are erroneous. Furthermore, I argue that the prescriptions such theorists do recommend - common ownership and control in the means of production, exchange and distribution and/or equality in the distribution of the social product - do not overcome the narrow interpretation of Marx’s claim concerning the alienation of man under capitalism, let alone the account of man’s alienation harboured within a more complete diagnosis. In part one, I advance a more complete diagnosis of Marx’s alienation critique of capitalism and show how a more complete diagnosis is better able to handle objections to Marx’s alienation critique of capitalism.

In what follows I will briefly discuss some issues raised by standard Socialist claims regarding capitalist inefficiency (section 1.1) and injustice (section 1.2), and then go on to discuss the claim that man is alienated under capitalism in greater depth.

Socialists’ and ‘Alienation Marxists’ to single out particular strands of thought so that we can command a better view of what Marx believed future communism to consist in.
(section 1.3). I do not have the space to conduct an exhaustive critique of traditional ‘efficiency’ and ‘justice’ interpretations of Marxian Socialism. My view is that whilst there is some basis in Marx to these two approaches, taken in-themselves, and as they are currently championed, the efficiency and justice critiques are largely irrelevant to contemporary circumstances. Moreover there are good Marxist reasons to reject both approaches. My aim in sections 1.1 and 1.2 is to set out a few of the basic difficulties with some common approaches to efficiency and justice critiques of capitalism and to indicate why the Alienation Marxist approach which I defend in the rest of this thesis is not vulnerable to such difficulties.

1.1 Efficiency

A simplistic efficiency approach to a critique of capitalism maintains that Socialists can dispense with a specifically normative critique of capitalism, and foundation for future communism, since Marx in his ‘later’ writings on economics and historical materialism came eschew ethics and instead concentrated on developing a purely scientific socialism which proves that the collapse of capitalism is unavoidable and the institution of communism inevitable. In so doing it is claimed, most notably by Althusser, that Marx dispensed with the normative claims of his earlier humanist writings and simply devoted himself to tracking the inherent contradictions and inevitable decline of capitalism. At the appropriate historical juncture capitalism will prove to be inefficient in matching resources to actual human needs. It will simply become rational for society to adopt a socialist mode of production.

The elements of a socialist mode of production are traditionally thought to be as follows: first, there is common ownership and control in the means of production

---

(capital) as opposed to its private ownership under capitalism and its control by a grubby profit-hungry class of capitalists; second, there is co-operative rather than competitive working relations; third, workers produce capital and consumer goods directly for social needs rather than indirectly via the pursuit of wages and profit (exchange-value); the distribution of goods (use-values) is made in accordance with an egalitarian standard (such as an equality of incomes) rather than in accordance with an inegalitarian distribution of wages and profits as under laissez-faire capitalism; fifth, there is an identity of individual interests, and a shared social purpose, which is reflected in a comprehensive State plan for production and distribution of goods.

Now this description of what is commonly regarded as the elements of a properly socialist mode of production describes the salient features of the economic and moral disaster that was Soviet Socialism. The spectacular collapse of the Soviet Socialist economic and political project has falsified the viability (that is, the practicability and desirability) of comprehensive State planning.

What history showed to be found wanting in practice, Hayek showed to be flawed in theory.¹³ Hayek argued that, under conditions of imperfect knowledge (as regards production technologies, labour skills and consumer preferences) an economy run in accordance with the disciplines of market exchange, a price mechanism and the profit motive is necessarily more efficient than an economy in which State bureaucrats attempt to organise capital and labour factors so as to meet human wants. A capitalist economy is better able to generate, act upon and develop information regarding capital

inputs, labour skills and actual consumer wants. If consumer wants are backed by money then the profit-seeking capitalist will direct capital and labour factors towards the service of such wants provided that she can clear an excess of revenue over costs. The goal of profit-maximisation, and competition from other producers, ensures that there is a downwards pressure on the running costs of capitalist enterprise, and that there is an incentive to develop capital inputs in order to maximise productivity (output per worker employed). The profit motive ensures that producers develop final goods in a way which either reduces cost to the consumer and/or tempts the consumer to spend by upgrading the quality, and expanding the range, of goods. Soviet State bureaucrats could never have hoped to generate, command and act upon the same degree and detail of knowledge as possessed by entrepreneurs, workers and consumers acting in accordance with market signals.

There are two main issues raised here. The first is the extent to which Marx can be implicated in commitment to implementing a Soviet-Style account of the ‘socialist’ mode of production and the second is the Hayekian view of the superiority of capitalism over what has (historically) come to pass for ‘communism’.

(i) Over the course of the thesis I will refer back to elements of, what has become, the standard account of the socialist mode of production. I will compare each element with (a) what Marx actually wrote, (b) developments within contemporary capitalism and (c) with lessons from the Soviet Socialist economic experience.

On the identification of the goals of Marxian Socialism with Soviet Socialist economic experiment, Marx in Capital Vol.3 does speak Socialism in terms of achieving ‘the social regulation of general production’ and in the German Ideology he does state that: ‘The national centralisation of the means of production will become the
natural base for a society which will consist of an association of free and equal producers acting consciously according to a general and rational plan’. However, the social regulation and planning of general production does not to my mind necessarily equate to the kind of ‘comprehensive’ economic planning attempted by Soviet Socialists. It could be argued that in modern Social Democracies we have a ‘social’ and ‘general’ regulation of production in that through the political process, and by exercising the legal and fiscal powers of the Modern State, we can enact measures which regulates capitalism so that we can benefit from its positive aspects and cushion ourselves from its more brute effects. Social Democracy has humanised capitalism. The advent of social democratic politics has enabled mankind to subject his fate to goals formed and pursued within the political process rather be simply left to the play of purely economic forces. Thus by implementing policies such a minimum wage, limits to the working week, union rights, the provision of welfare benefits and pensions, as well as rights to healthcare, education and access to general cultural goods, the modern Social Democratic State has made capitalist society more palatable, and even worthwhile, for the majority.

Obviously Marx was not in the business of making capitalism more palatable for the masses; he was in the business of revolution. I will be arguing below that his revolutionary passion was powered by his reflections upon the alienation of man under capitalism, and the prospect of his freedom as self-realisation under communism. In his book Evolutionary Socialism Eduard Bernstein (an intimate of both Marx and Engels) writes that: ‘The whole practical activity of Social Democracy is directed towards creating circumstances and conditions which shall render possible and secure a
transition of the modern social order into a higher one'. In part three I will suggest several ways in which we can and should further regulate general production so as to facilitate a development from social democratic capitalism to a higher order of communism which avoids the pitfalls of Soviet Socialism. We should bear in mind that for Marx communism was always going to be a post-capitalist achievement. Communism takes place 'within the entire wealth of previous periods of development'. Soviet Socialism was not a Marxian Socialism. The material and social basis of communism was not yet in place. In part three I will show how the material and social foundations of communism can arise out of (and could only have arisen out of) a full development of capitalism. I will argue that this development consists in the achievement of capital-intensive manufacture, an unconditional basic income and the institution of 'associative' production.

(ii) As for Hayek, he provides us with a plausible account of why Western Capitalism came to triumph over Soviet Socialism. The advent of capitalism meant that profit became the determining force of human production. There is no doubt that production for profit delivered many great and good developments to man and heralded the achievement of an unprecedented level of material well-being to those in the Capitalist West. However, in part three I will argue that communism proves itself to be a more efficient system of production and consumption than capitalism. I will argue that there are practical limits to a system of distribution in the means of consumption that is principally based on the performance of wage-labour, and that there are normative limits to a system of production based primarily on the pursuit and realisation of profit. On a practical level I will argue (along with Marx) that there is a tendency towards the replacement of labour by capital factors within the production process and that this

---

tendency 'fetters' the optimal development and deployment of productive forces and the ability of capitalism to match productive possibilities to human needs. A scheme of unconditional basic income is required by which individuals will be able to consume without the necessity of labour. On a normative plane, I will argue that the satisfaction of certain needs are better served where an individual's production is geared towards the pursuit and realisation of, what Alisdair MacIntyre terms, 'goods internal to practices' rather than profit. I will argue that the institution of associative forms of production - in which individuals are primarily minded to produce in accordance with internal goods - are preferable to capitalist organisation where technology cannot produce for our needs and where production necessarily requires the development, exercise and expression of our generically human powers and capacities.

1.2 Justice

There are two distinct and yet conflicting approaches to the justice critique of capitalism. The first is based on the claim that the capitalist exploits the worker. Exploitation Socialists believe that capitalist profit is based on theft of the worker's 'surplus' labour by the capitalist and that Socialism must come to rectify such an injustice and return to the worker(s) the full fruits of his labour. The second approach centres on the belief that the just society requires an egalitarian distribution of the social product. Egalitarian Socialists believe that capitalist inequality cannot be justified and that Socialist philosophy and politics are required to justify, advocate and implement a more equal distribution of income and wealth across all individuals in society.

There is a conflict between these two approaches to Socialist Justice. If the product rightfully belongs to the workers, and in proportion to the labour they give to the
production process, then it is difficult to justify a general entitlement (for workers and non-workers) to a share in an egalitarian distribution of the social product.\textsuperscript{15}

In the first approach Exploitation Socialists are concerned with the morality of exchange that takes place between the capitalist and the worker and question whether the transaction which takes place between them - labour power for a wage - is an exchange of ‘equivalents’. In the second approach Egalitarian Socialists enjoin a liberal debate about the just distribution of the social product (the ‘results’ of production) and position themselves at the radical end of Liberal Egalitarian philosophy. On the first approach the worker’s rightful claim to his individual product (or the rightful claims of the working classes to the social product) is (are) violated. On the second approach, individuals in general (workers and non-workers) are thought to suffer from an unjustified lack of freedom (well-being) in virtue of an unequal distribution in the results of production.

On both approaches injustice stems from the fact that the capitalist holds legal (and not moral) rights of property in both the means of production (capital) and over the lion’s share of the results of production (income and wealth). Exploitation Socialists believe that common ownership in the means of production and distribution in accordance with one’s labour contribution is required to rectify capitalist injustice. Latter day (liberal) Egalitarian Socialists seek to right capitalist injustice through achieving a more equal distribution of income and wealth in society.

\textsuperscript{15}This fundamental problem for Socialist theory has been recognised by G.A. Cohen. Most of his book Self-Ownership, Freedom & Equality (Cambridge, 1995) consists in his attempt to overcome this problem. He argues that Socialists must junk the premise of ‘self-ownership’ upon which the claim of exploitation is based, in favour of securing a more equal distribution of the social product.
In what follows I discuss the exploitation and the liberal egalitarian approaches to Socialism in turn. I will argue that neither of these approaches are relevant to a viable (practical and desirable) Marxian Socialism.

1.21 Exploitation & Justice

Exploitation Socialist view wage-labours as the true producers in society. It is their labour, when joined with capital factors of production, which delivers an economic product (goods and services) to society. Hence, in a quasi-Lockean fashion, the worker’s product properly belongs to the worker. In David Miller’s words: it is “the workers who sweat while the capitalist idles,” or in G.A. Cohen’s words: “(workers)... are the only persons who produce anything which has value [i.e. commodities], and that capitalists are not workers in this sense.” The capitalist is only able to secure his portion of the economic product in virtue of the fact that he owns the means of production and by the fact that he is able to generate and appropriate ‘surplus’ labour from wage-workers. Capitalist profit is based on the ‘theft’ of surplus labour from the worker. A Socialist society remedies this injustice by reconfiguring ownership entitlements in the means of production and by effecting a scheme of distribution which returns to the worker the full fruits of his labour. 

Exploitation Socialists source their own approach in Marx’s own use of the term ‘exploitation’ in his later economic writings. In each historical-economic epoch there are what Marx terms the direct producers of society. It is their labour which, when twinned with the prevailing means of production, produces goods for both themselves and the

---


ruling (non-working) classes. In the ancient world slaves produced for their masters; in the feudal era serfs surrendered part of their product to the lord on whose land they laboured and lived; and, in the modern era, the product of the wage-labourer sustains and furthers the material interests of the capitalist. Now in the first two cases the relation of exploitation was overt. The class of masters and lords were able to live in the fashion they had become accustomed because of the fact that a class of slaves and serfs performed production for their mundane material needs, respectively. The slave’s life was geared to the service of his master, and the serf handed over a portion of the physical product of his labours to the lord in lieu of land rent. However, according to Marx the relation of exploitation under capitalism is covert and requires a labour theory of value, and a counterpart notion of surplus-value, to explain how the capitalist is able to consume/invest as he does without having to labour.¹⁹

On the face of things the worker turns up to the factory gate and offers to sell his labour power to the capitalist. The capitalist contracts the worker to perform some activity for ten hours per day, for which the worker then receives a wage. By means of his wage the worker is then able to purchase goods and thereby satisfy the (subsistence) needs of himself and his dependants. Now Marx claims that the subsistence bundle of goods purchased by the worker requires a certain amount of, what he terms, ‘abstract socially necessary labour time’. The worker’s consumption requirements only require the performance of X amount of labour hours given current capital factors of production. However, the capitalist hires the worker to perform X+Y amount of labour hours and this extra amount, Y hours, forms a ‘surplus’ of labour which the worker gives to the production process and which constitutes profit for the capitalist. The worker gives more

labour power to the capitalist production process than is required to meet his current (subsistence) consumption level. The excess is appropriated by the capitalist and used to finance the capitalist’s own (luxury) consumption and further investment in the production process.

Two key questions now arise in the Marxist exploitation debate. Firstly, on a question of textual interpretation: did Marx believe that the relation of exploitation constitutes an injustice to the worker? And, secondly, does the exchange that takes place between the capitalist and worker in fact constitute an injustice?  

Exploitation Socialists argue that the answer to both questions is yes, Marx’s explicit and vituperative remarks to the contrary not withstanding. These Socialists argue that the whole point of Marx’s later writings, of his using the concepts of value, surplus value and exploitation, lies in him exposing capitalism’s dirty exploitative “secret.” They further argue that Marx implicitly harboured a quasi-Lockean theory of entitlement in light of which workers are deprived of their rightful ownership of the full social product. These Socialists advance further authority for their view by citing instances in which Marx speaks about the capitalist “robbing” and “embezzling” from the worker.

There are several problems with the Exploitation approach to a Marxian critique of capitalism.

(i) Firstly, the Exploitation Socialist belief in the view that the wage-worker is the true producer in society contradicts a Hayekian view of the role of capitalist agency in the triumph of Western Capitalism over Soviet Socialism. Capitalist agency embodies the functions of entrepreneurship, investment and risk in an enterprise. It is the fact that

---

20 For a useful survey of the issues raised by these questions see Norman Geras’ paper ‘The Controversy about Marx & Justice’ re-printed in Marxist Theory (Oxford, 1989), ed. Alex Callinicos.
the exercise of these functions were performed by private individuals as opposed to the State which accounts for the material achievements of capitalism.

(ii) On Marx's use of the word 'robbery' and 'theft', Marxist commentators such as Allen Wood and Robert Tucker claim that Exploitation Socialists miss the ironic tone that Marx adopts in the relevant passages.\(^2\) Also, simply by describing someone as stealing from another, it does not follow that an injustice has been done. Robin Hood stole from the rich to give to the poor but it does not follow that thereby he acted unjustly. Moreover, there is an alternative sense in which Marx intended by using the term "exploitation". Instead of construing its use as the capitalist taking of unwarranted advantage of another person, it could just mean the capitalist making best use of a resource (in this case labour power).\(^2\)

(iii) Husami claims that Marx, in his pamphlet *The Critique of the Gotha Programme*, advances two principles of justice.\(^2\) A 'Socialist' principle of justice has application in the first stage of post-capitalist society and stipulates that 'each worker should receive goods in proportion to their labour contribution'. A 'Communist' principle of justice, 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their need', has application in the second stage of post-capitalist society. Now, I do not believe that Marx was setting out two principles of justice for application in different stages of post-capitalist society. Marx did *not* envisage post-capitalist communism to be


\(^2\)In part three I argue that the fact that labour power came to be performed by alienated wage-labourers, and the fact that capitalism accelerated de-skilling of productive profit-maximising work, prepared the ground for the replacement of labour factors by capital factors of production.

secured via a ‘first stage’ of socialism in which workers receive from a common product in proportion with the amount of labour they give to the production process.

In *The Critique* Marx makes a distinction between communism “as it has been developed on its own foundations” and formulations of socialism which are “in every respect economically, morally, intellectually... still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb [they have] emerged.” 24 *The Critique* is a highly ambiguous document, however, I believe that much of *The Critique* consists in Marx ridiculing schemes of Socialist justice which aim at returning to the worker the full fruits of his labour since such a conception of socialism is riddled with the hallmarks of capitalism.

For a worker to expect due ‘compensation’ for labour-time given over to the production process is a bourgeois conception of right. A contribution principle of distributive justice presupposes the existence of alienating wage-labour and the experience of production as a ‘sacrifice’ of oneself. In *The Critique* Marx claims that communism is achieved when ‘labour is no longer just a means of keeping alive but has itself become a vital need and when the all-round development of individuals has increased their productive powers so that the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly - only then can society cross the narrow horizon of bourgeois right and inscribe on its banner: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!’

In part three I will argue that Communism ‘as it has developed on its own foundations’ consists in the development of capital-intensive manufacture across the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors the capitalist economy, the institution of a right

---

to meet one's basic material needs without the compulsion of labour (via an unconditional basic income) and the institution of 'associations' of producers which enables, what Marx terms, 'socialised man, the associated producers' to produce for social needs whilst also being able to develop, exercise and express their own capacities in their production.

(iv) Fourth, whilst the rhetoric of class struggle might have had some relevance in the industrial phase of capitalism, advanced post-industrial capitalist society resists straightforward decomposition into a class of capitalists and a class of workers. Therefore any practical expression of this critique and its proposals for reform will fall on mainly deaf ears in our popular politics. Indeed, in part three I will make much of the fact that we are in an epoch of oligopolistic capitalism in which we are all workers and all (potential if not actual) owners of oligopolistic share capital.

(v) Fifth, there is the practical problem of instituting a system of rectificatory justice based on a standard of labour contribution. According to the Exploitation Socialist view an individual's rightful claim on the social product should be in proportion to the amount of labour she has given to the production process, at least in the so-called 'first-stage' of post-capitalist socialism.\(^2^5\) In a late industrial society such as ours, in which we have a highly complex structure of the division and specialisation labour and a social product resulting from the interaction of a multitude of tasks, it is then difficult to disassemble them and determine precisely what contribution any particular individual made to the sum of the social product. In short, Exploitation Socialists cannot provide a workable alternative to the 'marginalist' theory of income (value) determination championed by neo-classical economists and Libertarian political

philosophers. Even if the exploitation critique and a principle of contribution in accordance with one’s labour did secure a popular mandate, how can we assess a worker’s contribution to the production process in order for him to receive his rightful entitlement?

*From Wage-Labour to Technology.* I believe that the concepts of value, surplus and exploitation were not intended by Marx to provide Socialists with a moral critique of capitalism and the moral basis for a Socialist society. If exploitation does form the basis of a critique of capitalism, and the policies and programmes for Socialism, then what of the need for capitalist development? Marxian Socialism is post-capitalist. If we are primarily in the business of righting a wrong, and if exploitation is wrong now, it was also wrong at the inception of capitalist society. Therefore, Socialism, conceived as returning to the workers the fruits of their labour, by wresting the ownership and control of the means of production from capitalists, would have been appropriate then. However, for Marx, communism requires the *full* development of capitalism. In *Capital Vol.3* Marx writes: “The development of the productive forces of social labour is capital’s historic mission and justification. For that very reason, it unwittingly creates the material conditions for a higher form of production.”

My view is that the wage-worker within the capitalist mode of production, as well as the slave and the serf before him, are in some sense the true producers in society. Their labour, when joined with land and capital factors of production, furnishes mankind in general with those goods that sustain systems of material and cultural

---

26 Classical theorists argue that there is no practicable standard of assessing value apart from a market theory of income determination. A worker is hired at the current wage rate if the product (measured in monetary terms) she potentially generates is greater than her market wage. The company stops hiring workers at that point where the marginal cost (wage) of the last worker equals the marginal revenue that his labour helps to generate.

(social) re-production. In part three I will argue that mankind’s interest is not best served by returning to the workers the full fruits of ‘their’ labour, but by the development of a higher form of production in which alienating wage-labour is consigned to technology; where each is able to consume for one’s basic needs without the compulsion of labour via a scheme of unconditional basic income; and where associative forms of production (‘social labour’) are instituted, in which each is able to produce for social needs whilst also being able to develop, exercise and express their capacities.

1.22 Liberal Egalitarian Socialism

An Egalitarian Socialist approach to a critique of capitalism focuses mainly on justice in distribution of the ‘results of production’, the social product. The view is that capitalist inequality cannot be justified and that Socialist philosophy is required to formulate and justify a more egalitarian scheme of distribution across persons in society. A common cause for concern, and focus for re-distribution, is the spread of income and wealth although other equalisandums are proposed. I will focus on the demand that Socialist justice requires an egalitarian distribution of income and wealth across persons in society. This is by far the most common Socialist rallying cry. In an age where there is scepticism as regards radical reform in the mode of production, Socialism seems to have boiled down to the aim of achieving a more just scheme of taxation and distribution of in-cash and in-kind welfare benefits.

In addition to the argument from justice, Egalitarian Socialists also argue that the degree to which one is free is a function of the amount of income and wealth one has to hand. Thus, David Miller rejects an alienation route to Socialism and, instead,

---

champions a ‘distributive’ approach to a critique of capitalism. He argues that the alienation approach is undesirable because it is perfectionist and impracticable because it rejects a role for markets in the co-ordination of economic activity. He writes: “These are the two pressures, therefore, that incline contemporary socialists to put forward a slimmed-down version of socialism, defined more or less entirely in distributive terms.” On Miller’s account the task of Socialism is to outflank libertarians and liberals and to champion a more *effective* freedom which, along with traditional liberal rights to negative liberty and equality of opportunity, requires a more egalitarian distribution of income and wealth across persons in society.

In what follows I will make three main points. First, that Marx explicitly denounced the aim of securing a more egalitarian spread of income and wealth in society. Second, his denunciation of Socialist demands for distributive equality is consistent with his materialist/realistic view of distributive justice. Marx maintains that distribution in the means of consumption arises as a ‘natural consequence’ of the mode of production. There is no such thing as a just distribution of income and wealth beyond the norms of right and entitlement occasioned by a particular mode of production. The demand for distributive equality on the basis of capitalist relations of production merely amounts to idle moralising. Third, aside from a scheme of basic income and a


30 Miller writes: “We can identify the central idea of new socialism as equality of *effective* choice: people should have the rights, opportunities and resources that enable them to choose effectively how they are to live their lives. Socialism is not the enemy of freedom, but its best friend; whereas libertarians and liberals claim that their proposals provide people with the greatest equal liberty, only socialist policies can make that liberty effective.” See ‘In What Sense Must Socialism Be Communitarian?’ p.52 in *Socialism* (Blackwell, 1989) ed. Paul, Miller & Paul.

31 Egalitarian Socialists such as G.A. Cohen and David Miller do advocate reform of the mode of production along the lines of market socialism. Miller defends a market economy in which worker co-operatives, rather than capitalists and wage-labourers, produce for consumer wants by pursuing profit. Cohen speaks approvingly of a scheme ‘in which the standard capitalist market organises economic
sufficiency to meet one's basic needs, there is no reason to be especially concerned with the overall distribution of income and wealth across persons in society. Distributive equality is neither necessary nor sufficient to secure Marxian freedom as self-realisation.

(i) Marx's explicit remarks on the subject of distributive justice are unequivocal. In his 1875 pamphlet *The Critique of the Gotha Programme* he writes:

> If I dealt at some length with the 'undiminished proceeds of labour' on the one hand, and 'equal right' and 'just distribution' on the other, it is to show the criminal nature of what is being attempted: on the one hand, our party is to be forced to re-accept as dogmas ideas which may have made sense at one time but which are now only a load of obsolete verbal rubbish; on the other hand, the realistic outlook instilled in our party at the cost of immense effort, but now firmly rooted in it, is to be perverted by means of ideological, legal and other humbug so common among the democrats and the French Socialists.

Quite apart from the points made so far, it was a mistake anyway to lay main stress on the so-called distribution and to make it the central point.

... Vulgar Socialists (and from them, in turn, a section of democrats) have followed the bourgeois economists in their consideration and treatment of distribution as something independent of the mode of production and hence in the presentation of socialism as primarily revolving around the question of distribution. Why go back a step when the real state of affairs has been laid bare? 32

Here Marx speaks of the 'realistic outlook instilled in the party' and of its being perverted by 'ideological, legal and other humbug'. The realistic outlook refers to his materialist conception of justice in which Marx maintains that norms of distribution (justice) arise as a 'natural consequence' of the mode of production, and that transformations in the mode of distribution are contingent upon subjective (social) and objective (material) developments within the mode of production itself. Marx writes:

---

activity, but the tax system cancels the disequalising results of that market by re-distributing income to complete equality' (Self-Ownership, Equality & Freedom, Cambridge, 1995, p.264). However, such schemes of market socialism do not transform the teleological basis of production. The relations and aims of production are essentially capitalist.

In part three I argue that a viable form of Socialist distribution in the means of consumption is effected by means of an unconditional basic income. Above this, an individual's access to the means of consumption (income) is to be obtained mainly through enjoining activity and effecting products within associative forms of production.

What is a 'just' distribution?

Does not the bourgeoisie claim that the present system of distribution is 'just'? And given the present mode of production is it not, in fact, the only 'just' system of distribution? Are economic relations regulated by legal concepts of right or is the opposite not the case, that legal relations spring from economic ones? Do not the socialist sectarians themselves have the most varied notions of 'just' distribution?

(Critique, p.344)

Right can never rise above the economic structure of society and its contingent cultural development.

(Critique, p.347)

The distribution of the means of consumption at any given time is merely a consequence of the distribution of the conditions of production themselves; the distribution of latter, however, is a feature of mode of production itself.

(Critique, p.348)

(ii) These remarks are consistent with Marx’s materialist/realistic view of justice. Marx maintains that the,

... phantoms formed in the human brain are... necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premisses. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. 33

According to Marx, norms of justice, as found in pre-communist societies, are ideological or ‘superstructural’ phenomena. On a technological determinist and functional interpretation of Marx’s historical materialism, society decomposes into three distinct ensembles.34 First, there are the forces of production, or the tools and machines that direct producers (slaves, serfs and wage-labourers) have to hand. Second, there are the relations of production which, in successive historical-economic epochs, have

33The German Ideology (Lawrence & Wishart, 1970), p.47.

34Here I am loosely summarising G.A. Cohen’s technological determinist/functionalist reading of Marx’s historical materialism. Cohen does not reduce all claims of justice in pre-communism to the superstructure of class-based society; he only includes aspects of a society’s political and legal structures. For a summary of Cohen’s functionalist interpretation as regards the interaction between society’s productive forces, its economic relations and its superstructure, see his paper ‘Forces & Relations of Production’ re-printed in
comprised of a ‘ruling’ class of masters over slaves, a class of lords over serfs and, more recently, a class of capitalists ruling over a class of wage-labourers. Thirdly, there are the ideological forms that constitute the superstructure of a society. The forms of ideology include a society’s political and legal system as well as its religious and moral life.

According to Marx, the content of practical morality, the norms of justice which prevail at any particular time, are determined by the relations of production which, in turn, are determined by the level of development in society’s productive forces. Norms of justice arise out of particular relations but also serve to sustain those relations of production. Similarly, relations of production are determined by the level of development of productive forces but also serve to promote the optimal level of development in society’s productive forces.

According to Marx norms of justice arose (arise) in pre-communist societies in order to serve the material interests of the ruling classes. The ruling class of each age sustains their position as long as they are able to preside over an optimal development in the productive forces of society. Norms of right and justice that obtain in pre-communist society do not fundamentally result from the intellectual labour of philosophers or the deliberation of politicians. Rather, the ruling ideas of an age as rationalised by particular philosophers and championed by certain politicians function in order to sustain and further the material interests of the ruling class. Norms of distributive justice correspond

---


35 On the morality of exchange that takes place between the capitalist and the worker, Marx states: “The justice of transactions which go on between agents of production rests on the fact that these transactions arise as a natural consequence from the relations of production. The juristic forms in which these economic transactions appear as voluntary actions of participants, as expressions of their common will and as contracts that may be enforced by the state against a single party cannot, being mere forms, determine their content. They merely express it. This content is just whenever it corresponds to the mode of production, is adequate to it. It is unjust whenever it contradicts that mode. Slavery, on the basis of the capitalist mode of
to a particular mode of production in the sense that general acquiescence to such standards promotes an optimal development of society’s productive forces.36

Arguments regarding distributive justice, and demands for rightful shares of the economic product, either challenge or coincide with prevailing norms of distribution. Marx remarks that ‘socialist sectarians themselves have the most varied notions of a “just” distribution’ and that many of them champion principles which are ‘in every respect economically, morally and intellectually,... still stamped with the birthmarks of the society from whose womb [they have] emerged’. Cohen positions himself as one such sectarian when he demands that,

... what the Labour Party has to do from a Socialist point of view, and what Socialists in it have to do, is to engage in more principled advocacy. When people have nothing to lose but their chains, you don’t have to tell them that it is wrong that they have nothing, but when people who have a lot to lose are in a society where other people have nothing, them you have to emphasise the wrongness of that position to get them to act.37

However, according to Marx, such advocacy is idle since changes in the norms of morality/justice do not fundamentally issue result from movements in the mind but from developments in the real basis of society, the forces and relations of production.38

Husami claims that we can reconcile a justice critique of capitalism with Marx’s historical materialism because there are two levels of determination in a Marxian sociology of morals. He argues that conventional norms of distributive justice in class-production is unjust; so is fraud in the quality of commodities.” Karl Marx Capital Vol.3 (Penguin, 1991), p.17.

36In part three I argue that through the development of capital-intensive production under oligopolistic capitalism a new norm for distribution in the means of production can obtain. The advent of capital-intensive production, and the corresponding reduction in opportunities to perform wage-labour within the capitalist mode of production, occasions the prospect of consumption without the compulsion of labour via a scheme of unconditional basic income.


38See footnote 186 in part two for more on Marx’s claim that ‘right can never rise above the economic structure of society and its contingent cultural development’ (my emphasis).
based societies do favour the ruling classes but that ‘theorists of the proletariat’ (Socialists and Communists) can fashion justice from the standpoint of oppressed workers and from those who generally suffer from material disadvantage. Husami believes that by proffering, first, a principle of justice based on labour contribution and, second, a principle of justice based on need, Marx in *The Critique of the Gotha Programme* was providing grounds in ‘justice’ upon which Socialists can challenge the rule of capitalist convention. Husami writes: “The ruling class fails in maintaining the hegemony of its ideas when the oppressed class develops from a class in-itself to a class for it-self; when it comes to an awareness of its life situation and articulates its class interests.”

Engels claims that the demands of Exploitation and/or Egalitarian Socialist justice are simply reducible to the fact that the weak (the proletarian workers and other materially disadvantaged groups) pit their material interests against those of the strong (the propertied class of capitalists and the moneyed class of worker). There is nothing especially ‘just’ about the claims of either group in what they respectively take to be their rightful share of the social product. Engels writes:

> We... reject every attempt to impose on us any moral dogma whatsoever as an eternal, ultimate and for ever immutable ethical law on the pretext that the moral world, too, has its permanent principles which stand above history and the differences between nations. 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. And as society has hitherto been moved in class antagonisms, morality has always been class morality; it has either justified the domination and interests of the ruling class, or ever since the oppressed class has become powerful enough, it has represented its indignation against this domination and the future interests of the oppressed. That in this process there has on the whole been progress in morality, as in all other branches of human knowledge, no one will doubt. But we have not yet passed beyond class morality. A really human morality which stands above class antagonisms and above any

---

recollection of them becomes possible only at a stage of society which has not only overcome class antagonisms but has even forgotten them in practical life.  

Rather than seeing Socialism as being exclusively concerned with taking up the cause of one class over another, and at aiming to secure a more just portion of the economic product for the exploited and materially disadvantaged, Engels writes that our aim must be to get to a society beyond class antagonisms. Only then can we fashion, and come to live by, a 'really human morality'.

There is a moral basis for future communist society but it does not centre on the achievement of exploitation/egalitarian distributive justice. Moral value under communism is primarily informed by a Marxian conception of freedom as self-realisation and by our coming to know, share in and pursue 'goods' internal to, what Alisdair MacIntyre/Aristotle terms, social practices. In part three I argue that post-class/capitalist/bourgeois morality is achieved where social practices and their counterpart virtues come to constitute our common practical and expressive life, and where we have achieved both the subjective and the objective conditions in order for the virtues to flourish. The subjective conditions require a state of affairs in which each is able to develop some aspect(s) of our generically human powers and capacities, whilst the objective conditions denote the material and institutional framework by which we are able to exercise and express such capacities. The advent of the subjective and objective conditions for communism correspond to a certain development in the 'forces and relations' of production. In part three I argue that the material (objective) and institutional (subjective/social) framework of communism consists in the achievement of capital-intensive production for mundane consumer wants; an unconditional basic income; and the institution of 'associative' forms of production in which individuals are

---

able to produce for social needs whilst also be able to develop, exercise and express their capacities.

Marx maintains that the traditional struggles of unionised labour that aimed at securing a greater share of the economic product for the worker, as well as improved conditions for the performance of wage-labour, are a necessary but not sufficient condition for the achievement of communism. On the conflict between the interests of the worker and that of capital, Marx states that the workers “by cowardly giving way in their everyday conflict with capital, they would certainly disqualify themselves for the initiating of any larger movement.” He then adds that:

At the same time, and quite apart from the general servitude involved in the wages system, the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate working of these everyday struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction; that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady. They ought, therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerrilla fights incessantly springing up from the never-ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the material conditions and social forms necessary for the economical reconstruction of society. Instead of the conservative motto, ‘A fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work!’ they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, ‘Abolition of the wages system!’

(iii) There is no doubt that the amount of money one has to hand, in a capitalist society, determines one’s freedom to consume as well as one’s freedom to abstain from burdensome labour. As I will argue in part two, the ability to consume (at least) in accordance with one’s basic material needs is a necessary part of Alienation Marxist freedom. The other necessary part of freedom as self-realisation is that an individual becomes able to secure meaning and fulfilment in their life through the development, exercise and expression of their capacities in meaningful production. Aside from a

scheme of unconditional basic income, ‘associative’ forms of production should provide forums by which individuals become able to further access the means of consumption. Above a sufficiency to meet one basic material needs the fact that some are able to consume a greater quality and quantity of goods over others is not any ground for rectificatory justice.

In late capitalist society consumption has come to constitute the dominant means by which we seek self-identity and fulfilment, whilst production is largely experienced as a sacrifice of the self, as a means to life rather than ‘life’s prime want’. There is little doubt that most in capitalist society would prefer more money to less in virtue of the fact that one then becomes better able to fulfil one’s desires for consumption, and because it lessens one’s compulsion to work. A more egalitarian distribution of incomes would equalise such freedom across persons in society. However, this is not the conception of freedom that Marx envisaged as the goal for communism.

Miller is right to claim that Socialists champion a more effective freedom than libertarians and liberals. However, for Marx Socialist freedom is not more effective because it includes a more egalitarian spread of incomes across persons (along with traditional individual rights to negative liberty and equality of opportunity) but because it enables man to realise his good both in terms of his need to consume (rather than his consumerist wants) and the fact that he becomes able to secure self-definition and fulfilment in his production. For Alienation Marxists, freedom for the individual consists in his ability to meet (at least) his basic material needs as well the ability to occasion meaning and value in life through his production. Marx writes:

To clamour for equal or even equitable retribution on the basis of the wages system is the same as to clamour for freedom on the basis of the slavery system. What
you think is just or equitable is out of the question. The question is: What is necessary and unavoidable with a given system of production?  

For Marx man cannot be free unless he is able to produce in accordance with his generically human nature. Production under capitalism denies and degrades his nature; he is less than human. (Communism is the ‘complete restoration of man to himself as a social, i.e. human being’. ) Under capitalism man fails to develop, exercise and express his capacities and/or he produces for instrumental ends such as wage and profit rather than for ‘goods internal to social practices’. Marxian freedom requires a state wherein you are able to meet your basic material needs without the compulsion of labour, and where one is able to develop one’s capacities in some way and then have the opportunity to exercise and express those capacities in some form of meaningful production. In part three I argue that Marxian freedom as self-realisation only requires an unconditional basic income and the institution of associative forms of production.

I will discuss the Marxian conception of freedom as self-realisation further in part two. First we must command a perspicuous view of Marx’s alienation critique of capitalism and how his analysis led him to the communist goal of freedom as self-realisation.

1.3 Alienation

In The Critique of the Gotha Programme Marx does cite a distributive norm for communist society, that is: ‘From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs’. However, Marx does not proclaim this as a principle of justice but as a standard which takes effect “when labour is no longer just a means to keeping alive but has itself become a vital need” and “when the all-round development of individuals has

---

also increased their productive powers and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly." Thus, Marx puts the overcoming of man's alienation and the achievement of self-realising production, as well as the prospect of (relative) abundance, as conditions for a society in which each contributes in accordance with their ability and each is able to consume (at least) in accordance with their basic needs. I will first remark upon the issue of abundance and then go on discuss the alienation of man and the goal of self-realising production.

1.31 'Abundance' Under Communism

Some say that Marx believed future communism to be a society beyond the requirements of distributive justice simply because an abundance of goods will obtain. The rationing of goods in accordance with principles of distributive justice is only applicable where there is moderate scarcity and where our wants outstrip the supply of goods. Apparently communism provides for circumstances in which man becomes able to meet his wants, and more. A charge of utopianism is then levelled against Marx since it is assumed, in common with neo-classical economists, that man is, and will remain, below his satiation point of consumption, and that there are ecological limits to the achievement of a system of production and distribution which can satisfy any and every consumer want as and when they arise. Thus Nove writes:

Marx appears to believe that technical progress already made under capitalism had fundamentally solved the problem of production, but that the shackles imposed on the forces of production by the capitalist system prevented this from being realised in practice... Let us define abundance as a sufficiency to meet requirements at zero price, leaving no reasonable person dissatisfied or seeking more of anything (or at least of anything reproducible). This concept plays a crucial role in Marx's vision of socialism/communism... If other goods were as easily and freely available as water is in Scotland, then new human attitudes would develop: acquisitiveness would wither away; property rights, and crimes related to property, would also vanish, not because the

citizens would have become 'good' by reading Marxist books but because acquisitiveness would have lost its purpose.  

Nove claims, on behalf of Marx, that new human attitudes will develop simply because of developments in the material or objective realm of society. That is, through a quantitatively (and qualitatively) higher production of capital and consumer goods. Now future communism is contingent upon the realisation of certain developments within the capitalist mode of production. As mentioned above, and as I will argue in part three, the development sought is the advent of capital-intensive production for mundane consumer wants across the primary, secondary and (main strands of) the tertiary sectors of the economy. However, Alienation Marxists also seek a change of the subjective realm of society. That is, a transformation in actual wants effected through a further and greater development of our 'all-round' generically human powers and capacities. Production rather than consumption must come to form the primary forum within which individuals occasion self-definition, meaning and fulfilment in their lives.  

Neo-classical economists take man to be permanently insatiable in his pursuit of utility via consumption. Economic man is perennially below, what they term as, his

---


45 Elster claims that of the kinds of normative justification advanced in defence of capitalism are the following propositions: (i) the best life for the individual is one of consumption, understood in a broad sense that includes aesthetic pleasures and entertainment as well as the consumption of goods in the ordinary sense; (ii) consumption is to be valued because it promotes happiness or welfare, which is the ultimate good; (iii) Since there are not enough opportunities for consumption to provide satiation for everybody, some principles of distributive justice must be chosen to decide who gets what; (iv) The total to be distributed has first to be produced. What is produced depends, among other things, on the motivation and information of producers. The theory of justice must take into account the fact that different principles of distribution have different effects on motivation and information; (v) Economic theory tells us that the motivational and informational consequences of private ownership of the means of production are superior to those of the various forms of collective ownership.

Elster's aim in his article is to challenge propositions (i) and (ii). This challenge is a necessary part of an Alienation Marxist Socialism since, as Elster states "... at the centre of Marxism is specific conception of the good life as one of active self-realisation, rather than passive consumption (p.127)". See 'Self-realisation in work & politics: the Marxist conception of the good life' in Alternatives to Capitalism (Cambridge, 1989), ed. J. Elster & K.O. Moene, p.127.
“bliss point” of consumption. This assumption seems to be borne out by reality. In circumstances of late capitalist society we have come to produce more than ever and we have come to want more than ever. Our capacity to form, and aim to realise, wants for consumer goods seem to be boundless. It seems as though scarcity will always be with us. Human nature makes this so.

A distinction can be drawn between the real scarcity characteristic of backward and developing economies, and the imagined scarcity of late capitalist consumer society. As one commentator writes:

... the new scarcity is an abstraction - a hypothetical condition created when people's desires outdistance actual goods. The real scarcity of a subsistence economy with population pressing upon its productive resources [has] now been replaced by the psychological scarcities of imagined wants heightened by a commerce rapidly extending the size and diversity of its goods. ⁴⁶

In a subsistence economy the pressing and brute physical needs of the population achieve respite through the consumption of its meagre material resources. In late capitalist consumer society the needs of our imagination drive, develop and deliver systems of production, distribution and retail which service wants far beyond those which arise on the basis of our brute physical needs. Apparently it isn't enough for consumers in late capitalist society to own and have the use of a mobile telephone. They now need ‘snap-on’ covers which now enables them to co-ordinate their hand-set with their wardrobe, and which enables the consumer to express his “personality” by exercising a choice, and by effecting a purchase, over a range of designs.

A major environmental problem stems from the fact that our capitalist consumerist wants are compounding the hazardous, and potentially catastrophic, demands that we make upon the earth's eco-system. In addition to this, and for

Alienation Marxists, the puerile demands of capitalist consumerism provide pathetic productive opportunities for people. For Liberal Socialists such as David Miller capitalist consumerism is unproblematic. He seeks to fashion ‘designer socialism which celebrates the modes of consumption thrown up in present day capitalism’. Alienation Marxists take a contrary view, which is aptly expressed by William Morris in the following passage:

It would be an instructive day’s work for any one of us who is strong enough to walk through two or three of the principal streets of London on a week-day, and take accurate note of everything in the shop windows which is embarrassing or superfluous to the daily life of a serious man. Nay, the most of these things no one, serious or unserious, wants at all; only foolish habit makes even the lightest of minds suppose that he wants them, and to many people even those who buy them they are obvious encumbrances to real work, thought and pleasure. But I beg you to think of the enormous mass of men who are occupied with this miserable trumpery, from the engineers who have had to make the machines for making them, down to the hapless clerks who sit day-long year after year in the horrible dens wherein the wholesale exchange of them is transacted, and the shopmen, who not daring to call their souls their own, retail them amidst numberless insults which they must not resent, to the idle public which doesn’t want them but buys them to be bored by them and sick to death of them.\(^{47}\)

In part three I argue that the ‘miserable trumpery’ of engineers, clerks and shop assistants can and should disappear, in part, by technology replacing the product of humans in production for our mundane consumer wants. However, a transformation in actual wants also has to occur. There must occur a cultural shift from consumption to production as the primary sphere of human fulfilment. For Alienation Marxists, man’s good is to be realised, in part, through his consumption and, in part, through his production. His good is not simply reducible to what he is able to ‘extract’ from nature but also in how he is able to ‘act’ upon external nature and thereby make something of


\(^{48}\)See his essay ‘Art & Socialism’ re-printed in Political Writings of William Morris (Lawrence & Wishart, 1973), p.112.
himself, his life. His activity and his products should coincide with the development, exercise and expression of his capacities. Capitalism has travelled too far in perfecting a ‘consumer society’. Alienation Marxists seek to achieve a balance between, if not a wholesale shift towards, a more producer-orientated society.

To understand how this can occur we must first understand the basis of human wants. (In part two I detail some of the ways in which wants can transform in response to a further and greater development of our all-round human powers and capacities.) Marx provides us with a materialist philosophical anthropology of wants (and of the ‘modes’ of life within which wants are formed and satisfied) in terms of, what I shall call, the dual aspect of human needs.

1.32 Marx on the Dual Aspect of Human Needs

On Marx’s account human needs have a dual aspect. First, there are needs which stem from the fact we are physical creatures of a certain kind who need to effect an equilibrium between our generic physiology and inorganic nature. Second, there are needs which arise from the fact that we are peculiarly conscious creatures. Thus, we need to eat, be clothed and have shelter in order to wrest ourselves from the forces of our internal physical nature and that of external inorganic nature which, if left unchecked, conspire to destroy us. However, beyond the satisfaction of such needs, and in virtue of the fact that we are conscious beings, our life is an ‘object’ for us which we need to experience as meaningful, satisfying or fulfilling in some way. Our conscious being is a source of needs, which are distinct from those that arise from the demands of our strictly physical being. Also, this source of needs sets us apart from the rest of the animal world.  

\[^{49}\text{Albert Camus writes: "If I were a tree amongst trees, a cat among animals, this life would have meaning or rather this problem would not arise, for I should belong to this world. I should be this world to which I}

\[^{49}\text{I would not have the misery of being what I am."
}
Conscious life activity directly distinguishes man from animal life activity. Only because of that he is a species-being. Or rather, he is a conscious being, i.e. his own life is an object for him, only because he is a species-being. Only because of that is his activity free activity. Estranged labour reverses the relationship so that man, just because he is a conscious being, makes his life activity, his being [Wesen], a mere means for his existence. ⁵⁰

As soon as an individual becomes able to meet the needs of his physical being, the needs of his conscious being emerge. As soon as a society is able to meet the subsistence needs of its people, then it begins to devote itself to the needs of its conscious (cultural) life. As man passes from circumstances of extreme to moderate scarcity, he also develops, what can be termed, ‘spiritual’ products. ⁵¹ Thus, man not only produces and consumes food but also produces and consumes religion, morality, law, politics, art, music, etc. These spiritual products service needs which arise from man’s nature as a conscious being. Also, once society has broached those needs which derive strictly from man’s physical being, and is able to service those needs in an increasingly efficient way, then it begins to invest the mundane satisfaction of nutritional and other physical needs with spiritual significance. (Strictures concerning kosher food, in the case of Jews, or halal, in the case of Muslims, could not have obtained in conditions of extreme material scarcity.) That is, the satisfaction of physical needs takes particular cultural forms, which also satisfy the need to experience our lives as meaningful, fulfilling or satisfying in some way. Thus we do not simply eat, dress and have shelter in order to wrest us from the conspiratorial forces of nature but also gain subjective states of meaning, fulfilment and satisfaction through the particular


foodstuffs, clothes and dwelling we consume. We satisfy our physiological requirements as a consequence of pursuing the spiritual through consumption.

There seems to be a paradox of the dual aspect of human needs. At the extremes: a person whose body is devoid of food has no need for meaning, and a person without the prospect of meaning has no need for food. Obviously, the destitute and the starving do not need to secure meaning in their life, they need sustenance. As man moves from a situation of bare physical subsistence to conditions of relative material plenty then the needs of his conscious being begin to take precedence. He needs to locate and orientate himself in a world of value. In conditions where man lacks meaning, satisfaction or fulfilment, or the hope of achieving these things in his life, then he tends to enjoin habits that are detrimental to his physical well-being (drug-abuse, body mutilation, eating disorders, etc.). In the extreme, the complete absence of hope can lead to the annihilation of one’s physical being in suicide. Albert Camus writes: “A man devoid of hope and conscious of being so has ceased to belong to the future.”

In between the life of an individual pained by starvation, and the life of a person entertaining thoughts of suicide, are individuals who do manage to satiate the dual aspect of their needs. Human needs have a general and universal character; however, each of us satisfies the dual aspect of needs in ways that are particular and relative to the culture within which we find ourselves. According to Marx the way in which a particular society sets out, and meets, the dual aspect of general human needs is determined by the level of development of its productive forces and its consequent cultural development. In the German Ideology Marx writes:

---

52 The Myth of Sisyphus (Penguin, 1975), p.35. I once heard a Rabbi remark on BBC Radio Four’s Thought for the Day that man needs religion because ‘he can live three weeks without food, however, he cannot last three minutes without hope’. 
Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organisation. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life.

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of expressing their life. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production.  

In the next section I will argue (along with Marx) that because man in pre-communist society fails to achieve meaning and value through his production then he is apt to enjoin alienating forms of consciousness such as religion. Religion, along with nationalism and (in late capitalist society) consumerism are modes of life, and hence consciousness, which are expressions of man's alienation and are caused, inter alia, by the fact man is unable to develop, exercise and express his capacities in his production and/or because the exercise and expression of his capacities is subordinated to the demands of exchange-value (wage/profit). Where man is unable to occasion self-discovery/creation through his productive activity and in his products, and by the development, exercise and expression of his own powers and capacities, then religion, nationalism and consumerism provide his imagination with ready means by which he can make his world meaningful.


54 I maintain below that alienated labour is not the only cause of mankind's drive to religion. Also I am not claiming that pleasure gained through consumption should not form any part of a rounded human life. My Alienation Marxist worry concerns those 'pathological' features of late capitalist consumer society, such as the proliferation of celebrity culture and the phenomena of positional and conspicuous consumption. See p.54 below and section 2.5 'Consumer Society' in part two for more on this point.
In what follows I first set out the basic terms of Marx’s analysis of the alienation of man under capitalism. Secondly, I propose a more complete reading of Marx, which includes a much neglected ‘expressivist’ dimension. Thirdly, I show how this enlarged interpretation of Marx is better able to handle common criticisms of his alienation critique of capitalism. Finally, I show how contemporary political philosophers have interpreted Marx’s analysis in a narrow and one-sided sense and that this partial reading of Marx has led to erroneous prescriptions for the overcoming of man’s alienation. Specifically, I will be arguing that the ‘abolition’ of private property in the means of production and some measure of common ownership and control in the means of production do not provide antidotes to alienation on either a narrow reading, or a preferred wider interpretation, of Marx on the alienation of man under capitalism.

1.321 Marx on the Alienation of Man from his Activity & Products

In his 1844 Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts Marx details four ways in which man is alienated within the capitalist mode of production. Man is, firstly, alienated from his *activity*. Secondly, he is alienated from his *product*.55 Thirdly, from his *species-being*56 and, finally, from *others*.57 Man’s alienation in the third and fourth aspects are consequent on his being alienated in the first two aspects. The alienation of man from his activity and products supply the ground for his being alienated from his species-being; he is alienated from his species-being *because* he is alienated from his

---

55"... estrangement manifests itself not only in the result, but also in the act of production, within the activity of production itself... The estrangement of the object of labour merely summarises the estrangement, the alienation in the activity of labour itself." Karl Marx ‘1844 Manuscripts’ re-printed in Early Writings (Penguin, 1992), p.326.


57"In general, the proposition that man is estranged from his species-being means that each man is estranged from the others and that all are estranged from man’s essence." Karl Marx ‘1844 Manuscripts’ re-printed in Early Writings (Penguin, 1992), p.330.
activity and products. Furthermore, man is alienated from others because he fails to realise his species-being. Thus, the fourth aspect of man’s alienation is consequent on his failure to realise his species-being.

Marx’s account of man’s species-being forms the normative dimension of a Marxian philosophical anthropology, that is, ‘a concept of man which serves as a standard against which his present existence can be measured and criticised’ and by which we can and should fashion his future. An account of man’s species-being details the relation he should enjoy between his activity and products but which he fails to within the capitalist mode of production. Communism comes to enable man to realise himself as an individual and social being in accordance with his species-essence. On the Alienation Marxist view man under capitalism fails to realise his species-essence and instead tends to confirm himself as an individual and social being by enjoining alienated modes of consciousness, such as religion, nationalism and consumerism. Individuals locate themselves within, and act in accordance with, a realm of ‘illusion’. And, in so doing, human life is less than it can be, and less than it should be.

---

Marx formed his view of alienation in response to a view held by Feuerbach. Feuerbach believed that religion creates false consciousness and alienates man from his true species-being. The concept of a species-being sets out what man is, what man can be, and an account of why a gap obtains between what man is (his alienation) and what he can become (the realisation of his species-essence or being). For Feuerbach, man is not by ‘nature’ a religious animal, he only learns to be so, and remains so either through timidity or ignorance. Through religious instruction man comes to feel inadequate, guilty and repressed before the gaze of God and, through religious faith, he comes to pin his fulfilment upon an illusory future in God’s kingdom.\(^5^9\) Man mediates his present existence through religion and thereby regulates his activity and aims for the sake of a future in another heavenly world. Feuerbach maintains that it is incumbent upon us to make the most of this world. The perversity of religion is that it is a mere human construction and the positing of a deity as an all-knowing and all-loving creator simply magnifies and puts a mystical spin upon qualities that inhere within man. God’s capacity to love, create and to know mirrors the capacities of mankind itself. In religion people project their own qualities and idealise them in the form of a God.\(^6^0\) Our actual species-essence is projected elsewhere only to return to us - through received religious doctrine and institutions - to direct our beliefs and actions in a way that distorts the achievement of a properly human existence. Thus instead of developing and exercising our own potentialities and furthering our own capacity to love, create and know, we worship it,


\(^{60}\text{Ludwig Feuerbach} \text{ The Essence of Christianity (Harper Torch Books, 1957), tr. George Elliot and intro. by Karl Barth, p.31ff.}\)
feel inadequate by it, and are thus alienated by it. Religion, on Feuerbach’s view, causes a fundamental distortion to obtain between our species-essence and our actual existence (which is less than human).

Marx also believed the relation between man and religion to be one of alienation. However, he regarded religion as an expression rather than a cause of alienated existence. Marx declares:

Religious misery is in part an expression of actual misery and in part a protest against actual misery. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the soul of a heartless world, the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the opium of the people.61

Whilst Feuerbach believed that religion is the obstacle to a truly human existence, Marx believed that the grounds for man’s alienation lay elsewhere, specifically, in the conditions of human production. Feuerbach argued that the grip of religion on human consciousness and activity could be loosened, and eventually wrested, through philosophical critique. Marx on the other hand argues that mankind’s economic and subsequent social conditions give rise to the creation and persistence of religion. Religion provides an illusion that comforts individuals in the face of the misery and drudgery that dominates their productive lives. Thus where Feuerbach views religion as ‘false’ consciousness alienating the species-essence from actual human existence, Marx sees alienation as fundamentally located in social conditions which give rise to consciousness expressing its own alienation in religion.

Marx did not believe that the end of religion would simply result from its negation (that is, via a philosophical critique or its legal prohibition). The dissolution of religion can only obtain by transforming the ground in which religious belief and practice takes root. Marx writes:

The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is the demand for their *real* happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up a condition that requires illusions. The criticism of religion is therefore in *embryo* the criticism of *that* *vale of tears* of which religion is the *halo*. 62

Man is not at home in his production, he fails to realise himself in his activity and products. He fails to confirm himself as an individual and as a social being through his activity and in his products. He thus seeks such confirmation (self-realisation) elsewhere. Religious belief and practice provides man with a means to confirm him as both an individual and a social being. He identifies himself as a Christian, a Moslem, etc. and through such identification he connects himself to other similarly situated individuals. Such identification is rarely a matter of wholesale choice; it is usually the product of socialisation.63 The effect of such socialisation is that individuals come to share in a particular history, tradition and custom of religious belief and practice which provides them with some measure of self-realisation.

For Marx the route to a post-religious society lies in transforming the terms of human production. Production can and should come to form the primary forum within which the individual achieves self-realisation. If you reform or revolutionise the conditions of human production then mankind will cease to express his alienated consciousness in religion.

This Marxian view requires some modifying. Traditions of religious thought and practice obviously precede the advent of capitalist society. Religious consciousness cannot *wholly* be reduced to its servicing the needs of alienated man under the capitalist mode of production. For Marx the fact that religion has held its sway over men’s minds


throughout history is simply because man has failed to access the subjective and objective conditions of freedom during that time. Capitalism is a mode of production in which mankind experiences its highest alienation.

However, religion does offer the conscious mind some respite from permanent features of the human condition - namely our being in the face of one's own death and the loss of others - which cannot be addressed by achieving systems of more meaningful production. Misery in the circumstances of one's productive life forms a source for consolation in religion but it is not the only source of misery in human life. As Susan Wolf writes: “Traditional worries about the meaning of life, often set off by reflections on our own mortality and on the indifference of the cosmos in which we occupy so tiny a place, are rarely appeased by the reflection that one can actively engage in projects of worth.”

Nevertheless some if not most, aspects of religious belief and practice can be accounted for in terms of man seeking escape, comfort and meaning in religion. We can also add the practices of ‘nationalism’ and ‘consumerism’ to religion. Virulent forms of religious and nationalist fundamentalism can be understood in terms of some giving shape to their existence through the negation of, what those of a religious or nationalist disposition can come to regard as less significant ‘others’.

To a certain extent the advent of the city economy, and the perfecting of a consumer society, ushered in distractions which have diminished the power which traditional religions have exercised over men’s minds. “The decline of religion in

---

64Susan Wolf ‘Happiness & Meaning’, p.214, re-printed in Self-Interest (Cambridge, 1997), ed. Paul, Miller & Paul. Wolf discusses the case of Tolstoy. In all of his intents and purposes Tolstoy’s life conforms to the model of Marxian freedom as self-realisation. However meaningful and worthwhile we might consider his life-projects to have been he viewed them as worthless if this world were not shot through with divine purpose.
modern times means simply that religion is no longer the uncontested centre and ruler of man’s life, and that the church is no longer the final and unquestioned home and asylum of his being.” 65 Man has sought, and secured, asylum elsewhere.66 The self-conscious mind of modern economic man has orientated and confined itself within comforts afforded by capitalist commodity production.67 The generation and satisfaction of wants for, so-called, ‘positional’ and ‘conspicuous’ consumption has come to constitute salient sociological feature of the late capitalist economic system.68 Also, modern expressions of alienation include those aspects of our media culture that trade in the deification and veritable worship of ‘celebrity’. Mass/tabloid media culture - the consumption of images in the form of a commodity - has come to replace traditional religion as the opiate of the people. Capitalism has provided us with more ready formats by which we can enjoin alienated forms of consciousness. Technology has enabled man to exchange the pulpit and the pew for the t.v. screen and an armchair. The pathology involved in the latter day


66In late capitalist society there are drives towards a ‘Feng Shui’ of the mind. New Age religion and Zen self-help therapies are increasingly providing lucrative returns for the media and publishing industries. Celebrity new age ‘philosophers’ has become a feature of our age. The Observer reports on Robert Holden, a millionaire self-help guru: “Robert Holden, who is based at the Happiness Centre in Oxford, believes that ‘life-coaches’ and contentment counsellors are very much a product of their times. ‘I think’ he suggests, ‘that when society has a need, it throws up someone up someone to fill it. During the depression, society demanded laughter, and there was Charlie Chaplin. In our own times we want more information and more self-awareness: it therefore creates philosophers like me.”’ See ‘That was Zen this is now’, p.1, Review Supplement, 19/12/99.

67Some years ago the vice-president of MacDonald’s claimed that no two countries which have their fast-food outlets have since been to war. This is not because the message of Ronald MacDonald has made us more understanding and tolerant of our differences, or because we have become more passive through the consumption of high cholesterol fast food, but because MacDonald’s only sets up their stalls in countries which have a large mass of lower-to-middle income individuals whose leisure values and concerns have become largely centred in consumption. See The Observer, 27/6/99, p.13, Review Supplement, Will Hutton’s article ‘New Books on Globalisation’.

68See Fred Hirsch The Social Limits to Growth (Routledge, 1976 revised edition), with forward by Tibor Scitovsky. I discuss positional and conspicuous consumption further in part two, see section 2.5.
cult of the celebrity, and the ‘miserable trumpery’ of those occupied in the capitalist media/culture industry, can be accounted for in terms of individuals seeking solace in a derivative, second-hand and other-worldly ‘reality’. 69

Some have maintained that individuals in late capitalist society seek an even more direct means of escape through the use of narcotics. If religion is the opium of the people so too is ‘opium’ the opium of the people. The reasons for compulsive and habitual drug-use (in contrast to recreational drug-use) are complex; there are a whole host of psychological and social causes for addiction. However, meaningless in the general conditions of human life, especially in one’s productive life, forms one of the reasons why individuals increasingly, in the circumstances of late capitalist society, turn to drugs as a means of subordinating or negating their conscious being. This trend has been singled out and expressed by Ronald Beiner in the following way:

To characterise it philosophically, I would say that it is a symptom of nihilism as diagnosed by Nietzsche, that is, the drying up of the narrative possibilities of our civilisation, of our capacity to project civilizational purposes in which we ourselves still believe, to sustain narratives that make these purposes credible to ourselves. A public void is then compensated for by a retreat to hyper-subjectivity. 70

69 Plato describes a state of affairs in which the “... healthy city will no longer do; it has become bloated and distended with occupations which leave the essential requirements of the community behind - for instance, with all kinds of... imitators. Among [them are] hordes of people concerned with shapes and colours, and further hordes concerned with music (poets and their dependants - rhapsodes, actors, dancers and producers), and manufacturers of contraptions and all sorts of things, especially women's cosmetics.” The Republic, 373b ln.3. The passage is taken from p.64 of the Oxford (1993) edition translated by Robin Waterfield.

Unlike Plato, Alienation Marxists do not want to banish dancers, poets and actors from the good society. Alienation Marxists aim to have the practices of dancing, poetry and drama at the heart of the practical and expressive life of the community and not conducted at a ‘virtual’ remove from everyday life. Alienation Marxists do aim for an end to what Guy Debord terms, a ‘society of spectacle’ in which dance, poetry and acting are only occupations for a tiny minority. Alienation Marxists aim to see an end to a situation in which a minority of artists, performers and sportsmen are able to have their ‘product’ commodified and marketed for the masses; and who, like Nozick’s ‘Wilt Chamberlain’ before them, are able command astronomical incomes by plying their trade in a culture of spectacle. See Guy Debord The Society of Spectacle (Zone Books, 1995) and Comments on the Society of Spectacle (Verso, 1998).

For Alienation Marxists our ‘narrative possibilities’ and ‘civilizational purposes’ must be built through the development and construction of a material and institutional framework in which each is able to achieve self-realisation through one’s activity and in one’s products, and by each being able to develop, exercise and express their own powers and capacities. Cohen states that:

Participation in religion is a form of alienation. It is a search on an illusory plane for what is unavailable in life itself. If religion is the spirit of a spiritless situation, one might expect that it will disappear only when there is spirit in life itself. It would then follow that, since there is no religion under communism, there will be spirit in the free association of individuals. But where does Marx say anything about it?  

I will be arguing that, for Alienation Marxists, the ‘spirit’ of communism, and the strivings and satisfaction of the self-conscious mind, is secured when man ceases to have his production driven by the alienating demands of commodity production, market exchange and money (wage/profit) disciplines and when, instead, he is able to develop, exercise and express his capacities, through his activity and in his products, and in accord with goods internal to shared social practices which are (and come to be) constitutive of the practical and/or expressive life of a community directed to the promotion of human freedom as self-realisation.  

For Alienation Marxists the essence of religion, nationalism and late capitalist ‘positional’ and ‘conspicuous’ consumption rests in difference between people. They are expressions ‘of the separation of man from his common essence and from other men’. Thus, an Alienation Marxist aim is to facilitate the achievement of self-realisation through establishment of a ‘real’ community in which individuals obtain their freedom in

---


72 I discuss this point further in part three; see section 3.1122 entitled ‘The Correspondence Thesis - Alisdair MacIntyre’s Idea of a Social Practice’. 

and through their *productive association*[^73], as opposed to the *illusory* communities, of religion, nationalism and consumerism characteristic of pre-communist societies.

Religion, nationalism and consumerism are constructions by, and for, the imagination which supply a kind of answer to the need, of our conscious being, to experience life as meaningful, worthwhile or fulfilling in some way.

As stated above, criticism of the illusory communities of religion, nationalism and consumerism is not sufficient for communism. Marx writes:

> Criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers on the chain not in order that man shall continue to bear that chain without fantasy or consolation but so that he shall throw off the chain and pluck the living flower. The criticism of religion disillusions man, so that he will think, act and fashion his reality like a man who has discarded his illusions and regained his senses, so that he will move around himself as his own true sun. Religion is only the illusory sun which revolves around man as long as he does not revolve around himself.[^74]

> Man 'revolves around himself', and is able to 'pluck the living flower', when he is able to develop, exercise and express his own capacities, and thereby impress meaning and value upon his existence, in and through his productive association with others. As regards the supposed 'justice' aims of Marxian Socialism, Cohen hopes that, by arguing a case for distributive equality, "capitalist action wanes not primarily because it is illegal, but because the impulse behind it atrophies, or, less Utopianly, because other impulses become stronger, or because people [come] believe that capitalist exchange is unfair."[^75] I rejected the justice approach to Marxian Socialism above. However, the Alienation Marxist programme aims for *atrophy* in the central impulses which send mankind to seek solace in religious, nationalist and consumerist consciousness not by


prohibition, but through both (i) a further and greater development of our generic human powers and capacities and (ii) through the development, and construction, of a material, and institutional framework, which enables man to exercise and express his capacities.

In part two I discuss (i), that is, the subjective grounds for Marxian freedom as self-realisation and the overcoming of man’s alienation. In part three I discuss (ii), that is, the objective grounds for man coming to overcome his alienation and achieve his freedom as self-realisation. In what follows I counter a Hegelian objection that Cohen levels at Alienation Marxism and then go on to set out and discuss the basic elements of Marxian freedom as self-realisation.

1.323 Cohen’s Hegelian Critique of the Alienation Marxist Philosophical Anthropology

Cohen argues that the Alienation Marxist philosophical anthropology is too ‘one-sided’ and that an individual’s drive towards religion cannot simply be reduced to its being an expression of, and protest against, the conditions of his alienated labour. According to Cohen the problem with the Alienation Marxist philosophical anthropology is that it puts exclusive emphasis on the creative side of human nature and “neglects a whole other domain of human need and aspiration.” 76 This other domain of human aspiration is captured by, what can be termed, a Hegelian philosophical anthropological requirement. Whereas the Alienation Marxist philosophical requirement treats of the subject and his relation to the world (via his activity and products), the Hegelian anthropology centres on the subject’s relation to itself. Cohen’s claim against Alienation Marxists is that “the individual cannot wholly define itself in terms of his activity and products, the self has an irreducible interest in a definition of itself”, and this

irreducible interest manifests itself in an individual identifying himself with certain religious beliefs and practices. Cohen argues that an individual,

... must, as Hegel saw, find something outside himself which he did not create, and to which something inside himself corresponds,..., he must be able to identify himself in some part of objective social reality: spirit, as Hegel said, finds itself at home in its own otherness as such.  

Religion provides a means by which individuals fulfil a need to identify with something which is not of their own making. It provides for a wider framework of being in which the individual has a place and some role or part to play. The need is for the individual to gain (at least) a partial self-understanding in terms of some entity (religion, ethnicity, or nationhood) which does not solely result from his own intention and construction. Individuals need to affirm a connection with a history and community of thought, feeling and practice, which others share in and which others contribute to creating and sustaining. Plamenatz echoes Cohen’s point in his summary of Pascal’s account of religion. He writes:

Man needs religion to give him a sense of place in the world, a sense of his own identity, an idea of himself that satisfies him; for, without it, he, who differs from other animals in being self-conscious, is intolerable to, and seeks escape from, himself. Religion satisfies an essential need of a creature that is an object of thought to itself, and therefore aware of itself as a finite being in an infinite world. If man can see no purpose and no reason in the world other than his own, then, since he knows that he is ephemeral, inconstant and frail, he feels himself to be a lost being, a finite mind in a mindless universe, a feeble light in a dark wilderness.

Cohen argues that Alienation Marxists have neglected the Hegelian philosophical anthropological requirement in their aims for fashioning a post-capitalist political order, and that their exclusive reliance upon man’s ability to create and produce cannot serve the whole of what human nature requires. The creative and productive

---


individual lacks a sufficiently *communal* dimension to his self, a dimension that has, historically, been supplied by forms of religious and nationalistic practice and consciousness. Cohen does add a qualifying note to his view. He states:

I have not argued that there exists a human need for religion, or for nationalism, or for something rather like them. The need I affirm is to have a sense of who I am. I say that the forms of consciousness just mentioned have, in past history, offered to satisfy that need, and have thereby obtained much of their power, but I advance no opinion about what features a form of consciousness must have to be a possible satisfier of the need I have emphasised... I do not deny that many self-portrayals from which people draw satisfaction display a large measure of distortion and illusion. And religion and nationalism may, of course, be cases in point: nothing said here is intended to contradict the proposition, with which I sympathise, that their more familiar forms constitute immature means of securing self-identification, appropriate to a less than fully civilised stage of human development.  

Cohen does not assert a human need for religion as such but the need for the individual to possess a communal self-understanding. Cohen is cynical about forms of religious and nationalist consciousness, as are Alienation Marxists, however his main point is that human attachment to religion, etc. cannot be readily disposed of. Cohen regards Marx’s account of religion as deficient in the same way that Marx argued against Feuerbach. Whereas Marx argued (against Feuerbach) that the demise of religion would not result simply from a philosophical critique of its basic tenets, similarly Cohen argues (against Marx) that religious thought and practice will not wither away simply through an Alienation Marxist revolution in the conditions of human production/consumption. Its hold upon our lives is much deeper that its being a protest against, and an expression of, alienated labour. It provides an answer for the need to confirm oneself as a *social* being.

In what follows I will show that Marx can address Cohen’s Hegelian worry.

---

1.33 Marx on *Self-Determination & Self-Actualisation* as conditions for *Self-Realisation*

As stated above, Marx’s analysis of man’s alienation under capitalism, and his countervailing account of man’s species-being, are concerned with the relation which man should enjoy between his activity and his products. In his *1844 Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* and in volumes one and three of *Capital*, Marx sets out two conditions which must be met if man is to overcome his alienation and achieve self-realisation in his production. These can be termed the *self-determination* and *self-actualisation* conditions for freedom as self-realisation. Both conditions arise out of the distinction Marx makes between animal and human production, and both are frustrated within the capitalist mode of production. I will discuss each in turn.

1.331 Self-Determination: To Actualise in Something ‘One’s Own Purpose’

On self-determination, Marx states:

> The animal is immediately at one with its life-activity. It is not distinct from that activity; it is that activity. Man makes his life activity an object of his will and consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges.\(^{80}\)

Marx echoes this condition in *Capital Vol.1* where he writes:

> A spider conducts operations which resemble those of a weaver, and a bee through the construction of its wax cells puts many an architect to shame. But what above all distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that he has already built the cell in his head before he builds it in wax. At the end of the labour process a result comes about which was already present ideally in the representation of the labourer at its beginning. He not only works a change in form on something natural; he at the same time actualises in something natural his own purpose, and he knows this purpose as determining the kind and mode of his action, and as something to which he must subject his will.\(^{81}\)

Earlier I claimed that for Marx there is a dual aspect to human needs. There are needs that stem from our physical being and those that stem from the fact that we are

---


peculiarly conscious creatures. It is in virtue of the fact that we are conscious beings that our life is an 'object' for us which we need to experience as meaningful, satisfying or fulfilling in some way. In the above passages Marx claims that our productive life-activity can be an object of our will and consciousness. Unlike the rest of the animal world, man is able to 'actualise in something natural his own purpose.' Other animals lack this capacity; they produce in accordance with instinct rather than intention.

Other animals are indistinguishable from their activity and products whereas man can consciously fashion and re-fashion himself through his activity and products. According to Marx 'how' and 'what' other animals produce define what they are. Other animals are at 'one with their life-activity'; their life-activity is a determination with which they directly merge. Man is not so-determined.\textsuperscript{82} From above we saw that, for Marx, the 'mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite mode of life on their part. As individuals express their lives, so they are. What they are, therefore coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production'. The 'how' and 'what' we produce does define us, only we are also able to subject the how-and-what of our production to our conscious goals and purposes.

True, animals can be said to have a goal, that of self-preservation. An animal hunting and devouring of its prey can be understood in terms of it aiming towards, and then realising, its goal. However, the goal of self-preservation is characteristic of living organisms in general. Also the particular ways in which a particular animal sets about to

\textsuperscript{82}For a contrary view see my discussion of Aristotle on slavery in part three, section 3.01.
fulfil its goal of self-preservation is characteristic of its species and is in no way particular to them as an *individual*. Animal production cannot be subject to the control of their individual intention and action. There is no *self*-conscious animal life to speak of.

A criticism levelled at Marx is that the distinction he makes, between what humans and other animals are capable of, is false. Elster claims that some animals do exhibit a degree of intentionality in their production. He argues that 'insight and intentionality is displayed when gulls drop shells in order to break them and get access to the edible interior' and when the 'Japanese monkey Imo, upon receiving a mixture of sand and wheat, threw it on the water so that the sand could sink and she could recover the grain'.

Firstly, do the examples show that some animals do act from intention rather than instinct? In both examples the bird and the monkey perform some action in order to satiate the brute physical need of hunger. Their 'intentions' are bounded by the need to reproduce their physical being. On Marx's account man can and does produce *outwith* of his physical necessity. Man produces what I earlier termed 'spiritual' products. He produces and consumes music, art, philosophy, literature, politics, etc. According to Marx, man only *truly* produces when he is free from physical necessity. In *Capital Vol.3*, Marx writes:

The realm of freedom really begins only where labour determined by necessity and external expediency ends; it lies by its very nature beyond the sphere of material production proper. Just as the savage must wrestle with nature to satisfy his needs, to maintain and reproduce his life, so must civilised man, and he must do so in all forms of society and under all possible modes of production... The true realm of freedom, the development of human powers as an end in itself, begins beyond it, though it can only flourish with this realm of necessity as its basis.

---


Here Marx makes the distinction between production for the ‘realm of necessity’ and production which ‘develops human powers as an end in itself’. Necessity refers to our physical dependence upon nature; that is, the labour man is compelled to perform in order to satisfy the needs of his brute physical existence. The Third World labourer who hand sews official Premier League Club footballs for twelve hours a day in exchange for a subsistence wage, is someone who is driven to perform hard labour by their physical necessity and the fact that the demands of Western consumer society occasion such ‘miserable trumpery’. In contrast Marx writes: ‘Really free labour, the composing of music for example, is at the same time damned serious and demands the greatest effort’. For Marx the appropriate arena for the formation, execution and realisation of our generically human intentions is outside the demands of our physical being and in our ‘spiritual’ products. To refute Marx we would require examples of animals producing outside the realm of the simple reproduction of their physical existence, that is, in the formation of intentions and consequent action which does not simply involve eating or sheltering from the elements.

The following methodological criticism is also levelled at the distinction Marx draws between animal and human production. This says, so what if there is a distinction to be drawn between the way animals and humans produce? Why does this fact exalt us to seek reform in man’s production? The idea that there is a difference to be drawn does not issue in any normative conclusions. If, on closer inspection, animals were found to exhibit the same capacities as man then this approach to founding a normative

---

philosophical anthropology fails. The 'differentia argument' cannot support a Marxian account of freedom as consisting, in part, in the value of self-determination.  

There are three points I want to make about this methodological criticism. Firstly, claims regarding how man should be require an understanding of how man can be, since ought implies can. The normative aspect of the Alienation Marxist philosophical anthropology aims to bring to light those capacities which man is able to exercise but which have been, and are, frustrated by the historical and economic forms by he has sought (and learns) to satisfy the dual aspect of his needs. Pre-communist social forms have condemned man to a vegetative, slavish and animalistic existence, which is less than human. Secondly, our understanding of the nature of something is often arrived at through drawing comparison and contrasts between concepts and objects, which share in a certain resemblance. Think of how we arrive at our understanding of colours, smells, textures and sounds. Thirdly, if animals were found to share in capacities particular to man then this would not detract from our value of these

---


87Marx puts this point starkly in his view of village life within the Asiatic mode of production. He writes: "... these idyllic village communities, inoffensive though they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism,... they restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath traditional rules, depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies. We must not forget the barbarian egotism which, concentrating on some miserable patch of land, had quietly witnessed the ruin of empires, and the perpetuation of unspeakable cruelties, the massacre of the population of large towns, with no other consideration bestowed upon them than on natural events, itself the hapless prey of any aggressor who deigned to notice it at all. We must not forget that this undignified, stagnant, and vegetative life, that this passive sort of existence evoked on the other part, in contradistinction, wild, aimless, unbounded forces of destruction, and rendered murder itself a religious rite in Hindustan. We must not forget that these little communities were contaminated by distinctions of caste and by slavery, that they subjugated man to external circumstances instead of elevating man to be the sovereign of circumstances, that they transformed a self-developing social state into a never changing natural destiny, and thus brought about a brutalising worship of nature, exhibiting its degradation in the fact that man, the sovereign of nature, fell down on his knees in adoration of Hanuman, the monkey, and Sabbala, the cow." See Karl Marx 'The British Rule in India', p.306, reprinted in *Surveys from Exile Political Writings Vol.2* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), ed. David Fernbach.
capacities in man, but would elevate our value of those animals that share such capacities.

‘To actualise in something one’s own purpose’ forms the first condition Marx attaches to properly human production. Man is able to distinguish himself from animals by ‘the fact that with him consciousness takes the place of instinct or that his instinct is a conscious one’. The countervailing critical claim to this condition is that under capitalism man is not able to produce in accordance with the capacity of his species, his production is reduced to the status of animal production. Under capitalism labour is only subject to habit and instinct. Marx maintains that:

The result is that man (the worker) feels that he is acting freely only in his animal functions - eating, drinking and procreating, or at most in his dwelling and adornment [consumption] - while in his human functions he is nothing more than animal.

It is true that eating, drinking and procreating, etc. are also genuine human functions. However, when abstracted from other aspects of human activity and turned into final and exclusive ends, they are animal. I will be discussing this critical claim further below. I now turn to the second aspect of Marxian freedom as self-realisation, that is, freedom as self-actualisation.

1.332 Self-Actualisation: To Produce in Accord with the ‘Laws of Beauty’

The second condition concerning the relation that man should enjoy between his activity and products is encapsulated in the following passage:

Man’s creation of a world of objects through his practical action, his fashioning of inorganic nature, verifies his character as a conscious species-being, i.e. a being that relates to the species as to his own being or to himself as a species-being. True, the animal also produces. It builds itself a nest, dwellings, like bees, the beaver, ants, etc. But it produces only what is directly needed for itself, while man produces when free of physical need and in fact truly produces only when free of such need; the animal produces only itself, while man produces the whole of nature; its products belong directly to its physical body, whereas man freely confronts his product. The animal

---

fashions things only in accord with the standard and need of its species, whereas man knows how to produce in accord with the standard of every species and to apply everywhere the inherent standard of the object; thus man fashions things also in accord with the laws of beauty.\(^9\)

As we have already seen, the first claim which Marx makes in this passage is that an animal's production is circumscribed by its physical needs whilst man can produce he is free from such needs and, for Marx, only truly produces when he is freed from the demands of his physical necessity. The crucial claim as concerns the second aspect of freedom as self-realisation is that 'man is able to freely confront his product' and 'also fashion things in accordance with the laws of beauty'.

In the first condition man realises his species-being by forming, executing and realising his own goals. The second condition concerns man's relation to others and to himself. In the second condition it is through creative and practical activity that he confirms himself as a 'species-being' and relates to other similarly situated individuals (he "relates to the species as to his own being"). Marx speaks of activity 'in accord with the standard' (and of the realisation of those standards fulfilling the needs of his species); of man being able to 'apply everywhere the inherent standard of the object'; and of man fashioning things 'in accord with the laws of beauty'. What Marx suggests in the above passage is that man's activity and his products is set apart from the activity and products of other animals in virtue of the fact that man's activity/product can stand in a certain relation to given standards of excellences which are 'internal' to the activity/product itself. Thus, properly human production does not simply consist in the outward expression of one's own goals and purposes. As I will be arguing below, the formation, execution and realisation of such purposes, as well as the development, exercise and expression of our generic human capacities and powers, is mediated by

norms and standards of skill and excellence which constitute *practices* that do not solely result from man’s solitary efforts. Such norms and standards are irreducibly social in nature, and supply a means by which man can relate himself as an individual and to other similarly situated individuals. In response to Cohen’s Hegelian criticism of Marx, social practices provide a means by which individuals can confirm their social being. Man as a properly intentional being must be able to orientate himself in a community in which each come to know, share in and realise goods internal to social practices.\(^9\) The self-actualisation condition for Marxian freedom (as self-realisation) requires that one should be able to develop, exercise and express one’s capacities through one’s activity and in one’s products whilst also tracking and realising goods internal to the social practices of a community.

This second ‘expressivist’ aspect of Marxian freedom as self-realisation has been neglected by certain contemporary theorists of Marx on alienation. This has led to them proposing erroneous prescriptions as regards the overcoming of man’s alienation. In the rest this chapter I will discuss the two aspects of freedom as self-realisation in relation to some contemporary treatments of Marx on alienation.

1.3.4 Some Contemporary Treatments of Marx on Alienation

Kymlicka presents an interpretation of Alienation Marxism, which I will be consider and criticise here. He along with contemporary Liberal Socialists dismiss Marx’s alienation critique of capitalism as being fundamental to a viable Marxian

\(^9\) In chapter three of *After Virtue* (Duckworth, 1985 second edition), MacIntyre discusses the cases of three central ‘figures in the social drama of the present age’ - the Aesthete, the Bureaucrat and the Therapist - whose intentional agency lacks an anchor in shared social practices (p.34). Such characters ‘see in the social world nothing but a meeting place for individuals wills, each with their own set of attitudes and preferences and who understand that world solely as an arena for the achievement of their own satisfaction, who interpret reality as a series of opportunities for their enjoyment and for whom the last enemy is boredom (p.25)’. 
Socialism for reasons that I will counter in part two. My charges against Kymlicka are that he (along with others) narrowly describe the normative ends of Alienation Marxism, and that he and others mis-construe the means by which we can achieve properly Alienation Marxist ends. These misrepresentations of Alienation Marxism stem from the fact that Kymlicka and others only treat a ‘one-sided’ diagnosis of the alienation of man under capitalism and (mistakenly) believe that Soviet-Style economic planning or market socialism are appropriate prescriptions. They exclusively concentrate on the fact that the worker lacks the opportunity to exercise his capacity for self-determination within the capitalist production process. My complaint against certain contemporary treatments of Marx on alienation is that they neglect an ‘expressivist’ dimension of Marx’s critique as captured in the self-actualisation condition for freedom. In consequence, these theorists propose erroneous prescriptions as antidotes for the alienation of man. In circumstances where production for our mundane capital and consumer wants still requires the performance of wage-labour, then replacement of capitalism with either Soviet-style economic planning, or with currently proposed models of market socialism, do not provide antidotes to the alienation of man.

As regards ends, Kymlicka takes the countervailing positive goal of the alienation critique to be the achievement of ‘freely creative co-operative production’. On the question of means, Kymlicka takes the Alienation Marxist programme to consist in the ‘abolition’ of private property in the means of production and a Soviet-style ‘socialisation’ of society’s productive forces. Against this, I argue that, on the question of ends, Alienation Marxists seek man’s freedom as self-realisation, which is not as

---

92 Kymlicka claims that Alienation Marxism is perfectionist and that this conflicts with the liberal moral value of according each ‘equal concern and respect’. Liberal Egalitarian Market Socialists such as David Miller and Richard Arneson endorse Kymlicka’s critical views. See Arneson’s ‘Is Socialism Dead? A
simplistic as the demand for ‘freely creative’ and ‘co-operative’ production. Secondly, as regards means, Marx called for the positive transcendence of private property in the means of production/consumption rather than simple abolition.

1.341 Alienation & ‘Socialisation of the Means of Production’

In chapter five of his book *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction* (Clarendon: Oxford, 1990) Kymlicka surveys and criticises some of the central strands of latter day normative Marxist philosophy. He claims that Marxian Socialists are centrally committed to abolishing private property in ‘the control of productive forces (p.170)’ and that this proposal arises out of both the exploitation and alienation critiques of capitalism.

Crucially, Kymlicka, like many others, simply source the cause and remedy for man’s alienation in the issue of ownership and control of society’s productive forces. The worker is considered to be alienated because, firstly, the tasks that he is contracted to perform are dull, repetitive and mundane. The modern office, factory and shop line-worker is merely an ‘appendage’ to machinery, he is paid to flick switches, pull levers or punch a keypad.\(^\text{93}\) Secondly, the worker is deemed to be alienated because the activity

---

\(^{93}\)Marx writes: “In handicrafts and manufacture, the worker makes use of a tool; in the factory, the machine makes use of him. There the movements of the instruments of labour proceed from him, here it is the movements of the machine that he must follow. In manufacture the workers are the parts of a living mechanism. In the factory we have lifeless mechanism which is independent of the workers, and which are incorporated into it as its living appendages. ‘The wearisome routine of endless drudgery in which the same mechanical process is ever repeated, is like the torture of Sisyphus; the burden of toil, like the rock, is ever falling back upon the worn out drudge.’” *Capital Vol.1* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p.548.

He also writes: “… within the capitalist system all methods for raising the social productivity of labour are put into effect at the cost of the individual worker... they distort the worker into a fragment of a man, they degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, they destroy the actual content of his labour by turning it into a torment; they alienate from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they deform the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labour process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness; they transform his life-time into working-time, and drag his wife and child beneath the wheels of the juggernaut of capital.” *Capital Vol.1* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p.799.
he enjoins is subject to 'control' by the capitalist. Thirdly, the worker is alienated because his product is 'appropriated' by the capitalist at the end of the labour process. By the lights of contemporary treatments of Marx on alienation, the worker is thought to lack freedom simply because his activity and products are subject to the will of another agent - the capitalist. The capitalist is thought to be able to exercise his will over the worker's activity, and over a lion's share of the 'results' of production, in virtue of his ownership and control over the means of production. It is therefore concluded that the achievement of the non-alienated life simply consists in delivering ownership and control the means of production/consumption to the workers. This is achieved by the institution of a Soviet-Style planned economy in which the State augments systems of production and distribution in the interests of the workers, or (less radically) by installing a system of market socialism in which profit-maximising worker co-operatives produce for society's capital and consumer wants rather than firms comprising of capitalists and wage-labourers.

This argument raises three key questions. First, how does the worker gain self-determination by having his labour under capitalism replaced by the direction of his labour within a Soviet-style command economy or a system of market socialism? Second, what of the claim that productive tasks are boring under capitalism, how does the planned economy or market socialism address the fact that production for

---

94 Allen Buchanan, unifies the Marxist 'exploitation' and 'alienation' critiques of capitalism based on the claim that the worker is alienated simply in virtue of his lacking control over his activity and in his being disposessed of his 'rightful' product. See Allen Buchanan's article 'Exploitation, Alienation & Injustice' in the Canadian Journal of Philosophy, vol.IX, no.1, March 1979.

95 For an argument which relates the amelioration of worker alienation to a Soviet-style planned economy, see Jonathan Wolff 'Playthings of Alien Forces' in Cogito 6/1 1992. For the claim that market socialism can provide an antidote to worker alienation see David Miller Market, State & Community (Oxford, 1989), ch.8, p.204 and Richard Arneson's article 'Meaningful Work & Market Socialism' in Ethics 97 (April 1987).
industrial/consumer society wants has reduced man to an ‘appendage’ of machinery? Thirdly, what of freedom as self-actualisation?

As we saw earlier, the capacity for self-determination forms an aspect of freedom as self-realisation and requires that an individual should be able 'to formulate their own aims, decide on means for achieving their ends, and be able to revise their goals and methods in light of experience' 96 within the production process. This condition requires that decisions regarding a worker's activity and products should be subject to the worker's own determination and control. Capitalism frustrates this ideal in virtue of the fact that "workers are employed to perform precisely specified actions," which are "determined by other's decisions" so that "workers are in effect paid for blindly pursuing ends that others have chosen, by means that others judge adequate." 97 The call for self-determination within the production process is an extension of the familiar Liberal demand that the individual should generally be allowed, or made able, to live an autonomous life "to the extent that they rationally form and act on some overall conception of what they want in life." 98

The demand for self-determination is frustrated within the capitalist mode of production on two levels. Firstly, the worker is not able to actualise his own purposes since his activity and products are subject to the dictates of, what Miller describes as 'a capitalist overlord'. On this micro level the capitalist himself satisfies conditions for being self-determined. The capitalist is able to exercise significant autonomy within his firm in both his control over people (the workers) and in his management of the aims

and methods of production. However, at an economy-wide macro level both the capitalist and the worker suffer from a lack of self-determination. Both of their lives are subject to economic forces beyond their control. The worker fails to be self-determined at a micro level because he is denied control in the activity and aims of his production. His productive life is subject to the will of the capitalist. However, the capitalist’s own situation is not wholly insulated from the effects of choices exercised by other economic agents. The capitalist’s capacity to direct his own fate is compromised by the ‘anarchy’ of the market. Under capitalism individual capitalists, workers and consumers act in isolation, however, the aggregate effect of their individual decisions and choices issues in forces of the ‘market’ which dominate and control each of our lives. Every economic actor is at the mercy of capitalist ‘boom-and-bust’; unemployment, recession and stock market crashes are the undesired features of an intrinsically anarchic economic system. The irony is that (as with religious alienation) we are subjugated by forces which each of us help to create and sustain. Jonathan Wolff argues that this constitutes the fundamental problem of alienation and that the anarchy of capitalist production led Marx to advocate a Soviet-style planned economy.  

Kymlicka similarly reduces the problem of alienation to the fact that we lack control. On his view ending alienation - taking control - is simply achieved by socialising the productive forces. He claims that by putting productive forces under common ownership and control we return activity and product back to the workers. In his view the ‘abolition’ of private property in the means of production and the institution of Soviet-style economic planning ends alienation. He writes:

Socialising the means of production ensures that each person has an effective say in how her work life is organised, and enables her to organise production so as to increase its intrinsic satisfaction, rather than increase the profits of the capitalist.

---


Now, this claim is obviously false. It does not follow that simply by bringing society's productive forces under common ownership and control that the individual worker has his activity and product bought under his will. Rather, the Soviet Socialist experience tells us that the worker's activity and product is bought under the command of State bureaucrats. The State, as Marx foresaw, comes to function as an "abstract capitalist," 101 In his 1844 Manuscripts Marx describes 'crude communism' as that which aims for a "community of labour and equality of wages, which are paid out by the communal capital, the community as universal capitalist," and which raises labour and capital to "an imaginary universality - labour as the condition in which everyone is placed and capital as the acknowledged universality and power of the community." 102 For Marx the simple abolition of private property in the means of production and the installation of State ownership and control achieves neither individual self-realisation nor real community.103

Latter day market socialists are mindful of the authoritarian legacy of Soviet Socialism and propose an economic system which socialises ownership over the means of production but democratises control by leasing capital inputs to worker co-operatives who would then produce for wants as revealed in the market. Market Socialists such as David Miller and Richard Arneson locate the problem of alienation in the lack of control


103 'Boom-and-bust' is a feature of the capitalist mode of production. A system of laissez-faire capitalism delivers both positive and negative outcomes that are beyond our individual control. However, our lack of individual control need not necessarily send us in the direction of Comprehensive State planning for production/consumption. As I mentioned earlier, within latter day Social Democracies there is a general regulation of production/consumption via the political process. Our aim must be to harness the positive effects of capitalism and to 'regulate' the negative effects out of existence. (An increasingly globalised capitalism requires supra-national centres of political power.)
the worker has over his activity and products, they argue that a market socialist system accommodates the demand for self-determination since decisions regarding the workers' activity and products are put in the hands of workers themselves.

There are practical difficulties with this proposal which I discuss in part three (see section 3.13 'A System of Associative Market Socialism'), for now I want to consider whether latter day accounts of market socialism provide an adequate solution to the normative problem of alienation.

Miller claims that alienation is overcome within a market socialist system because the workers can control their activity and generate/dispose of their product as they see fit. However, if worker co-operatives are merely replacing the capitalist-worker relation, and units of production are still geared towards profit-maximisation through production for capital and consumer wants, then what co-operatives produce and how they produce will be governed by the demands of the market and not their own intentions. If worker co-operatives are set to maximise profits (and minimise costs) then they are compelled to adopt those working practices, and produce those commodities, which best fulfil such goals. It could be argued that a particular co-operative does not have to simply pursue the goals of profit-maximisation/cost-minimisation and that workers can elect to have diminished returns and higher costs if this enables them to enact those working practices and produce those products, which allows them to be more creative, or provides them with greater satisfaction. Andrew Mason argues that:

Market forces would still operate and create a pressure towards efficient production; but the hope would be that (under normal circumstances) groups of workers would be in a position to choose to sacrifice some measure of efficiency in order to organise their work so that it enabled them to exercise and develop various human

---

104 Richard Arneson argues this point in his paper 'Meaningful Work & Market Socialism', p.518, in the journal Ethics 97 (April 1987).
capacities, and exercise and develop various virtues in the process. They might, for example, opt for a system of task rotation.¹⁰⁵

There are several problems with this argument. If a firm does not remain efficient, and at least command an excess of revenue over costs then its goes under. It might not even be enough to simply command an excess of revenue over costs. The firm that commands the largest profit in a sector is best placed to develop both its methods of production and its products. In a market exchange and money-based economy those firms that take their eye off efficiency are more vulnerable to obsolescence. In any case, if worker co-operatives are producing the kinds of capital and consumer goods which oligopolistic capitalist corporations currently supply us with, then there is little scope for factoring in creativity and realising greater satisfaction in office, factory or shop line-work. Production for our mundane wheat, steel, and plastic requirements or for everyday manufactured goods such as disposable razors, biros and nappies, offer little scope for individual creativity except for the scientists, engineers and managers required to augment such production. Job-rotation falls far short of Alienation Marxist aspirations.

We should bear in mind that capitalists do not implement mundane, stupefying and stultifying working practices because they want to be nasty to the workers but because the production of capital and consumer goods, as geared towards effecting market/money exchange and maximising profit, dictates. Capitalists hone and preside over an alienating specialisation and division of labour in which each is directed to perform a single task or a narrow range of tasks because it promotes efficiency. Such practices promote output per worker (productivity), minimise costs and thus maximise profits. (In part three I argue that, by honing an alienating specialisation and division of labour, capitalism prepares the ground for a replacement of labour by capital factors

¹⁰⁵ Andrew Mason 'MacIntyre on Modernity & How It Has Marginalised the Virtues', p.208, in How
within the realm of material production proper. Our overarching interest does not consist in consigning the production for our mundane capital and consumer wants to worker cooperatives but to have technology/capital replace the labour of line-workers. I argue that there is a role for market socialism under future communism but it can only take its place once the teleological basis for production has been transformed. Production for primarily profit must be replaced by production for goods internal to social practices. See section 3.13 ‘A System of Associative Market Socialism’.

The worker cannot gain greater self-determination under either Soviet-style Socialist planning or current accounts of market socialism. In any case, Kymlicka and others only provide (erroneous) solutions to a one-sided account of Marx’s theory of alienation. Kymlicka’s account lacks an expressivist dimension, which is captured in the self-actualisation condition of freedom as self-realisation. The bringing of one’s activity and product under the control of one’s will is not all that the non-alienated existence consists in, it also consists in one being able to discover/cultivate who one is, or what one wants to be, through one’s activity and in one’s products. In Capital Vol.1 Marx remarks: “Milton produced Paradise Lost as a silkworm produces silk, as the activity of his own nature.” 106 In his early writings Marx maintained that our products should be “so many mirrors from which our essence shines forth.” 107 Earlier we saw that, for Marx: ‘as individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce.’ 108

---

Thus, what matters for Alienation Marxists is 'what' we produce, 'how' we produce, and what we become as a result of enjoining certain activities and effecting particular products. This expressivist ideal is lacking in Kymlicka and other contemporary accounts of Marx on alienation.

Kymlicka states that the distinctive excellence that Alienation Marxists value is the 'capacity for freely creative co-operative production'. He adds: “To produce in a way that stunts this capacity is to be alienated from our true 'species-nature'.” Now, the positive counterpart of the negative alienation critique of capitalism is the achievement of freedom as self-realisation which includes the individual becoming able to develop, exercise and express his skill, judgement and creativity within the production process. However, such freedom cannot be secured in, and should not to be sought within, what Marx terms, 'the sphere of material production proper'. The sphere of material production proper furnishes mankind with those mundane capital and consumer goods which cater to the 'realm of necessity' (foodstuffs, textiles for clothing, bricks for houses, etc.) and forms the material basis of the true realm of freedom - 'the development of human powers as an end in-itself'. In successive economic epochs, menial production for the realm of necessity has been performed by the slave, the serf and (under capitalism) the wage-labourer.

In part three I argue that technology must come to replace the work of the wage-labourer. Machines, computers and robots can in theory, perform any mundane, repetitive and boring productive task. An aim of Alienation Marxism is to make such

---

109. Kymlicka assumes that Alienation Marxists seek co-operation rather than competition in all aspects of human production. This is not essential. Sometimes competition promotes better production. A novelist who competes with other novelists for a literary prize, a philosopher who competes with other philosophers for publication of his article or an athlete who pits his abilities against other athletes, promotes goods internal to the practices of literature, philosophy and athletics.

theory a reality. If, and as, we can course to such a world, then mankind becomes progressively more free to perform that aspect of production for social needs which technology cannot perform and which necessarily requires the development, exercise and expression of human skill, judgement and creativity.

Marx writes:

Man is a social animal in the most literal sense; he is not only a social animal, but an animal who can individualise himself within society. Production by an isolated individual outside society - a rare event, which might occur when a civilised person who has already absorbed the dynamic social forces is accidentally cast into the wilderness - is just as preposterous as the development of speech without individuals who live together and talk to one another. \(^{111}\)

I take the 'dynamic social forces', which Marx speaks of as equivalent to what MacIntyre terms, a 'social practice'. MacIntyre writes:

To enter into a practice is to enter into a relationship not only with contemporary practitioners, but also with those who have proceeded us in the practice, particularly those whose achievements extended the reach of the practice to its present point. It is thus the achievement, and \textit{a fortiori} the authority, of a tradition which I then confront and from which I have to learn.\(^ {112}\)

Under communism, work must come to take the form of a social practice. The structure of a social practice is such that it requires the development of particular human capacities and the exercise and expression of our capacities coincides with the realisation of goods internal to a particular social practice. Work fails to be a social practice if tasks are repetitive and mundane; i.e. the individual fails to develop any of his capacities. Work also fails to be a social practice if the exercise and expression of his capacities is subordinated to the demands of an external good such as money (profit) rather than goods internal to social practices. The practical and/or expressive needs of a


community are best served if a producer tracks goods internal to a social practice rather than external goods.\textsuperscript{113}

\textit{Wittgenstein's Private Language Argument.} Marx claims that 'production by an isolated individual is just as preposterous as the development of speech without individuals who live together and talk to one another'. Now, one might think, pace Locke, that language simply consists of us using signs to serve as a proxy for ideas in our head; ideas which we, as individuals, form in response to our perception of the world. In this way,

... Thought, language, now appear to us the unique correlate, picture of the world. These concepts: proposition, language, thought, world, stand in line one behind the other, each equivalent to each. \textsuperscript{114}

But asks Wittgenstein, how do words refer to sensations? How does a human being learn the meaning of names of sensations? Wittgenstein claims that:

... words are connected with the primitive, the natural, expressions of the sensation and are used in their place. A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behaviour.

'So you are saying that the word 'pain' really means crying?' - On the contrary: the verbal expression of pain replaces crying and does not describe it. \textsuperscript{115}

When an infant exclaims, "I have a toothache!" he is not essentially referring to internal objects of pain. He is not making a first-person report of some occurrence within him; he is \textit{expressing} his pain. When we are inflicted with pain, our natural instinct (due to facts of our physiology) is to simply scream 'aarhh!' However, as children we are taught to make our expression more sophisticated so that appropriate

\textsuperscript{113}I discuss these claims further in part three, see section 3.1122 'The Correspondence Thesis - Alisdair MacIntyre's Idea of a Social Practice'.


responses (sympathy, treatment, etc.) can be directed towards our condition. In this way we are wired into a particular community’s way of dealings with situations that arise from our general needs as human beings. Similarly, in practices such as, for example, medicine, cooking, athletics, music, poetry, chess, and tailoring, we come to know and act in accordance with shared rules and customs which operate within some aspect of the practical and/or expressive life of the community.

Language is primarily practical. Marx writes: ‘Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men.” 116 Wittgenstein emphasises this in his use of the builder’s and grocer’s language games at the beginning of the Philosophical Investigations. It is nonsense to suppose that someone can create the expression, and the purposes to which that expression is put, wholly by themselves. (Purposes are given internal to the medium of expression, in language as well as in other aspects of a community’s practical and/or expressive life - e.g. healthcare, sport, painting, teaching, etc.)

First, what would such an exercise be for? The exercise would be as idle as giving yourself a birthday present. Wittgenstein posits the following:

Why can’t my right hand give my left hand money? My right hand can put it into my left hand. My right hand can write a deed of gift and my left hand a receipt. But the further practical consequences would not be those of a gift. When the left hand has taken the money from the right, etc., we shall ask: ‘Well, and what of it?’ And the same could be asked if a person had given himself a private definition of a word; I mean, if he has said the word to himself and at the same time has directed his attention to a sensation.117

---


Second, if you did not share in those purposes with others you will fail to communicate anything. The possibility of expression and recognition with language, as with ‘production’ in medicine, music, sport, painting, philosophy and art, only obtains by us coming to share in common ‘forms of life’. In a social practice ‘production not only supplies a material for the need, but it also supplies a need for the material... The need which consumption feels for the object is created by the perception of it. The object of art - like every other product - creates a public that is sensitive to art and enjoys beauty. Production thus not only creates an object for the subject, but also a subject for the object’.118

1.342 ‘Abolition’ or ‘Positive Supersession’ of Private Property in the Means of Production?

Up to this point my claims against Kymlicka (and others) are: (i) he only gives a partial view of why man is alienated within the capitalist mode of production. Man is taken to be alienated simply because he lacks control over his activity and ownership of his product. Kymlicka’s account lacks an ‘expressivist’ dimension; (ii) out of his incomplete diagnosis of man’s alienation stems the proposal to abolish private property in the means of production and institute common ownership and control. This proposal will not return activity and product back to the worker. Even given the socialist end he describes, the means he invokes fails to fulfil this end. By trying to understand the means which Marx did invoke we can develop aims that answer to a more complete diagnosis of why Marx believed man to be alienated within the capitalist mode of production.

As regards the alienation of the worker, this will not end with the abolition of private property in the means of production and the institution of common ownership and control. Simple abolition is not what Marx called for, he maintained that:

Communism is the positive supersession of private property, of human self-estrangement, and hence the true appropriation of the human essence through and for man.  

Kymlicka derives the simple abolition view of Marx from The Communist Manifesto where Marx states that 'the theory of Communists may be summed up in a single phrase: Abolition of private property'. However, the former quote is taken from Marx's 1844 Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts whilst the latter is taken from what is, by most accounts, an insurrectionary pamphlet rather that a sober statement of his philosophical views. The 1844 Manuscripts are representative of Marx in the cool of reflection rather than the heat of revolution.

Engels suggests the 'abolition' view, and the goal of Soviet-style economic planning, at various points in his book Anti-Duhring and in his other writings. In his paper 'Marxian Science and Positivist Politics', Terence Ball argues that 'the link in the transition from classical Marxist theory to contemporary Soviet practice is to be found in Engels' philosophical labours. For it is from Engels' metascientific premises - his positivism, his materialist metaphysics, and his instrumentalist view of the scientific theory's relation to political practice - that some of the repressive features of Soviet practice follow as a conclusion'. Ball claims that, as regards the legacy of Soviet

---


Socialism, we can 'at least partially exonerate Marx and... bring a bill of indictment against Engels'.

I do use Engels at various points in this thesis to illuminate, or add to, arguments which are advanced by Marx and which are central to a defensible case for Alienation Marxism. I am inclined to disregard the slogan offered in the Manifesto, and the 'planning' aspirations of Engels, since they contradict Marx in his early writings on alienation, and especially since it is false to claim that the abolition of private property in the means of production and the institution of common ownership and control will lead to the end of alienation. This is the case on either the partial diagnosis of man's alienation offered by Kymlicka or a fuller account that incorporates an expressivist dimension.

What, then, is positive supersession of private property in the means of production/consumption?

Production. The right to private property in the means of production, exchange and accumulation is central to the workings of capitalism. The prospect of money (exchange-value) drives the delivery of capital and consumer goods to society. Capitalist firms steer innovation and investment in order to secure profit; they commission scientists, engineers and managers and hire office, factory and shop line-workers in order to maximise profits (exchange-value) for their shareholders. Similarly, the worker is driven to sell his labour power for a wage (exchange-value) in order to meet his needs. Within the capitalist mode of production, the motive to produce is largely, if not wholly, instrumental in nature. Production is enjoined by capitalists and workers as a means to money (profit/wage).

---

Consumption. Under capitalism one is able to consume insofar as one can command rent on land, profit on capital or a wage gained through the sale of one’s labour power. (Wage gained through the sale of one’s labour provides, by far, the most important means by which individuals under capitalism are able to access the means of consumption.) All three means of consumption are premised on ownership rights in, and returns to, land, capital and labour.

In part three I argue that ‘positive’ transcendence or supersession of private property to refers to revolutionary transformations in the conditions of both production and consumption. I argue that oligopolistic capitalist corporations are developing capital-intensive manufacture across the primary, secondary and (main strands of) the tertiary sectors of the economy, and that capital-intensive manufacture, as developed and managed by oligopolistic capitalist corporations, can provide the material basis of a society in which each is entitled to an unconditional basic income, and in which each is able to pursue self-realising ‘associative’ production.

1.4 Conclusion

Over the course of part one I have argued that Marx’s alienation critique of capitalism forms the critical basis of Marxian Socialism, and that considerations of productive efficiency and distribution must only be understood once we command a perspicuous view of why Marx believed man to be alienated and of an account of freedom as self-realisation. I discuss the economic and institutional basis for future communism in part three. However, before turning to such practical matters in part two I discuss some further normative problems raised by Marx’s alienation critique of capitalism and its counterpart idea of freedom as self-realisation. I discuss the sense in which Alienation Marxism is communitarian. I also defend the philosophy of Alienation
Marxism against the charge of perfectionism. Certain contemporary liberal socialists maintain that in championing the value of developing, exercising and expressing our capacities through our productive activity and in our products, Alienation Marxists are simply subjecting the social order to a view of the human good over others that can be legitimately held and pursued. I aim to show that freedom as self-realisation is more plural than these theorists suggest; that freedom as self-realisation comports with ordinary and deep human aspirations; and that Alienation Marxism is not particularly perfectionist.
PART TWO
FREEDOM, COMMUNITY & SOCIALISM

The Alienation Marxist Sense In Which Socialists Must Defend Freedom & Be Communitarian

‘Thou shalt labour by the sweat of thy brow!’ was Jehovah’s curse that he bestowed upon Adam. A. Smith conceives of labour as such a curse. ‘Rest’ appears to him to be the fitting state of things, and identical with ‘liberty’ and ‘happiness’. It seems to be far from A. Smith’s thoughts that the individual, ‘in his normal state of health, strength, activity, skill and efficiency’, might also require a normal portion of work, and cessation of rest. It is true that the quantity to be provided seems to be conditioned by external circumstances, by the purpose to be achieved, and the obstacles to its achievement that have to be overcome by labour. But neither does it occur to A. Smith that the overcoming of such obstacles may itself constitute an exercise in liberty, and that these external purposes lose their character of mere natural necessities and are established as purposes which the individual himself fixes. The result is the self-realisation and the objectification of the subject, therefore real freedom, whose activity is precisely labour. Of course he is correct in saying that labour has always seemed repulsive, and forced upon the worker from the outside, in its historical forms of slave-labour, bond labour and wage-labour, and that in this sense non-labour could be opposed to it as ‘liberty and happiness’. This is true of this contradictory labour which has not yet created the subjective and objective conditions (which it lost when it abandoned pastoral conditions) which make it into attractive labour and individual self-realisation. This does not mean that labour can be made merely a joke, or amusement, as Fourier naively expressed it in shop-girl terms. Really free labour, the composing of music for example, is at the same time damned serious and demands the greatest effort.122

Only within the community has each individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; hence personal freedom becomes possible only within community. In the previous substitutes for community, in the state, etc. personal freedom has existed only for the individual who developed under the conditions of the ruling class, and only insofar as they were individuals of that class. The illusory community in which individuals have up till now combined always took on an independent existence in relation to them, and since it was the combination of one class over another, it was at the same time for the oppressed class not only a completely illusory community, but a fetter as well. In the real community the individuals obtain their freedom in and through their association.123


2.0 Introduction

From part one we saw that the Marxian account of freedom as self-realisation has two central values. These are the values of self-determination and self-actualisation.\(^{124}\) For Marx, the lack of either or both these values in an individual's life (production) entails alienation from his 'species-essence'.

Self-determination consists in having one’s action (activity and products) subject to one’s own beliefs and desires rather than the will of some other agent. (From part one we saw that, as regards production, one should be able to actualise in something 'one's own purpose'.) This is what can be termed, the intentional, or internal, aspect to human freedom. Self-determination is the anti-thesis of servitude. A concern for the value of self-determination issues in the demand that one should be able to act in accord with one's own beliefs and desires compatible with the exercise of similar ability in others.

Self-actualisation is the extensional, or external, aspect of freedom as self-realisation. For Marxists, this aspect of freedom concerns the demand that one should be able to occasion meaning in one’s life, through one’s activity and in one’s products, by developing, exercising and expressing one’s capacities. It is the externalisation, or objectification, of oneself, the making manifest of who one is or what one is striving to be. Dialectically, it is the process, and result, of finding/fashioning oneself in something objective.\(^{125}\)

The demand for freedom as self-determination rules out the achievement of self-realisation through the subjugation, exploitation or annihilation of others. It defeats the


so-called ‘wrong-properties’ objection to a self-realisationist ethic.\textsuperscript{126} Thus, the value of self-determination rules out the achievement of self-actualisation through, for example, an individual developing, exercising and expressing a capacity to murder, maim or torture.

The demand for self-actualisation provides the sense in which Alienation Marxists are communitarian. As we saw in part one, the development, exercise and expression of our generically human powers and capacities requires us coming to be versed in social practices. Social practices are enacted by a community of people in order to address their practical and/or expressive needs, and are a means by which an individual becomes able to develop, exercise and express their capacities, and thereby attain a measure of meaning in her life.

For Alienation Marxists freedom (as self-realisation) requires that an individual be able to meet the dual aspect of her needs in circumstances where she is also able to develop, exercise and express her capacities. An individual who lacks sustenance cannot achieve self-determination let alone self-actualisation. Also, an individual fails to properly achieve self-actualisation if they are not able to develop their capacities, or if they fail to access opportunities in which they can exercise and express the capacities, which they are able to develop.

2.01 Negative Freedom & Self-Determination

The goal of Marxian freedom as self-realisation can be contrasted with a Libertarian demand for so-called negative freedom. The demand for negative freedom ‘as the absence of coercion’ on individual action presumably stems from a concern for

self-determination. An individual’s actions should be self- rather than other-directed; an individual’s actions should follow from her own beliefs and desires rather than that of the will of another individual or a collective such as the State.

We can, however, reasonably question the value of negative freedom for a starving individual. Such an individual’s action (or rather inaction) can be said to be other- rather than self-driven. She suffers a lack of freedom in virtue of the fact that she is saddled with brute physical needs which she is unable to meet, and in virtue of which her actions fail to be properly self-directed. Similarly an individual who is subject to psychological or physical addiction (such as a compulsive gambler or an alcoholic) may have negative freedom, but they can also fail to achieve self-determination over their actions. Also, an individual who simply and unquestioningly acts in accordance with the wishes of his elders, or the pressure of his peers, may have negative freedom but lacks self-determination. As Mill writes:

He who lets the world, or own portion of it, choose his plan for him has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation. He who chooses his plan for himself employs all his faculties... Human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing. 127

Similarly an individual who acts in accordance with norms of conduct which obtains within, and which he feels is ‘required’ by, the crowd or by his class, gender or race also fails to be self-determined. As Freud maintains:

We have the impression of a state in which an individual’s private emotional impulses and intellectual acts are too weak to come to anything by themselves and are entirely dependent for this on being reinforced by being repeated in a similar way in the other members of the group. We are reminded of how many of these phenomena of dependence are part of the normal constitution of society, of how little originality and personal courage are to be found in it, of how much every individual is ruled by those

attitudes of the group mind which exhibit themselves in such forms as racial characteristics, class prejudices, public opinion, etc.\textsuperscript{128}

The achievement of negative freedom does not necessarily entail self-determination. Freedom as the absence of interference on individual action is consistent with circumstances where individuals are not particularly self-determined but who have lives that are dominated by forces of physiology and/or the sway of sociology.

It may be argued that it is impossible to distance the formation of our beliefs and desires, and our consequent actions, from the influence of nature and society in order to lead an 'authentic' self-determined life. This may be so.\textsuperscript{129} However, Alienation Marxists do not look to the intentional aspect of freedom as self-realisation for evidence of the authentic existence. The evidential basis for freedom is to be sought in the extensional, or external, aspect of freedom as self-realisation. That is, in how one is able to properly achieve self-actualisation.\textsuperscript{130} It must be judged in terms of how an individual


\textsuperscript{129}The prospect of a properly authentic existence seems to rest on a solution to the metaphysical problem of free will and determinism. Freedom as self-determination seems to suppose that it is possible for me to form and hold beliefs and desires which can be set outside determining forces of nature and society and somehow be described as original to me. Even if the metaphysical thesis holds and freedom as self-determination is possible, there is an epistemological problem: how can I know which of the beliefs and desires I have are properly my own?

I am writing this thesis because I believe it is worthwhile and because, in doing so and if good enough, it will fulfil my desire to gain a Ph.D. Can these beliefs and desires be described as authentic to me? What if my parents wanted me to be a (medical!) doctor and my school friends are now lawyers, engineers and accountants who prefer a life in which they command high salaries and are able to drive executive cars, wear designer clothes and dine in expensive restaurants, rather than one spent trying to make sense of Marx’s \textit{Grundrisse}. Can I then reasonably be said to hold beliefs and desires that are my own? What if I formed beliefs and desires in opposition to what my parents believed good for me, or in spite of the beliefs and desires that my peers acted upon? Does this mean that my actions are self- as opposed to other-directed?

Some have suggested that the criterion of freedom rest in those beliefs and desires that I \textit{reflectively} endorse, and come to identify with, rather than in any of actual belief or desires that I happen to hold. (This path to an analysis of freedom is set out in Harry Frankfurt’s paper ‘The Freedom of the Will & the Concept of a Person’ re-printed in his collection \textit{The Importance of What We Care About} (Cambridge, 1988) and in Gerald Dworkin \textit{The Theory & Practice of Autonomy} (Cambridge, 1988).) To my mind this approach still begs the metaphysical and epistemological questions.

\textsuperscript{130}I say ‘properly’ because, as we saw in part one, religion, nationalism and consumerism are alienated or \textit{inauthentic} means by which an individual can achieve self-actualisation. For Alienation Marxists the
comes to inhabit a social practice and then deploy her powers in a way that truly makes
that practice her own. Think of Pelé and the practice of football, Wittgenstein and
philosophy, and Joyce and the novel. The truly authentic life is the stuff of obituaries
and biographies. One might think that these are wholly exceptional individuals, and that
the truly authentic life is only ever going to be achieved by a very tiny minority.
Marxists believe otherwise.\footnote{Communists believe that genius is due to facts about an individual’s ‘social environment’ and the
application of, what Marx terms, ‘damned serious and great effort’ rather any notion of innate intelligence,
skill or creativity. ‘Albert Einstein came from a family with strong scientific interests; The Bronte sisters
did not suddenly begin writing great novels. They perfected their writing skills through intense preparation
over a period of many years; George Elliot had an excellent training. She was immensely diligent and
made herself into a superb scholar and writer through serious and sustained effort; While almost all the
world’s greatest musicians and composers were child prodigies, including Mozart, Handel, J.S. Bach,
Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt, Schumann and Debussy, even the most exceptionally able took at least ten years
of hard study to become a major composer’. Professor Michael Howe of Exeter University recounted these
findings at a session of the British Psychological Society’s annual conference. See a report of the
conference in The Guardian, 15/4/00, p.6 article entitled ‘Geniuses made with hard work, not born’. For
more detailed argument see Michael Howe’s book Genius Explained (Cambridge, 1999).}
Our aim must be to develop an educational, economic
and civil life in which ‘social practices’ become central to the lives of everyone, and
where each can become able to develop, exercise and express their potential to acquire
and direct human knowledge, skill and creativity towards the service of social needs. As
Trotsky writes, under communism “the forms of life will become dynamically dramatic.
The average human type will rise to the heights of an Aristotle, a Goethe, or a Marx.
And above this ridge new peaks will arise.”\footnote{Marxism: Essential Writings (Oxford, 1988), ed. David McLellan, p.225.}

2.02 David Miller on Socialist Freedom & Community

Now, the sub-title of this chapter is a twist on a paper by David Miller entitled
‘In What Sense Must Socialism Be Communitarian?’\footnote{Re-printed in Socialism (Blackwell, 1989), ed. Paul, Miller & Paul.} In his paper (and in his book
Market, State & Community) Miller advances a view about Socialist freedom and

authentic self-realising existence requires one to be free from pressing material needs, and to have
opportunities to develop, exercise and express one’s own powers and capacities.
community, in defence of a ‘distributive’ conception of Socialism, and against the alienation or, what he terms, the ‘quality of life’ approach to Socialism. For Miller, the central problem with capitalism is that it distributes the means of production (capital) and the means of consumption (income and wealth) unfairly, and in a way which compromises the achievement of greatest freedom (as the ability to satisfy preferences) for the greater number, and not because man fails to achieve self-realisation by developing, exercising and expressing his capacities in production. He claims that the distributive critique “can be reconciled with the major features of industrial societies far more readily than the ‘quality of life’ critique,” and that: “Consideration of realism... are one major pressure inducing contemporary socialists to abandon the ‘quality of life’ critique in favour of distributive critique of capitalism.”

According to Miller, the problem with the alienation approach is that it cannot be reconciled to both the normative and practical features of modern industrial society. On a normative plane, the alienation critique is ‘somewhat pious’ and issues in paternalist, perfectionist and authoritarian politics. It champions a view of the human good - centred in an account of ‘meaningful’ production - when there is, instead, a plurality of conceptions of the good (preferences) which can be held, and legitimately pursued, by different individuals in a properly free society. On a practical level, there must be markets. Miller maintains that, on Marx’s account, the end to alienation requires Soviet-style economic planning. Thus, given such deep normative and practical problems, Miller argues a case for market socialism situated within a broadly liberal egalitarian and nationalist framework. For Miller, nationalism provides the sense in

---


which Socialists must be communitarian. A society sharing in nationalist sentiments is necessary to underwrite radical liberal egalitarian re-distributive goals.

Miller makes an appeal to a conception of community as a means of effecting a more egalitarian spread of income and wealth across persons in society. In his view promotion of the greatest freedom for the greatest number requires a more equitable spread of income and wealth. However, an egalitarian scheme of re-distribution cannot obtain unless individuals, whose productive efforts generate incomes and wealth, come to see their lives as bound up with one another. In a market exchange and money-driven economy the social product is delivered by having producers primarily pursue profits, salaries and wages. The problem of community stems from the fact that, on the one hand, the market marshals the egoistic and narrowly self-interested motives of producers primarily maximising money-returns for themselves whilst, on the other hand, the prospect of re-distribution of the results of market exchange is premised on the hope that producers harbour more communitarian motives. The hope for Socialist justice hinges on the expectation that those producers and consumers who command above average returns in the market place will sacrifice their extra gains from production, and their greater capacity to consume/invest, in order to underwrite a more equitable scheme of re-distribution in goods across all persons. Thus Miller writes:

The kind of ties we are looking for... involve each person seeing his life as part and parcel of the wider group, so that questions of how well his own life is going depends in some measure on how the community as a whole is faring.

---


Miller believes that nationalism provides the means by which we can come to encounter one another as similarly situated individuals, and by which we can foster a common identity and shared social purpose. He arrives at his position via a run-through and rejection of conceptions of community that are advanced by contemporary communitarian philosophers. Thus in a section entitled *The Ambivalence of Contemporary Communitarianism* Miller claims that latter day communitarians such as Charles Taylor, Michael Sandel and Alisdair Maclntyre have nothing to offer to a viable Socialist project save for the general argument that “ideas of justice cannot be separated from a broader understanding of the community within which distributive practices exist.” Whilst the latter day Communitarians are correct in their general argument, Miller argues that this does not mean that the particular ‘conceptions of justice and community which they advance are socialist conceptions’.

I am in the business of defending the alienation approach to Socialism. On the practical point I have already argued that Marx did not advocate Soviet-style economic planning and that, in fact, the planned economy does not provide a solution to the problem of alienation (‘the riddle of history’) as laid out by Marx in his 1844 *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*. I take up issues regarding the economic and sociological basis of future communism in part three. In this part of the thesis I will centre on normative issues raised by an Alienation Marxist conception of socialist freedom and community.

*Community.* As for the issue of community, Miller rejects accounts supplied by latter day communitarian philosophers and settles on the notion of nationalism as the answer to the socialist need for community. To my mind ideas of nationality are, and should remain, an anathema to Socialist philosophy. The Nazi’s in 1930’s Germany

---

termed their own political morality 'National Socialism' precisely because they wanted
to demarc themselves from the internationalist perspective and aspirations of Marxian
Socialists. I am not claiming that Miller's socialism has anything to do with fascism,
however I do believe that a properly Socialist political morality/economy should be
international in scope. Miller advocates nationalism because he sees the cultivation of
such identity as necessary to achieve a more egalitarian spread of income and wealth
across persons in society. In the last chapter I argued that radical egalitarianism does not
come to fulfil Alienation Marxist aspirations, a more equal spread of income and wealth
is neither necessary nor sufficient to achieve Marxian freedom as self-realisation.
Likewise a nationalism which aims to underpin liberal egalitarian re-distributive goals
has nothing to do with a properly Marxian Socialism. Unlike Miller I believe that
latter day communitarian philosophers do provide some answers to the problem of
community in a post-capitalist communism. Specifically, I argued in part one, and I will
argue further in part three, that Alisdair MacIntyre provides us with important insights
into the nature of community and that his interpretation of Aristotle on social practices
and the virtues enable us to make best sense of, and give substance to, Marx's own
Aristotelian-flavoured critical writings. Allen Wood writes:

Not only Marx's language, but also his thought is... profoundly Aristotelian. For
both philosophers a fulfilling human life consists in the development and exercise of our
essentially human capacities in a life of activity suited to our nature. Of course,... , to

---

139 I make a few remarks concerning the cosmopolitan nature of Alienation Marxism in part three (p.254)
however I do not have the space in this thesis to go into the necessity and desirability of developing
structures of 'Global Governance' and 'International Law' and of fashioning a 'Cosmopolitan Culture'. I
hope to return to these deep problems at a future occasion.

140 Miller might argue that he is not in the business of fashioning a Marxian Socialism but in constructing a
viable Socialism fit for our modern age. However, in the course of his own writings he does suggest that
his own proposals can provide answers to specifically Marxist concerns as well as providing an account of
socialism which is relevant to contemporary circumstances. I am arguing that he does not achieve the
former, especially as regards the problem of alienation, and that his positive proposals are either wrong
(viz. nationalism) or radically under-described (viz. a system of market socialism, see section 3.13).
conceive of human good as ‘activity in accordance with excellence’ is only to provide a sketch or outline of the good which needs to be filled in if it is to be informative.  

My view is that MacIntyre does provide us with the filling and that his analysis of the individual and her relation to community does inform us as to the nature of a post-capitalist and communist civil life in which the individual becomes able to ‘cultivate her gifts in all directions’.

*Freedom.* Miller argues that the Alienation Marxist conception of freedom contains an account of the human good which is perfectionist and that this offends against a liberal approach which aims to fashion a political morality that assumes a general relativism, subjectivism or pluralism on questions concerning the good for man in a properly free society. A belief in pluralism concerning the good is reflected in the fact that Miller aims to fashion a political morality that adheres to a strict (actual) ‘preference-satisfaction’ metric of value. In Miller’s view, question of meaning and value should be ‘privatised’ to the personal sphere and not come to rule the political plane of our civil life. The use of the State’s legal and fiscal powers should not be beholden to any particular account of the good; the State must remain neutral.

Against this in the rest of this chapter I will argue that the Alienation Marxist conception of freedom as self-realisation is not perfectionist, and that the demand that the individual be able to develop, exercise and express her capacities actually comports with some rather common sense assumptions regarding individual and social development. Firstly, I will argue that such assumptions play key roles in the political

---


142 I discuss such issues further in part three, see section 3.1122 entitled ‘The Correspondence Thesis - Alisdair MacIntyre’s Idea of a Social Practice’.
moralities advanced by the godfathers of contemporary liberalism: John Stuart Mill and John Rawls (section 2.1). Secondly, I will argue that liberal socialists such as Miller neglect the fact that preferences are endogenously formed (section 2.2) and that there is a means by which we can examine the preferences we are apt to form, pursue and aim to satisfy which does not simply reduce to the pious (ideal-regarding) prejudices of an elite but is, instead, grounded in knowledge regarding human needs and capacities (section 2.3). I maintain that such knowledge is generated, transmitted and accumulated within social practices geared towards servicing the practical and expressive life of a community. I aim to show that Alienation Marxists do not champion a political morality that simply aims to aid some to sit in judgement over the actual preferences of others. However, given an argument concerning the endogenous formation of preferences we do aim to shape the social environment so that preferences tend to track the good for man given what we know about human needs and capacities. I will argue (in section 2.3) that there are better and worse ways to meet the needs of our physical being, and (in section 2.5) that an individual should have the opportunity to meet the needs of her conscious being by becoming able to occasion meaning and value in her life through the development, exercise and expression of her own capacities and powers.

2.1 Mill & Rawls on the Human Good

The demand that the individual should become able to develop, exercise and express his capacities is one we find in the political moralities of both Mill and Rawls. They both argue that man does possess generically human capacities and that his good, in part, consists in his becoming able to develop, exercise and express such capacities.

---

141I will argue that individual preferences, desires, and wants are formed in response to two givens: (i) the dual aspect of human needs, and (ii) the social environment (the family, systems of education and the economy) in which the individual learns to, and strives to, satiate the dual aspect of her needs.
2.11 Mill's Aristotelian Utilitarianism: 'Socrates dissatisfied is better than a fool satisfied'

Mill's version of utilitarianism is more complex than the traditional Benthamite approach. On the traditional view the human good is simply equivalent to our achievement of states of pleasure. Our interest as individuals, and a society as a whole, is to maximise the quantity of pleasure in ourselves, and across persons. The sources of our pleasures, and what it takes to realise pleasure, are of no independent concern. All that is required is that we each possess a profile of preferences over goods which yield pleasure to us, our good then simply consists in our becoming able to satisfy such preferences. In contrast to this view Mill states that "... if the sources of pleasure were precisely the same to human beings and to swine, the rule of life which is good enough for one would be good enough for the other." To this he adds: "Human beings have faculties more elevated than the animal appetites, and when made conscious of them do not regard anything as happiness which does not include their gratification." Mill maintains that: "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied."

In contrast to the strictly quantitative Benthamite view of the human good, Mill suggests a qualitative aspect that factors in the 'gratification of human faculties' into the utilitarian hedonistic (preference-satisfaction) calculus. With this new factor Mill argues that there exists a hierarchy of pleasures capable of being realised by humans, and that such a hierarchy is ordered by the extent to which the realisation of a particular pleasure

---


145 'Utilitarianism', p.279.

146 'Utilitarianism', p.281.
engages our generic human capacities. Poetry is better than pushpin because the former requires the cultivation, possession and deployment of our aesthetic/literary capacities. Similarly, chess is better than draughts because it develops and engages our analytical and strategic abilities to a greater degree.

A common criticism levelled at Mill is that, in making a distinction between higher and lower pleasures, he is a cultural elitist. On the basis for the distinction Mill argues the following:

If I am asked, what I mean by the difference of quality in pleasures, or what makes one pleasure more valuable than another, merely as a pleasure, except its being greater in amount, there is but one possible answer. Of two pleasures, if there be one to which all or almost all who have experience of both give a decided preference, irrespective of moral feelings to prefer it, that is the more desirable pleasure... Now 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 the fullest allowance of the beast’s pleasures; no intelligent human being would consent to be a fool, no instructed person would be an ignoramus, no person of feeling 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.  

Here Mill grounds his distinction in an empirical claim concerning the preferences expressed by those persons who have sampled both kinds of pleasures, he terms these people ‘competent’ and ‘cultivated’ judges. A position that is then commonly attributed to Mill is that the means (goods) by which we each pursue and gain pleasure should be assessed and governed by such ‘cultured’ individuals. It is then thought that Mill harbours elitism in Utilitarianism, which is inconsistent with his professed libertarianism in On Liberty.

---

147 'Utilitarianism', p.279ff.
149 F.H. Bradley Ethical Studies (Oxford, 1876), p.120.
Mill is not, however, dividing society up into groups of the cultured and uncultured and arguing that the former should legislate on questions of value. Mill’s distinction between higher and lower pleasures can be seen to hinge upon a rather common sense tenet of philosophical anthropology. Consider the following.

An infant realises pleasure either through the pursuit of some activity (say, playing on slides and swings) or by the direct consumption of some commodity (chocolate). These activities and objects form a set \( A(a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_n) \) which are ordered by the degree to which they realise pleasure to the infant, \( a_1 \) yields more pleasure than \( a_2 \), \( a_2 \) more than \( a_3 \), and so on. This activity/consumption set \( A \) can be mapped to a pleasure set \( P(p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_n) \). This pleasure set, \( P \), maps particular activities to quantities of pleasure, thus \( a_1 \rightarrow p_1 \), \( a_2 \rightarrow p_2 \), etc. The sum of individual pleasure is given by \( p_1 + p_2 + \ldots + p_n \). Thus the sum of the set \( P \) gives the total amount of pleasure realised by an infant through his pursuing certain activities and consuming various products.

Mill’s claim is that our good - as adults - does not simply consist in maximising the sum of set \( P \) across our lives. He wants to introduce a new factor into the calculus of the good - our capacities. An infant’s capacities are relatively small but can grow in time through education and training. We can posit another set \( C(c_1, c_2, \ldots, c_n) \) which details the capacities we are able to develop. Mill’s claim is that the nature of our activity set \( A \) and pleasure set \( P \) transforms in response to changes in our capacity set \( C \). Our capacity set \( C \) could include a capacity to appreciate and/or create, for example, poetry, philosophical arguments, or displays of skill in football. Thus through developing a capacity to read (write) and appreciate (create) poetry we will then, in general, prefer it as a pursuit to pushpin.\(^{150}\) The standard of value (utility) is still located in the actual

\(^{150}\) 'Utilitarianism', p.281.
preferences/pleasures of individuals, Mill thus remains true to his libertarianism, only he is making a rather ordinary empirical claim about human development and the formation of our preferences. In general we prefer, or take greater pleasure in, those activities which enable us to realise some capacity, talent or skill we possess.\textsuperscript{151}

Mill adds two cautions to his general claim:

(i) Firstly Mill writes:

\begin{quote}
It may be objected, that many who are capable of the higher pleasures, occasionally, under the influence of temptation, postpone them to the lower. But this is quite compatible with a full appreciation of the intrinsic superiority of the higher. Men often, from the infirmity of character, make their election for the nearer good, though they know it to be less valuable; and this is no less when the choice is between two bodily pleasures, than when it is between bodily and mental.\textsuperscript{152}
\end{quote}

Thus Mill is not claiming that in every event we prefer those activities which realise our generic capacities to those that do not, he is claiming that if we have

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{151}As F.H. Bradley points out in his book \textit{Ethical Studies} (Oxford, 1988 re-issue), p.120 footnote, Mill equivocates between pleasure-realisation and preference-satisfaction, as a definition of utility, in his essay ‘Utilitarianism’. In his formal definition of Utilitarianism he states that the “theory of life on which this morality is grounded - namely, that pleasure, and freedom from pain, are the only things which are desirable as ends; and that all desirable things (...) are desirable either for the pleasure inherent in themselves, or as means to the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of pain (p.268).” Later on in the essay Mill rejects the traditional monist interpretation of pleasure and states that: “The ingredients of happiness are very various, and each of them is desirable in itself, and not merely when considered as swelling an aggregate (p.309).” Elsewhere Mill is quite content to equate pleasure with simply those things that we prefer in life. He states:

“According to the Greatest Happiness Principle,..., the ultimate end, with reference to and for the sake of which all other things are desirable (whether we are considering our own good or that of other people), is an existence exempt as far as possible from pain, and as rich as possible in enjoyments, both in quantity and quality; the test of quality, and the rule for measuring it against quantity, being the preference felt by those, in their opportunity for experience, to which must be added their habits of self-consciousness and self-observation, are best furnished with the means of comparison (p.283).”

Mill claims that, on becoming competent and cultivated judges, we prefer \( p_c \) to \( p_i \) and that \( U(p_{c1}, p_{c2},...,p_{cn}) > U(p_1, p_2,...,p_n) \). If this means that, as we develop our capacities, we come to prefer those pursuits that enable us to exercise and express those capacities, then this seems consistent. Greater utility is to be had by developing, exercising and expressing our capacities. However, it is more contentious to claim that, on balance, the realisation of our capacities entails the realisation of greater pleasure in our lives. As our capacities develop we prefer more complex and sophisticated activities and pursuits. Our participation in such pursuits also opens us up to greater frustration and torment (displeasure). Is the life of a jobbing poet more pleasurable than the life of a champion pushpin player? It is impossible to state a priori that the life which requires a higher development, exercise and expression of our capacities is necessarily the life that yields the more pleasure. Thus, on a strictly hedonistic conception of utility it is difficult to say whether \( U(p_{c1}, p_{c2},...,p_{ca}) > U(p_1, p_2,...,p_a) \).

\textsuperscript{152}‘Utilitarianism’, p.281.
\end{footnotesize}
managed to develop certain capacities then we ‘give a marked preference for the manner of existence which employs the higher faculties’.\textsuperscript{153}

Mill’s claim echoes the one Marx invokes against Adam Smith. In the Grundrisse Marx maintains that Smith identifies liberty and happiness with ‘rest’ and the absence of effort. Against this Marx claims that ‘the individual in his normal state of health, strength, activity, skill and efficiency requires a normal portion of work, and cessation from rest (p.661)’. Here I take ‘requires’ to mean needs, desires or prefers. Alienation Marxists believe that if man is given the opportunity to develop his capacities then he seeks those pursuits and vocations that enable him to exercise and express those capacities. Marx claims that: ‘really free labour, the composing of music for example, is serious and demands the greatest effort’ and that ‘the overcoming of obstacles’ as characteristic of activities, pursuits and vocations which require the development and application of human knowledge, skill and creativity ‘may itself constitute an exercise in liberty.’ Hence Alienation Marxists seek the ‘objectification of the subject in labour’, we aim to bring about and sustain the conditions of ‘attractive labour and, hence, individual self-realisation’.\textsuperscript{154}

(ii) Second, our preference for this ‘manner of existence’ can either fail to form, or else atrophies, in the face of a social environment which does not either engender the development of our generic human capacities, or else fails to provide opportunities in

\textsuperscript{153}Utilitarianism’, p.280 my emphasis. In any case, and as Aristotle argues: ‘... in discussing subjects, and arguing from evidence,..., we must be satisfied with the broad outline of the truth; that is, in arguing about what is for the most part so from premises which are for the most part true we must be content to draw conclusions that are similarly qualified. The same sort of procedure, then, should be observed in receiving our several types of statement; for it is the mark of the trained mind never to expect more precision in the treatment of any subject than the nature of the subject permits; for demanding logical demonstrations from a teacher of rhetoric is clearly about as reasonable as accepting mere plausibility from a mathematician.’ Nicomachean Ethics 1094b13, p.64, in Ethics (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), trans. J.A.K. Thomson.

\textsuperscript{154}See quote from Marx’s Grundrisse at the top of the chapter.
which the individual is able to exercise and express the capacities which he does have the fortune to develop. Thus Mill writes:

The capacity for the nobler feelings is in most natures a very tender plant, easily killed, not only by hostile influences, but by mere want of sustenance; and in the majority of young persons it speedily dies away if the occupations to which their position in life has devoted them, and the society into which it has thrown them, are not favourable to keeping that higher capacity in exercise. Men lose their high aspirations as they lose their actual intellectual tastes, because they have not the time or opportunity for indulging in them; and they addict themselves to inferior pleasures, not because they deliberately prefer them, but because they are either the only ones to which they have access, or the only ones they are any longer capable of enjoying.\textsuperscript{155}

Here Mill claims that the social environment is decisive in our coming to prefer those pursuits and vocations that enable us to develop, exercise and express our generically human powers and capacities. Like Mill, Alienation Marxists seek a society in which each is able to develop their own capacities and to secure the material and institutional circumstances in which each is able to exercise and express such capacities.\textsuperscript{156}

2.12 Rawls' Aristotelian Principle

A similar aim is set out by Rawls in his discussion of (what he terms) the *Aristotelian Principle*. The Aristotelian Principle is a 'principle of human motivation'

\textsuperscript{155}‘Utilitarianism’, p.281.

\textsuperscript{156}Alienation Marxists do not seek to exclude the option of being a ‘couch-potato’ from the good society. Nor do we seek to seek to outlaw pleasure gained through, and preferences for, the kinds of goods, which have come to form latter day capitalist consumer/media/celebrity culture that the couch potato feeds off. Mindless pleasure does have its place in the good life. However, whilst we do not seek to exclude the production and consumption of such ‘froth’ from the good society, we do maintain that, like a good cup of cappuccino, it should form no more than a quarter of the drink. What if the individual prefers more froth than coffee? The answer to this is that Alienation Marxists aim to tailor society, as a system of production and consumption which the individual strives, learns and becomes able to satiate the dual aspect of his needs in circumstances where he is also able to develop, exercise and express his capacities, rather than fashion the life of any particular individual within society. Alienation Marxists maintain that how an individual prefers to live, and what she takes pleasure in, is a function of the options she has before her, and of whether or not she has had the opportunity to ‘cultivate her mind’ and exercise her faculties. We are not claiming that the good life simply consists in being able to develop, exercise and express one’s capacities, or that we should wholly eliminate the pursuit of mindless pleasure. However, whilst the development, exercise and expression of our capacities does not exhaust the good for man, it should form the basis of a cultural norm. For more on this see section 2.5 ‘Consumer Society - From Consumption to Production’.
which "runs as follows: other things equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realised capacities (their innate or trained abilities), and this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realised, or the greater its complexity." As regards the role of this principle in regulating our social arrangements Rawls states:

I believe that... in the design of social institutions a large place has to be made for it, otherwise human beings will find their culture and form of life dull and empty. Their vitality and zest will fail as their life becomes a tiresome routine. And this seems borne out by the fact that the forms of life which absorb men's energies, whether they be religious devotions or purely practical matters or even games and pastimes, tend to develop their intricacies and subtleties almost without end.

Here Rawls is making a claim about the social development of those practices, which can provide meaning and value to individuals. Take the game of football. At its inception it was a game played between neighbouring villages whose teams would arrange goal posts in their respective village-squares. The game would then proceed with an indeterminate number of players on both sides enacting a mad scramble across countryside trying to secure the ball in the opponent's goal. Over time the rules of this social practice evolved into the game we have today. Consider how subtle the offside rule and the rules for penalty-taking are when compared to the veritable anarchy that characterised the original practice of football. With this evolution we have a greater degree of sophistication in the role a player can occupy and the skills one can deploy within the game (one can be a goal-keeper, defender, striker, etc.). We can account for the evolution of the game with all of its 'intricacies and subtleties' in terms of man's desire to realise a greater and more diverse number of skills and to provide a more appropriate forum within which he can develop and express himself. Rawls argues one of the reasons why we value complex activities is because:

---


they satisfy the desire for variety and novelty of experience, and leave room for feats of ingenuity and invention... simpler activities exclude the possibility of individual style and personal expression which complex activities permit or even require, for how could everyone do them in the same way? That we should follow our natural bent and the lessons of our past experience seems inevitable if we are to find our way at all. Each of these features is well illustrated by chess, even to the point where grand masters have their characteristic style of play.  

Barry argues that, as an empirical generalisation, “the ‘Aristotelian Principle’ is, as a matter of fact, false for most people most of the time.” He adds:

It is to be emphasised that the question posed by the ‘Aristotelian Principle’ is not whether people get some satisfaction out of doing difficult things, but whether everyone’s central aim in life are bound up with the exercise of the most complex faculties, as against (say) eating, drinking, making love or watching television.

Barry pits the aim of ‘exercising the most complex faculties’ against the individual who simply wants ‘to eat, drink, make love, and watch t.v.’. To be sure most (if not all) of us wish to satisfy the latter wants, however, most of us invoke degrees of discrimination and discernment in undertaking such activities, this entails the exercise of various capacities on our part. This aside, Rawls (and Mill) are not claiming that every person, as they are presently constituted, have as their central aim, the exercise of the most complex faculties. What is being asserted is the weaker conditional, that if, and as, our capacities develop then we count their realisation as constitutive of our good. If we develop certain capacities then we come to prefer, or take pleasure in, the exercise and expression of such capacities. Can we imagine a state of affairs in which the antecedent of this proposition is true but the consequent false? Take the infamous ‘couch-potato’. Could someone have arrived at such a narrow aspiration in life if they are in possession of a cultivated mind? Where by,

---


... cultivated mind - [it] is not meant the mind of a philosopher, but any mind to which the fountains of knowledge have been opened, and which has been taught, in any tolerable degree, to exercise its faculties - finds sources of inexhaustible interest in all that surrounds it; in the objects of nature, the achievements of art, the imaginations of poetry, the incidents of history, the ways of mankind past and present, and their prospects in the future.  

2.2 The Endogenous Formation of Preferences

Liberal Socialists such as Miller and Arneson regard talk of the ‘cultivated’ mind, and of the individual coming to seek pursuits and a vocation in which he is able to develop, exercise and express his capacities as perfectionist. Miller claims that the alienation approach to Socialism,

...requires us to judge some modes of human life as better than others, regardless of the preferences that people actually display...[and that]...assumptions about the nature of the good life that socialists made a century ago - as indeed did many liberals, most notoriously John Stuart Mill - now strike us as elitist and somewhat pious.  

Similarly, Richard Arneson notes that ‘several recent commentators have observed that quasi-Aristotelian ideas about the good for man inform Marx’s own vision of the ideal postcapitalist society’, but then adds:

To my mind this identification of socialism or communism with a particular vision of the good life is unfortunate... I take the fundamental socialist aspiration to be equality in the distribution of economic burdens and benefits among citizens, the extension of democratic citizens rights to the workplace, and efficiency in the Pareto sense of operation in the economy.  

Arneson also writes: “In my judgement, the alienation ideal is illiberal if construed as a standard that is valid for assessing the worth of an individual’s life regardless of her own values and preferences.”  

---

162*Utilitarianism*, p.285.


Now Alienation Marxists do not argue their case for freedom and the human good ‘regardless’ of individual preferences, however, we are not as ready, as some liberals, to simply take individual preferences or desires at face value. Alienation Marxists are not championing a view of the human good life over and against the preferences and desires that individuals actually possess. We are not in the business of compelling individuals to, for example, rise at six, take an early morning jog, eat a high fibre breakfast, ‘hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon and then criticise after dinner’ if the individual is not of a mind to do these things. However, we do maintain that what an individual is ‘of a mind’ to do, to be, and achieve in her life, and therefore what she prefers or desires for herself, is a function of two givens: first, the dual aspect of human needs and, second, the social environment in which the individual strives, learns and becomes able (or not) to meet the needs of her physical being and satisfy the needs of her conscious being. By ‘social environment’ I mean the family; formal systems of education; and the structures and norms of production and consumption (distribution) which obtain within the economy. Rawls writes:

Now everyone recognises that the institutional form of society affects its members and determines in large part the kind of persons they want to be as well as the kind of persons they are. The social structure also limits people’s ambitions and hopes in different ways; for they will with reason view themselves in part according to their position in it and take account of the means and opportunities they can realistically expect... More generally... the social system produces and reproduces over time a certain form of culture shared by persons with certain conceptions of their good.

... we cannot view the talents and abilities of individuals as fixed natural gifts. To be sure, even as realised there is presumably as significant genetic component. However, these abilities and talents cannot come to fruition apart from the social conditions, and as realised they always take but one of many possible forms... Among the elements affecting the realisation of natural capacities are social attitudes of encouragement and support and the institutions concerned with their training and use. Thus even a potential ability at any given time is not something unaffected by existing social forms and particular contingencies over the course of life up to that moment. So not only our final ends and hopes for ourselves but also our realised abilities and talents reflect, to a large degree, our personal history, opportunities, and social position.\(^\text{166}\)

A child born into money; whose family dwells in a leafy suburb; who boards at his public school during term-time; and who ends up working within a profession via a course at Oxbridge; will learn and be able to satisfy his needs (and develop his capacities) in one fashion. A child born into a middle-income religious family; who dwells in suburbia; who is shuttled to and from his local denominational school; and who ends up working within a corporation via a spell at a provincial university will learn to, and be able to, satisfy his needs (and develop his capacities) in another fashion. Finally, a child from a welfare-dependent inner city sink estate; who sometimes attends a local comprehensive; and who ends up in a ‘yellow-pages’ trade via some training at an FE college, will learn to, and be able to, satisfy his needs in still another fashion.

All three need to satisfy needs of their physical being and all three need a locus of meaning and value in their lives. Each of them - in the main - achieve this as a result of being habituated into particular norms of thought and conduct which are transmitted from one generation to the next. These norms are shared by a generation of one’s peers, and service the needs of the stomach and the imagination. I say ‘in the main’ because I do not want to claim that there is a strict and all-encompassing determinism between upbringing and how an individual’s life pans out. Even in a class-ridden society there is some social mobility. However, I do want to maintain that what an individual aspires to be, hopes to do, and expects to achieve in her life - the preferences and desires which a person comes to hold - is a function of the family, the education system and the economy. Preferences are, inter alia, the product of, on the one hand, perennial facts about human needs and, on the other hand, the social environment in which the

---

167 There are the courageous few who do use what little advantage they have had dispensed by their social environment to lever themselves into a life which is at odds with the fate which befalls their peers. There are also those who lose their place in the pecking order by squandering the privileges which their social environment affords them.
individual is furnished (or not) with the subjective and objective means to properly meet the dual aspect of her needs.\(^{168}\)

Liberals such as Kymlicka argue that the individual and common good should simply aggregate, track and satisfy the preferences which people actually hold. He writes:

... a liberal state can be said to promote the common good, since its policies aim at promoting the interests of the members of the community. The process of combining individual preferences into a social choice function is often said to determine the common good for a liberal society. Thus it might promote the common good to build a new airport or highway if a fair process of counting preferences yields that result...

In a liberal society, the common good is the result of a process of combining preferences, all of which are counted equally (if consistent with the principles of justice). All preferences have equal weight 'not in the sense that there is an agreed public measure of intrinsic value or satisfaction with respect to which all these conceptions come out equal, but in the sense that they are not evaluated from a [public] standpoint'... Hence in a liberal society the common good is adjusted to fit the pattern of preferences and conceptions of the good held by individuals.\(^{169}\)

Now, the individual and social good in a free society does have to be a function of individual preference-satisfaction, or desire-fulfilment, but it should not be exhausted by such metrics of value. Non-perfectionist 'evaluation' of the preferences and desires which individuals are apt to form and pursue is possible. For a start Sen writes:

It is... clear that the fulfilment of a person's desires may or may not be indicative of a high level of well-being or of living standard. The battered slave, the broken unemployed, the hopeless destitute, the tamed housewife, may have the courage to desire little, but the fulfilment of those disciplined desires is not a sign of great success and cannot be treated in the same way as the fulfilment of the confident and demanding desires of the better placed.\(^{170}\)

---

\(^{168}\) There is a subjective and objective basis for the achievement of Marxian freedom as self-realisation. The subjective means include how effectively the family, the education system and the economy occasions the development of an individual's powers and capacities. The objective means include the individual's access to (at least) basic material goods, and to institutional (educational and economic) structures which enable them to exercise and express her capacities.


Evaluation, in addition to aggregation and satisfaction, is a necessary part of the politics and economics of the good and free society since our social environment substantially determines the preferences, wants and desires we come to hold. For Alienation Marxists our aim should be to tailor a social environment which promotes preferences that are, in fact, good - given what we know about human needs and capacities - rather than account for the good in terms of the preferences and desires individuals happen to have. The central question, which I address in section 2.3 below, is: are there such facts of the matter or do challenges to the preference-satisfaction metric of value simply issue from, what Brian Barry terms, the ideal-regarding political morality of perfectionists who seek to ride roughshod over the preference or want-regarding political moralities of liberals? \(^{171}\)

As regards the incorrigibility of actual desires, in accounting for the individual and social good, and the influence of ‘social’ factors, Nussbaum claims that:

\[\ldots\] desire is a malleable and unreliable guide to the good on almost any seriously defensible conception of the good. Desires are formed in relation to habits and ways of life. At one extreme, people who have lived in opulence feel dissatisfied when they are deprived of the goods of opulence. At the other extreme, people who live in extreme deprivation frequently do not feel the desire for a different way or dissatisfaction with their way. Human beings adapt to what they have. In some cases, they come to believe that it is right that things should be so with them; in other cases they are not even aware of the alternatives. Circumstances have confined their imagination. So if we aim at the satisfaction of desires and preferences that they happen, as things are, to have, our distributions will frequently succeed in shoring up the status quo. \(^{172}\)

Similarly Rawls writes:

\[\ldots\] the social system shapes the wants and aspirations that its citizens come to have. It determines in part the sort of persons they want to be as well as the sort of person they are. Thus an economic system is not only an institutional device for satisfying existing wants and needs but a way of creating and fashioning wants in the future. How men work together now to satisfy their present desires affects the desires


they will have later on, the kind of person they will be. These matters are, of course, perfectly obvious and have always been recognised. They were stressed by economists as different as Marshall and Marx. Since economic arrangements have these effects, and indeed must do so, the choice of these institutions involves some view of the human good and of the design of institutions to realise it. The choice must, therefore, be made on moral and political as well as economic grounds. Considerations of efficiency are but one basis of decision and often relatively minor at that. Of course this decision may not be open faced; it may be made by default. We often acquiesce without thinking in the moral and political conception implicit in the status quo, or leave things to be settled by how contending social and economic forces happen to work themselves out. But political economy must investigate this problem even if the conclusion reached is that it is best left to the course of events to decide.

Rawls claims that ‘our choice of institutions involves some view of the human good and of the design of institutions to realise it’. In the following section I will argue that Alienation Marxists view of the human good centres on needs and capacities. I will argue that the preferences which individuals are apt to form, pursue and satisfy can coincide or conflict with the good for man given what we know about human needs and capacities.

Miller, Arneson and Kymlicka simply identify the human good with actual individual preference-satisfaction. For such preference-satisfaction liberals our economic and political systems should simply be in the business of aggregating, tracking and satisfying the preferences which individuals happen to have. Our economic and political systems should be neutral mechanisms, which we install as a means to preference-satisfaction. The State has no business in seeking to judge and shape the preferences which individuals hold, it must remain neutral as regards forming and acting upon controversial issues concerning the good.

Brian Barry has argued that the demand for the State to be neutral when exercising its legal and fiscal powers hinges upon the implausible assumption that the State can be neutral. He writes:

---

The state, on the liberal view, must be capable of fulfilling the same self-effacing function as a policeman on point duty, who facilitates the motorists' getting to their several destinations without bumping into one another but does not have any power to influence those destinations.  

Barry goes on to argue that, first, the State cannot avoid influencing what people come to want (prefer or desire) in life and, second, this poses a problem regarding whether or not the State can influence wants in ways that are, in fact, good, or whether the wants that individuals come to hold are simply subject to the ideal-regarding political of those who occupy positions of State power. Barry claims that there is an option for the State to abstain from attempts to shape individual wants. However, this option is only compelling ‘if society consisted entirely of adults who never died and never had children’. The demand for State to hold back from acting upon controversial assumptions concerning the good is at odds with the claim that:

... it is patently obvious that how children turn out depends largely upon their upbringing. The complication is that it is indeed possible for the state to take no responsibility for how children turn out; however, whereas with adults it can be claimed with some show of plausibility that the absence of state intervention leaves people to pursue their own goals, with children it simply means handing them over to parents, private schools, churches, scout troops and any other organisation that can get hold of them. Here then the State can indeed be neutral; but neutrality simply involves underwriting the moulding activities of others.

2.3 Knowledge Regarding Human Needs & Capacities

Now, given that State neutrality is impossible and that, in the absence of State intervention, individuals are going to be ‘moulded’ in one way or another, we can ask: is the individual good and freedom best served by (as Rawls states) leaving her fate to ‘the course of events to decide’ or is there an objective basis upon which we should use the

---


legal and fiscal powers of the State to intervene in the course of events and thus shape the social environment so as to promote the human good and freedom in society?

My view is that there is a basis upon which to critique, and seek to shape, an individual’s revealed preferences which does not issue from a pious standpoint but, rather, trades on knowledge about human needs and capacities. An infant takes pleasure in, desires and prefers many things which are at odds with his good, given what we know about good physical health and the capacities which humans are able to develop, exercise and express. Given a choice, a child would prefer to consume chocolate rather than root vegetables and he would prefer to play video games rather than work at arithmetic. When things go well, figures of authority in a child’s life, such as his parents and his teachers, seek to moderate a child’s immediate inclinations and so inculcate those preferences which are, in fact, good for the child.\(^{176}\) This good does not simply reduce to the high-minded or pious preferences of his parents and his teachers, but tracks shared knowledge concerning the good for man given human needs and capacities. Good physical health and competence in mathematics are, inter alia, achievements which promote a flourishing human life.

In part one I argued that Marx provides us with a philosophical anthropology of human wants in terms of the dual aspect of human needs.\(^{177}\) Thus, there are those physiological needs that arise from man’s physical being, and there are needs which

\(^{176}\) Things don’t go well if, for example, the parent simply seeks to raise their child in accordance with irrational superstition, sentiment or custom rather than knowledge about human needs and capacities. Thus a father might believe that his female off-spring is of less value and is, by nature, capable of achieving less than the male, and will thus devote relatively less energy and resources to his daughter’s education than that of his son. The parent might prefer to cease educating his daughter at eight years old and prepare her for a marriage in adolescence. Our knowledge regarding human needs and capacities charges the community to override the will of the parent, and to ensure that the girl receives as good an education as the boy, and that she has similar opportunities to develop, exercise and express her capacities and thereby make something of her own life.

\(^{177}\) See section 1.31.
arise from the fact that man is a conscious being. It is in virtue of the fact that man is a conscious being that his life is an ‘object’ for him that he needs to experience as meaningful, satisfying or fulfilling in some way. Differing societies (both past and present) attend to these general human needs in particular ways. A particular community is defined by the common ways in which members of that community satiate the dual aspect of their needs.

Given this, we should not neglect the fact that biological, nutritional and medical science has enabled mankind to command a better knowledge of his physical needs, and of the goods in which the element and compound materials of good physiological functioning are sourced. We know that the average man or woman requires a ‘recommended daily intake’ of vitamins, fibre, protein, etc. And that, a person’s physical well-being consists in them being able to, firstly, command the knowledge of the needs of their physical needs and, secondly, in being to satisfy such needs in the goods which are habitually consumed by an individual. Physical well-being does not simply consist in effecting a proper systems of production, distribution and consumption in goods, it also requires that individuals come to know, and subsequently will, what is, in fact, constitutive of their physical well-being. In addition to this, and according to Alienation Marxists, one should be able to occasion meaning and value in one’s life through the development, exercise and expression of one’s powers and capacities.

\[\text{Nussbaum writes: “The aim of political planning is the distribution to the city’s individual people of the conditions in which a good human life can be chosen and lived. This distributive task aims at producing capabilities. That is, it aims not simply at the allotment of commodities, but at making people able to function in certain human ways. A necessary basis for being a recipient of this distribution is that one should already possess some less developed capability to perform the functioning in question. The task of the city is, then, to effect the transition from one level of capability to another. This means that the task of the city cannot be understood apart from a rather substantial account of the human good and what it is to function humanly.” Martha Nussbaum ‘Nature, Function & Capability: Aristotle on Political Distribution’, p.146, re-printed in Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy, Supplementary Volume, 1988. I argue below that an ‘account of the good and what it is to function humanly’ is what our social practices, as geared towards servicing the practical and expressive needs of the community, should provide us with.}\]
Thus a society in which there are high rates of heart disease caused by the consumption of high cholesterol food; or where there is a high incidence of cancer caused through smoking; or where there is an increasing consumption of narcotics; or where leisure time is increasingly devoted to absorbing media thrown up by mass celebrity/tabloid/media culture, might be successful from the point of view of desire-fulfilment, pleasure-realisation or preference-satisfaction, but score less well given what we know about good physical functioning and the fact that individuals are able to make more of their lives, and occasion meaning and value, through developing, exercising and expressing their own capacities. The mass formation, pursuit and satisfaction of preferences for the physically toxic and spiritually passive are symptoms of a less than good society.

For example, in Britain, there is a problem of high blood pressure and premature heart disease amongst the generation of Asians who emigrated from the Indian sub-continent in the 1950s and 60s. Their diet contains too many saturated fats and spices and is not particularly suited to the British climate. Such a diet was not as detrimental to the Indians in a hot climate as it is easier to work off such an intake of fats and spices. Thus, the Government targeted the Indian community with such information about their dietary needs given their consumption habits and the assumption that they aim to maximise the length of their life. Also, in May 1998, the Government launched a health campaign targeted at lower income men aged 40+ who are apt to ‘sit very still, drink beer and watch telly for days on end’. Research shows that ‘although the longevity gap between men and women is shrinking, poorer men are not making the same progress as the more affluent’. The Government aim to exhort these men to progress. To this end the Government launched a booklet with tabloid captioned photographs
showing men drinking in pubs, eating in chip shops, and lounging in front of the
television with dialogue-bubbles such as “I’m knackered. It must be that pie and chips I
had at lunch”, and “I enjoy a drink but I must be sensible.”

In both the case of the Asian emigrants and the case of the beer-swilling, chip-
eating couch potato the Government runs into a deep problem of identity and values. In
the case of the generation of Asians who came to this country in the 50s and 60s, they
have cultivated deep attachments and identification with their habits of ingestion, as
well as their habits of dress and general dwelling. Matters of dress and dwelling are not
life threatening (except if they had continued to simply dress with light cotton suits and
silk saris in the British winter), this is not the same with matters of diet. The continued
adherence to habits of ingestion, dress and dwelling, express who these groups take
themselves to be. In the case of the couch potato, the editor of ‘Men’s Health’ magazine
remarks that:

What advertising agencies know is that if you want men to change their habits
you have to convince them to buy a whole set of values and speak to them in a voice
they can identify with rather than merely offer unvarnished information. Few of the men
who will sink into their sofas during the World Cup and explore the world of lager and
snack food will do so in the belief that it will extend their lives... With this initiative the
Government is doing battle with ingrained ideas about acceptable behaviour. The booze,
the food and the belly which make up bloke-life as we know it will never be eroded
while the routes to a healthier existence belong to the strange and the fanatical... There is
one manual worker who really is helping to create a leaner, healthier, British bloke. He’s
a creature of habit and the creation of the world’s largest Cola company. As he leans his
head back in the advert to drink Diet Coke, I doubt he has a Department of Health
information booklet hidden in those sweat-soaked clothes.  

In conducting such campaigns the Government is running against an individual’s
deep sense of self. Attachments to ways of life which harbour the consumption of high
cholesterol food, a high alcohol intake and an inactive life-style, are not simply

---

179 See Phil Hilton’s article called ‘Moving the Goalposts’ in The Guardian, May 12 1998, tabloid health
supplement, and p.15.
expressions of the individual’s pleasures, desires, preferences or their own conceptions of the good. Such habits of the mind and conduct are enjoined as a coincidence between, on the one hand, their needs and, on the other hand, the social circumstances within which the individual finds themselves in which they strive to, and are directed to, satiate the dual aspect of their needs as well as develop, exercise and express their capacities, in particular ways.

Such government campaigns are premised on the overarching assumption that individuals within such socio-economic groups do want to prolong and maximise their life span. It is assumed that this aim should form part of any rational plan of life.\textsuperscript{180} Social scientific research reveals that these groups are not living as long a life as they are able to, whilst nutritional, medical and biological science directs us to the causes of high blood pressure, heart disease and pre-mature mortality rates within these socio-economic groups. Such Government campaigns aim to shape individual habits so that they act in accord with reason and what is, in fact, constitutive of their good, rather than continuing to act in accord with custom, in the case of the Asians, and machismo, in the case of the lager-drinking, chip-eating couch potato.

2.4 The Spectre of Social Engineering

What would be the argument against the Government gathering such information on particular socio-economic groups in society, and then seeking to re-shape their habits of diet and activity? If individuals are apt to satiate the dual aspect of their needs by falling in with the norms of belief and conduct within their social

\textsuperscript{180}Of course the (rational) want to make the most of life and to prolong one’s life does not have to overriding in every case. A person who knows he has two weeks to live does not act contrary to reason if he prefers to spend his money on his family and friends rather than committing it to an extension of his time on a life-support machine.
environment, then ought not the State seek to shape that norm in accord with what is, in
fact, good for the agent?

There is a liberal worry that centres of authority and power are being unduly
paternalistic in their attempts to influence the behaviour of individuals within these
socio-economic groups.¹⁸¹ Liberals recoil from the spectre of social engineering, that is,
the use of the State’s legal and fiscal powers directed to make us better, new and
improved individuals. If the use of the State’s legal and fiscal powers can simply be
reduced to the money interests of particular food manufacturers; the arbitrary
preferences of those currently operating the levers of power; or the majority ‘other-
regarding’ preferences of an electorate which keeps particular politicians in power, then
there is substance to the liberal complaint. However, if the State is directed to use its
legal and fiscal powers by associations which are, for example, instituted towards the
goals of healthcare and good physical functioning, and where individuals working
within such associations are of good will, then such campaigns do not constitute unduly
paternalistic exercises of State power. Properly constituted, associations provide us with
knowledge regarding human needs and capacities. As Marx writes ‘socialised man, the
associated producers’ enable us to ‘govern the metabolism’ which we need to effect
‘with nature in a rational way, bringing it under their collective control instead of being
dominated by it as a blind power; accomplishing it with the least expenditure of energy
and in conditions most worthy and appropriate for... human nature’.¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Other measures which trouble some liberals are the legal requirement that water companies put fluoride
in our water and that margarine manufacturers are made to put vitamin A in margarine because the typical
British diet contains too little vitamin A.

‘Associations of Producers’.
An infant needs a father figure because he is in a condition of ignorance and vulnerability. A father provides him with security and guidance. Such guidance might issue from prejudices which are simply sourced in superstition, sentiment or custom, or - preferably - such guidance will be sourced in actual facts about good physical, emotional and intellectual flourishing. The aim of associations centred on a particular social practice would be to discover and transmit that good. As adults we are to a certain extent ignorant of, and vulnerable to, the forces of nature and society which determine our well-being. That is, we are not self-sufficient in commanding knowledge of those natural and social forces that determine our fate and prospects for individual self-realisation. For example, we cannot command knowledge of good physical and nutritional well-being simply by our own efforts and researches, we require the historical and accumulated results of agencies whose central concern is the promotion of healthcare and good physical functioning. Similarly, in the case of any social practice which addresses the practical and expressive needs of a community (such as language, mathematics, art, philosophy, or football) we must subject ourselves to given standards; we must learn, and do, before we can become good speakers of English, good at mathematics, good at art, good at philosophy and good at football. In attaining the good, or goods, internal to healthcare, language, art, philosophy or football, we necessarily defer to our teachers who are the custodians and transmitters of a particular social practice. And, in aiming to become a good practitioner of a particular social practice we defer to competent judges within that practice. A community tracks the good for man when its institutes a

\[\text{References}\]

183Recently there was the case of a nine-year old girl who needed a life saving blood transfusion but whose parents refused authorisation due to their religious beliefs as Jehovah Witnesses. The will of the parents, and the influence of such stupidity over the child’s fate, was rightly overruled by the courts and the hospital.
specialisation and division of function amongst associations directed to the promotion of goods internal to particular social practices.  

For liberals to press the complaint against the workings and recommendations of such institutions presumes an unrealistic self-sufficiency on the part of the individual in acquiring knowledge concerning the good. However, it should be added that mankind has experienced enough examples of centres of authority being arrogant, patronising and even wrong, for us to simply accept the wisdom of their judgements without question. Therefore it is right and prudent that we require that such institutions render the value of their recommendations in terms which the lay person can readily comprehend, assess and only then, if willing, accept.

2.5 Consumer Society

Earlier I claimed that what the individual is 'of a mind' to do, to be and to achieve in their life - the preferences they come to hold - is a function of, first, the dual aspect of needs with which they are saddled and, second, the social environment in which the individual strives to, learns to and becomes able to (or not) meet the needs of her physical being and those which stem from the fact that she is a conscious being. It is in virtue of the fact that she is a conscious being that she needs to experience her life as meaningful in some way. I also claimed that the 'social environment' is essentially comprised of the family, formal systems of education and the economy. In this section I want to discuss the corporate capitalist economy and how such an economic system bears down upon consumer preference-formation.

In part one I claimed that religion, nationalism and consumerism are expressions of alienation. They are symptoms of a society in which individuals are not able to

---

184 For more on this point see section 3.1122 The Correspondence Thesis - Alisdair MacIntyre's Idea of a Social Practice.
occasion self-realisation through the development, exercise and expression of their own powers and capacities. Some therefore seek solace, and satisfy the demands of their conscious being, in religion, nationalism and consumerism. Such forms of consciousness are a means by which one can mark oneself as an individual and social being. As regards consumerism, Alienation Marxists are troubled by the fact that individuals are apt to invest goods with more significance than the strictly functional or pleasure value, which a commodity may provide. Kymlicka writes:

Marxian perfectionists tend not to be concerned with possible decreases in material consumption. They consider people’s concern with consumption as a symptom of the pathology of materialism created by capitalism, so that the transition to socialism ‘will involve a large shift in cultural emphasis from consumption to production as the primary sphere of fulfilment’. 185

Kymlicka is only half-right. As I will argue in part three, Alienation Marxists aim to facilitate an expansion in (capital-intensive) systems of productive, distribution and consumption so that we become better able to meet our mundane consumer wants (needs). However, Alienation Marxists do want to see an end to the more pathological aspects of late capitalist consumerism, and also want to see a shift from consumption to production as the primary sphere of human fulfilment. The shift from religion to consumption as a means to gaining fulfilment can be seen as a progress in some sense. In late capitalist society we have come to seek and achieve a secular means of self-definition. For Alienation Marxists, the next step is to effect a shift from consumption to production as the primary sphere of individual self-realisation.

In what follows I will first discuss some of the pathologies characteristic of late capitalist consumerism and then go on to discuss how we might effect a shift from consumption to production as a means for securing meaning and value in life.

Pathologies. Kymlicka does acknowledge a pathology of consumption, which is characteristic of late capitalist society. This is where consumer preferences track a so-called ‘keeping up with the Jones’ syndrome’. Here individuals come to believe that the ownership of some item confers standing and status in a culture and that, through the acquisition and parade of one’s possession, one can be someone. Conversely, individuals feel less worthy if they are not in possession of status goods.

In his article on conspicuous consumption, Geoffrey Miller, cites the following example:

At the top of Sennheiser’s range is the ‘Orpheus Set’, stereo headphones which retail for £9,652. They are finely crafted headphones, no doubt. But to most ears, they deliver a sound quality not greatly superior to a pair of £25 Vivanco SR250s, which have received several ‘best value’ awards. As an evolutionary psychologist considering contemporary human culture, I wonder this: why would evolution produce a species of anthropoid ape that feels it simply must have the Sennheiser’s, when the Vivancos would stimulate its ears just as well?

Geoffrey Miller suggests a socio-biological answer to this question in terms of sexual display; the possession and parading of such wares is akin to a peacock fanning its feathers! For Marxists, such preferences are anchored in the dual aspect of human needs. One gains a sense of self through passive consumption rather than through

---

186See Geoffrey Miller’s article ‘Waste is Good’, p.18, in the journal Prospect, February 1999.

Against Alienation Marxists Kymlicka writes: “There is nothing pathological about a music-lover wanting expensive stereo equipment, and being willing to perform alienated labour to acquire it.” I have no objection to someone wanting stereo equipment to simply indulge in his or her passion for music. However, I do object to the fact that one has to perform alienated labour in order to access such goods.

David Miller argues that such conspicuous consumption will be more difficult in a Liberal Egalitarian Market Socialist society since a greater equality of income will make it more difficult for middle-to-high income individuals to act upon and fulfil such desires. Individuals may still have the desire but will lack the means (money) to realise such desires. (See Market, State & Community, Clarendon: Oxford, 1989, p.137.) Here Miller seeks to constrain such preference-satisfaction by transforming an objective aspect of the political economy (i.e. the distribution of income). In a democracy, such redistributive aims run into the familiar problem of having to command the electoral support of those middle-to-high income earners who have to forego their greater opportunities to consume for the sake of an egalitarian ideal. As Marx claims: “Right can never rise above the economic structure of society and its contingent cultural development.” (‘The Critique of the Gotha Programme’, p.347, my emphasis.) Alienation Marxists seek to transform a subjective aspect of the political economy. Thus, there would be more substantial means by which an individual could occasion meaning and value in their lives. Consumption would cease to play such an important role in an individual’s conception of the good.
development, exercise and expression of one's own capacities in production. The phenomena of positional and conspicuous consumption trades on the individual defining himself in relation to a system and hierarchy of value, in which he aims to reign by striving to adorn himself in the crown jewels of consumer culture. Individuals come to covet goods not simply, and perhaps only marginally, for the use-value that they yield but because of the price tag (exchange-value) and for how possession of a commodity marks one out from the rest.

An advertising executive, working on behalf of BMW, once remarked that the market for their cars largely consists of middle-to-high income corporate personnel, and yet BMW have to advertise their products on peak-time television. This is not because they believe that their prospective executive consuming base tend to watch soap-operas, game shows and consumer affairs programmes, in fact studies show otherwise. If BMW were simply in the business of marketing and selling a more comfortable ride for the stressed executive, then they would save money by using more direct marketing techniques.\(^{187}\) The reason why BMW feel the need to advertise during peak time viewing is that they need to communicate what they have to offer to the mass of people who have no hope of owning one of their cars. The people who do come to purchase BMWs do so, in part, because everyone else is aware of what they own. The purchase and ownership of such goods serves to satisfy the need for a sense of self within the compass of consumer culture.

\(^{187}\) A car dealership informed me that the production, distribution and retail policy of firms such as Audi, BMW and Volkswagen is deliberately restrictive. These companies buoy up the price by restricting supply. That is, they do not produce to the point where supply and demand reaches equilibrium (where the marginal cost of production equals the marginal revenue of retail). Anyone seeking to purchase their vehicles faces a four to eight month waiting time, because such producers limit the amount of cars in circulation. They are mindful of the fact that 'more is less'; the more individuals who drive their cars, then the less desirable they would be. Consumers of their vehicles expect to pay a premium price for their goods and know that everyone else knows that they have done so.
There is no doubt that BMW, Armani, Clinique, etc. produce, distribute and retail a higher quality of car, clothing and toiletry and that, from a strictly aesthetic or functional point of view, the design and materials of their products are superior to those supplied by Ford, The Gap or Simple Soaps. A pathology of materialism characteristic of late industrial society stems from the worry that such goods are not simply coveted for their superior functionality but because individuals come to believe that by purchasing and parading such brands they are, thereby, someone.

The supply of branded ‘designer’ goods, by the very role they play in consumer society, cannot be consumed (produced) for a mass market. Their exclusivity, the fact that the mass of people is not able to consume such goods, is the basis of their kudos. The purchase and ownership of such goods are seen as a means of gaining social status. Recently a couple of the major supermarkets in the UK procured supplies of ‘designer’ wear through wholesalers based outside of the EC (so-called ‘grey suppliers’) and then proceeded to retail these goods, at knockdown prices, amongst the more mundane items required for everyday living (milk, bread, baked beans, etc.). This is called ‘parallel-trading’ and is where supermarkets stock and retail branded goods in competition with official dealerships. The designer wear companies went to the European court to prevent their goods being sold through supermarkets. They won their case.\textsuperscript{188} These producers know that in order to preserve the kudos of their product they have to be sold at a premium price and at prime locations, even if the economics of production, distribution and retail can be shown to service more consumers at lower prices.

Given the legacy of the Soviet Union, socialism has come to be associated with the production of shoddy consumer durables, and with everyone making do with a rather

\textsuperscript{188}In March 1999, the European Court ruled the so-called ‘Silhouette Judgement’, which endorsed the right of designer brand-manufacturers to have the last say in where their goods are retailed.
drab range of, for example, cars, clothes and toiletries. In part three I argue that the real aim of communism is to fashion a political economy in which we preserve and extend the capacity of capitalism to provide consumer durables of superior functionality and aesthetics to all.\textsuperscript{189}

*From Consumption to Production.* The latter day triumph of Western Capitalism over Soviet Socialism consisted in the fact that capitalist corporations were able to deliver both a quantitatively and qualitatively better package of consumer goods to the average Western consumer than that provided by Soviet State structures. However, a common left-wing complaint against oligopolistic capitalism is that corporations employ techniques of modern advertising and marketing that simply create desires within consumers. On the back of such manipulation, oligopolistic corporations produce, distribute and retail commodities, which the individual can do without, and by which oligopoly capital profits. Thus Galbraith claims that there is a,

... direct link between production and wants [which] is provided by the institutions of modern advertising and salesmanship. These cannot be reconciled with the notion of independently determined desires, for their central function is to create desires - to bring into being wants that previously into being wants that previously did not exist. This is accomplished by the producer of the goods or at his behest. A broad empirical relationship exists between what is spent on production of consumer goods and what is spent in synthesising the desires for that production. A new consumer product must be introduced with a suitable advertising campaign to arouse interest in it. The path for an expansion of output must be paved by a suitable expansion in the advertising budget. Outlays for the manufacturing of a product are not more important in the strategy of modern business enterprise than outlays for the manufacturing of demand for the product. None of this is novel. All would be regarded as elementary by the most retarded student in the nation's most primitive school of business administration.\textsuperscript{190}

\textsuperscript{189} See section 3.1 'The Womb of Capitalism & Production Under Communism'.

\textsuperscript{190} J.K. Galbraith *The Affluent Society* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984 fourth edition), p.129. Galbraith goes onto to argue that whilst this might be obvious to 'the most retarded student in a primitive business school', it is a phenomena which continues to be neglected by orthodox economic theory. Neo-classical economists continue to be content with regarding consumer preferences as exogenous to the economic system.
It seems that we can become too heady in acknowledging the superiority of Western Capitalism over Soviet Socialism and that, after a certain point, cheering the oligopolistic capitalist economic system is rather like ‘applauding a squirrel for keeping abreast of a wheel that is propelled by its own efforts’. As the left-wing complaint runs, individuals learn to satisfy certain needs passively, in terms of a preference for consumer goods, rather than through the development, exercise and expression of their own powers because of the capitalist system of production itself; by its systems of advertising and marketing. Apparently,

Two generations ago, Japanese couples did not bother with buying engagement rings. Then the DeBeers diamond cartel, through an advertising campaign in the 1970s, convinced Japanese women that they deserved a ring just like western women. A new standard was imposed: Japanese men must spend at least two month’s salary on a colourless lump of carbon to demonstrate their romantic commitment. Japanese marriages are probably no happier than a generation ago, but DeBeers is richer.

Some on the Left invoke an image of the modern consumer being controlled by the will of marketing men and manipulated towards the aim of maximising corporate profit, whilst some liberals are content to treat consumer preferences as exogenous to the social system and simply cast advertising in terms of capitalist producers providing information for the consumer who is then free to act upon or ignore corporate goods. Thus, there is a problem as how we should regard consumer preferences and what follows from whether it is correct to treat them as endogenous or exogenous to the economic system.

This whole debate trades on terms that do not plumb deep enough into the human condition. As argued above, preferences are formed in response to the dual aspect of human needs. Modern advertising and marketing cannot create desires ex

192 See Geoffrey Miller’s article ‘Waste is Good’, p.20, in the journal Prospect, February 1999.
A consumer would not come to desire a commodity if it were of no use to him. However, whereas the neo-classical economist simply equates the use, or utility, of a commodity with an individual’s ‘preferences’, Marxists reduce preferences to the dual aspect of needs. Thus, in Capital Vol.I, Marx resolves ‘use-value’ into those needs which ‘arise from the stomach and those which arise from the imagination’. Marxists understand the endeavours of modern advertising and marketing as attempts to work upon our imagination and the needs of our conscious being. Advertising and marketing messages provide an answer to the fact that man needs a simulacrum of meaning and value in his life in addition to the fact that he need to address the more brute needs of his physical being.

Corporations are in the business of social engineering. They seek to tailor the social environment in a way that shapes consumer preferences for the sake of profit. Capitalist industry and commerce is indifferent to whether or the preferences we do form are, in fact, good for us. Capitalists are ready to supply organic produce or more toxic ‘goods’ as long as payment precedes the individual’s felt preference for any commodity.

What follows from a Marxist critique of consumerism? As regards the DeBeers example, do we outlaw the production and consumption of ‘colourless lumps of carbon’ which serve to fulfil the desire for a significant act of engagement, a demonstration of social status?

---

193Capital Vol.I (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p.125. In footnote 2 (p.125) Marx quotes from Nicholas Barton’s book A Discourse on Coining the New Money Lighter. In answer to Mr. Locke’s Considerations, etc., London 1696, pp.2, 3: ‘Desire implies want; it is appetite of the mind, and as natural as hunger to the body...The greatest number (of things) have their value from supplying wants of the mind.’

194Drug dealers are, in the worst sense, arch ‘money-bags’ capitalists, as are tobacco companies. As recent revelations show tobacco companies will readily suppress findings which speak against their trade and commission studies which muddy the following facts: that most smokers take up the habit in their teens; that peer pressure and a teenage drive towards rebellion facilitates take-up; that tobacco companies play on such impulses through the use of subliminal and ‘subversive’ advertising, and through association with
love and an expression of commitment? And which contribute to the glossing certain human relations and so, ultimately, contributes to sustaining meaning and value in human life.

David Miller defends the principle of consumer sovereignty, but concedes that there are some aspects of human desire, such as that of status and positional consumption, which are wasteful of human aspiration and our natural and social resources. Ideally the individual and social good would be optimised if such desires were absent, and if we directed natural and human resources to more worthy ends. But he qualifies his doubts about some aspects of modern consumption with the following:

Even granting that markets are less than wholly efficient, because the desires they are responding to are less than optimal from the point of view of the agent’s welfare, can we imagine a better outcome occurring in practice? If we look to a political solution, we run up against the fact that no political authority has direct access to the psychic processes that lie behind consumers’ expressed preferences.  

What is the ‘political solution’? Do we require access to ‘psychic processes’ of consumers in order to optimise the individual and social good?

As regards the political solution, it seems that the only alternative to the inadequacies of the oligopolistic capitalist market place is an interfering State, which aims to prohibit certain kinds of production, exchange and consumption. However,

danger sports such as formula one racing; that very few choose to be a smoker and only continue to smoke as a result of coming to be addicted to nicotine; that smoking causes cancer.


In the past, Socialists possessed of the view that secularism, internationalism and ‘high’ culture, should form the basis of the political order, sought to outlaw and suppress expressions of the religious disposition, nationalistic sentiment and decadent consumer preferences. These ‘socialists’ mistook expressions for causes. Their actions and aims were inimical to the internal, or intentional, aspect of freedom as self-realisation. That is, such suppression is anti-thetical to freedom as self-determination: the demand that one be able to act in accord with one’s own beliefs and desires, subject to a similar right for all others. The fact is that individuals do cultivate deep attachments to religious dispositions, nationalistic sentiments and bourgeois consumer values. They also identify with their expression and realisation, they derive a sense of self from such practices, and view their own freedom in terms of being able to externalise their desire to worship, partake in national customs and indulge themselves in conspicuous consumption. Such truths and values are formed in response to, on the one hand, the dual aspect of human need and, on the other, the
we do not have to be caught between the inadequacies of the oligopoly-driven market and an unduly overbearing and Authoritarian State. I do not know the current figures but apparently in 1959 the aggregate advertising expenditure of capitalist corporations exceeded the State’s budget for education. As I stated earlier the oligopolistic capitalist system is in the ‘business’ of shaping consumer preferences for the sake of profit. Such preferences may or may not coincide with the individual and social good given what we know about human needs and capacities. The task for a properly Socialist State is to sustain those agencies (‘associations’) which discover, transmits and accumulate such knowledge regarding the good for man. In a good society such knowledge must be used to regulate the advertising and profit-making activities of oligopolistic enterprise and to shape the preferences of individuals through State (associative) systems of education and training.

We do not need access to the ‘psychic processes’ of consumer. The real issue is how did we get to this point and are there better ways of achieving meaning and value in life rather than through passive consumption? Why should the system commodity production, market exchange and money service our need for meaning and value? It is only because we have learned to satisfy our needs in such ways. It could be otherwise.

system of production in materials and ideas in which individuals are born into, versed in and then live out. This objective order provides individuals with a narrative, a history and tradition, of satisfaction in the dual aspect of their needs given the level of development in society’s productive forces.

However, given the argument concerning endogenous desire/preference formation, this does not mean that we remain neutral as regards the conditions, or ways of life, within which individuals form their desires, preferences and pleasures. These expressions have a realistic (factual) basis, their overcoming also has a realistic basis. Marxian Socialists are not in the business of seeking to interfere with the objective realm of free exchange, an individual’s felt need to express his religious identity or his want to celebrate his perceived national identity, but in wanting to transform the subjective basis upon which such economic exchange, religion and nationalism is conducted. We are in the business of seeking to transform the subjective basis upon which the need for meaning and value is sought within consumerism, religion and nationalism.

Communists want the satisfaction of needs, and ‘ways of life’, to be rooted in the development, exercise and expression of human powers and capacities. Rather than looking to the realm of money and market exchange we should look to development, exercise and expression of our generically human capacities.

(I should warn the reader at this point that you might find the following suggestion quite sickly, in a *syrupy* sense. However, hopefully your stomach won’t become too unsettled, and I will have made a point about a difference between the way in which our expressive needs are met under oligopolistic capitalism and how they should be met under communism.)

In the DeBeers example above, the need is real - that for a significant act of engagement, a demonstration of love and an expression of commitment - however, it is expressed in terms of a preference for ‘colourless lumps of carbon’, and is satiated through commodity production, market exchange and consumer expenditure. Mankind has come to invest emotion and expectation in the act and ceremony of an engagement ring upon which oligopolies mount system of production, distribution and retail. Their interest then lies in sustaining and, through advertising and marketing, feeding the emotion and expectation invested in their diamonds. Soon we get to a situation in which the giving and receiving of engagement rings is the cultural norm. It is constitutive of the act of engagement. You cannot be married without the prior act of engagement in which a diamond ring is passed from the prospective groom to the bride. Expectation and emotion then gets concentrated on the aesthetics of the ring and its price. Rings are coveted for their look, their function within tradition of marriage and also for their price tag.
The formation, pursuit and fulfilment of a diamond engagement ring does answer to deep needs within certain people. However, these needs are better met through the development, exercise and expression of our generically human powers and capacities rather than through passive consumption. In a Marxian view, a better way of satisfying such needs could be a ceremony in which the prospective couple compose and recite poems to one another expressing their love and commitment to one another in front of an audience of their friends and family. Such activity and products should constitute the act of engagement. This would certainly be more personal than the purchase and giving of a ring, and it would be rooted in the exercise and expression of man's own capacities. One would seek to impress the heart with words rather than the finger with metal and stone. Such a ceremony pre-supposes that the capacity to write and recite poetry is developed within our systems of education. In absence of such education, or if the respective couple are not fully confident in their own capacities, then they could seek the council of a local poet who, like a laureate, would be on hand to help out in such occasions. A local laureate rather than a parish priest would enable couples to form deeper and more meaningful attachments to one another. Poetry, prose and song could be used for secular ceremonies as regards births, anniversaries and deaths.¹⁹⁸

2.6 Conclusion

In part three I turn to practical matters concerning the economic and sociological basis for communism, and I suggest some further ways in which we can meet our

¹⁹⁸In the greeting cards industry individuals are set to 'mine' their imagination in a similar way to which producers within DeBeers are set to mine the earth. The comedian Jerry Seinfeld, in a sketch about greeting cards industry, said the following: 'There is something very insincere about these greetings cards we send back and forth to one another all the time. They are like these $1 folded paper emotional prostitutes.' It's like were saying: "I don't know what my feelings are so I'll just pay some total stranger a buck, to make up this little Hallmark hooker to do the job for me." 'So I can go: "I didn't write this but whatever they wrote, I think the same thing!"' For Alienation Marxists progress would be achieved when both the diamonds and greetings cards industry wither through atrophy in the demand for such goods.
practical and expressive needs through the development, exercise and expression of our
generic human powers and capacities rather than passively via money, market exchange
and capitalist commodity production.\textsuperscript{199}

In this chapter I sought to show that the political morality of Alienation Marxism
is not particularly perfectionist and that the individual and social good is better served
through each of us coming to develop, exercise and express our capacities. Liberals and
socialists who subscribe to a preference-satisfaction metric of value level the charge of
perfectionism against Alienation Marxism. I argued that a simple preference-satisfaction
account of the individual and social good is inadequate in virtue of the fact that, firstly,
preferences are formed endogenously in response to the dual aspect of needs with which
we are each saddled, and the ‘social environment’ in which we strive to, and learn to,
meet our needs. Secondly, I argued that there is knowledge regarding human needs and
capacities which is generated, accumulated and transmitted by the social practices of a
community. I argued that such knowledge forms the basis upon which we can evaluate
the preferences we are apt to form, pursue and satisfy; and that such knowledge provides
a means by which we can and should shape our social environment.

\textsuperscript{199}See section 3.122 ‘Communism Contra Neo-Conservatism’. 
PART THREE

PRODUCTION, CONSUMPTION & THE SATISFACTION OF THE DUAL ASPECT OF NEEDS UNDER COMMUNISM

Technology, A Basic Income & Associations of Producers

The realm of freedom really begins only where labour determined by necessity and external expediency ends; it lies by its very nature beyond the sphere of material production proper. Just as the savage must wrestle with nature to satisfy his needs, to maintain and reproduce his life, so must civilised man, and he must do so in all forms of society and under all possible modes of production. This realm of necessity expands with his development, because his needs do too; but the productive forces to satisfy these expand at the same time. Freedom, in this sphere, can consist only in this, that socialised man, the associated producers, govern the metabolism with nature in a rational way, bringing it under their collective control instead of being dominated by it as a blind power; accomplishing it with the least expenditure of energy and in conditions most worthy and appropriate for their human nature. But this always remains a realm of necessity. The true realm of freedom, the development of human powers as an end in-itself, begins beyond it, though it can only flourish with this realm of necessity as its basis. The reduction of the working day is the basic prerequisite. 200

3.0 Introduction

Marx claims that the ‘realm of freedom, the development of human powers as an end in-itself, begins beyond the sphere of material production proper’. Freedom begins where ‘labour determined by necessity and external expediency ends’. Throughout his history, man has been compelled to labour in order to meet his needs. More precisely, throughout human history, members of the working class within successive epochs - the slave, the serf and (more recently) the wage-labourer - were compelled to labour whilst members of the ruling class - the Master, the Lord and the Capitalist - were able to meet their needs by, respectively, appropriating the surplus product of slaves, serfs and proletarians. Slaves, serfs and proletarians are, what Marx terms, the ‘immediate’ producers of successive historical epochs. It is their labour, when joined with capital (tools and machines), which produces for the mundane material needs of class-based

society. Surplus is defined as that part of the economic product over and above that which immediate producers need to consume in order to reproduce their labour.

Under capitalism such surplus, or ‘profit’, forms the basis of investment for the replacement of current capital factors as they depreciate, and, more importantly, for the development of productive forces and the growth of capital factors in the capitalist economy. Marx writes:

Social relations are closely bound up with productive forces. In acquiring new productive forces men change their mode of production, in changing the way of earning their living, they change all their social relations. The hand-mill gives you society with the feudal lord; the steam-mill, society with the industrial capitalist. 201

An important part of the argument in this chapter is that under capitalism there has occurred, and continues to occur, investment of capitalist profit in labour-saving innovations. I argue that such a development has implications for both consumption and production in a prospective post-labour and communist world.

As regards consumption, the prospect of capital-intensive production across all sectors of the capitalist economy heralds the possibility of consumption without the compulsion of labour. For the first time in human history mankind will be able to provide for its mundane material wants ("the realm of necessity") without the need to deploy a mass of labour factors in the production process. I argue that, given such a development, the performance of wage-labour must cease to be the principal means by which one accesses the means of consumption. Technological development under capitalism can and must provide for a universal and unconditional basic income.

As regards production, I argue that the advent of capital intensive production for the production of mankind’s mundane material wants frees man to produce for those

---

needs that technology cannot service, and which necessarily requires the development, exercise and expression of our generically human powers and capacities. I will argue that technological development under capitalism can course us towards a post-labour/class world in which freedom as self-realisation becomes a possibility for all.

The argument unfolds as follows. Firstly, by way of preface for the main argument, I discuss the nature of freedom under pre-communist class-based societies (section 3.01) and then go on to describe some of the salient features of our present age of oligopolistic capitalism (section 3.02).

In the main argument of this chapter (section 3.1 onwards) I relate the transition from capitalism-to-communism to a technological determinist interpretation of Marx’s historical materialism and argue the following. First, that there is a tendency towards the replacement of labour by capital factors within the capitalist mode of production. I argue that mass labour has already been displaced from the primary and secondary sectors of the production process through developments in capital, and that there are trends within the service sector which will similarly obviate the need (demand) for the mass employment of labour factors (section 3.111). Second, I analyse and defend a proto-Keynesian claim which Marx advances concerning underconsumption of the capitalist economic product that stems from a tendency towards the replacement of labour by capital factors (section 3.112). I argue that technological development under oligopolistic capitalism can cause a disparity between productive capacity and our ability to meet consumer wants if the principle means of accessing the means of consumption depends upon the performance of wage-labour. Declining prospects for the performance of wage-labour within the capitalist production process can issue in a sub-optimal level of consumer want-satisfaction both within mature capitalist economies and
within early, developing and transitional capitalist economies. Unemployment and underemployment caused by technological change disables effective demand for goods and services within mature capitalist economies, and restricts the achievement of realisable consumer wants within early, developing and transitional capitalist economies (section 3.1121). Third, I argue that the advent of capital-intensive production across the primary, secondary and (main strands of) the tertiary sectors of the capitalist economy provide mankind with the prospect of consumption without the necessity/compulsion of wage-labour. I suggest that consumption in a post-labour world must primarily be augmented via a universal and unconditional scheme of basic income. Fourth, I argue (in section 3.1122) that the advent of capital-intensive production can ‘correspond’ to increased leisure (“the reduction of the working day”) and to the further, higher and ‘all-round’ cultivation of our generically human powers and capacities. Fifth, I argue (in section 3.12) that there are forms of professional and skilled production which technology cannot replace, and which necessarily requires the development, exercise and expression of our capacities. I argue that such production can provide a forum in which the individual can achieve her freedom as self-realisation, and that such production must be facilitated by the institution of ‘associations’ of producers. Associations of producers conduct or augment the kinds of production which are “most worthy and appropriate for... human nature.” Appropriate associations also regulate the profit-maximising activities of capital-intensive firms that would produce for our mundane material wants. Sixth, I argue that our social needs are best served by gearing production which necessarily requires the individual acquisition and application of specifically human knowledge, skill and creativity towards, what Alisdair MacIntyre terms, ‘goods internal to social practices’ rather than have such production directed
towards the capitalist pursuit and realisation of profit. Finally, (in section 3.13) I advance and defend a scheme of 'associative' market socialism and argue that such a scheme avoids the practical problems of currently proposed schemes of market socialism, and also accommodates Alienation Marxist conditions for self-realising production.

3.01 Aristotle’s Defence of Slavery, Economic Surplus & the Class Basis of Pre-Communist Freedom as Self-Realisation

In pre-communist society, freedom as self-realisation was open to members of the ruling and working classes insofar as they were able to, first, develop their capacities and, second, possess and access the material and institutional means to exercise and express those capacities. Members of the ruling classes were more favourably placed. They were largely free from having to perform labour 'determined by necessity and external expediency'. Economic surplus occasioned the material means by which the ruling classes, and those they favoured, were able to access, and realise, the true realm of human freedom. Surplus formed the basis of consumption for the ruling classes and, what Marx terms, the 'ideological groups' of individuals who operated the State, the Church, the legal system and the military. In addition, surplus extracted from the working classes provided the means of consumption for the artists, musicians and writers which were patronised by the rulers as well as, what Marx terms, the unproductive types of worker who were directed to 'skivvy' for the ruling classes (household servants, cooks, cleaners, chauffeurs, etc.).

In class based societies, members of the ruling classes were able to appropriate surplus by right of nature in the case of the Master and slaves; by divine right through land gifted by the Sovereign (as God’s representative on Earth), in the case of serfs and

Lords; and by right of property (profit) in the case of proletarians and Capitalists. The ideologies of such inequality in each epoch were cast in quasi-scientific, religious or moral terms. Certain individual were fitted by nature, God or justice to enjoy they place amongst the ruling classes whilst others were simply fit to serve them. The rule of such ideologies served to sustain the position of the Masters, Lords and Capitalist within successive epochs. For Marx part of our task consists in setting such ideologies in the social relations of their time, and to show their increasing and inevitable irrelevance given developing material circumstances. Marx maintains that communists,

... 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. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premisses. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain their semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life.\textsuperscript{203}

Thus in ancient times the material life-processes prompted Aristotle to proffer a quasi-scientific justification for the division of society into a class of masters and a class of slaves. Aristotle advances an argument from \textit{nature}.

Aristotle, in his \textit{Politics}\textsuperscript{204} defends in no uncertain terms the practice of slavery. He maintains that only some individuals (masters) are fitted by nature to live a human life whilst others (slaves) must enable masters to live out the properly human life. For Aristotle the household comprises of three basic relations: husband and wife; father and child; and master and slave. The latter relation concerns the "provision of essential

\textsuperscript{203}The German Ideology (Lawrence & Wishart, 1974), p.47.

services” (1253b15). Of the relation between the master and his slave Aristotle claims: “That one should command and the other obey is both necessary and expedient” (1254a20). Necessity stems from the fact that both the master and slave need to eat, be clothed and have shelter. And expedient because both of their well-being is maximised by the master-slave relation. The expediency of the relation hinges upon their respective capacities. The master is a “man who is in good condition mentally and physically, one in whom the rule of mind over body is conspicuous.” Aristotle claims that “whenever there is the same wide discrepancy between human beings as there is between the soul and body or between man and beast, then those whose condition is such that their function is the use of their bodies and nothing better can be expected of them, those, I say, are slaves by nature” (1254b15).

Aristotle continues, “The use made of slaves hardly differs at all from that of tame animals: they both help with their bodies to supply our essential needs” (1254b25). (In Alienation Marxist terms the slave’s life, like that of an animal, is not an ‘object’ for him which he needs to experience as meaningful, fulfilling and satisfying.) By the use of ‘our’ Aristotle is addressing himself to the class of masters. That is, he is addressing those who have the capacity of fulfilling man’s highest good which, in Aristotle’s view, is achieved by enjoining the activity, and pursuing the ends, of politics and philosophy. Slaves and beasts lack the capacity to fulfil man’s highest good. Instead they are directed to serve the ‘essential needs’ of those who are capable of fulfilling man’s highest good.

According to Aristotle, both the master and the slave/animal maximise their good by their relation to one another. An ox fares better ploughing fields for man than being left to fend for himself in the wild. Man also fares better if he cares for the ox. Man has to sustain the physical well-being of the ox if the ox is to be productive in the
field; by caring for the ox man is able to service his food requirements more efficiently than if man had to pull the plough himself. Both the good for man and that of the ox is maximised by man's dominion over beast. The slave's situation is akin to that of the ox. Since the slave does not have the wherewithal to provide for himself, his good is maximised within the master-slave relation. The slave's physical existence is guaranteed by him performing the daily-round of those necessary, mundane and stultifying tasks required to sustain a household and the physical existence of those who occupy that household. It is in virtue of the fact that the slave harvests food, prepares meals, does the laundry, gathers the water and firewood, etc., that the master is then free to enjoin activities and pursue ends (such as in politics and philosophy) which enable him to develop, exercise and express his capacities.

Aristotle argues that the master-slave relation is a convenience of nature. For Marxists actual adherence to such a belief, and the historical rule of such ideas, is formed as an ideological reflex of up-and-running social relations, which are, in turn, a function of the level of development of society's productive forces. Marx writes:

In the relations of slavery and serfdom... one part of society is treated by the other as itself merely an inorganic and natural condition of its own reproduction. The slave stands in no relation whatsoever to the objective conditions of his labour; rather, labour itself, both in the form of the slave and in that of the serf, is classified as an inorganic condition of production along with other natural beings, such as cattle, as an accessory of earth.\footnote{\emph{Karl Marx Grundrisse} (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), translated with a foreword by Martin Nicolaus, p.489.}

In successive historical epochs those who ruled over them regarded the slave, the serf and latterly the proletarian as 'accessories of the earth'. The Master, the Lord and the Capitalist were able to justify their own positions, to themselves and others, as
regards their relation to slaves, serfs and proletarians, by reaching for, and preaching, ideologies of inequality as championed by theorists such as Aristotle.

For Alienation Marxists much of Aristotle’s analysis regarding the master-slave relation holds except that instead of ‘slave’ (serf or wage-labourer) we should read technology. And, within communism, we shall all be masters.

As masters we shall not simply be confined to the activities and aims of philosophy and politics. Marx claims that under capitalism there is a distribution of labour in which,

... each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a herdsman or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in a communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic.

As regards the aims for communism this passage is thought to contain contradictory and utopian claims. First, how can Marx reconcile a Soviet-style central command economy with a state of affairs in which each is able to produce just as they ‘have a mind’? Second, no one can excel at several activities at once; Marx is proposing a communist political economy in which each of us becomes a ‘jack-of-all-trades’ and master of none.

---

206 Aristotle does posit a claim that seems to suggest that he is arguing from prudence rather than from nature. Thus, on technology, he writes: “... suppose that every tool we had could perform its task, either at our bidding or itself perceiving the need, and if - like the statues made by Daedalus or the tripods of Hephaetus, of which the poet says that self-moving they enter the assembly of the gods - shuttles in a loom could fly to and fro and a plucker play a lyre all self-moved, then master-craftsmen would have no need of servants nor masters of slaves.” (1253b35) See also Capital Vol.1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p.509.

First, as I argued in part one, I do not believe that 'society regulating the general production' necessarily equates to the demand for a Soviet-style planned economy. Over the course of this chapter I set out a case for a socialist distribution in the means of consumption (a universal and unconditional basic income) and a social/associative regulation of general production which enables individuals to develop, exercise and express their capacities and so achieve their freedom as self-realisation.

Second, I believe we can make better sense of this passage if we understand the first line to read as follows: ‘... in a communist society nobody has to have one exclusive sphere of activity’ as the worker does within the capitalist specialisation and division of labour, and which is (under capitalism) usually accompanied by a narrow and one-sided development of the individual. I believe that here Marx is describing the maximum freedom, the extreme case, that an individual can exercise under communism. That is, there are no practical limits to the exercise of such a life. Whether anyone is able and willing to pursue such a life, and be ‘accomplished’ at all these pursuits is another matter. To claim that, in the ‘hunter, fisherman...’ passage, Marx is describing the norm of human life within communist society is inconsistent with what Marx writes in the Grundrisse, where he claims that: “Really free labour, the composing of music for example, is at the same time damned serious and demands the greatest effort.”\textsuperscript{208} It is doubtful whether anyone can become accomplished at composing music, and give to it serious and demanding effort, whilst, at the same time, hunt, fish, criticise, etc. to any degree of competence.\textsuperscript{209}


\textsuperscript{209}There may of course be earnest ‘Hemingways’ amongst us, who are able to develop, exercise and express their capacities to a high degree of competence in many fields. See G.A. Cohen History, Labour & Freedom (Oxford, 1985), p.205ff for his reading of the ‘hunter, fisherman, critic’ passage.
Thus, the individual producing just as they 'have a mind' should not be read as equivalent to just as she 'feels like when she wakes in the morning'. In the last chapter I argued that, what the individual is 'of a mind' to do, to be and to achieve in her life refers to the vocations, pursuits and commitments in which she exercises and expresses her developed capacities, and by which she can gain self-identity (realisation). I also argued that the vocations, pursuits and commitments we come to value in our lives are a function of the social environment (the family; systems of education and training; and the economy), and of the opportunities and means we have to develop, exercise and express our capacities. A communist aim is to regulate/shape the social environment so that the individual can come to know and act in accordance with her own mind (her pleasures, preferences and capacities).^210

Engels argues that the existence of an exploited class of slaves, serfs and proletarians within successive epochs is a 'necessary consequence' of the level of development of productive forces. He writes:

The separation of society into an exploiting and exploited class, a ruling and an oppressed class, was the necessary consequence of the deficient and restricted development of production in former times. So long as the total social labour only yields a produce which but slightly exceeds that barely necessary for the existence of all; so long, therefore, as labour engages all or almost all the time of the great majority of the members of society - so long, of necessity, this society is divided into classes. Side by side with the great majority, exclusively bond slaves to labour, arises a class freed from directly productive labour, which looks after the general affairs of society; the direction of labour, State business, law, science, art, etc. It is, therefore, the law of division of labour that lies at the basis of the division into classes. 211

---

^210 As regards the idea that one can 'hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening and criticise after dinner without ever becoming a hunter, fisherman herdsman or critic' I argue later that this is conceptual and sociological nonsense. See section 3.122, part (i).

In the past these only the master, the lord and the capitalist, or those they patronised, were able to pursue 'the general affairs of society'. The ideologies of inequality helped to keep certain vocations and pursuits as the preserve of the few rather than the many. Communists believe such ideologies to be nonsense. No one is fitted by Nature or God to be more worthy than another. Under communism none will be denied the subjective and objective means to pursue 'State business, law, science, art, etc.'.

In the German Ideology, Marx writes:

Only within the community has each individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; hence personal freedom becomes possible only within community. In the previous substitutes for community,..., personal freedom has existed only for the individual who developed under the conditions of ruling class, and only insofar as they were individuals of that class... In the real community the individuals obtain their freedom in and through their association.

In general the ruling classes of successive epochs were more favourably placed to access the true realm of human freedom. This is not to claim that members of the

---

212 They pursued the general affairs of society either through their own efforts, or by a system of patronage in which masters, lords and capitalists effectively employed the services of those advocates, scientists, clergy, painters, composers and philosophers directed to the production of 'intellectual' goods within the spheres of the law, science, religion, art, music and philosophy. Insofar as the products within these spheres were produced in accordance with their paymasters, then such products function as ideology. That is, these products serve to protect the interests of the master/ruling classes within society. Such products offer reflectice justification for the preservation of class positions. That is, terms by which the class of masters justify their position to themselves and others, and the terms by which the class of slaves, serfs and wage-workers acquiesce to their class position.

All of this does not deny that there can be advocates devoted to justice; philosophers devoted to truth; artists to beauty, etc. This possibility rests on (i) individual integrity and (ii) forms of association which map and support right conduct and good aims by the lights of one's particular profession (see section 3.12). In bourgeois society - the rule of money and the market - integrity is subject to severe tests. Under communism, one's activity and products come to fall under the rule of goods internal to particular social practices (art, law, philosophy, etc.).

213 Aristotle's argument from nature has evolved and asserts itself in our present age with the cult of, so-called, ultra-Darwinism and the fact that latter day conservatives reach for such socio-biology to explain (justify) class, gender and racial inequalities. For an excellent critique of ultra-Darwinism which reveals both its feeble empirical base and its (right-wing) ideological assumptions, see Steven Rose Lifelines Biology, Freedom & Determinism (Penguin, 1998).

ruling classes invariably choose to direct the possession of their portion of economic surplus to such ends, or that those from who such surplus was extracted did not develop, exercise and express their own capacities. Members of the ruling classes did, for example, delight in, and patronise, the activity and products of great painters, architects, composers, and poets. However, members of the ruling classes also partook in conspicuous consumption, and directed their freedom from necessity, and their portion of economic surplus, to often vulgar and opulent ends.

Through the industrial phase of capitalism, vast numbers of the working class did lift their life-hopes by transforming their ‘social environment’, and by bequeathing a better social environment for their children, in absence of being able to access the same material advantages as the ruling classes. By forming co-operatives, mutual associations, trades unions, labour-based political parties which promoted the State goals of comprehensive education, healthcare free at the point of use, full employment, in-cash and in-kind welfare, re-distributive taxation, and access to cultural, recreational and sporting facilities, workers were better able to meet their physical needs as well as develop their own capacities. In the movement towards communism the true realm of freedom is no longer the preserve of the ruling classes, and is no longer dependent upon the struggles of the working class, but becomes the central goal of a Socialist State.

We are, it seems, heading for a post-class epoch. In Capital Vol.3 Marx defines a person’s class in terms of their source of income. In reference to the England he encountered, Marx wrote that there are owners of labour power (workers), owners of capital (capitalists) and owners of land (titled aristocracy). Each respectively lives off wages, profit and ground rent.\(^\text{215}\) However, we are no longer in a situation in which we

\(^{215}\)Capital Vol.3 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), p.1025. Later in this chapter (section 3.112) I will argue that in the transition from capitalism-to-communism, and within a functioning communist society,
can readily decompose society into contending classes of workers and capitalists. There are no longer any significant groups of leisured aristocrats, or idle capitalists, who are simply able to live off land rent, or share capital; and which confront a vast mass of propertyless proletarians. The rhetoric of Marxist class struggle, and any belief in the triumph and ultimate dictatorship of the proletariat, has had its time. (If, that is, it ever had a time.) In the epoch of oligopoly capital we are all workers and we are potential, if not actual, owners of share capital. As I will argue in the next section, in late, post-industrial, capitalist society, the vast majority need to secure the means of consumption through sale of their labour-power/skills for a wage/salary, and the majority seek returns (mainly) through pension-fund investment in oligopoly share capital.

The modern social democratic State is no longer particularly beholden to the interests of a class of capitalists or a class of workers but is caught in a balancing act between meeting our social (socialist) concerns and accommodating the money (profit) interests, and global power, of oligopolistic capitalist corporations. The convergence of policy options offered by previously contending political party elites, and the corporatism of our political culture, seems to mirror the waning of worker/capitalist struggle and the overwhelming corporatism of our oligopolistic capitalist economic life.

In the next section I will describe some salient features of our epoch of oligopolistic capitalism and draw some comparisons, and contrasts, between the fate of

---

216 G.A. Cohen writes: "... however one chooses to apply the much contested label 'working class', there is no group in advanced industrial society which unites the four characteristics of (1) being the producers on whom society depends, (2) being exploited, (3) being (with their families) the majority of society and (4) being in dire need. There certainly still exist key producers, exploited people, and needy people, but these are not, now, as they were in the past, even roughly coincident designations, nor, still less, alternative designations of the great majority of the population." Self-Ownership, Freedom & Equality (Cambridge, 1995), p.8.
"the sphere of material production proper" under the Soviet system of economic planning and present day oligopoly capitalism.

3.02 Oligopolistic Capitalism - Global Capitalism Without Capitalists

In the last century Soviet Socialism and Western Capitalism vied for ideological and practical hegemony. The collapse of the former system issued in the automatic ‘victory’ of the latter system. As I have already argued I am not in the business of defending Soviet-style Socialist State planning; I do not believe that Marx envisaged development from capitalism to communism to simply consist in the transfer of ownership and control of the means of production (capital and labour) from individuals to a political centre and to have the allocation of resources simply subject to the will of the State.

Nevertheless, many on the Right derive their defence of laissez-faire capitalism, and their diatribes against Communists, through a critique of Soviet-Style Socialist State ownership and planning. The Libertarian Right claim that the performance of labour in accordance with a plan drawn up by the State is, in Hayek’s words, a system of serfdom.\(^\text{217}\) Having one’s activity and aims subject to the will of another puts one in a relation of servitude. Libertarians such as Hayek believe that a system of laissez-faire capital is consonant with individual freedom because spontaneous and impersonal market forces (which include actual consumer preferences) set one’s productive activity and aims rather than intentional State design. For Hayek truly ‘free’ production is performed within privately owned and controlled capitalist enterprises rather than State-run organisations. Also, socially ‘useful’ (valuable) production is simply revealed by

\(^{217}\)F.A. Hayek *The Road to Serfdom* (Routledge, 1962).
profits and wages accruing to capitalist enterprises commanding money for the sale of goods and services, rather than in top-down directives from State.\textsuperscript{218}

From the Alienation Marxist point of view, there is no essential difference between performing mundane/skilled production in accord with the demands of market wants and money (wage/profit) or in accordance with quotas divined by central planners. Both are equally alienating by denying the individual the opportunity to develop, exercise and express his own capacities and powers, in the case of mundane production; or by skewing skilled/mundane production towards external goods (money or quotas) rather than goods internal to the practices which give meaning and value to the development, exercise and expression of particular capacities (medicine, art, philosophy, etc.). The point for Alienation Marxists is to progress towards circumstances in which ‘labour determined by necessity and external expediency’ ends (or at least diminishes to a fraction of what currently needs to be performed given the present level of development in productive forces), and where the ‘true realm of freedom’ - the development of human powers as an end in-itself - can properly come into its own.

Over the course of this chapter I will be arguing that there is a dual aspect to development in the conditions of production from capitalism to communism. First, to diminish the amounts of mundane wage-labour which need to be performed in the ‘sphere of material production proper’ through securing capital-intensive systems of production, distribution and retail for our mundane material wants. And second, to institute and sustain ‘associations’ of meaningful production where producers are directed to track goods internal to a particular social practice, and in which individuals

\textsuperscript{218}In section 3.122, part (ii), I criticise the claim that socially valuable production is \textit{simply} revealed by the revenues generated by profitable capitalist enterprises.
are able to develop, exercise and express their capacities whilst, at the same time, addressing the kinds of social needs which machines and computers cannot meet.

As it has been traditionally conducted, the debate between the Left and Right is caught between the poles of the State and the free-market. The idea of associative production is a third option, which, I will argue, can and should gain greater prominence in the development from capitalism to communism. Association of producers should come to play a central role in developing and channelling the productive energies and creativity of individuals under communism. I will argue (in section 3.12) that, properly constituted, the productive activity and aims pursued by individuals within associations of producers are insulated from arbitrary State directives or the vagaries of market exchange and money (profit/loss) disciplines.

Given these goals of communist development, we first need to understand where the capitalist economy is at present and what economic tendencies can course us towards the fulfilment of communist goals.

Soviet Socialism vs. Western Capitalism. In the Capitalist West the quantity and quality of consumer goods accessed by the average consumer is vastly superior to the bundle secured by the average Soviet citizen. Consumption isn’t everything, but in the presence of bread queues, it is almost all that matters. Soviet Socialist failure has been put down to two crucial factors. Firstly, State planners failed to command the same degree of knowledge, regarding techniques of production and consumer wants, as accumulated and acted upon in the Capitalist West. Secondly, Soviet bureaucrats lacked the personal material incentives and thus the motivation to develop such knowledge and to channel it in a way so as to efficiently match production possibilities to actual consumer wants. In what follows I will (i) outline some developments in the
informational basis of oligopolistic capitalism, and suggest how such developments can aid ‘associative’ communism. Then (ii) I will go on to outline the nature of the profit motive under oligopolistic capitalism; the practical limits of distributing the means of consumption via the performance of wage-labour; and the normative limits of organising production around the pursuit and realisation of profit.

(i) Knowledge. First, it is not obvious that Soviet State bureaucrats were primarily in the business of discovering and than acting upon information about consumer preferences within the Soviet population. Rather, the aims and methods of Soviet industry attempted to mirror the aims and methods of Western Capitalist industry.\(^{219}\) The Soviets attempted to replicate, for their own citizens, the consumer package available to citizens of the capitalist industrial society. Soviet industrialisation was a means to that end. In addition, the Soviets sought to emulate Western defence and space exploration capabilities. However, whilst the Soviets held their own in the spheres of space and weapons research, their systems of production, distribution and consumption were a poor reflection of that achieved within Western capitalism. The Soviets collected ‘information’ regarding the aims and methods of production from the Capitalist West. From on high came the cry, “each must have a fridge, a television, a car, etc.” This collection was not wholly one-way. The West had nothing to learn from the Soviets when it came to perfecting systems of production and consumption, but they had some knowledge to gain concerning the advances the Soviets made in the spheres of weapons and space research. The oligopolistic capitalist west carried the torch of

\(^{219}\)Here I am thinking of a footage of film from 1959, shown in the BBC documentary *Cold War*, which shows the then Soviet President, Nikita Khrushchev, at a Moscow trade convention, parading consumer goods of Soviet Socialist industry to the then US Secretary of State, Richard Nixon. Khrushchev boasted to Nixon that, in forty years since the revolution, the USSR was able to produce the goods that took the US three hundred years to produce. He then confidently asserted that in the next forty years that the USSR will overtake the US in the production of capital and consumer goods and that the Soviets will ‘wave goodbye’
economic development and perfected relatively efficient systems of production, distribution and consumption.\textsuperscript{220}

Oligopolistic capitalist organisations form the centre of our producing and consuming gravity within late capitalism. The prospect of economies of scale has, in general, led to the supplanting of independent small-scale capitalist producers by oligopolistic enterprise.\textsuperscript{221} Independents are left to service consumer wants within highly local and niche markets. Most of the goods that we require to service our consumer wants are produced, distributed and retailed through oligopolistic industry and commerce. The production, distribution and retail of almost all the commodities (use-values) which we require for our practical and expressive needs is conducted by oligopolistic capitalist organisation. Thus, food, clothing, footwear, toiletries, pharmaceuticals, confectionery, refrigerators, washing machines, cooking utensils, central heating systems, cookers, computers, cameras, hi-fi equipment, televisions, cars, cycles, sporting goods, DIY goods, home furnishings, books, stationary, newspapers, magazines, television programmes, films, vacuum cleaners, etc. are - in the main - supplied by oligopolies who tailor such commodities in accordance with the consumer's wallet and taste. Oligopolistic capitalist organisation has discovered and fashioned a modern consumer package. Oligopolies have perfected systems of finance, production, to the US as they pass them on the path to plenty! (There is the now comical image of Khrushchev actually waving to Nixon in order to emphasise his boasts.)


\textsuperscript{221}The latter day oligopolistic capitalist supply of goods and services mostly have their origins in perfect competition and the State. In conditions of perfect competition a multitude of producers service a multitude of consumers. The number of producers and consumers is such that no one producer or consumer is able to influence the price of goods by varying their supply or demand for a product. Both producers and consumers under conditions of perfect competition are price-takers in the market.

Under oligopoly capitalism we have a few producers servicing the wants of a multitude of consumers. The existence of modern oligopolistic capitalist corporations results from a history of mergers, acquisitions and buy-outs within the private sector, and (more recently) through State privatisation of, for example: public utilities; steel, coal and oil production; banking; car production and air travel.
distribution and retail which delivers that package to the modern consumer. Oligopolies are producing for a global consuming base, and are in the business of perfecting systems of production, distribution and retail for any economy in which consumers are willing, and able, to exchange stable currency for goods. The quantity and quality of commodities within the package, as supplied by various producers and retailers, is determined by the distribution of income and, in turn, the wants (needs) of the individual which stand behind the exchange of money for goods. Thus, high street supermarkets and department store food-halls in varying degrees of quality and quantity cater to man’s need to eat. Similarly, high street clothing stores and designer clothing houses both satisfy man’s need to be clothed. Individual wants (needs) stand behind money which, when proffered, signals the capitalist system of production, distribution and retail. Oligopolies discover the actual wants which we, as consumers, aim to satisfy. It then augments productive factors (land, capital and labour) at a cost which has to suit the price the market (consumers) will bear, and which can maintain the profit margins of their enterprise.

Secondly, within oligopolistic capitalism, the production, distribution and retail (consumption) of goods is subject to a vast specialisation and division of function. Bureaucracies which tailor productive factors to market wants govern systems of production and consumption. Such systems collect information regarding the needs a consumer wants to satisfy, how much they are willing to pay, and which productive factors (land, capital and labour) are best suited to fulfil that need at that price. If they get their sums right then they secure a profit for their enterprise. Oligopolies are continually in the business of unearthing new markets, of satisfying present wants in a better way, or of engendering a new want altogether (convince the consumer that they
will be better off with a product). By providing use-values that fulfil that need, and by commanding exchange-value on those use-values in excess of their initial outlay and running costs, capitalist organisation turns a profit.

As a means to such ends oligopolistic capitalism heralded the practice of 'polling' and the institution of organisations which enact highly sophisticated methods geared towards collecting, processing and interpreting of information regarding actual, prospective and waning wants in society. If the political economy is simply in the business of aggregating, acting upon, and satisfying individual wants, then oligopolistic capitalism has put in place those methods, procedures and institutions which would make a largely 'planned' economy viable. Capitalist development has provided the informational basis for planning on a large (even global) economic scale. Developments in telecommunication and computing technology will enable us to collect and process information concerning actual consumer wants at relatively little cost. Oligopolistic capitalism has perfected highly sophisticated techniques in which the production process rapidly, and efficiently, responds to the vagaries of consumer wants. For example, most of the major retail chains use 'loyalty cards'. This is not simply because they want to lock consumers into the habit of purchasing at their stores, but also because they can generate a detailed profile of the purchasing habits of each card holder. Thus, when the supermarket Tesco wanted to market a telephone/Internet service to couples with small children, it simply looked to its database and generated the names and addresses of all the households that purchase nappies and baby food. Such corporations can generate detailed demographic information regarding consumption patterns, and feed this information to manufacturers and wholesalers. They also know, at an instant, which product lines are waning and which are subject to a booming demand. Through the use
of such databases, retailers can determine, at an instant, which product lines are profitable and which are declining in sales and whether the continued supply of a particular goods warrants the cost of production and distribution. The key point here is that development in technology has enabled producers of everyday goods to collect and command unvarnished information regarding actual, waning and prospective consumer wants at relatively little cost.\footnote{222}

Now the key conclusion of this section is that such a development can be put to use in a post-capitalist and ‘associative’ communism. Polling and marketing techniques can be utilised not only by oligopolistic capitalist corporations geared towards profit maximisation, but by for various independent associations (medical, sporting, educational, etc.) primarily directed to the promotion of other (non-money) values. In a democratic culture the value of these forms of civil association trades on both shaping as well as, ultimately, accommodating the public understanding of their goals.\footnote{223} That is, in their terms of association and the social needs they are addressing. The informational techniques and procedures developed under oligopolistic capitalism can enable non-profit making associations of producers to efficiently gauge, shape and satisfy human wants.

(ii) \textit{The Profit Motive}. It is commonly thought that the decisive factors in the victory of capitalism over Soviet Socialist planning and the continued efficiency of capitalism rests in, first, the informational role of a price mechanism and, second, the...
presence of the profit motive for producers. According to the classical theory of perfect competition, the price mechanism and the capitalist profit motive work as follows. Suppose there is some commodity, x, which is currently traded at price, p. Now suppose there is a sudden increase in the demand for x. This means that retailers will run down their stocks of x at a much faster rate than anticipated. If, in the short-to-medium term, the supply of x remains fixed, then the price of x will rise. The costs of production remain the same as before, as supply remains the same, only the profit maximising producer knows that he can clear the same goods at a higher price, p*. At this higher price the producer clears a greater ‘mark-up’ on his goods. That is, a greater percentage of profit over costs. However, the fact that he is now making such ‘supernormal’ profits signals other profit-seeking producers to enter the market and supply commodity x, at price p* and at current costs of capital, land, and labour (which we can assume are the same for all producers). This is not an equilibrium condition. There is an over-supply of the commodity x at price, p*. Producers can only clear their stocks if they cut their prices. Thus, the increased supply of x drives the price of x back down to the normal level of profit for the economy. In sum, the price of commodity x, and the profits available in the sector, reflects information regarding individual wants, the under (or over) supply of commodity x, and potential returns to profit seeking producers.

The above scenario reflects the workings of perfect competition where many producers ‘respond’ to such monetary indicators. However, we are in the epoch of

---

225 The truth of the consequent is, of course, conditional on the appropriate elasticity of demand obtaining for commodity, x.
226 The normal level of profit in the economy is that which secures a rate of return on investment at or just above the loan rate (the cost of borrowing financial capital).
oligopoly capital. The conduct of business is different under the circumstances of imperfect oligopolistic capitalist competition. Neo-classical economic theory tells us that there is little, or no, price-competition between producers. Price wars may occasionally be enjoined by producers, however, competition between producers mainly takes place in attempts to differentiate what are basically the same goods through the cultivation of non-price factors such as brand image. In the short-to-medium term (week-to-week or season-to-season) there is little or no fluctuation in the price of goods. There is implicit price collusion between producers within particular sectors, or producers within an industry set prices in accordance with the ‘leader’ of the oligopoly (usually the producer with the largest market share). Prices are relatively fixed in the short-to-medium term.

There are also political and media pressures on oligopolistic pricing policies. In the UK, the State regulates the prices, profits and investment levels of particular industries through organisations such as OfTel, OfWat and OfGen. Prices usually fall in response to deficient demand, but rarely rise in response to over-demand. Oligopolies are much more likely to vary output by running down stocks through ‘sales’ in the event of waning demand, or by tracking down more sources of supply in the case of booming demand. Prices rise or fall in the long term if there are structural changes in the characteristic of oligopoly production is that producers do not compete on the price of a good, or the use-value which the consumption of a good yields to the consumer (products on offer are often substitutable). Instead vast amounts of resources are committed to sustaining an advertising and public relations industry which is devoted to the ‘engineering’ of brand identity and loyalty. They work to make the modern consumer feel that, through the activity of consumption and the possession of a commodity, he thereby comes to inhabit a world of values. In late capitalist consumer society most oligopolistic producers seek to foster a ‘philosophy’ for the goods they retail. Thus, Nike exhorts us to ‘Just Do It’, Kellogg’s maintain that they are ‘Serving the Nation’s Health’, and Benetton strive to relate the purchase and parade of their designs to a concern for the pressing social and cultural problems of the day. There is even a perfume range called Philosophy, which enables the consumer to project the otherwise hidden depths of their personality!

---

227 A characteristic of oligopoly production is that producers do not compete on the price of a good, or the use-value which the consumption of a good yields to the consumer (products on offer are often substitutable). Instead vast amounts of resources are committed to sustaining an advertising and public relations industry which is devoted to the ‘engineering’ of brand identity and loyalty. They work to make the modern consumer feel that, through the activity of consumption and the possession of a commodity, he thereby comes to inhabit a world of values. In late capitalist consumer society most oligopolistic producers seek to foster a ‘philosophy’ for the goods they retail. Thus, Nike exhorts us to ‘Just Do It’, Kellogg’s maintain that they are ‘Serving the Nation’s Health’, and Benetton strive to relate the purchase and parade of their designs to a concern for the pressing social and cultural problems of the day. There is even a perfume range called Philosophy, which enables the consumer to project the otherwise hidden depths of their personality!

228 Condition of perfect competition may be approximated in the long term. In the long run there can be new entrants supplying goods in the market. However, there can be, and usually is, numerous economic, legal and political barriers to entry and exit from an industry.
conditions of supply of primary and secondary sector goods (such as a rise in the cost of extracting basic commodities such as oil, wheat and coffee or a rise the cost of processing intermediate goods such as steel, plastics, and glass). In the short-to-medium term there are high economic costs of entry for new producers (the initial outlay for capital, land and labour factors). In addition there may legal barriers to entry. Perhaps there are a limited number of licenses to produce given by the State, or perhaps producers hold copyright over the commodity in question. Oligopolistic corporations, servicing particular sectors of the economy, are usually built up over decades of investment and trade. There is usually no question of oligopolistic corporations responding to sudden increases in demand for goods. Oligopolies compute and process information concerning the circumstances of supply and are able to predict, and even drive, demand for particular goods through various advertising and marketing techniques.

The corporate drive for profit has resulted in oligopolistic capitalist production being truly global. Corporate strategy can be devised in a New York office; engineers and technocrats can be consulted in Berlin; product designers and advertisers can be commissioned in London; raw materials can be sourced and extracted in Brazil; production facilities can be set up in Malaysia; distribution can then be extended to retail outlets all over the globe. The turnover value of many corporations outstrips the GDP of some nations. It is said that of the largest one hundred economies of the world, fifty-one are corporations. It is also suggested that globalisation is limited to ‘a core of industrialised countries - Europe, North America and Japan,’ where ‘85% of foreign investment flow is between the members of the triad’.\footnote{See States Against Markets The Limits of Globalisation (Routledge, 1996), p.2, ed. Robert Boyer & Daniel Drache.} In this chapter I will centre on
tendencies within the triad considered as one ‘closed’ economy. I will be considering the fate of capital and labour, and the prospects for a communist distribution of goods, as well as more communist forms of production, accordingly.

The aim of oligopolistic capitalist enterprise is profit. The goal of profit maximisation is sought through periodic ‘rationalisation’ of an enterprise, and by quarterly and yearly results in which performance indicators such as market share, turnover, stock and capital holdings, share price are judged in terms of other enterprises within a sector; and where decisions regarding choice of production technique (the mix of capital and labour) and product portfolio are assessed alongside innovations in capital and consumer goods and are matched with actual and prospective market wants.

Oligopolies are answerable to the shareholders that invest in their enterprise. The traditional image of the lone capitalist entrepreneur and risk-taker, as deified by the Libertarian Right and demonised by Exploitation Socialists, does not reflect the developing reality of our capitalist economic times. The functions of capitalist investment and entrepreneurship are no longer exercised by a particular individual, or class of individuals, but are dispersed within bureaucratic and technocratic management systems, and are subject to scientific determination and control. (I continue to refer to individual capitalists simply for ease of exposition and analysis.)

The terms of ownership and control of capitalist organisation has also changed. Investment in capitalist stock stems from bank credit extended from individual and corporate savings and, more recently and increasingly, from schemes of private insurance and pension fund holdings. The accumulation, concentration and

---

230 Most pension funds in the UK stick to the same tried and trusted formula. Pension fund managers have traditionally been risk averse, 50% of funds is held in UK-quoted equities, 20% in overseas equities, 15% in Government bonds and the rest are held in cash, property and other investments. However, pension funds are increasingly moving into the business of providing venture capital (see Financial Times, 5/10/99,
centralisation of these latter forms of financial capital have had a significant effect upon the control of oligopolistic corporations. For example, the fund managers of British Telecom pensions (Hermes Investment Management Fund) removed the chief executive of Mirror Group Newspapers due to a falling dividend on its share capital.\textsuperscript{231} The continued employment of the Chief Executive of Mirror Group was not thought to be consistent with the financial interests of British Telecom pension holders since they held a major share of Mirror Group media stock. In a more radical development, the US President, in his 1999 State of the Union Address, announced the policy aim of investing the federal fiscal surplus on the stock market so that, rather than frittering the surplus on current consumption, streams of revenue can be generated in order to fund future provision and expansion of State healthcare, education and welfare.\textsuperscript{232} To many on the Right, this is tantamount to socialism by the back door! The main point here is that there has been, and continues to be, a blurring of the distinction between a class who simply own and control capital (the capitalists) and those who simply sell their labour power to capital in order to secure a wage (the workers). Those who have an actual or prospective stake in the profitability of oligopoly capital are no longer confined to a class of capitalists.

*The Marxian Technological-Fix.* Now the oligopolistic capitalist corporate drive for profit has led to many good developments, not least of which is the potential to produce an unprecedented quality and quantity of agricultural, capital and consumer

\textsuperscript{231}See the *Financial Times*, 27/01/99, p.1.

\textsuperscript{232}See John Plender's article 'The Politics of Ownership' in the *Financial Times*, 25/01/99, p.17.
goods. However, as I will argue in section 3.111, the truly great developments of
capitalism are, first, the displacement of mass labour from agriculture-to-industry and
then from industry-to-services; and, second, the drive towards the replacement of labour
factors by capital across all three sectors of the capitalist economy. I argue that these
great developments constitute the Marxian 'technological-fix'.

The Marxian technological-fix presents both (a) threats and (b) opportunities for
man’s ability to service his needs and realise his freedom.

(a) Capitalism is production for profit *par excellence*. Profit (exchange-value) is
the bottom line. The needs of a population are only needs for capitalist producers if
individual wants (which arise on the back of the dual aspect of needs) are backed by
money. Capitalist production begins with financial capital (M) being invested in
physical capital (tools and machines) and labour (wages) so as to produce some
commodity (C). The sale of (C) is expected to command expenditure in the market
(M*). This is what Marx terms the M-C-M* cycle. This cycle continues, and
production remains viable, as long as M* > M. That is, capitalist production remains
viable as long as there is profit, or surplus-value (M* – M), to be secured from the
system of production, distribution and consumption. The profit-maximising capitalist

---

233 I borrow the term ‘technological-fix’ from G.A. Cohen, see *Self-Ownership, Freedom & Equality*

234 As I argue in section 3.12 below, under communism the practical and/or expressive *needs* of the
community are the bottom line for properly constituted human production in which producers track goods
internal to social practices rather than profit.

235 Marx writes: “Demand also exists for those who have no money, but their demand is simply a figment of
the imagination. For me or for any third party it has no effect, no existence. For me it therefore remains
unreal and without an object. The difference between effective demand based on my need, my passion, my
desire, etc. is the difference between being and thinking, between a representation which merely exists
within me and one which exists outside me as a real body.” See the *Economic & Philosophical*

236 Karl Marx *Capital Vol.1* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), chapter four ‘The General Formula of
Capital’, p.247.
only continues to invest in the production of goods and services if $(M^* - M) \div M \geq \text{the loan rate}$. That is, if capitalist return from investment in capital and labour ($M$), and the production of goods and services ($C$), exceeds or equals the rate of return gained from leaving ($M$) in a bank account.

Crucially, the viability of capitalist production is premised on the existence of a moneyed (able) and willing consumer base. In a closed economic system there are three kinds of consumers of the capitalist product, they are households, firms and Government.\textsuperscript{237} In the final analysis an economy’s demand for capital goods (i.e. company-to-company transactions) is contingent upon the sale of goods to households and Government. Government demand is contingent upon taxes upon profits generated by firms, and incomes accruing to individuals, within the capitalist sector; and also from consumption taxes imposed on the purchase of certain classes of good (alcohol, tobacco, petrol, etc.), and from value added tax upon consumer durables in general. Effective consumer demand (household expenditure on goods and services) is the most fundamental element of consumption within the capitalist economic system. It is the foundation upon which company-to-company transactions and sustainable Government taxation/expenditure takes place.

Now, in Capital Vol.3, Marx writes:

In the crisis itself,... everyone has goods to sell and cannot sell, even though they have to sell in order to pay,... Capital already invested is in fact massively unemployed, since the reproduction process is stagnant. Factories stand idle, raw material pile up, finished products flood the market as commodities... It is precisely... that there is a surplus of productive capital, partly in relation to the normal though temporarily contracted scale of reproduction and partly in relation to crippled consumption.

... as things actually are, the replacement of capitals invested in production depends to a large extent on the consumption capacity of the non-productive classes; while consumption capacity of the workers is restricted partly by the laws governing wages and partly by the fact that they are employed only as long as they can be

\textsuperscript{237}In an ‘open’ economy exports (demand stemming from foreign consumers, firms and Governments) consume part of a nation’s economic product.
employed at a profit for the capitalist class. The ultimate reason for all real crises always remains the poverty and restricted consumption of the masses, in the face of the drive of capitalist production to develop the productive forces as if only the absolute consumption capacity of society set a limit to them.238

In section 3.112 ‘The Contradiction Thesis’ I discuss a contradiction at the heart of capitalism. The primary means by which households pay for the goods delivered by capitalist enterprise is through wages gained through production for capitalist market wants. However, capitalist development tends towards the displacement and eventual replacement of labour factors by capital factors of production; and creates circumstances where those who remain in the employ of the capitalist system are made increasingly insecure in their work. I argue that such developments can issue in an underconsumption of the capitalist economic product. Technological development causes a disparity between the capitalist economy’s capacity to produce, and the levels of consumer want-satisfaction that are actually achieved. Capitalist wage-labour becomes an increasingly sub-optimal means by which to augment, distribute and ration a potential capitalist economic product. The tendency towards the replacement of labour by capital factors of production ‘fetters’ the optimal use and development of capitalist productive forces. Thus, I conclude that (at least) a scheme of guaranteed basic income is required, and that, in addition, sources of income via the performance of associative production must increasingly be made available to individuals. Such interventions become necessary because as capitalist production becomes more capital-intensive then, in absence of being able to perform capitalist wage-labour, individuals need a non-capitalist (communist) entitlement to the capitalist means of consumption. Also, such schemes will become necessary because, in a neo-Keynesian fashion, we need to shore up, and facilitate, the highest development of capitalist productive forces.

(b) The Marxian technological-fix, and a scheme of basic income, provides the
material foundation for mankind to pursue those forms of production that are more
'worthy and appropriate for human nature'. For Alienation Marxists diminution in the
demand for alienating wage-labour is a truly great development which can, will and
should be delivered by capitalism. In section 3.1122 'The Correspondence Thesis' I
argue, along with Marx, that 'the general reduction of necessary labour corresponds
to the free development of individualities; to the artistic, scientific, etc. development of
individuals in the time set free, and with the means created, for all of them.' I further
argue that the development of our 'individualities' requires an understanding, and
application, of Alisdair MacIntyre's idea of a social practice. Finally, in sections 3.12
and 3.13, I argue that the cultivation of our individual capacities, and the servicing of
those social needs which technology cannot address and which necessarily requires the
development, exercise and expression of our generically human powers and capacities,
is best achieved by associations of producers in which individuals are directed to
produce in accordance with, what MacIntyre terms, goods internal to particular social
practices, rather than capitalist profit.

I argue that there are normative limits to the use of the capitalist profit motive
within the systems of production that produce for actual social needs. A community's
systems of healthcare and education are vital for promoting the physical and 'spiritual'
well-being of the population. They cannot be treated like any other service sector
organisation. Systems of healthcare and education play a crucial role in determining the
life-hopes of a population. As I argued in part two healthcare agencies are central for
discovering and transmitting knowledge regarding our physical needs and the
metabolism which we need to effect with inorganic nature. And, as I argued in part two,
and will argue later in this chapter, systems of education which engender the development of our generically human powers and capacities are, along with the Marxian technological-fix, decisive in delivering communism.

As regards production for the healthcare and educational needs of the community there can be no room for profit. Production for healthcare and educational needs of the community will fall to several kinds of institutions and associations of producers. Although production for the healthcare and educational needs can increasingly utilise capital factors, there remains (and will always remain) needs to develop, exercise and express human know-how, skill and creativity in such spheres of production. In the development from capitalism to communism increasing numbers of individuals can and should come to produce for the healthcare and educational needs of the community.

In addition to the systems of healthcare and education, production for the policing and defence needs of a community; the activities and aims of those who produce for the legal processes, judiciary and penal system; and the work of those who power the civil service and the political system, should be insulated from arbitrary State directives and market (money) forces.

There are forms of production which require the development, exercise and expression of knowledge, skill and creativity, and which are vital for the practical and/or expressive needs of the community, that can be subject to more commercial pressures. Here I am thinking of production for the artistic, recreational and leisure life of the community. Thus, theatres, art galleries, museums, opera houses, newspapers, journals,

---

239 In the case of healthcare institutions such as hospitals, nursing homes and hospices provide sites for associations of doctors, nurses and carers to produce for the healthcare needs of the community. In the case of education institutions such as schools, colleges and universities provide sites for associations of teachers, tutors and lecturers to produce for the educational needs of the community.
cafes, restaurants, hairdressers, fashion houses, tailors, bootmakers, specialist wine, cheese and bread making, etc., can be organised in accord with a system of ‘associative’
market socialism. In section 3.13 I argue that associations of producers can play host to
individuals/co-operatives producing for such needs throughout the economy.

As regards production for our mundane material wants I argue that oligopolistic
capitalist enterprises must continue to supply primary, secondary and (main strands of)
tertiary sector production by developing and honing capital-intensive systems of
production, distribution and retail. However, I also maintain that appropriate
associations (such as OfWat, OfTel and OfGen) must regulate the profit-maximising
activities and aims of oligopolistic capitalist corporations.

In sum, I argue below that ‘socialised man, the associated producers’ must come
to either conduct (in the case of healthcare and education), facilitate (in the case of
market socialism) or regulate (in the case of global oligopolistic capitalism) production
under communism.

3.1 The Womb of Capitalism & Production under Communism

In his 1859 Preface Marx claims that:

At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society
come into conflict with the existing relations of production, or - what is but a legal
expression for the same thing - with the property relations within which they have been
at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations
turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution...

... No social order ever perishes before all the productive forces for which there
is room in it have developed; and new, higher relations of production never appear
before the material conditions of their existence have matured in the womb of the old
society itself.²⁴⁰

Our central concern here is to understand how Marx envisaged the development
from capitalism-to-communism. Given the passage above, three central questions arise:

(i) What is ‘higher’ about communist relations of production? (ii) What is developing in the ‘womb’ of capitalism which will make higher communist relations of production possible? (iii) How do developments within the womb of capitalism come to ‘fetter’ the further development, and optimal utilisation, of society’s productive forces?

(i) Capitalism has undoubtedly delivered to mankind an unprecedented capacity to produce for his physical needs. However, for Alienation Marxists, it has also delivered to man his highest alienation. From part one we saw that the alienation of man within the capitalist mode of production issues from the fact that, firstly, man is not able to develop, exercise and express his generically human powers and capacities in his production. Secondly, those who are able to develop, exercise and express their capacities have their work subject to the demands of commodity production, market exchange and profit rather than goods internal to the social practices that give meaning and value to the development of particular capacities.

In both cases work is instrumental. Work is simply a means to life (money) rather than ‘life’s prime want’. In his production man is alienated from his activity, his products, his species-essence and other people. Production fails to be a forum in which he can occasion self-discovery/creation through his activity and in his products, and by which he can properly relate to other similarly situated producers.

Production under communism forms an antidote to capitalist alienation. Under communism man is afforded the material and institutional means by which he can develop his capacities through enjoining activities and effecting products which track goods internal to social practices which constitute the practical and/or expressive life of the community. Also, social practices provide a means by which he can relate to
similarly situated others in his leisure and, more formally, within an appropriate
association of producers.

(ii) The freedom to produce in accordance with goods internal to social practices
is to be afforded by technological developments occurring within the oligopolistic
capitalist production process. In what follows I argue that oligopolistic capitalism tends
the economy towards the replacement of labour factors by capital across the agricultural,
industrial and service sectors of the economy. I argue that this is the Marxian
‘technological-fix’.

My use of the term ‘Marxian technological-fix’ differs from that of G.A. Cohen
(from whom I borrow the term). Cohen argues that we should reconcile themselves to
the loss of two articles of Marxist faith. The first is the belief that an industry-based
working class will come to act as the agent of revolutionary political change, and the
second is in the belief that technological development will deliver conditions of material
abundance. I agree that we should junk the first article of Marxist faith, Cohen writes:
“The proletariat did, for a while, grow larger and stronger, but it never became ‘the
immense majority’, and it was ultimately reduced and divided by the increasing
technological sophistication of the capitalist production process that had been expected
to continue to expand its size and augment its power.” 241 However I believe that we
should keep faith with an interpretation of the second article of Marxist faith. Indeed, my
interpretation of the Marxian technological-fix explains why the first article came to be
irrelevant for our times.

Cohen interprets the Marxian technological-fix as productive growth issuing “in
a material abundance so great that anything that anyone needed for a richly fulfilling life

could be taken from a common store at no cost to anyone.” However, I believe that Marxists do not have to be committed to the unrealistic goal of achieving a ‘common store’ of goods from which anyone can take whatever they happen to want and whenever they like. As I argued in part one and two, Alienation Marxists do not take wants at face value. Abundance is to be achieved through both a transformation of wants and through the development of production technologies. I argue below that the Marxian technological-fix consists in the achievement of flexible capital-intensive systems of production and distribution in agricultural, industrial and service sector goods which can readily adapt to changing human wants. Under communism *capital*, not (mass) labour, mediates the metabolism which man needs to effect between inorganic nature and his mundane material wants.

The fashioning of a capital-intensive system of production, a scheme of basic income, and returns to the performance of ‘associative’ production, provides the basis for a future communism in which each can pursue self-realising production. The end of mass employment within, what Marx terms, the ‘sphere of material production proper’ can herald the end of a state of affairs in which human effort and endeavour is based primarily on production for exchange-value; and an end to a situation where distribution in the means of consumption (the satisfaction of human needs) is based primarily upon wages gained through the performance of alienating wage-labour within the capitalist mode of production.

(iii) The Marxian technological-fix, the tendency towards the replacement of labour factors by capital within the oligopolistic capitalist production process, ‘fetters’ the development, and optimal utilisation, of productive forces both within advanced capitalist economies and within early, developing and transitional economies. Any

---

capitalist needs to amortise her investment in production through the sale of goods. The sale of goods depends upon the purchasing power of the general population. Purchasing power is dependent upon wages/salaries secured within the capitalist economy. A tendency towards the replacement of labour factors by capital within the production process tends to restrict the purchasing power of the masses. Restricted purchasing power fetters investment in and the subsequent development, and optimal utilisation, of capitalist productive forces.

At present Western agencies for economic development focus upon ‘supply-side’ strategies for early, developing and transitional capitalist economies. Western development agencies aim to develop a nation’s capital stock and labour skills so that companies native to such economies can compete with advanced capitalist economies (global oligopolistic corporations) in the production of agricultural, industrial and service sector products. Such supply-side strategies have some success but condemns most to a constant game of ‘catch-up’ with the advanced economies. Also, in the face of the Marxian technological-fix, there is a limit to how far we can raise and sustain living standards (consumption patterns) by simply concentrating on production-orientated (capitalist wage-labour) development strategies.

India is emerging as one of the nations leading development in the manufacture application and servicing of computing and telecommunications goods. Salaries accruing to computer scientists, and profits generated by high-technology start-up companies, have facilitated the growth of an urban middle class within New Delhi and

---

243 Development agencies work to improve a developing economy’s, so-called, ‘comparative advantage’. If an advanced trading nation A and a developing nation B both produce goods X and Y, and if (as is usually the case) A is superior to B in production of both X and Y but B can produce X more efficiently than Y, then aid agencies will concentrate on developing supply-side conditions (capital inputs and labour skills) for the production of X in developing nation B. However, in the time it takes B to catch-up to A in the production of X, A has already moved on in the development of its capital inputs. As the World Bank’s
Bombay, and a standard of living (patterns of consumption) that is comparable to average moneyed consumer in London, Paris or New York. However, if the Marxian technological-fix is increasingly becoming a reality of capitalist economic life then there is a limit to how far we can raise world living standards (and sustain current living standards) through the growth of ‘new’ economy jobs. At some point ‘demand-side’ measures such as a universal and unconditional basic income are also required for individuals in all nations in order to extend the capital-intensive produce of global oligopolistic capitalist corporations to citizens across the globe.

In what follow I discuss three key features of production in the development from late capitalism-to-communism. They are (i) technology (section 3.11), (ii) associations of producers (section 3.12) & (iii) a system of associative market socialism (section 3.13).

3.11 Technology

Many celebrate the fact that the workings of the capitalist market has delivered to the moneyed individual an unprecedented quantity and quality of goods and services. The capitalist market enables the modern consumer to develop and fulfil a seemingly endless range of desires for commodities. As I argued in part two, Alienation Marxists are troubled by certain pathological aspects of late capitalist consumerism, however, we

Knowledge for Development Report 1998/9 warns ‘developing economies are pursuing a moving target, as the high income industrial countries constantly push the knowledge frontier outwards’ (p.2).

244Germany, the UK, Ireland, and the US are offering fast track ‘green cards’ to Indian computer scientists and telecommunications specialists in order to add to the high-skills base of their own economies (and diminish the threat of competition from developing nations?). Such schemes are an echo of the Western drive to plug labour gaps by importing immigrant un-skilled labour during the 1950/60’s. In the 50/60’s there was a huge surplus of unskilled labour in the Third World, such policies were not that detrimental to the productive capacity (money earning potential) of less-developed nations. However, in our increasingly knowledge-driven age, such policies can only set back the production-led strategies of developing nations such as India. Signs are that, so far, Indian professionals are resisting offers from the West. See Financial Times, 19/4/00, p.8 ‘Indian IT specialists lukewarm over Germany’s invitation’.
concur with David Miller when he claims that the Left should not concern themselves with the fulfilled desires for a range of,

... mundane private goods - food, clothing, household items and so forth - which will be provided most efficiently by allowing markets to operate freely and obliging producers (...) to respond to the pattern of consumer demand, at the same time minimising the cost of their inputs. 245

Alienation Marxists do not dispute the ends (the production, distribution and retail of mundane consumer goods) but question his assumptions regarding the means of such production. Miller argues that the satisfaction of mundane consumer wants are most efficiently met by, first, allowing markets to operate and, second, by obliging a mass of ‘human’ producers, coupled with capital factors of production, to respond to market demand as communicated by patterns of actual and prospective consumer spending. He writes that,

... the market is not merely a device for co-ordinating production with consumer demand (though it is certainly that). It is also a major determinant of life-chances - since primary income earned through the market tends to outweigh all other receipts. Furthermore, producing for the market takes up a large part of (most people’s) daily lives. This constraint cannot be lifted, but we can at least ensure that they have the greatest possible chance to shape the environment in which their time is spent. 246

If by demanding that the market should operate Miller is merely claiming that there should be an open channel of information that matches production possibilities to consumer wants then I am in agreement with Miller. 247 The value of mundane consumer goods is largely, if not wholly, going to be accounted for in terms of actual consumer wants (demand). The production of, for example, bananas, paper clips or white cotton Oxford shirts is worthless if no one enjoys eating bananas, if individuals would rather


247In section 3.02 I argued that the Marxian technological-fix is also an ‘epistemological-fix’ of such information.
secure their loose leafs by means of a stapler, or if individuals prefer to wear polo pique
tops rather than button-down collar shirts.  

What I want to question here is his assumption that ‘production’ for mundane consumer wants inevitably requires a mass of labour factors coupled with capital factors of production. I furthermore want to question whether income earned through such market production can continue to be the primary means by which we distribute, ration and consume the capitalist social product given developments in production technology. Miller claims that income earned through producing with respect to markets for mundane consumer goods is, and can continue to be, the primary source of income for most people. This is because a production constraint - human production for mundane market wants - cannot be lifted. I want to dispute both of these assumptions.

I will argue that, first, the development of production technology under oligopolistic capital is in the process of lifting ‘the curse of labour which Jehovah bestowed upon Adam’ (Grundrisse, p.661). Technological development under oligopolistic capitalism is in the process of perfecting production, distribution and retail facilities which are becoming increasingly capital intensive and are diminishing the amounts of abstract socially necessary (mental and muscle) labour hours which have to

248 Later I will be making a distinction between the evaluative basis for the production of mundane consumer goods and production which services the educational, healthcare, intellectual, artistic, sporting and recreational life of the community. The production value of different kinds of bread ultimately depends on prevailing and prospective preferences for granary, ciabatta, baguettes, bagels, etc. The production value of goods internal to the educational, healthcare, intellectual, artistic, sporting and recreational life of the community is not ultimately reducible to the actual wants of those who produce for such needs or those who benefit from such production. Rather, in such cases the individual has her wants constituted by the practices which form the educational, healthcare, intellectual, artistic, sporting and recreational life of the community. See below, section 3.12 entitled ‘Associations of Producers’.
be performed in order to produce primary, secondary and tertiary goods for consumer needs.²⁴⁹

Second, because of such developments in production technology ‘income earned through the market’ can no longer serve as the primary means by which to augment, distribute and ration consumption of the capitalist social product. The development of productive forces, and the satisfaction of human wants, becomes ‘fettered’ in a system of production in which distribution is primarily dependent upon capitalist wage-labour. An unconditional basic income (to meet basic needs) and returns to the performance of associative production are necessary if we are aiming to optimise the servicing of needs in a post-capitalist/wage-labour society. I will first discuss the replacement of labour by capital factors of production and then go on to discuss fettering, a basic income and the consumption of the capitalist economic product.

3.111 The Marxian Technological-Fix

Technological development under oligopoly capital holds the prospect of a post wage-labour economy. That is, the end of a state of affairs in which man is compelled to enjoin production simply, or largely, for the sake of a wage (exchange-value). The advent of the capitalist mode of production ushered in a specialisation and division of labour in which work became largely stupefying and stultifying for the individual. However, the replacement of labour factors by capital factors of production within oligopoly capitalism is consigning such work to history. Alienation Marxists aim for a

²⁴⁹There are tendencies within capitalism, which fulfil the communist aim of a post wage-labour global economy. Under communism capital intensive production facilities would be charged with extraction of raw materials, its processing into capital and consumer goods and the distribution of such goods to consumers across all nations. High technology extraction, processing and distribution facilities should service the wants of a global consuming base. A communist aim is to have such goods, and this realm of production, almost wholly serviced by technology, and driven by groups of technocrats (computer programmers, engineers, production managers, etc.). Instead of saying that we should ‘oblige producers’ we should be saying that we aim to primarily ‘oblige technology’ to produce for such mundane consumer wants.
particular fruition of oligopolistic capitalist development. We want such systems of production and consumption, in primary (commodity), secondary (manufactures) and tertiary (service sector) products, to be almost wholly driven by technology. Technology must replace mundane work. Machines must replace the stultifying exercise of human muscle power and computers must replace the stupefying application of human brain power.

To be absolutely clear, Alienation Marxists are not claiming that there can and should be an end to human production altogether and that future communism will enable man to sit back and simply enjoy a life of consumption. Properly constituted, production can and should be a means to individual freedom and self-realisation. Capitalism holds the prospect for a post wage-labour future. Developments in technology holds for us the prospects for an increase in leisure-time and/or an increase in the amount of human skill and effort devoted to the kinds of production which machines and computers cannot perform. In theory, any dull, mundane or repetitive productive task can be performed by technology. I will be arguing that capitalism tends towards the replacement of such labour by capital factors within the production process. However, with technology (capital) at hand, man will be still be required to perform those aspects of production which machines and computers cannot service. That is, those aspects of production which necessarily require human skill, creativity and judgement. A problem remains as to how we should organise that human effort and endeavour that necessarily requires the development, exercise and expression of our generically human powers and capacities.

---

250 Of course a life of leisure would be an option under communism if an individual really considered this the best life to be lived. However, as I argued in part two, if individuals are able to develop their capacities then, in general, they count the exercise and expression of those capacities as part of their good. That is,
An Alienation Marxist aim is for all forms of work will become professional, vocational and ‘associative’ in nature. That is, most, if not all, human production will require the development, exercise and expression of judgement, skill and creativity as is particular to the kinds of theoretical and practical knowledge which are generated, accumulated and applied within particular professions and vocations. Professions and vocations arise within particular social practices and are rooted in the practical and/or expressive needs of the community. I will say more about such matters in sections (3.12) and (3.13) below. For now I want to return to the claim that capitalism tends towards the replacement of labour factors by capital factors of production.

Alienation Marxists believe that we should be in the business of encouraging those economic forces which can put mankind beyond the need for mass employment (wage-labour) in the production of agricultural, industrial and certain service sector goods. Developments within oligopoly capitalism are carrying us to the realisation of such a goal. Technological development has already resulted in radical displacements of mass human labour from the primary-to-the-secondary sector of the capitalist economy, and subsequent displacements of labour from industry-to-service sector production. Such displacements of human labour can and must be followed by the wholesale replacement of wage-labour by capital factors of production in agricultural, industrial and main strands of (capitalist) service sector production.

---

they come to prefer, or take pleasure in, those vocations and pursuits, which enable them to secure a self-identity through the exercise and expression of their developed capacities.


252 There is still those aspects of the mainly service sector portion social product, and the satisfaction of human needs and wants, which necessarily requires human production and the development, exercise and expression of our generically human powers and capacities. The organisation of such necessary human production will be addressed in section (3.12) and (3.13) below.
Throughout history man has had to act upon inorganic earth with his labour, and with tools in hand, in order to service the needs of himself and wider society. Such labour has, in different modes of production - Ancient, Feudal and Capitalist - been conducted within distinctive relations of production - Master/Slave, Lord/Serf, and Capitalist/Wage-Labour. Our aim must be to largely consign wage-labour to history and have mostly capital factors mediating the metabolism that man needs to effect between inorganic nature and his mundane material needs.

Marx writes:

... 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 agencies set in motion during labour time, whose ‘powerful effectiveness’ is itself in turn out of all proportion to the direct labour time spent on their production, but depends rather on the general state of science and on the progress of technology, or the application of this science to production. The development of this science, especially natural science, and all others with the latter, is itself in turn related to the development of material production. (Agriculture, e.g., becomes merely the application of the science of material metabolism, its regulation for the greatest advantage of the entire body of society. Real wealth manifests itself, rather - and large industry reveals this - in the monstrous disproportion between labour time applied, and its product, as well as in the qualitative imbalance between labour, reduced to pure abstraction, and the power of the production process it superintends. Labour no longer appears so much to be included within the production process; rather the human being comes to relate more as a watchman and regulator to the production process itself. (What holds for machinery holds likewise for the combination of human activities and the development of human intercourse.) No longer does the worker insert a modified natural thing as middle link between the object and himself; rather, he inserts the process of nature, transformed into an industrial process, as a means between himself and inorganic nature, mastering it. He steps to the side of the production process instead of being its chief actor.\(^{233}\)

A communist aim is for ‘man to step to the side of production instead of being its chief actor’. How has capitalism have careered us towards such an aspiration? How far have we got towards the realisation of this aim? What tendencies within capitalism have set us on the path for capital-intensive production and the exclusion of wage-labour from the production process?

Over the course of twentieth century capitalist development there has occurred radical transformations in the organisation and conduct of both capital and labour.

First, capital. As mentioned earlier, the era of competitive capitalism evolved into an epoch of oligopoly and monopoly capitalism. A history of vertical and horizontal mergers has resulted in the centralisation of financial and physical capital within monopolistic and oligopolistic corporations that now dominate almost every aspect of capitalist economic life. Such development occurred in virtue of the economies of scale that can be secured through gearing primary, secondary and tertiary sector enterprises for mass production (consumption).

Second, labour. Such mass production (consumption) initially required a mass of wage-labourers whose labour power was joined with physical capital in order to produce for mass market wants. Such workers were subject to a stupefying and stultifying specialisation and division of labour. Each worker performed a mundane and routine task in return for a wage. Productive tasks tended to be made as simple as possible for two main reasons. First, it is easier to train workers, and to replace workers. Second, the supply of potential workers is maximised, thus wage is kept as low as possible.

An important aspect of the argument that follows is that the de-skilling of work prepared (prepares) the ground for the eventual replacement of labour by capital factors of production. Capital-intensive production facilities provide for what used to be the


256 Karl Marx Capital Vol.1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p.517 ‘The Most Immediate Effects of Machine Production on the Worker’. Also see Harry Braverman’s Labour & Monopoly Capitalism The
preserve of mass labour. Along with this tendency is the trend towards the super-skilling of work for those who drive, service and develop capital-intensive systems of production. For Communists, the highly skilled and high-salary work of technocrats and managers working with capital-intensive factors of production, and within oligopolistic capitalist corporations, can, will and should produce in the place of mass labour. I will return to this issue later, first I want to examine the tendency towards the displacement and eventual replacement of mass labour within the capitalist production process.

The unionisation and politicisation of labour issued in ‘struggles’ (at factory gates and within the State) to improve the lot of the worker within the capitalist mode of production. Unions tried to promote the interests of the worker against the interests of capital (profit). The advent of mass production brought about mass employment and the prospect of collective bargaining of pay and conditions for workers who harboured a coincidence of such interests. Some unions tried to stem tendencies towards the dumbing down of working practices by maintaining ‘closed shops’ of semi-skilled workers. On the back of the union movement arose labour-orientated political parties dedicated to promoting the interests of the worker within the State. Union-sponsored political parties sought to promote goals such as full employment, re-distributive taxation, rights to union membership, a minimum wage, sickness and paternity leave, limits to the working week, health and safety regulations within the workplace, as well as more general rights of access to education, healthcare, welfare benefits and cultural goods.257

---

257The success of labour movement over the course of twentieth century capitalism was contingent upon the fact that there were three basic operating assumptions that constrained the power of oligopolistic corporations. First, economies within which unions exerted their power were relatively closed. Second, there obtained the political will, opportunity and practice, of Keynesian demand-management and deficit-
The activities and aim of unions and union-sponsored political parties upped the employment ante.\textsuperscript{258} Whether the worker secures better terms and conditions through a union or the political process, such demands impose costs upon profit-maximising (cost-minimising) oligopolistic employers.\textsuperscript{259} Also, union and political demands restrict the ‘flexibility’ of oligopolistic corporations to adapt to changing conditions of supply and demand within markets for particular goods. Higher production costs and restrictions upon corporate freedom to adapt the conditions of supply lead to either or both of two courses of action. First, to go ‘global’ and seek a work-force in developing countries with more modest (or even meagre) expectations as regards remuneration and conditions financing in order to sustain full employment. (Conditions of full-employment give unions relatively greater bargaining strength; there is no alternative source of labour for capitalists to use.) The success of Keynesian demand-management policies rested on the fact that the State could largely contain/predict the effects of fiscal expansion within the confines of the national economic border. Third, there was the relative ‘inertia’ of private financial and physical capital.

The demise of traditional union movement and the rise of new labour thinking can be accounted for in terms of the fact that there are no longer industrial centres which employ a mass of labour factors and the fact that all three operating assumptions of the capitalist political economy have been transformed through the so-called ‘globalisation’ of financial and physical capital and increased world trade. First, capitalist economies are more open. Second, Governments cannot contain the effects of Keynesian deficit-financing and demand management policies within their national borders. The Social Democratic State (and mainstream political parties) have come to accept high unemployment as a fact of advanced capitalist economic life, or else they attempt to falsify the facts and convince the general population that things are better than they are (see later). Third, private financial and physical capital are more ‘fluid’ and can traverse the globe seeking the most profitable conditions within which to produce and trade goods and services.

\textsuperscript{258}The fast-food service sector of the late capitalist economies is notorious for paying low wages and having stultifying and stupefying conditions of work. This situation has persisted because the work-force is non-union. However, in 1998 the first MacDonald's outlet was unionised. In Canada the Canadian Auto Workers Union (CAW) has succeeded in getting MacDonald's to let their staff join a union and have their pay and conditions subject to collective bargaining. At present MacDonald's employees in Canada are paid at, or just above, the national minimum wage, which is C$7.50 (£3). See Financial Times, p.4. 21/8/98. The unionisation of the service sector can (will?) issue in the same fate for the worker as happened in the agricultural and industrial sectors. Remember: any repetitive or mundane productive task, any task which does not require human creativity, imagination and skill, can in theory be performed by machines and computers. The overarching goal of Socialism is to make that theory a reality. This is the Marxian technological-fix.

\textsuperscript{259}The Guardian (25/11/98, p.3) reports that Rolls Royce, the supposedly archetypal British producer, is threatening to switch all of its manufacturing to the US if Britain continues to adopt more of measures contained in European Union’s labour and social charter. The company currently employs 30000 skilled workers based mainly in Derby and Bristol. A spokesman for the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) echoed the threats of Rolls Royce’s chairman by stating that: ‘We have long maintained that it is vitally
Second, to rush towards technology, to have machines and computers perform the tasks which people used to undertake.

Across two centuries of capitalist economic development mankind has already witnessed huge displacements of human labour from within the primary and secondary sectors of the capitalist economy. Agricultural and industrial production are now largely capital-intensive. Growth in productive capacity within these sectors, and the capacity to meet human needs (wants) by means of the production and consumption of agricultural and industrial goods, is not achieved through the additional mass employment of wage-labour but through adding capital factors to the production process. Can we infer from such developments and the course that capital and labour has taken, that there an inherent bias towards the adoption of labour-saving capital within the capitalist mode of production? If there is a tendency towards the replacement of labour factors by capital factors of production then where can it conclude?

Elster argues that there is no inherent bias towards an increasing utilisation of labour-saving capital within the capitalist mode of production. He claims that Marxists such as Maurice Dobbs and Paul Sweezy read a ‘Hicksean’ argument into Marx, in support of a Marxian view that capitalism engenders a labour-saving bias within the production process. However, Elster claims that the textual basis for extracting such an argument from Marx’s writings is slight and that, in fact, the argument propounded by Hicks is flawed. The Hicksean argument is not up to explaining factor bias that has

---

260 There are increasing political/media/consumer (moral) constraints upon oligopolistic corporations exploiting Third World workers. This provides a further reason for corporations to seek the second course of action.

occurred within the primary and secondary sectors of the economy, and cannot serve as a prediction for the conclusion of any general tendency towards the replacement of labour factors by capital factors of production.

On the texts, Elster admits a Hicksean argument plays a role in *Capital Vol. 1* where Marx attempts to explain transformations within agricultural production, but that he does not advance an argument for other sectors and that (in Elster’s view) it is wrong to generalise a labour saving bias across the whole of the capitalist economy. Elster claims that Marx simply assumes the truth of the Hicksean argument in *Capital Vol. 3* when he is setting out the case for his theory for ‘the tendency of the falling rate of profit’.

The truth of the Hicksean argument is central to the case for Alienation Marxism.

What is the Hicksean argument and why does Elster believe it to be flawed?

Hicks claims that changes in the relative prices of the factors of production determine the course of any factor-saving bias. Thus, if labour costs rise relative to capital costs then capitalists will tend to adopt labour-saving capital factors of production.

Elster has two objections to the Hicksean argument. Elster’s first argument against Hicks concerns ‘agency’ and the cause of any tendency towards the replacement of labour by capital factors within the capitalist production process. He claims that the Hicksean argument does have strong intuitive appeal but that it is based on a logical fallacy. Elster reasons as follows. First, assume that the price of labour relative to capital is increasing throughout the economy so that all capitalists simultaneously face rising labour costs. If all capitalists adopt labour-saving capital factors then there will be a fall
in the aggregate demand for labour. A fall in the demand for labour leads to a fall in wages. Thus, the adoption of labour-saving technology seems to be the collectively rational response to rising wages by capitalists. The problem with this argument, argues Elster, is that the capitalist acts on an individual and not on a collective basis. He states that: “External economies cannot motivate behaviour under perfect competition; to believe that they can is to make a mistake closely related to the fallacy underlying functional explanation.” 262

Why does Elster assume that the conditions of perfect competition still hold? The development of capitalism from conditions of perfect competition to imperfect oligopolistic competition occurred because there were economies to be gained through increasing the scale and scope of production. Mergers and acquisitions occurred because capitalist enterprises are then better placed to develop and implement technological change. Large-scale oligopolistic companies are better able to innovate, finance and install costly labour-saving capital factors of production. The centralisation of financial and physical capital as embodied in the modern oligopoly provides the ‘collective’ basis for the rational solution - a development of productive forces which issues in the replacement of labour factors by capital factors of production.

Elster’s second argument against the Marxian/Hicksean claim that labour factors tend to be replaced by capital factors is that if total costs of capitalist production rise, either through rising labour or capital costs, then the capitalist will seek to reduce costs. However, he will do this by adopting either labour-saving or capital-saving factors of production. The goal for the capitalist is to reduce costs and restore his level of profit. He can do this by either reducing his wage-costs or his costs of capital. There is no

inherent tendency for the capitalist to automatically adopt labour-saving capital factors in order to restore or improve upon his profit margins.

Why might the capitalist prefer to install labour-saving rather than capital-saving factors of production? First, if the source of rising costs is labour then it seems more rational to address the source rather than cast about for any means by which to preserve or promote profit levels. Any efficient capitalist must continually be in the business of minimising his costs from any aspect of the production process. If cheaper sources of raw material become available, or if there are cheaper supplies of capital factors, then it is rational for him to change suppliers. The specific problem that he has to address is that of continual increases in real wage as effected by union activity and the political process. Adopting labour-saving technology is rational if the capitalist is wary of the fact that unless he addresses the source then he will continue to face rising costs through labour struggle via unions and the political system. Second, there are benefits to adopting specifically labour-saving technology that the simple adoption of capital-saving technology cannot match. By reducing the proportion of labour relative to capital factors in production then the capitalist improves his degree of flexibility and control over the production process. If the production process is supplied with inputs (raw materials) and the capitalist expects a certain output, then workers are less predictable than machines. Thirdly, if the capitalist commits himself to increasing the proportion of

---

263 The Financial Times (8/6/99), p.16, reports on developments in residential and commercial building technology which reduces the need for on-site labour. Pre-fabricated building technology focuses production in the factory rather than at the building site. Such a development ‘reduces costs, improves upon technology and slashes completion times’. The building company Arup is developing production facilities, which cost between £3-5 million to set up. These facilities will be equipped with ‘simple tooling and 100 employees and able to produce 12 fully equipped houses a day.’ Such developments in building technology are occurring because (i) on site labour is ‘unreliable’ (ii) there are labour shortages due to the fact that workers are increasingly unwilling to partake in such production.

264 It might be thought that humans can provide a degree of dexterity and flexibility to the production process which machines and computers cannot match. This used to be the case in ‘chocolate production’. It
capital factors relative to labour factors then he enjoys more certainty as regards the costs he faces year-on-year. Investment in capital factors (machines and computers) typically services production on a five-to-ten-to-twenty year basis. Structuring and predicting the finance of an enterprise is easier with increased capital rather than labour factors of production.

The Hicksean argument aside, in the actual capitalist economy there are examples of entrepreneurs investing in capital-intensive production facilities even in the face of relatively lower costs for labour factors of production. Thus: ‘When Philip Lynch looked at expanding his company’s specialist bakery in South Dublin he had a choice. He could either invest €20m ($19.8m) in a French-made, fully automated, continuous mixing and moulding production line, or save money by keeping to an older but more labour-intensive technology. It was the labour issue which clinched it. “People [here] just don’t want to work in baking anymore,” says Mr. Lynch, chief executive of LAWS, the Irish Food Group. Nearby, two young Libyan men in white hairnets stand over a conveyor belt as French loaves roll off the state-of-the-art equipment’.

---

265 The capitalist will face greater ‘sunk’ costs for his enterprise if he develops labour-saving and capital intensive production facilities. However, in the medium to long terms he can expect diminishing marginal costs of production. Once the technological systems of extraction and processing of materials are in place, and with diminishing human labour within the production process, then the marginal cost of production tends towards zero. The cost (price) of inputs and processing simply reflects (private) ownership entitlements in land, raw materials and capital.

266 Financial Times, 10/2/00, p.9.
Elster claims that Marxists ignore the effects of capitalists developing and implementing specifically capital-saving innovations. Capital-saving innovations enable labour factors to be more productive with a reduction in absolute and relative amounts of capital factors. He cites examples such as ‘explosives and the wireless’. The mining of ore and coal used to be effected by means of masses of miners. Mechanical diggers (capital factors) then replaced the need for some of such labour factors and made workers who continued to work in such industries more productive. Then the use of explosives lead to the advent of open-quarry mining where, instead of sending labour and capital factors into the earth, explosives ‘invert’ the earth’s surface so that ore or fossil fuel can then be simply scooped up and processed into base metal and coal. Similarly, the development of wireless radio transmission supplants the need for a network and servicing of ‘physical’ cable technology. The same, or greater, levels of social need can be met through less capital factors of production.

There is no doubt that such specifically capital-saving developments has and continues to take place within the production process. The key question is whether such developments increases (or at least sustains) the relative and absolute amounts of

---


268 In the West our telecommunications industry and our needs for communication used to be serviced by analogue-wire based exchanges, which were installed and serviced by a mass of human labour. Developing economies need not pass through the same phase of development in order to develop and address their communication needs. The development of digital and mobile telecommunication technology in the West means that they can satisfy the same level of want-satisfaction with substantially less labour and capital than used to be employed in the West.

269 Telecommunications, computing, etc. do fall within the category of so-called ‘sunrise’ rather than ‘sunset’ industries. And yet labour and capital factors within such businesses are being shed through developing technology. For example, Ericsson, the telecommunications company, recently announced that 11000 jobs will be axed in the division which produces and installs network systems. This is because two years ago they used to dispatch ‘a crew of engineers and two truckloads of equipment to complete a contract’. ‘Within twelve months, advances in technology enabled two engineers to do the same job with equipment loaded into a Volvo’. And now it is predicted that ‘by the end of 1999, an engineer working alone will install switching systems no larger than a suitcase’. See the Financial Times, 26/1/99, p.28.
socially necessary labour hours which have to be performed. Do trends towards capital-saving innovations increase (or at least preserve) employment opportunities required to deliver the capitalist economic product, and the incomes by which individuals can consume (purchase) the capitalist economic product? Are capital-saving innovations smuggling mass labour back into the production process? Can (will) developments in production technology sustain a full employment wage-labour economy? In short, is it false to claim that the capitalist economy tends to displace, and will eventually replace, labour factors by capital factors of production? The contrary view is that there is, and always will be, a place for alienating wage-labour within the capitalist mode of production. (I will return to this issue - see remarks on the unemployment and underemployment of labour factors below.)

At this point I should distinguish three kinds of claims which are central to Alienation Marxism. First, there is the normative claim that wage-labour should be driven out of the production process. Second, there is a practical claim that dull and mundane wage-labour can be replaced by capital factors of production. Third, there is the predictive claim that labour factors will largely, if not almost wholly, be replaced by capital factors within the capitalist production process (production for mundane market wants). The predictive claim arises from Marx’s historical materialism/economics and, as I will argue in section 3.12, is central to the claim that capitalism first facilitates and

---

270 Can every last piece of mundane work disappear? Perhaps not. However, it can and should diminish to a tiny percentage of current requirements through the transformation of wants and developing technology. Even self-realising production has a proportion of dull and mundane tasks. Presumably, from the individual’s point of view mundane productive activity is more bearable if it forms an aspect of the generally self-realising productive life, rather than performing mundane tasks largely or simply for the sake of money (exchange-value).
then comes to ‘fetter’ the development of productive forces and the satisfaction of human wants.  

On the predictive claim Jeremy Rifkin (President of the Foundation on Economic Trends in Washington) in his book *The End of Work The Decline of the Global Labour Force & the Dawn of the Post-Market Era* (Columbia University Press, 1996) documents trends revealing the progressive exclusion of human labour from all sectors of the economy. Mass (structural) unemployment has already occurred through technological advances within agricultural and industrial production, developments in telecommunications and computing technology (the information revolution) will cause similar unemployment in presently growing aspects of the service sector (see below). There are, of course, aspects of the service sector (as well as residual aspects of primary and secondary sector production) which necessarily require the exercise of human skill, creativity and judgement. Any tendency towards the replacement of labour factors by capital factors of production has its limit where production is intrinsically labour-intensive. For example, the performance of surgery, the teaching of infants or the composition of music. Thus where production requires the development, exercise and expression of our generically human powers and capacities, then there is little or no room for labour factors to be replaced by capital factors of production.

If developments in technology can take us to this ‘limit’ then, for Alienation Marxists, this would be welcome progress. I have argued that an Alienation Marxist

271 The practical, predictive and normative claims collect into the general claims that, first, capitalism can, will and should drive out mass wage-labour from the production process. Second, the development of largely, if not (almost) wholly, capital-intensive systems of production and distribution can, will and should provide the practical basis for a communism in which individuals are, in the main, able to pursue self-realising production.

272 The problems are how to manage the changes which technology is visiting upon us? How to organise those aspects of production that machines and computers cannot perform (e.g. surgery, the composition of music, philosophical arguments, etc.)? And how to distribute and ration the capitalist (capital-intensive)
aim is for there to obtain capital-intensive production across the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy, and for there to be the replacement of wage-labour by capital factors within the production process. I have also argued that there is an inherent tendency within the capitalist mode of production to replace labour factors by capital factors of production. I have also stated that communists do not seek the end of all human production. Production (the satisfaction of needs) has always required, and will always require, the development, exercise and expression of our generically human powers and capacities. In theory any mundane task, any physical or mental productive activity which does not require the development, exercise and expression of our generically human powers of creativity, skill and judgement, can be performed by machines and computers. A communist aim is to make such theory a reality. Where capital factors can replace labour factors within the production process then it should. The big questions are: how far have we travelled towards this goal and what are the theoretical and practical (empirical) limits to its realisation?

If labour is being replaced by capital factors within the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy then one might think that mass wage-labour is still required to produce and service the capital factors which constitute the capital-intensive production processes of the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. That is employment growth, the demand for wage-labour, will be concentrated in those enterprises which produce the ‘instruments’ of primary, secondary and tertiary sector production. For every job lost in direct production for our agricultural, industrial and service sector...
needs, a countervailing growth in jobs occurs in the capital-producing industry. Marx terms this objection the ‘compensation theory’. He writes:

A whole series of bourgeois political economists, including James Mill, MacCulloch, Torrens, Senior and John Stuart Mill, assert that all machinery that displaces workers simultaneously, and necessarily, sets free an amount of capital adequate to employ those workers displaced.\(^ {273} \)

In a footnote to this passage Marx adds: ‘Ricardo originally shared this view, but afterwards expressly disclaimed it, with the scientific impartiality and love of truth characteristic of him’.

The compensation theory runs as follows. Variable capital set free by sacking workers is spent on constant capital that now delivers a product previously produced by workers. However, expenditure on new constant capital is adequate to employing those redundant workers. Workers shift from sectors in which there is the replacement of labour factors by capital factors, and are then employed in the capital-producing sector. Why must labour displaced through the introduction of machinery necessarily be employed producing capital goods and secure wages paid by growth in financial capital within the capital goods sector? Growth of employment within the capital-goods sector may occur initially, but the same tendencies at work within the production of primary, secondary and tertiary sector goods can (will) set in. In theory, if capital-intensive production can replace the activities of a mass of wage-labourers within agricultural and industrial sector production, then why can’t capital-intensive production facilities produce the instruments (capital) for primary and secondary production? It seems as if there is an implausibly infinite regress. Machines producing machines that in turn produce goods in order to satisfy human needs! Surely mass labour is required at some point? The fact is that such socially necessary human labour has already been

performed, the regress ends with (literally) dead labour. Such labour does not have to be repeated due to investment in labour-saving innovations and the development of capital-intensive manufacture. Prospects for man addressing his needs through largely capital-intensive production\textsuperscript{274} result from the fact that our production processes are a “historical product, the result of the activity of a whole succession of generations, each standing on the shoulders of the preceding one, developing its industry and its intercourse, modifying its social system according to the changed needs.”\textsuperscript{275}

There are trends in the development of productive forces across the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy, which seem to confirm the Marxian predictive claim. The green revolution in seed, field and harvesting technology obviates the need for mass labour within the realm of agriculture. There is no doubt that the rise of industrial society occasioned an epoch of full employment in the West, the 1950/60’s era of Fordist ‘Mixed-Economy’ State Capitalism, which has now passed. It is also evident that in our post-Fordist (post-industrial) service sector times that the information

\textsuperscript{274}A Nottingham-based precision engineering company presently employs 27 people in three factories. They preside over the ‘latest computer controlled metal cutting machines’ which have slashed ‘component production times, reduced costs and improved quality of what used to be a semi-to-highly-skilled human activity’. The factories are equipped with the latest German and Japanese computer-controlled milling machines and lathes. The milling machines are equipped with expensive precision fixtures that can hold up to six components at a time to speed up production. The lathe’s computer controls can dial into the Internet to rent additional functions or to have problems diagnosed remotely by a supplier. All machines are backed up by computer controlled measuring machines to ensure first time quality. One computer programmer has written the computerised production-control package, used by all three factories, to schedule work, track orders and prepare invoices. At present they are designing an Internet page which will aid them in selling production capacity to the US market; all three factories will be linked by e-mail to enable them to swap data. £200000 investment in the latest state-of-the-art Japanese milling machine will replace the equivalent of two and a half (already dated) conventional computer controlled milling machines and will do most of the parts the factory makes in half the time of other machines. Also, the machines fill 1000 sq. ft. and can be left to run for three-to-four hours at a go, making 24 hours lights-out manufacturing a distinct possibility’. See The Guardian, Tuesday September 22nd 1998, The Enterprise Page, p.24.

revolution, with its developments in telecommunications and computing technology, has led to employment growth in, for example, ‘call centres’. Telephone call centres form a late capitalist throwback to the factory floors of passing industrial society, or the feudal fields of our agrarian past. (In the UK 320000 people work in call-centres and it is projected that by the millennium call-centres will absorb 480000 people, or 2% of the work-force.) However, such service sector labour is as vulnerable to technological transformation as industrial and field workers of the past. Talking computers are now a reality. Speech-based computer recognition systems are poised to replace the employment of human labour within such service sector production. Such service sector production can become capital-intensive.

Other currently labour-intensive strands of the service sector can become capital-intensive. Financial services, the media and retail form major divisions of the capitalist service sector. Banking, insurance, and pension fund business is already in the process of shifting from ‘brick-to-click’. The future of our banking/financial system will consist in doing away with high street branches. All transactions will be conducted through telephones and the Internet. The need for physical location for such trade (a high street banking, insurance or investments office) rested on the fact that money was, in the main, a physical quantity. That is, we used notes and coins in order to facilitate market

276 Financial Times, 21/10/98, p.17.
278 Financial Times, 9/8/99, p.9, article entitled ‘IT may replace 40% of call centre jobs’.
279 Others include hairdressing, hotels, fitness centres and the restaurant/bar/cafe trade are less able to have labour factors replaced by capital factors of production. I will be arguing in section (3.13) that such service sector trade is best constituted along the lines of a ‘localised’ system of market socialism.
transactions. Technology is consigning this fact to history.\textsuperscript{280} In the future currency will simply become ‘zeroes-and-ones’ coursing through cyber-space adjusting individual and corporate deposits in accordance with digitised transactions. At present there is a burgeoning sector of banking (as well as airline, rail, cinema and theatre enquiry and ticket sales) which is conducted through 24-hour call centres located outside of the city. As already stated such call centre production is ripe for automation. The development of computer and telecommunications technology, as well as the advent of ‘virtual’ money are set to replace the bureaucratic and boring activities of a whole host of white-collar and, so-called, ‘pink-collar’ (female/part-time) production. There is simply no need for a mass of labour factors to service such mass consumer wants.

The world’s first automated dictation service went ‘on-line’ in September 1998. In a joint venture, the company \textit{Speech Machines Ltd.} and \textit{BT Cellnet} have fashioned the ‘virtual’ secretary. Voice-based computers will take dictation of messages for memos, e-mails, faxes and any text-based document at any time, day or night, and send them anywhere in the world.\textsuperscript{281} Such development obviates the need for a whole generation of white-collar secretarial and clerical staff.

Retailing is also becoming more capital-intensive through the rise of, so-called ‘E-tailing’ and the advent of warehouse retail parks. At present till-workers within supermarkets pass groceries over a barcode sensor panel and the till automatically totals up the consumer’s purchases. Supermarkets have perfected technology that will do away with the need for human labour at till points. Smart tills will image-sense the contents

\textsuperscript{280}Barclaycard and \textit{BT Cellnet} have pioneered ‘mobile banking’. Mobile banking enables the individual to ‘withdraw’ cash from their account and pay for small purchases such as newspapers and sweets via a new Visa Cash Card. \textit{Cellnet’s} managing director states: “Withdrawing e-cash over your mobile may seem a futuristic idea but within five years it will be commonplace.” See the \textit{Financial Times}, 20/02/99, p.18.

\textsuperscript{281}See \textit{The Guardian}, p.21, Finance & Economics section, 21/8/98.
and cost of a shopping basket or trolley at an instant, the consumer will then simply swipe his charge or credit card across a pay point and, if cleared, will exit the store with his groceries. Also, supermarkets have also perfected container and mechanical technology which will enable shelves to be ‘self-stacking’, thereby making redundant another kind of worker.

At present we consume the following ‘media’ products: books, magazines, compact discs and compact disc players, video films and video players, and newspapers. The production, distribution and retail of such goods, and the employment opportunities which arise within the media industry, centres on the fact that there is some physical product which is produced, distributed and sold within retail outlets. The production of goods within particular media, for example, novels, life-style journals and popular music, is currently filtered through publishing houses, magazine syndicates and record company A&R departments. A whole industry arises on the physical production of a particular product. The Internet will, in due course, make such an industry redundant. With Internet technology the physical production of the product is performed in the home. One will consume images, script and sound directly from computer screens and speakers, or else will down load their own hard copy of some product. Some might feel that technology could never replace the need to hold and carry a paperback book around. However, computer scientists have already perfected wafer-thin polymers that can function as computer-screens in a book format. That is, this form of computer will have the format of a traditional book, and you will be able to turn the pages as you would.

---

282 See Financial Times, p.5, 12/11/98, article entitled ‘Internet music sales will hit the Big Five’. This article reports on the effects of the internet; on how its market position of the big five record companies (Seagram, Sony, Warner, EMI and Bertelsmann) more precarious through both on-line sales and ‘direct digital distribution’ of music, film and text; and how the internet will devastate ‘traditional retailers and distributors’ of media products. Time magazine, June 28/6/99, p.57, details similar trends/predictions for ‘e-commerce’. Also see Paul Taylor’s article ‘Middle Men Deleted as the Word Spreads’ in the Financial Times, 27/10/98, p.15.
with an ordinary book and be able to carry this book around, except that the individual pages will be down-loaded from your computer station. Developments in cable technology are already making the ‘video-store’ look dated. If you want to watch a film, you will simply have to telephone your cable company. Then, without having to speak to a single person, you simply key in the code of the film you want to watch on your telephone-dialling pad, then key in your charge or credit card number, and then sit back and enjoy the movie.²⁸³

It might be conceded that we are heading for a high-technology future in which systems of production, distribution and retail are almost wholly computer driven. One might think, however, that this means that we can pin the hopes of full wage-labour employment on production, application and maintenance of computer systems.

In Britain more than one million work in the computer industry. More people work in information technology than worked in the Britain’s coal industry at its peak. The production of such individuals covers a wide range of activities, from the physical production of actual computing units and communication systems to programming, maintenance and computer consultancy support services. It is predicted that 1 in 20 jobs in the year 2003 (1.3 million) will be in computing and computing related industries.²⁸⁴ However, this industry is as vulnerable to the forces of ‘globalisation’ and technological development (the replacement of labour factor by capital factors of production) as experienced in the agricultural and industrial sectors of the economy.²⁸⁵

²⁸³ See The Guardian, p.21, The Enterprise Page, 17/11/98. Here there is a feature on how a burgeoning low-cost video-on-demand service is set to supplant the traditional video distribution/rental industry.

²⁸⁴ The Observer, Business Section, p.3, 23/8/98

²⁸⁵ The Financial Times, 12/11/98, p.5, reports on the increasing flight of demand (and thus employment and incomes) for computer consultancy from Europe and the US to India, where labour costs are lower and the price of consultancy services undercut the West. 80% of contracts from European companies wanting to convert their computer systems for the ‘Euro’ went to Indian computer consultancies.
Take the example of semi-conductor production. As one commentator recently remarked: 'The information super-highway is paved with semi-conductors'. There is a seemingly exponential demand for these components, as they are central to the development of high-technology production and for high-technology households (consumption). In April 1997, and to much fan-fare, Siemens located a high technology semi-conductor production plant in the North East of Britain. Production within the plant required and drew 1100 highly skilled computer engineers, technicians and programmers. The cost of the plant was £2 billion, of which £150 million was provided by the British government as an incentive to locate in the Northeast. Semi-conductors produced within the plant were going to be sent to the Far East where 'workers are cheaper for the more labour intensive work of mounting the individual chip in a ceramic case, with the appropriate connections'. A year after it opened Siemens announced its closure. A glut of semi-conductors on the world market, stemming mainly from Far East computer firms off-loading stock as a result of the Asia financial crisis, reduced the price from $23 (the price which Siemens expected to trade at) to $2.50. The plant became uneconomic to operate.

The supply conditions for semi-conductors and PCB’s (Printed Circuit Boards) has now leaped ahead of the production process which Siemens hoped to augment. The silicon chips that Siemens were going to manufacture were flat. The process time for such chips was 100 days, at a rate of 2500 chips per second. However, a Texas-based company called Ball Semiconductor, has perfected a ball-shaped chip which slashes the process time, for the same rate of chip output, from 100 days to 5 days. Also, the start up

---

and running costs of such production are roughly one-fifth of what Siemens invested in their Northeast England plant.\textsuperscript{287}

All of these trends are coursing us towards a capital-intensive future in strands of the service sector which, at present, employ thousands but which can eventually deliver the same, or greater, levels of the service sector economic product with substantially reduced labour factors of production. Capital-intensive production across the primary, secondary and service sectors of the economy requires a residual class of human producers with specialist know-how in order to augment, facilitate and develop productive forces. However, an increased capitalist economic product can and should be delivered with progressively less alienated labour factors of production. Capital-intensive production should be augmented and developed in order to service the wants of the world’s consuming population. The problem we face how consumers can benefit from capital-intensive production in the face of diminishing opportunities for mass employment of labour factors within the capitalist mode of production. I will return to this problem below and I will also discuss the issue of how best to organise those aspects of service sector production (education, healthcare, etc.) in which there is little or no scope for labour factors to be replaced by capital factors of production.

\textit{Unemployment & Underemployment}. A salient symptom of technological change issuing in the replacement of labour factors by capital factors of production, rather than the simple displacement of labour factors within the production process, shows itself in the figures of involuntary structural unemployment and in the figures for underemployment. \textit{Structural} unemployment is that which persists even in the event of improving macroeconomic indicators in an economy. Thus we may experience an increase in aggregate demand within the economy, and with this an expansion in output.

\textsuperscript{287}Financial Times, p.10, 25/8/98.
However, increased production and consumption is achieved with less labour factors being employed within the economy.\textsuperscript{288} Figures for underemployment measure the generation and proliferation of part-time and temporary contract work. The goal of full employment has long since disappeared from the political horizon of mature capitalist economies.\textsuperscript{289} Rifkin writes:

Between 1989 and 1993, more than 1.8 million workers lost their jobs in the manufacturing sector, many of them victims of automation, either at the hands of their American employers or by foreign companies whose more highly automated plants and cheaper operating costs forced domestic producers to downsize their operations and lay off workers. Of those who lost their jobs to automation, only a third were able to find new jobs in the service sector, and then at a 20\% drop in pay.

Government figures on employment are often misleading, masking the true dimensions of the unfolding jobs crisis. For example, in August 1993 the federal government announced that nearly 1,230,000 jobs had been created in the United States in the first half of 1993. What they failed to say was that 728,000 of them - nearly 60\% - were part-time, for the most part in low-wage service industries. In February 1993 alone, 90\% of the 365,000 jobs created in the United States were part-time, and most of them went to people who were in search of full-time employment...

Craig Miller, a former sheet metal worker in Kansas City, represents the growing frustration of millions of American workers. Miller lost his job at TWA, where he was making $15.65 an hour. Now he and his wife hold down four jobs between them and make less than half what he made in his former job at TWA. When Miller hears the Clinton administration boast of creating new jobs, he responds with a forced chuckle, 'Sure - we've got four of them. So what?' Miller asks what good it is to have several low-paying jobs that pay a fraction of the wages he used to receive when he had one decent job at a liveable wage.\textsuperscript{290}

\textsuperscript{288}At present (Jan 2000) the UK is experiencing lower rates of 'official' unemployment than over the eighties and nineties. However, according to Martin Wolf of the Financial Times (13/12/99): 'the country is still far from the "golden age" low employment and high employment of the 1960s'.

\textsuperscript{289}The tolerance of increased rates of unemployment has been given a semblance academic respectability by neo-classical economists positing, and then revising upwards, the non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment (NAIRU), or the 'natural' rate of unemployment. Economists who defend the trade off between employment and inflation argue that stable prices (currency) can only be sustained in the presence of a particular level of individuals in employment (a certain level of incomes). A trade-off between unemployment and inflation begins below the natural rate of unemployment. Thus as unemployment falls below NAIRU greater incomes translate into higher prices. First, producers find that they can sell the same goods at higher prices because more money (incomes) is chasing a fixed supply of goods. Second, as unemployment falls then the costs of production can increase since workers become more confident in asking for bigger wage rises.

The International Labour Office (ILO) records global unemployment and underemployment at a record level of 1 billion people.\textsuperscript{291} Also, over the 1990s unemployment within the industrialised economies (the G7) rose from 120 million to 150 million.\textsuperscript{292} The International Monetary Fund (IMF), in the latest edition of its World Economic Outlook reports the fact that the proportion of the working-age population in employment within the Euro-zone has fallen from 63\% in 1970 to 57\% in 1998.\textsuperscript{293} It has also been reported recently that, in the UK, ‘almost a third of men over 50 but below pensionable age have no paid work and that most have given up seeking it’. And that ‘the fast growing trend of early retirement risks creating a group of 2 million men in their 50s and early 60s who are doing little with their lives and whose inactivity may jeopardise their health’. Among men aged 50 - 64, the proportion in paid employment has fallen from 84\% in 1979 to 69\% in 1998.\textsuperscript{294} These individuals are not counted in headline unemployment statistics of those actually claiming particular unemployment benefits or in the International Labour Force Statistics of those actively seeking work.\textsuperscript{295} Also in the UK the numbers moved on to incapacity benefits were more than trebled over the 1980/90’s, the claimant count presently stands at 1.7 million people. It is

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{291}From the Alienation Marxist point of view a more severe test for capitalism would be to count those who are willing and able to perform meaningful production - production which enables the individual to develop, exercise and express his capacities and thereby achieve a measure of self-realisation through his activity and in his products - but who fail to achieve such work.
  
  \item \textsuperscript{292}See \textit{The Guardian}, p.27, Finance & Economics section, 24/9/98. See \textit{Financial Times}, 25/6/99, p.7, for a report on the OECD’s pessimistic employment outlook for Western countries.
  
  \item \textsuperscript{293}See Martin Wolf’s column in the \textit{Financial Times}, p.28, 16/6/99. Martin Wolf suggests that the choice we face in Europe is between more jobs or higher wages. He notes that the US over the same recorded employment growth from 62\%, of the proportion of the working-age population in work in employment, to 74\% over the same period. Wolf is being highly interpretative of the US data on unemployment. See John Gray’s book \textit{False Dawn The Delusions of Global Capitalism} (Granta, 1998), p.112, for a reading of trends in US employment which are in every respect as bleak as prospects in Europe.
  
  \item \textsuperscript{294}\textit{The Guardian}, 11/06/99, p.8. The statistics are taken from the HMSO’s report ‘Social Focus on Older People’.
  
  \item \textsuperscript{295}\textit{The Guardian}, 15/06/99, p.31.
\end{itemize}
claimed that the widening of the net for those classed as unable to work was political in motive, and it estimated that about three-quarters of that number would have been classed as fit to work in the 1970s. These individuals are also absent from headline unemployment statistics. A recent study claims that 'official unemployment figures fail to reflect an “alarming” scale of hidden joblessness in Britain’s industrial heartlands'. This study contradicts the UK Chancellor's view that, given the present play of capitalist economic forces, we can achieve full employment and that there are 'enough vacancies in the economy for all the unemployed'.

Another symptom of a tendency towards replacement of labour factors by capital factors, within the economy proper, is the growth of the illegal and informal markets. Illegal markets include the production and trade of narcotics, the 'skin' trade and the trade of stolen and counterfeit goods. Informal markets include the supply and demand for 'skivvy' labour. Individuals who partake in such production absent themselves from the tax and benefits system and are therefore difficult to count. A recent report for the Social Market Foundation claims that 'the scale of the underground economy, which accounts for an estimated quarter of the Gross Domestic Product in the UK, is disguising the real level of unemployment'. Such trends in 'employment' are wholly unsatisfactory given the Marx's alienation critique of capitalism, and the countervailing conception of freedom as self-realisation.

---

296 The Sunday Times, p.8, 18/07/99.
297 The Financial Times, p.7, 19/04/00, 'Statistics fail to reflect north's jobless'.
298 Household cleaners, DIY labour, window screen washers at traffic lights, etc.
300 If we are considering the world economy as a whole, we should not neglect the fact that the livelihoods of subjugated men and women within city economies such as Bangkok are dependent upon a tourist sex trade with the West. Also that whole economies such as Columbia are dependent upon drugs-trade with the
I will be arguing in the following section (3.112), along with Marx, that rising unemployment and underemployment, as well as increasing insecurity in employment, tends the capitalist system to underconsumption and a sub-optimal development and utilisation of (capital-intensive) productive forces, and a less-than-maximal level of consumer want-satisfaction. On the one hand, technological development issues in moneyless (unemployed) and recalcitrant (insecure) consumers of the economic product. On the other, the augmentation, deployment and development of capitalist production needs to be amortised in actual consumer spending. Capitalist wage-labour increasingly functions as a sub-optimal means by which to augment, utilise and develop the forces of production (and maximise want-satisfaction).

3.112 Fettering: Underconsumption of the Capitalist Economic Product & a Scheme of Unconditional Basic Income

The idea that the development of productive forces corresponds to certain relations of production but that eventually those relations come to contradict such development is central to Marx’s historical materialism. In his classic 1859 Preface formulation of the materialist conception of history, Marx writes:

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces... At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production, or - what is but a legal expression for the same thing - with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins the epoch of social revolution.\(^\text{301}\)

Here our central problem is to understand why, in the transition from capitalism to communism, the capitalist/wage-labour relation initially facilitates ("corresponds to") the development of productive forces, and the satisfaction of human wants, but then eventually comes to frustrate ("contradict") the utilisation and maximum development of productive forces.\(^{302}\) We want to understand, first, why Marx thought that capitalist wage-labour (wage earned through human production for market wants) increasingly functions as a sub-optimal means by which to augment, distribute and ration the capitalist economic product. And second, why (as I will argue) the satisfaction of human wants, and the development of productive forces, can and should, increasingly, be serviced by communist relations (associations) of production and a communist system of distribution in the means of consumption where each person is able to meet their needs through, at least, an unconditional basic income and, in addition, through either (i) declining/residual wage or salary opportunities within the oligopolistic capitalist mode of production coupled with rights to limits, and progressive reductions, in the working week; (ii) an income contingent upon the performance of self-realising production within an ‘association’ of producers; or (iii) receipts gained through the exchange of goods and services within a system of ‘associative’ market socialism.\(^{303}\)

In the development from capitalism-to-communism, Alienation Marxists seek progress on two distinct fronts. First, as regards consumption, we seek a break between labour contribution (wage-labour) and entitlement to the means of consumption. In the

---

\(^{302}\)Following Cohen I will be arguing for a ‘relative-use’ conception of fettering. See his essay ‘Fettering’ (re-printed in History, Labour & Freedom, Oxford, 1985) where he makes a distinction between absolute stagnation and relative inferiority of development in productive forces, and the further distinction between use-fettering and development-fettering.

\(^{303}\)Stated above (p.147) that, in Marx’s own time, he defined an individual’s class position in terms of their source of income. The landed aristocrat lived off ground rent; the lone ‘moneybags’ capitalist lived off profit; and the worker lived off a wage gained through the exchange of his labour power within the capitalist workplace. Through developing capitalism and future communism this is transformed.
face of trends towards capital-intensive production, unconditional distribution in accordance with (at least) basic material needs can, and should, come into its own. Second, as regards production, we seek the institution of associative production wherein the individual is able to produce in accordance with goods internal to a particular social practice which addresses some aspect of social need; and which are constitutive of the practical and/or expressive life of the community.

I discuss (ii) and (iii) below, in sections 3.12 and 3.13. In this section I will concentrate on the claim that there are declining opportunities for humans to produce, and thereby gain a wage, within 'the sphere of material production proper'. Furthermore, I will discuss how this fact 'fetters' the utilisation and further development of capital-intensive productive forces.

According to Elster a standard interpretation of Marx's historical materialism runs as follows. Within any mode of production (ancient, feudal and capitalist) there is initially a high rate of technical progress which is facilitated by the relations (and the consequent goals and motivations) of producers particular to a mode. Over the course of time this high rate of technical progress slows down to stagnation. An initial correspondence of forces and relations of production evolves towards a contradiction between them. Elster thus charts the following course between functioning capitalism and future communism, as suggested by the standard or traditional interpretation of


305 The phrase 'the sphere of material production proper' refers to primary, secondary and the main strands of tertiary production (retail, banking and insurance) of an economy. This phrase does not include production within an economy's systems of education and healthcare, and does not include production for the cultural, artistic, intellectual and sporting life of the community. I treat such intrinsically labour-intensive production separately, see sections 3.12 and 3.13.

306 That is, except for the Asiatic mode of production which seems to be characterised by stagnation of development in productive forces. See Capital Vol.1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p.477ff.
historical materialism. First, the conditions of perfect competition that prevailed under early capitalism encouraged a high rate of technical progress. Second, technical change being typically labour saving, this development made for important economies of scale. Third, economies of scale lead to oligopolies and imperfect competition. Fourth, imperfect competition implies a lower rate of technical progress. Finally, a higher rate and level of development in productive forces (and the satisfaction of human wants) can only occur under communism.⁴⁰⁷

Elster only accepts the third proposition without doubt. For reasons discussed above (the Hicksean argument, p.182), he does not believe that there is an inexorable internal logic to capitalism which is reflected in the truth of proposition two. Nothing, in theory, suggests a tendency for labour factors to be replaced by capital factors of production. Finally, proposition four is refuted by the fact that the advent of imperfect oligopolistic capitalism has led to a higher rate, and level, of development in productive forces and a greater degree of want-satisfaction. If anything, technical progress has accelerated under oligopolistic capitalism.

Elster claims that a more plausible story regarding the transition from capitalism-to-communism runs as follows. He advances what he terms the ‘spur-and-bridle’ argument.⁴⁰⁸ First, the material circumstances of emerging capitalist society were characterised by poverty and scarcity. Second, poverty and scarcity provide spurs to production and innovation. (The pain of starvation spurred workers to exchange their labour power for a wage so as to meet their material needs. The presence of want, and prospect of profit through the sale of goods and services, spurred the capitalist to invest

---

in, augment, and innovate production facilities.) Third, innovation and development in productive forces continues to an extent to which there obtains a high degree of (material) want-satisfaction. Fourth, in the presence of high want-satisfaction there are reduced incentives to innovate and produce. (The motivation of workers diminishes because their beliefs are relatively fuller and capitalists have relatively less want to satisfy and exploit for the sake of profit.) Fifth, the rate of innovation and growth in productive forces declines. Finally, this rate can only be sustained, or increased, if production as self-realisation comes into its own, and producers innovate and produce, not because they fear destitution (the lack of money/material wealth) or because they want to acquire more money/material wealth, but because they want to innovate and produce. Work becomes ‘life’s prime want’ because production comes to form an arena in which the individual occasions self-discovery/creation.

Elster is correct to claim that Communists envisage circumstances in which self-realising production can, and should, be characteristic of human production in general. However, I want to question the route to such production as suggested by his spur-and-bridle argument.

First, Elster suggests that high want-satisfaction can come to constitute a ‘bridle’ upon the optimal utilisation, and further development, of productive forces. There is no doubt that capitalism has delivered an unprecedented quantity and quality of goods to Western society. For the 
moneyed consumer, capitalism engenders and satisfies the highest degree of human want-satisfaction. The capacity of capitalism to develop capital and consumer goods, as well as man’s capacity to develop and aim to satisfy new wants, seems boundless.
The prospect of money (exchange-value) motivates the capitalist production (and development) of goods (use-values). Money enables the consumer to command such goods and thereby satisfy his needs and wants. In a strictly capitalist economy firms produce, and develop productive forces, for the sake of exchange-value (profit). Consumption of the economic product is mainly conducted in accordance with wage-labour performed within the capitalist mode of production, or through profits gained through return to share capital. The vast majority consume in accordance with wages earned through the sale of their labour power either in the capitalist market or to the State (which is contingent upon taxes imposed upon profits and wages generated within the capitalist market). The sale of labour power for a wage is fundamental to the capitalist system. Employment and incomes stemming from within ‘the realm of material production proper’ sustains the effective demand for the capitalist economic product. A capitalist producer only produces and innovates his productive forces (or his product portfolio) if such investment can be amortised in the sale of his goods. The sale of his goods requires a solvent consumer. Peter Singer writes:

... Marx asserts that all profit arises from the extraction of surplus value from living labour; machines, raw materials and other forms of capital cannot generate profit, though they can increase the amount of surplus value extracted. This seems obviously wrong. Future capitalists will not find their profits drying up as they dismiss the last workers from their newly-automated factories.309

Singer is obviously wrong. A ‘fully automated’ capitalism cannot provide the employment and, more importantly, incomes that are necessary to ‘purchase’ the potential capitalist economic product. In circumstances where there is no prospect for wage-labour, then there is no prospect for capitalist profit. Living labour is the main source for capitalist profit in the sense that conditions and prospects for exchanging

---

labour power for a wage determines an individual’s capacity to consume and, therefore, the capitalist’s ability to sell. An economy’s level of employment and incomes determines the ability of oligopolistic capitalism to produce, and develop, both its means of production and its portfolio of goods.

The argument for fettering advanced in this section runs as follows. First, the principle means by which the capitalist social product is consumed (purchased) is wage-labour gained through human production for market wants. Second, technological development under oligopolistic capitalism issues in the replacement of labour factors by capital factors of production, and is in the business of fashioning an almost wholly capital-intensive production process. Thirdly, the augmentation, production and development of capitalist productive forces are dependent upon a mass moneyed consuming base. Capitalist profit is only realised in the sale of commodities, the exchange of goods for money. Finally, technological development comes to ‘fetter’ further development in productive forces because of declining opportunities to gain a wage within the sphere of material production proper. Here, the term fettering refers to the trend in which there is a growing disparity between the capacity to produce and the ability to consume. In the face of such a trend entitlement to the means of consumption must, to some extent, be detached from labour contribution. A scheme of basic unconditional income is therefore required.

Here I only defend the necessity of a basic income given technological development under capitalism. In a world where capital rather than labour increasingly mediates the metabolism which man requires to effect between his needs

and inorganic nature, then his ability to consume can, and should, to some degree, be independent of whether he is able to labour.\textsuperscript{311}

If capital factors are replacing labour factors within ‘the sphere of material production proper’ and there is, in consequence, diminishing opportunities for workers to gain incomes through production for capitalist market wants, then incomes gained through human production for capitalist market wants increasingly functions as a sub-optimal means by which to deploy and develop productive forces so as to meet human wants. In the words of Engels:

Too little is produced... But why is too little produced? Not because the [technical] limits of production... are exhausted. No, but because the limits of production are determined not by the number of hungry belies, but by the number of purses able to buy and pay. The moneyless belies, the labour which cannot buy, is left to the death-rate.\textsuperscript{312}

Of his own day, Marx reports that if a worker was not able to sell his labour power for a wage then he and his dependants were largely left to die. The effects of capital replacing labour within the production process were devastating. Marx documents the following effects of the implementation of machinery upon textile workers in England and India in his own time. He writes:

World history offers no spectacle more frightful than the gradual extinction of the English hand-loom weavers; this tragedy dragged on for decades, finally coming to an end in 1838. Many of weavers died of starvation, many vegetated with their families for a long period on 21/2d a day. In India, on the other hand, the English cotton machinery produced an acute effect. The Governor General reported as follows in 1834-5: ‘The misery hardly finds any parallel in the history of commerce. The bones of cotton-weavers are bleaching the plains of India’.\textsuperscript{313}

\textsuperscript{311}The level of basic income extended to a population, or any particular individual within a population, would have to be relative to both local/national economic conditions (prices, employment, etc.), and individual needs. I do not have the space to go into practical issues regarding the level a basic income should be set at, the timing for its introduction into an economy, or the increase in its level given developments in capital-intensive production. I hope to take up these problems at a future occasion.

\textsuperscript{312}This quote is taken from Melvin Rader’s book Marx’s Interpretation of History (Oxford, 1979), p.204.

Within mature capitalist economies the situation is not as dire. In the present day, apart from voluntary transfers of income and goods within the family and networks of private charity, the principle means by which individuals are able to meet their needs outwith of capitalist wage-labour is via State employment and systems of State welfare. Thus, those who do not own share capital, and are not able to consume through commanding profits on capitalist enterprise; and those who are not in the employ of private capital, can occasion the means of consumption through employment in the public sector, or through income transfers via entitlement to unemployment, disability, child or old age benefits.

However, the levels of want-satisfaction achieved through informal transfers within the family, and more formally by networks of private charity and through State employment and welfare, generally depend upon an economy in which a mass of workers are able to sell their labour power for a wage/salary within the capitalist mode of production. Capitalist employment is the fundamental base upon which informal transfers or formal taxation can take place. A decline in opportunities to perform wage-labour tends the whole economy to underconsumption and a less-than-maximal level of consumer want-satisfaction.

My argument concerning fettering centres on a population’s ability to consume rather than limits in the technical capacity of capitalism to produce. My approach does not hinge upon the unlikely prediction that, at some point, capitalist corporations will have exhausted all opportunities to innovate in the production of capital and consumer goods, or that capitalism will become relatively less efficient at innovation than any alternative socialist system of production for our mundane material wants. Cohen suggests, and then dismisses, the idea that socialism could come to supplant capitalism.
because ‘the length of a computer generation’ might be twelve months if we continue under capitalism, but nine months if we exchange capitalist relations and entitlements for socialist ones. Here Cohen is centring on the technical prospects for production and the role that they play in the choice of economic systems.\textsuperscript{314} The argument advanced in this section concerns the conditions of consumption, due to the effects of technology on the terms and prospects for the performance of wage-labour, rather than on claims concerning the technical possibilities for production. Marx advances (what amounts to) a proto-Keynesian argument concerning deficient aggregate demand which stems from the capitalist tendency towards the replacement of labour factors by capital factors of production, and the development of capital-intensive production across the agricultural, industrial and (strands of) the service sectors of the economy.

Elster claims that the acceleration of technical progress under oligopoly capitalism falsifies the standard interpretation of Marx’s historical materialism. However, I maintain, along with Marx, that it is precisely this acceleration of technical progress, and the tendency to replace labour factors by capital factors of production, which causes a growing disparity between what can be produced (and the needs which can be met) and what is produced (and purchased) upon the basis of capitalist wage-labour. Elster is also wrong to suggest that high want-satisfaction may come to constitute a ‘bridle’ on the development of productive forces. I will be arguing that the relative use- and development-fettering of productive forces does not stem from the unprecedented levels of want-satisfaction, but from diminishing opportunities to secure

\textsuperscript{314}Cohen rhetorically asks: “Is it possible to suppose that revolution would be risked at a time of accelerated development of productive forces, just because there would be still faster development under different relations. Would workers overthrow a capitalism which has reduced the length of each computer generation to one year because socialism promises to make it nine months?” See History, Labour & Freedom (Oxford, 1985), p.111.
a wage within the capitalist production process. If capitalist economic development issues in the prospect of largely capital-intensive production then the consequent unemployment of labour factors, and the lack of a wage by which to consume the potential capitalist product, leads to less-than-maximal want-satisfaction. Consumption via capitalist wage-labour proves to be a sub-optimal means by which to develop and match increasingly capital-intensive production possibilities with human wants/needs.

Production primarily for exchange-value and consumption of the capitalist product via the performance of wage-labour becomes an increasingly inefficient means by which to augment production and satisfy human wants. On the one hand the oligopolistic capitalist pursuit of exchange-value (profit) leads to the progressive exclusion of opportunities for human to perform productive tasks and thereby opportunities to receive a wage. On the other hand, consumption of the capitalist social product is primarily reliant upon the fact that the mass of consumers are able to secure employment and, more importantly, incomes through production for capitalist market wants.

In the *Grundrisse* Marx writes:

As soon as labour in the direct form has ceased to be the great well-spring of wealth, labour time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and hence exchange value [must cease to be the measure] of use value. The surplus labour of the mass has ceased to be the condition for the development of general wealth, just as the non-labour of the few, for the development of the general powers of the human head. With that production based on exchange value breaks down, and the direct, material production process is stripped of the form of penury and antithesis. The free development of individualities, and hence not the reduction of necessary labour time to as to posit surplus labour, but rather the general reduction of the necessary labour of society to a minimum, which then corresponds to the artistic, scientific etc. development of the individuals in the time set free, and with the means created, for all of them. Capital is itself a moving contradiction, [in] that it presses to reduce labour time to a minimum, while it posits labour time on the other side, as the sole measure and source of wealth. Hence it diminishes labour time in necessary form so as to increase it in superfluous form; hence posits the superfluous in growing measure as a condition - question of life and death - for the necessary. On the one side, then, it calls to life all the powers of science and of nature, as of social
combination and of social intercourse, in order to make the creation of wealth independent (relatively) of the labour time employed on it. On the other side, it wants to use labour time as the measuring rod for the giant social forces thereby created, and to confine them within the limits required to maintain the already created value as value.\textsuperscript{315}

In the above passage there is a contradi\textit{ction thesis} which asserts that 'capital is a moving contradiction, [in] that it presses to reduce labour time to a minimum, while it posits labour time (consumer spending by means of capitalist wage-labour) on the other side, as the sole measure and source of wealth'. There is also a correspondence thesis which asserts that 'the general reduction of necessary labour corresponds to the free development of individualities; to the artistic, scientific, etc. development of the individuals in the time set free, and with the means created, for all of them'. I will discuss each in turn.

3.1121 The Contradiction Thesis

In a capitalist economy \textit{money} is central to determining what is produced (for profit) and an individual’s ability to consume (purchase). The sale of labour power for a wage is the primary means by which an individual is able to access the means of consumption, and thereby meet her needs. The value of money as a medium of exchange stems from the fact that there is a radical separation between the activity of production and consumption. One has no need for money if one owned one’s own means of production (land, labour and capital) and if one simply consumes what one produces. Robinson Crusoe had gold coins on his island, but they were pointless as a means of exchange. In absence of a specialisation and division of ownership and control in the means of production (including labour), there is no need for a medium of exchange.

Under capitalism we have a stark specialisation and division of labour and ownership in the means of production. The trade of what any one individual or

corporation owns and controls necessarily requires a common measure and store of value, namely, money.^{316} Within the capitalist economy the individual sells her labour power in one sector for a wage, and with that money she is able to command the product of sectors in which her labour plays no part.^{317} The individual services one particular aspect of the capitalist production process and is then able to make (partial) claim to the general production of goods and services, in accordance with the wage she receives in exchange for her labour.

Now the problem of fettering stems from the fact that the general production of capitalist goods and services requires diminishing amounts of labour factors. The consequent unemployment of labour factors increases the amount of 'labour which cannot buy'. The replacement of labour factors by capital factors within the capitalist production process tends the economy towards underconsumption of the potential economic product.^{318} There is deficient effective demand for the (cash) value of goods

---


^{317}“In Western Industrial societies reliance on quantification of commodities consumed as an index of living standards is partly justified by the economic forms that have come to dominate our collective existence. Thus people are conventionally classified as producers and consumers. This reflects the separation of the workplace and the home in the normal experience of wage earners; we produce somewhere in order to consume somewhere else. The interdependence of each participant in the economic process is reified in the form of personal pay packets, while the isolation of households has reached the point where the majority of people now live in units of one or two persons only. The practice of paying for work by the hour, week or month makes the idea of regarding labour as a quantity intuitively plausible. Its output is often readily measured, and living standard may be summarised as the purchasing power of wages. At any rate the value of consumption can be assessed as the going price of equivalent goods in the market. These developments in the organisation of common livelihood are the substantive grounds for that scientific revolution in our thought which makes quantification indispensable to reliable knowledge. Economists’ models are thus reasonable, if incomplete, approximations to real conditions in industrial capitalist economies, where human labour is sold for short periods in man-made environments and households depend on commodities for the bulk of their consumption.” Keith Hart ‘Commoditisation & the Standard of Living’, p.74, The Standard of Living The Tanner Lectures delivered by Amartya Sen 1985 (Cambridge, 1988), ed. Geoffrey Hawthorn with responses by others.

^{318}It is not only unemployment that tends the capitalist system to underconsumption. It is also the fact that whatever work is left for humans to perform within the capitalist system is increasingly insecure. The expectation that one has a ‘job for life’ is no longer realistic given the dynamics and demands of global free market capitalism. This is already the case for temporary contract part-time and/or ‘flexible’ wage-workers and is increasingly the case for the traditionally secure professional worker. See the Financial Times, 23/9/99, p.30, article entitled ‘Employment Insecurity at Highest Level for 30 years’.
that are capable of being produced due to the replacement of labour factors by capital factors of production. A disparity occurs between the economy’s capacity to produce, and the ability to meet consumer wants, given that production is for ‘exchange-value’ and consumption is primarily conditional upon the performance of wage-labour.

The problem is: how to match increasingly capital-intensive production with human wants in the face of declining opportunities to perform wage-labour? This problem affects advanced capitalist economies, and the early, developing and transitional capitalist economies that, in the face of capital-intensive manufacture, cannot take the West’s ‘full-employment’ route to economic development. Below I argue that the problem can only begin to be solved by breaking the connection between wage-labour and entitlement to capitalist goods and services. A scheme of unconditional basic income must come into effect. However, before discussing the desirability of such a scheme I will first consider some counteracting tendencies towards underconsumption of the capitalist economic product.

Over the course of capitalist development there have been (and are) counteracting tendencies towards underconsumption of the capitalist economic product stemming from the replacement of labour factors by capital factors of production.

First, new industries and businesses absorb(ed) labour displaced from ‘sunset’ industries and thereby constituted the ‘sunrise’ opportunities for employment and, more importantly, incomes. Second, capitalist producers look(ed) to the international trade and the world market in order to sell their product and thus realise profit (surplus-value) in the global exchange of their goods for money. Revenues commanded through the foreign demand for goods enables a domestic capitalist corporation to further develop its means of production, as well as develop its portfolio of products. The advent of
common trading blocs and single currencies facilitates this counteracting tendency. Third, underconsumption crisis has, in the past, been averted through the actions of the Keynesian Demand-Managing Interventionist State sustaining/boosting the aggregate demand for capitalist goods through the use of subsidies, public works programmes and public sector employment.

The first two are tendencies endogenous to the workings of capitalism and are consistent with its basic terms of its operation. The third is an exogenous influence upon the capitalist economic system. In what follows I argue that there are theoretical limits to the first two counteracting tendencies. Also, I argue that the third counteracting tendency faces new obstacles due to globalisation of the capitalism, and the trend towards capital-intensive manufacture. A Keynesianism for our economic epoch must be conducted by international financial institutions working on a global scale. I will remark upon each in turn.

(i) New Industry and Commerce. New areas of commerce and new sectors of industry and services, producing for new wants, arise and can absorb labour factors displaced by the adoption of capital-intensive methods within more traditional sectors of the economy. Thus, the rise and expansion of industrial society absorbed labour factors displaced by the adoption of capital-intensive techniques in agriculture. The shift from agriculture-to-industry was accompanied by a shift from rural-to-urban living. The rise of urban living and the advent of the city-economy, led to the creation of new consumer wants that facilitated the growth of industrial capacity and created a consumer (service sector) society.
New consumer goods such as laptop computers and mobile telephones have come into being. The development of such products channels steel, plastics and semiconductor manufacture into new markets. However, the development of new goods does not necessarily signal the need for mass labour to produce such goods. If steel, plastics and semiconductor manufacture is becoming increasingly capital-intensive, then the production of new consumer goods simply requires capital-factors to be added to the industrial base of an economy rather than an additional mass employment of labour. Increased steel, plastics and semiconductor production can be achieved without significantly increasing prospects for employment within the plastics, steel or semiconductor industries.

The most visible sign of such new products influencing employment trends is in the retail sector. Thus, a whole host of retail outlets have sprung up on high streets within mature capitalist economies that are in the business of matching the right mobile phone or laptop computer to a consumer’s particular needs and budget. However, the production, distribution and retail of these new consumer goods have yet to reach a saturation point, that is, the point where there ceases to be consumers purchasing such...
goods for the first time and where customers of such goods simply aim to replace out-of-date or broken products. As with other consumer goods, rationalisation of retail will take place. Mobile phones and computers will be as common place as tea bags and toothpaste, and most probably will be mainly sold in the same warehouse-style supermarkets as these other more mundane household goods.

Post-industrial service sector society is characterised by the fact that there are declining employment and income opportunities within traditional and heavy industries, and growing opportunities within, for example, financial services - banking, insurance and accounting; the retail of food, household goods, etc.; the hotel, bar and café trade; hairdressing, tailoring and beauty salons; theatres, opera houses, and concert halls; cinemas, galleries and museums; the television, radio and print media; the legal and political system; and within the systems of education, academic research and healthcare. In each transition from agriculture-to-industry-to-services, employment and incomes (and hence effective demand) growth within successive sectors sustained output, and facilitated growth, within the preceding sector.

To be sure, there have always been primary, secondary and tertiary aspects to the production process. In general, the primary sector refers to the extraction of raw materials, the secondary sector refers to the processing of raw materials and their transformation into particular use-values, and the tertiary sector refers to the point of distribution/consumption. A farmer who ploughs, washes and parcels potatoes with the same machinery thereby combines the primary and secondary aspects of production within one process. And if the farmer were then able to sell his washed and packaged potatoes to customers at a corner of his field, he would thereby combine the tertiary aspect of production.
Within industrial and post-industrial societies there usually is a significant
distance of space and time between the primary, secondary and tertiary stages of
production. In order to meet the needs of a mass market, the humble potato makes a
journey from a field to a factory where it can be chipped, mashed or sautéed and then
packaged for distribution and retail within supermarkets, hamburger chains and frozen-
food stores in high streets across the economy. In our age, the demand for a farmer’s
potato crop is not determined by those passing his field but is, for example, registered in
the demand for fast-food, frozen meals and crisps with city and town-based retail
outlets.

The transition from a agricultural (rural) economy to an industrial (city)
economy, and then the transition from an industrial economy to a post-industrial service
sector economy simply marks an epochal shift in the concentration of labour factors
devoted to developing, honing and satisfying, needs within successive sectors.

We are now in a post-industrial service sector age. So, where to now? Marxists
claim that capital-intensive techniques can, will and should enable declining amounts of
labour to produce for increased mass-market consumer needs across all three sectors of
the economy. Some aspects of the service sector are more vulnerable to technological
transformation (the replacement of labour factors by capital factors) than others. I have
already suggested ways in which retailing, the media and financial services might
succumb to capital-intensive methods through the, so-called, information revolution and
the rise of e-commerce.

Within capitalism new businesses emerge in accordance with developments in
production technology and evolving consumer wants. Also, current businesses expand,
contract or collapse in accord with developing technology and changing human wants. A
confirmation of Marx's argument concerning underconsumption would be if the net effect of the ebb and tide of commercial enterprise resulted in declining opportunities for employment. I have already argued above that a symptom of such a trend shows itself in the figures for structural unemployment and underemployment; in the growth of labour factors working in markets for illegal goods (narcotics, counterfeit and stolen goods) and prostitution; and in the growth of labour factors within informal face-to-face markets for 'skivvy' labour.\(^\text{320}\)

A tendency towards the replacement of labour factors by capital factors of production cause society to function sub-optimally in two distinct ways. At the point of consumption, less than maximal levels of consumer want-satisfaction are achieved as a result of diminishing opportunities to gain a wage within 'the sphere of material production proper'. And, at the point of production, we have trends towards the unemployment, underemployment and the 'skivvy' employment of labour factors. Thus, in the face of technological change, we both fail to realise opportunities to consume for our mundane material needs, and fail to properly develop, and direct, the productive capacities of a population.

There are, of course, forms of service sector production that are intrinsically labour-intensive and less vulnerable to technological change, e.g. hairdressing, cuisine cooking and the performance arts. Here, there is little or no scope for labour factors to be replaced by capital factors of production, production for such social needs requires a stylist, chef or dancer to develop their expressive powers in particular ways, and by the lights (internal goods) of their respective mediums.

\(^{320}\)For Marx, household servants were classed as the productive since such labour is contingent upon the luxury/conspicuous consumption of the landed and money classes, and does not directly add to the stock of material, creative or intellectual capital.
Communists aim to see a huge expansion in labour factors pursuing these kinds of skilled production. However, I want to make two points about such production under capitalism and future communism.

First, expenditure on such ‘luxuries’ is usually the first casualty of unemployment, the loss of incomes and depressed effective demand caused by developments in sectors elsewhere in the economy. A communist scheme of unconditional basic income could (partially) offset a tendency towards the underconsumption (underproduction) of art- or craft-orientated products. Also, as I will argue later, associations of producers can and should play host to a scheme of associative market socialism in which they provide subsidies, or make lines of credit and/or capital goods available to individuals who wish to pursue such production.

Second, as I will argue later, the community is better served if such producers are not driven to primarily to pursue profit by serving brute (untutored) market wants, at the expense of values which inhere within their respective practices. There can and should be a commercial aspect to some service sector production, e.g. haircuts, cuisine dining or the performance arts. Producers within such enterprises must (at least) clear the costs of production through the sale of their goods and services in order to remain viable; and, as is the case with arts productions in the UK, subject to any subsidies dispensed by an association charged with, for example, cultivating and sustaining the artistic, musical or theatrical life of the community.

There is no point to such production if no one wants to sport one’s hairstyles, eat one’s meals or watch one’s performances. Such production, to a certain extent, must be

---

321 In section 3.122 ‘Communism Contra Neo-Conservatism’, part (ii), I discuss examples where market/profit driven production and the realisation of goods internal to social practices come apart.
subject to what the public wants.\textsuperscript{322} However, producers would receive an unconditional basic income, so that they are able to meet their own basic material needs irrespective of their ability to profit from their enterprise. A producer would be relatively freer to pursue her craft as she has learned to see fit, than if her activity and products were wholly driven by market demand and the need to meet her material wants simply through her trade.

Profit may form a goal for art- or craft-orientated production, however, Communists envisage that the primary motivation of producers engaged in such production would be the opportunity to practice their chosen craft, and to express their developed skills and abilities through their activity and in their products. Production will be associative in nature. Producers would primarily work to excellences internal to, for example, the art of hairdressing, cooking and dance whilst also, at the same time, service such needs within the practical and/or expressive life of the community. I will return to these issues in section 3.12 entitled ‘Associations of Producers’ and in section 3.13 entitled ‘A System of Associative Market Socialism’.

(ii) International Trade & the World Market. If firms within a particular nation’s economy are shedding workers through the replacement of labour by capital factors of production, then a decline in aggregate demand caused through the resulting unemployment and reduction in incomes can be offset through the export of goods. Unemployment and a reduction of purchasing power at home can be compensated

\textsuperscript{322}In the case of haircuts and restaurant meals, the value of such products are largely, if not wholly, going to be determined by what consumers want. However, associations regulating such trade would be charged with training, accrediting and grading the skills and abilities of those who chose to produce within such trades; and they would be charged with informing the general public about standards they should expect from such producers. In this way associations help to shape the wants that consumers come to have, as well as facilitates the trade which satisfies consumer wants. In the case of the arts there is a greater premium upon educating public tastes about the production values that inhere within particular forms of art. As Alan Yentob, the programme controller of the BBC, once remarked: ‘My job is to make the good popular, and the popular good’.
through an increase in effective demand from abroad. The growth of international trade, and especially the advent of common trading blocs such as NAFTA and the EC and the trend towards the institution of single currencies, can offset the effects of deficient demand stemming from the replacement of labour factors by capital factors of production which occurs in any one nation.

However, the 'economy' we are considering, and the tendencies which we are examining, takes in all of the advanced industrial regions of the world - Europe, Japan and the US. The Marxian claim is that deficient aggregate demand stemming from the replacement of labour factors by capital factors of production can and will occur across all advanced capitalist economies. Capital-intensive manufacture adopted in one nation inevitably spreads to other industrialised nations so that they can then match the productivity gains which occur within the leading industrial nation. (For further discussion of these issues see remarks on Japan's present underconsumption crisis below.)

(iii) The State. We are not living in a strictly free market capitalist economy and were not living in one for much of the last century. Over the twentieth century we witnessed the rise of the State and, in our more recent neo-conservative political times, a concerted attempt to roll-it-back from, what neo-conservatives take to be, the sphere of civil society and capitalism proper.

In the UK, and in most of the leading industrial nations, the State was instrumental in facilitating the development of industrial society and transition to a post-industrial service sector society. There arose three major aspects of State-activity.

First, the State set up industries that employed masses of labour and then deployed/developed capital inputs as public investment expenditure (taxation/deficit-
financing) allowed. More importantly, as far as averting any tendencies towards underconsumption caused by unemployment, the State saved bankrupt capitalist companies and sustained the production of otherwise loss-making enterprises through general taxation. Thus industries such as car production, steel-making, coal-mining, telecommunications, the post office, the railways and airlines owe some of their history, if not their origins, to the State, as well as utilities such as gas, electricity and water. In addition, national systems of education and healthcare were bought into being by the State.\(^{323}\) Also, through a system of subsides, the State sponsored various aspects of the nation’s cultural, sporting and artistic life where such production could not be wholly sustained by the market due to deficient demand or non-commercial costs of supply.

Second, the State came to provide for a system of welfare. The State administers an assortment of in-cash and in-kind benefits and directs them to those who are saddled with particular needs (mainly the unemployed, the disabled, parents/children and pensioners).

Third, the State managed aggregate demand for the capitalist economic product through the use of regional policy (grants and loans for businesses to locate to depressed areas), employment subsidies and public works programmes.

There have been significant changes as regards all three aspects of State activity.

(a) First, in the 1980s major State industries were privatised. Privatisation became the mainstay of industrial policy across the Western capitalist economies. ‘Social’ capital became private capital, and investment expenditures across swathes of

\(^{323}\)In the UK system of education and healthcare are still principally sustained through the State. Approximately 5 million of the approximately 27 million people in work are employed in the public sector. (The working population is about 32 million. The general population is approximately 56 million.) They are employed in nursing, medicine, teaching, academia, policing, public service broadcasting, the army and the civil service. Their product, the social needs they address, are financed through general taxation. That is, through taxes imposed upon incomes and profits generated by the capitalist economy. The fortunes of
the economy's industrial base became dependent upon profit-seeking and share-owning individuals/corporations rather than the State. Private investment and borrowing, rather than tax revenue and public debt came to finance (risk), and benefit (profit) from, previously nationalised heavy industry and public utilities.

Privatisation raised the ideological ire of sections within Left-of-Centre political parties. There was a knee-jerk Socialist opposition to the policy of privatisation, however most left wing and Social Democratic Parties in the industrialised economies eventually had to make peace with such policies.\(^{324}\) I am not that bothered about the privatisation of the nation's industrial base.\(^{325}\) If such policies accelerate tendencies towards the replacement of labour factors by capital within the industrial production process then this is all well and good. What troubles me, from an Alienation Marxist point of view, is the introduction of market and money disciplines into intrinsically labour-intensive, skilled and professionalised aspects of the public sector.

---

\(^{324}\)In the early 1980's left-wing Parties in both France and Australia pioneered privatisation policies. The British Labour party eventually crossed the traditional Socialist Rubicon in the mid 1990's by junking its notorious 'clause 4' commitment to wholesale nationalisation of the means of production.

\(^{325}\)Should Marxists have supported privatisation of the industrial base and public utilities? Before we attempt an answer to this question we should remind ourselves of the kinds of considerations which Socialists put in play in their opposition to privatisation. First, there are the interests of the workers within such industries: their pay, their conditions of work and the problem of whether they would even have a job within their industry once 'rationalisation' for international competition had taken place. Second, there was the feeling that these industries belonged to the 'nation'; that they were built upon tax payers' money and that, therefore, they should remain owned by the State, and controlled for the public interest. Third, there was the feeling that Socialism is defined by common ownership in the means of production and that the State ownership and control of such industries is Socialism in practice.

There are, what I term, the 'conservative' socialist position and the progressive Marxist position. Socialist conservatives maintain that the goals of socialism are exhausted by the interests of the workers wherever they produce, and that their material interests should be defended by unions and labour-based political parties. Alienation Marxists maintain that mankind's overarching interest consists in encouraging that technological development which progressively diminishes the need for labour factors to work within such industries. Given this goal unionised labour-based Socialism can operate as a conserving force and counteracting tendency towards the development of a properly communist political economy.
Thus, the neo-conservatives did not stop at the privatisation of industry and the utilities they also bought into being the ‘marketisation’ of, for example, healthcare, education and the arts. Producers within these sectors increasingly made to respond more directly to the ‘consumer’ base that they serve, rather than in accordance priorities decided strategically, and by taking in a host of considerations, at local and national level. Also the consumer - the patient, the student and those with ‘preferences’ for the arts - were made to bear more of the cost for the use of such services.\(^{326}\)

Neo-conservatives believe that any service currently provided by the State can and should be provided by the market. Private sector provision of all service sector production should simply be dependent upon actual flows of individual consumer spending and the personal production choices of individuals and groups, rather than a ‘Socialist’ model of public sector production in which the political process and politicians/electorate deliberate, and decide, how much of a nation’s economic surplus should be taxed and directed towards production for the nation’s education and

---

\(^{326}\)In healthcare this has meant trends towards the increased use of formal charges for prescriptions; informal charges for the cost of hospital stay; there also occurred an increase in the demand for private treatment given burgeoning waiting lists for public sector operations; and the effective end of dental treatment through the NHS. In higher education the costs of university came to be increasingly borne by the student through a system of loans. In schools, parents have to look to their own purses in order to provide for books, stationary, etc. In the arts, theatres, galleries and concert halls have to increasingly look to corporate sponsors, and high-price seats, in order to sustain their activities. Sports bodies have to look to corporate sponsors and media-money in order to sustain the sporting life of the nation.

It might be thought that ifShell Petroleum or British Telecom sponsors an art event, or if a tobacco company were to sponsor a sporting event, then this is all well and good since it saves on taxing the incomes of workers and consumers. However, it is the consumers ofShell’s petrol and British Telecom’s services, and the consumers of tobacco products, who ultimately bear the cost of their corporate marketing strategies, since their respective marketing budgets must be covered by the sale of their goods. The same goes for so-called ‘free’ commercial broadcasting as opposed to State-sponsored broadcasting. Programming in the commercial sector is dependent upon advertising revenue, which is dependent upon corporate marketing budgets. Again, the costs of marketing a product or corporation are, ultimately, borne by the consumer of goods and services. All production comes down to the same thing, the existence of an effective demand for capitalist goods which, in turn, is dependent upon prospects for performing wage-labour, or gaining a salary, within the capitalist mode of production.

(Depressed sales of petrol and telephone services can lead to a general cut in the marketing budgets and therefore a cut in corporate expenditure upon arts. That part of the price of their goods which covers the cost of corporate sponsorship could, just as well, be collected in taxes upon corporate profits or
healthcare needs; or the resources it should devote to, for example, cultivating the artistic, sporting and intellectual life of the community. In section 3.12 I will be arguing that there are normative limits to the reach of the market and that the education, healthcare, artistic, sporting and intellectual needs of the community are better served by having producers track goods internal to their respective social practices, and within appropriate 'associations' producers, rather pursue profit within the mechanism of the capitalist free market.

(b) Second, there has been a dramatic shifts in both the principle and practice of State welfare. In the UK, the real value of State pensions has diminished since its level was detached from actual earnings in the early eighties. Also, there have been concerted drives to clamp-down upon those entitled to unemployment benefit, and those who have hitherto been entitled to claim disability, sickness benefit and single-parent benefits. As regards the unemployed, there has been a cut in the period in which one is able to claim State aid before one is left to one's own devices, or before one is expected to 'disappear' on to a training place. The working disabled can no longer expect a benefit simply in virtue of having a disability. The definition of sick is again being narrowed (after its widening over the eighties and nineties so as to reduce the number counted as unemployed). And, single parents are being pressured into mainly low-paid and menial work.

private incomes, so that funding for the arts can be allocated in accordance with priorities of the cultural, artistic and sporting life of the community rather than the public profile and market share of a corporation.)

327 The future of pensions is thought to lie in the private savings of individuals being collected together into pension funds and then invested in the stock markets for future income streams. The value of pensions secured by any particular fund, and the streams of revenue accruing to members holding policies within a particular fund, is determined by the return on the portfolio of share capital held by the pension fund which is determined by the share performance of the public companies and, ultimately, the profitability of such enterprises. However, the profitability of oligopolistic capitalist corporations depends upon the existence of a moneyed consumer base.
(c) In periods of stagnating profits, commercial closures or high unemployment, the State would boost aggregate demand by increasing its own spending through 'deficit-financing'. The State would boost spending on social capital (schools, hospitals, etc.) and expand employment opportunities within the public sector. Increased stocks of social capital and higher levels of public sector employment would be financed through the sale of Government bonds to the money markets. In the short run the State would run-up a debt in order to increase (social) capital investment expenditures and the public sector pay bill, it would then pay this debt back through increased tax revenues arising out of future economic growth in capitalist output and employment (profits and incomes). Government borrowing in the short-to-medium term is viable if it can be paid back through increased tax revenues stemming from greater profits, through the renewed/expanded sale of goods, and incomes, through increasing the numbers of those in the employ of private capital. Greater profits and incomes are caused by, what Keynes termed, the 'multiplier effect'. Increased spending on plant and machinery leads to an expansion of output, and therefore employment and incomes, within capital-producing enterprises. Also, increases in incomes within capital-producing enterprises, as well as increases in the numbers drawing a public sector salary, leads to an increase in the demand for consumer goods and thus an increase in employment and incomes within enterprises producing, distributing and retailing consumer goods.

The efficacy of this Keynesian strategy was premised on two major assumptions. First, that increased Government spending boosted output and employment (incomes) within the domestic economy, rather than simply draw in more imports from abroad, and expand output (employment) in foreign economies. Second, that increased output led by increased Government expenditure actually requires mass labour, and hence
'creates' employment and incomes within capitalist industry and commerce. If increased Government expenditure simply signals and expands mainly capital-intensive production facilities, then there will be little impact upon the levels of employment and incomes.

The globalisation of trade and the greater degree of capital-intensive manufacture make these two Keynesian assumptions increasingly irrelevant. Traditional Keynesian demand-management presupposes a substantially closed economy, and a capitalist economy that requires a mass of labour factors to produce within the capitalist 'sphere of material production proper'. Neo-Keynesian fiscal strategies must be pursued at supra-national levels and by global organisations such as the IMF and the World Bank. And, Keynesian demand-management can no longer have the policy aim of increasing effective consumption through increasing opportunities to perform wage-labour within the capitalist mode of production. Demand for the capitalist economic product must primarily be managed via an unconditional basic income. Developments towards common trading blocs, and single currencies taking in a host of nations, puts in place the financial and fiscal infrastructure for supra-national neo-Keynesianism. An ultimate aim must be the achievement of a merger of all trading blocs (the EC, NAFTA, etc.) and the institution of a world currency.

Global Capitalism Requires A Supra-National Neo-Keynesianism. The globalisation of capital has also put new constraints upon the ability of the Nation-State to tax and spend; re-distribute; and manage aggregate demand for the national product. Global oligopolistic producers can invest, and withdraw, financial and physical capital into, and from, a national economy almost at will. Oligopolistic capitalist producers are minded to produce in the most fiscally friendly trading environments. They look to
sweeteners such as location grants and investment subsidies and, more importantly, to low rates of corporation tax. They also look to so-called *flexible* labour markets in which there are little or no restrictions on setting wages, working hours and working practices, and where there are minimal rights for maternity and sickness leave, and minimal rights for those who are dismissed when their labour becomes surplus to requirements.

Those individuals who own, direct and manage oligopolistic financial and physical capital, as well as those high-skill and high-salary technocrats required to deploy, service and develop capital-intensive system of production, are increasingly able and willing to trot the globe seeking an economic environment in which to maximise their personal/corporate money rewards. Thus, the ‘competition’ between the industrialised nations to provide the lowest rates of marginal taxation for high earners and the lowest rates of corporation tax; and the ‘competition’ between the developed and developing economies to provide the least restrictive (most flexible) labour markets.

Competition for the affections of oligopolistic capitalism locks each nation into a ‘race to the bottom’. The latter day strength of global oligopolistic capitalism has come to compromise the fiscal and legal powers of the Modern State. Nations are compelled to reign back, and limit, the capacity of the State to tax the capitalist economic product and direct surplus towards, for example, the educational, healthcare and welfare needs of its population. Mature capitalist economies are being pressured into diluting, or even junking, laws that protect workers’ rights to, for example, fair dismissal, limits to the working week, a minimum wage. Developing economies struggle to secure or sustain a tax base upon which they can extend systems of healthcare, education and welfare to their population; and they have little or no hope of securing even minimal labour standards for their workers.
The new-found power of oligopolistic capitalist corporations must be countered through the development of supra-national systems of fiscal and legal power. Such political developments are required, not simply to promote freedom as self-realisation for all people across the globe, but also to facilitate the maximal development and use of capitalist productive forces.

Oligopolistic corporations may have come to hold great power over individual nations, however, the profitability of global oligopolistic capitalist industry and commerce, and the returns to those who own, manage and deploy capital, ultimately depends upon the *effective* demand of the consuming masses. Oligopolistic capitalism can and will produce for the moneyed consumer; however, the modern consumer largely becomes moneyed through work (the exchange of labour power for a wage). The unemployment and underemployment of labour factors, as caused by a tendency towards the replacement of labour by capital within the capitalist ‘sphere of material production proper’, *disables* effective demand within mature capitalist economies, and *restricts* the achievement of realisable consumer wants within early, transitional and developing capitalist economies. The problem of underconsumption due to the replacement of labour factors by capital factors of production fetters the optimal utilisation and development of productive forces in circumstances in which distribution of the economic product is primarily conducted in accordance with capitalist wage-labour. A disparity occurs between the potential of global capitalism to produce and the needs that *can* be met across the world, and what is actually produced and consumed on the basis of capitalist wage-labour. In the face of technological development, and the fashioning of capital-intensive systems of production, distribution and retail of goods, an
individual’s ability to consume must, to some extent, be detached from her actual labour
collection, by installing a scheme of unconditional basic income.

*Japan’s Present Underconsumption Crisis.* The problem of underconsumption is
something that arises periodically within capitalist economies. Commercial
rationalisation and industrial re-structuring can come to cause mass unemployment in
previously thriving regions within an economy. Unemployment and lack of security in
employment impacts upon consumer behaviour. Lack of “consumer confidence” and the
so-called “feel-good” factors results in a depressed demand for consumer goods which,
in turn, depresses the demand for the capital goods and raw materials which go into
manufacturing consumer products. Lack of consumer demand depresses can thus
depress the general output of an economy and, in consequence, employment and
incomes across the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy. A depression
of employment and income opportunities further feeds the lack of consumer confidence
and the feel-good factor thereby leading to further depressed demand, and so on.

Recoveries can be Government-led, capitalist investment-led or consumer-led.
As outlined above, the Government could try to boost demand through increasing social
capital spending or by increasing public sector employment. Capitalist firms could
anticipate an up-turn and invest in new production facilities and products. Or, consumer
confidence could return and the spiral of production, retail and purchase could, once
again, tend in increasing circles.328

---

328 The US is the leading capitalist economy in the world. At present the US is enjoying an unprecedented consumer boom fuelled by over-inflated asset prices. The so-called ‘wealth-effect’ is in full flight. Consumers run up credit bills, and purchase consumer goods, based upon the fact that their savings in the form of share capital are climbing astronomically in paper value. A major reason for an over-inflated US stock market is that, given uncertainty in the rest of the industrial world (the Far East crisis, bankruptcy of the Russian State, and currency collapses in South America) investment monies (mainly from pension funds) seek sanctuary and security in US stock. There is little expectation, on the ground, for the share-price bubble to burst. Many commentators expect otherwise. See, for example, Samuel Brittan’s article ‘Bubbles Do Burst’ in the Financial Times, p.22, 22/7/99.
In Japan, the world’s second largest capitalist economy is at present (May 2000) suffering from an acute underconsumption crisis. The Japanese economy is in its eighth year of recession. A major cause of Japan’s present economic difficulties stems from the money economy (banking and accounting) although a major reason for their continued economic woes rests in structural transformations of the real economy (the realm of capital and labour, and the production and sale of goods and services). Bad loans extended from within the banking sector to cover high-risk property speculation resulted in the major Japanese banks being faced with widespread defaults. Interest-bearing loans used to purchase commercial property became worthless. A decline in assets of the banking sector led them to reign in liquidity. Defaults on bad property loans issued in a general contraction of commercial and consumer credit, which in turn led to a contraction in the domestic demand for capital and consumer goods. This led to the bankruptcy of firms, mass unemployment, and further depression in the demand for capital and consumer goods.

Fifty-seven percent of Japan’s production capacity is geared towards the production, distribution and retail of consumer goods (televisions, hi-fis, etc.) for both domestic consumption and export. Export markets have suffered because many of the other Far Eastern Tiger economies can produce similar quality consumer goods at prices that undercut Japanese goods. In the face of such competition great Japanese corporations are tending to source supplies of capital and labour from outside Japan. Also, they are rationalising their enterprises for international competition by shedding vast swathes of their work force.

Japanese post-war prosperity was built around the expectation of a ‘job-for-life’. Japan was in effect a corporate welfare capitalist economy (in contrast to the State
welfare capitalist economies of West). Corporations were largely responsible for the healthcare, education and social security needs of the work force. The expectation of those in the employ of great Japanese corporations, was not only that their jobs were secure, but also that their children and their children’s children could enjoy the same security in employment. One hundred-year mortgages, serviced by generations within a family, were not uncommon.

Now, Japan is experiencing high unemployment and underemployment. In the period 1990-99, ‘real’ unemployment (that is, the official unemployment rate plus estimated underemployment) soared from 0% to a rate of 16% of the work force. For the first time workers within post-war Japan are faced with unemployment, underemployment and lack of security in employment.

The Japanese Government has experimented with various measures to boost their flagging output by increasing domestic demand. In September 1998 they issued ‘gift-vouchers’ with a face value of $250, earmarked for the purchase of particular domestically produced consumer goods, to some of its population in order to boost demand for consumption in general. (This policy amounts to the implementation of a scheme of conditional basic income into the economy.) Needless to say, this policy failed to have any sustainable impact upon output.

More recently the Government attempted to re-introduce ‘inflation’ into the economy. With consumer confidence at such a low ebb, the prices of goods have fallen dramatically. In the face of low inflation, and even negative inflation in the case of some goods, consumers put off their purchases in expectation of even lower retail prices in the future. This leads to even lower prices, and so on. The hope is that, in the face of

---

329See Gillian Tett, Naoko Nakame and Alexandra Harney’s article ‘Down & Out in Japan’ in the Financial Times, p.21, 8/7/99.
expected or even actual rising prices, consumers will bring their consumption forward and thereby stimulate sales and therefore output, employment and incomes.

Reports in 1999 indicate that, whilst Japan may have lifted itself out of the trough of a recession, depressed consumer spending remains by far their most pressing problem. A financial reporter writes: ‘There had been hopes that the wealth effect from a rising stock market, combined with a clearer understanding of where job losses would and would not fall, would help boost consumer confidence. But household expenditure is expected to have contracted by about 1 per cent during the quarter to September. During September real income fell 0.4% year on year’. In April 2000 the picture remained bleak: ‘Japanese retail sales have fallen for the 36th consecutive month as consumers cut back spending amid the worst recession of the post-war era. Retail sales fell 3.5 per cent year on year to Y11700bn ($70bn) in March according to figures released by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry. Wholesale sales also fell 2.1 per cent to Y46190bn after seeing a rise in February thanks to an extra trading day due to the leap year... The weak sales data signal that personal consumption, which is the largest component of the economy, is not picking up in spite of recent indications of recovery in the corporate sector. Efforts to speed up restructuring have led to rising unemployment and mounting bankruptcies, fuelling consumers’ fears about the future’.331

*The Necessity of a Basic Income.* Any tendency towards underconsumption of the economic product stemming from structural transformations in the terms and prospects for labour requires a structural transformation in the conditions for

---


331 Financial Times, 27/04/00, p.10 ‘Japan hit by retail sales blow’.
consumption. In an extreme scenario, production, which does not require labour, should not posit labour as a condition for consumption. In the face of circumstances in which ‘the sphere of material production proper’ requires diminishing amounts of human labour, then wage-labour should cease to be the primary means by which the individual is able to consume. A scheme of unconditional basic social income can and must come into being.

Marx’s argument concerning underconsumption stemming from the replacement of labour by capital factors of production would be falsified if technological development continued to coincide with the full employment of labour factors within the capitalist economy. However, over the course of this century, each time a capitalist economy recovers from a depression, or a recession, and again achieves output growth of more than 2%, it does so with higher rates of unemployment. Less labour factors are required to produce a progressively greater economic product. The circle which capitalism has to square is that, as the same time it tends towards capital-intensive manufacture, it also needs an effective consuming base to which that product has to be sold. Capitalist profit (surplus value) can only be realised in the exchange of goods for money (exchange-value). The increasing organic composition of capital (the increase in dead labour relative to living labour) diminishes the general population’s ability to purchase and consume goods because of declining prospects for the individuals to exchange their labour power for a wage.

Rifkin writes that those economists who advocate social income schemes are at odds with the prevailing neo-classical orthodoxy, which maintains that technical

---

332 The money value of goods and services produced and traded by an economy should normally grow by 2% per annum. Rates above 2% is a sign of a booming economy whilst rates above 0% but below 2% signal a recession. Negative growth rates (i.e. contractions in the money value of goods and services produced and traded) signal an economic depression.
innovation and rising productivity, if coupled with ‘flexible’ labour markets, would guarantee full employment. The orthodox view is that the unemployment of capital or labour must stem from imperfections in the market, i.e. unemployment is caused by labour pricing itself out of the market through requiring minimum wages, maximum working hours, rights to paid leave, etc. The anti-orthodox view is that technological development will "... increase productivity, but at the expense of replacing more and more workers with machines, leaving millions unemployed and underemployed, and without sufficient purchasing power to buy the increased output of goods and services being produced by the new automated production technologies." A consequence of the anti-orthodox (and Alienation Marxist) view is that:

... since automation would continue to boost productivity and replace workers, it [is] necessary to break the traditional relationship between income and work. With machines doing more and more of the work, human beings would need to be guaranteed an income, independent of employment in the formal economy, if they were to survive and the economy were to generate adequate purchasing power for the public to buy the goods and services being produced. Theobald, among others, perceived the guaranteed annual income as a turning point in the history of economic relationships, and hoped that its eventual acceptance would transform the very idea of economic thinking from the traditional notion of scarcity to the new ideal of abundance. He wrote: "For me, therefore, the guaranteed income represents the possibility of putting into effect the fundamental philosophical belief which has recurred consistently in human history, that each individual has the right to a minimal share in the production of society. The perennial shortage of almost all of the necessities of life prevented the application of this belief until recent years: the coming of relative abundance in the rich countries gives man the power to achieve the goal of providing a minimum standard of living for all." A scheme of basic income has many difficulties not least of which is the worry that if some individuals are entitled to consume without necessarily having to work then production which does require labour factors of production will suffer. If there is a


general entitlement to consumption without work, then an incentive to work, namely the fear of destitution, will be lost. There are three responses to this objection, which I will make at this point.

First, its introduction will be used to cover for basic material needs; extra income will have to be gained through production of some kind. I will argue later that production will still have to be performed through either declining/residual wage and salary opportunities within oligopolistic capitalist organisations; increasing opportunities to produce within associations of producers; or returns to trade within a system of associative market socialism.

Secondly, a basic income will accelerate developments towards the replacement of labour factors by capital factors of production, since those who perform mundane labour for a subsistence wage will no longer be compelled to do so (on the pain of starvation). Earlier I argued that increases in the relative cost of labour to capital tends capitalist production towards the replacement of labour by capital. In addition to this, lack of supply of labour factors is also a major cause for tending capitalism towards the capital-intensive production, distribution and retail of goods and services. With this latter trend, Alienation Marxists aim to effect an acceleration towards the end of menial and skivvy labour.

Third, as we approach circumstances in which each is able to consume without the compulsion of labour, there must also be a general increase in the development of the ‘all-round’ and specialised productive powers and capacities of a population. As the capacities of individuals develop, there then obtains an increase in the will to exercise and express such capacities within some form of production. Systems of education and training which engender a greater development of a population’s powers and capacities
must also be complemented with communist (associative) systems of production in which each individual is able to exercise and express her developed powers and capacities. I take up these issues in what follows.

3.1122 The Correspondence Thesis

Marx's correspondence thesis asserts that 'the general reduction of necessary labour corresponds to the free development of individualities; to the artistic, scientific, etc. development of individuals in the time set free, and with the means created, for all of them' (Grundrisse, p.705).

In general as a society moves on from circumstances of subsistence to a condition of relative plenty; and where the agricultural and industrial requirements of the economy are largely met through capital-intensive production, then it can devote more of its resources, especially labour-time, to the education and healthcare needs of its population as well as to the development of the artistic, intellectual, sporting, recreational and relational life of the community. Marx writes:

The less time society requires in order to produce wheat, cattle, etc. the more time it gains for other forms of production, material or intellectual. As with a single individual, the universality of its development, its enjoyment, and its activity depends on saving time. In the final analysis, all forms of economics can be reduced to an economics of time. Likewise, society must divide up its time purposefully in order to achieve a production suited to its general needs; just as the individual has to divide his time in order to acquire, in suitable proportions, the knowledge he needs or to fulfil the various requirements of his activity. ³³⁵

In short, as an economy emerges from a subsistence state, and progresses to a state in which mass labour is no longer required to service the mundane material needs of the population, then the creative and expressive life of the community - the

development, exercise and expression of our generically human powers and capacities - *can* come into its own.\textsuperscript{336}

The correspondence thesis refers to the organisation of that production which necessarily requires the development, exercise and expression of our generically human powers and capacities. It concerns the conduct of those activities and aims (products) which require human effort and endeavour, and which provides the individual with a forum in which she can achieve her freedom as self-realisation.

As I claimed earlier, Alienation Marxists are not arguing for the end to all human labour. There is a limit to what machines and computers can do for man. Much of our practical and/or expressive life requires feats of human ingenuity, skill and creativity. Thus the arts, sports, handicrafts, acting, journalism, medicine, literature, scientific research, philosophy, politics, film-making, crafts, architecture, cooking, parenting, etc., are all social practices which require the development of particular skills. Also, there are better and worse ways for an individual to work within these practices given excellences and goods *internal* to such practices. In such production, the individual enjoins a history and tradition of a social practice, and is open to the judgements of a community of co-practitioners. In the course of this section I will argue that subordinating the activity and product of social practices to the demands of an *external* good such as money (profit) can be: first, alienating for the producer; second, solvent of goods internal to the social practice itself; and third, detrimental to the satisfaction of needs within the practical and/or expressive life of the community.

In the rest of this section I will be elaborating and defending Alasdair MacIntyre's idea of a social practice. I will discuss the way in which social practices

\textsuperscript{336}I say 'can' because, as argued in part two, in advanced capitalist society we have come to direct human effort and aspiration towards wholly puerile 'consumer society' ends.
enable the individual to occasion self-discovery/cultivation through the development, exercise and expression of her capacities; and how the pursuit and realisation of goods and excellences internal to social practices services needs within the practical and/or expressive life of the community. In the next two sections I will be arguing that the organisation of (human) production that is required by social practices is best conducted within particular associations of producers (section 3.12) and through a system of associative market socialism (section 3.13), rather than capitalist economic structures.

**Alasdair MacIntyre's Idea of a Social Practice.** In part two of the thesis I claimed that MacIntyre provides Socialists with the relevant sense in which they must be communitarian.\(^{337}\) I now discuss this issue further.

MacIntyre has been interpreted as a moral conservative; as an apologist for the kind of moral majoritarian politics espoused by Christian Right Republicans in the US and Nationalist Patrician Tories in the UK.\(^{338}\) I will be arguing that, on the contrary, MacIntyre’s critique of capitalism and ‘modernity’ shares in many of the concerns of Alienation Marxists and that his Aristotelian account of the individual and communal good comports with the revolutionary aims of Alienation Marxism.

The concept of a *social practice* is central to MacIntyre’s communitarianism and his relevance to the philosophy of Alienation Marxism. In his book *After Virtue*, MacIntyre defines a practice as follows:

By ‘practice’ I am going to mean any coherent and complex form of socially established co-operative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result

---

\(^{337}\) See section 2.02 ‘David Miller on Socialist Freedom & Community’.

that human powers to achieve excellence, and conceptions of ends and goods involved are systematically extended. Tic-tac-toe is not an example of a practice in this sense, nor is throwing a football with skill; but the game of football is, so is chess. Bricklaying is not a practice, architecture is. Planting turnips is not a practice, farming is. So are the enquires of physics, chemistry, and biology, and so is the work of the historian, and so are painting and music... Thus the range of practices are wide: art, sciences, games, politics in the Aristotelian sense, the making and sustaining of family life, all fall under the concept. 339

There are three key aspects of MacIntyre's idea of a social practice. First, social practices require the development of our generically human powers and capacities, and are a source of self-identity (discovery/cultivation). Second, the exercise and expression of such powers, excellences or virtues, entails the realisation of goods internal to a social practice and the promotion of particular social needs. Third, there is the concomitant notion of external goods, and the claim that the rule of external goods such as money can be solvent of goods internal to social practices. I will remark upon each aspect in what follows and then go on to discuss the second and third aspects further in sections 3.12 ‘Associations of Producers’ and in section 3.121 ‘The Paradox of Profit Argument’ respectively.

In the first part of the thesis we saw how a child becomes inculcated into certain linguistic practices as a result of being taught how to apply certain expressions in appropriate contexts and for particular purposes. 340 The child comes to learn the rules of a language and, if he is successful in applying such rules, he can relate conventional forms of expression, within relevant contexts, to his practical and/or expressive needs (goals). Language is not simply an instrument for realising our contingent goals, the shared ‘forms of life’ within which we are versed, and in which common forms of expression have their meaning (use), also shape the goals we come to have (the ways in


340 In section entitled Wittgenstein's Private Language Argument, p.81.
which we address our practical and/or expressive needs). Wittgenstein argues that language functions primarily as a *practical* tool, which an individual learns to use through training within a community. Such training enables her to address her practical and expressive needs. Also, through such training, and the subsequent use of a language, the individual secures a measure of self-identity. The individual coming to use a common medium of expression, with shared rules and purposes for action, relates her to similarly-situated others.\(^{341}\)

Language is normative in the sense that there are right and wrong ways to apply expressions, and better and worse ways to express oneself, given the context within which they are used or, what Wittgenstein terms, our shared 'forms of life'. Language is governed by rules which members of a linguistic community must learn to understand and apply. Members of a linguistic community, in part, *inherit* these rules. However, members of a linguistic community also, in part, *construct* these rules. Traditional terms fall away from use and new expressions arise and gain common usage as a community's forms of life evolve. Thus, as linguistic beings, humans come to share in, engage with and also fashion common forms of life.\(^{342}\)

What is true of language is also true of other social practices. In a social practice there are activities and aims which are shared by a community of co-practitioners as well


\(^{342}\)Wittgenstein writes: "'So you are saying that human agreement decides what is true or false?' - It is what humans *say* that is true or false; and they agree in the *language* they use. That is not agreement in opinions but in a form of life.

If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as it sounds) in judgements." See *Philosophical Investigations* (Blackwell, 1958 second edition), p.88, #241 & #242.
as common rules and standards of achievement which form goods internal to a social practice. Social practices require the individual to develop certain capacities and powers of a particular kind. A competent practitioner must come to acquire certain virtues. MacIntyre describes a virtue as:

"... an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods."

Social practices are directed towards the promotion of particular social needs (e.g. healthcare in the case of medicine or nurturing in the case of parenting) and also give rise to social roles which serve as means of self-identity (e.g. a doctor in the case of medicine or a mother in the case of parenting).

Social practices can overlap. (In Wittgenstein’s terms, social practices share ‘family resemblances’.) Thus, the activity and aims of nursing; the excellences developed and exercised by any competent nurse serves the needs of healthcare and complements the work of surgeons, general practitioners and medical technicians. Similarly the activity and aims of teaching serve to nurture infants and adolescents and, when things go well, complements and builds upon the practice of parenting.

Internal & External Goods. The game of chess caters for a certain recreational need and provides a forum for individual creativity and ingenuity. The practice of chess,

---

343 MacIntyre writes: "... what the agent is able to do and say intelligibly as an actor is deeply affected by the fact that we are never more (and sometimes less) than the co-authors of our own narratives. Only in a fantasy do we live as we please. In life, as both Aristotle and Engels noted, we are always under certain constraints. We enter upon a stage which we did not design and we find ourselves part of an action that was not of our making." After Virtue (Duckworth, 1985 second edition), p.206.


as with all other social practices, opens up the prospect of an individual cultivating their own style and expression through the activity and aims of the game. Becoming a competent chess player requires one to learn common rules of play, as well as coming to know and apply certain basic strategies, in order to undertake, and engage in, a game. To develop as a player, and to play the game well, one has to cultivate those excellences, capacities or virtues, which realises goods internal to the game of chess. For MacIntyre these goods include 'the achievement of a certain highly particular kind of analytical skill, strategic imagination and competitive intensity'.

What is distinctive in a practice is in part the way in which conceptions of the relevant goods and ends which the technical skills serve - and every practice does require the exercise of technical skills - are transformed and enriched by these extensions of human powers and by that regard for its own internal goods which are partially definitive of each particular practice or type of practice.

MacIntyre contrasts the realisation of goods internal to a social practice with the idea of external goods. He lists 'money, status and prestige' as examples of external goods. The nature of internal and external goods differ in the following three ways:

Firstly, internal goods are those which an individual can secure as a result of excelling within a particular social practice, but the achievement of external goods 'is never to be had only by engaging in some particular kind of practice' (After Virtue, p.188). Here, the distinction between goods internal to a practice and external goods seems to rest upon the fact that internal goods are exclusively attached to a particular

---

346 Rawls writes: "... complex activities... satisfy the desire for variety and novelty of experience, and leave room for feats of ingenuity and invention. They also invoke the pleasures of anticipation and surprise, and often the overall form of the activity, its structural development, is fascinating and beautiful... simpler activities exclude the possibility of individual style and personal expression which complex activities permit or even require, for how could everyone do them in the same way? A Theory of Justice (Oxford, 1973), p.427.

347 Alasdair MacIntyre After Virtue (Duckworth, 1985 second edition), p.188.

social practice, or to a family of practices which share a certain resemblance in aims (parenting and teaching or medicine and nursing), whereas external goods are quite general and can collect around an individual engaged in any social practice.

Secondly, there is no social practice that counts the accumulation of money, fame or ego as an internal good. And, whether or not particular external goods collect around any particular social practice depends upon the contingency of economic and political circumstances rather than the inherent nature of a social practice.

Thirdly, the nature of external goods are such that their realisation is always some individual’s property or possession, the more one gains the less others have. On the other hand the achievement of internal goods is good for the whole community who share in a particular practice. Thus, MacIntyre writes: “... when Turner transformed the seascape in painting or W.G. Grace advanced the art of batting in a quite new way their achievement enriched the whole relevant community.”

Not so very long ago, athletics used to be conducted only a mainly amateur basis. There was little money but a measure of fame to be had as a result of an athlete excelling within a particular track or field event. Presumably, an individual would compete at either local, national or international level because he had chosen to develop his talents in a certain way, and wanted to express, and be recognised for, such talents amongst those he competes with, and before an appreciative audience. His recognition as an athlete, by both his peers and spectators, rests on his ability to pursue and realise internal goods such as strength, agility and stamina. The pleasure gained from viewing a sports event is a function of the spectator coming to know and appreciate goods internal to the sporting practice. The particular capacities of an athlete, and his success in

---

realising such goods, are demonstrated (or not) in the results he achieves. That is, in the races he wins, and in the local, national or international records he is able to break.

These days there are substantial media-money and media-fame available to those who achieve excellence within any mass-spectator sport. Now, more than ever, mass sporting spectacles are traded as a commodity. Money flows from the purchase of broadcasting rights which are then recouped by satellite and cable companies charging subscription-for-view. Moreover, the fact that mass-spectator sports attract high audiences provides an opportunity for corporations to sponsor individual athletes and events, and so further sales of their cars, cigarettes, cola, etc. through the display of their own brand names.

An athlete is able to secure lucrative material rewards if he achieves excellence in his field; he is also able to secure such wealth if he *appears* to achieve excellence. Thus, if the athlete is simply in the business of commanding riches and fame for himself he may be tempted to reach for chemical power, and supplement his physical training with the use of drugs. In this event the pursuit and realisation of external goods such as money and fame becomes solvent of goods internal to sporting practices. The single-minded pursuit of external goods gives rise to vices rather than the virtues.\(^ {350} \) A dogged ambition for external goods can lead the individual to dissolve the virtues of *honesty, justice* and *courage* that, according to MacIntyre, are necessary for any practice to be in good social repair.\(^ {351} \)

\(^ {350} \) During the Cold War, countries behind the Iron Curtain set another kind of external good on the activity and aims of athletes and gymnasts. The dogged pursuit of ideological/national pride against the Capitalist West led Soviet Socialists sporting authorities to take the same kinds of chemical routes to nominal ‘success’.

\(^ {351} \) The other conditions include how successful an individual is in realising goods internal to a practice; of what he makes of himself; and of how he promotes particular social needs. MacIntyre writes: "... no quality is to be accounted a virtue except in respect of its being such as to enable the achievement of three kinds of good: those internal to a practices, those which are the goods of an individual life and those which are
In the case of the drug-taking 'athlete' he, firstly, dishonestly presents himself as something he knows that he is not. Second, if he is successful then the outcome is unjust since each is not given their due in accordance with rewards/recognition relative to the practice. Finally, he lacks the courage to place and prove himself before his peers as an equal, and be judged solely in light of his success in achieving goods internal to athletic sporting practice. MacIntyre writes:

It belongs to the concept of a practice as I have outlined it - and as we are all familiar with it in our actual lives, whether we are painters or physicists or quarterbacks or indeed just lovers of good painting or first rate experiments or a well-thrown pass - that its goods can only be achieved by subordinating ourselves within a practice in our relationship to other practitioners. We have to recognise what is due to whom; we have to be prepared to take whatever self-endangering risks are demanded along the way; and we have to listen carefully to what we are told about our own inadequacies and to reply with the same carefulness for the facts. In other words we have to accept as necessary components of any practice with internal goods and standards of excellence the virtues of justice, courage and honesty. For not to accept these, to be willing to cheat,..., so far bars us from achieving the standards of excellence or the goods internal to the practice that it renders the practice pointless except as a device for achieving external goods.\(^{352}\)

I will be discussing the relation between internal and external goods further in section 3.121 'The Paradox of Profit Argument'.

Neither the rules of a social practice, or its activity and aims, are fixed and immutable. They can evolve over time. The game of chess has its variations across the world. In part two of the thesis (section 2.312) I discussed the example of football and how the rules of this game has transformed from its origins as a game played between neighbouring villages, with each team of unlimited number, scrambling across countryside in order to secure the ball (rags bound with leather) in the square of the opposing village, to the modern game where there is a bounded area of play, a team of goods of the community.' See 'A Partial Response to my Critics’, p.284, in After MacIntyre Critical Perspectives on the Work of Alasdair MacIntyre (Polity Press, 1994), ed. John Horton & Susan Mendus.

eleven on each side and highly finessed rules such as off-side and (in the 1998 World Cup) a prohibition against tackling a player from behind. (Rugby has in some respects retained characteristics of the original practice of football.)

The social practice of medicine has certainly been transformed in light of developments in scientific research and technology and, it could be argued, that our ideas of good parenting have progressed from the days in which nurturing used to be considered the sole preserve of the mother to now where, given our modern understanding of child development, it is generally considered best if both parents take an equal and active role in the emotional, creative and intellectual development of their child, and both parents share in the benefits and burdens of child-care.

MacIntyre discusses the example of portrait painting as it developed in Western Europe from the late middle ages to the eighteenth century. MacIntyre claims that the goods internal to portrait painting "are those which result from an extended attempt to show how Wittgenstein’s dictum ‘The human body is the best picture of the human soul’ might be made to become true by teaching us ‘to regard... the picture on our wall as the object itself (the men, landscape and so on) depicted there in a new way.” MacIntyre then goes on to add that Wittgenstein’s dictum neglects the truth of George Orwell’s claim that: ‘At fifty everyone has the face they deserve’. The development of portrait painting from late Middle Ages to the eighteenth century can be seen as attempt to reconcile the attitude expressed by Wittgenstein to that of Orwell. MacIntyre writes:

What painters from Giotto to Rembrandt learnt to show was how the face at any age may be revealed as the face that the subject of a portrait deserves.

Originally in medieval paintings of saints the face was an icon; the question of resemblance between the depicted face of Christ or St. Peter and the face that Jesus or Peter actually possessed at some particular age did not even arise. The antithesis to this iconography was the relative naturalism of certain fifteenth century Flemish and German painting. The heavy eyelids, the coiffed hair, the lines around the mouth undeniably represent some particular woman, whether actual or envisaged. Resemblance has
usurped the iconic relationship. But with Rembrandt there is, so to speak, synthesis: the naturalistic portrait is now rendered as an icon, but an icon of a new and hitherto inconceivable kind.\(^{353}\)

**MacIntyre's Moral 'Conservatism'.** Now, MacIntyre's attempt to locate human life within a normative network of social practices; his talk of social practices embodying traditions; and the idea of an individual coming to know and appreciate goods internal to social practices, has led some to conclude that MacIntyre is, at heart, a moral conservative. David Miller believes MacIntyre to be a moral conservative because of his so-called *narrative* conception of the self. Miller takes the following passage as an expression of MacIntyre's conservatism:

... I am never able to seek for the good or exercise the virtues only *qua* individual... we approach our own circumstances as bearers of a particular social identity. I am someone’s son or daughter, someone else’s cousin or uncle; I am a citizen of this or that city, a member of this or that guild or profession; I belong to this clan, that tribe, this nation. Hence what is good for me has to be the good for one who inhabits these roles. As such, I inherit from the past of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectations and obligations. These constitute the given of my life, my own moral starting point. This is part of what gives my life its own particularity.\(^{354}\)

Miller argues that the narrative account of the self, rather than (as I maintain) the idea of a social practice, is key to understanding MacIntyre's communitarianism.\(^{355}\)

Miller then relates a narrative account of the self to the claim that the appropriate scope of community in which the self is able to flourish is necessarily local and face-to-face ('the family, the neighbourhood, the city, the tribe, etc.). Miller claims that MacIntyre

---


\(^{355}\)Here I am referring to Miller's analysis of MacIntyre in his paper 'In What Sense Must Socialists Be Communitarian?', re-printed in *Socialism* (Blackwell, 1989), ed. Paul, Miller & Paul. In this paper Miller casts MacIntyre's communitarianism as being almost wholly irrelevant to socialism. Elsewhere Miller does take up MacIntyre's idea of a practice and the virtues but according to MacIntyre himself; Miller misinterprets all the essential points of MacIntyre's thesis. See David Miller's paper 'Virtues, Practices & Justice' and MacIntyre's reply to Miller, 'A Partial Response to My Critics'. Both papers are in *After
locates moral virtue in the *de facto* local communities that an individual finds herself in and as the individual finds herself 'encumbered' in tradition-bound and customary social roles.\(^{356}\)

Kymlicka argues that MacIntyre’s position is either conservative (‘... that my good is the good of someone in the social roles I currently occupy’) or incoherent because, Kymlicka writes, ‘MacIntyre also claims that the fact that the self has to find its moral identity in... communal traditions, practices and roles does not entail that the self has to accept the moral *limitations* of the particularity of those forms of community’.\(^{357}\)

In what follows I will be arguing that MacIntyre’s communitarianism is neither incoherent nor necessarily conservative.

In *After Virtue* MacIntyre recounts and then rejects a Homeric account of the virtues, which is essentially role-centred, for an Aristotelian conception centred on the idea of a social practice.\(^{358}\) Also, MacIntyre explicitly counsels us against ‘the ideological uses to which the concept of tradition has been put by conservative political theorists’. He writes:

> Characteristically such theorists have followed Burke in contrasting tradition with reason and stability of tradition with conflict. Both contrasts obfuscate. For all reasoning takes place within the context of some traditional mode of thought, transcending through criticism and invention the limitations of what had hitherto been reasoned in that tradition; this is as true of modern physics as of medieval logic. Moreover when a tradition is in good order it is always partially constituted by an argument about the goods the pursuit of which gives to that tradition its particular point and purpose.

---


So when an institution - a university, say, or a farm, or a hospital - is the bearer of a tradition of practice or practices, its common life will be partly, but in a centrally important way, constituted by a continuous argument as to what a university is and ought to be or what good farming is or what good medicine is. Traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict. Indeed when a tradition becomes Burkean, it is always dying or dead.  

Thus our moral 'starting point' does not have to be the moral resting point. Social roles supervene upon social practices that ultimately subserve particular social needs. Our being born into, and discovering ourselves within, a web of social practices and social roles, and our learning to meet our practical and/or expressive needs in particular ways, does not necessarily mean that we should unquestioningly submit to the normative demands of current practices and roles. However, knowledge of the goods that a practice has traditionally aimed to realise, and the social needs a practice purports to serve, is a pre-condition for criticism and possible re-constitution of any social practice and the re-definition of social roles.

Whilst establishment, authority and tradition are necessary aspects of the politics of a good society; the particular institutions that are the custodians of particular social practices have to be, in part, constituted by an open and encompassing dialogue both amongst members of the institution (the practitioners of a social practice), and between the institution and the wider community whose needs they must serve. The political system itself must, in part, be constituted by an on-going dialogue wherein members of the community as a whole must, in a deliberative and discursive manner, be able to decide upon the kinds of institutions; forms of associations; and the social practices (activities and products), by which they can (re)constitute the community and, thereby,  

---

(re)make themselves.\textsuperscript{360} Such deliberation, discussion and decision must be located within, and must be reflection upon, the social practices in which we are (can be) immersed.\textsuperscript{361} Community is in part about the social practices we have inherited, it is also about the practices we choose to dispose of, and those we choose to re-fashion and construct.\textsuperscript{362}

To locate moral and aesthetic value in the up-and-running social practices of a community suggests for some that (i) MacIntyre’s communitarianism issues in ethical monism or that (ii) MacIntyre’s communitarianism lends itself to moral relativism.

(i) On charge of value monism, Charles Larmore interprets MacIntyre’s communitarianism as suggesting that there is one single good life to be lived. He claims that, according to MacIntyre, ‘the recovery of Aristotelian ethics must include Aristotle’s conviction that the question, What is human life lived at its best? has a single answer and that our success as moral beings depends upon understanding this

---

\textsuperscript{360}Marx claims: ‘... as individuals produce, so they are.’ \textit{The German Ideology} (Lawrence & Wishart, 1970), p.42.


\textsuperscript{362}Communist society would be subject to the rule of deliberative democratic structures rather than a system of direct or representational democracy. In a direct or representational democracy politics in a matter of aggregating and acting upon the contingent interests or preferences of private individuals and groups. The political arena is simply an instrument by which individuals and coalitions seek to realise their respective ends. In a deliberative democracy the aims of our political association result from an ‘outcome of deliberation about ends among free, equal and rational agents (p.5, \textit{Deliberative Democracy}).’ On a liberal account of politics the good, e.g. preference-satisfaction, is defined prior to political activity, politics is a purely procedural matter. In my view a system of deliberative democracy is preferable because its premise would be for the individual to enjoin critical and reflective engagement with the up-and-running social practices of the community. I do not have the space to go into the nature and desirability of deliberative democracy here, I hope to discuss these issues at a future occasion. For important writings on this subject see the collection edited by Jon Elster entitled \textit{Deliberative Democracy} (Cambridge, 1998); ‘Democracy & Shifting Preferences’ by Cass R. Sunstein and ‘Must Preferences Be Respected In A Democracy?’ by John Ferejohn. Both papers are in \textit{The Idea of Democracy} (Cambridge, 1993), ed. David Copp, Jean Hampton & John E. Roemer. Also see Joshua Cohen ‘Deliberation & Democratic Legitimacy’ and ‘Cass R. Sunstein ‘Preferences & Politics’, both papers are in \textit{Contemporary Political Philosophy An Anthology} (Blackwell, 1997), ed. Robert E. Goodin & Philip Pettit.
answer'. In fact MacIntyre argues that the concept of a social practice should be interpreted in a more plural sense. He writes:

Aristotle's ethics, in its central account of the virtues, of goods as the ends of human practices, of the good as that end to which all other goods are ordered, and of the rules of justice required for a community of ordered practices, captures essential features not only of human practice within Greek city-states but of human practice as such. And because this is so, whenever such practices as those of arts and sciences, of such productive and practical activities as those of farming, fishing and architecture, of physics laboratories and string quartets and chess clubs, types of activity whose practitioners cannot but recognise the goods internal to them and the virtues and rules necessary to achieve those goods, are in a flourishing state, then Aristotelian conceptions of goods, virtues and rules are regenerated and reembodied in practice. This is not to say that those who practice them are aware that they have become to some significant degree, in their practice, although commonly not in their theory, Aristotelians. It is to say that Aristotelianism always has possibilities of revival in new forms in different cultures.

The idea of a social practice only unearths a necessary condition for us to be individuals of any kind. The social practices we become versed in, and our ability to satisfy the dual aspect of our needs, as well as develop, exercise and express our capacities, is going to vary from culture-to-culture.

There is a *cosmopolitan* hope that arises out of the internationalist perspective of Alienation Marxism. It is the hope that with the economic pre-requisites of communism

---


365 MacIntyre writes: "In many pre-modern, traditional societies it is through his or her membership in a variety of social groups that the individual identifies himself or herself and is identified by others. I am brother, cousin and grandson, member of this household, that village, this tribe. These are not characteristics that belong to human beings accidentally, to be stripped away in order to discover 'the real me'. They are part of my substance, defining partially at least and sometimes wholly my obligations and my duties. Individuals inherit a particular space within an interlocking set of social relationships; lacking that space, they are nobody, or at best a stranger or an outcast. To know oneself as such a social person is however not to occupy a static and fixed position. It is to find oneself placed at a certain point on a journey with set goals; to move through life is to make progress - or fail to make progress - toward a given end." *After Virtue* (Duckworth, 1985 second edition), p.34.
in place,\textsuperscript{366} developments in global travel and communication; and the institution of multi-cultural systems of liberal education, a cosmopolitan self-identity will become a post-capitalist, post-nationalist and post-religious norm.\textsuperscript{367} Michael Ignatieff expresses this cosmopolitan hope as follows: "There are at least a dozen world cities - gigantic, multi-ethnic melting pots which provide a home for expatriates, exiles, migrants and transients of all kinds. For the urban professional populations of these major cities, a post-national state of mind is simply taken for granted. People in these places do not bother about the passports of people they work and live with; do not care about the country-of-origin label on goods they buy; they simply assume that in constructing their own way of life they would borrow from the customs of every nation they admire. Cosmopolitans make a positive ethic out of cultural borrowing: in culture, exogamy is better than endogamy, and promiscuity is better than provincialism.\textsuperscript{368}

(ii) On the charge of relativism it may be thought that the right or the good is simply going to be constituted by whatever social practices any collection of individuals come to share in, and subsequently, enact in order to service their needs. However, for Alienation Marxists, there is a human telos, an account of human flourishing, by which the practices of any society can be held to account. Social practices must ultimately be judged in terms of whether or not they promote or frustrate the human good and freedom as self-realisation. In part two of the thesis the human good was seen to consist in the individual being able to satisfy the dual aspect of their needs in circumstances where they are also able to occasion self-realisation. Self-realisation was seen to consist of two

\textsuperscript{366} The economic pre-requisites of communism are capital-intensive production for our mundane material wants; a scheme of unconditional basic income; and associative forms of production.

\textsuperscript{367} For an important working out of what a multi-cultural liberal education should consist in, see Martha C. Nussbaum’s Cultivating Humanity \textit{A Classical Defence of Reform in Liberal Education} (Harvard, 1997).

aspects: self-determination and self-actualisation. Self-determination was seen to consist in the demand that the individual should not be subject to the arbitrary will of another, that his actions and goals should stem from his own beliefs and desires; whilst self-actualisation was seen to consist in the demand that one be able to discover/cultivate oneself, through one’s activity and in one’s products by being able to develop, exercise and express one’s capacities. Given the Marxian account of the human good and freedom, there is no sense in which a communist society can tolerate, for example, the practice of slavery or forced labour. As I argued in part two, there is no sense in which one can be a good slave owner, or a good concentration camp commandant or, for that matter, a good hit-man, mugger or murderer.

MacIntyre’s Pessimism. MacIntyre is, however, pessimistic about our prospects for achieving a community of social practices in which the virtues can flourish, and by which (for Alienation Marxists) an individual can achieve self-realisation. Obviously insofar as an individual becomes a linguistic creature of a particular kind, and insofar as he find himself born into a network of family relations, and as he strives to sustain those relations as well as forge relations of friendship, love, etc. outside of the family, then he does engage in social practices and he can achieve a modicum of self-identity. Our coming to express ourselves through coming to use a particular language, as well as our efforts to make and sustain relations with others does provide a forum for self-discovery/cultivation and thus a measure of self-realisation.\(^\text{369}\)

MacIntyre’s pessimism concerns the economic and political conditions of modern society. He believes that the corporate market economy and the bureaucratic

\(^{369}\)See Karl Marx & Frederick Engels *The German Ideology* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1970), edited & introduced by C.J. Arthur, p.48ff, for a discussion of how language and the family are historically fundamental conditions for an individual coming to self-consciousness.
nation state provide for conditions hostile to the flourishing of virtues in our working lives. In a passage, which echoes the Alienation Marxist critique of production under capitalism, MacIntyre writes:

As, and to the extent that, work moves outside the household and is put to the service of impersonal capital, the realm of work tends to become separated from everything but the service of biological survival and the reproduction of the labour force, on the one hand, and that of institutionalised acquisitiveness, on the other. Pleonexia, a vice in the Aristotelian scheme, is now the driving force of modern productive work. The means-end relationships embodied for the most part in such work - on a production line, for example - are necessarily external to the goods which those who work seek; such work has consequently been expelled from the realm of practices with goods internal to themselves. And correspondingly practices have in turn been removed to the margins of social and cultural life. Art, sciences and games are taken to be work for a minority of specialists: the rest of us may receive incidental benefits in our leisure time as spectators or consumers. Where the notion of engagement in practice was once socially central, the notion of aesthetic consumption now is, at least for the majority. An Alienation Marxist aim is to have practices and the virtues ‘socially central’.

Individuals must be free to develop the virtues and produce in accordance with goods internal to social practices. Modern work fails to be a forum within which the individual for either or both of two reasons. First, work is mundane; it does not occasion the development, exercise and expression of capacities (virtues) which enable self-discovery/cultivation. Second, work in corporate capitalist organisations is made subordinate to an external good such as money (profit) rather than goods internal to practice. In either and both cases work is instrumental for the individual, a means to a wage.

Alienation is thought to be the price which members of modern society must pay for productivity and relative material abundance. Large-scale capitalist manufacture ushered in the highest degree of division and specialisation of work. The production,

office or retail line-worker who collects a wage by pulling on some levers or by punching a keypad; the executive who draws a salary in respect of his efforts to sustain or improve upon market share, profit margins and stock value of a corporation; the salaries of technocrats, scientists and engineers who translate the results of our scientific heritage into a wealth of capital and consumer goods; and the salaries of those who advertise, market and sell products to consumers, all provide means by which the modern worker can access a greater range and quality of goods than if their opportunities to produce were confined to a specialisation and division of production within the household or the village. Whilst we may have gained in terms of productivity MacIntyre claims that the development of productive work within the modern oligopolistic corporation coincided with the debasement of community.

MacIntyre believes that centrality of social practices has been achieved in the past, and can only be secured on a local level. The ancient city, the medieval commune and certain kinds of modern co-operative farming and fishing enterprises represent, for MacIntyre, the appropriate forum within which social practices and the virtues have flourished in the past and can flourish in the present. Only in communities of such scale can social relations be informed ‘by a shared allegiance to the goods internal to communal practices, so that the uses of power and wealth are subordinated to the achievement of those goods, and so make possible a form of life in which participants pursue their own goods rationally and critically, rather than having continually to struggle,.., against being reduced to the status of instruments of this or that type of capital formation’. He cites the example of ‘the communal life of the hand-loom weavers of Lancashire and Yorkshire before and during the greatest prosperity of those

---


At its best the hand-loom weaver’s way of life sustained his family’s independence and his own self-reliance. Honesty and integrity were highly valued and what Thompson calls the ‘rhythm of work and leisure’ allowed the cultivation of gardens, the learning of arithmetic and geometry, the reading and composition of poetry. What the hand-loom weavers hoped to, but failed to sustain was ‘a community of independent small producers, exchanging their products without the distortion of masters and middlemen’. At their best they embodied in their practice a particular conception of the human good, of virtues, of duties to each other and of the subordinate place of technical skills in human life.  

The hand-loom weaver’s way of life came to grief due to the growth of the capitalist mode of production. Textile production became increasingly concentrated in factories. Textile workers exchanged their labour-power for a wage and their activity and products became subject to a capitalist overlord who was minded to maximise profits by selling textile goods to a host of middlemen and merchants (wholesalers and retailers).

On MacIntyre’s account the hand-loom weavers were living the kind of life in which social practices, and the pursuit of goods internal to practices, were central. This life was then lost to a life in which the pursuit of wage-labour became the goal, on terms determined by the capitalist. The capitalist specialisation and division of labour transformed productive work into mundane, stupefying and stultifying activity. The goal of a productive enterprise became the maximisation of profit (exchange-value). MacIntyre claims that the hand-loom weavers way of life was revolutionary, in comparison to the conditions of work which they faced through the growth and proliferation of the capitalist mode of production, precisely because the hand-loom

---

weavers were free to develop their powers and capacities in a multi-faceted manner, and because they were able to realise goods internal to practices (and satisfy social needs) whilst at the same time exercising and expressing their capacities. MacIntyre claims that Marx, in his *Theses on Feuerbach*, came close to formulating the distinctions necessary to understanding the revolutionary nature of the hand-loom weavers’ resistance to the proletarianisation of textile work.\(^{373}\) For MacIntyre the important distinctions detailed by Marx include: the importance of practice in the understanding, construction and maintenance of a common social life (*Theses #8*) and its providing the basis for a new materialism; the concept of ‘objective’ activity (*Theses #1*); the idea of practical-critical activity (*Theses #1*); the standpoint of new materialism as social humanity (*Theses #10*); and the coincidence of changing circumstances and the human activity of self-changing (*Theses #3*). MacIntyre argues that if Marx had applied the distinctions detailed in his *Theses* to the case of the hand-loom weavers he would have set himself against the large-scale capitalist economic transformations that were taking place and provide groups, such as the hand-loom weavers, with ‘a conception of the good and of virtues adequate to the moral needs of resistance’. Instead, according to MacIntyre, Marx (in 1845) mistakenly turned himself away from philosophy *proper* and sought to describe the historical and economic forces of what he considered to be inevitable social change.

I have been arguing that MacIntyre provides Socialists with the sense in which they must be communitarian. However, I have also been arguing that Marxian Socialism is necessarily a *post*-capitalist economic and social development. MacIntyre’s call for a return to small scale communities of the past is incompatible with the view of communism which, as I have been arguing, welcomes the advent of large-scale

manufacture and which expects technological development within oligopolistic capitalism to deliver capital-intensive systems of production across primary, secondary and (main strands of the) tertiary sectors of the economy. Capital-intensive production and the prospect of consumption (at least for basic needs) without the compulsion to labour, through a system of unconditional basic income, can provide the basis upon which all individuals should have the opportunity to live lives in accordance with social practices, and where the pursuit and realisation of goods internal to our shared practices comes to constitute the main currents of our common civil and productive life.

In what follows I will be arguing that those aspects of our productive life which require the development, exercise and expression of our human capacities and powers, and which enable us to realise goods internal to practices, is best mediated through appropriate associations of producers rather than through capitalist enterprises.

In some cases an association of producers will simply provide an educational, licensing and regulatory base upon which small scale worker co-operatives can produce in accord with a social practice whilst at the same time address needs of a particular locale. Such associations must have the legal power to sideline sharp practice and be charged with husbanding an ethos that issues in good social practice. Here I am thinking of the need for a trade in services such as hairdressing, fashion design, wine makers, carpentry, building, bakers, confectioners, tailoring, restaurants, coffee houses, hotels, handicrafts, etc. In these kinds of cases an association of producers will play host to a system of local and associative market socialism.

I say ‘local’ market socialism because, as I will argue below, market socialism cannot serve as a complete framework by which to run a modern industrial town/city-based economy. Capital-intensive production within the primary, secondary and (main
strands of the) tertiary sector of the economy, as fashioned and run by oligopolistic capitalist enterprise, must provide the material basis upon which individuals can develop and direct their creativity and energy towards the rescue and resurgence of local crafts and colour. Oligopolistic capitalism must, in the near-to-medium term, be charged with the role of managing large-scale capital-intensive production for our mundane primary, secondary and tertiary sector wants. However, corporate capitalist service sector trade must be supplanted by worker co-operatives that produce in accordance with social practices and attend to local social needs.

Other kinds of production can and should be effected directly through appropriate associations of producers. Here I am primarily thinking of production for the education and healthcare needs of the community, although aspects of the community’s sporting, artistic, intellectual, political and legal life would also fall under the direct responsibility of an appropriate association of producers. Whilst the supply and demand for haircuts, couture designs and haute cuisine meals can and should have a commercial dimension, there is little or no place for market exchange and money disciplines upon the activities and aims of healthcare specialists and educationalists; the political and legal system and in organisation for the sporting, intellectual and artistic life of the community. I contrast the idea of an association of producers with capitalist organisation in the next section and then go on to consider a main objection to my view in section 3.121 entitled ‘The Paradox of Profit’.

---

374 Oligopolistic capitalist enterprise has arguably contributed to the homogenisation of our high streets. We are developing an economy where the commerce of one town centre pretty much mirrors the service trade in another. Such a development can and should be routed through a system of local market socialism. For more on this see section 3.13 A System of Associative Market Socialism.

375 Thus national sporting bodies, opera houses, concert halls, theatres, galleries and journals would be charged with conducting production for the sporting, artistic, cultural life of the community.
3.12 Associations of Producers

An association of producers differs from a capitalist organisation of producers in the following respects.

First, whereas a capitalist organisation is geared to the goal of profit-maximisation, an association of producers or, what Marx terms the associated producers, is orientated towards the pursuit and realisation of goods internal to a particular social practice.

Second, under capitalism producers are expected to be primarily motivated by their own material self-interest. The prospect of wages and profits (or the threat of the loss of such money-returns) is thought to propel individuals and organisations in production. Under communism the individual is expected to be motivated by a self-identity as formed by her enjoining relations within, and pursuing the objectives which characterise the terms of, a particular association of producers. What prompts the individual to produce is her coming to engage in, and identify with, what Marx and MacIntyre term, the 'objective' activities of a social practice. MacIntyre writes:

Objective activity is activity in which the end or aim of the activity is such that by making that end their own individuals are able to achieve something of universal worth embodied in some particular form of practice through co-operation with other such individuals. The relationship required by this type of end are such that each individual's achievement is both of the end and what has becomes of his own ends. Practices whose activity can thus be characterised stand in sharp contrast to the practical life of civil society.\(^{376}\)

Market exchange and money dominate 'the practical life of civil society'. The individual requires money if he is to meet his needs in the capitalist market place, and individuals are only able to produce if there is profit to be had by the production,

distribution and retail of goods and services. Production within capitalist enterprises is subordinate to the goal of profit. The ‘end’ or ‘aim’ which producers (workers) and consumers must ultimately submit to is money.

Under the corporate capitalist mode of production, film producers are increasingly made to market test their product to test for popularity (profitability) of plot lines, casting and characters. This alienates directors, actors and scriptwriters from their ‘product’. Journalists have to sacrifice truth for the kinds of copy that caters to the prurience of mass celebrity culture tastes. This entails the alienation of the journalist from her product. Football managers are made to sign and field players who, in our global media age, have to suit the tastes of the sports-spectating and subscription-paying masses, rather than the judgement of the manager. This alienates the manager and players from their product.

In each case, production is orchestrated so as to ‘play to the gallery’, since the paying gallery must be convinced to view the film, read the newspaper or support the football team. Under laissez-faire capitalism, there is no non-market means by which producers can sustain their activity and products. The corporate production of films, newspapers and sports events are crucially dependent upon the command of revenue streams sourced in mass ‘private’ consumption. In a corporate capitalist commodity culture, there are drives towards seeking and satisfying the lowest common and commercial denominator. In this way, the single-minded pursuit of corporate profit

---
377 Under communism a scheme of unconditional basic income provides the primary basis upon which producers become relatively freer to produce as they see fit. The producer becomes less dependent upon securing money-returns in the market.

Earlier I argued for a scheme of unconditional basic income on the grounds of economic efficiency. Such a scheme would be required to offset any tendency towards underconsumption of the capitalist economic product as caused by a tendency towards the replacement of labour by capital factors of production. Below I will suggest that a scheme of basic income is desirable for the effects it can have upon the motivation of producers occupied with associative production.
debases the social practices of filmmaking, journalism and football within the community.

In what follows I will be defending the claim that production in accordance with social practices is best promoted by associations of producers either producing directly for social needs without the intervening prospect for profit, or by having an appropriate association play host to a system of market socialism for those needs which can and should be subject to commercial disciplines.

3.121 The Paradox of Profit Argument: The Market, Money & the Motives of Greed & Fear

Now it may be argued that profit accumulated by successful capitalist enterprises requires, or entails, the realisation of goods internal to social practices. A defender of capitalism might direct a ‘paradox of profit’ argument against the approach to communism defended above. The paradox of profit argument shares the same form as the, so-called, paradox of hedonism. Railton writes:

One version of the so-called ‘paradox of hedonism’ is that adopting one’s exclusive ultimate end in life the pursuit of maximum happiness may well prevent one from having certain experiences or engaging in certain relationships or commitments that are among the greatest sources of happiness. The hedonist, looking around him, may discover that some of those who are less concerned with their own happiness than he is, and who view people and projects less instrumentally than he does, actually manage to live happier lives than he despite his dogged pursuit of happiness.  

Thus, just as someone may be thought to only maximise happiness if they work towards, and secure, goods internal to particular relations and social practices, it may be also thought that a capitalist enterprise is only able to maximise profit if the goods it produces, and the market exchanges it effects, realises goods internal to the social practices. The objection is that the pursuit of external goods is not an obstacle to, and

---

does not contradict, the realisation of goods internal to particular social practices. There is a coincidence between the realisation of external and internal goods. Capitalism is therefore the best form of production by which to meet any of our social needs. Thus, in addition to meeting our wants for mundane consumer goods, capitalist organisation can effectively service the community’s needs for education and healthcare, as well as promote a rich intellectual, sporting, artistic and cultural life. Capitalist enterprises prosper best by inhabiting and tracking a sphere of value internal to shared social practices of the community.  

John Kay writes:

... successful business in reality is not selfish, narrow and instrumental. What makes somebody a good parent, a fine teacher or a great sportsman, is a combination of talent relevant to that activity and a passion for - and commitment to - parenthood, education or sport. Similarly, the motives which make for success in business, both for individuals and corporations, are commitment to and passions for business - which is not the same as the love of money. The defining purpose of business is to build good business - as the defining purpose of parenthood is to be a good parent. What we mean by good business is as complex as what we mean by good parenthood.

Thus the activity and products of any kind of production can be placed safely in the hands of profit-maximising capitalist producers. This counts for production directed to the mundane wants for primary and secondary goods (such as wheat, steel, electricity) as well production directed towards the educational, healthcare, intellectual, sporting,

---

379 John Kay defends this claim in his inaugural lecture as the Peter Moores Director of Management Studies at the newly founded Said Business School, University of Oxford. His lecture is re-printed in the journal Prospect, issue 28, March 1998, p.25. In his lecture (entitled ‘Good Business’) Kay speaks approvingly of MacIntyre’s concept of a social practice and of the importance of profit-seeking capitalist producers tracking goods internal to practices in order to maximise profit. The single-minded pursuit of profit will not maximise profit, profit is maximised by being good and by realising values. Also see the critical response to Kay’s argument given by Christopher Tugendhat (Chairman of the bank Abbey National) in his article ‘Pure Profit’, Prospect, issue 31, June 1998, p.14. Here Tugendhat argues that Kay’s view of capitalism is misguided and that capitalist producers only maximise profits by pursuing profit directly, and with the shareholder’s interest in mind, rather than by paying any special attention to the broader values of the society within which they operate.

380 Prospect, issue 28, March 1998, p.27. At the end of his article Kay writes: “My conclusion is that business is - and ought to be - a practice, a profession like any other. It requires the same sort of dedication to its values, the same sort of breath of understanding of the complexities of society and individuals, the same sort of sensitive understanding of people, as parenthood, education, sport, or any other complex human activity.”
artistic, legal and political life of the community. The work of any kind of professional, producing within any social practice, can be set to market exchange and money (profit) disciplines.\(^{381}\) Jeffrey Paul and Fred D. Miller, Jr. argue the case for capitalism along similar lines to Kay. They write:

> It is true that one can become so fixated on acquisitive, goal-directed activities such as earning money or accumulating goods that one loses sight of the virtues, which are for MacIntyre excellences concerned with intrinsically valuable activities. But it is possible for individuals in a liberal, capitalist society to maintain a proper balance in their lives between goal-directed and intrinsically valuable activities. Furthermore, the same activity can be intrinsically valuable as well as productive; thus, in a free society a philosopher or artist can simultaneously lead the good life and make a living.\(^{382}\)

I will consider the case of philosophy in a free and good society shortly. We have already seen examples of how external goods can frustrate the realisation of goods internal to social practices. Earlier I discussed the example of the drug-taking ‘athlete’ who forsakes the achievement of goods internal to his particular sporting practice in order to accumulate external goods such as money, status and fame. I then raised the cases of film producers, journalists and football managers whose activity and products come apart from tracking goods internal to their respective practices due to the fact that such producers are made to service the money-interests of their corporate capitalist paymasters.

---

\(^{381}\) Kay states that there is widespread agreement on which are good businesses of which he lists Marks and Spencer, Hewlett-Packard and Sony. Whilst there is little doubt that these companies do successfully cater respectively for our mundane needs for pre-cooked meals, computer systems and televisions, Sony’s excursus into the field of popular music through its purchase of WEA records enslaved many of the label’s artists to the profit-maximising goals of the corporation. Thus the singer-songwriter George Michael was instructed by Sony executives to write the same kind of songs as he wrote on his first and highest selling solo album ‘Faith’. The singer then undertook lengthy court battles in order to extricate himself from his contract with WEA (Sony). The judge in his case ruled in favour of the artist and agreed that Sony was compromising his artistic integrity.

Now it seems true that the realisation of goods internal to a social practice and the accumulation of external goods can be in harmony in certain cases. Thus, Andrew Mason claims that 'an electrician is likely to receive many of his contracts as a result of personal recommendation, and these will be based on his achievement of standards of excellence which govern electrical installation. In many circumstances, an electrician will be rewarded with a continuous supply of external goods only if he is a good electrician'.\(^{383}\) This also seems true for other sorts of local tradesman such as tailors, restaurateurs, interior decorators, shoemakers, carpenters, etc.

In many cases the consumer will go by word-of-mouth and the reputation of a producer within a locale. Crucially, the consumer needs *something* to go by when he seeks expert help.\(^{384}\) The consumer lacks the specialist knowledge and skill to truly judge for himself whether a producer will best attend to his needs. A moral hazard can issue from the fact that, if producers are fundamentally in the business of maximising profit, then they may be tempted to exploit the ignorance of the consumer and create a perception of need and subsequent want within the consumer which is at odds with the individual real interests. Thus, at a face-to-face level, there are standard examples of a car mechanic ‘over prescribing’ for his customer’s car, or the dentist who fills perfectly healthy teeth in order to maximise revenue from a patient.\(^{385}\) At a corporate capitalist level, there is the example of a multinational food producer promoting the dubious


\(^{384}\) Under communism, *associations* of producers will – in the main – provide that informational ‘something’ to go on, see later.

\(^{385}\) It has been reported that dentists in the UK inflict an unnecessary £200 million worth of unnecessary work upon their patients. ‘Studies show that dentists replace fillings far more than necessary, and that if they suffer a drop in income, they will replace their patients’ fillings more frequently’. See *The Observer* 16/04/00, p.6 & 23/04/00, p.5.
benefits of their powdered milk over breast milk to moneyed consumers in Third World economies. There is also the recent example of electrical goods retailers selling extended five year warranties on consumer durables which are statistically unlikely to breakdown in that period and, if they do breakdown, the average cost of repair is far lower than the extended warranty surcharge. In each case the money-minded capitalist exploits the asymmetry of knowledge and information that exists between the producer and consumer. Profit to the producer results from bad value to the consumer.

John Kay distinguishes between three kinds of responses that can be made to the problem of moral hazard in a market exchange and money (profit-based) economy.

The first is the 'minimalist' or libertarian response. This says that there is no real problem. If the consumer freely consents to the terms of exchange then the consumer must be responsible if the producer exploits any asymmetry of knowledge and produces against the consumer’s best interests. It is the consumer responsibility to search for second opinions, look for other quotes and read up any relevant statistics before consenting to any market exchange.

The second response is more ‘rules-based’. This approach recognises that in a market exchange and money dominated economy there may be a tendency for producers to exploit the vulnerability, fears and ignorance of consumers for the sake of profit. This approach therefore attempts to intervene in the exchanges between producers and consumers and to regulate the market-trading environment. It is difficult to devise rules for cases such as that of the dentist who fills perfectly healthy teeth. However, in the

---

386See John Kay’s article ‘Regulation by Rules or By Values’, p.7, in The Social Market & the State (Social Market Foundation, 1999), ed. Alastair Kilmarnock.

387Kay’s recognition of the problem of moral hazard in a market exchange and money (profit) based economy is inconsistent with his defence of the ‘paradox of profit’ argument above.
case of extended warranties, the State might require that retail outlets display the costs of repair at the point of sale, or specify that the same people who sell electrical goods should not solicit the sale of insurance products. Also, the State might monitor the claims of advertisers and prohibit the practice of food producers listing ingredients that are not in their products (e.g. no tartrazine) and thus, by implication, suggest that the products of the competition are worse for including those ingredients in their products.

The third response is a ‘value-based’ approach and says “well-respected producers do not sell products that are demonstrably bad value for money, even if their customers know no better.” 388

An advantage of the minimalist approach is its simplicity. We do not have to bother about drafting and enforcing rules of exchange, or concern ourselves with judging whether or not our systems of production and the satisfaction of actual market wants coincides with our real interests; the values, or goods, internal to our social practices. 389 However, the minimalist approach is not optimal from the perspective of values, the single-minded and dogged pursuit of profit by individuals and corporations can be solvent of goods internal to social practices. Setting producers to work in accordance with the profit motive can come to form a ‘bridle’ on the realisation of goods internal to social practices, and be inefficient as regards the goal of maximising the individual and social good (the development and satisfaction of human needs and capacities).

388 See John Kay’s article ‘Regulation by Rules or By Values’, p.8, in The Social Market & the State (Social Market Foundation, 1999), ed. Alastair Kilmarnock.

389 In part two I argued that whilst the individual and social good is a function of want-satisfaction, it is not exhausted by such a metric of value. I argued that wants are formed as a function of one’s social environment, which I defined in terms of one’s up-bringing within the family, the system of education and the economy. I also argued that there is knowledge regarding human needs and capacities by which we can judge the wants that individuals form and aim to satisfy, and that such knowledge should constitute the basis upon which we must shape the social environment.
For those of us who care about values the third response to the problem of moral hazard is ideal. The problem is how to get producers motivated to produce directly for real social needs (values) rather than simply for the sake of external goods (profit). In the third response Kay invokes the concept of 'respect' and trust. It is often true that where a producer seeks repeated business from his customer base, and where his business relies upon face-to-face personal contact with his consumers, then profit is most likely to be maximised if he cultivates good-will and gains a reputation for fair dealing rather than be known for conducting sharp practices. Profit will be maximised if the producer believes and/or acts as if he has his clients' best interests at heart. The producer actively seeks to produce primarily for his consumers his needs, or appears to be doing so, rather than be seen to directly pursue the narrower goal of profit at every turn.

The perception of trust, and the desire to pursue and realise goods internal to practice, can be cultivated for instrumental reasons (i.e. one wants to maximise the accumulation of an external good such as money) or because it is an expression of one's own productive self-identity, one's self-realisation. In the movement from capitalism-to-communism Marxists seek to cultivate and build upon the motivation of self-realisation. That is, the self as fashioned by coming to know, appreciate and pursue goods internal to social practices. Man's creativity, energy and effort ceases to be prompted primarily by the prospect of accumulating money. Production must, in the main, take on an associative character wherein the individual's practical identity comes to be fashioned through his coming to know, appreciate and pursue goods internal to particular profession or craft.

At this point neo-conservative theorists charge communists with trading on utopian assumptions regarding an unrealistic altruism at the heart of man. They saddle
communists with the (hopeless) belief that man can and should sub-ordinate his ‘naturally’ acquisitive, narrowly materially selfish and egoistic motives and, instead, be minded to produce in accordance with moral values. For neo-conservatives the social product is maximised by getting people and organisations to meet social needs indirectly through the individual and corporate pursuit of money, and to have their own material self-interest as the primary goal of production. Capitalism is said to have triumphed over Soviet Socialism precisely because it worked with the grain of human nature.

Neo-conservatives champion the market and the disciplines of exchange-value (wage/profit) on a producer's activity and product because it harnesses the motives of greed and fear. Society is composed of the highly creative and entrepreneurial at one end and the work-shy and feckless at the other. In between these two extremes there is a mixture of these two characteristics possessed by workers at all levels of industry, commerce and the public sector. Greed and the promise of accumulated income and wealth, is taken to be a basic goal for those who possess creativity, talent and entrepreneurialism. For others it is fear, and the threat of losing one’s livelihood, which moves them to turn up to their work-station and perform a function. Thus in the eighties the neo-conservative British government pushed through measures such as the reducing the top-rate of tax and reducing the real value of welfare benefits to the unemployed. By such measure neo-conservatives sought to promote economic growth by harvesting the product of greed and fear. For neo-conservatives the social product is thought to be maximised by, on the one hand, celebrating and rewarding the acquisitive drives in man and, on the other hand, to caricature the unemployed as freeloaders; of not wanting to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps and of not wanting to ‘get on their bikes’ and

do as the capitalist market for labour/goods demands. The State could not indulge such tendencies within man by non-market schemes of income which people could actually live on.

3.122 Communism Contra Neo-Conservatism

In what follows I level three responses against the neo-conservative. First, I claim that our central task must be to consign, what Marx terms, ‘contradictory’ labour to history and establish the subjective and objective conditions of ‘attractive labour and individual self-realisation’. Second, I claim that production set strictly in accordance with capitalist market exchange and money disciplines can exert, what Marx terms, an ‘inverting power’ over social practices. This inverting power can be solvent of goods internal to social practices and, hence, be detrimental to the efficient satisfaction of needs in society. Third, I claim that the advent of, what Marx terms, ‘socialised man, the associated producers’ can reconcile self-interest with the demands of morality (virtue).

(i) ‘Attractive labour and individual self-realisation’. In circumstances where production is self-sacrifice (where an individual is unable to develop, exercise and express her powers and capacities and thereby achieve self-realisation) then it seems rational that an individual would abstain from such production if a life without having to labour were materially tolerable. For neo-conservatives the way to counter this rational inclination is to make life without work as materially meagre as possible. For communists, rather than making life out with of capitalist market production as pestiferous as possible, we should aim to make society’s systems of production as attractive as possible. In the development from capitalism to communism, work must

---

391 Karl Marx Grundrisse (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), p.661. See the beginning of part two for the full passage. ‘Contradictory’ labour is that which is ‘repulsive to the individual’; where it is experienced as ‘forced upon the worker from the outside’; and where ‘non-labour could be opposed to it as liberty and happiness’.
increasingly come to take the form of a social practice. For Alienation Marxists production becomes attractive for the individual when they are able to develop their capacities in some way, and when the individual is able to access opportunities in which they can exercise and express their capacities. In part two I argued, along with Mill, that if, and as, an individual develops her capacities in some way then she counts the exercise and expression of those capacities as part of her good, her pleasure or preference-satisfaction. Social practices enable the individual to develop, exercise and express her capacities whilst also enjoining activities and effecting products which service the practical and/or expressive needs of the community. Self-realisation is to be achieved through the growth of the professionalised and vocational forms of working that social practices require.

In the Grundrisse Marx describes wealth as follows:

... what is wealth other than the universality of human 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 humanity's own nature? The absolute working out of his creative potentialities, with no other 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 pre-determined yardstick? Where he does not reproduce himself in one specificity, but produces his totality? Strives not to remain something he has become, but is in the absolute moment of becoming.

Here Marx distinguishes between the subjective and the objective aspects of wealth. The subjective aspect includes the development of people (that is, the development of their 'needs, capacities and pleasures'), whilst the objective aspect includes the development of society's 'productive forces'. The growth of wealth, the capacity of society to meet its needs, includes mankind's mastery over himself

---

392 See my discussion of Mill on 'higher' and 'lower' pleasures in section 2.11 entitled 'Mill’s Aristotelian Utilitarianism: “Socrates Dissatisfied is Better than a Fool Satisfied.”'

('humanity’s own nature') as well as his mastery over inorganic nature. Communism requires the development of people as well as the development of production technologies. Over the course of this chapter I have argued that the objective aspect of wealth (mankind’s mastery over inorganic nature) includes the development of capital-intensive production for our mundane material wants. However, this is not enough to deliver communism. As I argued in part two, a subjective transformation has to also occur. The development from capitalism to communism has to consist, in part, in a cultural/economic shift from consumption to production as a sphere in which the individual is able to satisfy her need for meaning and value. This cultural/economic shift has to be achieved through a greater development of our all-round and specialised generically human powers and capacities through systems of education and training. Under communism social needs will be met more efficiently through the greater development and use of technology and also through a greater development and deployment of individual knowledge, skills and abilities.

Now, as regards the above passage, Kymlicka claims that where Marx speaks of the individual working out his ‘creative potentialities’ without a ‘pre-determined yardstick’, what Marx means is that the individual will be able to develop, exercise and express his generically human capacities in absence of any fixed social roles and relations. Kymlicka argues that this sets Marx at odds with the communitarianism of Alisdair MacIntyre.

There is an assertion in The German Ideology, which seem to support Kymlicka’s interpretation of Marx in the above passage from the Grundrisse. Thus at one point Marx does state that: ‘In a communist society there are no painters but at most

---

people who engage in painting among other activities. However, as Cohen remarks, the aim of abolishing defined social roles and relations is both conceptual and sociological nonsense. I have argued that what it means for man to achieve 'the working out of his creative potentialities' requires an understanding of MacIntyre's conception of a social practice; of the social needs which particular practices are enacted to serve; and the social roles and relations which an individual comes to inhabit as a consequence of enjoining activities and effecting products within a particular social practice. It is absurd to suppose that a society can function efficiently without specific individuals dedicating a large measure of their productive lives to particular social practices such as architecture, painting, sculpture, medicine, tailoring, hairdressing, teaching, scientific research, philosophy and opera singing; and for such individuals to occupy and subsequently identify with the specialist roles and relations that accompany such practices in society.

I don't believe that Marx is committed to such an absurdity. Marx's remarks concerning the individual developing their 'creative potentialities' in absence of any

---

395 The German Ideology (Lawrence & Wishart, 1974 second edition), p.109. This assertion follows a passage in which Marx bemoans the fact that under the capitalist specialisation and division of function 'there is a concentration of artistic talent in the very few and its suppression in the broad mass' so that the role of artist, as well as the composition and appreciation of art, is unique and exclusive to a minority.

Marx's assertion suggests that if someone wanted a painting in a communist society they would be accomplished enough to produce such goods for themselves. Earlier I argued that this claim is at odds with his claim, from the Grundrisse, that '... really free labour, the composing of music for example, is... damned serious and demands the greatest effort' (see p.144 above). See G.A. Cohen History, Labour & Freedom (Oxford, 1988), p.141, for similar claims.

My view is that we should aim for a increase the general ability of individuals to produce and appreciate art and that the servicing of wants for art can and should, to certain degree, be met by the individual being able to develop, exercise and express their own capacities and powers to produce such goods (see below). However, there will inevitably be circumstances in which individual wants are best met by turning to specialist producers. Under communism there will be the need to commission the product of another, that is, the work of a painter, composer, scientist, etc. The service of such specialist needs should be met through the institution of associative systems of production. Academies of art should sponsor the work of the most promising students of art, and an appropriate association should play host to a scheme of market socialism in which individuals are enabled to service the wants for art within a particular locale (see later, section 3.13).

‘pre-determined yardsticks’ occurs after his discussion of the scope for individual development under pre-capitalist modes of production. In pre-capitalist times producers were subject to a high degree of socialisation and rigidity in social classes, relations and roles. According to Cohen, in pre-capitalist feudal times the “artisan using his own means of production, typically handed down by his father, is caught like a ‘snail inside its shell’; but the fact that the nineteenth-century worker is propertyless, which explains his misery, signifies an independence, a detachment from his particular machine and this particular job, a disengagement that the guildsman does not know.” 397 This (modern) experience of independence, detachment or disengagement is a necessary part of freedom as self-determination. 398 Where Marx speaks of the individual being able to develop their potentialities in absence of any ‘pre-determined yardstick’ he can simply be taken to mean that the individual should not be caught like a ‘snail in its shell’ and find himself compelled to work within an occupation that is simply bequeathed to him by the limiting productive history of his family and village traditions.

In Alienation Marxist terms, the pre-capitalist artisan lacked self-determination, he could not exercise a choice over a range of different occupations. However, he was able to secure a form of self-actualisation. The village artisan was able to develop his creative potentialities in a particular way; he had a meaningful role to play in a feudal


398 Marx cites the following example: “A French worker wrote as follows on his return from San Francisco: ‘I could never have believed that I was capable of working at all the trades I practiced in California. I was firmly convinced that I was fit for nothing but printing books... Once I was in the midst of this world of adventurers, who changed their jobs as often as they changed their shirts, then, upon my faith, I did as the others. As mining did not pay well enough, I left it for the city, and there I became in succession a typographer, a Slater, a plumber, etc. As a result of this discovery that I am fit for any sort of work, I feel less of a mollusc and more of a man.” Karl Marx Capital Vol.1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p.618.
and pastoral social order that was a significant source of self-identity.\textsuperscript{399} The capitalist wage-labourer, on the other hand, gained greater self-determination over his choice of work, he became able to work in a factory, an office or a store.\textsuperscript{400} However since factory, office and retail line-work is mundane and profit-driven, the capitalist wage-labourer lacks the ability to occasion self-actualisation from his work. Marx writes:

\ldots large scale industry, through its very catastrophes, makes the recognition of the variation of labour and hence the fitness of the worker for the maximum number of different kinds of labour into a question of life and death. This possibility of varying labour must become a general law of social production, and the existing relations must be adapted to permit this realisation in practice\ldots the partially developed individual, who was merely the bearer of one specialised function, must be replaced by the totally developed individual, for whom the different social functions are different modes of activity he takes up in turn.\textsuperscript{401}

For Alienation Marxists our aim should be to perfect a social and economic order in which the individual can secure both self-determination and self-actualisation over his production and thereby gain self-realisation in his life. The aim is to twin any feeling of ‘rootedness’ and sense of purpose within a social order that the pre-capitalist producer may have experienced with the modern freedom to choose how one develops, exercises and expresses their capacities over the course of one’s life.

\textsuperscript{399} Charles Taylor writes: “Modern freedom was won by our breaking loose from older moral horizons. People used to see themselves as part of a larger order. In some cases, this was a cosmic order, ‘a great chain of being’, in which humans figured in their proper place along with the angels, heavenly bodies, and our fellow earthly creatures. This hierarchical order in the universe was reflected in the hierarchies of human society. People were often locked into a given place, a role and station that was properly theirs and from which it was almost unthinkable to deviate. Modern freedom came through the discrediting of such orders.

But at the same time as they restricted us, these orders gave meaning to the world and to the activities of social life. The things that surround us were not just potential raw materials or instruments for our projects, but they had a significance given them by their place in the chain of being\ldots By the same token, the rituals and norms of society had more than merely instrumental significance. The discrediting of these orders has been called the ‘disenchantment’ of the world. With it, things lost some of their magic.” The Ethics of Authenticity (Harvard University Press, 1991), p.3.

\textsuperscript{400} This is not to say that the worker came to enjoy significant self-determination within any particular job, see section 1.331.

\textsuperscript{401} Karl Marx Capital Vol.1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p.618.
In the *German Ideology* Marx writes:

Within communist society, the only society in which the original and free development of individuals ceases to be a mere phrase, this development is determined precisely by the connection of individuals, a connection which consists partly in the economic prerequisites and partly in the necessary solidarity of the free development of all, and, finally, in the universal character of activity of individuals on the basis of existing productive forces... The individuals' consciousness of their mutual relations will, of course, likewise become something quite different and, therefore, will no more be a ‘principle of love’ or *dévouement*, than it will be egoism.402

Where Marx writes about the ‘economic prerequisites’ I take him to refer to the advent of capital-intensive production and the prospect of each being able to consume without the necessity of labour (via a scheme of basic income). And where Marx refers to ‘necessary solidarity’, I take him to mean that a greater development of our *all-round* capacities, as well as our coming to share in goods internal to social practices through the development of our *specialised* capacities, will transform individual consciousness and our mutual relations.

In what follows I discuss how social needs can be better served through a greater development of our ‘general’ powers and capacities. In the following two sections I take up issues surrounding the development of our ‘specialized’ powers, and the transformations in relations and consciousness that can result from individuals coming to occupy roles which are particular to a social practice. It will be seen below (and in the following two sections) that, for Communists, it is better to develop norms/systems of production in which, on the one hand, individuals are able to develop, exercise and express their own capacities whilst, on the other hand, produce directly for social needs rather than indirectly via the pursuit of money (profit).

Under capitalism money is central to both the organization of production and an individual’s ability to meet his wants (needs). Capital and labour are directed to satisfy

---

human wants only if the provision of particular goods and services, as demanded in the
market, yields a profit to the producer. Profit (wage) signals capitalists (workers) to
move into particular markets for goods (jobs). Production is organized primarily for the
sake of exchange-value and is only sustained if the money costs of production are
outstripped by money gained from the sale of goods and services. Under capitalism we
have production and distribution in accordance with consumer wants only if an
individual’s wants are backed by money (income and expenditure). On the mediating
role of money in production and the satisfaction of wants, Marx writes:

What I as a man cannot do, i.e. with all my individual powers cannot do, I can do
with the help of money. Money therefore transforms each of these essential powers into
something which it is not, into its opposite.

If I desire a meal or want to take the mail coach because I am not strong enough
to make the journey on foot, money can procure me both the meal and the mail coach,
i.e. it transfers my wishes from the realm of the imagination, it translates them from their
existence as thought, imagination and desires into their sensuous, real existence, from
imagination into life, and from imagined being to real being. In its mediating role money
is the truly creative power.

Demand also exists for those who have no money, but their demand is simply a
figment of the imagination. For me or for any third party it has no effect, no existence.
For me it therefore remains unreal and without an object. The difference between
effective demand based on money and ineffective demand based on my need, my
passion, my desire, etc., is the difference between being and thinking, between a
representation which merely exists within me and one which exists outside me as a real
object.403

Within a capitalist economy ‘money is the truly creative power’, what one wants
to be, to do, or achieve in life can be secured through the system of market exchange and
producers seeking profit (wage). One can ‘command’ the product of others through
one’s own expenditure. One can become this, and be that, through consumption. What
one cannot do for oneself, one can get others to do. One does not therefore need to
develop one’s own powers; one can simply direct the powers of others towards ones

403 Karl Marx Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts, p.378, re-printed in Early Writings
wants through the market exchange and money system. In this way the money system thus fashions a highly sophisticated specialisation and division of function (labour) in society, where each person within this system develops and possesses some particular knowledge, or skill, which they must ‘market’ primarily for the sake of money (exchange-value).

However, to turn things the other way around, the specialisation and division of knowledge and skill is also a specialisation and division of ignorance. We look to the market and our wallets to satisfy our wants because as individuals we lack the wherewithal to produce for ourselves. An Alienation Marxist aim is dismantle the specialisation and division of ignorance through the development, exercise and expression of our ‘all-round’ capacities and powers.

For example, within a capitalist system of production (consumption) the need for domestic plumbing, electrical, and heating services is sought through, what can be termed, the ‘yellow pages’ market exchange and money economy. Within these pages there is an attendant specialisation and division of labour whose product is only commanded by the prospect of money. Thus, as the need arises one calls out a plumber, electrician, a joiner, car mechanics, builders, etc. with our wallets in hand. The need for such a technician stems from the fact that they possess specialised knowledge which we, as consumers of their services, lack. (As argued earlier, the consumer’s lack of specialised knowledge provides fertile ground for the problem of moral hazard to flourish.)

In a recent survey of work and consumer trends, there is the case of the chairman of an advertising agency who earns ‘in excess of £100,000 per annum’ and who works a ‘65 hour week’. ‘The services he purchases are largely dictated by time’. ‘He enjoys
DIY, but often ends up hiring someone else to work on his Georgian house in Hampstead’. 'He feels guilty about getting someone else to do it’. 'He has the temperament and aptitude to do it himself, and would like to - if only he had the time.' The survey also documents the case of a carpenter earning £24000 per annum whose consuming habits include 'a full breakfast at his local cafe', 'sandwiches from a supermarket at lunch time' and, in the evening, 'either an oven-ready pizza, or the ordering of Indian or Chinese food from the local take-away'.

Revealed preferences for the kinds of goods and services supplied by the 'face-to-face' market exchange and money sector of the economy stem from three sources. First, lack of know-how on the part of the consumer; second, lack of time for the consumer to produce for himself; and three, the presence of money and the subsequent power to command the product of another. The money-rich and time-poor are best placed and driven to command the product of another. In a properly communist state of affairs there would be a raised level of general know-how in each individual and dispersed within the community, and there would also be a reduction in the working day. The fulfilment of these two aims would move us to a situation in which there obtains a diminished reliance upon the market exchange and money sector of the economy. The intervening prospect of money will be removed as a motivation for producers and necessity for those in need. Individuals will cease to express their needs in terms of a preference for the money-driven product of another.

In a properly communist state of affairs we would have progressed to a situation in which basic practical knowledge about wiring, plumbing, car maintenance, etc. becomes general knowledge which is communicated to all through the education system. Judging by the proliferation of DIY features in the media, there seems to be a

---

mass interest on the ground. The kinds of knowledge involved hardly amount to rocket science. Also, if practical knowledge about such systems were communicated through the general education system, then the onus will be put on manufacturers to design and produce plumbing, heating and electrical systems which are relatively easy to understand and operate and which, through the increased use of 'smart' computing technology, lends itself to easy diagnosis should there be a system failure.

Now, not everyone is going to excel at absorbing or applying such practical knowledge. However, we should be able to progress to a situation where, if these kinds of practical knowledge are dispersed within the community, one might be able to call upon a friend or neighbour who might be able to help you out. In this way a raised level of general know-how facilitates production in accord with need, and reduces helplessness (alienation) when these everyday objects breakdown on us. Individuals will be more familiar with the mechanical/technical infrastructure that they rely upon in their everyday lives. As we progress in the development of such capacities then a reduction in the demand for an extensive specialisation and division of labour, and our dependence upon market exchange and money, to address such needs will occur.

A more serious application of this proposal was applied in a US state when a decision was taken to reduce death from heart attacks in the state. It was found that eight minutes after a heart attack is a crucial time period in which if the patient receives the appropriate resuscitation procedure then they have a better chance of survival. Now, the two options before the State government were to either invest resources in rapid reaction helicopter ambulances and a team of roving medics or undertake to train 50%

---

405 Of course, there would be a residual need for a team of experts in each locale, handled by a system of associative market socialism, in order to treat exceptional problems (see later).

406 Amitai Etzioni recounted this example in a seminar on 'Communitarianism and Public Policy'.
of the adult population of the state in emergency first aid. The first option further hones the specialisation and division of labour in society, whilst the second option aims to disperse knowledge within the general population. The State took the second option and proceeded to lay on first-aid courses and devote resources towards an advertising campaign for individuals to sign-up. In consequence, if someone suffered a heart attack in a public space then, in all probability, someone at close quarters would know what to do. Also, such a policy would presumably affect the relations between people. Our bond and reliance upon one another becomes deeper and more communitarian. Or, as Marx puts it: 'The individuals’ consciousness of their mutual relations will, of course, likewise become something quite different'. Once such policy goals are achieved then chances are that a stranger could be your saviour.

This above example is meant to show that social needs can be better served by seeking solutions out with of the money, market exchange and an extensive specialisation and division of function in society; and through the development of our 'all-round' capacities. I now turn to the more thorny issue of producer motivation as regards production that requires an institutional setting, and which requires the development, exercise and expression of ‘specialist’ capacities on the part of an individual.

(ii) The ‘Inverting Power’ of Capitalist Free Market Exchange & Money. Neo-conservatives believe that the private profit-maximising company is the best form of productive organisation. In this section I will argue that the social product is not necessarily optimised if individuals and organisations are respectively set to pursue their own narrow material self-interest and if an enterprise yields profit.

407See passage from the German Ideology above, p.276.
Hayek’s view is that:

... in the evolution of the structure of human activities, profitability works as a signal that guides selection towards what makes man fruitful; only what is more profitable will, as a rule, nourish more people, for it sacrifices less than it adds. 408

Now there is no doubt that the fact that, under capitalism, production came to fall under the profit motive and that this led to great and good social developments. Earlier in this chapter I argued that, for Marxists, the most important developments which capitalism delivered to mankind were, first, the advent of efficient large scale manufacture to satisfy the demands of our mundane material needs and, secondly, the prospect of capital intensive production across the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy. 409 Large-scale capital-intensive systems of production, distribution and consumption can and should deliver much for human society, however, there is a limit to where we should put capitalist market exchange and money disciplines to the service of human needs. The satisfaction of certain social needs still requires, and will always require, the development, exercise and expression of our generically human powers and capacities. Also, unlike the demand for mundane material goods (such as bananas, paperclips and shirts) the good of certain forms of production cannot be reduced to the contingent wants of the (supposed) consuming base they serve. Here we reach the limit of market exchange and money disciplines upon man’s activity and product. The profit motive has its place. I have already suggested some examples of ways in which the individual and corporate accumulation of money (profit) conflicts with the realisation of goods internal to social practices and the satisfaction of actual


409 These positive developments also ushered in highly negative developments. Thus, in addition to bringing mass employment into being, capitalism also delivered the highest alienation of man in his own production. Capital intensive production, an unconditional basic income and the opportunity to partake in associative production are the antidotes to the alienation of man.
social needs. In what follows I will argue that society can become more civilised, and more ‘fruitful’, as a result of needs being addressed outwith of a capitalist specialisation and division of function and production in accordance with a system of market exchange and money. Instead certain kinds of production should be conducted in accordance with goods internal to a practice as determined by particular associations of producers.

The neo-conservative belief that the social product can be maximised by setting the discipline of external goods (profit, status, etc.) upon the activities and aims of producers formed the basis for policies such as privatisation of public utilities and also the trend towards ‘marketisation’ of the public sector. In the case of academia, and of philosophy in particular, Dummett claims that:

British universities are in the course of being transformed by ideologues who misunderstand everything about academic work... The vision which the ideologues have of the successful functioning of the economy or of any other social mechanism is that it works well only if operated by human beings engaged in ruthlessly biting and clawing their way to the top, where they will be able to obtain a disproportionate share of limited rewards... The plan of ideologues is to increase academic productivity by creating the conditions of intense competition. Those who compose what is known, in today’s unlovely jargon, as academic and academic-related staff are now lured by the hope of gaining, and goaded by the shame of missing, extra payments and newly invented titular status. Their output is monitored by the use of performance indicators, measuring the number of words published per year. Wittgenstein, who died in 1951 having published only one short article after the *Tractatus* of 1922, would plainly have not survived such a system... The universities have no option but to co-operate in organising the squalid scramble... [by] introducing... new ‘incentives’ for their professors and lecturers and in supplying data for the evaluation process. The question is to what extent they will absorb the values of their overlords and jettison those they used to have... It is obviously as objectionable in a capitalist as in a communist country that politicians should decide how universities are to be run; but it is catastrophic when those politicians display total ignorance of the need to judge academic productivity on principles quite different to those applicable to industry. Our masters show some small awareness that, as in industry, quality is relevant as well as quantity: their performance indicators are sometimes modified by the use of more sophisticated criteria, such as counting the number of references made by other writers to a given article. Frege would never have survived such a test: his writings were seldom referred to in his lifetime. It is not, however, that quantity is not the only criterion, but that it is positively harmful. The reason is that overproduction defeats the very purpose of academic publication. It long ago became impossible to keep pace with the spate of books and of professional journals, whose number increases every year; once this happens, their production
becomes an irrelevance to the working academic, save for the occasional book or article he happens to stumble on. This applies particularly to philosophy. Historians may be able to ignore much of their colleagues' work as irrelevant to their periods; but philosophers are seldom so specialised that there is anything they can afford to disregard in virtue of its subject matter. Given their need for time to teach, to study the classics of philosophy and to think, they cannot afford to plough through the plethora of not bad, not good books and articles in the hope of hitting on one that will truly cast light upon the problems with which they are grappling; hence, if they are sensible they ignore them altogether.  

The market and the rule of external goods have intruded into areas of human ‘production’ where it does not belong. Recent exemplars of the discipline - Frege and Wittgenstein - would not have survived the market-style criteria of value which has come to dominate the philosophical academy. Mary Midgely echoes Dummett’s complaint and writes:

I have been exceptionally lucky here in having the chance to work in this area during a long and disorganised life, before the present battery-egg system of academic production was bought in. Future historians will surely find it hard to believe that this system was actually accepted in practice - that in a highly sophisticated age, academic work was assessed essentially in quantitative terms, by the number of publications and sometimes even by number of pages published.

The point is not just that this arrangement encourages industrious mediocrity. It is that anyone, however gifted and original, who has to keep publishing at this rate is forced to choose small topics - usually negative ones - and to treat them to disproportionate length. Quality is indeed supposed to be kept up by requiring publication in ‘reputable journals’. But the sheer mass of print flooding out is such that most of it cannot hope to find readers anyway. Nobody has the time for such endless reading, even if it were likely to be useful. Many journals are therefore bound to be merely reputable cold-stores for eggs that everybody knows will never be eaten.

In seeking to tailor academic work in accordance with market disciplines and the competition for external goods (money, status, etc.), neo-conservatives cast around and fixed upon a ‘product’ by which an academic’s productivity can be judged, and by

\[\text{footnote: Michael Dummett Frege: Philosophy of Mathematics (Duckworth, 1991), p.viii. Dummett’s complaint is echoed within other academic disciplines. Professor David Cannadine, in his inaugural lecture at the Institute of Historical Research, described “a large and depressed professoriate... with all the frenzied energy of battery chickens in overtime, laying for their lives.” See Gordon Marsden’s article ‘Publish or Perish’ in Prospect issue 48, January 2000, p.11.}

which university departments can be compared and rated. Presumably, the point of academic philosophy is to service the general intellectual life of the community; to direct specialist know-how in ways that raises philosophical knowledge and debate in society at large. To set such a high premium on *an* aspect of academic production seems to frustrate the basic goals of philosophical activity. Indeed, if the activities and aims of philosophers were truly set in accordance with capitalist market disciplines then the intellectual culture of society would tend more towards the philosophy of Feng Shui rather than that of Frege, etc. That is, if bookshop shelves of ‘mind, spirit and body’ are anything to go by.

As a result of neo-conservative ‘market’ reforms over the eighties, British universities came to be run more like businesses. University funding became increasingly contingent upon the student numbers that departments were able to attract, and the continued existence of departments became contingent upon sustaining student rolls within particular courses. This has led to some institutions simply flagging students - regardless of ability - through a course of ‘study’ in order to preserve funding.\(^{412}\) Presumably the point of education is to deliver certain competencies to society and to enable an individual to make something of himself through the development of his potential. In a situation where universities come to regard themselves as sellers of

\(^{412}\)See Chris Fitter’s response to Alan Ryan’s call for the further marketisation of higher education in *Prospect*, November 1999, p.5. Alan Ryan’s article ‘The American Way’ is in *Prospect*, August 1999. In his article Chris Fitter (a professor at Rutgers University) derides the ‘market-orientated’ system of higher education in the US. He reports on a state of affairs in which colleges have metamorphosed into businesses and where “students are redefined as fee-payers whose numbers may be increased indefinitely. Since even the dimmest student brings in fistfuls of dollars - indeed the more conceptually challenged they are, the more they pay, because they must retake failed courses - competition between universities generates ever-lower entry standards, grade inflation and overcrowded classrooms. The result is a race to the bottom. First year classes in mandatory core subjects crowd in 200 to 400 fee payers according to the size of institution. Multitudes such as these compel the abandonment of essay-writing for easily graded multiple-choice tests; and this in turn not only substitutes memorisation for creativity, but abolishes the need for articulate competence.” Fitter reports the increase of such trends within in respected university such as Rutgers and also claims that at “lesser universities, I have known junior instructors to be summoned to the Dean and
courses, and students as the paying consumers of courses, and where continued funding of departments becomes increasingly reliant upon sustaining student rolls, then the (often un-stated) goals of educational organisation can become inimical to the essence of education itself. Thus Marx writes:

Money... appears as an inverting power in relation to the individual and to those social and other bonds which claim to be essences in themselves. It transforms loyalty into treason, love into hate, virtue into vice, vice into virtue, servant into master, master into servant, nonsense into reason and reason into nonsense.\(^{413}\)

In the nineties hospitals came to be run more like businesses, the Conservative government created an ‘internal market’ within the National Health Service. Newly independent hospitals were made to tout for trade from health authorities and newly franchised general practitioners. Hospitals were made to gain and sustain their revenue through the exchange of their services for money. This situation led the Bristol Royal Infirmary to claim that they could perform complicated heart surgery upon babies when in fact they were plainly incompetent at doing so. The operations took longer and carried a far higher probability of death than anywhere else. A surgeon at the hospital recently told a public inquiry that ‘he believed the hospital carried on with complex heart surgery for financial reasons, for extra money gained from the department of health, although there had been discussion about stopping so as to assess what was going wrong’.\(^{414}\)

As regards our culture of broadcasting, a recent survey of top producers, journalists and commissioning editors reveals that they have lost their previous sense of independence and integrity. The survey concludes that once British television ‘had a

---


tremendous record for its contribution to democracy, entertainment and the creative arts' but now there is 'a fundamental shift of priorities which is seriously threatening that tradition'. In the corporate drive for ratings and advertising revenue, news and documentary programming has become increasingly consumer-driven. For example, in the wake of the death of Diana the director of programmes at ITV demanded an endless stream of Diana documentaries and films. Journalists were sent away to come up with stories with which to satisfy the wants of a morbid and prurient public. They came back with half-truths and hearsay which were then cobbled together to form programmes such as 'Diana - the secrets of the crash'. In the words of one of the journalists who worked on the piece: 'the desperation to deliver a Diana film produced that really tacky piece of work'. Presumably, the point of journalism is to report facts and to interpret, and relate, the significance of any particular course of events to society at large. Under the influence of money-interests and the pursuit of television ratings, journalists are told at the outset which stories are significant for the public, and are then set to deliver stories, which match the peoples' tastes.

As regards our scientific culture, John O'Neill argues that the goal of scientific progress, and the desire to maintain scientific objectivity and authority, is better served by fostering a communism rather than a commercialism of effort and endeavour amongst scientists.

It is undoubtedly true that the market, competition between producers and the pursuit of profit has led to great and good advances in science and technology. Commercialism has furthered the goal of scientific progress and has led to man being able to develop and service his needs and wants in increasingly sophisticated ways. However, O'Neill argues, firstly, that at the base of such progress is a communism of

---

415 The Guardian, 25/10/99, p.3.
scientific inquiry, wherein the transmission, accumulation and growth of scientific knowledge is treated as a public good, rather than as a commodity to be exploited with a view to personal gain or corporate profit. Secondly, he argues that the preservation of scientific objectivity and authority trades on the fact that science is not too closely aligned to the individual or corporate pursuit of external goods (such as profit), and that judgements within the scientific community are, and are seen to be, subject to standards internal to the practice of science itself.

As regards the first ‘public goods’ argument, O’Neill claims that if scientific research were simply conducted by scientists working within private profit-maximising organisations then there would be a tendency towards non-disclosure of speculative, hypothetical and pre-mature research. Science flourishes when there are open channels of information between scientists working within similar fields. Inter-subjective judgements from within a group of those who are similarly skilled and similarly knowledgeable, within any practice, is a necessary condition for progress. However, from the point of view of profit, it is better to work in isolation from other profit-orientated scientists lest they develop and capitalise on new discoveries. This tendency towards isolationism conflicts with the norm of open communication amongst those whose brief has traditionally, and primarily, been accounted for in terms of a desire to accumulate knowledge and to enlarge human understanding.416

O’Neill’s second ‘authority’ argument concerns the supposed objectivity of science. Scientific judgements are deemed to be authoritative because they are, and are seen to be, impartial and objective. That is, scientific judgements are not governed by instrumental and commercial considerations such as the accumulation of profit or the

scientist's own ego. The pursuit of money and status can lead organisations and individuals to falsify results; and to claim something greater than can realistically, and thoroughly, be proved. Thus, the current controversy concerning the benefits and risks of genetically modified agricultural produce. How authoritative can a report on the benefits of genetically modified crops be if it is sponsored by the biotechnology company Monsanto? How much credence should we give to a report proving that processed tomato has enormous health benefits if it were sponsored by Heinz?

(iii) Beyond Egoism & Altruism: The Demands of Morality & the Social Determination of the Self. The neo-conservative could concede that there are potential moral hazards stemming from the fact that individuals and organisations are primarily set to pursue external goods such as status, wealth and profit. However, he could then argue that even in the presence of such problems, the individual and corporate pursuit of money has yielded a greater social product than any alternative arrangements that have been tried. Also, given that individuals are, by nature, materially self-serving they are best suited to produce in accordance with an economy subject to free market exchange, private property and money (profit/loss) disciplines. Thus, in an often-quoted passage Adam Smith claims that: 'It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our necessities but of their advantages'. Where neo-conservatives speak of self-love they mean the advantage man seeks in terms of his accumulation of external goods.

---

417 See Thomas Barlow's article 'Science Plc' in Prospect, p.36, August/September 1999. Barlow echoes the O'Neill's worry about the objectivity and impartiality of scientific practice being compromised by its increasing and deepening relations with big business.

Producers serve the community because they seek and act upon opportunities to gain external goods, rather than because of requirements that pertain to the social role they occupy or because they are particularly moved by the needs of others. Communists are utopian because they pin their hopes on an unlikely altruism at the heart of man.

The examples above are intended to show ways in which the social product is not optimised if each were to pursue their narrow material self-interest. The single-minded pursuit and realisation of external goods can issue in a less-than-good society. The good society requires individuals to know, appreciate and pursue goods internal to a community’s shared social practices. These practices require the development of particular capacities and the cultivation of particular virtues. The realisation of goods internal to a particular practice addresses some aspect of social need. Such a society requires a material basis and an institutional framework upon, and within, which individuals are able to develop their capacities in appropriate ways and where the virtues can flourish. I have been arguing that the material basis of such a society requires the end of mundane labour through the development of capital-intensive manufacture across the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy; and an unconditional basic income which enables each person to meet their basic needs without the necessity of labour. The organisational framework of such a society is constructed, first, through a greater development of our all-round capacities and, second, the institution of requisite associations of producers, in which our capacities can be exercised and expressed, and by which we can address social needs. In these associations producers enjoin activities and effect products which track goods internal to a social practice rather than an external good such as money (profit).
The inclinations towards the self-interested pursuit of external goods which neo-conservatives to be ‘natural’ to man, communists take to be a product of our historical and social circumstance and open to transformation through effecting ‘a co-incidence of changing circumstances and the human activity of self-changing’ (Theses on Feuerbach #3). Marx writes:

The dissolution of all products and activities into exchange values presupposes the dissolution of all fixed personal (historic) relations of dependence in production, as well as the all-sided dependence of producers on one another. Each individual’s production is dependent on the production of all others; and the transformation of his product into the necessaries for his own life is [similarly] dependent on the consumption of all others. Prices are old; exchange also; but the increasing determination of the former by the costs of production, as well as the increasing dominance of the latter over all relations of production, only develop fully, and continue to develop ever more completely, in bourgeois society, the society of free competition. What Adam Smith, in the true eighteenth-century manner, puts in the prehistoric period, the period preceding history, is rather the product of history...

... The economists express this as follows: Each pursues his private interest and only his private; and thereby serves the private interests of all, the general interest, without willing or knowing it. The real point is not that each individual’s pursuit of his private interest promotes the totality of private interests, the general interest... The point is rather that private interest is itself already a socially determined interest, which can be achieved only within the conditions laid down by society and with the means provided by society; hence it is bound to the reproduction of these conditions and means. It is the interest of private persons; but its content, as well as the form and means of its realisation, is given by social conditions independent of all. 419

Here Marx claims that if you put certain goals before man, if the terms of his civil association with others is structured in a certain way, then the adoption and pursuit of such goals can constitute a mode of self-assertion and a measure of self-worth. The rise of bourgeois society supplanted historical relations of production with a system of relations mediated by money. Production for exchange-value came to form the dominant rationale to produce for both individuals and companies, rather than the traditional and customary feudal relations of production. Wage and profit became the goals for workers and capitalists respectively. In such circumstances individuals will, in all probability,

take goals such as the accumulation of money and status to be a measure of themselves and adopt it as a standard by which to judge the success of their own lives and others. In bourgeois society money is the dominant measure of man.\(^\text{420}\) Marx writes:

*Practical need, egoism,* is the principle of civil society and appears as such in all its purity as soon as civil society has fully brought forth the political state. The god of practical need and self-interest is money... Money debases all the gods of mankind and turns them into commodities. Money is the universal and self-constituted value of all things. It has therefore deprived the entire world - both the world of man and of nature - of its specific value. Money is the estranged essence of man's work and existence; this alien essence dominates him and he worships it. \(^\text{421}\)

Under the capitalist mode of production, only the prospect of money (profit/wage) determines what one can produce. Also, the receipt of money in exchange for one's labour power, and/or returns on one's investment, determines - in the main - the extent to which one can consume. If you do not watch your own back, and pay mind how you can gain and sustain flows of money in order to meet your needs, no one else will. In a free market and money driven economy the dominant, and dare say rational, strategy is to look to one's material (money) self-interest.

I hazard the following general claims. First, the harsher the conditions of exchange between producers, the sharper the social practices and the more single-minded the producer's conception of his self-interest. Second, the material and institutional pre-requisites of communism will soften the conditions of market exchange and allow for a broader understanding of self-interest to flourish. Under communism,

\(^{420}\)In our media age those in possession of material wealth automatically gain celebrity status. Also it seems as though it is irrelevant as to how individuals have gained their money, criminals seem to be as celebrated as thrifty, inventive and hard-working entrepreneurs.

\(^{421}\)On the Jewish Question, p.239, in Early Writings (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton. Elsewhere Marx writes:

"All emancipation is the reduction of the human world and of relationships to man himself. Political emancipation is the reduction of man on the one hand to the member of civil society, the egoistic, independent individual, and on the other to the citizen, the moral person.

Only when real, individual man resumes the abstract citizen into himself and as an individual has become a species-being in his empirical life, his individual work and relationships, only when man has
one's basic material needs are met independently of whether or not one produces. Opportunities for individuals to produce are governed directly by associations of producers, and indirectly by associations playing host to a system of market socialism (see later). As regards the latter system of production, there is less reason for producers to pursue market exchange and money at expense of values that inhere within social practices.

The assumption that moral behaviour is fundamentally self-sacrificing and basically other-regarding (altruistic), and that rationality demands that we only look to our narrow material interests in all material and social circumstances is questionable. In any case, communists are not championing altruism over and against egoism. Marx writes:

... communists do not put egoism against self-sacrifice or self-sacrifice against egoism, nor do they express this contradiction theoretically either in its sentimental or its high-flown ideological form... The communists do not preach morality at all... They do not put to people the moral demand: love one another, do not be egoists, etc.; on the contrary, they are very well aware that egoism, just as much as self-sacrifice, is in definite circumstances a necessary form of self-assertion of individuals. Hence, the communists by no means want... to do away with the "private individual" for the sake of the "general", self-sacrificing man...

The egoism-altruism dichotomy fails to capture the ways in which the social determination of the self can harmonise the pursuit of self-interest with the demands of morality. For Marxists, once the material and institutional basis of communism is in place, man is expected to motivated by self-interest, but his 'interests' and his 'self' are

---

422 These assumptions are taken to task in Jean Hampton's paper 'The Wisdom of the Egoist: The Moral and Political Implications of Valuing the Self' and in Kelly Roger's paper 'Beyond Self and Other'. Both papers are re-printed in Self-Interest (Cambridge, 1997), ed. Paul, Miller and Paul.

cast more widely and less cynically than the neo-conservatives.\textsuperscript{424} His self and his interests will be substantially fashioned through his participation in a particular social practice. Doctors, athletes and philosophers will be moved to produce in accord with \textit{who} they take themselves to be, given that they have developed, and have learnt to deploy, their capacities so as to address particular social needs. Thus, in a passage reminiscent of MacIntyre, Christine Korsgaard writes:

When you deliberate it is as if there were something over and above your desires, something which is \textit{you}, and which \textit{chooses} which desire to act on. This means that the principle or law by which you determine your actions is one that you regard as being expressive of \textit{yourself}.

The conception of one's identity... is not a theoretical one, a view about what as a matter of inescapable scientific fact you are. It is better understood as a description under which you value yourself, a description under which you find your life to be worth living and your actions worth undertaking. So I will call this a conception of your practical identity. Practical identity is a complex matter and for the average person there will be a jumble of such conceptions. You are a human being, a woman or a man, an adherent of a certain religion, a member of an ethnic group, a member of a certain profession, someone's lover or friend, and so on. And all of these identities give rise to reasons and obligations. Your reasons express your identity, your nature; your obligations spring from what that identity forbids.\textsuperscript{425}

Neo-conservatives believe that man is only prompted to produce if there is the prospect of personal gain or loss in external goods. However, as Elster remarks the history of science and art shows that man has not necessarily been primarily moved to create and produce with a view to monetary rewards.\textsuperscript{426} The prospect of money rewards, or a flight of fame, are not necessary conditions for forms of production in which the 'practical identity' of the individual is fashioned by her coming to know, appreciate and pursue goods internal to a particular social practice.

\textsuperscript{424}For a useful discussion of this point see John O'Neill's book \textit{The Market Ethics, Knowledge & Politics} (Routledge, 1998), p.168ff.

\textsuperscript{425}The \textit{Sources of Normativity} (Cambridge, 1996), p.100.

Of course I am not claiming that in a situation where practices become ‘socially central’ that no one will be moved to act in accordance with instrumental concerns such as the desire for money or fame, and that no one will view a practice simply as a means to realising such external goods. However, according to Aristotle, nature neither prejudices nor promotes an individual’s capacity to act in accordance with virtue. What is crucial is the social environment in which such potential either flourishes or is frustrated, and by which we become disposed (are habituated) to act in one way rather than another. For Aristotle, as for Marxists, our aim should be to construct the material and institutional basis of a society that makes the realisation of virtue more rather than less likely.

When practices are in good order there is no conflict between the interests of the producer and the social needs she addresses. When a mother addresses the needs of her child there is no antagonism between the mother’s private interests and the welfare of her child. Indeed, her coming to occupy the role of mother conditions her interests. Becoming, or being, a good mother is a matter of discovering, knowing and pursuing goods internal to the practice of parenthood. In the same way, becoming, or being, for example a footballer, an athlete, and a poet is a matter of discovering, appreciating and pursuing goods internal to the practice of football, running, and poetry. The want to be good in who one considers oneself to be, or who one is trying to become, is not an altruistic impulse.

Marx claims that:

When communist workmen gather together, their immediate aim is instruction, propaganda, etc. But at the same time they acquire a new need - the need for society - and what appears as a means has become an end. This practical development can be most strikingly observed in the gatherings of French socialist workers. Smoking, eating

---

and drinking, etc., are no longer means of creating links between people. Company, association, conversation, which in its turn has society as its goal, is enough for them. The brotherhood of man is not a hollow phrase, it is a reality, and the nobility of man shines forth upon us from their work-worn figures.  

The practical development which communists seek is the institution of free and independent associations of producers; the aim to set terms for man's civil association so that doctors can be doctors, philosophers can be philosophers, athletes can be athletes. What Marx terms 'socialised man' comes to be moved to act and produce in accordance with his practical identity as it has been formed within a determinate association of producers which aims to address particular needs within the community (medicine, philosophy, sport, etc.), rather than in accord with an identity as fashioned within bourgeois society, wherein money value and profit reign supreme.

3.13 A System of Associative Market Socialism

For Communists a central aim is to progress to a society in which individuals become able to develop, exercise and express their capacities by acquiring and applying forms of human knowledge, skill and creativity. Also, individuals should produce directly for social needs by primarily pursuing and realising goods internal to social practices, rather than indirectly through the pursuit of money (wage or profit). Capitalism frustrates these goals, first, by the existence of mundane labour, the worker is not able to occasion self-discovery/cultivation through the development, exercise and expression of their capacities. Second, by positing the goal of profit as the principal aim of production rather than the realisation of goods internal to practice.

---


429 The doctor who falsely diagnoses his patient in order to secure money from their health insurance ceases to be a doctor for the community. The athlete who uses performance-enhancing drugs in order to win, and thus secure lucrative sponsorship deals, ceases to be an athlete. The philosopher who scripts articles and
Earlier I claimed that an economy’s systems of healthcare and education are central for addressing the dual aspect of human needs and the promotion of the physical and ‘spiritual’ well being of a population. Production for healthcare and education needs play a decisive role in determining the life-hopes of individuals within a society. In healthcare and education there should be no prospect for conflict between the interests of producers and the community whose needs such producers must serve. Associations of producers must produce directly for social needs without the intervening prospect for profit. Healthcare and education professionals must simply direct their efforts to goods internal to their respective practices, and be seen to be doing so, in order to promote good physical functioning of individuals, and to engender the ability in each to achieve meaning and value in their lives through the development of their all-round and specialised capacities. In the transition from capitalism to communism we should aim for increases in the numbers of individuals engaging in such production so that a population becomes progressively better able to meet its educational and healthcare needs.

Similarly there are other spheres of production should be insulated from both arbitrary State directives and capitalist market exchange and money pressures. Thus individuals producing directly for social needs must meet the civil service, as well as the policing and defence needs of society. Also, those who work society’s legal and political process should produce in accordance with goods internal to their respective practices rather subordinate the demands of justice and the common good to the rule of money and market exchange.

books in order to suit the tastes or interests of his paymasters ceases to be a philosopher. (To a certain extent a scheme of unconditional basic income decreases one’s dependence upon a paymaster.)
At the one end of society we should have individuals producing directly for social needs without the intervening prospect for profit from their activity and products. At the other end of society we should have oligopolistic capitalist producers driving capital-intensive production facilities that service the mundane material wants of a population. Such producers should be set to maximise profits (minimise costs) from their enterprise by providing other businesses and consumers with goods and services. Oligopolistic capitalist producers should continue to be charged with supplying products within the primary, secondary and main strands of the tertiary sector of the global economy. They should also continue to drive humans out of the production processes that cater to our mundane material needs through the continued, and accelerated, trend towards the replacement of labour by capital factors.

In between purely communist and capitalist systems of production there can operate an 'associative' system of market socialism. In this section I will argue that a system of associative market socialism is required to service those aspects of social needs that can have a more commercial dimension.

The division between production that should fall within strictly communist structures, market socialism and oligopolistic capitalism is not hard and fast. There will inevitably be some overlap between social needs that are met through production within communist associations and worker co-operatives operating within an associative system of market socialism, and between worker co-operatives and oligopolistic capitalist enterprise. (There should be no overlap between the social needs addressed by associations of producers and oligopolistic capitalist enterprises.)

Thus oligopolistic capitalist corporations deploying and directing capital-intensive farming methods towards the food requirements of an economy can supply
agricultural goods alongside worker co-operatives that want to farm for niche food markets. The production for cultural and sporting life of the community should be managed by appropriate arts and sporting bodies that provide direction and funding for national and local centres of artistic and sporting excellence. However, alongside associations producing directly for social needs, worker co-operatives could run repertory theatres, art galleries and sports centres in accordance with local market demand for plays, paintings and fitness.

In what follows I set out a case for associative market socialism and contrast my view of how worker co-operatives can and should operate with claims made by current defenders of market socialism.

Market Socialism has many enthusiastic defenders and as many, if not more, detractors. I will be arguing that some of the central claims made in defence of market socialism, as a complete economic system by which to augment and regulate production for social needs are too grand. And, as a system that can and should play a role in future communism, it is, on current accounts, under-described. In my view the viability (practicability and desirability) of market socialism rests in such a system confining itself to production for consumer wants at the margins of agriculture and industry, and within the service sector of the economy. Also, the viability of market socialism requires a significant role for ‘associations’ enabling and regulating mainly knowledge and skills-based service sector trade.

David Miller argues a case for market socialism as a comprehensive economic system which avoids the inefficiencies of Socialist State planning and which is able to

430 For current defences of market socialism see David Miller Market, State & Community (Oxford, 1989), John Roemer A Future for Socialism (Verso, 1994) and Alec Nove The Economics of Feasible Socialism (George Allen & Unwin, 1983). For some trenchant criticisms of market socialism see John Gray’s book
match, and possibly emulate, the efficiency of market capitalism as regards the ability to
discover, satisfy and track consumer wants. Miller believes that a system of market
socialism can preserve the efficiency of market capitalism but is agnostic as regards
whether market socialism is superior to capitalism in this respect. David Miller does
argue that market socialism is superior to laissez-faire market capitalism from the
perspective of freedom and justice and that market socialism provides an answer to
socialist complaints as regards capitalist exploitation and the alienation of the worker.

In part one of this thesis I argued that Miller’s account of market socialism only
provides a partial prescription to capitalist alienation. In part two I argued that the
Marxian conception of freedom as self-realisation requires an individual to gain greater
control (self-determination) over his activity and products, however, those activities and
products must also be a forum for self-actualisation. Producers must be able to develop,
exercise and express their capacities by enjoining activities and effecting products
within a social practice. Miller’s conception of market socialism lacks an expressivist
dimension. In my view a system of market socialism needs to be supplemented with an
account of associations which enable individuals to efficiently produce for mainly local
market wants, and in accordance with goods internal to social practices. I will return to
this issue below, I first want to examine Miller’s claim regarding the efficiency of
market socialism as a ‘comprehensive’ economic system.

On Miller’s account, the salient features of a system of market socialism are as
follows. First, units of production are run by worker co-operatives. Within each co-
operative there is expected to be a worker democracy, each should have a say in the

Beyond the New Right Markets, Government & the Common Environment (Routledge, 1993), p.92ff and
his article ‘Socialism with a Professorial Face’ re-printed in Endgames (Polity, 1997).

running of the enterprise. Second, these co-operatives produce for profit through effecting market exchange for particular goods or services. Third, capital factors of production are supplied by State agencies and leased to viable co-operatives. Workers are expected to pay a return on leased capital and are then free to distribute the remaining profits amongst members of the co-operative.\(^\text{432}\)

As a complete or comprehensive economic system market socialists believe that every aspect of our economic life can be run in accordance with worker co-operatives producing goods and services for profit in the market place, and that such a system can preserve the virtue of efficiency as exhibited by market capitalism in the production of capital and consumer goods. When we refer to the merits of market capitalism we should bear in mind the fact that we are in an epoch of oligopolistic capital. As I argued earlier, production for mundane primary, secondary and tertiary sector wants is - in the main - driven, if not conducted, by oligopolistic industry and commerce. Given this economic reality, I have two main objections to level at market socialists here. The first concerns the conditions of labour and the second concerns the generation and allocation of capital.

**Labour.** Now, aside from decisions such as when to take your tea-break or holiday, substantive decisions within current capitalist organisations concerning investment, product portfolio, pricing, etc. are subject to a high degree of professionalism. Capitalist bureaucracy enacts highly sophisticated management systems to attend to such decisions. A call for greater say in the workplace is tantamount to curtailing or ending the division of labour in such matters and the efficiencies that accrue from such job specialisation. It may be argued that the worker co-operative will

be a much smaller scale productive unit so that each can have an input into their colleague's task. However, the scaling down of present productive units can only diminish the economies of scale which oligopolistic capitalist enterprises can secure, especially concerning innovation, invention, investment and risk in current and new markets.

Capital. As regards capital, Miller thinks that we can treat present capital holdings as exogenous to the construction of a market socialist economy. That is, we can attain a viable market socialist economy merely by 'equalising capital holdings, and converting current enterprises into worker co-operatives'. But it is false to assume that capital holdings are fixed, discrete, and open for re-distribution once they have taken the particular form within the capitalist enterprises they currently serve. It is false to assume that there is anything like the 'all-purpose' means of production waiting for us Socialists to appropriate and re-distribute amongst newly formed co-operative enterprises.

It could be argued that the Socialist State does not have to undertake wholesale nationalisation of the means of production but that it could start a scheme whereby it would, by a piecemeal process, develop capital inputs and then lease them to any group who wish to set up a worker co-operative. A question to ask here would be what capital factors will the State holds? Such factors cannot merely be as simple as hammers and nails. If capital holdings are going to be complex then their nature will be governed by the industry they function in and the particular commodities they help produce. On Miller's account such information would have to be gathered, held and relayed by the State. This, however, leads us to the traditional epistemological problems raised by libertarian critique of the State planning in circumstances of imperfect knowledge.
It could be argued that all that has to happen is that the workers are simply allowed to own and control existing (mainly) large-scale enterprises. This proposal only lead us back to the problem cited above, the democratisation of decision-making compromises efficiency gained from a specialisation and division of function. It may be argued that we should sacrifice some of the advantages of efficiency in order to secure progress in terms of the workers wanting to control and be responsible for the performance of the capitalist enterprises within which they are currently employed. However, there seems to be little evidence that workers would want to control, and bear the risks of success and failure, of current capitalist enterprises.

Miller claims that under his version of market socialism work would still be instrumental and profit would be the main motivation to produce. If work is instrumental for the worker, and he enjoins production simply to meet his needs outside of the work-place, then what he wants is security in work and the knowledge that he can rely upon a set income every month and into the future. Some might be tempted by the prospect of profit. However, if work is largely instrumental and is enjoined as a means to life, then why would anyone want to bear the burden (risk) of failures within a large-scale profit-maximising enterprise and hang around after work in order to discuss the product portfolio, product development, choice of production techniques, pricing/cost structures, and sources of supply for raw materials and capital?

Miller claims that all that is required is that the worker expects to, and will, derive some self-satisfaction from being involved in such decision-making so that, in his words, 'the machinery of industrial democracy does not atrophy'. Miller does advance some empirical evidence which reports that, when asked, workers would prefer to produce within firms which are owned and controlled by the employees, rather than
within a firm in which they are employed as wage-workers; where their productive activity is subject to the dictates of managers, and where the sale of their product serves the material interests of outside investors.\textsuperscript{433} However, there is a major jump from a revealed preference in theory to its working in practice. Oligopolistic corporations currently enact a high degree of specialisation and division of labour in its control over all aspects of their enterprise. Is the desire for workers to have control over the circumstances of mundane/profit-maximising production enough for them to ‘put the hours in’ and so sustain such an enterprise? Would workers, in practice, be able and willing to shoulder the responsibilities of owning and controlling, for example, a steel works, a canning factory or paper mill, producing for world markets? In my view a scheme of market socialism must be confined to mainly small-scale service sector production and that the \textit{teleological} basis of such production must be transformed. The prospect of self-realisation gained through developing, exercising and expressing one’s capacities must become the main spur to produce rather than profit and ‘self-satisfaction’ gained by having a greater input in bureaucratic decision-making procedures (see below).

Finally, it could be argued that the State does not have to involve itself in the making and distributing of capital inputs or concern itself with the transfer ownership rights in oligopoly capital. Instead, the State can augment a system of market socialism by loaning money to prospective worker co-operatives so that they can purchase their capital requirements in a free-market of capital goods serviced by other worker co-operatives. This is now looking very much like capitalism only it seems that the State will merely provide a nationalised industrial and commercial banking service. If a commercial bank loans money then its seeks collateral against its loan or else it bears the

risk of the success or failure of an enterprise. The privatisation of risk is thought to economise on waste. A profit-maximising bank will not extend credit to non-commercial enterprise and, if they do, only the bank and the entrepreneur lose out. If the State becomes charged with allocating credit then the risk of enterprise will be diffused within the State itself. The effects of bad investment decisions are not borne by particular institutions or individuals. A system could be devised in which a number of State banks (officials) are given a budget with which to invest in, and maximise revenue from, worker co-operatives producing within any sector of the economy. However, if a State bank (or State official) is made to suffer by its (his) bad decisions, and benefit from its (his) good decisions, then there does not seem much difference between capitalist and socialist industrial and commercial financing. If a State bank (or official) is insulated from the effects of its (his) decisions then such an arrangement will only replicate some of the attendant inefficiencies of Soviet-Style Socialism.

Oligopolistic Capitalism. My view is that, in the foreseeable future, oligopolistic capitalist organisations must continue to pursue profit (return on share capital) through production for our mundane agricultural, industrial and service sector requirements. Thus, our demand for wheat, fruits, coffee, spices, steel, coal, paper, plastics, semi-conductors, glass, etc. must be met through oligopolistic capitalist organisations continuing to develop capital-intensive systems of production for such global consumption needs. As for the question of ownership of such enterprises I suggested earlier that the traditional image of a capitalist, or a class of capitalists, owning and controlling the means of production increasingly fails to match the reality of oligopolistic capitalism. We are all potentially, if not actually, owners of oligopolistic share capital through subscription to pension funds and schemes of insurance. Whilst we
can in some sense be considered as common owners of capital it does not follow that we are thereby controllers of capital. As owners we expect a financial return on our investment (savings) through profits generated by oligopolistic enterprise. However, the dogged pursuit of profit on the part of those who direct and manage corporate capital can lead to the sacrifice of values which inhere within the social practices of a community, as well as more general values such as workers' rights, public safety and respect for the environment.

Oligopolistic Capitalist enterprise requires regulation. As is the case at present, particular associations such as OfTel, OfWat and OfGen monitor the economics of oligopolistic enterprise. Such associations should continue to monitor the capital, product and investment strategies of Oligopoly Capital; the costs and profits that accrue to the various divisions and subsidiaries of Oligopolistic Capitalist enterprises; and regulate pricing of Oligopolistic Capitalist goods and services. The political system should enact laws and fund agencies that regulate capitalist organisation so as to protect labour standards, public safety and the environment. As I suggested earlier, in the face of new constraints placed upon the Nation State, the regulation and monitoring of Oligopolistic Capitalist production does require, and will increasingly require, regulation by supra-national and international systems of legal and fiscal power.

**Associations & Market Socialism.** In what follows I discuss the following questions: What sphere of production can and should a system of market socialism service? How can we avoid lapsing into the kinds of epistemological and motivational problems that pertain to current accounts of market socialism? In what circumstances is a system of market socialism to be preferred over a system of free (oligopolistic) market capitalism?
The advent of capital-intensive production, and a scheme of an unconditional basic income, can form the material framework for a system of 'associative' market socialism. A system of associative market socialism would (mainly) cater to the satisfaction of wants within the service sector of the economy, and would enable individuals to practice some craft or ply a trade. Appropriate associations of producers would facilitate and regulate the activities and products of small-scale and otherwise independent worker co-operatives producing for local market wants.

Associations would be formed and function in a way similar to present day professional, guild and trading associations only, instead of being a voluntary group which represents and furthers the money interests of its members (producers), an association will aim to promote good practice given the interests of both producers and consumers. Scepticism about the utility of associations does stem from the fact that particular associations have traditionally functioned as groups that simply exist to further the material interests of their members. They worked to build and protect the oligopolistic power of their members. They would bid up the price of goods and serve as apologists for malpractice. The recent B.S.E. crisis in Britain shows the way in which the Meat and Livestock Association simply functioned to further the money interests of

---

434 John O'Neill claims that the history of associations fuelled the scepticism of both Adam Smith and Karl Marx as to their utility. He writes: "For Smith, professional associations, trade associations, guilds and the traditional self-governing university are conspiracies against the public, concerned with the pursuit of sectional interests at the expense of those of consumers." O'Neill also writes: "A fault in Marx is that, in his criticism of Hegel, he accepts Smith's empirical claim that modern market economies would be premised on the disappearance of associations and shares something of his normative case against them." See The Market Ethics, Knowledge & Politics (Routledge, 1998), p.110ff.

Smith posits an historical/predictive claim as to the past and future workings of associations. O'Neill cites a passage from Marx's 'On the Jewish Question', p.232, Early Writings (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), which he takes to be Marx confirming Smith's historical/predictive claims. To my mind Marx only confirms Smith's historical claims. In his later writings Marx does speak of a future communism in which 'the associated producers' and 'socialised man' governs the system of production and the satisfaction of our needs. One of the main aims of this chapter is to cash out what Marx may have meant by such remarks. I don't believe, as O'Neill claims, that: "Marx shares Smith's failure to recognise the normative significance of particular associations and the modes of individuals recognition they can embody."
its members. Farming practices such as feeding of the ground up carcasses of dead cows to living cattle, as well as injecting livestock in general with antibiotics, kept feed costs low and meat yields high for the farmer. A farmer’s profits were maximised, however, such practices were detrimental to the interests of the consumer and, as it happened, the long term interests of the farmer. CJD and increased immunity from the effects of antibiotics in the event of illness were the result of such practices.

We have already seen numerous examples in which the real interests of consumers are not served where producers pursue external goods at the expense of goods internal to practice(s). In a communist society associations would function as a bulwark against such tendencies. They would act as conduits for certain kinds of knowledge for the benefit of those who work to provide for particular social needs, and those who aim to meet their wants through market exchange. Associations would be charged with fostering best practice by producers and by informing the general public as to the standards they can expect for their money. Associations can provide small-scale worker co-operatives with many of the economies of scale secured by oligopolistic capitalist enterprise. They would facilitate market socialist trade by (i) administering start-up grants and loans for the purchase of fixed and variable capital, (ii) providing/directing education for particular skills, and (iii) giving advice on running a production facility and, in particular, how to control operating costs and generate revenue from the sale of goods and services.

If an enterprise were not able to service its loan and/or the community in accordance with standards devised by an appropriate association, then it would fold. To prevent such an eventuality, associations would offer advice regards sources of supply for fixed and variable capital, logistical and operational advice, and they would survey
costs and revenues accruing to trade within particular areas across an economy. This information can then be transmitted to educational establishments so that courses of study can be tailored accordingly and those embarking on a career can bear such market opportunities in mind. An association of producers would play host to a system of market socialism in which a multitude of small-scale producers would be spread throughout any modern industrial economy and produce for mainly local needs. In short, associations would provide the epistemological and financial foundations for socialist rather than a free/oligopolistic capitalist market economy.435

Thus, if an individual, or a small group of individuals, wanted to set up a small enterprise such as, for example, a hairdressing salon, a tailoring establishment, a bar, a coffee house, a hotel, a restaurant, a fashion house or a specialist/niche retail outlet then a scheme of market socialism could come into operation and would preferable to free/oligopolistic market capitalism. At present such trade is subject to the disciplines of market capitalism and such production is mainly performed by low-paid and ‘flexible’ wage-workers. Also an increasing proportion of high street service sector trade is becoming dominated by oligopolistic enterprise. The commercial life our major town and cities, and in foreign towns and cities, seem to look pretty much alike. Corporate capitalism is honing a homogenisation of our commercial culture where instead we want pluralism. We should stem the ‘Starbucks-isation’ of our high streets by encouraging the creativity of small scale and independent local producers.

It is commonly thought that communists are opposed to individual enterprise and that the flourishing of individual creativity and expressions of the entrepreneurial spirit

435 At present financing for small scale production is often difficult to secure through the commercial banking sector. In the UK the State, as well as charities such as the Princes’ Trust, already provides start-up loans and lines of credit for budding entrepreneurs. A system of market socialism will simply elevate such schemes.
can only obtain under free-market capitalism. Libertarian defenders of capitalism caricature socialist opponents as wanting the provision of all capital and consumer goods to be generated, owned and allocated by means of central State command and control; and for distribution of the economic product (income and wealth) to be rendered consistent with some metric of equality. Against such collectivist and egalitarian aims critics of Socialism invoke an image of the lone individual who simply wants to use his own talents and better himself and others through private market exchange. Thus, in his discussion of Socialists, and their attitude to free exchange, Jonathan Wolff pits the following aspirations of a budding entrepreneur against the Soviet-style Socialist regime in which he lives:

I wanted since childhood to open a shop, so that any folk could come in and buy. Along with it would be a snack bar, so that the customers could have a bit of roast meat, if they like, or a drink. I would serve them cheap, too. I’d let them have real village food. Baked potato! Bacon fat with garlic! Sauerkraut! I’d give them bone-marrow as a starter, a measure of vodka, a marrow bone, and black bread of course, and salt. Leather chairs, so that lice don’t breed. The customer could sit and rest and be served. If I were to say this out loud, I’d have been sent straight to Siberia. And yet, say I, what harm would I do to people. 436

Robert Nozick famously claims that: ‘The Socialist society would forbid capitalist acts between consenting adults’. 437 However, as regards the above example, Alec Nove reminds us that: ‘nowhere does Marx say that the petty bourgeoisie should be eliminated by the socialist police!’

There are two distinct issues raised here by critics of Socialism. There is, firstly, their caricature of Socialism and, secondly, their claims concerning the capitalist alternative to their presentation of ‘Socialism’.

---


Libertarian critics of Socialism posit the image of the enterprising individual, and of his liberty being upset by a collectivist and egalitarian State lording it over an economy that is essentially comprised of individuals trying to contract and effect ‘face-to-face’ exchanges with one another. Libertarians invoke such an image in an epoch where oligopolistic capital drives, if not conducts, almost every aspect of the production, distribution and retail of goods and services within actually functioning capitalism. The opportunity to exchange one’s labour for a wage and thus to develop, exercise and express oneself (or not) in production is largely determined by structures developed and sustained by oligopolistic enterprise. Also, the opportunity to satisfy one’s needs by exchanging money (wages) for goods is largely determined by a range fashioned by oligopolistic enterprise. The point for Alienation Marxists is to get the individual back in. An aim of Marxian Socialism is to channel positive developments occurring within oligopolistic capitalism, however, we also seek to contain and offset the power and reach of oligopoly capital so that we can enrich our opportunities to produce and consume. The development of (oligopolistic) capital-intensive manufacture, a scheme of basic income and the augmentation of a system of associative market socialism are means to that end.

Returning to our frustrated entrepreneur, he does not sound like the archetypal ‘money-bags’ capitalist out to exploit workers, resources and consumers simply for the sake of profit. He expresses a rather ordinary human aspiration. Our prospective cafe-owner wants to make something of himself by deploying his creativity, enterprise and energies within a particular trade. He wants to create and sustain something of his own, and feel that he is playing a role within the practical, social and expressive life of the community. In his stead we can put individuals who, for example, master the art of
tailoring, cooking, and hairdressing and who subsequently, and primarily, seek to ply their trade as tailors, chefs, and hairdressers rather than simply aim to use their skills and abilities to maximise profits. The realisation of such ambitions can and should be made easier under communism. Capital-intensive production, an unconditional basic income, and the institution of associations hosting a system of market socialism can make the formation of such aspirations, and their fulfilment, more common.

We can distinguish between profit seeking at the expense of values (the 'money-bags' capitalist) and the pursuit and realisation of values (goods internal to social practices) which coincides with profit. The task of an association that plays host to a system of market socialism is to promote the latter. Nozick claims that Socialists would 'forbid capitalist acts between consenting adults'. He is correct if he is referring to the first kind of exchange and wrong if he includes the second kind. A socialist aim is to regulate and institutionalise the first kind of exchange out of existence.

As I claimed earlier, the institution of a scheme of unconditional basic income means that that producers are able to meet their basic needs in absence of commanding a return on goods and services in the market. As less of a producer's material well being is contingent on returns gained in the market, the producer has less of an incentive to cheat his customers and pursue profits at the expense of the virtues. The Marxian hope is that their main motivation to produce consists in the will to exercise and express the capacities they have developed, and to produce in accordance with goods internal to a social practice.

*Soviet Socialist Collectivism & Liberal Socialist Egalitarianism.* As regards the supposed collectivist and egalitarian aims of Socialism, State ownership and control in the means of production and equality in the distribution of the social product (income
and wealth) are taken to exhaust the goals of socialism. The Libertarian Right set out their own positions through a critique of such aims whilst some socialists posit such goals as totems towards which we should march, and around which we should marvel. Now, I am not denying that the legacy of Soviet Socialism gave most a reasonable cause to believe that Marxian Socialism entails a commitment to State ownership and control in the mean of production. Also, I am not denying that the aim of distributing the socialist/capitalist social product in accordance with some metric of equality powers the endeavours of (Liberal) Socialist philosophers and activists. However, I am claiming that neither of these aims were intended by Marx to be characteristic of future communist society, and that such goals should not form any part of a Marxian Socialist political philosophy.

In part one of this thesis we saw that in his 1844 Manuscripts Marx wrote that the imposition of common ownership, in circumstances where the social product still requires the mass performance of wage-labour, simply transforms the State into an 'abstract capitalist'. In the Communist Journal (September 1847), Marx explicitly distanced himself from 'those communists who are out to destroy liberty and who want to turn the world into one large barracks or gigantic workhouse.' On the supposed egalitarian goals of Marxism, there is no textual evidence, which indicates that Marx envisaged the development from capitalism-to-communism to consist in the achievement of a more egalitarian distribution of income and wealth. In fact there are remarks to the contrary.438 In part one we saw that Marx in his 1865 pamphlet ‘Value, Price & Profit’ wrote that equality on the basis of wage-labour only amounts to a ‘better payment for slaves’. An egalitarian (re)distribution of the socialist/capitalist economic

product is neither sufficient nor necessary for the fulfilment of the Alienation Marxist aims set out in this thesis.

Marx’s primary normative concerns were centred in the conditions of human production. There is no ‘virtue’ to be had by having the means of production and consumption subject to Central State ownership and control, and there is no ‘virtue’ in the achievement of equality in the distribution of income and wealth across persons in society. What is of paramount importance, given the account of Marxian Socialism that I have been defending in this thesis, is that we achieve a society where each is able to (at least) meet their basic material needs, and where each are able to occasion meaning and value in their lives through the development, exercise and expression of our respective capacities. The material and institutional basis of communism is a basic income and associations of producers that provide opportunities for each to produce in accord with goods internal to social practices.

G.A. Cohen cites the fact that in ‘1988, the ratio of top executive salaries to production worker wages was 6.5 to 1 in West Germany and 17.5 to 1 in the United States’ and claims that, from the point of view of the re-distributive goals of Socialism, West Germany was a more just society than the United States.439 Also, John Roemer claims that an equality of income is desirable because it will promote community in a socialist society since community ‘is fostered, inter alia, by equality of condition’.440 However, it does not follow simply from the fact that one society has a more egalitarian income differential than another, that it is any more Socialist, in the Alienation Marxian sense defended in this thesis. Also, the route to community is not achieved through


effecting an equality of incomes but, as I have been arguing, by citizens of a socialist society coming to share in, pursue and realise goods internal to social practices.

Of course money is valued in a capitalist market exchange economy. Most, if not all, would prefer more money to less. The amount of money that an individual is able to command determines her freedom to consume (and command the market-driven product of another) and her freedom to abstain from self-sacrificing production.\(^{441}\)

On consumption I have argued that, in addition to a scheme of unconditional basic income, we should seek to decrease our dependence upon the market exchange and money sector economy. We should aim to meet more of our practical and expressive needs through the development of our own 'all-round' and 'specialised' powers and capacities.\(^{442}\) Over time, and as we achieve growth in capital-intensive production capacity, there can be progressive increases in the level of basic income so that eventually a basic income progresses to an adequate income that then becomes an income that covers more than what the average person needs to function well physically as well as access goods that enable her exercise and express her developed powers and capacities.\(^{443}\)

On production I have argued that we must put in place the subjective and objective conditions for the individual to achieve self-realisation in production. On a

\(^{441}\) Production is experienced as self-sacrifice if one fails to develop, exercise and express their own capacities in their work, that is, if mundane, stupefying and stultifying tasks dominate one's production. Work is also experienced as a self-sacrifice if one is made to subordinate the exercise and expression of one's developed capacities to the demands of money (external goods) rather than goods internal to the social practices which give meaning and value to the development of particular human capacities. (That is, unless one is largely or wholly driven by money, and if one judges the success of one's own life by the amount of money one is able to command.)

\(^{442}\) See part two section 2.5 'Consumer Society' and part three section 3.122 'Communism Contra Neo-Conservatism'.

\(^{443}\) Marxian freedom as self-realisation requires that those who are unable to produce, such as the elderly, infirm and handicapped, should receive entitlement to in-kind and in-cash benefits that enables them to
subjective level, communism requires the all-round and specialised development of our powers and capacities. On an objective level it requires that we secure the material and institutional basis of a society in which the individual can exercise and express her developed capacities. In this way, rather than work being experienced as self-sacrifice, we must aim to construct and maintain associations of meaningful production so that work becomes 'life's prime want'.

3.4 Conclusion

In the Critique of the Gotha Programme Marx claims that a communist norm of production and distribution can (will) only come into effect once,

... the enslaving subjugation of individuals to the division of labour, and thereby the anti-thesis between intellectual and physical labour, have disappeared; when labour is no longer just a means of keeping alive but has itself become a vital need.”

Over the course of this chapter I have been arguing that the route to communism consists in the following. First, that oligopolistic capitalist development issues in capital-intensive production for our mundane material wants across the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors of the economy. Second that the advent of capital intensive production allows for, and requires, a scheme of unconditional basic income. Third, that the replacement of labour by capital factors within the capitalist production process can and should correspond to a greater development of our individualities. Fourth, that the fruition of our individualities, through the development, exercise and expression of our respective capacities, requires an understanding and application of Alisdair MacIntyre's idea of a social practice. Fifth, that production for social needs that requires the development, exercise and expression of our capacities, and which coincides with the realisation of goods internal to social practices, should be directed by function well physically and, as far as possible, to enable them to occasion meaning in their lives through development, exercise and expression of their capacities.
appropriate 'associations' of producers. Sixth, I argued associations of producers must come to conduct production, in the case of healthcare and education; facilitate production, in the case of market socialism; and regulate production, in the case of profit-maximising and capital-intensive activities of oligopolistic capitalist firms. Paraphrasing Marx: '… socialised man, the associated producers', must come to 'govern the metabolism man needs to effect' between himself and inorganic nature 'in a rational way, accomplishing it with the least expenditure of energy and in conditions most worthy and appropriate for human nature'.

Only once we have understood, acted upon and delivered the material and social pre-requisites of communism will "... the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly – only then can society cross the narrow horizon of bourgeois right and inscribe on its banner: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!" 444

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works by Karl Marx & Frederick Engels

Karl Marx

Early Writings

Revolutions of 1848 Political Writings Vol.1
(Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), ed. David Fernbach

Surveys from Exile Political Writings Vol.2
(Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), ed. David Fernbach

The First International & After Political Writings Vol.3
(Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992), ed. David Fernbach

Grundrisse (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993), tr. Martin Nicolaus

Capital Vol.1 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), tr. Ben Fowkes

Capital Vol.3 (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1991), tr. David Fernbach

Selected Writings (Oxford, 1977), ed. David McLellan

Marx & Engels

The German Ideology
(Lawrence & Wishart, 1974 second edition), ed. C.J. Arthur

The Communist Manifesto A Modern Edition (Verso, 1998),
introduced by Eric Hobsbawm

Selected Works in One Volume


Frederick Engels Anti-Duhring
Other Works

Aristotle


Richard Ameson
- ‘Meaningful Work & Market Socialism’ in *Ethics* 97 (April 1987)

Hilliard Aronovitch
- ‘Marxian Morality’

Shlomo Avineri *Karl Marx: Social & Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1968)

Thomas Barlow ‘Science Plo’ in *Prospect* August/September 1999

Terence Ball & James Farr, eds., *After Marx* (Cambridge, 1984)


Brian Barry
- *Political Argument* (University of California Press, 1990 re-issue)


Daniel Bell *Communitarianism & Its Critics* (Clarendon: Oxford, 1993)


Eduard Bernstein *Evolutionary Socialism* (Schocken Books, 1961)

Robert Boyer & Daniel Drache, eds.,
States Against Markets The Limits of Globalisation (Routledge, 1996)

F.H. Bradley Ethical Studies (Clarendon: Oxford, 1876)

Harry Braverman Labour & Monopoly Capital (Monthly Review Press, 1974)

George Brenkert Marx's Ethics of Freedom (Routledge, 1983)


Allen Buchanan 'Exploitation, Alienation & Injustice'
Canadian Journal of Philosophy, vol.IX, no.1, March 1979


Albert Camus The Myth Of Sisyphus (Penguin, 1975)

G.A. Cohen
- Self-Ownership, Freedom & Equality (Cambridge, 1995)
- 'Forces & Relations of Production' in Cohen (1988)
- 'On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice' in Ethics 99 (July 1989)
- 'Incentives, Inequality & Community' in The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Volume XIII (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992)
- 'Commitment Without Reverence' Imprints, Vol.1 no.1 June 1996
- 'Where the Action Is: On the Site of Distributive Justice’ in Philosophy & Public Affairs, Winter 1997, Volume 26, number 1


Gary Cutting Pragmatic Liberalism & the Critique of Modernity (Cambridge, 1999)

Guy Debord
- The Society of Spectacle (Zone Books, 1995)
- Comments on the Society of Spectacle (Verso, 1998)

Michael Dummett Frege: Philosophy of Mathematics (Duckworth, 1991)

Gerald Dworkin The Theory & Practice of Autonomy (Cambridge, 1988)
Jon Elster
- Explaining Technical Change (Cambridge, 1983)
- Making Sense of Marx (Cambridge, 1985)
- An Introduction to Karl Marx (Cambridge, 1986)
- ‘Self-realisation in work & politics: the Marxist conception of the good life’


Ludwig Feuerbach The Essence of Christianity
(Harper Torch Books, 1957), tr. George Elliot and intro. by Karl Barth

Harry Frankfurt The Importance of What We Care About (Cambridge, 1998)

Sigmund Freud Civilisation, Society & Religion (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985)


Andrew Gamble Hayek The Iron Cage of Liberty (Polity Press, 1996)

Norman Geras ‘The Controversy about Marx & Justice’
re-printed in Alex Callinicos, ed., (1989)

Alan Gilbert Democratic Individuality (Cambridge, 1990)

John Gray
- Beyond the New Right Markets, Government & the Common Environment
  (Routledge, 1993)
- Endgames (Polity Press, 1997)
- False Dawn The Delusions of Global Capitalism (Granta, 1998)


David Harvey The Condition of Postmodernity (Blackwell, 1990)

Geoffrey Hawthorn, ed., The Standard of Living Tanner Lectures by Amartya Sen 1985
(Cambridge, 1988)

F.A. Hayek
- ‘The Use of Knowledge in Society’ (1949)
  Both papers are in Individualism & the Economic Order (Routledge, 1949)
- The Road to Serfdom (Routledge, 1962)
  (Routledge, 1982)
- The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism
  (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988)
Fred Hirsch *The Social Limits to Growth*  
(Routledge, 1976 revised edition), with forward by Tibor Scitovsky


Michael Howe *Genius Explained* (Cambridge, 1999)

Thomas Hurka *Perfectionism* (Oxford, 1993)

Ziyad Husami ‘Marx on Distributive Justice’  


Eric & Mary Josephson, eds., *Man Alone Alienation in Modern Society* (Dell, 1962)

Philip Kain *Marx & Ethics* (Clarendon: Oxford, 1988)

John Kay  
- ‘Good Business’ in *Prospect*, issue 28, March 1998  
- ‘Regulation by Rules or By Values’  
in *Social Market & the State* (Social Market Foundation, 1999),  
ed. Alastair Kilmarnock

Christine Korsgaard *The Sources of Normativity* (Cambridge, 1996)


Will Kymlicka  

Charles Larmore *Patterns of Moral Complexity* (Cambridge, 1987)

Alasdair MacIntyre  
- *After Virtue* (Duckworth, 1985 second edition)  
- *Marxism & Christianity* (Duckworth, 1995 second edition)  
- *A Short History of Ethics* (Routledge, 1998 second edition)  

Andrew Mason ‘MacIntyre on Modernity & How It Has Marginalised the Virtues’  

David McLellan  
- *Karl Marx A Biography* (Papermac, 1995)

Mary Midgley *Beast & Man The Roots of Human Nature*  
(Routledge, 1995 second edition)
John Stuart Mill
- On Liberty (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974)
- Utilitarianism & Other Essays (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987)

David Miller

Geoffrey Miller ‘Waste is Good’ in Prospect, February 1999

Richard Miller
- Analysing Marx (Princeton, 1984)

William Morris ‘Art & Socialism’ in Political Writings of William Morris (Lawrence & Wishart, 1973), ed. A.L. Morton

Alan Nasser ‘Marx’s Ethical Anthropology’ Philosophy & Phenomenological Research Vol.35, June 1975


Alec Nove The Economics of Feasible Socialism (George Allen & Unwin, 1983)

Robert Nozick Anarchy, State & Utopia (Blackwell, 1974)

Martha C. Nussbaum

Martha C. Nussbaum & Amartya Sen, eds., The Quality of Life (Clarendon: Oxford, 1993)

John O’Neill The Market Ethics, Knowledge & Politics (Routledge, 1998)

Ellen Frankel Paul, Fred D. Miller & Jeffrey Paul, eds.
- Socialism (Blackwell, 1989)
- Liberalism & the Economic Order (Cambridge, 1993)
- The Communitarian Challenge to Liberalism (Cambridge, 1996)
- Self-Interest (Cambridge, 1997)

Jeffrey Paul & Fred D. Miller ‘Communitarian & Liberal Theories of the Good’ Review of Metaphysics, 43 (June 1990)

John Plamenatz *Ideology* (MacMillan, 1971)


Melvin Rader *Marx’s Interpretation of History* (Oxford, 1979)

Peter Railton ‘Alienation, Consequentialism & the Demands of Morality’ in Scheffler (1988)

John Rawls


John Roemer
- *A Future for Socialism* (Verso, 1994)

Steven Rose *Lifelines Biology, Freedom & Determinism* (Penguin, 1998)

Alan Ryan ‘The American Way’ *Prospect*, August 1999


Adina Schwartz ‘Meaningful Work’ in *Ethics* 92 (July 1982)


Christopher Tugendhat ‘Pure Profit’ in *Prospect*, issue 31, June 1998

Charles Taylor
- *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Harvard University Press, 1991)
- *Philosophical Arguments* (Harvard University Press, 1995)


Phillipe Van Parijs
- *Marxism Recycled* (Cambridge, 1993)

Marx Wartofsky *Feuerbach* (Cambridge, 1977)
Ludwig Wittgenstein *Philosophical Investigations*  


Jonathan Wolff  
- *An Introduction to Political Philosophy* (Oxford, 1996)  
- ‘Playthings of Alien Forces’ in *Cogito* 6/1 1992

Allen Wood  
- ‘Marx’s Critical Anthropology’ in *Review of Metaphysics* 26 (1972)  
- ‘The Marxian Critique of Justice’  
- ‘Marx on Right & Justice’  
- *Karl Marx* (Routledge, 1981)  

Nicholas Xenos *Scarcity & Modernity* (Routledge, 1989)

Andrew Zimbalist, ed., *Case Studies on the Labour Process*  
(Monthly Review Press, 1979)