

TOWARD AN EMANCIPATORY SOCIAL SCIENCE

Lecture 1: The Road Not to be Taken

I

In these lectures I shall set out and defend a conception of an emancipatory social science. The form I articulate is that of a Marxian emancipatory social science and I will search for something of contemporary import and relevance. It is, as is a Durkheimian, Weberian and Habermasian social science, a comprehensive and systematic social science trying to show what the structure of societies are and how they function and to characterize how social life is in different societies at different times for different peoples differently situated. I shall in the first lecture come to grips with historicist Hegelian Marxism which, besides being a philosophy, tries to set out an emancipatory social science. It was the account of Marx and Engels and of the dominant Marxist tradition, though I do not suggest they all sang the same tune. They did not. Not even Marx and Engels. But they all, as distinct from utopian socialists, sought to develop scientific accounts in what for them found its scientificity in what they called the dialectical method (Wood 2004, 195-226). And their social science, they thought, was rooted in it. It was crucial, they also thought, that their economic-political-historical accounts, which were also revolutionary, would take a recognizable scientific form while remaining resolutely a dialectical one. Moreover, their account would not just be a philosophical and/or a moralizing narrative. (It could be one without the other.) It is the trajectory of epochal historical social change as construed by historicist Hegelian Marxism (classical Marxism) and emancipatory social science that goes with it that will be at the center of my attention in this first lecture.

In the second lecture I shall come to grips with analytical Marxism and its conception of an emancipatory social science. It is a form of Marxism that is sometimes derided (falsely, I believe) as being a purely Scholastic academic Marxism of the seminar room. (It is that but not just that.) I shall characterize and criticize some things in it and defend others and argue, honing in my third lecture on my own form of analytical Marxianism, a form that is historicist and holistic without taking a Hegelian historicist or Hegelian holistic turn, a turn that utilizes a dialectical form. My historicism and holism is something that is standardly rejected by analytical Marxists. But I shall be a maverick here. I shall, however, generally be concerned to defend analytical Marxism and its conception of social science, a social science that travels philosophically light. (Though it should be said this is less so of one of its central framers, namely, G. A. Cohen.)

For both Hegelian Marxist and analytical Marxist accounts there are problems—perhaps devastatingly so—that must be addressed. We must address, among other things, how they, if they can, can be both a science and be emancipatory. Perhaps ‘emancipatory social science’ is an oxymoron. We can and should agree with Max Weber in rejecting a moralizing social science without agreeing with him that social science must be ‘value free’ or even can be ‘value free’. But we still need to explain how a social science can be emancipatory and remain a science. How it can, if it can, remains ‘a deep problem’ that we should approach with trepidation.

I should also add in making these preliminary remarks that there is a prominent meta-philosophical subtext running throughout these lectures as well as I hope to the point, some autobiographical remarks. Perhaps the metaphilosophical is too prominent? Metaphilosophy is something with me, atypical for a philosopher, which has been an obsession through most of my philosophical life. What is the point of philosophy (if any) is something I can’t help but keep on asking. I keep wondering why most other philosophers don’t. And if we can give a compelling answer to that question *about* and *of* philosophy, what is it and how should philosophy be done? What kind of avoidances, if any, shall we engage in here? I shall come to grips again with these and

related matters in the context of discussing the possibility and feasibility of an emancipatory social science and in facing what is sometimes called anti-moralism (Wood 1995; 2004, 143-58; McCarney 2000, 85-119). However, I shall in detail examine metaphilosophy in my final lecture and confront its relevance for an emancipatory social science for socialism.

In this first lecture I shall take Joseph McCarney as my exemplar of Hegelian historicist Marxism at its best. I have long admired his work. His unfortunately neglected book, *The Real World of Ideology*, is the best book on ideology that I have read (McCarney 1980). It turned around my belief that to have an ideology it was necessary to have a distorted view of the world. It of course frequently—very frequently—is but not invariably. Rather, an ideology is a set of beliefs and practices which answers to or serves class interests and has a distinctive role to play in the class struggle.¹ It is a cluster of beliefs, perceptions and practices that functions, or at least purports to function, to serve the interests of a class or sometimes of several classes. In any class society with its class conflicts there will an ideology: a dominant class and the ideologies of the challenging classes. In a capitalist society the dominant ideology will serve capitalist class interests; in a socialist society the dominant ideology will serve socialist class interests. If we ever get to what Marx and Engels regarded as a communist world, there will be no ideology because there will be no classes and eventually no consciousness of class except in the historical sense that we will have a historical knowledge that there once were classes.

No social theory in class societies, no matter what the beliefs of its articulators, can rise above all ideology. This is as true of Marx as anyone else. To think that we can rise above all ideology is one of the ways an ideology can be illusory as well as give us false beliefs about why we do what we do. Yet one class view can be more adequate—more warrantably assertable—than another. Indeed some class views are not warrantably assertable at all. Marx's class view may be more adequate than Ricardo's or Hegel's views. One class view may in one way or another be distorting and another not distorting at all, though all class views will at least purportedly be in the

interests of a class or classes and will be unavoidably perspectival. But a 'distorting perspective' is not a redundancy and a 'non-distorting view' is not a contradiction. A Marxian can and will claim the latter quite consistently, though perhaps mistakenly, for Marx's view. That is, he will claim Marx's view is inescapably perspectival but not distortingly so. Marx's view, a plainly proletarian class view, may not be distorted. One crucial task for a Marxist is to show that it is not.

McCarney's *Social Theory and the Crisis of Marxism* is also a wonderful book (McCarney 1990a). His criticism of critical theory seems to me right on (McCarney 1990a, 17-65). In this too he has changed my mind. I used to think what we as Marxians should now be doing is to articulate or, if you will, construct a critical theory of society working from something like Jürgen Habermas's account of a critical theory before he became so Kantian—a view more clearly and cogently expressed by what I take (controversially) to be his most astute commentator, Raymond Guess, in his *The Idea of a Critical Theory* (Guess 1981). I tried in a series of essays to push such an account along (Nielsen 1992; 1993a; 1993b; 1993c). I took it then that the very idea of 'a critical theory of society' was plainly unproblematic and could be unproblematically Marxian. (This does not mean I thought Habermas or any of the Frankfurt School to be giving a Marxian account—in the general conception (the form) of critical theory they developed—but that a critical theory could and should be. Such a conception could, that is, be utilized by a Marxian and indeed should be.)

However, McCarney has well argued in his *Social Theory and the Crisis of Marxism* that the very idea of a critical theory of society is both problematic and unMarxist and that it should not be adopted by an emancipatory social science. His argument for this is both astute and complicated. In spite of the fact that it seemed to be obvious that all of us, Marxists or not, who were doing anything of any scope that we conceived of as a social science contributing to emancipation, thought that we were doing critical theory. Indeed, almost by definition, we thought what we were doing should be regarded as a critical theory of society; perhaps we were doing it very inadequately but it would be critical theory all the same. But I now think what I and many others took to be

unproblematic—and obviously so—was not unproblematic. Here again my head, though a little less definitively, has been turned around. McCarney has well argued that this very way of conceptualizing things is mistaken or at the very least problematic and it should not be adopted by an emancipatory social science (McCarney 1990a). I now have come to think that McCarney's argument is probably sound. (This 'dark saying' will later be explicated.)

There is another way that McCarney has changed my views. I used to think that when we talk of the contradictions of capitalism or of any mode of production that the term 'contradiction' should be taken to signify 'deep and intractable structural conflicts'. McCarney, building on the work of Roy Edgley (another philosopher I admire), has given us good reason to believe that we are speaking here of literal contradictions. 'Contradiction' is used there as when we speak of two propositions being contradictory. To simplify, but I hope not distort his account, we should say that if we can unproblematically speak of propositions being contradictory we can also speak of beliefs (after all, if expressed, they contain propositions) being contradictory. Indeed, we could not have beliefs without having the propositions proper to them. We can also say the same thing of practices which contain beliefs which contain propositions of forces of production, relations of production, and modes of production. These forces, relations and modes are practices with clusters of beliefs and again their propositions. The forces and relations of production in revolutionary situations come into conflict and in doing so are said to contain contradictions. 'Contradictions' is again used in a straightforward literal sense. (Whether as well they actually contain contradictions or just *intractable* conflicts which for their resolution require a change in the mode of production and with this a revolution are distinct matters. But whatever is said here it doesn't and shouldn't require using 'contradiction' in some distinct and perhaps esoteric sense.)

In Chapter 6 of *Social Theory and the Crisis of Marxism* and also in his "An Emancipatory Science of Society" and "Recent Interpretations of Ideology", Joseph McCarney considers (on the road to affirming it) how "a non-normative theory may be conceived as . . . an emancipatory science

of society” (McCarney 2007, 225-35; 1985, 77-93). He asks, and then attempts to show, how Marx’s thought can have a practical significance without it being a *critical* evaluation of its subject. And how, he asks, could this coherently be said to be a non-normative matter? To say that it can seems to me to be deeply counter-intuitive just as it also is counter-intuitive to speak of an *emancipatory* science that is non-normative. The very use of ‘emancipatory’ is itself normative.

However, McCarney makes an interesting and indeed powerful case for a Marxian and socialist emancipatory social science that is both emancipatory and non-normative. I shall argue later that McCarney’s claim here, as insightful as it is, is in some respects true and in other respects false. It can readily escape the charge of being contradictory by suitable stipulations on either ‘emancipatory’ or ‘normative’ but that doesn’t end the trouble or even touch what may be the important trouble.

II

Classical Marxism and much of Marxism practiced today is Hegelian historicist Marxism. McCarney is a distinguished member and practitioner of this. Both Althusserians and analytical Marxists set their faces against Hegelian historicist Marxism—to wit classical Marxism—and I share that position, though I have great admiration, as I have already indicated, for central parts of McCarney’s work and gratefully acknowledge the ways he has turned my mind around on several issues. However, even though analytical Marxists deeply oppose historicism, I regard myself as both a historicist and an analytical Marxist. But I am neither a *Hegelian* historicist nor any kind of *dialectician*. I think we should be grateful to Hegel for calling philosophers’ attention to history—something widely ignored in philosophy. He made us aware of its philosophical import and importantly made us realize that there is no overleaping history: that is, that we cannot attain a view of the world which is in any very substantial sense ‘history transcendent’; he also usefully made us see how we can reasonably and fruitfully view philosophy as our time held in thought. But

he also often talks in what is at least a seemingly contradictory manner as if reason compels us to go 'history transcendent'. Hegel's historicism (and with it Marx's as well) is flawed. A proper historicism has no room for the Absolute, the totally (*sans phrase*), absolute knowledge, certain knowledge, or any claim to a foundational truth—*the truth*—of everything, to say nothing of being a *redemptive* truth. A proper historicism will be anti-foundationalist, or at least non-foundationalist, realizing that there is no plausible or perhaps even a coherent claim for philosophical foundations. Philosophy is perspectival and rejects as incoherent such notions as 'the point of view of the universe' or 'the view from nowhere' (Rorty 2007a, 176-83).

Early analytical philosophy, from Bertrand Russell to C. I. Lewis, was foundationalist and tried to reduce things to their alleged atomistic parts or derive or found all propositions from or on atomic propositions (protocol statements) denoting sense-data or sensibilia or to 'reduce' all other objects to sense-data or sensibilia so that we can come to know that the world is really made up of sense-data or sensibilia. (Shades here of Bishop Berkeley and subjective idealism).² Calling this *logical* atomism does not help. Sean Sayers is correct in criticizing *that* type of analytic philosophy (Sayers 1990). But logical atomism has few, if any, defenders now. We can even go back to Otto Neurath—a charter member of the Vienna Circle *and* a very active Communist—and see that there have been analytic philosophers who were holists and who vigorously attacked logical atomism, indeed *all* forms of atomism and foundationalism. But this is by now past history. Logical atomists are, if not an extinct species, a very endangered species. Contemporary analytic philosophers (or at least the most distinguished among them) are holist and non-foundationalist. Quine and Davidson are explicitly so, the later Wittgenstein implicitly so. And so also by implication is Rawls (Rorty 1991, 175-96). A renegade analytical philosopher such as Richard Rorty—his challenge to the analytic tradition notwithstanding—is explicitly holistic and historicist without being a relativist, subjectivist, or a philosophical skeptic. And his historicism, as mine, challenges Hegel's absolutism by arguing that there is no ahistorical worldview that is not so abstract as to come to nothing. Neo-

pragmatists such as Rorty reject, as do analytical Marxists, any appeal to something so obscure as dialectics and to the making of obscure claims about the Absolute, the totality and claims to 'absolute knowledge'. For neo-pragmatists, historicism (with its holism) tells us to expect things to be interconnected and to look for these interconnections without making the metaphysically extravagant claim that everything in the universe is connected to everything else and that that yields a cosmic unity. Most analytic Marxists without explicitly embracing foundationalism reject historicism. I shall examine and critique their claim in Lecture 3 and, in contrast, set forth my maverick holistic and historicist analytical Marxism in Lecture 4 and show how it meshes well with an emancipatory socialist social science. I shall also argue that this does not result in a relativism. I shall do this while sturdily disavowing, as sturdily as standard analytical Marxists do, Hegelian type holism and historicism.

For Hegelians, including McCarney, to attain genuine philosophical knowledge is to become aware of the unity of this alleged totality and to realize that reason shows us that this *must* be so—that there is a reason—a 'rule of reason'—which governs the universe. Hegelian historicist Marxists claim there is and must be a historical process to be identified with the achievement of history's end, goal or aim, that is, by history's *telos*. As Andrew Levine puts it in characterizing Hegelian Marxism: "Whatever is entirely self-realized ought to be" (Levine 2003, 72). Indeed, Hegelian Marxists have it that what will become actual is not something that just happens to be but is something that must be. In the fullness of time human beings will be—indeed, must be—entirely self-realized and free (autonomous). Actuality must escape all contingencies. It must be something that is through and through rational and in being so it compels agents to advance history to the point that all teleologically given destinies are realized. Humankind's teleological destiny is to make the actual rational thereby undoing the difference between the apparent and the real.

However, this cannot be for there is no such historical teleology or ends (goals or aims) of history. We don't understand what it means to say something is entirely self-realized or *perhaps*

even self-realized, period. There are no teleological destinies to be realized. History has no such destiny or indeed any destiny. In such a Hegelian Marxist characterizing of history, we have at least in effect reified history and treated it incoherently as some kind of person or agent—some kind of ‘super-person’. But there is no such thing. There is no coherent general contrast between ‘the apparent’ and ‘the real’ (Rorty 1982, xiii-xlvi). We have to know the real *what?* Just talking about ‘the real’ (as even Levine does who is no Hegelian) is vapid (Levine 2003, 68). In doing so, philosophy has gone on holiday. Indeed, clear thinking has gone on holiday. Unless such remarks can be radically demythologized or decoded these ‘claims’ are not even false but incoherent. They are not even genuine claims or claimables. It is difficult for me to believe that such a careful thinker as McCarney can believe these things but he at least seems to and he does very little to decode or demythologize them.

I now go, albeit initially indirectly, toward making the case that a social science could be emancipatory without being normative. Levine is correct in saying (following Hume and a host of others) that there is a *distinction* between what is the case and what ought to be the case. However, Hilary Putnam is also correct in saying that there is no *dichotomy* between the is and the ought—a *distinction*, yes; a *dichotomy*, no (Putnam 2002). Our language is pervaded by sentences that are inextricably both descriptive and evaluative. If I say ‘Cheney is fanatical’, ‘Bush is both fanatical and stupid’, and ‘Obama is both charismatic and brilliant’, I surely have evaluated the Cheney-Bush team harshly and Obama perhaps extravagantly. I have also surely described them, though perhaps falsely and perhaps in a *parti-pris* manner. But such talk—fanatical or not, false or not, extravagant or not—is still *descriptive as well as evaluative*. There a description is also an evaluation. Our language is redolent with such examples. Just go back to Phillipa Foot’s example of ‘That’s rude’.

If Hegel’s and Marx’s way of viewing things is right, to make such negative evaluations or extravagantly positive evaluations is something that is perhaps unreasonable for us to do. Moreover, they are theoretically and practically (except as hype) useless. What I should do instead

is explain why such people get into the power situations they do, retain for some time that power in a capitalist society and how damaging that is to working people and to the underclass as a whole and how it is that so many of the underclass can be Bushians: how even reasonable working class people can do so and not see how much it is against their interests. I should also explain what Bush and Cheney do and why they do it. If this is well done the negative evaluation will just result from that. (I did not say that the evaluation was *entailed* by the description but that they run together.) But it is the descriptions *and* the evaluations together (inseparably together) that are doing the work or are principally doing so. There is no way, *pace* R. M. Hare, of separating the normative from the descriptive here. It is thick concepts that we are relying on here. If the claims made with them are convincing, they will result in an evaluative response from most people and indeed usually the same one. Moralizing here has little use or point, let alone moral philosophy (Nielsen 2009). It is the effective deployment of the thick conceptions that do the work. We can reasonably say—indeed justifiably say—that the exploitation and domination of the working class obtains under capitalism, but if we see also that exploitation and domination must obtain in some measure under capitalism and usually extensively, we will also recognize that it makes no sense to say that it ought not to be under *capitalism*, though we could see that the exploitation and domination caused by it are reasons (though perhaps not decisive ones) for bringing, where we can, capitalism to an end (Wood 2004, xxi-xxxvii, 242-64). But if we see, let us assume counterfactually, that capitalism can never be brought to an end or be without exploitation, as I think Hegel thought, we, if we are rational, will stop saying it ought to be brought to an end or be without exploitation. We will regret that but we will stop saying capitalist exploitation is irrational—another normative but also descriptive word—if it must be: if it is inescapable within capitalism and *if* there is no alternative to capitalism it is irrational to say it should be ended in a capitalist society. But *pace* Hegelians, *we will not go on to say, alternatively, that it therefore must be rational*. It may, *pace* the Hegelians, not be rational, but since what must be must be—*que sera, sera*—then, rational or not, there is no sense

opposing it. Indeed, there is no sense in saying it is either rational or irrational. We can now *begin* to see how a social science can be non-normative but still emancipatory, though the kind of emancipation we will get if such a world is unavoidable will be minimal. But we will realize that is the best we can get and, if we are rational, be resigned.

When we clearly see this, we will also see that moralizing will be (or at least should be to the extent we are rational) conceived of very differently than the way it has traditionally been conceived. There is no point in saying that exploitation or domination *under capitalism* is evil if we think that capitalism is unavoidable. That is like saying that death is evil. The crucial thing to consider is whether there are any such necessities, as Classical Marxists and Hegelian historicist Marxists believe there are, that are relevant to their account or whether there are any such *ontological* necessities at all.

I believe Marxianism needs to be reconstructed into saying that such alleged ontological necessities (if they are not *ersatz*) will be empirical necessities or, more probably, reasonable possibilities that are not necessary at all. This takes away from us the claim of the strong necessity of Classical Marxism or Hegelian Marxism and in historical materialism as Marx developed it and as Cohen initially reconstructed it. *It takes away Hegel's and Marx's attempt to escape contingency to gain any guarantees.* We cannot show that socialism or anything else social is in the cards; that history necessities it. We can only reasonably say, and perhaps show, that socialism, resting on a weaker conception of historical materialism that G. A. Cohen and Andrew Levine have come to defend, is a reasonable possibility and that it should be struggled for. But the latter part of the above sentence—or so it seems—takes us to ethical socialism—to what Classical Marxists call contemptuously utopian socialism—with all its defects. Defects that Marx, and McCarney following him, point to.

I should point out, following Levine here, that Hegelian Marxists (dialectical and historicist) claim an allegedly strong necessity for the advent of socialism—what, they say, is an *ontological*

necessity. These alleged 'ontological necessities' are neither logical necessities nor merely empirical necessities. However, even if we can only get empirical necessities, McCarney's point about the normative and the moral might (reasonably might) still hold. If it is an empirical necessity that I must die there is no point in railing against it or trying to escape it or saying it ought not to occur or for that matter in saying it ought to occur. We again began to see how a social science can be non-normative but still emancipatory, functioning in some contexts to reconcile ourselves to what must be so, with what by action—revolutionary or not—cannot be brought to an end. While the process itself may be neither rational nor irrational, a reconciliation to it surely is. Railing against such necessities is irrational. Here we have a very Hegelian point and, I think, a sound one.

Moreover, I raised questions above about whether, in the relevant Hegelian Marxist examples, we can even get such empirical necessities, e.g., law-like empirical generalizations sustaining counterfactuals. I do not think we can. But there being such empirical necessities, if indeed there are any such, is compatible with my fallibilism and my type holism and historicism as is their absence. But Classical Marxists and Hegelian Marxists, as I have remarked, want something stronger; something that science—at least as normally construed—cannot yield. I think Levine gives good reasons for believing they can't get this. As Levine points out their holism and historicism commits them to the view, derived from Hegel, that "to explain anything it is necessary somehow to invoke everything—because everything is related to everything else in a way, they claim, that explanations must acknowledge. Adequate explanations therefore make reference not only to parts but also to wholes by implying the reality of the interconnectedness of all things. So understood holism follows from the ontological claim "that, in the final analysis, all is One—that everything that exists *expresses* a fundamental, underlying unity" (Levine 2003, 67-8). (A small aside: to say 'in the final analysis' is to give up the ghost. Nothing, except sometimes contextually and for certain ends, is in the final analysis. Argument concerning anything substantive never

comes to an end, *full stop*. We say “in the final analysis” for pragmatic reasons.) Be that as it may, Levine goes on to say:

Hegelian historicists therefore take issue, at least implicitly, with the Aristotelian idea, assumed by positivists, that the world consists of discrete parts, ‘natural kind’ divisions, that are each explainable in their own right, without reference to larger wholes. Positivism dispenses with any notion of the whole or, as historicist Marxists usually say, the *totality*. For positivists, a theory of *X*, where *X* is a natural kind division of the real, can be adequate and complete without in any way taking *Y* into account, where *Y* is distinct from *X*. For historicists, on the other hand, explanations must deploy a notion of totality, if they are to succeed. A theory of *X* that does not connect *X* to everything else, including *Y* – if only by revealing *X*’s connection to an underlying unity that somehow encompasses both *X* and *Y* – can never be adequate or complete (Levine 2003, 68).

Levine thinks, as I do, that this Hegelian claim is at best false. Suppose the *Xs* are giraffes and the *Ys* are salmon. And suppose one wants to know why giraffes developed such long necks. We explain it by natural selection. Giraffes with the longer necks get leaves from tall trees that are pervasive in giraffe habitats that shorter necked giraffes cannot get. So more of the long necked giraffes survive than giraffes with shorter necks who have less stable and abundant food sources. And the long necked giraffes breed mostly with other long necked giraffes since they were the ones extensively around and thus more readily available while the giraffes with shorter necks, having less access to leaves and having fewer breeding opportunities, do not survive as well and eventually over generations die out. Salmon as well as trees are connected with giraffes, though distantly, for they are—what else is new?—in the same world and they are also connected biologically because way back they both evolved from the same simpler organisms. But do we need to refer to salmon to explain adequately and completely how giraffes got their long necks? We do not. Maybe it makes some sense to say or think that all things in the world (indeed the universe) are connected. But even so, there is no point in invoking it or even thinking it when we are making such explanations or indeed any explanations. We do not need, to be specific, an explanation of why and how all

things are connected in order to have a full and adequate explanation of how giraffes got their long necks. Giraffes are at a certain distance, in several ways, from salmon and they are both animals. But so what? We do not need to refer to salmon and a host of other things to explain completely and adequately how and why giraffes came to have long necks. Even if we did and we go on to try to refer to everything to explain that fact about giraffes we should not because trying to 'refer to everything ubiquitously' is a notion of very questionable intelligibility, as is the notion of referring to the *totality* of everything and thinking of it as somehow a unified whole. We do not know in this context what talk of 'a *unified* whole' comes to. Moreover, we do not need to do such things or even be able to make sense of trying to do so, with such a putative ubiquitous reference, so that with it we finally would get a complete explanation of why giraffes have long necks. At least for practical purposes we get on quite well with Darwinian explanations of their long necks. And what is the point of or the rationale, if any, for trying to go beyond practical purposes here? (Note that I said 'at least' and also that I am not claiming that *my* Darwinian explanation is airtight or even very good. It was given for illustrative purposes only. But I am claiming that for biologists in giving their Darwinian explanations that they need not, and indeed should not, go Hegelian. Their explanations can be perfectly complete without such dialectical dances or cosmic holism.)

Even if we talk Hegelish and we think the universe must be a whole that we can comprehend, why must we think it has to be a *unified* whole? Indeed what is it that we are thinking when we try to think either of those two things? A star, by now possibly extinct, whose light took thousands of years to come to us may in some sense be connected with us and our planet. It is or was a certain distance from us. But what sense, if any, is there in saying our planet and the star are part of a unified totality or for that matter of an un-unified totality? What sense is there in saying we have here a foundational underlying unity? Do we even understand what we are talking about here? I at least for one do not think so.

It is even less coherent to say that the universe forms an *organic* unity and still less so to say that it forms a hierarchical organic unity. There are places where the notion of an organic unity makes sense. A human being is in an organic unity. Human beings could not survive--could not even be human beings—without a heart and blood and a lot of other connected bodily things. But a human being also could not survive without oxygen. Oxygen and being a live human being are importantly connected but they are not in an *organic unity*. A human being also could not survive for long without having been in a society either, but certainly there is no *organic unity* here. We just need a little common sense here—some of Peirce’s critical commonsensism.

Moreover, it is not a matter of choosing between mechanical explanations and organic explanations. A society, state, the world, or even the universe is not in any relevant sense either like a frog or a clock. The development of a tadpole into a frog is explained one way; the working of a clock is explained in another. One needs a mechanical explanation for one and for the other an organic explanation. But those are not the only kind of explanations there are. Societies, kinship, states, classes, let alone worlds or the universe, to the extent they can be explained at all, are not explained in either of those ways. Philosophers’ penchant for using organic, obstetric or mechanical metaphors has hurt our understanding of these things and it does not aid our understanding of a totality at all (assuming that there is anything intelligible to understand here).

This dismissive turn on Hegelianism does not commit us to positivism (though it is, of course, compatible with it). All we need is a dose of critical commonsensism with its technique of translation into the concrete, e.g., I put on my socks before I put on my shoes, so no matter what some philosophers and even some scientists say or might say time cannot be unreal. G. E. Moore *may* have been provincial in certain ways as Gilbert Ryle certainly was being provincial and ethnocentric when he was asked about Eastern philosophy and replied, “The only light that comes from the East is the sun.” (At least this has been attributed to Ryle but it sounds like something he would say.) Moore’s and some ordinary language philosophers’ insistence on translating into the

concrete is something different than Ryle's ethnocentric remark just mentioned. The Moorean or ordinary language philosophy technique need not be at all provincial. Moreover, it should be noted that when Ryle was doing philosophy Ryle was very adept at practicing translation into the concrete. This insistence on translating into the concrete has been very salutary in philosophy.

It might be thought that my rejecting such Hegelian interconnectedness is incompatible with my holism but it is not. Holism is not identical with or dependent on Hegelian or classical Marxist holism. Levine puts this very well:

There is another sense of 'holism' that should not be confused with the holism of its historicists. I have in mind claims that are advanced within particular sciences and in philosophical theories of various kinds that expressly or implicitly accept the division of the whole into discrete natural kinds. Holism, in this sense, is the view that, for particular explanatory purposes, it is best (or perhaps even necessary) not to decompose particular wholes into their constituent parts. It was in this sense, for example, that Quine famously maintained that there is no simple correspondence between words and objects. To understand the connections between them, it is necessary, he argued, to look to links between entire theories or even conceptual schemes, on the one hand, and sensory experiences, on the other. This sort of holism is compatible with the denial of the metaphysical notion that, ultimately, all is One. One can therefore be a holist in this sense without also being a holist in the historicist's sense. But even this nonhistoricist form of holism is incompatible with extreme positivist views, according to which there is – or must be – a one-to-one correspondence between words and objects or between facts, however identified, and the real (Levine 2003, 69). [Note here that Levine is identifying historicism with 'Hegelian historicism', something I do not do.]

The above note by me notwithstanding, I am in general in sympathy with what Levine says here. But I want to point, perhaps pedantically, to a few additional differences between us here that might have some significance. Levine is a holist in the sense just explained but not a historicist. I am both, though I am neither a Hegelian historicist nor a Hegelian holist (what some analytical Marxists call a radical holism). Most analytical philosophers who are holists are not historicists in any sense. Quine and Davidson, for example, are holists but not historicists. However, while a Quinean or Davidsonian holist need not be a historicist still she could be a historicist, though not a Hegelian one. Quine, as I have said, isn't a historicist in any sense and neither is Davidson. But

some generally in sympathy, as I am, with either of their views might also consistently be a historicist. I think, as does Rorty, that (though this is controversial) the later Rawls was also a historicist, though not a Hegelian historicist. He was also a holist as was the very late Wittgenstein (principally in *On Certainty*) but both Rawls and Wittgenstein were also historicists, though not Hegelian historicists in the sense that I shall explicate and defend in Lecture 4. (But neither Rawls nor Wittgenstein would have been caught dead making such self-ascriptions. So labeling them as I just did is controversial and *perhaps* mistaken (though Rorty very plausibly attributes this to Rawls; see Rorty 1991, 175-96). Rawls and Wittgenstein would probably think that such labeling was oversimplifying. Labels were in that way invariably libels. But I think they sometimes can be useful markers and guides. Isaiah Berlin often usefully deploys them.)

Rorty is both a non-Hegelian historicist and a non-Hegelian holist as I am as well and it fits with Quinean holism as does our fallibilism, contextualism, anti-essentialism, perspectivism, and finitism. A natural kinds conceptualization in the way that Levine characterized it is, I think, fine for at least part of the natural sciences and for biology and botany, but I am much less confident that it works in the social sciences or for talk of society or history in general or even specifically. Even if it does, it does not require a dialectical conception of science going *Geistwissenschaftlich*.

McCarney rightly points out that '*Wissenschaft*' has a wider use than 'science' characteristically has. '*Wissenschaft*' does not carry the strong tendency as 'science' does to take only the paradigmatic, utterly secure sciences such as physics and chemistry as models for what constitutes a genuine science. So construed there is a tendency towards scientism. '*Wissenschaft*', according to McCarney, "involves no such partiality. Rather it signifies quite impartially the organized pursuit of knowledge" (McCarney 1990, 121). But while this opens up what counts as science more widely and avoids scientism, namely the claim that what the natural and biological sciences cannot tell us, humankind cannot know, it comes to have the opposite misfortune of being

so wide that theology or perhaps even Christian Science becomes a science unless (*somewhat* controversially but perhaps correctly) we rule out by stipulation that there can be knowledge there.

The German term—‘*Wissenschaft*’—is more amenable to the conception of a ‘proletarian science’, a conception which postulates that the scientific orientation and attitude may come to “permeate the worldview of class subjects” (McCarney 1990, 121). But this looks at least as if it is too wide a conception for perhaps what most English speakers and reflective and informed people, including German speakers, would call ‘science’. Not anything that permeates the worldview of the proletariat or anyone else need or perhaps even should count as science. At a certain stage of the proletariat’s evolution metaphysical or religious views or both may have been a part of their worldview. Perhaps it still is? But these are plainly not scientific worldviews. And workers’ views about personal relations and more generally about how they should live their lives, though perhaps in certain respects are affected by science, are not scientific views. Nor is anyone else’s. However, they *may* in some considerable measure be largely justified, if justified at all, by science or at the very least not be in conflict with science. Moreover, a worldview may not be a scientific one without being anti-scientific or unscientific as my non-scientific naturalism is not, though I hope and trust it is compatible with science (Nielsen 1996, 25-77).

I think it a mistake to speak of ‘a proletarian science’ as distinct from speaking of ‘a form of scientific activity in the service of the proletariat’. Science itself is not proletarian, liberal, fascist, capitalist, or post-capitalist technological authoritarianism. Science has at various times been a handmaiden to many things. But ‘socialist science’—if we persist in talking that way—should be a science that is used (I do not say exclusively) in the service of the proletariat. But that itself is not a scientific judgment but a economic-political-moral judgment: a value judgment in short. And it needs to be justified in the way value judgments are. We do not find out whether a scientific claim is true or warranted by finding out whether it serves the proletariat or any class or group, including all of humanity, but by finding out if it is adequately empirically confirmed. This sometimes is a

very indirect process but it cannot be bypassed (at least for whole scientific theories) and being in the interests of one or another class cannot be relevant to its claim to be true. We cannot properly say 'scientifically true from the capitalist point of view, but scientifically false from the proletarian view' or vice versa. (*If* perspectivism entails this then there is something wrong with perspectivism.) Moreover, we can have a scientific account of socialism without socialism itself being scientific (something I shall argue extensively in Lecture 4). When we speak of scientific socialism that is what we should mean. We mean that socialism is backed up by systematically structured empirical claims.

Alternatively, if a Marxist means by 'proletarian science' that the proletariat in its maturity will come to have scientific attitudes and a science-friendly materialist (naturalist) worldview, then this *may* be alright, but it is a misleading way to put the point by saying there is such a thing as a proletarian science. Moreover, it is unclear whether all working people who are *in but not of* the capitalist order and thus proletarians and are ready, when the occasion is ripe, to make a revolution actually have, let alone *must* have, a scientific worldview. There are priests, some very high ranking, who are liberation theologians and who are firmly socialist-oriented. I would see them as comrades and struggle shoulder to shoulder with them without hesitation. At a certain stage of our evolution metaphysical or religious views may become part of a socialist worldview for some people but they are plainly not scientific worldviews and a worldview, to repeat, may not be a scientific one without being anti-scientific (Nielsen 1996, 25-77). I wish all of us would become naturalists, but it is dogmatism to think this is necessary for us to be genuinely a socialist or even a Marxist, one. To claim that such proletarians have no revolutionary potential until they come to have a scientific world view is, to understate it, not warranted.

McCarney, rather conventionally, claims that the possibility of science for Marx arises "whenever the appearance of things fails to correspond to their reality" (McCarney 1990, 122-23). But this itself is a metaphysical conception and a very problematic one at that as Rorty well argues

(Rorty 1982, xiv-xvii). There is no *general* notion of the distinction between appearance and reality but only *contextual* ones. We have no reasonable understanding of what we mean by *the real* without some context. There is real wine as distinct from wine without alcohol. There is real cream as distinct from dairy creamer. There is real solidarity as distinct from pseudo-solidarity. And there is genuine scientific socialism as distinct from merely a misleading faint image of one calling, as was common in the Soviet Union, itself a scientific socialism. The last two examples are perhaps somewhat controversial. But all the examples illustrate (*pace* both Levine and McCarney) how ‘real’ is used as distinct from the lack of a coherent use for ‘the real’ *sans phrase*. (It is not used that way outside of philosophy and the use in philosophy is opaque.) We have no coherent conception of ‘the real’, *full stop*.

‘Science’ is an honorific term and there are very different things legitimately called science, for example astrophysics and social anthropology. It is ludicrously partisan to try to rule out either of those activities as sciences or as (for that matter) legitimate activities. Yet they are radically different—I do not say completely different—in their content, procedures, methods, manner of explanation, and the type of theories they have. The classical pragmatists tried to identify what was scientific or not by their method rather than their subject matter. They tried to characterize something as *the* scientific method. But Kuhn, Bachlard, Toulmin, and Feyerabend have put paid to that. There is no such thing as *the* scientific method but only scientific methods often greatly different between disciplines and sometimes even within disciplines. When we look at the characterizations of the scientific method given by John Dewey, Sidney Hook, and Ernest Nagel—all classical pragmatists—we get something very vague and platitudinous. It has to be to cover all the range of things they wanted it to cover. We can, of course, give a more specific characterization of what ‘scientific method’ is but it will then turn out to rest on a partisan definition of what ‘real science’ is, but that is to give a *persuasive* definition that settles nothing. Remember my remark about ‘science’ being an honorific term and Wittgenstein’s remarks about the use of stipulations.

III

Before I turn to the considerations with which I wish to engage McCarney's work in Section IV, I think, given what I will argue there and the way in which I argue it, it would be useful at this point to tell you something of where I am coming from (to put it in what was once the idiom of radical Californian students). I do this not out of a self-indulgence but to alert you to what may on my part be a certain blindness to Hegel and to parts of McCarney's work. McCarney's Marxism, as I have remarked, is an Hegelian one and, as far as I can make out, a deeply informed one. But for me as an analytic philosopher (though also rather atypically formed as well by pragmatism), Hegel as well as Heidegger, Derrida, Althusser, and Adorno are black boxes. But I am not a Searle. I do not say they are black boxes for me with either arrogance, pride, or with what in effect is a patronizing sneer. I just can make little out of them except for a few striking sayings, e.g., 'Philosophy is our time held in thought' (Hegel) or 'After Auschwitz moral philosophy is impossible' (Adorno) or 'We cannot overleap history' (Hegel again). I am tempted to say I can make nothing of them, but that would be an exaggeration. But I find them very opaque and frustrating. I think that if anyone is going to write as they did I am not going to read them. They may have some deep and sound things to say but they wrapped them in wool and they have to be painstakingly unwrapped (Findlay 1958; 1964). There are many others who write in reasonably accessible ways that also have some deep and sound things to say, e.g., Hobbes, Hume, Wittgenstein, Rawls, sometimes Habermas, Foucault, and G. A. Cohen. If some commentators of the above to me offending collection of philosophers could show me that there was something insightful there that is not otherwise available, then the effort to come to grips with them might be well worth it. But commentators either fail to do so or in interpreting them write intelligible things that other aficionados of these to me offending philosophers claim to be oversimplified and to have missed the deepest insight of their heroes' thought. So I remain stuck. All that aside, it seems to me that the way these allegedly, and perhaps

actually, deep and insightful philosophers write violates every norm of what good philosophy and good reasoning or reflective thought should respect. It is hard for me to resist the thought, to echo but deliberately modify Wittgenstein's remark that what can be said can be said plainly and reasonably clearly and what cannot should be passed over in silence.

I have also read McCarney's writings on Hegel and I can see from them that Hegel is not at all the buffoon that I took him to be as a smart-assed undergraduate. I thought as did many of my fellow students that Hegel was the guy who said the real was the rational and the rational was the real and that the Prussian state was the best thing since white truffles. The last was just ignorance on our part. McCarney has shown (as have others) how crudely false that is. Moreover, Hegel was anything but an uncritical statist; and to call him a reactionary reveals extensive ignorance of his writings or of what he was. He was not uncritical of the Prussian state or of other authoritarian states. For him freedom, including political freedom, was of paramount importance. Here he had complicated and nuanced views, though, after his youth, in some ways his views were deeply conservative, thought not reactionary. In that respect he was like Edmund Burke or Michael Oakshott, not Ronald Reagan or George W. Bush.

As for the rational is the real and real is the rational, McCarney in several places has made a painstaking and careful interpretations of it (McCarney 2000, 96-9, 189, 194, 214-17; 2007, 225-35). While what he says is not entirely satisfactory to me, he has at least given us something that, surface appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, is not implausible let alone irrational to say or even a Panglosian optimistic thing to say. Indeed (to me at least) it challenges without being convincing. If I were 20 or perhaps even 30 with some of the understanding I have now, and I were to start again in philosophy, I would try seriously to study Hegel. But not at the expense of many of the philosophers I have studied, e.g., Hobbes, Hume, Rawls, Habermas, Dewey, Wittgenstein, Charles Stevenson, and Axel Hägerström. But there are other things I could have well done without, e.g., Alonzo Church on logic and Roderick Chisholm or H. H. Price on perception come readily to

mind as does Alvin Plantinga on God and modal logic. But it is not because those philosophers were obscure. *Perhaps* this attitude of mine is just a matter of the contingency of interests. Different people are interested in different things. But this was not at all the case with the, for me, 'black box' philosophers I have mentioned. Many of their interests are mine. It is their way of doing philosophy that is so off putting to me. Still, there *may* be a lot more to Hegel, as well as the others, than what meets my eye, or indeed the eye.

However, given my formation, I remain blocked about them. What formed me not only blinds me to Hegel but made me (and still makes me) anti-Hegelian. This blocking formation (a distinctive philosophical enculturation with a certain vintage) was the following: First, pragmatism (though it is important to remember that Dewey—the pragmatist who influenced me the most—wrote his PhD dissertation on Hegel and was initially a Hegelian), logical positivism along with Charles Stevenson and Axel Hägerström on ethics, Pascal, Kierkegaard and Feuerbach (perhaps these three are out of synch with the others that influenced me), ordinary language philosophy, Wittgenstein, Ryle, Austin, and the early Cavell, Hart, Rawls, Foucault, and Habermas and later—indeed too much so—Quine and Davidson (very much Davidson) and still later Rorty and to some extent Putnam. This mix—some might think it a lethal cocktail for me—and my utilizing of these diverse influences in forging my own ideas made of me a fallibilist, a non-Hegelian holist, a non-Hegelian historicist, a finitist (not a relativist or subjectivist), a contextualist, a perspectivist, an anti-essentialist and what Peirce called a critical commonsensist, something that not only linked me to Peirce but to certain parts of Moore. (The role that Marx played in this will be discussed later.)

I do not mean to suggest that I at all adequately portray much of my thought or its orientation by rattling off such matters all subject to various understandings and misunderstandings. It certainly cannot replace hard thought and in describing such a development in some ways explaining and detailing what I have gestured at above. And indeed in some ways

justifying it. I agree with Hilary Putnam's remark that any philosophy that can be put in a nutshell belongs in a nutshell. I have no time and it is not the appropriate occasion to articulate the evolution of my own thinking here: to provide the necessary rationale, exposition and justification if indeed I could. I only rattle off these items to attempt to give you some sense of where I am coming from so that you can at least grasp some of the *causes* of why I am so blocked by McCarney's *Hegelian* Marxism and more generally by Hegelian thought.

However, I am sure that McCarney and I would be on the same side of the barricades and I think that is the most important thing (more on this later). Moreover, we both see ourselves as and are Marxists and aim to be scientific socialists. What divides us is Hegel and his (and indeed Marx's as well) dialectical thinking and cosmic holism replete with cosmic teleological explanations as well as about whether I should have sympathy with the conviction on McCarney's part that there is something called ontology that is believed by him to be essential in trying to get a proper grip on history, society and political and economic life and how we should proceed philosophically.³ He thinks the things I have just mentioned are vital for our philosophical understanding and with that vital for our understanding of socialism; but I think they are free spinning wheels that turn no machinery. Ontology, metaphysics and something called dialectical method are all, McCarney believes, essential to Marxism, to a proper understanding of socialism, and to what it would be to have an emancipatory social science. I think there is incoherence here or at best matters that can be and should be benignly set aside as useless for the theory and practice of socialism, including, of course, a revolutionary socialism. I believe that we can and should do our Marxian thinking without such ontological and dialectical baggage. We should, that is, travel philosophically light. This inclines me toward analytical Marxism, though not to the rational-choice theory or the methodological individualist theory branch of analytical Marxism (Kumar 2008, 185-211).⁴ Like both Andrew Levine and Joseph McCarney, being a Marxist or, as I would prefer to call it being a Marxian (on analogy with being a Darwinian rather than being a Darwinist), I defend a scientific

socialism and not what has come to be called an ethical socialism or, as Marx and Engels called it, a utopian socialism. (But I do not deny that scientific socialism has an indirect normative aspect but I also believe its scientificity is absolutely essential and can be assessed, if not understood, independently of this normative aspect.) More of this in Lecture 2.

Analytical Marxism, that is, should be both scientific and normative and indeed should also have in the background a moral point of view (Cohen 1996; Nielsen 1989). But analytical Marxism, Levine argues, threatens to self-destruct, collapsing into ethical (utopian) socialism. And in doing so, he claims, it gives us an analytic version of what Western Marxism generally has become and in doing so collapses even further into liberalism (Levine 2003, 122-66). But this does not square with G. A. Cohen's unequivocal remark "I did not say that liberal egalitarianism carries Marxism's normative commitment. Liberals do not believe that capitalism is a system of exploitation which should be overthrown in favor of a socialist society which is both possible and desirable. I believe all that, which certainly distinguishes my normative commitments from liberals'..." (Cohen 1996, 13).

However, what is to count as 'scientific' is contested and scientific socialism, as it was *characterized* by the Soviets and the Second and Third Internationales and somewhat differently by Althusser was a bad joke. Scientific socialism characterized as it is either by Levine and his collaborators or by McCarney is not a joke (Levine *et al.*, 1992). But they do characterize it *differently* than did the Marxists of the Second and Third Internationales. Yet Levine and McCarney do not agree on the proper characterization of its scientificity either. But both think, as I do, that it is essential that socialism be genuinely scientific. But they do not agree concerning what counts as 'genuinely scientific'. Here is something that needs working on. (I will return to that later.)

Given what I have said about my philosophical orientation (e.g., its fallibilism, historicism, holism, perspectivism, etc.), I could not possibly accept Hegel's claim (and supposedly Marx's as well) that (as Hegel puts it) the sole aim of philosophical inquiry is "to eliminate the contingent"

(McCarney 2000, 163). I think it is fair enough to recognize, if one drops 'sole', that this conception has been a part of the rationalist philosophical tradition and has even wider coinage in philosophy. There is a deep urge among philosophers to go on what Dewey called the quest for certainty and, where they become convinced that that cannot be had, to go into a deep scepticism. The pragmatists—most prominently Dewey—gave up this quest and sought, without dismay or philosophical nostalgia or *angst*, to live with a thorough acceptance of the inescapability of contingency. (Peirce sometimes was in some ways an exception to this.) Moreover, they had no tendency to slip into scepticism and this is importantly true as well of Rawls, Quine, Rorty, and Davidson. They would simply take contingency as pervasive and inescapable. That they take to be obvious. Both Wittgenstein and Rorty share that attitude but Wittgenstein as well takes it with *angst* and Rorty *happily*. Both attempt to theraphize away the very idea that there is any coherent alternative to contingency or at least a substantive non-contingency. (See my last lecture.) Contemporary tough-minded philosophical sensibilities have, or so I believe, no room for non-contingency. *Some* may be a bit nostalgic about that. Others will, thinking it a good thing too, sometimes glory in it—Quine for example—or at least welcome it as an intellectual step forward. Not so Hegel, Marx, McCarney or even in some ways Levine. They still see it as essential and a crucial aim of philosophy to eliminate the contingent. Non-contingency—some kind of ontology—underpins Hegel's claim (accepted by Marx) "that world history is the progress of the consciousness of freedom" and that this is the "progress we must come to know" in its necessity (McCarney 2000, 169). Moreover, it partially explains their optimism that the rational will come in time to be; to be, that is, an actuality.⁵ I share the rather common scepticism about such cosmic optimism while remaining steadfastly and robustly socialist and Marxian. But mine is a *Marxianism without guarantees*.

With the eliminating of contingency, *assuming* it can be done or even intelligibly conceived, it will perhaps still be possible to make sense of and see the warrant for McCarney's key claim that

history has an 'internal necessity' which "originates in causes inherent in the material itself, in some imminent power binding its successive moments" (McCarney 2000, 162-63). McCarney goes on to say: "This is the necessity that belongs to what Hegel standardly refers to...as the dialectical movement... [where] history may be conceived as an internally necessary, dialectical progress" (McCarney 2000, 167). (See how Levine handles that without the dialectic. Levine 2003, 145-54.)

This is all (unfortunately I believe) accepted by Marx and by Hegelian Marxists (including McCarney). It is best articulated, they take it, by the dialectical method, a method common to Hegel and Marx and distinct from the methodology of our standard scientific culture. But I, like the other analytical Marxists or pragmatist Marxists, have difficulties, to put it mildly, with the dialectical method, and with its cosmic claims to necessity. I shall set them out in the next section.

I now want to remark that it is the *manner* and perhaps not (or at least I hope not) the *matter* that bugs me. The manner is at times so obscure—or at least I find it so—that I become frustrated by and completely alienated from such a way of proceeding. Hegel is said to be some sort of historicist, but no historicist, at least as I take the notion, would or could consistently speak of the Absolute, absolute knowledge, the ultimate grounding of things, of totality or of reason just flat out, though they do speak of rationality or reasonableness or intelligence (Dewey's favorite phrase)—something that people (individuals) can be or have and collective agents can have. By 'collective agents' I refer here to peoples who make up a state, nation, class, community and the like at some determinate time and place. But historicists of my sort would not speak—hypothesizing and reifying it—of reason in history (or for that matter unreason in history) or of reason as driving history or peoples or nations, enabling them to grasp the goal or the end of history. History cannot have a goal though individual people and collective agents—say, a people—can. But history is not a collective agent or any kind of agent. And reason is not a collective agent—or any kind of agent—and it cannot have a goal or an end, except as a termination. It makes no sense to say these Hegelian things. Rational and reasonable agents can have an end in both the sense of a goal and a

terminus, though not in the same sense of 'end'. History for them, taken as individuals, has a terminus: this happens when they die or grow so incapacitated that they are permanently no longer capable of thought at all. And human history has a terminus. (Someday human life will die out.) But it cannot have a goal—an end to be aimed at. History cannot aim or fail to aim at anything. But people and peoples can.

People can come to recognize that they have class interests and that they are agents whose intentions are deeply conditioned, and indeed constrained, by their history and their class. They can also realize that they can act together as members of that class. They can, as a class, act just as we say corporations can act. Where they are members of the dominated class, people can, though it is typically as a matter of struggle and fighting off an imposed ideology, understand and realize something of their class interests and come to understand that in a socialist society they would be realized more fully. But this is not something reason or the rule of reason so hypothesized and reified can achieve or fail to achieve any more than it can march through history. Indeed reason cannot march at all or rule at all except in the sense that people can come to govern themselves more rationally, intelligently and reasonably. If we want to call this latter 'the rule of reason' we can, but this way of talking runs the risk of obscurantism and reification. (We will see in the second lecture that G. A. Cohen, in the name of rejecting such an obscurantism, entangles himself in it.)

We do not understand what is being said when it is said the 'pure idea' is dialectical or what it is to have a historical teleology or what it is to speak of the cosmic spirit or of the cosmic idea or of absolute knowledge yielding the whole truth or what it is for history to have a *telos*. We do not understand what it is for there to be *purposiveness without purposers*. We have only a dim understanding of what it is to say 'World history in general is the exposition of spirit in time' or 'the Idea is the proper philosophical meaning of reason'. Such sentences frequently occur in Hegel. And these sentences, to understate it, certainly do not wear their meaning on their sleeves. All of them are opaque. Some of them are very opaque. Indeed, they may be nonsensical—not obvious

nonsense as 'Blair sleeps faster than Brown' (which anyone who knows English knows to be nonsense except when seen as something like a metaphor). The Hegelian sentences are instead disguised nonsense which leaves us at sea with the sense for some of us (but not for me) that there may be something deep here to grasp. (Remember Stanley Cavell.)

However, is it also not unreasonable to ask someone with the relevant expertise (say, a scholar of Hegel or Plotinus) to elucidate such remarks making plain or at least plainer the meaning they have for the author they are commenting on? When I say that 'Blair sleeps faster than Brown' has no meaning, I recognize that we could always *stipulate* a meaning. 'Sleeps faster', for example, could be taken as metaphorical for 'wakes earlier rested'. An author can do that with his own work (though sometimes it is a cheap way out in philosophy) but a commentator cannot. *Stipulations are not elucidations*. Hegel seldom (if ever) does much in the way of elucidation of his obscure remarks and McCarney does not do much of that either in stating or paraphrasing them or even in attempting to show their rationale.⁶ But they often are remarks that McCarney takes to be central in Hegel's account. And they cry out for elucidation. But we do not get it, either from Hegel himself or from McCarney.

Still, McCarney for the most part does a good job, as far as I can ascertain, at explaining Hegel. However, at key points his account often affects the reader analogously to the experience of looking up a word she doesn't know in the dictionary and finding it defined in terms of another word she doesn't understand and then finds herself continuing around in the dictionary lost, the same thing being repeated. Take, for example, Hegel's term 'reason' that unlike 'rationality' or 'reasonably' or 'intelligently' is a term we do not understand well if at all particularly in Hegel's work. And given our knowledge of the history of philosophy, we might well be suspicious. But McCarney doesn't explain such troubling terms by any clearer terms or give us, translating into the concrete, a context where the uses of these terms are reasonably clear and point to what McCarney takes to be Hegel's meaning.

Sometimes it is fruitful and not just a positivist dogma to ask for truth conditions or assertability conditions, the testability (confirmability or infirmability) of a putatively factual candidate for a truth apt claim (Sober 1999; Nielsen 2008). I take it that the Hegelian sentences made above are those sorts of claims, though presumably Hegelians would take them to be claims about some kind of 'dialectical ontological fact' or set of facts. But do we have the faintest idea of how to confirm or infirm them? I think not. Nor are they disguised conceptual truths like 'What is eternal cannot not exist' whose truth or falsity we can in our armchairs either easily or with some difficulty ascertain. We can, that is, ascertain the truth or falsity of them by reflecting on their use in our language or their lack of use in our language. But when we try to do this with Hegel's puzzling remarks we usually come up with a blank. They are like a lot, perhaps all, of theology (Nielsen 2008). (Is this just to deny there are any synthetic *a priori* claims? Well, if so, so be it.)

IV

So it is plainly Hegelian Marxism—what Levine calls historicist Marxism—and not Marxianism *sans phrase* that I want to reject. I had originally intended to try to show how we could 'translate' or 'decode' the Hegelian side of McCarney's thought and thereby show how McCarney could say everything he wanted to say without his Hegelianism. But I can't do that for I would first have to understand these Hegelian matters well enough to decode, translate or rationally reconstruct them. I can't for I find them at best too obscure to make anything intelligible out of them and I think that is Hegel's fault, not mine. Of course, the shoe may be on the other foot. The fault may be mine. But I wonder? McCarney, when not on a Hegelian dialectical key, writes and argues clearly, forcefully, and often convincingly. But when he talks Hegelish, this (for me at least) is not so. Why does Hegel express things so obscurely? If he *must* it would be of help if someone would explain why. If it is not necessary then it should be possible to put Hegel's claims less obscurely.⁷

Rather than following this out I want instead to turn to a further examination of where McCarney's work has turned my head around, or largely so, and to push the elucidation (perhaps it is a rational reconstruction) a little further to reveal something of its importance and to see if it requires a Hegelian or somewhat Hegelian turn.

But first I want to briefly say something different that may shock. I do not take Marx as a philosopher. Or, if you insist on stressing that side of him, a side he genuinely had (his degree, after all, was in philosophy), I would respond by saying he was a bad philosopher, philosophically formed in an unfortunate *philosophical* environment by an unfortunate philosophical tradition. I prick my graduate philosophy students and advanced majors a bit—but what I prick them with is what I really think—by saying that Marx was better than a philosopher. He was incredibly all the following rolled into one: a revolutionary, a theorist of revolution, a sociologist, a critic of political economy, an economist, a great economic historian, more broadly a historian, and a radical public intellectual. In short, Marx was a social scientist and a public intellectual forging, or at least attempting to, a scientific socialism and not a utopian one—though this did not keep him from having a vision of how life should be and powerful moral convictions motivating him, his anti-moralism notwithstanding (Nielsen 1988; Wood 2004, 127-61). He did not *just* want to describe, interpret, explain the world, or certain salient parts of the world, accurately and perspicuously. He had, and compellingly, a practical intent as well. He wanted to change the world in certain determinate ways, but not without understanding it. And he wanted to change it in the light of his understanding. This is why I dubbed his social science an emancipatory social science. But, for it to be an adequate science at all, he had to describe, interpret, and explain the portions of the world he turned his attention to as accurately and perspicuously as possible. He was not a Luddite out to change the world without bothering to try to understand it.

With one exception, in my view an unfortunate one, Marx's central canonical conceptions were social science conceptions and not philosophical ones. Consider the things that make him a

towering intellectual giant: his historical materialism, his class theory and theory of class conflict and class contradiction, his labor theory of value and account of exploitation derived from it, his account of how capitalism will collapse, how it will be followed by socialism, and his conception of how without economic democracy political democracy fails yielding a plutocracy. The only exception was his conception of dialectics. That is a methodological and philosophical conception and as well, as McCarney and many others mysteriously have it, an ontological doctrine. It is these last two conceptions—or so I would argue, perhaps mistakenly—that are of problematic intelligibility and do more harm than good to Marxist thought and practice. And they are his distinctively *philosophical* conceptions. What they set out, though in an incredibly cumbersome and obscure way, is a methodological directive about how we should try to understand the world. If such a dialectical procedure only came to telling us to view events diachronically as well as synchronically and in doing so to pay careful attention to their history, noting how it reveals class conflicts, noting their effects and the dynamism of such matters and how in a plain sense things connect+, then his dialectics would not take us down the garden path. His account would be empirical and broadly scientific in a standard sense and not lean on the philosophy of history or require an ontology of history or an ontological dialectics, whatever (if anything) those things mean.

All accounts of history are interpretive. We cannot treat history as if it were a grocery or laundry list. What we need, at least for a Marxian account, is good scientific theory, something that will make observations, theory-laden as they or at least certain crucial ones will be. Being so, there will be a not inconsiderable number of theoretical accounts that will be equally compatible with the available evidence. We need evidence, of course, to have a scientific theory. We cannot just make up scientific theory out of nothing. But by itself the evidence will never be decisive in determining the warranted assertability of a theory and Marxian theory is no exception. What we do not need is, as we have with Hegel, a *philosophical* theory of history: a set of speculative claims without

empirical constraints. We need instead causal explanations grounded on observations theoretically arranged. We need to have in giving historical accounts causal explanations of what has been described. ('Linear causation' if you must.) They may be functional ones but to have scientific creditability these functional ones must also be straightforwardly causal. Functional explanations that are not also causal are just arm waving. (This was something that Cohen well recognized though not all his reviewers did.)

The dialectical method does not meet such scientific criteria and cannot be a grounding for historical accounts and narratives or be a method to be followed in giving such accounts or narratives. It is a philosophical theory alright, but an ontological or metaphysical and speculative one up for Wittgensteinian therapeutic dissolution. If we, Wittgenstein to the contrary notwithstanding, are stuck with a dialectical method of describing things, it will be a method of describing which is cumbersome and useless at best. It is better if it is dropped from the Marxist canon.

I think McCarney has well shown how deeply Hegelian Marx was. I think that in doing this he has given us a painstaking and excellent exegesis, intellectual historians should be grateful to him. (I do not sniff at intellectual history, though I do not practice it myself.) Like McCarney and Levine as well, I am interested, as of course Marx was, in pushing the socialist project along. I want to try to help sustain it and develop it. I don't just want to be a historian of it. Even though in these days its present prospect is bleak, I am, as McCarney and Levine are as well, concerned to help establish it as a sound scientific social theory that will be, directly or indirectly, of use to the struggling masses if some come on stream. (If the working class will become genuinely proletarian: people *in* capitalist society but not *of* it.) I want to be one of the spokespersons for these masses or, as McCarney put it, their mouthpiece. To put it just this way is, while I think correct and Marxian, nevertheless it is still in some ways worrisome and perhaps unfortunate. Are we to become the propagandists and 'sweet singers' for the causes of the masses? Are we to become a kind of secular

preacher? This, of course, must be avoided. We must instead both serve them *and* keep our critical faculties, intellectual integrity and seek to develop an emancipatory social science on sound scientific grounds. Indeed, that is the only way we Marxian intellectuals, in our role as intellectuals, can properly serve the masses.

However, are we again to become critical theorists (something that McCarney well criticizes)? Are we to tell the masses what their needs really are and what they must do? We can and should, particularly when our place in the division of labor has given us some at least putative insight in such contexts, tell our comrades what we think and why. But we certainly must not become a kind of Grand Inquisitor propagating a royal lie or even *knowingly* propounding that we know could not withstand critical examination. That is plainly something we must not do and not just because it is patronizing, arrogant and dishonest. We must to keep our integrity say what we honestly think and, where there is a live issue about it, try to justify it. But if our comrades think otherwise concerning some issue of political interest, then, after discussion and a vote, if we are defeated we must still stand unequivocally with them or, where there is no chance of voting, do something that is a near equivalent expressing our own beliefs but also showing respect for and solidarity with our comrades and with what they have agreed on even when we are convinced it is mistaken. Where we can, and that is what they wish, we must serve as one of their spokespersons, or (if you will) their mouthpieces, though we should not crucify our intellects in doing so. We should not say that the policy adopted is the policy we personally think is best to adopt. Though we should not go out of our way to express our dissent after a vote or some near equivalent has taken place. We should, if asked, say what we honestly think. But we should also say that the policy adopted has been democratically decided on and that is the one we, as one of the cadres, and the other cadres as well, should support. But, if asked, we should say it is not the policy that we personally think best. When rebuffed in this democratic way, we must not take our marbles and go home no matter what our misgivings. And we should not throw dissention into the ranks by going

out of our way to criticize what was democratically decided on. Sometimes so proceeding can be tragic for ourselves and our comrades. Rosa Luxembourg so acted in solidarity with a policy with which she disagreed that her comrades had voted to accept, though not without discussion and her dissenting vote. Acting on this policy in good democratic form resulted in her death and the crushing of the movement of which she was a part. Still, this is a lesson in democratic centralism or, if you will, just plain democracy. When a workers' council (what the Russian Communists called a 'soviet') of which we are a part democratically decides on something, we must go along with it unless it violates some very fundamental human rights not in conflict with other equally fundamental human rights. (Where such rights conflict we have what is indeed a tragic situation. Still there, our misgivings notwithstanding, we should go along with the democratic vote.) One who does not understand that does not understand what collective action comes to or its rationale and does not understand what it is to be democratic or to be committed to a political movement.

McCarney may well be right: a scientific socialism will not, as I thought for most of my life, be a critical theory of society. It will be a scientific social theory which will be emancipatory in another way. It will not tell the mass of people what their needs are, or really are, but will help them to recognize what these human needs are and also help them and ourselves to see what their and our needs are behind their alienated form. But—and there is a fine line to draw here—this should not come finally to on the part of Marxian intellectuals just to a *telling to* but our role as public intellectuals could help us and our comrades to see, for example, what our consumerist orientation, so dear and so necessary for capitalism, does to us. People can come to see that shopping until they drop is not a way of meeting their genuine needs or a way to live nor is going into a cycle of painful indebtedness because we just come compulsively to feel we need more things and can't keep our credit cards in our pockets. They will see, and we will see, that there is no need or point or lasting satisfaction in satisfying those media-instilled artificial needs and in seeing this they and we may come to begin to see that we need a very different kind of society than a capitalist

one. They, and we, may come to have a better understanding of a realized or self-fulfilling life. We may thus come to see what an emancipatory thrust is for them and for us.

However, we do not need moral theory or any kind of philosophical theory or moralizing for that (Nielsen 2009). Rather, we need a talking straight—as difficult as that is—about what our lives are like and what they could be like. Here we need more than just description but causal explanations as well. An emancipatory social science will endeavor to do those things. But we must not turn our social science into what Max Weber detested, namely, a *moralizing* social science. That would be a pseudo-science. But we must also remember (*pace* Weber) that we can't have a normatively neutral social science either if it is to be emancipatory or even *adequately descriptive and interpretive*. We can't have it anyway given the blending of the descriptive and the evaluative in our everyday discourse (Putnam 2002, 28-45). Also 'emancipatory', of course, is not a normatively neutral word. But how then could an emancipatory social science be non-normative? This poses a problem for us that McCarney helps us resolve. I want to follow how he does it out and give it my own twist.

McCarney comes to grips with this in several places as I have indicated. I shall now concentrate on his "An Emancipatory Science of Society" (McCarney 2007. See also Nielsen 2007). McCarney correctly remarks that Marx "rather conspicuously fails to characterize his own work as a critique of capitalism, or of society more generally, though such a form of description was readily available to him" (McCarney 2007, 226). McCarney, again correctly, goes on to remark:

The situation is even more troubling than this suggests. For we encounter not just silence in this area but a systematic hostility toward the kind of evaluative or normative language that seems indispensable for any social critique. This hostility is most marked in the case of moral evaluation in particular but the point holds quite generally. The attitude in question may readily be illustrated from all phases of Marx's intellectual career. Thus, quite early in it he asserts that "the communists do not preach *morality* at all," and that the rise of their views "shattered the basis of all morality." At the other end he attacks the "ideological nonsense about right and other trash so common among the democrats and French socialists." The young Marx insists that communism "is not an *ideal* to which reality would have to adjust itself but rather the real movement that abolishes the present state of things." Many

years later he assures us that “the workers have no ideals to realize, but to set free the elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant.” It would be easy but scarcely fruitful to multiply such declarations. The lesson they enforce is in any case very widely recognized. It is that whenever Marx addresses in any self-conscious way the question of the theoretical needs of the workers’ movement, and, by implication, the character of his own theoretical contribution to that movement, his chief concern is to repudiate any moral, or more generally normative, dimension. This kind of consistency has surely to be respected (McCarney 2007, 226).

Marx, as we have seen, realizes that what is ideological is meant to serve the interests of one or another class or classes. It may do so deceptively or distortingly or it may do so without deception or distortion. But always an ideology is intended to answer to the class interests of some class or classes. He does not limit ideology to serving the capitalists, landowners, and feudal lords. Socialists and Communists have ideologies too. But an ideology *may* have *no cognitive defect* (*pace* what is generally thought). Science—genuine science—may also be ideological. Marx treats classical political economy as having both an ideological and scientific character and being none the worse for that. David Ricardo is portrayed by Marx as at the one and the same time “a great scientist and a pillar of bourgeois ideology” (McCarney 2007, 227). McCarney sees ideology—all ideology—as answering to class interests, or at least trying to. And it answers to class interests most paradigmatically by having a *legitimizing* role in a society. It attempts to confer “legitimacy on the social practices and institutions that constitute those interests and denying it to whatever is opposed to them” (McCarney 2007, 228). But this legitimating operation, Marx recognizes, is a normative one but it need not to be a distorting legitimation though it usually is. But Marx insists that his own work cannot be normative for he has explicitly repudiated in his theoretical work the taking of a normative approach or stance (Nielsen 1988). (But, if what we have just said about ideology is what he thinks, why does he engage in such a self-restriction?)

This raises a puzzle about Marx’s work. How could he have thought of it consistently and coherently as “having a practical significance without being a critical evaluation of its object” (McCarney 2007, 228)? It is not unreasonable for people to think the very idea is oxymoronic. It is

natural to think that 'emancipatory but not normative' is contradiction in terms. Moreover, if ideology crucially has a legitimating role and if, as Marx has it, that is a normative matter, how could an *emancipatory* social science avoid it? How could it not but be normative?

McCarney, going against the grain, argues that it is not oxymoronic and that Marx's way of viewing things has a good claim to being correct. Here Marx, McCarney has it, owes a debt to Hegel. McCarney claims "that a certain conception of the theory-practice relationship constitutes the core of his [Marx's] Hegelianism and embodies the sense in which he remains all his life a faithful Hegelian" (McCarney 2007, 228).

What is this conception and how plausible is it? First note what *may* be simply a personal idiosyncrasy of both Hegel and Marx but one which McCarney claims turns out to have a significant theoretical ground. Both had a kind of aristocratic disdain for the habit of complaining and fault-finding, of despising the world and retreating into idealistic dreams. They had a kind of proto-Nietzschean antipathy towards the spirit of criticism in the sense of negative evaluation. The kind of criticism, as Marx put it in *Capital*, "that knows how to judge and condemn the present but not how to comprehend it" (Marx 1976, 174). This betokens an inability on the part of these critics to do justice to the situation at hand. It is a failure of insight that never gets to the heart of the matter. Scientific understanding requires a deep and probing understanding of the matter being inquired into. (Indeed that may be a grammatical remark in Wittgenstein's specialized sense.)

But with the *Wissenschaftlich* way of characterizing science in the manner in which McCarney does, he goes on to characterize the dialectical character of such a science. If in his judgment science is to be properly done in such contexts it must be a dialectical scientific theory, a *Wissenschaftlich* way "insofar as it surrenders to the life of its object and seeks to bring that life into the life of consciousness" (McCarney 2007, 246). But this science, whether aptly described or not, is not normative. We "must not seek to supply a normative commentary [Hegel has it] but to mediate the stages of the life of the object" (McCarney 2007, 230). Marx, McCarney continues, thoroughly

grasped, ingested and clearly expressed that side of Hegel's dialectic. Moreover, Marx had himself such a conception of science. This made for him the very idea of critique very different than the one usually accepted and practiced.

In Marx's 'critique of critical criticism', as Marx called it, he employs this Hegelian conception of what he regards as a genuine dialectical science. Let's try to see what this comes to by proceeding indirectly. McCarney, quoting Marx, contends that the "proletariat is necessarily driven to rebellion by the contradictions of its existence. But it is not a question of what a particular proletarian or even the whole of the proletariat regards as the proletariat's aim" (McCarney 2007, 230). Rather, as Marx puts it, it "is a question of *what the proletariat* is, and what in accordance with this being it will historically be compelled to do" (McCarney 2007, 230). Marx views all this—the very condition of the proletariat—as somehow historically necessary. In fact, his talk here sounds very essentialist and perhaps Marx was in this sense an essentialist. (Wood so reads Marx. Wood 2004.) McCarney obscurely claims it has an ontological necessity. Ontological or not, he is taking it as historically necessary: as something, whether we like it or not, that will just come to be. With this necessitation (or supposed necessitation) of what the proletariat's condition of life is, then, if it is so understood, it is easy to understand why someone who believes it, as Marx did, will reject, and rationally so, moralistic beliefs in that domain. What is the use—indeed even the very intelligibility—of saying that something ought to be different when it can't be otherwise? If such necessitation obtains, ought-talk is without sense or at least application. It has no practical use.

What is needed instead is a "certain cognitive achievement on the part of the proletariat, its becoming aware of its own nature and the nature of the situation in which it finds itself" (McCarney 2007, 230) and then for it to act in accordance with this recognition and to hurry along the inevitable, which is also emancipatory for the proletariat—the vast mass of the people including

what was once called the *lumpen proletariat* and now is more commonly called the rest of the underclass.

I have argued that the necessities that Marx portrays are, if necessities at all, *empirical* necessities—empirical in their logical status like all human beings are mortal or all sugar dissolves in water. They are neither logical necessities nor ‘ontological necessities’—and they don’t require *essentialism*—but rather are deeply entrenched empirical necessities. Indeed, they are historical empirical necessities—or, more accurately, candidate ones which may actually be empirical necessities (Nielsen 2007).

Still, recognizing they are such necessities or purported necessities, we should also realize that it is pointless, if they really are such necessities, to make a moral or any kind of normative critique of them. It is too much like making a moral critique of the fact that we must die. The thing to do, as both Hegel and Marx argue, is to try to understand why these at least alleged historical necessities (if they really are empirical necessities) are necessary and how this will play out in our social lives and with what effects. Moral theory or moral critique and a critical theory of society is at best an irrelevancy in such a situation and at worst an encumbrance. Of course, this claim could and should be challenged as to whether, empirical or not, these claimed Marxian necessities are necessities at all. But this is to challenge, perhaps legitimately, a key part of the classical Marxian framework itself. Again, this can and should be done, but this is not to imply or to give to understand that it can be done successfully. And it is not—directly at least—a moral challenge. And this last point is the most central consideration here.

However, as McCarney notes, this is exactly what Western Marxists and analytical Marxists do. They have critically examined classical Marxism and in the light of that have given up on the revolutionary role of the proletariat. It is not, they claim, the agency that will lead us to a change in the productive forces and the productive relations in such a way that it will lead to socialism. Even more broadly, they will deny, as Levine denies, that there is any longer a proletariat or say, as

McCarney says, that there is a proletariat but, following István Mészáros, he argues that it is a fragmented and divided one (more on this later). This, of course, is a different problem than the more exegetically internal theory-practice problem we discussed above. But if there is no proletariat or no proletariat like the old industrial proletariat that can and will carry out the transformation from capitalism to socialism, still McCarney's turn—and I have come to follow him here—is to make the non-normative move that I have just described as the only kind of critique available to those making Marxian assumptions. (Whether those assumptions should be made is still another matter.)⁸

What McCarney has been talking about in articulating an account of how a practically oriented emancipatory theory can and should be non-normative is on the mark only if the necessities that he and I (following Marx) claim to be necessities really are necessities. But if there is no proletariat (no working class that is *in* but not *of* the society in which they are enmeshed) or no working class that will become revolutionary, then McCarney's solution is merely one for another possible world where such necessities obtain. But it is intended not as philosophical speculation but as a real world solution. But, true or false, it shows us, in a logically coherent way, how an emancipatory theory could be, and should be, *if certain conditions obtain*, emancipatory without being normative. My problem here is that there are no adequately good reasons for thinking those conditions obtain: that those alleged necessities—claimed empirical necessities or otherwise necessities—obtain.

V

This leads us to a consideration of that matter. I think, like Levine, that the most important challenge to Marxians (analytical or not) is to face this ramified challenge concerning the proletariat, or, *sans* the proletariat, what else can take us (if anything can) to socialism. It is to this problem that I now turn.

Levine correctly sees this problem as one of great significance for the future of Marxism. He introduces this problem as follows:

It was the idea, also consistent with mainstream thinking, that the working class, the agent of radical social transformation in traditional socialist theory, had become 'integrated' into the existing order. Partly thanks to victories won by the labor movement, and partly due to changes in the nature of work itself, it had *dropped in* – inserting itself into the existing order, thereby gaining a stake in its perpetuation. That the working class in the West was not revolutionary was beyond dispute. For all but the most doctrinaire, it was no longer even, strictly speaking, a proletariat, a class with 'nothing to lost but its chains'. As remarked, this stubborn fact posed a challenge to the socialist project, and especially to Marxism. It rendered the notion that the agent of social change must be in civil society but not of it – that, like the bourgeoisie in the French Revolution, it must take control at a political level of a society it already effectively constitutes – increasingly untenable. In these circumstances, the move that Marcuse and others made was a last desperate attempt at finding a revolutionary agent in Western societies. If the existing order no longer produced its own 'gravediggers' in the way that Marx thought it did, then its gravediggers must be willed into being. Otherwise, an indefinite capitalist future awaits – a future of totalitarian repression, if all goes badly, or of 'the American dream' turned nightmare, if all goes better; of barbarism or inauthenticity and pervasive alienation (Levine 2003, 54-5).

A few pages later Levine asks, "How much of 'classical' Marxism can survive the absence of a genuine proletariat" (Levine 2003, 60)? Without such a working class—a proletariat that is a class *in* civil society and *not* of it—is there any hope of so transforming society and moving to socialism? Levine remarks, "The New Left effectively accepted the fact of the proletariat's absence, but without relinquishing the revolutionary impulse emblematic of the socialist tradition, and without giving up other socialist goals either" (Levine 2003, 60). Herbert Marcuse is the central and paradigmatic intellectual figure here. Levine remarks of the New Left that its efforts were "based mostly on wishful thinking and were ultimately in vain" (Levine 2003, 60). The New Left apart, is it the case that absent a proletariat—*such* a working class—that the task of establishing socialism is in vain?

However, before we turn to that crucial question I will cite two more comments from Levine to round out his thinking about the proletariat. He says of both analytical Marxists and Althusserian ones, both coming after Hegelian historicist Marxism—the Marxism that is clearly the

continuator of Classical Marxism—that “they were...accommodations to a world without a proletariat or its functional equivalent—without agents with interests and capacities sufficient for constructing a socialist and then communist order” (Levine 2003, 72). He says later in his *A Future for Marxism?* that “both historicist and Althusserian Marxists had to grapple with the problems caused by the all-too-evident loss of an agent” (Levine 2003, 119-20). Levine adds, “If a proletariat had ever existed in the way that Marx and his immediate co-thinkers envisioned, by the mid-twentieth century it was gone” (Levine 2003, 120).

A working class, of course, exists and neither McCarney nor Levine is going to deny that. It would be idiotic to do so. There is a great mass of people, the vast majority of people, who own little or no means of production—certainly not enough to live on—and who must and do sell (when they can) their labor on a capitalist labor market. But just from this, which defines the working class, they are, as Levine clearly shows they are, still not a proletariat in the sense that Marx had in mind. To be what Marx and Marxists mean by a proletariat they must also be, as we have seen, *in* but not *of* capitalist society. That is the proletariat that at least seems to have disappeared and it was a proletariat that was crucial for achieving socialism.

The working class, as McCarney argues, is fragmented and large remnants of it, perhaps all of it, has been integrated in one way or another into the capitalist order. Most working class people now at least in the North have some stock in capitalist society. (I don’t mean by this that they have stocks.) They no longer have nothing to lose but their chains. They may lose their houses or jobs or both. Moreover, to return to the notion of their fragmentation, within the working class, the number of industrial workers—those among workers the best situated to carry through a revolution—has declined and the number of service workers has increased and there is as well an increasing number of agricultural workers, now increasingly relieved of any individual ownership of the land they work on. (They are for the most part not even like medieval serfs who at least had their own little patches.) These different contemporary workers often have different interests—

interests that sometimes conflict. It is not easy for them to form a common front. Moreover, there is a large and growing middle class with an anomalous status, in some respect exploiters and in some respects exploited. (Think of lower ranking managers here.) Even more evident in the South is the immiseration and steep exploitation of workers. Globalizing capitalism exacerbates that. Capitalists can and do move many of their factories to the much lower wage regions in the South. The North, of course, then, as far as workers are concerned, loses them. Moreover, in the North, and to a lesser but still considerable extent in the South, with growing technical sophistication there is a need for ever fewer workers. All of this goes well with good capitalist rationality. Capitalists, as always, go on seeking to maximize their profit or at least what they take to be their secure profit, though, as we are now seeing with what has been called 'disaster capitalism', where sometimes greed gets the best of them. They don't act according to capitalist rationality. But greed aside, our increasingly global capital with its multi-nationals and trans-nationals greatly facilitates the moving of work to the South at the expense of workers in the North. Workers in the North fear, and not without reason, losing their jobs to what now are potential workers in the South while these potential workers in the South are desperate to get jobs. They are in many respects like the reserve industrial army of times past. Moreover, with capital going increasingly global with globalization, the many worldwide different and conflicting ethnicities are making for increasing and often violent conflicts *within* the working class itself or more broadly the underclass. This militates against working class solidarity. Often their nation, religion or ethnicity takes precedence in the minds of working class or potential working class over their class. For all these reasons it would seem that the proletariat—a class (to repeat) in capitalist society but not of capitalist society—has disappeared and an alternative transformative trajectory is not clearly on the horizon. Some would say it is not at all on the horizon.

Moreover, socialism not only must be democratic to be socialism but it must also be practical (politically and economically aware and transforming) or it also will not be. Scientific

socialism not only wants to churn out predictions of explanatory interest systematically integrated but it also wants to help change the world and change it in a socialist direction. But in doing that it needs a credible account of how to change it in that direction. It had one with Classical Marxism's conception of the proletariat as the agent struggling for radical change and capable of carrying it out. It had, that is, in the time of its flowering, a plausible account of how this change would take place. But with the proletariat gone in the sense described above, what is to replace it? Or can such a proletariat be resurrected?

Vladimir Lenin, Georg Lukács, and the young and still radical Sidney Hook all argued that the working class could not by itself gain a revolutionary consciousness and that it must be brought to this by a party of dedicated Marxist revolutionaries. Rosa Luxemburg thought this to be a mistake. *Such a vanguard is tragically liable, she thought, to substitute the party for the class.* It would, as the socialist anarchists argued before Luxemburg and Simone Weil afterwards, become a dictatorship *over* the proletariat rather than a dictatorship *of* the proletariat. 'Dictatorship' is, to put it mildly, a misleading term here. But when Marxists speak of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' they meant it to signify a class—a proletarian class—mass democracy. It would indeed suppress the capitalist class and the great landowners, remembering their many criminal acts but also seeing that it was necessary to do this to achieve a secure socialist society. But otherwise it would be a political and economic democracy (Levine 2003, 146-71; C. B. Macpherson 1966). It would be a political and economic democracy *of and by the people*, i.e. the masses of the *proletariat* and the *lumpen-proletariat* (what now would be called the *underclass*).

However, this did not happen. In the Soviet Union after a good start—the very early years of the revolution—became a dictatorship *over* the proletariat (and a brutal one at that) and not the class democracy of the proletariat. This was exactly what Rosa Luxemburg feared and predicted. *Perhaps* if the rising Soviet Union had been left alone—something capitalism would never do—it might have become a genuine socialism. But from the very beginning it was not left alone; capitalist

countries made relentless war against it as well as capitalist and landowning elements in the Soviet Union itself. (This is the only place where we are justified in killing capitalists, namely killing them when they make war on us or when they otherwise try to kill us or torture us. Otherwise, killing them would be too close to genocide.) The early Soviet Union was attacked both from within and from without. Given this and the smallness of the Soviet proletariat, the establishing and sustaining of socialism would have been very difficult, to put it mildly, but whether it could have been accomplished will never be known. Russia, to say nothing about the whole Soviet Union, was a vast peasant society with a small, very wealthy, landowning class and a very small proletarian class. It is very unlikely that a proletarian democracy or any kind of democracy could arise and be sustained in such a situation. In spite of the slogan 'All power to the Soviets'—honestly meant by some—what Luxemburg feared came to pass. It was not just because it was a peasant society—consisting mainly of recently freed serfs—and with no democratic traditions that it didn't happen. It was also relentlessly harassed by the imperial capitalist order—as Cuba has been and still is—until many years later a sclerotic Soviet Union still harassed fell. This does not even remotely excuse, let alone justify, Stalin's atrocities or the Maoist ones in China. Neither the Soviet Union nor China can be our model for socialism, though we should study carefully what went on there and why (e.g., Andreas 2008).

Right after World War II in France and Italy—and to some extent in Germany as well—there were masses of people ready to go for socialism. They had, that is, a socialist consciousness and a commitment to radical change. There was a socialist ethos among masses of people. They were ready to make a socialist revolution. Many were workers who were proletarians in Marx's strong sense. They were *in but not of* the capitalist order and they wanted out and they wanted capitalism ended and socialism to replace it. They wanted to transform the capitalist order to their order, namely a workers' democracy: an economic democracy as well as a political democracy. But the United States, by now the great unacknowledged imperial power (with the complicity of the local

capitalists and right and centrist political elites with their political parties in these European countries), had a very strong presence there with its far greater wealth boosted by the U.S.'s war economy—something that gave the United States a far greater economic strength and with that a far greater political clout than the other great nations, nations that by contrast with the United States, had been devastated by the war. It meant that the United States was calling most of the shots because of its economic and political power. (The United States, of course, was not devastated at all by World War II; its wealth was enhanced. Its wartime economy was good for it.) Socialist impulses under these circumstances lost out, not because they were mistaken but because of U.S. power which was intensely capitalist power and the smartness of their policies such as the Marshall Plan. What quickly followed was the American-led golden age of capitalism (1946-60). In such a situation, revolutionary impulses came to have little appeal in the West. Instead, there was a growing *embourgeoisment* of the working class and decline and pessimism on the Left as well as harassment of it. The flurry of Left activity in the West during the late 60s and early 70s was principally a matter of students—mainly middle class students and some non-middle class Afro-Americans. It never effectively penetrated the working class or the *lumpen proletariat* (in that situation unemployable members of the underclass).

The most central thing to recognize is that the vast numbers of working class people did not then and do not now constitute a proletariat in the Marxist sense. They were not politically motivated. When we go down to our times and we look at things globally, we have a multitude of unemployed or marginally employed people or in the situation unemployable people. There is a not inconsiderable some in the Third World living on the equivalent of one U.S. dollar a day and even more living on the equivalent of two U.S. dollars a day. People in Haiti are eating mud cakes baked in the sun not for nourishment but to stave off the pangs of hunger. The 'really poor' of the world, to use a South African phrase, are too busy just trying to survive from day to day to revolt.

There is little revolutionary potential from such a multitude. Moreover, it is very unlikely that intellectuals, students or the peasants of the Third World will become that revolutionary force.

Cuba is to many of us on the Left a striking example of a small and poor society maintaining socialism against great odds and with a decent though hardly an abundant life for their people. (Cuba is exemplary in health care and education.) They maintain this even when they are a small socialist island literally next to the United States, that great imperial capitalist power implacably out to undermine them (Castro 2007; Rorty 2007; Rorty 2009; Habel 2009). This struggle to hold on to its socialism has so far been successful. But Cuba is in no position to spearhead a revolution, though there are amicable and mutually supportive and mutually beneficial relations between Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia. But its resources are limited but Cuba's persistence and what is going on in South America are helpful signs for us on the Left. South America is populated principally with Second World countries which are more industrialized than and not as impoverished as those of most of the Third World. Africa, particularly sub-Saharan Africa, has many countries which are very impoverished—some hardly worth exploiting—and not very industrialized or sometimes not even industrialized at all. So there is an important difference between Second and Third World countries. But there is, encouragingly, a potential for going socialist in the whole of South America, particularly if the countries of South America work together.

In South America there are many industrialized countries though still countries with large peasant and indigenous populations. There is a lot of rising radical consciousness there, though it takes diverse, more or less radical forms. Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, and Paraguay seem, at least, to be going in a somewhat social democratic direction. (Perhaps Ecuador is now going in an actual socialist direction. Social democrats, we should not forget, have been known to morph into socialists. But it can, and often does, go in the other direction too. Venezuela and Bolivia, by contrast to the above mentioned countries, are clearly on a socialist track. Moreover, more generally throughout South America there is—or so it seems to an outsider—a Leftish leaning and a

pan-South American ethos that might produce what Simon Bolivar wanted, namely a United States of South America and it might go firmly Left and so united it has the capacity to sustain socialism.

This is now a dream and a hope but it might turn into a reality. In countries like Columbia—countries that are right-wing comprador states of the United States—there is (it is particularly plain in Columbia) a very strong and persistent contesting of the Rightists. Moreover, and distinctly, in social democratic countries such as Argentina, Brazil, and Chile, if the social democrats cannot deliver (or only minimally) the goods and thereby integrate or more firmly integrate their working classes into capitalist society, perhaps these countries will go genuinely socialist and we might realize Bolivar's dream. This, from where we are now, can only be speculative. Many things can happen, including some untoward things. But remember that there are social democrats who are genuine social democrats. Unlike Blair, Brown, Royale, and Kichner they honestly and regretfully believe that for the foreseeable future there is no feasible road to socialism and try instead to tame capitalism giving it a more human face. There is with such people still a commitment to the Left. But social democracy has only been successful, and there only temporarily, where there was the threat or a perceived threat of a Red Menace in the background. If the United States becomes a little less Neanderthal, as it *might* with Obama, this may unintentionally in one way or another have the effect of ending, for a time, movements to the Left as Roosevelt's policies did in times past. I doubt that Obama is aware of that possibility or, if aware, very much taken up with worrying about it. His concern is to halt the ascendancy of a very Neanderthal, destructive, and inward-looking Right and to make some modest renewal in the United States—a United States that is more multilateral and more a user of soft power than under the Bush-Cheney regime. But he is still committed to continuing and even strengthening the American Empire. Still—and this is my central point—we have never seen a social democratic surge forward where there was not a fear of a Red threat or its like. Is what I have been saying, I ask parenthetically, any reason for Americans not to vote for Obama or for others not to hope they will do so? I don't think so. It is usually bad tactics, and

perhaps bad morals as well, to wish for evil to temporarily obtain or be sustained in the hope that it will spark a revolt which will bring about a considerable change for the better. Remember the German communists' disastrous slogan right after Hitler's ascension to power: 'After Hitler, then us.' Usually things are not that extreme. But it is usually counterproductive to welcome reaction to bring about a Left turn. I think Immanuel Wallerstein's notion that in the 'democracies' of the North the very short term strategy should be to support the lesser evil knowing that all realistically possible choices are in some way or another unsavory (Wallerstein 2008).

However, about the United States crushing movements on the Left, particularly in South America, it is salutary to remember that South America is a rather big and formidable continent, particularly if it stands united against U.S. threats. The Americans can't manage to crush resistance and stabilize things in either Iraq or Afghanistan. Imagine doing it for the whole of South America from the Mexican border with the United States to the tip of Argentina/Chile! Now the United States tries to do it, in more or less subtle ways, with individual countries in South America and sometimes for a time they succeed, e.g. in Colombia. But if there becomes a whole united South American bloc, this will become much more difficult. It is a significant opportunity for us.

Moreover, if the American Empire is in decline, as Eric Hobsbaum and some others reasonably think, this opens up more windows. Some think (probably as a bit of wishful thinking) the American Empire is in steep decline. But at least it *may* very well be in decline. Obama, like FDR was before him, may be a savior capitalism, making up for Bushian extremely conservative neo-liberalism and unilateralism as FDR made up for Hoover. Obama may reason, as Roosevelt reasoned, that half a loaf is better than none and not only get off South America's back, but by being more multilateral. Capitalism has been bailed out in such a way before. But there is no guarantee that this or any such tactic will work for them now as there is no guarantee of the triumph of socialism. Contingency is the name of the game.

Perhaps under some circumstance like this South America will not go in something like the Chavez-Castro path but it may instead pervasively develop instead a mild form of social democracy making its peace with capitalism. But that will require concessions on both sides and that may help the working class. Again, for both sides half a loaf is better than none. There are all sorts of scenarios we can dream up here, some more plausible than others and some (not necessarily the same ones) more hopeful for the Left than others. But still we are inescapably, as we always are, enmeshed in contingency and we can have no secure knowledge of where the so-called 'cunning of reason' will take us. Put more literally, we do not know what the future will bring. I think the conviction of Classical Marxists and their historicist Hegelian Marxist continuers that they know that history must go the way they think or hope it will is a rationalistic dream. I would very much like it to go the way they think it will. But it is wishful thinking to think that it is a certainty or even something that has a high probability or perhaps any probability.

If I were a betting person or just a betting person, I would bet that we will not get socialism, not even an *ersatz* socialism. But, as I have repeatedly remarked in many of my writings, we are not just neutral observers and perhaps interpreters and explainers of the world; we are also agents acting in the world with a vision of the kind of world we would like to see and with some of us beliefs about and a commitment to do what we can do to help bring it about. (Indeed, to be moralistic for a moment, we should do that.) As agents we must—a moral 'must'—go on struggling to make a more reasonable and better world than the horror we have now and have had repeatedly throughout human history. As Hegel well called it, history is among other horrible things, a slaughter bench. (But more accurately and non-teleologically, repeatedly in the life of *homo sapiens* there have been not infrequently slaughter-bench like situations.) This may suggest to some of you that I am either opting for ethical (utopian) socialism or copping out Hegelian fashion with resignation or to a reconciliation of political forces—of classes. I am not doing any of these things. I agree with both McCarney and Levine about what they consider the helplessness of Western

Marxism and even with Levine concerning what he calls second phase analytical Marxism as it has with some morphed into ethical socialism and sometimes into just a liberalism. And I agree that this is not a good thing for the Left. (Remember, however, the quotation I made from G. A. Cohen earlier about his not being a liberal.)

However, consider this: we can moralize—reasonably moralize—as much as we like and poverty—the extreme poverty that we now actually have—and steep exploitation do not end or even get seriously, if at all, ameliorated. I am thinking here principally of global poverty. We can develop moral or normative political theories and advocate them until we are blue in the face and perhaps sound ones or at least plausible ones at that, including careful ones empirically informed such as Thomas Pogge’s or Jeffrey Sacks’ (Pogge 2002; Sacks 2006). But the world does not change. Think, for a prominent example, of the fate of John Rawls and those—many of them very able—who philosophize more or less in his wake. Rawls developed a nuanced and powerful account of social justice and its place in morality and public life. It was, as became clear in his later work, only for distinctively liberal (i.e., social democratic, not neo-liberal) societies. He was, besides being a powerful thinker, a deeply principled person with intense moral seriousness. Moreover, his vision of what he called political liberalism could be believed, only be instantiated, in either a liberal socialism or what he called a property-owning democracy (Rawls 1999, 420). It was (*pace* John Gray) as much for Norway as for the political elites of the Eastern seaboard of the United States. It is a very carefully worked out and very complex but still a plausible normative moral and political theory and it generated with Rawls and some Rawlsians a hope for a realistic utopia. At least it would be something, they thought, to guide our actions. It may, however, be vulnerable to the very trenchant and in effect radical criticisms of Raymond Geuss (Geuss 2008). Yet it—as well as for the other theories made more or less in the light of his—has not changed the world for the better. No realistic utopia Rawlsian style is in sight (though that would perhaps not surprise Rawls). Society in the United States and societies throughout the world are less liberal (social democratic) and

more inegalitarian and exploitative now than when Rawls started to write in the late 1950s. His liberal egalitarian theory—an *ideal* theory for a liberal (social democratic) society—has gone along in a progressive minded way while the society in which he lived along with most of the world has grown markedly more inegalitarian, exploitative and less progressive or at least less progressive in the most essential ways. His own home country has not only become more conservative but Neanderthally reactionary. The world in most ways—but not in all—is a worse place now than when he started to write in the 1950s. The United States besides being conservative is still also a reactionary, still a racist, flag waving, chauvinist place. You should remember that Obama had to drape himself in the flag and his opponent ran on the slogan ‘America First’. We must not forget what his opponent’s running mate was and why she became his running mate. And we also must not forget the United States is a world empire. Obama, I believe, wishes to turn some of this around a bit. He wants it to be an empire of smart power—of soft power—rather than an empire of hard power repeatedly flexing its muscles militarily. But an empire it will remain under his helm. And we can hope and not unreasonably expect he will be able to some extent improve things. But he has a very long way to go. The country he governs is still very reactionary. He will not take us—nor does he intend to—to what the socialists want. (To call him a socialist as some of his opponents do is simply absurd.) But to return to Rawls—*perhaps* Rawls did not want to change the world. But what is the point of a normative political theory, particularly a social democratic one as his is, if it does not affect (or try to) in some way the social world it is in? Isn’t it pointless if it has no potentiality, directly or indirectly, to have any effect on making the world a little better place (Guess 2008)? *Pace* John Roemer, ethical socialism will not be the force to lead us to the Promised Land. It is not that what Rawls says about morality is false, let alone meaningless, but that it does and can do little to change things. Constructing such theories is, as I have said elsewhere, too much like fiddling while Rome burns (Nielsen 2009).

I do not know what in our situation (I speak here of the world), if anything, will bring us to socialism. I don't even have any good hypotheses or even remotely compelling conjectures. I have pointed to, among all the dark things, some happier *possibilities* (as has Levine, though I am more pessimistic than he is and he is not exactly jumping with optimism). I have no idea how probable or plausible these happier possibilities are of coming to fruition. Take, for example, my optimism about South America and my worries about it. We do not have a firm idea of what the world will look like in ten years or twenty years. This makes me more sceptical than McCarney or even Levine. (I don't here speak of philosophical scepticism. I think of it as an absurdity.) But of scepticism about our ability to know how the world will go or even probably go. (I mean in the next 25 to 50 years.) But we do know that we socialists must (again a moral 'must') go on struggling—soldiering on—to make socialism prevail and to make it prevail in a reasonable form. However, the actual realistic alternative to capitalism may not be socialism but a technologically based post-capitalist authoritarianism. The post-capitalism which may follow capitalism may at its worst be barbarianism *tout court* and at its best be a bureaucratically constricted alienated non-democratic existence in the North and barbarianism in the South. Capitalism—its distinctive mode of production—will not be eternal. No mode of production will be. And its replacement *may* be socialism. But that is not written in stone, Hegelian Marxists to the contrary notwithstanding. If, in Engels's phrase, we care about the possibility of a decent life for ourselves and for as many others as possible, we socialists must struggle for socialism and the demise of capitalism even when the odds are very much against us.

VI

I think McCarney would agree with me on much of what I have said in the last section. We *may* disagree on exactly what a contemporary socialism would look like but that is a friendly disagreement among comrades that can perhaps with effort be worked out. Neither of us is likely

to have truth by the tail. Where we disagree, I believe, is on *philosophy* and the importance of it for political life. I am resolutely a therapeutic Wittgensteinian about this with what I have elsewhere called my anti-Philosophy philosophy stance (Nielsen 1994). McCarney takes an ontological stance with a commitment to a philosophical dialectical method. I have tried to give some arguments why we should not take that path but instead take a different (*perhaps* in some ways more radical) path traveling philosophically light. This way of proceeding is, I have argued, recognizably Marxist (or Marxian as I prefer to call it) and it squares well with treating Marx not as a philosopher but as a social scientist articulating an emancipatory social science in the service of socialism. McCarney, I believe, would agree with the latter part of that sentence though he certainly would not with the first part about philosophy. Moreover, he would include in his science a 'dialectical science' that I would argue is neither a science nor a very coherent notion. I have tried to give reasons for my claims. If my claims, indeed all or any of them, are too strong (which I, of course, do not think they are or I would not hold them), then I would retreat to claim that this 'dialectical method' is both obscure and very probably useless.

Scientific socialism is something which McCarney and I both agree we socialists need. We agree we should not be mere utopian (ethical) socialists or let socialism reduce itself to that. But, as I have argued, scientific socialism has no need for dialectics. Moreover, I think it is a burden to us. It just causes unnecessary and distracting problems, typically (to use McCarney's phrase) meta-theoretical problems which we could do without. (I do not say that of all meta-theoretical problems and claims. A good bit of what is going in this lecture is meta-theoretical and I hope and believe it is not altogether useless.)

I have argued that we can coherently keep (perhaps with the exception of the labor theory of value) what I have called the rest of Marx's canonical theses, though somewhat reduced along the lines that G. A. Cohen and Andrew Levine specify, without having any truck with Marx's Hegelian dialectics or any dialectics (Lenin and indeed Marx to the contrary notwithstanding). Most

Marxists, except the analytical ones, would disagree. And some formerly analytical Marxists (e.g., Elster) have come to believe that carefully analyzed these other canonical theses wither away. But, the last sentence aside, as activists fighting for the coming to be of socialism, nothing would matter very much where we stand on the intellectual issue of dialectics or *perhaps* on the labor theory of value. To argue that proceeding in the way I have, and generally speaking all analytical Marxists have, gives us—I mean here we socialists—a clearer conception of how we should proceed for socialism to be achieved. But we can agree to disagree about dialectics and indeed about the labor theory of value without our political and economic practices or concrete analyses being affected. (This is a controversial claim. But I would put it do defenders of the labor theory of value to show just what socialist practices would have to be dropped.)

In the beginning was the *act*, not the *word*. Put less metaphorically, words and acts go together. There would be no words without acts and no acts without words at least in the background, though there would be movements. (A newborn baby makes some of them but the baby cannot yet act.) There is no language (e.g., English, French, German, etc.) without speech acts and speech acts are acts. But this is all just philosophy. It, like anything anywhere, but particularly in philosophy, might be mistaken. Francis Fukuyama to the contrary notwithstanding, philosophy, let alone liberalism, will not last forever, not even to when human beings all shuffle off the stage which, given global warming, may be sooner than we would otherwise think. I do not think we know, though we can conjecture not unreasonably and hope, that the mode of production following the capitalist mode will be a socialist one. It is a conceptual truth that it will be post-capitalist. Moreover, it is inevitable (empirically speaking) that eventually there will be a demise of the capitalist mode of production. But we cannot be at all sure, as I argued in the previous section, that our future will be a socialist one. It could be a number of things including a technological authoritarianism with an almost fascist-like quality.⁹ We cannot know that history or ‘reason’ is on our side. Fallibilist that I am, I do not think that we can know anything like this. Contingency is

inescapably with us human animals. We cannot reasonably have the belief in the guarantees that traditional Marxists had. That notwithstanding, I am utterly determined and committed to do all that I can to help bring about a firmly socialist future. (That may, and probably will, come to very little. But then I am only one individual actor in the world though with things which I very much care about at issue. And this motivates my trying to help make a socialist reality. I do not say that it is the most rational thing to do but it is not unreasonable.)

VII

A Meta-philosophical but Politically Relevant Interlude

I am too much of a Wittgensteinian to have any confidence in constructive philosophy at all, particularly grand scale metaphysical or epistemological theories or comprehensive moral theories or normative political theories. My philosophy, though not my Marxianism, is negative and therapeutic. It seeks to get the fly out of the fly bottle, as Wittgenstein famously put it. I use conceptual therapy to try to free people, including myself, from philosophical perplexities and obsessions and to help us to live, and reasonably so, without great cosmic assurances. To do so I describe the uses of words or the uses of whole sentences or (alternatively put) I try to clarify concepts where these things stand in need of or are *thought* to stand in need of clarification and I try to live with the consequences of these clarifications taken to heart. Where we are blocked concerning the uses of words in science and everyday life, including in our morality and politics, I seek sufficient clarification to unblock us. (Complete or perfect clarity is a philosophical chimera.) McCarney also regards his work—at least in *Social Theory and the Crisis of Marxism*—as a *second-order* task. He calls it a meta-theoretical task designed to clarify and elucidate concepts and theories, principally those of Marx and Hegel, and to the ways people have reacted to Marx and Hegel. Mine is a *second-order* task as well, though in a broadly Wittgensteinian and Rortyan fashion. I see no conflict between going Wittgenstein's or Rorty's way in philosophy and Marx's

way in social science and over politics and economics. Since the Wittgensteinian one is *second-order* and the Marxian one usually is not, I am not caught in a Habermasian pragmatic contradiction.

So McCarney and I differ over philosophy, as I remarked in the last section, but not, or not vitally, over Marxian matters except over the dialectical method and perhaps—I do not know—over the labor theory of value. I don't know what McCarney's position is here. And I don't know enough economics myself to reject the labor theory of value, let alone having a view about replacing it with another economic theory or some modification of the labor theory of value. But I am suspicious of it—it sounds to me like metaphysics—and I am most tempted by some form of market socialist account like David Schweickart's and, in some respects, but not all, John Roemer's (Schweickart 1996 and 2002; Roemer 1994). Both of them are market socialists and it seems to me, perhaps in my ignorance, that that is a more efficient way of allocating and distributing goods than in a non-market way and that it is something that could readily be utilized without thereby engulfing itself in capitalism's market orientation which seeks to make all human beings not only into commodities but also into consumption addicts—addicts wishing for and feeling the need for 'new things' all the time (Schweickart 1998; Ollman 1998). I see why capitalism needs that, but I do not see how socialism does and, market socialism or not, I do not see why it should. Why can't we socialists, as Schweickart and Roemer think we should, use markets for allocating goods without becoming consumption addicts, without having a consumerist orientation? People in a socialist ethos would not need or want all those new and usually useless things that are pushed on them in a capitalist society and a socialist media would not so push it. We, under such conditions, would cease being shopping addicts. There was a time when our societies needed growth but we in the North do not need it now and for people so situated it tends to cause alienation and waste and indeed environmental harm. Indeed it is destructive for us. In the South growth will still be needed for a time. For capitalism, of course, consumerism is something that is required—at least as it operates

now. (It is difficult—but perhaps not impossible—to envision how it could be any other way in a capitalist order.) But under market socialism the market could allocate goods without their being consumerist.

So McCarney and I differ over philosophy, including whether Marxism needs a distinctive methodology and ontology. He thinks, as all Hegelian Marxists do, that a distinctive methodology is something Marxism and socialism needs. And he also thinks that Marxism needs an ontological philosophy. I think, like Marx and Engels had it in the *German Ideology*, that philosophy is to science what masturbation is to sexual intercourse. Moreover, McCarney believes that Marx had such an ontology and that it is foundational for Marxism and crucial for a proper understanding of the world. I believe none of these things and I further believe that such notions led Marxism and socialism astray into needless perplexities and into making the obscure claims that Classical Marxists and Hegelians take to be essential while in my view they do no more harm than good to the very scientificity and coherence of Marxism and socialism. This scientificity is something which both McCarney and I (and Levine as well) believe to be essential for socialism. However, I believe that these ontological and dialectical mysteries get in the way and should be benignly set aside and I further take it that that is something, and commendably so, that is in the spirit if not the letter of analytical Marxism. I try with regard to Hegel and McCarney's account of Hegel and about his articulation of Marx's *philosophy* (which he sees rightly as deeply Hegelian) to practice this conceptual therapy on it without mischaracterizing or in any way distorting McCarney's account. It is, of course, not for me to judge how successful I have been.

Philosophy (more accurately, *some* philosophy) unfortunately fascinates me. But I have come to think, rather ambivalently, as does Rorty (though Rorty is without my ambivalence) that philosophy is (or at least should be) a transitional genre (Rorty 2007a, 89-104). For Rorty it is transitional to literature and a literary culture; for me it is transitional to social science and I hope to an emancipatory one (Nielsen 2007; Rorty 2007b). Indeed, I am inclined to think with David

Harvey that what philosophy more generally should principally morph into is a new kind of social science, namely an amalgam of geography, social anthropology, and history (including economic history) (Harvey 2000). Marxians will add macroeconomics and some (Elster, Cohen, Roemer) microeconomics as well. But generally the new social science discipline should be a creative integration of geography (as now practiced), social anthropology, and history (particularly but not exclusively economic history). The small residue that is left for philosophy as it has been will become what I have characterized in a Wittgensteinian manner as being conceptual therapy, a form of *second-order* conceptual or linguistic analysis of language where some bit of linguistic practice is *felt* by some (including sometimes ourselves) to be troubling. But that does not do (or try to do) a foundationalist job or a founding job—some illusory underpinning of both our scientific activity and our everyday life conceptualizations. The study of the history of philosophy should also remain as a part of our cultural heritage. But that should become a part of history—cultural history—and should not be taken as a search for truth, let alone *the* truth or ‘an ultimate truth’ and above all not for a *redemptive* truth. It should not be regarded as a philosophical investigation but a historical study of what once were philosophical investigations. (However, to do it properly requires some understanding of philosophy, as well as history, just as to do the philosophy of biology requires some understanding of biology.)

I should also stress that philosophy as a transitional genre could—and I think should—split differently in both Rorty’s and my directions and that this can be done without conflict and with its being the case that both are preserving something important but different, that comes now from philosophical aspirations but, after the transition has been firmly made, it will take more significant ways, i.e., with literature and literary culture, on the one hand, and with social science on the other. With the social science part being much as Harvey characterizes it and I have gestured at above. Philosophy will, I hope, morph in those two directions. (There may be other directions as well. Cognitive science may be one.) In trying to make sense of our lives and of our condition both of

these activities are essential and have their *origins* in both religion and philosophy, though by now their time should be past. Moreover, these activities are not conflicting and need not be at cross-purposes.

So for me, Marxism or Marxianism (as I prefer to call it) becomes emancipatory social science. Marxist philosophy, where it is distinct from emancipatory social science, will become something of merely antiquarian interest. Fitting with that and with what I have just said above, a few autobiographical remarks will, I think, help—perhaps only causally help—to further an understanding of the position I take and why I take it.

I was not a red diaper baby. I grew up in a small town in the U.S. Midwest during the Great Depression in a reasonably affluent bourgeois family that never suffered, as far I can remember, from the Depression. But many of my school chums and their families did. They lived in poverty, some more so than others, but there were many that lived in great poverty. They lived in scarcely heated houses with scant furniture and cupboards nearly bare. Their mothers had gaunt features pinched with hunger and worry and their fathers were unemployed and many of them on the road looking desperately for just any kind of work, usually without success. (There was little in the way of social safety nets then.) The condition of these families made a great and lasting impression on me and made me think—though I don't remember with guilt—how unfair it all was. Why couldn't they—indeed everyone—live like I did? (I don't mean I lived sumptuously but I lived well.) I thought it was so wrong that they didn't. It is there I expect the roots of my socialism can be found. I had gentle and kindly parents who cared for me, an only child after twenty-two years of marriage, so I didn't revolt against them, capitalist-oriented as they were. But I couldn't understand why they just accepted the situation as if nothing was wrong and with the feeling that nothing could be done about it anyway. But I think this was like many of our compatriots now think (mistakenly) about global poverty (Pogge 2002). When I was a little older and was in high school I came across some writings of Norman Thomas—who was, I would guess, a social democrat though I confusedly

thought of him and that he thought of himself as being a socialist—and I came to think of myself (I suspect rather incoherently) as a socialist and I could not understand why everyone wasn't. It just seemed so obviously right.

After my war experience, I went to university and read rather desultorily some Marx, Lenin, Trotsky, and even some Stalin—many people on the Left in the West their naiveté used to call him 'Uncle Joe'—along with a lot of rather different thinkers including John Dewey and Thorsten Veblen. I became rather more coherently a socialist and while an undergraduate in university I actively participated in the Henry (not George) Wallace presidential campaign. Henry Wallace was a former Vice-President in the Truman Administration. He tried to form a rather more leftish (but not very leftish) Third Party. But Wallace accepted support from the Communist Party of the United States and that enabled the two major parties (firmly capitalist parties) with the help of the media to destroy Wallace's Third Party. Active in the Wallace campaign, I met Paul Robeson briefly and introduced him at a rally. During the war I had seen Robeson play Othello. So in two quite different ways I was awed and inspired by him. I decided I should become as much like Paul Robeson as I could.

However, as I read more, including Sidney Hook who put me on to the bad sides of Stalin and to the often nefarious tricks of the various Communist parties, I slid back into being a social democrat, or as I thought of it then, a liberal socialist. I thought we should just hold on to our brains and go at things gradually. I believed then that we in the United States (I was then an American citizen) should make reform after reform until in ten years we would become like Sweden. Then we would—or so I thought then—be as socialist as we reasonable could be. I persisted in thinking of myself, in spite of that plainly social democratic orientation, as a socialist but as a mild one—a socialist who firmly took a liberal path. I continued to think in this way through my last years in graduate school and my first years of teaching. I didn't then think, naïve as I was, of it in that way then, but I now reasonably conjecture that that liberal turn of mine saved my neck for by then

McCarthyism was becoming a reality. But for that time—though not out of fear but out of conviction—I remained comfortably and safely a social democrat under the illusion that I was a socialist. I passed up through the professorial ranks and became a full professor at New York University and Chair of the Washington Square department. I was saved from political and academic destruction with all that gradualism ingrained in me mostly by the influence of pragmatism.

The Vietnam War turned, and decisively, my head around. I became an activist in the anti-war campaign, involved in resistance, speaking and protesting, as Hilary Putnam did, all over the place while longing, if only I had a little time, to do some philosophy again which by that time had become for me analytic philosophy with a pragmatist turn. Finally, I got so fed up with the United States that I left for Canada, thinking it would be a different place and there I began to study and teach Marx jointly with a more orthodox Marxist philosopher and a close friend. (He was a Marxist in spite of the fact that his D.Phil. from Oxford was under the tutelage of Gilbert Ryle.) We jointly gave a course on Marx and Engels one term each year and in the other term a more advanced seminar on a different Marxist author and/or on a different Marxist topic. In that way we bootstrapped ourselves into a better understanding of such matters and at the same time taught our students—I don't know how competently—something of Marxism and the Marxist tradition. (We had no professors in our student years who gave us anything like such instruction.) In the first year after I arrived in Calgary, the advanced seminar was on Georg Lukács's *History and Class Consciousness*. Later, we assigned G. A. Cohen's classic book on historical materialism and in what perhaps was the last year—I don't remember that accurately—the topic was Jon Elster's *How to make Sense of Marx*. (I agree, by the way, with what McCarney says about Elster's book in his article on analytical Marxism. See McCarney 1990.)

I would never have taught those courses if the Political Science Department at the University of Calgary (where I taught in the Philosophy Department) had not been infested with

Straussians and that there was no one, as far as I could ascertain, to teach Marx or the Marxist tradition. There was, that is, no one but us to teach Marx and the Marxist tradition. We wanted students to get a somewhat more fair-minded and accurate account of Marx and Marxist tradition. If the two of us did not do it, no one would. This, I should add, is characteristic of most universities in Canada and the United States; there are only a few Marxists or Marxist sympathizers to teach such courses. As for the University of Calgary, Marx and Marxism is now with our retirement simply not taught at all, at least not in the Philosophy Department. I do not think this is atypical of the North American Anglophone university scene or of the Francophone scene either. (It is perhaps a little better now but not much.) However, for me, to go back to myself, I would not without that teaching have gained the somewhat detailed knowledge of Marx that I came to have. I would have gone on in my radical ways with my half-formed knowledge of Marx and with a radicalism formed more by Noam Chomsky than by the Marxist tradition. (I don't by this mean to suggest that reading Chomsky is a bad thing. I think it was a very good thing indeed, an indispensable thing.) I would have gone on teaching Hart, Rawls, Barry, and Dworkin and sometimes even meta-ethicists such as Stevenson, Nowell-Smith, Hare, Mackie, Foot, and Railton as well as giving seminars on Wittgenstein and Austin. But in retrospect I am very glad that I did this teaching of Marx and Marxism for I found studying Marx and Marxists not only good for my students but for me repeatedly enlightening. It gave, I hope, some rational and reasonable substance to what otherwise would have remained my rather Luddite but passionate socialism. Still it did not make me at all into what Elster has called a Marxist fundamentalist or into any kind of fundamentalist or even into a foundationalist. Rather, it strengthened my fallibilist non-Hegelian perspectivist historicism. *In that way* I am a rather sceptical Marxian but a committed one all the same, though I have a deeper distrust of theory, particularly of grand social theory, than most Marxians. (Thanks here to Wittgenstein, Toulmin, and Rorty.)

To return again to our joint teaching: we taught Marx, as I have remarked, each year and each time in preparing for the course I reread or read something different of Marx's or Engels' texts. In this way, and in teaching the set texts, I learned something new and valuable. I came to see what a very powerful figure Marx was and how he astutely worked together theory and practice. I even toyed for a while with the idea of becoming a Marx scholar but decided that my German wasn't good enough to do it adequately. (It was a little bit late in the day for me to become proficient. I haven't, unfortunately, Marx's language learning talents.) Moreover and more importantly—and this fits in with what I have been saying about philosophy and social science—I wanted to do some Marxist social science myself rather than just analyzing Marx or some Marxist philosophers or indeed any philosophers. My interests shifted away from studying Marx or Marxist philosophers (even analytic ones) to examining globalization, imperialism, the effects and sustainability of neo-liberalism, and the geo-political scene. I wanted to study such things from a broadly Marxian perspective without at all worrying about Marxist orthodoxy. Marxian-oriented social scientists such as David Harvey, Adam Freeman, Boris Kagalowsky, George Bello, Colin Leys, Leo Panitch, Peter Gowan, Tariq Ali, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Samir Amin gripped my attention and gave me a better understanding of what problems I should investigate and how.

With the sort of work that these and others like them are doing—and they are not carbon copies of each other—it seems to me that this is where it is at much more than with the philosophical examinations, even astute ones, engaged in trying to reconstruct Marxist philosophy or work out a socialist theory of justice. I want to study such problems as Harvey *et al.* study them and in broadly the same manner on my own. Darwinian biologists don't typically spend their time sorting out Darwin or present-day physicists in sorting out Newton. Those are jobs for historians of science. Some of the scientists may never have read Darwin or Newton and are none the worse for that as scientists. Why shouldn't the same thing or a similar thing be true for Marxian social scientists? The analogy isn't exact but it is close enough, I think, to be relevant. We Marxists or

Marxians should roll up our sleeves and do something analogous to what Darwinian biologists do. This, I think, is the way to push Marxianism and socialism forward. I say this somewhat (but only somewhat) ambivalently because I think we need as well, given the state of social science, *second-order*—what McCarney calls meta-theoretical work—on what is involved in characterizing and conceptualizing Marxism and socialism, including conceptualizing it as scientific and explaining how it is and how it can be, if it can be, an emancipatory social science without being normative. It is also relevant to recognize that the development of the social sciences—even economics—is not even remotely as advanced (and perhaps never will be) as physics or even biology (Toulmin 2001). This being so, it makes study of the founding fathers of social science (Marx, Durkheim, Weber) more relevant than it otherwise would be.

These matters are all at the center of McCarney's concerns and he has contributed much to how these problems are to be broached. I would only add that it is only by setting aside a *purely* ethical socialism—a utopian socialism—that we can even begin taking on McCarney's ideas. I am thinking here particularly of his claim, powerfully if perhaps not altogether convincingly argued, concerning how Marxism can be emancipatory social science without being normative. But, to return with a conflicting note, remember Marxism and socialism has a vision of the world. Dare I say a vision of how the world should be?

We still arguably should find it useful and desirable to have something like G. A. Cohen's, John Roemer's, and Erik Olin Wright's normative political claims that we can use in a justificatory account—an account concerning, as an important example, the contention that egalitarian justice is also, and desirably, rooted in socialism—while accepting Marx's and McCarney's argument against moralizing socialism. It is crucial to see if the Cohen-Roemer-Wright type claims and McCarney's claims as well as Wood's, can be made compatible. That is, are McCarney's and Wood's claims and an egalitarian socialism compatible? Can we coherently articulate and defend such a reading? (But see here for a conflicting note Raymond Geuss 2008.)

We should remember that radicalism had a beginning with the slogan 'Liberty, Equality, Fraternity' (solidarity) and that this has always been a part of the socialist tradition. Still, such considerations pale in significance to the social science issues that Harvey, Panitch, the Andersons, Gowan, Amin, Davis, *et al.* raise. No doubt we have a division of labor here and that it would be a good thing to have both. My reaction—perhaps too strong—is rooted in my intuition about their comparative urgency. (But again intuitions can be unreliable. See again Geuss.) Concerning the philosophy part of this lecture, I return to it in the last lecture.

Notes

¹ In the conference where I presented an initial version of this lecture, John Clegg also presented a careful account of Marx's own conception of ideology which in effect cast seriously into question whether the account McCarney and I have given of ideology was Marx's. His textual evidence was thorough. Perhaps what McCarney and I were talking about fits better with Lenin, Trotsky and Luxembourge than with Marx. If this is so, as it now tentatively appears to me to be, it is still no reason to drop that conception of ideology except as a characterization of Marx's conception. It seems to me, Marx aside, that it is a very useful conception of ideology to hold on its own: useful for a Marxian project and indeed more generally.

² There is still something analogous to that in G. A. Cohen's and Jon Elster's penchant to move from the complex to its parts and to go from macro-mechanisms to micro-mechanisms. In Lecture 2 and Lecture 3 I will point to some places where it has deleterious partisan results.

³ Though McCarney makes frequent references to ontology in *Social Theory and the Crisis of Marxism*, he never defines or characterizes what he means by 'ontology'. In his *Hegel on History* (London, UK: Routledge, 2000) he is more explicit. There (p. 17) he first tells us rather conventionally that ontology is a theory of being and this leads us to a familiar difficulty—I would say an insuperable difficulty—of determining what being is. (What do we mean by 'being' as distinct from talking of beings?) A little later he tells us that ontology is a general theory of what there is (p. 36). But this sounds like an *ersatz* and impossible-to-carry-out allegedly empirical enterprise, but not an ontological theory or anything that could be philosophical. Perhaps, alternatively, this is the same as Quine's remark (I suspect a tongue-in-cheek) that ontology is the claim that what there is is; that it is what we can quantify over, i.e., to be is to be the value of a variable. But this, of course, tells us nothing, as Quine well recognizes. Is McCarney following Quine here? He doesn't say so. If he means to gain the necessity that supposedly goes with ontology and he is saying that ontologists are saying that whatever is is, he has a tautology on his hands and a rather odd one at that. Surely he wants something more substantial than that but what is it? To deny what there is is, itself is oxymoronic. (It may be moronic as well.) If he means to say that ontology is a general theory of what there is, then to try to carry it out is (among other things) to try to do the impossible task of listing all that there is or even to show what that could come to. If this is something we could in principle do, then we must be able to make sense of this notion. Hilary Putnam has said (and rightly) that we cannot count all the objects (things) in a room, to say nothing about in the universe. (We have to first decide what is to count as an 'object', e.g., a speck of dust? There is not going to be any agreement here or an understanding of how we can get one except arbitrarily by stipulation. See Putnam 2004, 52-85.) To say that we could do it in principle is just arm waving. Being able to determine all that there is in the universe is clearly nonsense. One is put in mind of Hobbes's remark that there is nothing so absurd that some old philosopher has not said it.

McCarney is a Hegelian Marxist. Perhaps a theory of being is a theory of dynamic becoming (pp. 53 and 62). But since we do not understand what is meant by 'being' we cannot understand 'being is becoming'. Suppose we try to say the flow of reality is becoming. But what is that? And becoming what? And what if it is replied, 'just becoming'? Again, we have something unintelligible as we also do when we try to substitute 'potentiality' for 'becoming'.

Suppose we say instead, as Hegel does, that reason rules the world and therefore world history has been rational in its course? The rational is said to be the substantial and this somehow and somehow is necessary and it is the real: I know not *how* or even if this is intelligible and I know not *what* this is and I know not *that* it is intelligible or, if intelligible, how or that it is a necessary truth. The substantial and the real stick in the gore (Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, as cited by McCarney, p. 81). We just chase ourselves around in a circle trying to understand one meaningless term in terms of another meaningless term, e.g., 'the substantial' in terms of 'the real'. We can't understand the one unless we can understand the other. But we are given no way of understanding either and more broadly for a host of similar terms so we cannot even get started: we cannot find a foothold. This is not the way to do philosophy or anything else. I fear I can make nothing of this Hegelian ontology. Perhaps it is my fault? Most crucially the part I have tried but failed to understand is what is said by McCarney to be "invoking the central thesis of Hegel's ontology, the thesis that

reason is that through which and in which all reality has its being and substance” (p. 81). And that is said to be the grounding for the claim that “reason rules the world and *therefore* world history has been rational in its course” (p. 81). But reason cannot (logically cannot) either rule the world or march through history or for that matter fail to do either of these things. An emperor or Hitler or the Americans or the capitalists or the proletariat possibly could. People or peoples could do these things but history can’t, logically can’t. But that people can is certainly not necessarily so and if they contingently can do so it very well might not result in a rational state of affairs. Hitler might just have pulled it off. But that would not have shown its rationality. Hegelish may itself be irrational talk. To me at least it is baffling when McCarney uses ‘Hegelish’; when he does not, he writes clearly and to the point. It seems to me that when he uses Hegelish we get absurdity and, more likely, unintelligibility. But am I being blockheaded?

⁴ Chandra Kumar (2008) forcefully argues that analytical Marxists can and should dissolve rather than resolve the putative dispute between methodological individualism and methodological holism rather than try to resolve it as Cohen, Roemer, and Elster do in favor of methodological individualism and that no obscurantism is involved in such a dissolving move. Marxists, including analytical Marxists, can benignly neglect such subjects. There are similar dissolving in Levine, Sober and Wright. (See Levine, *et al.*, 1992 and also my Lecture 3.)

⁵ This led one of the early analytic philosophers in turning his attention to Hegel to remark at the end of an explication of Hegel, “To be a Hegelian in fact means to be a consistent rationalistic optimist, to lay stress on all the indications of deepening rationality in the world, and to understress, or explain away, whatever seems of a contrary tendency” (Findlay 1964, 340). However, contrast McCarney (2000, 83-101; 169-99). See also Findlay 1958.

⁶ The philosopher who comes closest to doing this vis-à-vis Hegel is Robert Brandon. In a complicated and probing paper (1999), Brandon starts by remarking, “This paper could equally well have been titled ‘Some Idealist Theories in Hegel’s Pragmatism’.” In this strikingly original and cogently argued paper, Brandon, a neo-pragmatist, gives a pragmatist reading to some central conceptions of that arch anti-pragmatist thinker. He makes them accessible, plausible and challenging. Still, it is difficult to ascertain whether Brandon is just imposing on Hegel a view that coincides with his own striking and important philosophical account. Some might say it doesn’t matter. But it certainly does if we are trying to get an elucidation of Hegel.

⁷ Some of them have been elucidated by Hegel relatively clearly. See Allen Wood and John Rawls. But there remain some crucial claims of Hegel that are, as far as I know, put clearly neither by Hegel himself nor by his commentators. For useful comments on Hegel see Wood 1990; Wood 2001; Wood 2004; Rawls 2000, 329-71; and Brandon 1999.

⁸ There are at least two things which must be addressed here. (i) I speak vaguely of ‘our comrades’ or of workers’ councils, the soviets. ‘Our comrades’ can be indeterminate. I would say ‘the party of militant workers and militant unemployed people who are committed to socialism’. These are the people who are socialist militants. But in speaking of ‘workers’ I mean that in the broadest sense to include farm workers and service workers—the whole of the working class. (ii) The sticking in solidarity to what has been democratically decided by our comrades like any other value judgment takes a *ceteris paribus* clause. If our comrades vote for genocide we must not go along and must do whatever we can to stop it. But there is, as well, extreme cases where one human right conflicts with another. What should be done then? But where we have disagreements of a lesser kind, we must not withdraw if the vote goes against us; *au contraire* we must support the collective democratic decision wholeheartedly. Still, we have indeterminacy here. What is to count as an ‘extreme case’?

⁹ I say ‘fascist-like’ because I do not think that history exactly repeats itself. But for just an utterly timely reminder, McCain and his running mate speaking to ultra-conservative audiences experienced when they mentioned the name Obama the chant coming from some of the audience ‘Obama, terrorist, terrorist’ and they did not protest. This is ‘fascist-like’, not just ignorance.

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TOWARD AN EMANCIPATORY SOCIAL SCIENCE

Lecture 2: The Road Possibly to be Taken

I

Analytical Marxism sets its face resolutely against all forms of Hegelian or dialectical Marxism such as the form of Marxism that I discussed and criticized in the first lecture. It is important to note, however, that Joseph McCarney (the principal subject of my first lecture) was both a paradigmatic and very thorough Hegelian and a dialectical Marxist. But what is most relevant in the present context is to note that he also often deployed careful analytical arguments in setting out his account and defense of Marxism and socialism and he is not alone among Hegelian-oriented Marxists.¹

Be that as it may, analytical Marxists agree that there is no distinctively Marxist *method* (dialectical or otherwise) which sets Marxism off from (if you will) 'bourgeoisie' social science and philosophy. In terms of origin Marx was, as McCarney among others amply establish, deeply influenced by Hegel and in an important sense was thoroughly Hegelian, particularly in his methodology. That, I believe, was an unfortunate historical accident. His important substantive claims can be and, analytical Marxists believe, should be stated and argued for in complete independence of the so-called Hegelian or dialectical method—something usually so obscure and ill-articulated as to be scarcely if at all intelligible. This is something that analytical Marxists contend or assume and it is something I contended in my first lecture.

What Marxists should do instead, analytical Marxists have it, is to deploy resourcefully the most adequate methods of mainstream social science and philosophy of their time in pursuing the

substantive issues that Marx and Engels have set out. This does not at all mean that we should, let alone must, hold Marx in reverence. To do so is incompatible with having ‘a scientific attitude’ and, I would claim as well, with being through and through reasonable. But that is not at all incompatible with thinking someone’s ideas are deeply important and deserve careful consideration and reconsideration. That is exactly what analytical Marxists feel about Marx, but not, unless they are dogmatists, exclusively about Marx. I, for example, feel that way about Dewey, Davidson, Wittgenstein, Rawls, Rorty, and Gramsci as well. (I do not mean to suggest that they are all of equal importance.)

Mainstream methodologies in science and philosophy that analytical Marxists deploy and claim that all Marxists and scientific socialists should deploy are (1) in philosophy logical, conceptual and linguistic analysis such as logical positivist and post-positivist analytical philosophers deploy; (2) in economics, the technique of analysis Adam Smith and David Ricardo deployed and that have been given mathematical formulation by Leon Walras and Alfred Marshall; and (3) in political science and the social sciences more broadly, what is now called ‘decision theory’, ‘game theory’ or more broadly ‘rational choice theory’. The four founders of analytical Marxism—G. A. Cohen (a philosopher), John Roemer (an economist), Jon Elster (a political scientist), and Erik Olin Wright (a sociologist)—are comfortable with all three of these methodologies and upon occasion, where they are most relevant, employ methodologies across this range, though typically Cohen emphasizes the first, Roemer the second, and Elster and Wright the third. As G. A. Cohen writes, these techniques “are commonly styled ‘analytical’ in a broad sense because their use requires and facilitates precision of statement on the one hand and rigour of argument on the other” (Cohen 2000, xiii).

The above is being analytical in what Cohen calls a *broad* sense. But analytical Marxism is as well analytical in what Cohen calls a narrower sense. This is in its *disposition* to explain molar phenomena—be they entities or processes—by reference to their micro-constituents and micro-

mechanisms. Such a movement to a more atomic level is more integral to the economic techniques utilized by Roemer and the techniques of game theory utilized by Elster for political science, than to “the more purely and more generally philosophical techniques associated with Cohen” (Cohen 2000, xxiii). Similar things obtain for much, but not all, of the sociological analysis used by Wright. However, there is an affinity all along the line in analytical Marxism in there being a commitment to gaining a more fine-grained analysis than many other theorists seek.

Such a penchant was not true of pre-analytical Marxists (e.g., the classical Marxists) or of many non-Marxists as well (e.g., Durkheim, Michels, and Parsons). Some theorists even believe such fine-grained theory or analysis is not feasible or (even if feasible) desirable. Against such holistic thinking Cohen remarks, “insofar as analytical Marxists are analytical in the narrow sense they reject the point of view in which social formations and classes are depicted as entities obeying laws of behavior that are not a function of their constituent individuals” (Cohen 2000, xxiii). Cohen goes on to say:

Now the commitment of analytical Marxists to the constitutive techniques of analytical Marxism is absolute: our belief in the power of analysis, both in its broad and in its narrow sense, is unrevisable. And our commitment to Marxist theses (as opposed to our commitment to socialist values) is not absolute in the way that the commitment to analytical technique is. The commitment to the techniques, so we should claim, reflects nothing less than a commitment to reason itself. It is a refusal to relax the demand for clear statement and rigorous argument. We believe that it is irrational obscurantism to resist analytical reasoning, to resist analysis in the broad sense in the name of dialectic, and to resist analysis in the narrow sense in the name of anti-individualist holism. It is not, of course, irrational obscurantism to reject particular conclusions that are presented as results of analytical reasoning, for ordinary error and extraordinary ideological distortion commonly disfigure such (supposed) results. But to argue that there is something hopelessly undialectical or individualist about analytical techniques themselves represents, we believe, an unwillingness to accept the rule of reason (Cohen 2000, xxiv).

It is, for me at least, tempting to accept what Cohen says as just plainly and unequivocally true and to believe that to deny it or even question it is an irrational abrogation of “a commitment

to reason”—“an unwillingness to accept the rule of reason”. But initially beguiling for me as that thought is, it is mistaken to put things this way or to have such beliefs. We should be *fallibilists all the way down*. That is in the very experimental spirit of scientific inquiry. The classical pragmatists (particularly Peirce and Dewey), the neo-pragmatists (Putnam, Rorty, Brandon, and Stout), such paradigmatic analytic philosophers as Sellars, Quine, and Davidson, as well as such renegades as Kuhn, Feyerabend, and Toulmin and, above all, that *über* renegade Wittgenstein (who is also a founder of analytic philosophy) have enculturated us into this fallibilism and a suspicion of talk of ‘the rule of reason’. (Remember Peirce here on the fixation of belief.) Cohen writes, perhaps to be a bit unfair to him, as if analytic philosophy had culminated with philosophy done in the spirit of Austin and Ryle.

Cohen claims that the commitment to analytical techniques—the commitment to analysis both in its broad and narrow senses—is a commitment to reason. It is, that is, just to accept the rule of reason itself. Not to make such an acceptance or such a commitment is, Cohen claims, irrational and obscurantist. It is irrational to relax the demand for clear statement and rigorous argument. Cohen remarks, “We [analytical Marxists] believe that it is irrational obscurantism to resist analysis in the broad sense in the name of dialectics and to resist analysis in the narrow sense in the name of anti-individualist holism” (Cohen 2000, xxiv). But what exactly, or even inexactly, is this *commitment to reason* or to the *rule of reason* that tells us that this is what we must do? The ‘rule of reason’ has been understood very differently by hosts of intellectuals (including philosophers and scientists) at different times and places and, as it is paradigmatically by us now, even in the same places and times. Even such a careful thinker as Peirce thought it to be an empty appeal. I would ask Cohen, or a Cohenite, to flesh out clearly and to clearly specify what he means by the ‘rule of reason’ or ‘commitment to reason’. These phrases do not wear their meanings on their sleeves. I have little doubt that Cohen could do so. But I very much doubt whether he could spell them out in such a way that it would be seen to be unreasonable to question these spellings

out—i.e., such that we would get something substantive that all people must accept on pain of being unreasonable or irrational. If that is so and Cohen sticks to his guns, he is insisting on it without argument or grounds and in that way without reason. He is being what he calls a dogmatist. It is, for example, very unlikely that he would gain acceptance of his beliefs about unrevisability from all, or even most, people, excluding from considering those who are locked up in mental institutions and the like (Callinicos 2006).² He would not even get acceptance from all intellectuals or all philosophers and scientists. He would not even get it from all analytic philosophers. Imagine Reichenbach, Feyerabend, Davidson, and van Frassen agreeing about ‘the rule of reason’ or a ‘commitment to reason’. (Perhaps he would discount Feyerabend as an analytic philosopher? But then just take the others.) We can wave those phrases, e.g., ‘rule of reason’, as banners to rally the faithful or as slogans to excoriate heretics. But there would not be widespread agreement about what constitutes or can constitute precision of argument or exactitude of characterization beyond something rather formal and empty. Talk of ‘the rule of reason’ is not as bad as talk of ‘the Absolute’ or ‘God’ but it is pretty obscure. It is not the way, as Peirce stressed, to be fixing belief (Peirce 1991, 109-23). Cohen has forgotten the lessons of fallibilism and has set himself here on a quest for certainty that hardly fits with a scientific way of thinking that he and his fellow analytic Marxists (among whom I would like to include myself) exemplify. They (including Cohen himself), eschewing unrevisability and absoluteness, have repeatedly modified and altered their positions and sometimes have even abandoned them. Moreover, we should not in any case be claiming certainty and unrevisability. But we can and should be wary of talk of ‘the rule of reason’ without going post-modernist.

Don’t misunderstand me. I am not inveighing against clear statement, rigorous argument, and careful deliberation. That would be absurd and indeed irrational. But I am sceptical about its being context-free (including historical context-free). In struggling for such attainments, for some reasoning to be practice-independent, we are asking for the moon (Toulmin 2001; Geuss 2008),

Cohen himself showed this contextual awareness when he charged that “Elster’s rejection of functional explanation in historical materialism reflected a too insistent analytical stance, in the narrow sense of ‘analytical’” (Cohen 2000, xxiii). There he showed just such a sensitivity, but he abandons it with his talk of ‘the rule of reason’ and unrevisability.

I frequently say to myself, sometimes thinking of Wittgenstein, that what can be said can be said clearly and the rest must be passed over in silence. I (perhaps strangely) am not sure of the truth of that claim and I am puzzled concerning its logical status. On one reading it has a tautological ring and a paradoxical one at that. However, I would like to take it more prosaically as saying that for the purposes of science, philosophy or everyday deliberation our aim should be to state things as clearly as we can and to set aside and pass over in silence allegedly cognitive informational claims that resist such effort. But I certainly would not say that of poetry which has different aims. But philosophy, even Heideggerian philosophy or bad philosophy, is not *pace* Carnap poetry: not even bad poetry. My difficulty with Heidegger, Hegel, Adorno, Derrida, and Althusser as well, as I pointed out in my first lecture, is that they don’t even try to say things clearly. And yet they try to do philosophy.

If they would argue in response, clearly or even reasonably clearly (something that admits of degrees), that there are certain important things they are trying to say that cannot (no matter how hard one tries) be said clearly that can still somehow be understood, though not with clarity, then we should, though cautiously, take interest in those things. But unfortunately here I believe we perhaps are stuck. These philosophers disdain that but some of their commentators rise to that challenge. If some of them succeeded in saying with reasonable clarity that there are these things—important things—that cannot be said clearly, then we might be home and clear. But *what* is this that cannot be said with some reasonable clarity? If one of the commentators says it with reasonable clarity then they by that very act are unsaying what they are saying. If they do not, then they (as it seems even good commentators of Hegel or Adorno do) just leave us with obscure

remarks of their own concerning those they write on or they leave key obscure remarks of the philosopher they are commenting on unexplicated. The commentator who will make everything reasonably clear—who will leave none of their subjects allegedly crucial obscure remarks (what I would call their dark sayings) unexplicated—will be invariably accused by other authorities on Hegel, Adorno, et al., of distorting their texts and of making a fetish of clarity.

We should note, however, that there are thinkers we can learn from and understand reasonably well who are not paradigms of clarity. Kierkegaard and Herder and indeed Marx himself are examples of thinkers we can learn a lot from in spite of their lack of thorough going clarity of statement or rigorous argument (as if we know what that is or know what thorough going or complete clarity is). But they, Cohen responds, are pre-analytical, but after the age of analysis (to use Stuart Hampshire's phrase) Cohen would say for a philosopher, social scientist or historian to be a non-bullshitter they must be committed to and actually practice clarity of argument and rigor of argument. They must reason according to what Cohen calls the 'rule of reason'. But two philosophers both well acquainted with analytic philosophy and generally regarded as important by most analytic philosophers (including for at least one of them by Cohen) lack the kind of clarity (or at least don't practice it) that Cohen requires. Yet we can learn a lot from them. Even some of their remarks which are cloudy are still deeply insightful or suggestive, driving our own thinking along. I refer to Cohen's old teacher and friend Isaiah Berlin and to Jürgen Habermas. But I could have referred to Wilfrid Sellars or Robert Brandon. Clarity and rigor are important but the work of these philosophers often does not fit Cohen's conception of the rule of reason or his analytic ideal. They do not fit with his ideal of clarity. I wish none of them had written just as they did. I refer here not to the contents of their writing but to the way they write. I wish, for example, that Berlin would have calmed down his exuberant metaphors—though they make for enjoyment in reading—and that Habermas would be less turgidly obscure which certainly doesn't make for enjoyment in reading. But *maybe* the way they do it is the best way for them to say what they wanted to say or

perhaps the only way they could have said it, though that is more doubtful. But even with their ways of saying thing—not models of clarity—we without their thought would have been at a considerable loss. And the same thing should be said for Collingwood and Toulmin—not paradigms of clarity but not obscurantists either. If these thinkers, following Cohen’s rule, had been preoccupied with getting the clearest sentences they could possibly get and the most rigorous argument they could possibly make, they would not have written in the expansive way they did, giving us the insightful narratives they did. Rigorous argument indeed is important but it is not the whole or even (*pace* John Passmore) the first virtue of a philosopher or intellectual or something that should always be at the center of either philosophy or social science (Passmore 1967).

It is also important to remember there are degrees of unclarity and clarity as well as unreasonableness and reasonableness. Berlin and Habermas are one thing; Hegel and Adorno another. I have great difficulties with the latter two. *Perhaps* I am making unreasonable demands on them? Perhaps I am asking them to say clearly what they say (*perhaps* rightly) cannot be said clearly. Berlin and Habermas with a little effort can be made out. With Hegel and Adorno, it is different. Unless we can somehow, by grasping that there is at play some form of Kierkegaardian indirect discourse which makes things a little more understandable, what they are trying to say is simply lost on us. Or at least on me. (Certainly it would be the utmost in *hubris* to take myself, or for anyone to take themselves, to be the measure of the world.) Still, it isn’t just that what they say cannot be said clearly but that it cannot be said at all in terms of which we can make head or tail. Or am I just talking about myself and people like me, i. e., the bulk of analytic philosophers? Or am I just being dogmatic here? When I say I can’t understand Adorno-talk, suppose someone says, ‘Well, I can.’ Is it unreasonable for me to respond, ‘Well, show us how’? Is it unreasonable to ask for the rules of the game here? And would not that, when my interlocutors (Hegel or Adorno experts) are pushed, come to asking for truth-conditions or assertability-conditions: what would count for the warrantability or unwarrantability? Remember that they (*pace* Carnap) are not writing poetry.

Their not infrequent (to me, at least) utterly obscure Hegelianish or Adornoish sentences are not meant to be poetic utterances. Or am I in making such claims asking too much in the spirit of pragmatism and logical positivism? But is there any alternative here that would be reasonable? Or is 'reasonable' a slippery term here? (See here Sober 1999 or, somewhat differently, Toulmin 2001, 204-14.)³

At this point, and my last endnote to the contrary notwithstanding, I say in sympathy with Cohen, 'What is the point of such obscure talk?' Perhaps it is to enable us to see or understand something that we could not otherwise see or understand? But isn't that just a matter of resonating with Adorno or Hegel or attuning to them. They and we are engaging in philosophy—doing some when they wrote and doing some when we try to understand or assess them—and doesn't this unavoidably and rightly involve an attempt to gain something of a 'cognitive grasp of something'? We are not just engaging in mood setting or vision articulating. We should try—I would say *for the context* (moral discourse is one thing; the discourse of chemistry another, logic still another)—for clear statement and sound argument and as perspicuous articulation of the relevant things as we can on occasion get. That is just what it is to be intellectually serious when one is trying to do science or philosophy or anything with a cognitively intellectual content. It is not just or at all a matter of resonating or 'sweet singing'. In science, philosophy and deliberation over practical matters we should ignore those who would make claims about what the world is like who would ignore this. Perhaps we cannot get things precise but we should seek to get things as reasonably clear as we can though we should remember that that will in part depend on what we are talking about. But I am not saying, and I conjecture Cohen would not say either, that the above matters are all there is to life. To come to grips with how the world is is not the only thing of value in the world. To gain a steady grasp of such matters is not the only thing that is worth achieving. Such a 'cognitive grasp' is not all there is to life.

However, to gain a ‘cognitive grasp’ of what the world is like is something of grave importance that both philosophy and science (including a normatively engaged philosophy or enmeshed emancipatory social science) should be centrally concerned with and an emancipatory social science (Marxian or otherwise)—though not as a part of that science—will have as well a vision of how our lives should be and of what a better world would be like.⁴

In line with this I appreciate and applaud Cohen’s remark that we will, or at last should, resist intoxication with Althusserian Marxism when we come “to see that its reiterated affirmation of the value of conceptual rigor was not matched by conceptual rigor in its intellectual practice” (Cohen 2000, xxi). I never felt the attraction that both (though in varying degrees) Cohen and Andrew Levine once had for Althusser. But I resonate with Levine’s point that Althusser importantly insisted on the claim that Marxism and socialism were and must have a determinate scientific aspect if they are to be at all what they aspired to be. They must have a scientificity. Althusser importantly set himself against Hegelian Marxism and Marxist humanism (e.g., Yugoslavian Marxism). But Althusser writes in such a turgid and obscure fashion that he is at least as bad as those he critiques. Perhaps worse. Indeed, worse than the Yugoslavian Marxists. When he started to make his claims about the scientificity of Marxism, he characterized science in such an obscure way, in spite of the fact that he had been a student of Gaston Bachelard (a kind of French Kuhn), that it was scarcely recognizable as a characterization of science of any kind.

I also take Cohen’s moral derived from his unsettling and very, for him, instructive encounter with Isaac Levi when Cohen as a young man read a paper “Bourgeois and Proletarians.” This was a paper written before he had firmly taken his analytical turn, as he puts it. In an extended comment on Marx’s claim that “like the proletariat the bourgeoisie are alienated but that, unlike the proletariat, they [the bourgeoisie] enjoy their alienation and find their strength in it” (Cohen 2000, xxii), Cohen suggested that on Marx’s view “the rich capitalist’s mistress does not love him because of his money; instead, she loves the money itself” (Cohen 2000, xxiv). Levi, in a good pragmatist

fashion (or, if you will, in an analytic fashion), wanted to know what that meant and/or how one was supposed to go about telling whether or not it was true: what, precisely, was the *difference* between loving someone *just* because of their money and loving that money itself? Reflecting on this, Cohen remarks of himself that he “stopped writing (at least partly) in the fashion of a poet who puts down what sounds good to him and who needn’t defend his lines (either they resonate with the reader or they don’t). Instead, “I tried [Cohen remarks] to ask myself when writing: precisely what does the sentence contribute to the developing exposition or argument and is it true?” (Cohen 2000, xxiv). The lessons that Cohen learned here are just what should be learned, though, as I remarked above, we can make a fetish of them. Moreover, analytical Marxism or any good philosophy or truth-seeking intellectual activity should adopt them. Any serious and responsible intellectual should seek to ascertain whether what at the time and for the matter that he is concerned with is warrantably assertable. He should also have learned a pragmatist/verificationist lesson from Levi. It should be that when in any non-formal context we are trying to ascertain what we responsibly should believe concerning what is the case, we should try to ascertain the truth-conditions or at least the assertability-conditions of what must obtain for a claim to be true or to be false or probably true or false. Strict across the board verificationism is a thing of the past. But not all is dross that was a part of that program (Sober 1999).

Cohen is a philosopher I genuinely admire and regard as not only a principal source of analytical Marxism but as its most important lucid and consistent advocate. But that notwithstanding, I think his remarks that I have been considering about unrevisability, the rule of reason, absoluteness, and what he says about bullshit are mistaken and unfortunately so. They have a rationalistic tone that runs counter to the very fallibilist and genuinely experimentalist scientific attitude that he and his fellow analytical Marxists so brilliantly instantiate. I put it down (to be a bit *ad hominum*) to a rather kneejerk reaction to the obscurities of Hegelian Marxism and its nemesis Althusserian Marxism and to the dogmatism and utterly unscientific claims to ‘scientific

socialism' of the official and doctrinaire 'Marxism' of the Soviet Union and its comprador states and of the Second and Third Internationales. But Cohen's remarks I have been objecting to are (in effect, if not in intention) meta-theoretical remarks that can, and should, be benignly neglected and forgotten. One can go on in the reasonable and rational way that most analytical Marxists in practice (including Cohen) do without a rationalistic song and dance about the rule of reason and without being spooked out by the specter of post-modernism. Cohen remarks, speaking for all analytical Marxists, "in all our work, it is always Marxism that is in question and analysis is used to question Marxism" (Cohen 2000, xxiv). But where reflection generates a reason (or at least a cause) for scepticism about some Marxian claims, either or both should be questioned and neither should be taken as foundational, as the 'bottom line', as the 'last word' that we just without question must rely on. (We should not be in the business of 'the bottom line'. We should be fallibilists and non-foundationalists all the way down. Moreover, we are not caught in a pragmatic contradiction. We should be fallibilist about our fallibilism itself.)⁵

II

I now want to turn to some more positive remarks about analytical Marxism. Take Cohen's remark quoted below and the gloss on it that Cohen *endorses*:

I think that three questions should command the attention of those of us who work within the Marxist tradition today. They are the questions of design, justification, and strategy, in relation to the project of opposing and overcoming capitalism. The first question is, What do we want? What, in general, and even not so general terms, is the form of the socialist society that we seek? The second question is, Why do we want it? What exactly is wrong with capitalism, and what is right about socialism? And the third question is, 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 was, or what it was once thought to be? (Cohen, *History, Labour and Freedom*, Oxford 1988, p. xii) [Now for his commentator's remark.] According to Jon Elster, the Analytical Marxists have subjected virtually every tenet of classical Marxism to 'insistent criticism', but the foregoing quote . . . should clarify why most of these critics still identify themselves as Marxist. Much of the scholarship produced by Analytical Marxists addresses

one or more of the three questions posed by Cohen and explores the possibilities of transcending capitalism. 'Perhaps the greatest task of Marxism today', suggests Roemer, 'is to construct a modern theory of socialism'. The emphasis on using the full methodological armory of modern social science stems from the desire to give better answers to questions about the longevity of capitalism and the viability of socialism (Cohen 2000, xxv. The commentator was Tom Mayer, 1994, 16).⁶

We first should note that all the scholars and analytical Lefties whom Cohen describes as being of a Marxist or quasi-Marxist persuasion who met first in 1979 (the so-called September Group) to discuss elements of analytical Marxism have continued to meet up to now. Only two—Jon Elster and Adam Przeworski—talked and thought themselves out of Marxism. But all the others have stayed and others have joined the group, among them Joshua Cohen. They are a diverse group. They all are analytical and most are Marxist but all subscribe to Elster's commitment to insistent criticism of the Marxist canon. Still, all of them are some form of socialist.

Cohen remarks that it was unfortunate that people who came to be designated as Marxists were so called, analytical or otherwise, rather than called what Engels preferred, namely, 'scientific socialists'. Marx and Engels, and indeed Lenin, Trotsky, Luxembourge, Gramsci, and as well analytical Marxists today, want or wanted to set out a scientific socialism in opposition to utopian socialists. Analytical Marxists wished to articulate a conception of Marxism that was on a *sure road to science*. They all sought to construct or reconstruct socialism as a social science (though not *only* as a social science), albeit an emancipatory social science—something that some intellectuals, mistakenly I shall argue later, came to regard as oxymoronic.

However, those who work in what has come to be called the Marxist tradition have almost without exception regarded their socialism as an emancipatory social science using in the interests of socialism the most advanced resources of the social sciences at the time of their writing. This is exemplified very robustly by analytical Marxists. It is unfortunate that they or any other Marxists have been called Marxists, let alone (*pace* Lukács) orthodox Marxists. It makes it all sound too much like church. The very use of 'Marxism' rather than 'scientific socialism' assimilates it too

much to religion. Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam all were founded by figures who their followers fervently believed revealed *the truth*—the *redemptive* truth—once and for all. To speak of Marxism, or of Marx founding Marxism, makes Marxism sound too much like a religion—something which it is not or at least certainly should not be, particularly if it is also, as it is, to be construed as a science. Perhaps this is part of the reason why Marx famously said of himself, “I am not a Marxist.”

If socialism has obtained or is to obtain the status of science, then it would be out of place to ask a socialist if she were a Marxist. It would be as conceptually anomalous as it would be to ask a physicist if she were a Galilean or a Newtonian. If all the same this misdirected question is asked, a sensible response from a contemporary physicist would be, ‘Look, Galileo or perhaps Newton or both founded physics and much of what they said remains true’. But, as Cohen well puts it, the physicist should go on to say, ‘We physicists don’t call ourselves “Galileans” or “Newtonians” because physics is a progressive discipline and no one expects that the views of its founders will remain intact. Contemporary physicists will reject many of the things Galileo and Newton said. Only so can it be loyal to the tradition which they founded’ (Cohen 2000, xxvii).

Note that could only rightly be said of a science like physics or chemistry whose scientificity is secure. Yet scientifically secure as biology is, it is not quite so secure as physics or chemistry and it is not quite so out of place to ask a biologist if she is a Darwinian.⁷ It is not *quite* like asking a physicist if she is a Newtonian. But I emphasize ‘quite’. But if we turn to social science it is a somewhat different story. It is problematic—some would say very problematic—to say that social science (even economics) has gained a status like physics or even biology (Toulmin 1999, 47-66). Marx and Engels and most analytical Marxists think and proceed on the assumption that it has gained that status. But it is not at all odd (conceptually anomalous) to ask a social scientist if she is a Marxian. The answer reasonably could be yes or no or that they don’t know.

Cohen in this mode of thought remarks, "If it were not just a fact, *but also appropriate*, today that Marxism gets called 'Marxism' then Marx would have failed" (Cohen 2000, xxvii; italics mine). And many people think he failed. Even if he did found a social science, Cohen goes on immediately to say, "there are, of course, big differences between physics and the social sciences" (Cohen 2000, xxvii). And it is not just in the subject matter and the intellectual resources needed to cope with it but the security of its status as a science; its very claim to be a genuine science. (Remember there are not unreasonable people who will say that 'social science' and 'political science' are oxymoronic. Not a few political science departments have renamed themselves departments of politics or political studies.) But whatever we say here social science is not and never will be as scientifically developed as natural science or even the biological sciences. You do not need to read Galileo or Newton to be a good physicist (reading them is part of the vocation not of the physicist but of historians of physics). And the same thing is true about Darwin for a contemporary biologist. "We have not," Cohen goes on to say, "progressed so far that it is time to stop reading Marx. The study of Marx and Engels remains an indispensable element in a scientific socialist education" (Cohen 2000, xvii-xxviii). And I would say the same thing is true for a contemporary economist, though, alas, that is far from being true in practice.

However, we should ask, 'Why is this so?' Is it something that is just baldly contingent and may without mystification cease to be so one hundred years from now *if homo sapiens* is still around and in decent shape in decent conditions with a decent education? We just don't know. Even if conditions remain decent for human life (something that is not very likely) we still will not know. The jury is out here. If *naturewissenschaften* and *geistwissenschaften* are very different we will have good reason to think that there will never be a reduction or partial assimilation of one to the other. But they seem at least to be importantly different activities. People such as Peter Winch and Charles Taylor and such a different figure as Donald Davidson are neither stupid nor ill-informed about such matters and they are very philosophically sophisticated. They believe that

there is not much prospect that there will be such erosion of the current belief held by many people concerning the difference between *naturewissenschaften* and *geisteswissenschaften*. But *some* social scientists believe that this situation will not continue for, they believe, social science is on its way to becoming a mature science. Again, the jury is out. And it may indeed result in a hung jury. That is, it is not unreasonable (though perhaps mistaken) to think the jury is permanently out.

That is why it is so untoward—or perhaps I am just mistaken here—of Cohen to say that “there exists Marxism which is neither analytical nor bullshit, but once such (as we may designate it) pre-analytical Marxism encounters analytical Marxism, then it must either become analytical or become bullshit” (Cohen 2000, xxvi). I can well understand feeling that way when one encounters what one can only hope, and probably rightly, is an unintentionally obscurantist Marxism. But then when one encounters analytically literate non-analyticals such as Joseph McCarney, Christopher Arthur, Simon Critchley, Bertell Ollman, and Michael Lebowitz one realizes Cohen’s judgment concerning the whole of non-analytical Marxism is not justified or even reasonable. This is all the more distressing since Cohen is normally a very open-minded person acutely aware of alternatives and sensitive to them. He is out of character here.

It is surely right, as Cohen stresses, that there is a distinction between a dogmatist and a bullshitter. A “dogmatist maintains his belief in the face of all criticism as best he can, and who might even admit he has no good response to a particular criticism while nevertheless sticking to his dogmatically held view” (Cohen 2000, xxvi). Cardinal Newman is a good example of such a dogmatist, indeed—though this sounds like a contradiction—a reflective one. A bullshitter by contrast just goes with the flow, shifting with the warp and woof of the argument like a good sophist.

However, the contemporary non-analytical Marxists I have just mentioned—and they are not alone—are not at all like that. They are aware, with varying degrees of thoroughness, of analytical Marxism, respond to it in thoughtful though perhaps in mistaken ways, and articulate

reflective and reasoned responses. There are other philosophers who are analytical and deeply schooled in the analytical tradition who do not go Cohen-like concerning analytical philosophy and its alternatives. I am thinking here of Sellars, Rorty, Brandon, and Allen Wood among others. It would certainly be irresponsible to say they have no use for reasonability or what Cohen calls 'the rule of reason'. (Cohen actually said of Allen Wood that he wrote the best general book on Marx in English (Cohen 1983).) The bullshitter by contrast has no concern for truth or to get something that is warrantably assertable or even close to it and like a sophist he will shift his position or his arguments in an attempt to keep from being bested. The thing for him is to keep at almost any cost from losing the favor of his audience. The show is the thing. What is crucial for him is to win; it is not to try to ascertain what it is more reasonable to believe. There are a lot of bullshitters around, some of them very sophisticated and some perhaps not quite conscious of what they are doing (e.g., that they are in fact though not intention bullshitters) and not all of them are antagonistic to analytical philosophy. Like Kant's 'man of good morals' as distinct from 'a morally good man', they are often hard to spot. Still, as difficult to detect as the bullshitter sometimes is, we should be on the lookout for bullshitters. But, even more importantly, we should beware of acquiescing in the cynical but still mistaken belief that one person's intellectual hero is another person's bullshitter.

People here can be what Kierkegaard called double-minded. The thing to remember is that the conscious bullshitter is not concerned with principle and has no concern with honesty and integrity except to *appear* honest and as a person of integrity. He/she has an exclusively instrumental concern with being principled or, rather more accurately, with the *appearance* of being principled. But we should also, if we can, have an acute awareness of the possibility of our being *unwittingly* double-minded—of being unaware of our plentiful capacity for self-deception. But all that aside, surely honest commitment, integrity and concern with truth or warranted assertibility is as true of non-analytical but still analytically informed Marxists such as the non-analytical Marxists I have just mentioned.

There is, as my above remark gestures at, surely a lot of bullshitting in the world and Cohen has the right attitude toward it. But there is a lot of understandable confusion, indecisiveness, and intractable disagreement as well among contestants and where this obtains scepticism and tolerance is in order among the contestants. There is also, as I mentioned in the previous paragraph, a lot of self-deception. It is something like influenza that may creep up on us unnoticed. He who with integrity just proclaims the rightness or truth of his view is being a *parti-pris* dogmatic proclaimer and not someone with a philosophical or scientific attitude. Though he need not be a bullshitter, he is a dogmatist and both are to be resisted. It is sometimes difficult to distinguish one from the other. But that is no reason to collapse the distinctions (1. honest and reasonable searcher for what is warranted, 2. *parti-pris* dogmatist, and 3. a bullshitter). It is all the more reason to try to maintain the distinctions. I have been centrally concerned in these last few pages to refute Cohen's claim that an analytically informed non-analytical Marxist must be a bullshitter. I think to claim this is both mistaken and untoward. It is itself a bit of unwitting dogmatism. Moreover, particularly in a contemporary culture which has little contact with analytic ways, we could also have a non-analytical Marxist who was neither a dogmatist nor a bullshitter.⁸ And, as I pointed out, we have some in our culture who while not innocent of analytical ways also are neither.

III

This has been a long preamble to my own articulation and defense of an emancipatory social science and an analytical Marxism that has as its center such a social science (Nielsen 2003, 81-116). Besides being a theory and practice of revolution against capitalism, or at least a theory and practice for overcoming and transcending capitalism, analytical Marxism is an emancipatory social science. I shall argue that enough of the canonical core of classical Marxism remains, even after analytical pruning, to yield an emancipatory social science. My claim will be that even after the classical core of Marxism has been suitably reconstructed, though sometimes with some of its

claims cut back, enough of it remains on which to construct a sound emancipatory social science in the service of socialism. It, that is, is sufficient for a genuinely scientific socialism (Levine *et al.* 1992, 89-100, 179-98; Cohen 2000, 341-88). It retains as a *presupposition* Marx's vision of a socialist and then a communist world order (Levine 1993). This, when properly understood, is a powerful normative vision, Marx's anti-moralism notwithstanding.

Analytical Marxists, taking their work together, have articulated an account of an emancipatory social science for a scientific socialism that does not collapse into something that is *merely* an ethical or utopian socialism. I do not deny that, in addition to its scientific content and scientific manner of proceeding, analytical Marxism has, non-conflictingly, a utopian and moral content and thrust. It has a utopian vision of what a world would be where human beings would flourish—a world very different from the pigsty and insane asylum we live in now, most particularly evident when we view the world globally. Such a claim about the world we live in now may seem to some, perhaps even to most people who live in the geopolitical North, much too extreme and exaggerated. Tolerably well off and sheltered people living in the North, if they did not read or travel extensively, might not notice it, particularly if they lived in the Netherlands, Scandinavia, or contemporary Ireland. But I think, though deliberately metaphorical, it is not unjustifiably extreme and that these are appropriate metaphors which fit our global world. That is, if we take a non-evasive look, at what our world is like. But be that as it may, the positive Marxian vision, inescapably vague, is a conception of a world that is through and through good, a world which would capture a reflective and informed moral point of view (Nielsen 2001). It is of a world that would be classless, non-racist, non-ethnically divisive, and non-sexist. It would be a world where for all human beings there will be no socially caused impediments to their flourishing. There will be only impediments that for some and sometimes for all can't be escaped such as purely physical things caused by injuries, aging or other infirmities—either inescapable ones or diseases that come upon us that for us that are at the time inescapable there being no way at least at the time

of preventing or curing them. The vision of the Marxist tradition is of a world that maximally utilizes its best scientific knowledge and its resources to cure all the ills that can be so cured now or, where they cannot be cured, to ameliorate them as fully as possible within the limits of our worldwide resources, including our scientific resources and our best sympathetic understanding of people and their inescapable situations (situations that cannot be rectified). No one shall be left to die in eradicable pain and suffering or with inescapable and unreasonable cognitive losses that make their lives meaningless where there is no longer even the faintest possibility of their living a life or having a consciousness of or any pleasure in mere existing (though we must be very careful that this is really so.)⁹ They should not be required to continue to exist in such conditions until they die in misery or in utter and irreversible unconsciousness.

In short, the Marxian utopian vision is that of a world where everyone's compossible needs are met to the fullest extent possible. What we should aim at is captured by Marx's famous slogan for a fully communist world, "To each according to his needs and from each according to his abilities." It will be a solidaristic world—a republic of equals—where people serve and are served. This vision would, if people acted in accordance with it, yield a fundamental equality of circumstance worldwide giving some flesh—some non-ideological reality—to the utopian and cosmopolitan ideal that the life of everyone matters and matters equally. I have stressed in giving some substance to this ideal the relief of suffering and the importance of compassion and the importance of community. But there is as well the ideal of achieving as maximal flourishing as possible for all people. Some people cannot flourish as well as others. And there must be no leveling down. But everyone within the limits of possibility must be helped to flourish as much as they can.

We are, of course, light years away from achieving or even approximating these things and perhaps (very likely perhaps) we always will be. But this, Marx's anti-moralism notwithstanding, is a socialist and communist utopian vision. It, fact-insensitive though it *may* be in some crucial

respects, is compatible with scientific socialism though scientific socialism does not require it except, perhaps, as a presupposed *heuristic* ideal. And even that would not be part of its science but the normative vision *its* science presupposes and serves. You don't have to be a utopian socialist to have that ideal. And we might, as I do, have Marx's low estimate of moralizing's causal efficiency (efficiency for achieving and sustaining socialism) and still have that ideal as I believe Marx in practice did, his nay-saying anti-moralism and pessimism about human nature notwithstanding. Generally, moralizing won't do much to change the world or even do much to help understand it. It may sometimes even be an impediment. It can, however, give us some idea of where ideally we would like to go, but we must not just blow bubbles in the air.

Marx and Engels and classical Marxists following them rejected a moralizing Marxism and any attempt to set their scientific socialism on moral foundations (Nielsen 1988; 1989; 2009). Yet their work—Marx's *Capital*, for example—resounds with strong moral condemnations of capitalism, with Marx's rage against that very system with its exploitation, oppression, domination, and the willingness to immiserate or at least indifference to the immiseration of people. Moreover, they did have a utopian vision of what the world would become with the end of capitalism and the development of socialism into communism and they took this ending to be deeply desirable (Levine 1993). But this was not their tactical and strategic focus. Their focus was to give an accurate account of *what* capitalism is, *why* it is that way, and, indeed for classical Marxists necessarily so, *what* it was becoming and an account of *when* and *how* it can and will be brought to an end and be replaced by a socialist and finally a communist order. Given these 'laws of motion' of capitalism, there was little point in saying it should be such and such or not be at all. Their anti-moralist strain was rooted in this and in a firm recognition of how most moralizing was ideological and how it is used in our societies to preserve and facilitate the capitalist order, whether in intention or just in effect. Moralizing, that is, mostly functions to serve in various ways ruling class interests.

Sometimes crudely and at other times sophisticatedly, the latter effectively disguising how moralizing so answers to class interests.

A Marxist emancipatory social science under analytical auspices enables us to understand what is going on in the world by (1) clearly describing and explaining how these things are and (2) by explaining why they are that way and how this order is sustained. It calls our attention to things which we are conditioned in capitalist societies not to see. It also, where the conditioning is not effective and we become aware that people are hoodwinked into believing that is just the way things are and indeed factually speaking must be. People have been and are being so indoctrinated. Feudal ideology and then capitalist ideology have conditioned people into believing that the way things are in their societies are just rooted in the human condition. The poor, we are conditioned to believe, will always be with us. There is no alternative to this. As Margaret Thatcher famously put it, "There is no alternative." For Marxists *au contraire* many of these things are rooted instead in our historically given social systems and indeed for us in the capitalist system. They are not deep unalterable facts of human nature; they are not the way things must be. They are not the way social systems and human life must be (Fanon 1965, 237-50).

Of course, there are different ways of describing, explaining and interpreting—sometimes radically different ones—that are economically and politically important. With, say Frederick Hayek, Michael Oakshott, or Robert Kaplan, we have accounts of the world that are radically different accounts of the world from that of such contemporary Marxists as David Harvey, Colin Leys, Samir Amin, and Leo Panitch. There will, of course, be disputes about who, if anyone, comes closer to telling it like it is or, indeed, if there can be any telling it like it is. But, whatever we say here, Marxist social science has a very different take on things than we usually get from our mass media or even from more conventional academic sources such as the conservative ones mentioned above. Marxist social scientists and (seldom-read) Marxist activists—Marxists may be both—point to social facts most people, including most academics, are quite likely to be unaware of. Concerning

them, and for more well known facts as well, Marxians often give us different explanations or interpretations than we will see elsewhere. These explanations function within a program which has plainly normative ends or goals but has a distinctive empirical take on what the world is like as well. (The very idea of changing the world expresses and requires both. This is similar for the claim that a different world is possible.) But these so embedded descriptions, explanations and interpretations make confirmable or infirmable claims if they are genuinely scientific. These descriptions, explanations and interpretations, directly or indirectly, face the bar of empirical evidence. (This is true at least of the emancipatory social science of analytical Marxists. And it is often though not invariably true of the Marxian activists as well. Indeed, it should always be true of them.)

Let me illustrate this from a Marxist oriented report on the recent (Fall 2008) attacks in Mumbai. It first reports something that is well known to people somewhat informed by the mass media, namely, that the death toll from the attacks in Mumbai as of December 2, 2008 had risen to 173 with hundreds more wounded. But then it also goes on to report facts that are less well known at least in the North. They are facts that are important to become aware of in coming to properly understand the attacks and what they signify for life in India and Pakistan and for what should be done there. First, there is the fact of extensive recent attacks on Muslims in India. These attacks, even the single one in 2002 in the state of Gujarat in India just north of Mumbai, caused (to understate it) far more deaths and extreme suffering than the 2008 attacks in Mumbai. These attacks by extreme rightwing Hindu organizations resulted in the death of 2,000 Muslims and drove 200,000 from their homes. They were carried out by Hindu extremists who were part of a fanatical rightwing Hindu organization with an extreme anti-Muslim ideology. And in the summer of 2008 the Indian state, facing demonstrations by hundreds of thousands of people in Kashmir, used its police and armed forces to brutally attack the demonstrators. There the object of the violent repression was against the Muslim majority in Kashmir.

India is a country of one billion people. Most people in the North, if they think about India at all, are likely to think of India as a rapidly modernizing country greatly profiting from capitalist globalization. Indians do this perhaps most prominently through their high tech industries. It is true that a few Indians have profited from that and that there has more generally been rapid industrialization in India. However, its benefits have not been spread out among the population, and poverty and inequality have grown enormously. Many live in incredible and increasing poverty. High tech industries employ just 0.2 percent of India's 1 billion people, while almost half of all Indians live below the international poverty line of the equivalent of \$1.24 US a day. The World Bank reports that half of the children of India are so malnourished that their bodies fail to achieve normal size (*Workers' World* 2008). Moreover, they have the highest rate of such malnourishment in the world.

Now relate this to the Muslims of India. They number 150 million—13 percent of the population—and are the poorest segment of people in a very poor country with the lowest literacy, lowest income, highest infant mortality, highest unemployment, and (when they have them) the worst jobs. One third of the villages in India with a majority Muslim population have no schools at all (*Workers' World* 2008).

Given all these social facts—determinable empirical facts, though facts that few of us, at least in the North, know—how should we view the attacks in Mumbai? I am not saying or suggesting that the attacks in Mumbai were justified. They plainly were not. But, given the above understanding, it is hardly surprising that Indian Muslim youth, as well as Pakistani Moslem youth, will be radicalized and that some will turn to desperate measures. (I do not mean to suggest that only youths will be radicalized but to give to understand that their radicalization will be the most politically salient.) It *may* be that the Mumbai killing was only a Pakistani affair, though this is not what later reports *seem* to bear out. But it is understandable, given what we have noted above, that the attackers or some of them could be homegrown. Be that as it may, the report—a Marxist

report—goes on to say, correctly I believe, “Marxists know that violence against wealthy individuals and their politicians does not end the system of exploitation and oppression. They also understand that when there seem to be no alternatives, such actions are bound to arise from the violence of the system and the misery and desperation that millions experience” (*Workers’ World* 2008). Here we move from determinable facts to at least putative explanations and interpretations of them which also purport at least to be factual and factually well taken. And they very likely are. Moreover, if we accept this account of the situation in India, it is very likely that we will come to believe that, though the attacks are condemnable and indeed deserved condemnation, the situation that caused them was even more evil and condemnable with its oppression, domination and destruction and prevention of even remotely decent life chances for vast numbers of Indian Muslims. And such strong religious and ethnic fanatical hatred and violence directed against Indian Muslims is bound to provoke and sustain counter violence. (I am not saying that there is not hatred on both sides. There is. In this sense it is like the Israeli and Palestinian situation.)

A socialist emancipatory social science will show us that and how the reality of such states of affairs is not just rooted in the human condition. It will show us meaningful ways to interpret and explain such events. It will also, being emancipatory, point to ways in which such inhuman situations can be resisted and in some situations overcome. We will come to clearly see, if we have any moral awareness at all, that such situations are unjust and evil. Moreover, we hardly need a moral theory here to see that. A fine-grained account of equality, autonomy, solidarity, and justice is not needed to see that such situations are both evil and alterable. There is no need for micro foundations here. We only need an egalitarian ethos with the moral convictions that are commensurate with it; and the specification of that ethos need not be something fine-grained. The thing is to see how our somewhat more generalized moral beliefs—what Rawls calls considered judgments and others have called intuitions—should be translated into the concrete and for that we do not need a fine-grained philosophical account or indeed any philosophical account of justice,

autonomy, equality, solidarity, and a moral point of view. In fact, and reasonably so, such more fine-grained accounts piggy-back on certain un-fine-grained egalitarian and liberal convictions *and* on a good knowledge of how the world goes and a reasonable understanding of how it could go differently. It is that which undergirds what has been called 'Marxist amoralism'. An understanding of a Marxian account of ideology and its home in Marxian class theory and historical materialism is what we need here.

But the rudimentary moral convictions we rely on are equally compatible with liberal (social democratic) considered judgments (considered convictions), some of which *may* be fact-insensitive, and the very similar ones of Marxists. (For some Marxists, including Marxist amoralists, they may not be articulated but they are held in practice.) But such radical egalitarian Marxists have a much more realistic political and economic sociology than Rawls deploys (Levine 1986). The most important thing is not to worry about these shared liberal and Marxian moral convictions. They will have the concurrence of moderns (or at least most of them) lucky enough to have what Freud called a sober education. What we should be worried about is having or getting a reasonable knowledge of the facts on the ground, including their explanations and best interpretations and at least a somewhat comprehensive viewing of them. And this, if it does not require it, is greatly aided by a well validated emancipatory social science.

IV

In this penultimate section and the next I shall consider the conception of emancipatory social science of one of four major figures of analytical Marxism, the sociologist Erik Olin Wright. He has a considerable body of writing but I shall concentrate on only four recent essays (Wright 2001a; 2001b; 2005; 2006). Within that space I shall concentrate most extensively on the 2006 article "A Compass for the Left," for it focuses on what is most central to what I have been concerned with in these lectures. But all four relatively recent articles meld together into a

formidable case by analytical Marxism for the scientificity of socialism, and for an emancipatory social science.

Wright, a sociologist, is, as I initially remarked, one of the four most prominent figures in analytical Marxism. The others are G. A. Cohen (a philosopher), John Roemer (an economist), and Jon Elster (a political scientist). Wright (as all the others) exhibits in his work the virtues of analytical thought but as well he has a thorough grip on his own discipline. And he utilizes these talents with clarity and an intelligent purpose. Fitting with his disciplinary orientation, his work is most extensively oriented towards class analysis and articulating clearly a conception of an emancipatory social science with a clear Marxian orientation. He is most noted for his striking and innovative work on class exploitation, particularly in capitalist societies (Wright 1978; 1985; 1996; 1997). He also has a good understanding of philosophy and it shows in his work. It comes out in his articulation of what he calls *radical* egalitarianism and its place in the social sciences and particularly in an emancipatory social science with a Marxian orientation. Unlike Joseph McCarney, he does not think an emancipatory social science can be without normative functions. But like McCarney, he understands the importance of what has been called Marx's amoralism. (Indeed Allen Wood, no enemy of Marx, has characterized it as Marx's *immoralism* (Wood, 1985).) While Wright is reasonably clear about what he is saying about egalitarianism, justice, autonomy, solidarity, exploitation, and the like, his characterizations of these normative notions are not nearly as fine-grained as G. A. Cohen's or John Roemer's or for that matter mine (Cohen 2008; Roemer 1994; Nielsen 1989 and 2003). Without in any way condoning—let alone in any way defending—obscurantism, I think Wright's proceeding as he does is a virtue at least for what he is trying, quite legitimately, to achieve. Again note the importance of contextualism. How fine-grained we should get and in what way depends on the context including our goals. For setting out, explaining and defending an emancipatory social science, Wright has found, I believe, at least approximately the right level. And he has found, or at least nearly so, the right level without betraying the ideals of

analytical Marxism or the Marxist tradition more generally. (However, I am *somewhat* ambivalent about some of this and I shall return to it later after I have described and examined what he says about radical egalitarianism and its place in an emancipatory social science.)

I shall now proceed to an examination of Wright's texts listed above. In the first part of his "Compass Points: Towards a Socialist Alternative", Wright shows how socialism is located "within a broad agenda of emancipatory social theory" (Wright 2006, 93). He remarks:

Emancipatory social science, in its broadest terms, seeks to generate knowledge relevant to the collective project of challenging human oppression and creating the conditions in which people can live flourishing lives. To call it a social *science*, rather than social criticism or philosophy, is to recognize the importance for this task of systematic scientific knowledge about how the world works. To call it *emancipatory* is to identify its central moral purpose—the elimination of oppression, and the creation of conditions for human flourishing. And to call it *social* implies a belief that emancipation depends upon the transformation of the social world, not just the inner self. To fulfill its mission, any emancipatory social science faces three basic tasks: first, to elaborate a systematic diagnosis and critique of the world as it exists; second, to envision viable alternatives; and third, to understand the obstacles, possibilities and dilemmas of transformation. In different historical moments one or another of these may be more pressing than others, but all are necessary for a comprehensive emancipatory theory (Wright 2006, 94).

Wright's characterization will raise the eyebrows of those still captivated by the idea that science—including social science—is and must be 'value neutral' in order to be genuinely scientific. Moreover, they will think that to speak, as we have just seen Wright does, of science's moral purpose, let alone its central moral purpose, is unscientific. Science should and indeed must limit itself to gaining a systematic scientific knowledge of how the world works and why it works that way and to how it can plausibly come to so work. There are two importantly distinct issues here: (1) whether there can be a normatively neutral description of the world, particularly of the social world; and (2) whether there is a *scientifically acceptable sense* in speaking of the moral purpose of science. When, some will say, science has given its most accurate descriptions, given us its best causal explanations (something that will carry with it predictions) and most perceptive

interpretations, including, where that can be had (if it ever can be had) comprehensive ones, its task is finished.¹⁰ Perhaps public intellectuals, moralists and moral philosophers can utilize, and indeed legitimately, these empirical findings for enlightening and indeed emancipatory purposes but that is not the business of science *per se*. Perhaps an emancipatory theory can be extended beyond an emancipatory social science to include an emancipatory theory which contains those non-scientific but not unscientific activities as well. But then it will not just be an emancipatory social science or any kind of science. It will have a part which is *non-scientific*. Perhaps Wright meant to suggest this in his last sentence in the above quotation but he is not explicit about it—though he is when writing with Andrew Levine and Elliot Sober in *Reconstructing Marxism* (Levine *et al.*, 1992, 187-91). To be genuine science, some will say, it must limit itself to a value-neutral description, explanation and to non-moral—not immoral—interpretations. If we are clear about the task and vocation of a scientist (to echo Weber), we will acknowledge the last part of the sentence—namely, the part about interpretations—of the immediately prior sentence, but not the part about the value-neutral descriptions. It is also important to recognize that we could reject the part about value-neutral descriptions (as I think most social scientists now would) and still affirm the denial of (2), namely, that there is a *scientifically acceptable* sense in speaking of the moral purpose of that science. (It is now commonplace to say that social science discourse in many areas cannot be normatively neutral. It cannot avoid using thick concepts. But to say ‘Our study shows that there is a lot of male domination in our society’ need not be to say or give to understand that it is wrong. To add, in my view plainly appropriately, that it certainly should be taken to be plainly wrong is not to make a further scientific remark but to make a moral one and one that is justified. And all justification need not be scientific justification—though this is not to give to understand that that justification is or can be unscientific.)

I have given in my first lecture my reasons for believing (1) to be false. Briefly now: thick concepts and thick descriptions are pervasive and ineliminable in our discourses including our

social scientific discourse where they have both substantive informative content and substantive normative content often inextricably mixed (Berlin 1980, 103-42). I speak here of concepts and descriptive terms which have both a descriptive and evaluative content that is indivisible. Think of terms like 'rude', 'amenable', 'touchy', 'sleazy', 'beastly', 'alienated', 'kindly', 'thoughtfully', or 'compassionately'. We cannot specify their descriptive content independently of their evaluative or normative content or vice-versa. We cannot separately analyze the descriptive part or the normative part. When a social scientist speaks of 'oppression', 'domination', or 'exploitation' she is using such expressions and utilizing such concepts (the concepts these terms are expressive of); her discourse would be impoverished or (if you will) inadequate to its subject if she did not use them or other terms expressing similarly content-full thick concepts (Berlin 1980, 103-42). (Again with 'impoverished' and 'inadequate' we are using thick terms expressive of thick concepts. There is no escape from that.) We could hardly open our mouths without using such concepts. Evaluating and describing come together pervasively in many contexts, contexts that the social scientist cannot avoid if she wants to say anything not so thin as to be practically devoid of content. (By the way, similar things obtain in normative ethical theory.) But the social scientist *qua* social scientist cannot be using them to make moral remarks; but she may go on to make a moral remark—indeed a reasonable moral remarks—as well but not *qua* social scientist. A social scientist studying urban ghetto life might well say, 'Partially as a result of continued overcrowding, ghetto life is becoming more oppressive.' And she may then go on to say, 'And we must do everything we can to relieve that oppressiveness.' The first statement (correct or incorrect) is a scientific observation; the second is a moral remark. They are validated in different ways. Moreover, to make both of them plainly does not require the social scientist to go schizoid.

However, (2) is another matter. Here, I think, Wright has gone off the mark or at least has not expressed himself perspicuously. Can science, including social science, have, *qua* science, a moral purpose? The answer, I think, is no. Science *qua* science, as distinct from philosophy or

social criticism, seeks to give us “knowledge of how the world works” and, where it is successful, it actually does. It is to seek, as well, to show us why the world works his way. Formal science (mathematics and logic) aside, science gives (or seeks to give) us systematic empirically grounded substantive knowledge of the world. For social science this is of the social world. Science itself has no moral purpose but only the purpose of producing such knowledge. Wright is perfectly on target when he says in his first sentence of the above extended quotation, “Emancipatory social science, in its broadest terms, *seeks to generate knowledge relevant to the collective project* of challenging human oppression and creating conditions in which people can live flourishing lives.” The scientific part is concerned with the part I have italicized in the above quoted sentence. It, that is, is the part about *generating knowledge relevant to some project*. That knowledge, whatever it is, if it is genuine scientific knowledge, is knowledge, direct or indirect, of empirical facts or of mathematics or logic. (Knowledge of the empirical facts includes empirically grounded explanations, predictions, and interpretations of empirical facts.) But the non-italicized part of the sentence, while not connoting anything unscientific, let alone anti-scientific, is non-scientific. It speaks of a political and moral practice that uses such scientific knowledge but is not itself such knowledge.¹¹ (If this sounds too much like logical positivism, make the most of it. Not all was dross there.)

Challenging human oppression is just that, namely, a challenging, not an *additional* knowledge, of human oppression, though to successfully challenge human oppression may require some human knowledge. It well utilizes an understanding of the conditions of oppression and of how oppression can be resisted and perhaps ended. But *challenging* it is not itself such knowledge. It is a political act. It requires (while not being that) more primitively an understanding of the use of the term ‘oppression’ and some knowledge of the occurrence of oppression and of its evils. This is, of course, a linguistic and moral matter and without this primitive understanding we could not have a scientific knowledge of the conditions of oppression for we wouldn’t then understand that it was oppression or what oppression is. We couldn’t understand *what* they were conditions of.

Without this primitive understanding there could be no emancipatory social science or at least not a Marxian one. To understand the use of ‘oppression’ is to understand that it is *regarded* as bad but that by itself need not be to think or believe oneself that it is bad.

I should say *ditto* for the last part of the sentence we have been discussing, i.e., “*creating* the conditions in which people can live flourishing lives”. ‘Creating’ here is no more than ‘challenging’ a scientific activity but a political and moral one utilizing scientific knowledge but not itself being a part of scientific knowledge. It is another political act.

To put the matter somewhat differently: science, including emancipatory social science, can be and often is instrumental in aiding political and moral agents in the attainment of certain extra-scientific aims, aims that need not be anti-scientific or unscientific. But they are non-scientific. For a Marxian emancipatory social science, the or an extra-scientific aim is “the elimination of oppression and the creation of conditions for human flourishing.” But scientific knowledge itself is not moral knowledge but among others things a tool for gaining it, a tool for bringing about the conditions for securing that certain moral commitments are or at least can be realized in our lives.¹² Socialists take oppression and a lack of human flourishing to be two connected plain evils—a *background assumption* of a part of their scientific analysis. Acting politically, they seek to eliminate the former and further secure the latter. Their very political activity, if successful, shows this can be done. What is shown here rides on scientific knowledge but this showing is not itself such knowledge, though this showing is something relevant to science. And this activity is itself a political and moral matter, not a scientific matter. Socialists acting politically seek and need relevant scientific knowledge to achieve these aims—or at least it is reasonable to so believe. The sought-for scientific information is taken to be *relevant to* but not *constitutive of* the moral matter.

It might be thought that this way of reasoning commits me to a distinction between the is and the ought. And it does. Like Hilary Putnam, I believe that there is such a *distinction* but also like him I believe that there is no *dichotomy* between the is and the ought (Putnam 2002).

It is enough that there are in the stream of life these different practices—scientific, moral, religious, legal, and political— with different rationales and with different purposes. Most of them, perhaps all of them, are needed in our common life together. Moreover, they are often entangled. And one cannot be reduced to the other (Nielsen and Phillips 2005). They are socially sanctioned, deeply enculturated, and during a given epoch *at least* they are indispensable and irreducible. But *some* may, usually slowly, wither away as has the practice of witchcraft in the West, though not generally in the world. (*Perhaps* over time, and if we can avoid great catastrophes, religion, at least in the wealthier, better educated parts of the world, will wither away, though I wouldn't bet my ranch on it (Nielsen and Phillips 2005).

Most of these practices are indispensable in and to our lives and without them we would be scarcely human. (Here 'human' is a term expressive of a thick concept. It is not equivalent to *homo sapiens*.) In Wittgenstein's terminology, if you want to use it, they are language-games embedded in forms of life without which we would not be recognizably human. Science and morality are such practices distinct from each other, though sometimes entangled, and both are indispensable to our lives. But one cannot be reduced to the other. And they are not *foundations* for our lives or societies and one practice is not foundational for another practice. Moreover, there are no *foundations* for our lives. These practices are just there, like our lives (Rhees 2003). Moral practices pervade our lives; they are, that is, deeply embedded in our lives and there would be no emancipatory social science without them. They are indispensable. But moral practices are not part of the emancipatory science (or any science) themselves but *presuppositions* of it. Moral practices are indispensable for society—for its very existence as well as its coherence—as though in a different way scientific practices obviously are for modernizing contemporary cultures. Both moral and scientific practices are embedded in contemporary and indeed all modern social life as well. And increasingly so in our lives, our moral and social practices, while remaining distinct, work

together (Nielsen 2009).¹³ Still, talk of either providing or yielding foundations is without any compelling sense. Indeed, the very notion of foundations fogs things up.

For a Marxian, a socialist, or an otherwise anti-capitalist anarchist or Rawlsian liberal (i.e., a social democrat), certain moral convictions embedded in certain moral practices may be the (or at least a) *motivational* force for them to become social scientists. And where they become social scientists, they are will, in making certain of their social science descriptions and explanations, have to use thick concepts that have a determinate moral or other normative force. To understand them they will, of course, have to understand that these concepts have that normativity. But it doesn't require, and the scientific use of these concepts doesn't imply, endorsement of them. Endorsement is a moral and political act, not a scientific one. Again, let us remind ourselves that it need not be unscientific or anti-scientific but it is non-scientific. We can speak of a socialist's scientific view of the world and of his moral view of the world, meaning by that how his own view of the world has been informed and guided by scientific considerations and by moral considerations, often working together though not being identical or reducible to each other. The moral convictions embedded in these practices are not a part of the science or a foundation for it or a funding of a Marxian view of the world. Practices, moral and scientific, may be *a* way for a Marxian to articulate a clearer and sounder Marxian view of the world but its social science is not nor can it be 'a moral science'. Yet its view of the world is a deeply moral one, Marx's amorality to the contrary notwithstanding (Nielsen 1988). But a Marxian view of the world is not a science and it is not a morality, though crucially it has moral aspects as well as scientific aspects. We can still, however, speak coherently of that view of the world—our view of the world—as being 'a scientific view of the world', meaning that our view of the world is informed and guided by scientific considerations. And we can as well coherently speak, though somewhat differently, of that very same view of the world as being a 'moral view of the world', meaning by that a view of the world that is informed and guided by moral considerations. But a view of the world that is both scientific and moral need not be a conflicted

view; it can and should rely on both moral and scientific considerations which are characterized by a fruitful reciprocity. We might call this combination—this emancipatory view of the world—a Marxian emancipatory theory (Levine *et al.*, 1993, 187-89). But given what I've just said, calling it a theory seems to make it something too philosophical. Calling it a Marxian emancipatory comprehensive practice is better. It is less philosophically pretentious and misleading.

V

At the beginning of “Foundations of a Neo-Marxist Class Analysis”, Wright contends that Marxism needs (and at least in effect has) a specific orientation to radically egalitarian principles (Wright 2005, 4-8). Linked to this, Wright gives a class analysis in the body of that article. In clarifying that contested concept, he shows how for Marxians (*pace* Roemer) class has a close link to exploitation and how class has “a distinctive centrality within the Marxist tradition...” (Wright 2005, 4). He goes on to contend that (1) a good argument can be made for Marxian class analysis, and (2) how a specific orientation to radically egalitarian normative principles is “a large part of what defines the continuing distinctiveness of the Marxist tradition as a body of thought, particularly within sociology” (Wright 2005, 6). A few pages later he adds, “At its core, class analysis within the Marxist tradition is rooted in a set of normative commitments to a form of radical egalitarianism” (Wright 2005, 6). This, as he recognizes, goes explicitly against Marx’s own expressed view. Marx thought that “ideas about morality just reflected material conditions and interests of actors. Rather than defend socialism on grounds of social justice or other normative principles, Marx preferred to simply argue that socialism was in the interests of the working class and that it was, in any case, the historical destiny of capitalism” (Wright 2005, 6). Wright then makes an observation that many have made (including Steven Lukes, G. A. Cohen, and myself) that “Marx’s own writing is filled with moral judgment, moral outrage, moral vision” (Wright 2005, 6). But this does not establish that Marx took any of this as foundational to his scientific socialist

theory or even as a working part of it or even as revealing a commitment to radical egalitarianism or any egalitarianism or even to any acceptance of equality. Indeed, both Marx and Engels were hostile to an appeal to equality (Nielsen 1989, 193-226).

It just never occurred to Marx that one could take on or even try to take on writing in a manner that conformed to what later came to be called ‘a normatively neutral vocabulary’ supposedly to be utilized in articulating a normatively neutral social theory—any more than it occurred to the hardnosed political realist, Thomas Hobbes. Marx felt perfectly entitled to express his own deep indignation at the evils inherent in capitalism, evils that he thought just go with the system and cannot be eradicated without eradicating that system. Yet, as I have already noted, he did not think that moralizing or moral theory aided the revolution or in any other way the project of ending capitalism and constructing socialism. He even worried that it might impede it. And he *may* well have been right.¹⁴

That notwithstanding, Wright’s judgment is that the “core class analysis within Marxist tradition is rooted in a set of normative commitments to a form of radical egalitarianism” (Wright 2005, 6). However, Wright stresses—and this fits well with Marx’s thought—that this should not be regarded as a claim about moral or other normative *foundations* or funding. There is no such foundational or funding theory in Marx and there should not be in the Marxist tradition. Moreover, “rooted in” suggests *causal* effects and not necessarily *justificatory* ones. More generally, this does not face Marx’s low estimate of the practical effect of any form of moralizing or moral theorizing and it does nothing to establish radical egalitarianism. Still I hope that the Marxist tradition has developed somewhat in the direction that Wright points to, but it must do so *sans* Marx. However, Marx’s scepticism concerning moralizing is not addressed by Wright and it should be. *Perhaps*, however, that does not damage Wright’s claim, particularly if we should (as we should) view Marxism as a changing and developing tradition. Still, I think Marx’s ideas here and McCarney’s utilization of them are not readily put aside and that we should beware of taking a moralistic turn.

We should not view Marxian emancipatory social science as a ‘moral science’ or a ‘science proclaiming any normative point of view’. It can have a normative vocabulary but it also can’t as a *science* advocate a moral or otherwise normative point of view. Moreover, deploying a normative vocabulary need not to be advocating anything.

However, bracketing that, let us see how Wright portrays and defends his version of radical egalitarianism and what claim it can legitimately make to being, Marx notwithstanding, central to the Marxist tradition. (It should also be remembered that G. A. Cohen defends a radical egalitarianism. See Cohen 2008.) Wright says that radical egalitarianism can be expressed in terms of three theses which reveal its underlying rationale. The three theses are what he calls (1) the *Radical Egalitarianism Thesis*, (2) the *Historical Possibility Thesis*, and (3) the *Anti-capitalism Thesis*. They read as follows:

1. *Radical Egalitarianism Thesis*: Human flourishing would be broadly enhanced by a radically egalitarian distribution of the material conditions of life.
2. *Historical Possibility Thesis*: Under conditions of a highly productive economy, it becomes materially possible to organize society in such a way that there is a sustainable radically egalitarian distribution of the material conditions of life.
3. *Anti-capitalism Thesis*: Capitalism blocks the possibility of achieving a radically egalitarian distribution of the material conditions of life (Wright 2005, 6-7).

There are a number of questions to be raised concerning these three theses. A first one is to ask what work, if any, is ‘radical’ or ‘radically’ doing in these theses? How does ‘radical’ or ‘radically’ qualify egalitarianism? Wright does not say. If we say that *radical* egalitarianism is distinctive in claiming that everyone should have the same income or the same resources or the same shares then radical egalitarianism is obviously mistaken. People have very different needs sometimes requiring for their satisfaction different incomes, perhaps very different incomes and different shares. (But shares of what?) A worker who must commute long distances to work *ceteris paribus*

needs more income than someone whose work is just around the corner. Aged persons who need expensive medications not paid for or only partially paid for by the state need more income than young people otherwise similarly situated. Here we see that to make people equal in one respect makes them unequal in other respects, or at least in another respect (Geuss 2008, 77-78).

What about the *same* meeting of needs or the *same* meeting of basic needs or the *same* having of what Rawls calls primary social goods (not to mention primary natural goods, e.g., health, intelligence, stamina, and the like) or the *same* capabilities? The same type of objection as to sameness of income, though a little less obviously, arises for these matters. People in different stages of life and in different situations will sometimes have different needs. Babies, young children, young adults, pregnant women, middle-aged persons, aged persons all have different needs and usually require different allocations of resources or income or shares. What about the *same* meeting of these *different* needs? But what could be ‘the same meeting’ here is very unclear. Presumably people would have to come to a *commensurate* meeting of their various needs. But it is still very unclear what this comes to or how we or they could figure it out. And in any event it would have to take into consideration different people often differently situated with not infrequently very different needs and sometimes with different needs for allocation of resources and income—though generally speaking things here could be, without leveling down, made more equal with considerate benefit for many and no great loss for others. There is no justification for the vast inequalities with which we are stuck.

Similar things would obtain for the same welfare. To achieve the same welfare across the board requires in some domain other inequalities along with drastic leveling down of the welfare of some, though, of course, with the enhancement of the welfare of others. I don’t have in mind just the greater welfare of the rich. Soaking the rich to bring them closer to the non-rich, including, of course, the poor, seems perfectly alright to me as it does to Brian Barry. However, quite commonly situated and roughly commonly incomed people sometimes have very different welfare needs. To

give them the 'same welfare' or an 'identical welfare' would lead to plain harm for some with no equalizing benefit for others.

People also sometimes have very unequal capabilities. Some they have been born with or acquired early on by drastically different life conditions. Some of these differences in capabilities do not affect equality but many of them do. To lower down capabilities would often mean a loss for some with little or no gain for others. Suppose someone comes to recognize that there is nothing he is very good at. He is, he recognizes in moments of clarity, just mediocre through and through. Such a recognition could very well make his life very bleak. Leveling down people with higher capabilities would not help, perhaps even hurt, given his recognition of it and why it was being done. There is no clear-minded non-evasive escape from the bleakness of his life or even a rectification of it. That aside, there would still remain between different people different capabilities yielding different inequalities. Some people are just more intelligent or better runners or more imaginative or have greater capacities for sympathetic or empathetic understanding or greater endurance than others. *Sometimes* these matters are rooted in our physiology, or at least they could be. Perhaps there are some that could only be equalized by drastic and utterly unacceptable genetic engineering and the like. That plainly is not a road to be taken. Moreover, in some cases at least, it is very unlikely that it could be done. Suppose—to go to science fiction—we could make it such that all babies except for their sex could be made the same and their conditions of life could be made such that they remained the same throughout their lives. Should we do it? There would be very good reasons not to do that. Moreover, we do not have to fall back on the reason—valid as it is—that what I have been talking about is wildly and absurdly counterfactual and desert-islandish. Even if it were possible, it would be nightmarishly wrong. Equality, if it is to have the slightest attraction, can't come to anything like that.

A more standard way of moving to what is frequently called radical egalitarianism is to find some acceptable principles of egalitarian justice, more radical and more to the left than Rawlsian

liberal (social democratic) egalitarianism. They would, if acceptable and acted on, arrange social life and political life so that people were more equal in power and the social life that was instantiated would go beyond in an equalizing direction the difference principle of justice. People under ideal conditions Rawlsian style could have equal political rights. But that would not make them equal in or even nearly equal in political power. But to have an acceptably stronger principle for equalizing than the difference principle nested as it is with Rawls with other fundamental principles of justice has not gained any consensus. One may retort, 'Hasn't been accepted does not prove such a principle could not be acceptable'. But this in turn provokes the counter, 'People have tried and no one has succeeded more extensively in going beyond the difference principle. Other egalitarian principles have not gained the broad acceptance that Rawls's difference principle (so nested) has' (Daniels 2007). I sought to do so on three extended occasions and on all of them failed, and I have not seen anyone else succeed in that endeavor (Nielsen 1985; 2003, 139-90; 2007, 294-305; for critics see Levine 1986, 416-17; Daniels 2007, 278-93). Perhaps we shouldn't require such a consensus in trying to gain a wide reflective equilibrium, but where else for politics and morals should we appeal for something that even looks like a grounding? Should we appeal to reason? What does this come to? Remember my discussion of Cohen in Section I.

However, Wright does not even face considerations of this sort—considerations relevant to *ideal* theory—and, as I have pointed out, he does not specify what he means by 'radical' in his radical egalitarianism. *I am inclined to think that Wright means by 'a radically egalitarian society' a classless society with people more equal in power than in any class society—a republic of such equals.* But given his own analysis of class, even the working class is not a unified thing. There just isn't '*the* working class' and '*the* capitalist class' and there are status distinctions *within* the working class as well as *within* the capitalist class. Moreover, there are mixtures and partial crossovers of both. Even assuming we could achieve a classless society, there would still remain considerable *strata* differences—the kind of differences Weber and Rawls think are ineliminable at least in modern

societies. Moreover, there would remain divisions of labor: something the mature Marx came to accept as rationally ineliminable and that would produce strata differences which would make for inequalities—perhaps even steep inequalities, though not as steep as under capitalism.

However, there is no longer any unified proletariat—a class that is *in* society but not *of* it—to bring about a classless society (Levine 2003). Wright remarks, “the full realization of the radical egalitarian ideal may, of course, be a utopian fantasy. But even if ‘classlessness’ is unachievable, ‘less classness’ can be a central objective, and this still requires challenging capitalism” (Wright 2005, 7). This seems to be both important and well taken. But Wright should explain what he means by ‘challenging capitalism’. Does he mean seeking to end it and replace it by socialism? Or does he mean to accept the reality and probable irreplaceability of capitalism at least for the foreseeable future but to seek to challenge it by weakening its domination and its exploitation of the working class and the underclass? But domination and exploitation would still continue to occur, but perhaps with less severity in the North. This latter kind of challenge is what genuinely serious social democrats would be committed to. (I don’t mean by ‘genuinely serious social democrats’ ‘new labor’ which has nothing, except for a false labeling, to do with either social democracy or socialism.) Both socialism and genuine social democracy challenge capitalism but which kind of challenge does Wright have in mind or does he have both kinds in mind, one for one situation and the other for a different situation? Many leftists of integrity do and did opt only for the latter, as did Olaf Palme (a murdered Swedish politician once in power) and Stuart Hampshire (a distinguished philosopher). But, unless social democracy is regarded as a transitional stage, this is to give up on socialism as it is usually and rightly understood and instead just to seek to tame and humanize capitalism as much as possible. But a socialism with strata on the way to a strata-less, classless communism appears to be, as Wright believes it is, a fantasy (Wright 2005, 2-7). What, given all this, has happened to our radical egalitarianism? Can we have a radical egalitarianism in a stratified world or even a stratified but still classless world? But a classless world, even if one could

be attained, could still be extensively stratified or so it at least seems. And can there be a radical egalitarianism in a world with considerable strata or indeed with any strata?

I think the questions I have put would be legitimate and telling if Wright were doing *ideal theory*—what he points out moral philosophers specialize in and that is brilliantly exemplified in the work of Rawls, Nagel, Parfit, Gauthier, Scanlon, G. A. Cohen, Joshua Cohen, Gibbard, and Railton. The above considerations would be worrying for philosophers trying to articulate an ideal theory. But are they questions that should be worrying to Wright? He could be clearer about what he means by ‘radical’ as a component of radical egalitarianism, but from his more specific remarks we get some idea of what he intends. We need a rough material equality of condition and a far more extensive democratic control over our lives than we have now even in the extant most progressive societies. But should Wright do some ideal theory or instead even give it much attention in carrying out his project, any more than Brian Barry should have done in his *Why Social Justice Matters*? I do not think that either should do so. Barry wisely makes this issue quite explicit. We do not have to know what equality is precisely or what radical egalitarianism is precisely to know (something that Thomas Pogge convincingly reminds us of) that the poors in the geopolitical South are in dire circumstances of great inequality leading to terrible miseries and death. Something that is plainly morally unacceptable if anything is. That twenty thousand people (mostly children) die each day mostly from quite unnecessary and easily curable diseases or malnutrition shows this inequality is plainly evil. (We don’t have to have any kind of moral theory to know that. In fact, any kind of normatively ethical theory that did not acknowledge that would thereby be plainly mistaken.) Yet this kind of material inequality could be eradicated with little cost to the people of the North (Pogge 2002; Sachs 2005). But it is not done. This is plainly vile and however we characterize equality and egalitarianism or relate it to Pareto it is an utterly unacceptable inequality. And we know that between nations and within nations across the world various steep inequalities cause a variety of harms—plain evils—that are morally intolerable, though tolerated, and readily eradicable. We

could perhaps morally and reasonably resist this only if draconian measures were to be taken to eradicate them. But Pogge gives us good evidence that this draconianism is false. We don't have to so act to eradicate global poverty (Pogge 2002). Yet we go on tolerating this inequality while our masters are in a position to radically cut it down and we do very little to push or even to try to push them into action. Next to nothing is done. Some crocodile tears are shed and a few band-aid 'solutions' are proposed and some actually implemented. That is all.

Moreover, inequalities have been steadily growing, no matter what *The Economist* tells us about the rise of a global middle class (*The Economist*, February 14, 2009, 3-8). (People within countries, even wealthy countries, at the top end of the income and wealth spectrum live sumptuously while children in families at the bottom of the spectrum in those countries (the United States or Canada, for example) often go to school without breakfast and are often too fatigued to properly attend to their lessons and typically live in conditions at home that make studies or help with studies virtually impossible. They, hardly surprisingly, do badly in school and often drop out as soon as they can. And if they find jobs at all they are poorly paying insecure jobs and usually in one way or another unpleasant jobs (Burgi 2004, 12-13). Typically, such people die earlier than the better off and while they live they usually live a less healthy and more stressful life (Barry 2005, 70-95). And this is not a sob story. It is the way it is. And we know that things do not have to be that way, or at least not so grossly that way (Barry 2005, 37-94).

We can and do recognize such inequalities, and sometimes vividly, even when we do not understand what a radical or robust or full or perfect equality could come to. But we know life on our globe isn't even within a country mile of any of those things. And certainly, if we are reasonably free from self-deception, we recognize without any difficulty at all that the kind of inequalities I mentioned above are wrong. A world which moved just a little bit more in the direction of rough material equality would, we should recognize, be better and closer to being just. But the world does not so move. And we have some understanding of what it would be like for it to so move even if we

do not understand just how rough material equality can be to be an acceptable rough material equality. Moreover, we do not need to know the answers to the above questions of ideal theory to know that such inequalities as we have been mentioning are wrong and grossly unjust. These are plain, unacceptable inequalities easily recognizable as such. We (speaking now of the rich societies of the North) could readily take redistributive measures to eradicate the miseries that such extreme inequalities cause without just spreading the misery around (Pogge 2002; Sachs 2005). If the United States, for example, would divert small but reasonable amount of money from its military budget or its space exploration budget, they could do a lot of poverty eradication in the South as well as at home. But they don't. Why not? Are all their military and space exploration expenditures necessary? That is, are such extensive military expenditures and money for military-oriented space exploration—or even for any space exploration at all—necessary or even particularly desirable? It will be asserted by some that they are necessary, but isn't this just a distorting ideology? Given what is at issue, isn't this thoroughly misplaced? Even granted that the US needs some considerable military expenditure to be the super imperial power and the world's policeman, something of very dubious desirability, is all that expenditure still necessary? Beyond helping certain primarily military industries, is it even desirable? Even granting that the US needs such overwhelming military might, including the control of space, does it have to go so whole-hog that it could not take out some of these expenditures to eradicate at least extreme poverty? The expenditures, particularly if we compare them with the military expenditures, would be minimal. Moreover, the United States is way ahead militarily of their possible rivals—indeed of all of them taken together. That they could, if they would, answers itself. The burden of proof rests on those who would deny that, that is, if they could without endangering their security or imperial control relieve at least such extreme poverty. It might even strengthen both because perhaps not so much not unjustified hatred would be directed toward the U.S. It certainly appears that to allow such poverty and such inequalities is rankly unjust and indeed evil and probably not even rational.

We must go for a greater equality than we have in our very inegalitarian societies and struggle to increase equality as much as we can as long as there is avoidable misery and as long as there is domination and oppression around. (We are not in the position of having to worry about the possibility of too much equality.) We should only accept a 'second best' when we are forced to and where at the time we cannot effectively resist one. What perfect equality would come to be we do not need to know and perhaps we cannot know but, practically speaking, we need not lose sleep over that. We know what has to be done to make our society and our world a decent place. (I did not say a perfect or even a near perfect place.)

However, we need to think hard about the equality that with resourceful thought and determined action and struggle, luck and intelligence, we could realistically achieve or would reasonably achieve in the near future. What kind of advance in equality, if any, is maximally achievable with a proper institutional design for its achievability for the peoples on our globe in the next 25 to 50 years? We can recognize a range of inequalities unacceptable for peoples now in communities of the North and, less securely, ultimately for all the peoples on the whole of our globe and in both cases for peoples as well as for individuals. (Nobody, morally speaking, can just set aside people or treat a people as simply expendable. But a lot of people in fact are so treated and sometime whole races, ethnic groups or whole societies. Our world certainly does not look like a moral order.) The idea that it is a 'well-ordered society' is a fantasy. Even the idea that it is a society or community is problematic. But that is not to give to understand that it could not become one and desirably so. It is mind numbing and deeply depressing to reflect on all the *impediments* that stand in the way of its being a well-ordered moral order. But it is—to moralize—plainly something that must be fought for. We have a good understanding of what must be done to get within the ballpark of decency. And we have this without being able to recognize what it would be like for there to be a radical, perfect, or full equality or even a robust equality. When people are dominated, exploited, oppressed, not respected, even brutalized and even though there is the

factual possibility without extensive loss to the rich of meeting their basic needs and still these needs are not met, then we have unacceptable inequalities. We have something that is morally intolerable. We know that such a society is unjust and that such a world is unjust. Just the most casual glance at our world reveals our world is rife with such inequalities both in the North and the South but more grossly in the South. We live in a savagely unjust world and our governments, with their capitalist orientation, are, though in varying degrees, very much complicit here. We do not need moral theory to recognize that. Indeed, to repeat, any normative ethics that did not recognize that would be thereby shown to be very mistaken (Nielsen 2009).

We can feel despairingly powerless to do anything about these extreme inequalities and sometimes actually are not able to do anything about them. We may sometimes be forced to tolerate the intolerable, as we actually tolerate the unnecessary deaths of twenty thousand people, mostly children, each day or men tied up and gagged in the Congo who were forced to witness their children being killed and their wives being gang raped. We feel helpless to stop the torture that goes on in the world, indeed by such 'liberal democratic' societies as the United States and Israel, not to mention such places as Syria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Algeria under France's colonial power during the Colonial War (Fanon 1965). We also have to tolerate the fat cats in power swilling at the trough while many of their compatriots suffer (not to speak of others who starve). But we need not and should not give up doing everything we can to resist those things, to fight them with whatever means we have as things that are unspeakably evil. But, again, we don't need moral theory or any philosophy to know we should do this. And no moral theory will prove to someone not already inclined that he should do this.

Taking these things to heart and to mind means thinking in a resolute and non-evasive way about what is to be done. The realization that sometimes, even often, there is nothing that we powerless individuals can do makes the thing all the more horrible, all the more intolerable. Here we must not dream or just speculate about what it would be like to eradicate such evils. That is,

though understandable, to be evasive. We must, facing this, try to figure out and resolve to try to carry out what we can do to fight these things (Fanon 1965). We should do this rather than, Hegel-like, resign ourselves and reconcile ourselves to the intolerable with which we are faced. But we should not for a moment forget that we are often slaves to our situations. Sometimes there is nothing we can do, try as we will. Through our long and barbarous history slaves of various kinds and in various conditions have resisted and sometimes with success, partial success, or defeat have paved the way for success. We should not forget Franz Fanon here. What he says is vital (Fanon 1965).

Where the situation is not quite so grim, we should, as a strategy for achieving a greater equality (compatible, as Rawls shows, with a reasonable autonomy), aim at viable equalities that are at present not achievable but still would be desirable to have if and when they become achievable and are such that it is not unreasonable to believe that there are conditions under which they could become achievable. We again can recognize these things without being able to recognize what a perfect or radical equality would come to or what would be maximally acceptable equality. Again, ideal theory seems a pointless extravagance.

Wright reminds us that “the actual limits of what is achievable depend on beliefs about what sorts of alternatives are viable. This is a crucial sociological point: social limits of possibility are not independent of beliefs about limits...[and] beliefs about limits systematically affect what is possible” (Wright 2006, 98). We need to realistically think about alternatives “to existing social structures that would eliminate, or at least significantly reduce, the harms that they [these institutions and social structures] generate” (Wright 2006, 96). To do this is to prepare the conditions for a greater equality. (How much equality can be achieved or should be achieved under ideal conditions we do not know. Do we need to know to be effective agents for deep social change? I don’t think so. For an activist, ideal theory can and should be neglected. A quietist can wallow in it to his delight.

Wright goes on to point out that such “alternatives can be elaborated and evaluated by three different criteria: *desirability*, *viability*, and *achievability*” (Wright 2006, 96). They are nested, as he puts it, “in a kind of hierarchy: not all desirable alternatives are viable, and not all viable alternatives are achievable” (Wright 2006, 96).

He remarks, “the exploration of *desirable* alternatives, without constraints of viability and achievability, is the domain of utopian social theory and much normative political philosophy” (Wright 2006, 96). In fine, it is ideal theory. He goes on to remark on something that I have been concerned to emphasize, namely, that “typically such discussions are institutionally very thin, the emphasis being on the enunciation of abstract principles rather than actual institutional design” (Wright 2006, 96). The great exception to this among philosophers was John Dewey and it was sometimes said that in proceeding as he did he was not doing philosophy. (This is what my genteel tradition philosophy teachers told me as a brash young Deweyian.) Still, philosophers (including such ideal theory philosophers) argue that *ought implies can*. But in practice they typically ignore this. For example, liberal theories of justice such as Rawls’s or Scanlon’s, elaborate the principles that should be embodied in the institutions of a just society without exploring what (if any) sustainable, robust structures could actually even with some viability be designed to enable something approximating the instantiation of how our lives are to be lived with something that yielded some social realization of those principles, how they would lead to a world that was a just world or even a somewhat decent one only intermittently good, rather than the terrible one we have now.

Rawls, for example, at least arguably the greatest of our contemporary moral and normative political philosophers, argues (according to Wright) that his equal liberty principle should always be taken to be lexically prior to his difference principle in real social institutions (Wright 2006, 97). This idealization, a central element of his ideal theory, points, I have argued, to the poverty of moral philosophy. It has been responded that what I point to as the poverty of moral philosophy instead

only points to a division of labor between moral philosophers doing, as is appropriate for them, ideal theory and social scientists and social activists thinking morally about our actual social practices. But what is the point of and how does it contribute to the clarifying of anything to ask why something is desirable without ever asking in any realistic way whether it is possible? One of the great virtues of Dewey was that he never fell into this trap.

This scepticism about the value of ideal theory and the way moral theory and normative political theory are normally pursued squares well with my claims about the considerable value of the way Wright pursues his emancipatory social science. He stresses that it should have an egalitarian moral and normative political infusion integrally linked with its scientific explanatory and interpretive structure, but, or so I have suggested, it should not make (try to make) its actual scientific account into a moralizing one or into a normatively activist or even committed one, but it should be a *social science in the service of egalitarian ideals*—ideals that when properly embodied in institutions arguably yield socialism. But that does not make socialism into ‘a moral science’ which in my view is an incoherency. But if not at present achievable, the ideals still must be viable. Moreover, in being an emancipatory social science, it is supposedly (*pace* McCarney) a normatively oriented social science and, in the case of a Marxian account, an egalitarian oriented one of some sort. (Like Brian Barry, I am prepared until utopia arrives (if ever) to settle for a rough material equality.) But that normativity does not make the truths or warranted assertions of its scientific claims justified by or rest on morality or any other normativity; whether what they assert is true or not is purely an empirical matter while the desirability of its claims is another thing.¹⁵ The claims of an emancipatory social science about which institutional designs are actual, and which ones are reasonably possible now and which ones might be possible in the future are also empirical matters, though, in respect of the *possible* designs, often rather speculative ones. They will include an account of what normativities *as a social fact* are actual, which ones will come to obtain in social structures and which ones are likely to obtain or be attainable (achievable) in the future. These

empirical matters involve beliefs *about* what norms are held and are likely to be held in the future. These normativities as social facts do not show which normativities, morally speaking, should obtain. *They are beliefs about which normative beliefs themselves are held by a certain population and they are not beliefs about 'the foundations' of a Marxist social science or any kind of legitimate social science.* Charles Stevenson is useful about this (Stevenson 1944; 1963). To scientifically theorize, as far as social science is concerned, is not to proclaim moral beliefs or crucially or fundamentally to try to evaluate moral beliefs or even at all to do so, but to determine and examine institutional designs and social structures which would give or reasonably might give ideals a substantive place in our lives making them live options for us. Social science, including an emancipatory one, does not say anything, at least not directly, about what should or should not be our non-scientific ideals. That is a moral matter or a matter of what is the good life and not a scientific one. But, given certain moral beliefs or attitudes on our part, sometimes—indeed often in modern societies—some scientific beliefs can be useful concerning certain moral matters. Given, for example, that we want our children to do well in school and to be healthy and happy, science can often advise us on things to do or avoid. My qualifier 'at least directly' is important. Often science gives us good reasons—I didn't say decisive reasons—for having one or another moral belief or orientation or perhaps even a whole moral outlook. It can, for example, be significantly important in determining whether a sense of belonging or recognition is as important as some philosophers believe. And it can perhaps even say something informative about what a sense of belonging or recognition should come to. Psychology and the social sciences are important reason-givers without their being directly moral or taking a moral point of view and without there being such a thing as moral science. Using old fashioned terminology, science can, and significantly so, give us *hypothetical* imperatives but not *categorical* ones. However, perhaps there are no legitimate categorical imperatives. If so, what then? And is this something that is up to science to ascertain or are we drawn again back into metaethics? Or what? Some might wax lyrical here about

philosophy. Social science is to talk *about* these moral beliefs in an empirical way, not *to give voice* to those moral beliefs or to be expressive of the attitudes and commitments that go with them.¹⁶

However, all that notwithstanding, an important “task of emancipatory social science is to develop a coherent, credible theory of alternatives to existing institutions and social structures that would eliminate, or at least significantly reduce, the harms they generate” (Wright 2006, 96). Here we at least seem to have something that is *perhaps* not compatible with what I said above; we have (or so it seems) a blending of the moral and the empirically factual. It indeed takes a certain moral or at least normative understanding of harm to understand the statement from Wright just quoted. And that is not given by the social science he articulates or by any social science. However, it takes a scientific understanding, not just a moral understanding, to be able to know or plausibly believe that a certain change in or of institutions or social structures will reduce or eliminate the harms in question. But even to be able to understand such statements would presuppose at least a primitive moral or other normative understanding. But with that prior understanding the claim that certain institutions would reduce or eliminate these harms or what the changed institutions or structures are like is a purely empirical matter. And it is not only brutally empirical but scientific and (pleonastically) empirical as well. With a moral understanding one wants, *ceteris paribus*, structures to reduce harms but whether they will or will not is not a function of our moral understanding, though identifying and establishing such structures *presupposes* a moral understanding. Given an understanding of the concept of harm (if you will of the use of ‘harm’), we can show—empirically show—that something is harmful from empirical beliefs about these harms. That is a scientific matter; the former, namely, that the harmful acts are *ceteris paribus* wrong is not. That smoking harms your lungs is a scientific statement. That harmful things are *ceteris paribus* bad is a moral truism, perhaps even a ‘moral tautology’, and not a statement of emancipatory social science or any other kind of science, though it is presupposed by some sciences. To understand the use of ‘harm’ or the concept of harm which is supposedly (as Gilbert Ryle claimed) particular

language-neutral is to understand that it is bad or at least that it is generally taken to be bad. But what practices, institutions, or structures cause harm is an empirical matter and a subject of emancipatory social science.

What about Wright's remark that "alternatives can be elaborated and evaluated by three different criteria: desirability, viability, and achievability" (Wright 2006, 96)? 'Desirability', 'viability', and 'achievability' are clearly normative words. But they are also terms expressive of thick concepts so they have—and indivisibly so—both descriptive and evaluative components. While this is plainly true for 'viable' and 'achievable', it is *perhaps* not for 'desirable'. To understand that something is viable is not only to think that something is possible or taken to be possible but also that it actually might (with some probability might) obtain when conditions occur that are not achievable now but that it is reasonable to believe they would be so if in the future things change in a certain way and that it is reasonable to believe now that this is factually possible with a certain degree of probability. By contrast, if something is achievable it is reasonable to believe that with effort now it could actually be achieved. To take an example, a guaranteed unconditional basic income is viable now in the North but not achievable now. But it is not unreasonable to believe that in certain wealthy reasonably progressive countries in the North, e. g., Sweden, Finland, Holland, or Luxemburg, that it might in the not too distant future be achievable. Such a thing is arguably achievable for wealthy societies and not *just* viable and desirable. This is not just a wish for it or something we think would be desirable but as well a not unreasonable belief—an empirical belief—about what could come to be. Whether it could or could not is an empirical matter and establishable or disestablishable empirically and subject to social science confirmation and disconfirmation.

Desirability, it might be thought, is different from viability or achievability. But I believe that it is not. That something is desired does not mean or establish that it is desirable. Something can be desired and not be desirable. Similarly something can be desirable and not be desired. But,

or so it seems at least, there must be some relevant connection between the desired and the desirable. If no one anywhere and anywhen ever desired some particular thing, it would not be plausible or perhaps even coherent to say that it was desirable. *Perhaps* we could rather implausibly but still coherently say that though something is not desired by anyone now living nor, as far as we can ascertain, has it in the past ever been desired by anyone, yet if people in the future become more reasonable and rational then they would desire it. This is a rather chancy and implausible use of a modality but it is not incoherent to say it. It is not like 'Bush sleeps faster than Cheney'.

What then makes the desired also desirable? When is a desired something desirable? One not implausible response is to say that when we are aware of the causes of desiring something and the probable consequences of that desire being realized and reflect carefully on that, then what we will continue to desire, if we are reasonable, is something that under such conditions is the best reason we as individuals can have at that time and in those circumstances for believing it is desirable. When there is a considerable reflective consensus of reasonable people about that, when others also under such conditions so desire that something, we have the best reasons we can have at a given time and place for believing it desirable. It still would be *intelligible* even then to say that what is so desired is not desirable. The use of 'desirable' cannot be identified with what is desired under certain conditions. This is analogous to the so-called naturalistic fallacy or mistake. But it would be irrational to deny that something desired under those conditions is desirable. The relation between what we have grounds for desiring and what is desirable is like the relationship between confirmation and truth. Something can be well confirmed and still not be true and something can be true though not confirmed or *perhaps* not even confirmable. But the best reasons we can have for believing it to be true is that it is as well confirmed or otherwise grounded as it could be at that time and in that place. Similar things obtain for something being desirable. If it is desired under the conditions described above, particularly when we have a full cross-cultural

consensus about that, we have the best reasons we could possibly have at that time and in that place for believing it to be desirable.¹⁷ (The use of ‘reasonable’ in this paragraph might seem troublesome. But it is not. Like ‘desirable’ or ‘viable’, it is expressive of a thick concept with both a descriptive and a normative meaning (Nielsen 2008).)

Desirability, like viability and achievability, is a thick concept with both a descriptive and an evaluative meaning (use). Emancipatory social science can have something to say about what it is to achieve something desirable, viable and achievable while *presupposing* that something is desirable, viable and achievable are normative notions not just bits of scientific information, though still being thick concepts having as well descriptive import. But to say ‘Boiling babies is vile’ is an expression of moral horror. Being a thick concept, ‘vile’ also has a descriptive component. But it doesn’t make it a bit of scientific information. But they also have a descriptive use and this enables a social science to explain, examine and confirm or infirm *what* is said or thought to be desirable, viable or achievable. That is in the competence of social science, including most particularly an emancipatory one.

A scientific socialism is a social science whose research programs and investigations are designed to achieve socialist emancipatory goals, centrally, egalitarian and perfectionist goals (for the latter, they are those concerned with human flourishing expressed in the normative vision of socialism and existing in its egalitarian *ethos*). This is a central (but not exclusive) *goal* of scientific socialism’s inquiry. It is, however, not the inquiry itself; it is that at which the inquiry is directed. It is a, perhaps the, central reason for its very being. But that is not what makes the inquiry scientific. This would have been regarded as a truism in the time of Gunnar Myrdal and I think it is what Wright is driving at and *perhaps* even McCarney.¹⁸ But that is not clearly so. They do not put their points as perspicuously as they might. I hope I do not seem arrogant in saying if that is not what they are getting at that is what they should have been getting at. It is—or so I believe—a more coherent and perspicuous way, even with its abstractness, of characterizing a Marxian

emancipatory social science. And I would add that any *emancipatory* social science should be broadly so characterized, though some (perhaps most) will have somewhat different goals. But it is not impossible or in some contexts undesirable to argue about which of these goals are the most adequate but that also will not be a *purely* scientific matter.

VI

For Wright emancipatory social science analytical Marxianism style consists in both historical materialism (a Marxian theory of history) and sociological Marxism (Buraway and Wright, 2001). But, and Cohen follows him here, it is important to distinguish them. Historical materialism is a theory of *history*. It is about how social forms succeed one another. It is, that is, about epochal social change and its effects—economic, political, and cultural—on peoples. Sociological Marxism, by contrast, raises questions about how elements *within a society* are related. The two are complimentary to each other but they are distinct, though historical materialism sets, or tries to, the general parameters about how central elements in a society can be structured.

Sociological Marxism's central claim is that social being determines consciousness. Put otherwise, material and economic existence explains for a given society or cluster of societies during a given epoch *the main lines* of its 'spiritual existence', e.g., religious, moral, legal, artistic, and political beliefs, practices, attitudes, and actions: superstructural matters as Cohen, following classical Marxism, labels them. This has a normative side. Marxists, *sometimes* Marx and Engels to the contrary notwithstanding, have a vision of how the world should be and they have a conception, animated in part by that vision, of in what ways to change the world. We have something here that is a normative conception, though rooted in (note the causal term) a factual understanding of how the world is and how it could change. That normative conception, though so rooted, is not a part of Marxian social science as we saw in the last section. But, by being so factually rooted, it is a vision which is informed by and is in part generated by that social science, though it in turn generates the

further development of that social science. The influence goes both ways. That normative vision affects which research programs are pursued; the research programs pursued and their results, in turn, affect that normative vision. Reflection on the evils of class domination makes us search for ways in which class society could be transcended. Study of the way domination works in a capitalist class society in turn makes us reflect on what it would be to have a society without class domination. This enhances our vision of a truly human society.

This science also includes some of the deep underlying assumptions that Marxists, including analytical Marxists, make. Analytical Marxism is not just a social science that, as a science, has no moral norms, but a social science that seeks to push on the Marxist tradition's social vision, normative stance, and political agenda without compromising its scientificity (Levine 2003). Marxists do not just moralize or speculate about the world or construct normative ethical theories or normative political theories but seek instead scientifically to comprehend and explain what is going on in the world in order to change it in certain determinate ways and give backing to their socialist vision of what the world should be without confusing that with their scientific conception of how it is, how it is likely to be and can be. This is a normative vision, though it is certainly not independent of what Marxists believe the world can be—of its factually historical trajectories. Marxists seek to understand and explain empirically the trajectory that our social world is likely to take and to alter their normative vision as well as their factual conceptions when they do not square with what careful scientific research reveals. (I am not saying that these normative and scientific matters can always be sharply and clearly distinguished. But they are, as I hope I have shown, distinguishable and importantly so.)

Analytical Marxian social science seeks to use cutting-edge techniques—or to put it with greater circumspection, what is conventionally taken to be cutting-edge techniques—in the disciplines of history, geography, sociology, social anthropology, economics, and philosophy to examine key substantive topics that have always been central to Marxism. Analytical Marxists

concern themselves with—seek to accurately describe, interpret, and explain—the social reproduction of capitalism with its practices, ideas, ideals, ideologies, institutions, ways of maintaining or manufacturing consent, with its assumptions and conceptions of legitimacy, with its conceptions about the conditions for the transition from capitalism to socialism to articulate conceptions that a socialist society and a socialist world would come to have.¹⁹

Marxist social science is also centrally concerned with class, exploitation, domination (indeed, all forms of oppression), democracy, markets, consumerism, alternatives to capitalist markets, and, more broadly, capitalist market economy, the feasibility of a market socialism, capitalist organization of social life, and to what could come to be called a post-capitalist alternative. Sociological Marxism, as Buraway and Wright put it, is concerned to understand so it can effectively challenge “capitalism’s capacity to absorb or ridicule alternatives to itself and to provide the grounds for a prefigurative politics” (Buraway and Wright 2001, 484). They go on to remark, “Thus, a sociological Marxism has to be not only a science but also ideology—ideology in Gramsci’s sense that embodies real utopia in a concrete fantasy that will move people to collective action” (Buraway and Wright 2001, 484). I take, as far as I understand it, their important substantive point but reject its specific formulation. Sociological Marxism, like all genuine sociology, all genuine science, has, to remain faithful to its vocation, to be *just* scientific. To be a science is to be a system of description, explanation, interpretation, and prediction. It is not to be in the business of advocacy or moralizing. It can and sometimes should be used to further an ideological and normative perspective. But that furthering is not a further scientific use. As we saw in Lecture One in discussing McCarney, an ideology is a set of beliefs, ideals, and practices that answers to class interests. Ideologies are different from scientific beliefs but they need not be in conflict with them and they may be supported by them and in turn motivate research for scientific beliefs that may either support or challenge particular ideological beliefs. Socialism’s ideology (some of its normative beliefs answering to its class interests) will be set against capitalist ideology.

Scientific beliefs may be utilized in this struggle, but that is a *utilization* and not a further bit of scientific activity nor a part of socialist ideology. It is something—a scientific something—that may be used by ideologists. To explain, for example, how work goes in capitalist society can be used to support socialist ideology.

Often—indeed usually—ideological beliefs are distorted beliefs but they need not be. Marxist sociologists have an ideology that in the ideal case will not be distorted but that can be true of the ideological beliefs of others as well. Ricardo, as Marx points out, had bourgeois ideological beliefs and as well was a firm supporter of capitalism but he also had scientific beliefs, some of which were well warranted as were *some* of his ideological beliefs. Marx regarded Ricardo as an astute defender of the bourgeois order but also as a soundly scientific political economist. But that does not mean that Marx agreed with either his central scientific or ideological views. He had his own alternatives that he took to have a greater claim on a more comprehensive truth. (I do not speak of *the* truth here. There is no such thing.) But we should not conflate his scientific beliefs with his ideological ones. They are different. But they both in their own way can be well warranted.

McCarney's conception of ideology here meshes nicely with Gramsci's. Moreover, we should, as Cohen has come to do, separate questions about how the elements within a society are related (sociology) from questions about how social forms succeed one another (history) (Cohen 2000, 385-86).

Political economy, of course, is also a social science, indeed as deployed by Marx, a key emancipatory social science, but it is a distinct discipline from history and sociology though it borrows elements from both as they crucially do from it. All three volumes of *Capital* as well as the *Grundrisse* have economics as their central concern. Yet with the exception of Robert Brenner and sometimes Erik Olin Wright, analytical Marxists have paid scant attention to it as an economic

theory, though Cohen masterfully uses this part of Marx in setting out his account of Marx's historical materialism (Callinicos 2006).

Cohen, Elster, and Roemer, as most analytical Marxists, reject the centerpiece of Marx's economics, namely, the labor theory of value (Cohen 1988, 207-38). Cohen has a deep understanding of Marx's economics and its place in Marx's thought, yet he is as firm as Elster and Roemer in rejecting the labor theory of value. Indeed, it is not much of an exaggeration to say, as Alex Callinicos does, that with their rational choice framework Cohen's, Elster's, and Roemer's work displays "a nihilist attitude towards the entire tradition of Marxist political economy" (Callinicos 2006, 252). Probably, principally through the powerful influence of Piero Sraffa, a brilliant but eccentric Marxist but still in economic theory a neo-Richardian, many contemporary and near contemporary Marxists were led away from Marx's economics. (This is particularly true of those who are also economists.)²⁰ Sraffa's trenchant but incredibly condensed and heavily mathematical criticisms of the labor theory of value and its related theory of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall and his alternative positive theory plainly had a strong effect, particularly on contemporary Marxist economists.

Justified or not, analytical Marxists followed the economic crowd here. I am not competent enough in economics to have even a reasonably informed opinion here but it seems to me that Wright's prudent agnosticism is the approach we should take; namely, we should not take the labor theory of value off the agenda. But, if it is something that is to be an object in renewed intensive investigation or to be accepted, it must meet the rigorous standards for assessment that analytical Marxists require, particularly by those of them who are economists. Whether it can be so articulated remains, as far as I can ascertain, open. But we should note that most economists think Marx's specific economic theory is a lost cause. But most economists could be wrong (Toulmin 2001, 47-66).

However, and be that as it may, I am interested instead in whether, in the form of classical Marxism, Gramscian Marxism, Althusserian Marxism, analytical Marxism, or some eclectic blending of Marxisms (scientific socialisms), we have a cogent critique of capitalism and its evident ills—now becoming glaringly apparent (2008-09)—brought about, or at least seemingly brought about, by neo-liberal practices. Does the collapse of the American boom-bubble mark the inception of a systemic crisis? Is the American empire bankrupt? Can states, either singly or together, develop, sticking with some form of capitalism, new and more adequate forms of economic regulation and behavior? Does constructing fairer and more democratic alternatives to neo-liberalism require a break with capitalism and/or the market altogether? Or can capitalism be stabilized in some neo-Keynesian form of economic governance? Or, alternatively, can there be developed a form of market socialism that avoids the mistakes of the command/administrative allocation systems of the now defunct 'state socialisms' (perhaps better called statist post-capitalisms)? Can we develop, and hopefully instantiate, a more adequate form of socialism for the twenty-first century? In an attempt to do that, what reasonably specific economic and other social measures shall we adopt? With a depression looming as a feared reality, can a Keynesian capitalism stem the recession/depression caused by, or at least seemingly caused by, the privatization and deregulation policies of neo-conservatism with its economically driven neo-liberalism? Do we need more big government than neo-liberalism will allow? Will Keynesianism again lead in turn to stagflation? Are we now unwittingly starting down the road to World War III as the failure to decisively end the Great Depression led to World War II? If Keynesianism down the road a bit, perhaps taking on some Marxian elements, begins to threaten or to be extensively perceived to threaten the ruling classes, frightening them with the specter of a socialist world, what will the ruling classes do? The prospect is frightening. Can socialist moves be necessary, or at least desirable, to replace capitalism altogether, to bid it a non-fond farewell (Callinicos 2006, 260-62; Nielsen 2003, 41-75 and 317-48)?

However, given the power (including the military power) of the rich capitalist North (particularly the United States) along with the widespread popular belief there that socialism in any form is a non-starter and, given the looming phenomenon of global warming, what are the prospects for us in the next 25 to 50 years? Will historical materialism, even in its weak and restricted forms as proposed by Cohen (2000, 341-95) and Levine, *et al.* (1992), provide a realistic guide and indeed one supporting the ascendancy of socialism? Classical historical materialism has been shown by analytical Marxists to be unsustainable. Can its weaker and restricted replacement do the job? What will our future most likely look like? South America shows some hopeful signs of going in a leftward direction but will it not be resisted by every means at the disposal of the rich and much more powerful North (Raby 2006)? (Think of the utter military superiority of the United States. But do not forget that with all that power—all that ability to shock and awe—it has not yet been able to subdue and pacify Iraq and Afghanistan as it could not Vietnam. More generally, see here Amin 2009). However, socialism in one country or on one continent (particularly not one of great wealth) has never been a great success. And what will be the role of China here? It calls itself a socialism but is it not in reality a very powerful authoritarian exploitative capitalism with a statist (not socialist) political structure? Still, it may well outstrip in a few years the other capitalisms. It may in time become the next dominant world power replacing the United States. (We see again, as if Nazi Germany and apartheid South Africa were not evidence enough, how mythical the claim is about the link between capitalism and democracy.) Is there any reasonable hope that China, as it thoroughly catches up with the rest of the capitalist world and comes to an awareness of its ills, will revert to a genuine socialism? Perhaps, but I wouldn't bet on it.

It is questions like these—and they are just a sampling—with which we socialists must come to grips. Does rational-choice theory (game theory and decision theory) along with a methodological individualist anti-holism oriented analytical Marxism as well as a very elaborate and finely tuned moral theory—say, the one brilliantly executed by Cohen—help us come to grips

with the above central problems for socialists? I doubt it. They seemingly do little to help us in coming to grips with problems of the sort I have just characterized. Yet it is these problems and problems like them that are up front for socialist activists as indeed they should be for all of us who are socialists, even the most academic of us. Can we be serious socialists without coming to grips with them, putting them foremost on our agenda? Are they not the crucial problems rather than the problems that analytical Marxists, or for that matter Hegelian Marxists or Althusserian Marxists, concern themselves with? Are these not the crucial problems to be put on the agenda? Are not the problems of analytical Marxism, at least for the most part, free spinning wheels that turn no machinery? Are they not better set aside or put on the back burner? Should not an emancipatory social science in the service of socialism instead fasten on such activists' (but not only activists') problems? Or is this to be Luddite and fail to come at things at a sufficiently abstract scientific level, the austere level analytical Marxism requires? *Perhaps* I am being too Luddite. It is certainly important to determine, if we can, whether the capitalist mode of production is obsolete and likely to break down under the present recession/depression and at least somewhere along the way lead to socialism. And it is important to determine, if we can, whether or not social being determines or massively effects social consciousness. These are crucial issues for analytical Marxism. But can answers be given to these questions, standing where we are, without careful attention to the more specific questions and issues I have alluded to above? Probably not. Or should I just say candidly that I do not know the answer to this? I think we need a lot more clarity here. But we should also be wary about philosophers' penchant for endlessly asking questions about questions about questions. The thing to do is to determine, as directly and non-evasively as we can, what to do about our pigsty and global insane asylum—as a first step and immediately.

Notes

¹ Think, for example, of the work of Christopher Arthur, Simon Critchley, Alex Callinicos, Jacques Bidet, Bertell Ollman, and Michael Lebowitz.

² Since first drafting this lecture I have come across an important article by Alex Callinicos. In it, among other things, he makes some similar as well as some additional criticisms of Cohen that I think have considerable force. See Callinicos 2006, 254-60.

³ In a personal communication with him, John Kerkhoven noted that when someone repeatedly asked Louis Armstrong “What is jazz?” he responded, “Man, if you gotta ask, you don’t know!” Armstrong, if he wanted to be very patient, could play for his questioner a few short things by a variety of jazz musicians and then say, “That’s jazz” and then play some passages from Mozart and Mahler followed by a bit of music typically heard in cheap restaurants and then say that the last three were not jazz. That is an equivalent of what some philosophers call ostensive teaching. That would count in that context as an explanation. Kerkhoven goes on to say: “What if someone says, ‘Kai, you need to live with Adorno’s thought for a while before you can properly begin to understand it. And why should it [Adorno’s way of thinking and writing] conform to the ways of thinking you are accustomed to?’ That’s fair enough. But Kerkhoven also takes my point that in some sense Adorno ought to be translatable in ways that poetry need not be. (I would add, and I think Kerkhoven would agree, that poetry should not be translatable.) But Kerkhoven asks as well why I do not also have trouble with Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein, though he is often elliptical, rhetorical, enigmatic, and cryptic, is not that obscure. He is a paradigm of clarity compared with Adorno or Hegel. To which it could be responded, “Try harder.” But is it worth the candle? Maybe, but there are a lot of other things to come to grips with and there is not world and time enough.

⁴ Gregory Elliot notes that Max Weber once remarked that “anyone who wants ‘vision’ can go to the cinema” (Elliot 2008, 124). This could be taken in at least three ways: (i) as a tough minded remark affirming the desirability of being a realist about political and economic matters; (ii) as a cynical pun on how ‘vision’ is to be taken; or (iii) as an oblique remark concerning the cognitive triviality of most (perhaps all) expressions of a world vision or a vision about what the world should be like or about a better world being possible. Taken as (iii), it has an element of truth. Many such articulations are rather obvious and also risk having an overly utopian content. Yet sometimes they are something that should not be lost. I will return to that in my last lecture.

⁵ But in doing this we should go up a meta-level. Remember Bertrand Russell.

⁶ The commentator was Tom Mayer (Mayer 1994, 16).

⁷ I think it should be out of place to ask that of a biologist ‘Are you a Darwinian?’ But due to some Neanderthal-like religious claims of ‘alternative biological accounts’, it, as a matter of ideological occurrence, is not quite out of place yet. If Neanderthal-like ways prevail, it might unfortunately not be out of place for a long time. Here again John Kerkhoven has made a sound relevant point. After acknowledging my point just made and made at greater length in the body of my text, Kerkhoven goes on to say that matters here are “complex, or at least quirky. Some say there just is no discipline of biology [now] without Darwinian thought. Wallace got it and someone else would have if Wallace and Darwin hadn’t.” Kerkhoven then says, “What I am saying is that one wouldn’t ask a biologist that question. How could a biologist not be a Darwinian?” I agree that he couldn’t now *not* be a Darwinian and remain a legitimate biologist. Indeed, and for some considerable time, to be anything else and still be a biologist, in practice at least, would be absurd. But some people—out of ignorance or from being ideologically bamboozled—do ask biologists that question. Biologists should respond to it as a matter of opposing a primitive ideology and not as a scientific challenge.

⁸ However, this is something that Cohen does not deny. His target is the non-analytical Marxist who, having become well aware of analytical Marxism, remains a non-analytical Marxist. He contends that such a Marxist becomes a bullshitter. This seems to be a bit of dogmatism on Cohen's part. Is Michael Lebowitz, who meets his conditions for a bullshitter, a bullshitter? That is not credible. The same obtains for the others mentioned in note 1.

⁹ We need to be extremely careful about claims that life has lost its meaning or that it never had any and that none can be found or gained. Historically, the *sometimes* unintentional evils of the eugenics movement—something that Henry Ford and Adolf Hitler shared—should make us aware of that and make us extremely cautious. John Kerkhoven has well reminded me that before we judge that a life is or has become meaningless we should take note of Jean Vanier's L'Arche communities where "they put into practice that the handicapped have something to offer; they have something to teach us who are not disabled" (personal communication). A recognition of this and a taking it to heart and putting it into action, into practice, must not be evaded. However, that is not the kind of case that I had in mind. Rather, cases where (i) people are in incurable and unremedial pain and misery and want to die; and (ii) people are utterly and irreversibly unconscious and where it is crystal clear to medical experts (a consensus among them) that they will never regain consciousness. People in (i) and (ii) should be allowed to die or should be assisted in dying—the only thing for those characterized by (ii) that could be done if they are to die. Still, we should be extremely cautious here. Remember the Nazi practices of clearing out the insane asylums of the captured towns in the Soviet Union and liquidating their patients in accordance with the Nazi doctrine that there is some life not worthy of life. There were Nazis who were not brutes who still did this because they thought, everything considered, it was the right thing to do.

¹⁰ Two objections emerge here. (i) A good deal of science does not concern itself with how the world might be but only with how it is and why it is that way. That's certainly true, but some science does concern itself with determining possible historical trajectories, e.g., parts of physics, climate science, and some social science (Levine, *et al.*, 1992, 129-75). (ii) In facing social life, some things (important things) are inescapably normative. Indeed, psychology and social anthropology importantly *study* normative matters. *But that does not make those sciences themselves normative.* You do not have to be fat to drive fat oxen to market. Some sciences non-normatively study normativity.

¹¹ Science does not need to hitch its wagon to some project, though it often usefully does. But in some important instances it *seems* at least to have no project in mind, e.g., Galileo's observations of the moons of Jupiter, his experiments with falling bodies, Darwin's explanation for the origin of species. I am again indebted here to John Kerkhoven.

¹² Could not one instead, after carefully studying Wright's characterization of emancipatory social science, say, *contra* me and McCarney, that that very notion is empirically normative and thus *as science* incoherent? I am inclined to agree that, as Wright states it, such a conception of an emancipatory social science is, if not incoherent, at least deeply flawed. In the body of the text I have tried to reconstruct Wright's otherwise impressive theory so that we would not call the *science* of it, either explicitly or implicitly, normative. Whether it is an effective tool for normativity is an empirical matter. He also has a partly normative emancipatory social theory but that is not a scientific theory, though it has important reciprocal relations with his emancipatory social science. Emancipatory theory and emancipatory social science are distinct but in close relation. Marxism as an emancipatory theory is a normative theory (Wright, *et al.*, 1992, 187-91).

¹³ An example may help. Suppose an MP is accused by two former servants of sexual abuse, oppression, exploitation, and underpayment of wages for which they had contracted. These, if true, are serious moral charges. But they are also empirical fact-sensitive claims. The key terms used in these charges are expressive of thick concepts. They have both an evaluative (normative) component and an empirical factual component. They are distinguishable but not separate components. They are indivisible. (Hume showed us how this could obtain.) There is no way of asserting 'they were oppressed' without at least implicitly making an evaluation of their situation. And there is no way of asserting that sentence without describing their situation. Science will not tell us that sexual abuse, oppression, exploitation, and underpayment of contracted

wages is wrong. That is a moral matter; something that is finally determinable by our moral intuitions (considered convictions). But whether sexual abuse, oppression, exploitation, and underpayment of wages actually occurred is a factual matter empirically determinable. (An MP so accused, guilty or not, will not deny that these things are wrong. He will deny that he actually did them or that they actually occurred but whether they did or not is an empirical matter: factually, empirically determinable.) The inference to the conclusion that they are wrong is a conceptual and moral matter embedded in certain linguistic practices in our language; our moral intuitions here are also embedded in our practices. Still, what *presently* counts as oppression and exploitation in Saudi Arabia and in Denmark may, at least in part, differ. But, given what may be a culturally determinant conception of oppression and exploitation in different cultures, there can be disagreement about what counts as oppression and exploitation. At least in a particular culture at a particular time and given a consensus about the uses of these terms (or their other language equivalents) that oppression or exploitation occurred or did not occur is an empirical matter as well as a moral matter, though science only considers, *qua* science, the first. Even for a determinate use of ‘oppression’ and ‘exploitation’, including the inferences to their being wrong, social science can often tell us in an authoritative manner whether oppression and exploitation has actually occurred. That is a factual matter determinable empirically, given a determine use of ‘oppression’ and ‘exploitation’. Someone may acknowledge that and still not believe or acknowledge it is wrong.

¹⁴ Marx’s stance here is also compatible with Joseph McCarney’s conception of an emancipatory social science that is non-normative. Indeed, a vindication of McCarney’s account here would—or so I think—have to take a view of Marx and of emancipatory social science like the one I have just been expounding. But this would also require McCarney to narrow his concept of ‘science’.

¹⁵ John Kerkhoven remarks that it seems deviant to speak at all of the *desirability* of claims of science. That is right, or so I have argued, of the scientific claims just taken as scientific claims. They are not, and cannot be as long as they remain purely scientific claims, also moral claims or claims of the appropriateness or acceptability of any norms *except norms of scientific inquiry*, e.g., that certain scientific claims should aim at predictive reliability, coherence, and interconnectedness with other scientific claims. But norms of scientific inquiry aside, bits of science *as such* can assert no norms including moral norms or any norms of good living or norms of a good or authoritatively acceptable political or social order. But science, in terms of what it reveals about how the world is and can be (including the social world), can help us in achieving or sustaining moral norms and similar such normative notions. It can, for example, help ascertain if some principle and the practices that go with it are achievable now or whether there is any reasonable possibility that it will be achievable in the foreseeable future. It can help us to keep from blowing moral and good life bubbles in the air.

¹⁶ Suppose we, as Rawls did, acknowledge the pervasiveness of self-interest and, while continuing to defend a moral point of view, remark that we should not expect people to be saints. Where does ideal theory, or indeed any kind of moral theory (something I claim emancipatory social science is *not*) leave off and emancipatory social *science* begin? Where, if at all, is the cut or the distinction—it need not be a dichotomy—between them? Or is there such a distinction? I assume there is one, but I do not believe, the remarks attributed to Rawls notwithstanding, put in question that there is such a distinction. I claim there is a distinction, but I acknowledge that it is not always sharp such that we can properly speak of a dichotomy or even a division (Putnam 2002). There are many relevant sentences which are of an anomalous logical status. ‘That we should not expect people to be saints’ is one of them. In certain contexts it could be taken to be a psychological or sociological remark albeit expressed in a common parlance. Used otherwise in other contexts, as presumably Rawls used it, it could be a moral remark warning us to avoid a too vigorously deontological morality. In still other contexts its import could be indeterminate. But the user, if he has a clear intention, could make its status clear by attending to the context in which he is uttering it and by being clear about why he is uttering it and then clearly expressing that. It could be a bit of moral or normative political theory, perhaps relying in part on a bit of psychology or social science, or it could be just a psychological or social science generalization and as such it would be non-normative or, in a normative political context, it could be used to make a moral (normative political) claim either with or without a moral theory. But the distinction between morality and science remains intact. However, the context would determine how the

remark is to be understood. Sometimes it is ambiguous and there we sometimes need some disambiguation with clarity about the user's intentions.

¹⁷ Am I not engaging in ideal theory here and isn't it here at least pointless? Do we ever get a recognizable cross-cultural and reflective consensus here? Probably not, at least not about anything significant. But we do get some useful approximations. I think of myself here as doing a bit of conceptual analysis and not as setting forth a theory, ideal or otherwise. I work with some *idealizations* but that does not require a theory, ideal or otherwise. And it is the idealization, not any reliance on ideal theory, that has the bite. But what is the use of such an idealization? The use is to clear up a conceptual point—something that sometimes but not always is an important thing to do—and with that in this case to critique a perhaps small point concerning Wright's account. But what is the point of that? The point is to strengthen Wright's important argument for socialism by making a small emendation to it. And the point of that is to make a small move to help ensure the credibility of socialism.

¹⁸ But if we look again at the extended quotation I made from Wright at the beginning of this section, in all but one place he seems to be in sync with what I have just been saying (Wright 2006, 94).

¹⁹ I have been asked whether in time the conception of analytical Marxism should become obsolete. The answer is, I hope, yes. First because I would like to see the day when 'analytical Marxism' has become pleonastic and, secondly, because still later in our historical trajectory I would like to see 'Marxism' disappear and be replaced by 'scientific socialism'. Marx would have achieved his aims if people, utilizing a good understanding of our social world and having a fidelity to a moral vision concerning that world that is expressed by socialism (both utopian and scientific) where we socialists would have, as it were, built a better mousetrap and would continue to tinker with it to make it still better. Or to switch to Wittgenstein's metaphor, analytical Marxism gives us a ladder which, after we used it, we can throw away.

²⁰ Sraffa is principally known by philosophers for his close friendship with and influence on such diverse figures as Wittgenstein and Gramsci.

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TOWARD AN EMANCIPATORY SOCIAL SCIENCE

Lecture 3: On Holism, Historicism, and Perspectivism

I

So what do I hope to have accomplished in the first two lectures? In the first, I sought to take the measure of Hegelian Marxism. I think Joseph McCarney (a prominent contemporary Hegelian Marxist), along with some others, is right in arguing that Marx was, through and through, a Hegelian. With only minimal changes, Marx adopted Hegel's dialectical method, historicism and holism. Marx didn't, as he and Engels thought they did, stand Hegel on his head. Marx's methodology and much of his conceptualization is thoroughly Hegelian. McCarney's is one of the strongest attempts to deploy, without obscurantism, this distinctively Marxist and Hegelian method earlier expounded by Georg Lukács, but both attempts fail. History has no *telos* or goal and we do not know, and indeed cannot come to know, the universe's interconnected whole or totality. The very idea is an utter non-starter. Moreover, we need not know such a totality or even have a coherent conception of what we are talking about here, something that is supposedly necessary, adequately to know anything. There can be no purposiveness without purposes: purposes are things individual agents have (sometimes acting collectively) with beliefs, ends, intentions, and the like. The World Spirit, reason, or humanity cannot count as purpose or an agent, though individual agents (human beings), acting together and cooperatively, can act purposively to achieve some end. We can (*pace* Hegel) have causal explanations which are complete without taking in (comprehending) or indeed in any way grasping such a totality, let alone a *unified* totality. We have no coherent conception of what such a totality would be like and we, to add insult to injury, have no

conception of what it would be like for it to be so unified. Moreover, 'Absolute knowledge', even assuming the idea is somehow intelligible, is not available to us. Some people (or so these people say and believe) long for the Absolute, but that is pure self-mystification. They do not understand what they are longing for and the idea that in forging these things we must adjust ourselves to some form of epistemological skepticism, postmodern or otherwise, also has no warrant. That is another road not to be taken. Whatever the errors of logical empiricism may have been, it had the right ideas and the right attitude toward such matters. It took seriously the idea of the supremacy of evidence. We, however, can and do have knowledge without having Absolute knowledge, just as Rudolf Carnap showed long ago that we can have knowledge without having *certain* knowledge (Carnap 1949). We cannot and do not need to escape contingency and gain certainty. But we are no worse off for all of that. We, if we think otherwise, should take lessons from John Dewey here.

However, not all is dross that is McCarney. He is on target in his conceptualization of ideology. He is also an astute critic of the very idea of critical theory—the underlying idea that attracted many of us (including me once) to the Frankfurt school (Nielsen 1982; 1990; 1991a; 1991b; 1993a; 1993b; 1993c; 2003). Perhaps most interestingly of all, McCarney makes a strong case for what at first sounds like an oxymoron, namely, an emancipatory social science that is non-normative. There he builds on what has been called Hegel's and Marx's amorality. His argument is a controversial one, but he makes (as I tried to show in the first lecture) a strong case for it that deserves careful attention.

In the second lecture I argued on more controversial grounds for an emancipatory social science that *presupposes but does not contain norms*. I should add, qualifying my thesis, the *procedural* norms of scientific practices apart. But non-procedural substantive norms must be excluded from emancipatory social sciences. Indeed, they must be—or so I claim—if they are going to be sciences. This must be true of all sciences, emancipatory or not. So egalitarian norms (even radical egalitarian ones), along with all other substantive norms, should be excluded from science,

including Marxian emancipatory social science. This view, like McCarney's, builds on what has been called Marx's amorality, though it does not require it (Nielsen 1988; 1989).

This Marxian emancipatory social science, or so I argued, presupposes but does not contain a normative stance or viewpoint itself and is not reducible to a purely ethical or utopian socialism or to becoming (what Max Weber detested) a *political moralism*. It is an emancipatory social science and yet *does not, indeed cannot, endorse as part of its science a socialist moral theory or Weltanschauung or any moral claims*. It is a social science that is *explicitly normatively relevant without its science itself being normative*.

I expect this is something that will be strongly resisted in some quarters. Indeed, some will take it to involve a pragmatic contradiction. However, a morality or a normative ethical theory or normative political theory or politics is one thing; a science is something else. They are categorically distinct. Confusion, and sometimes worse, arises if we try to collapse them. But, as I have already advertised, a Marxian emancipatory social science presupposes a socialist normative orientation or *ethos*—I didn't say a theory—without this being a part of its science itself. That science is neither actually nor implicitly normative. (In that way we can, from another angle, see the strength of McCarney's claim while still quite consistently keeping a normative orientation. I don't think that McCarney would have disagreed with that.)

However, to stress again my central point, this emancipatory social science and the socialism it serves does not collapse into an ethical or utopian socialism, something firmly rejected by Marx, or commit itself to articulating a normative ethical theory or normative political theory or into being a political moralism (Nielsen 1988; 1989). Science is one thing and morality another. They are categorically distinct.

I argued this in the second lecture while characterizing and assessing analytical Marxism. I regard myself as an analytical Marxist or, as I prefer to say, an analytical Marxian, but as a maverick one much more sympathetic to a Davidson-like holism and a non-Hegelian historicism than are

most analytical Marxists. Unlike Richard Rorty, I would never call myself a neo-Hegelian (Rorty 2007, 129). I shall argue in this third lecture that we can and should take a holistic and historicist turn without sacrificing the rigor that analytical Marxists rightly prize and without abandoning the claimed, and indeed needed, scientificity of socialism (Levine 2003).

II

It is important to keep in mind that all four of the major analytical Marxists (Cohen, Elster, Roemer, and Wright) set themselves against historicism and holism and are methodological individualists. I shall, *au contraire*, articulate and defend here: (i) a form of non-Hegelian holistic Marxism, and (ii) a form of historicism and perspectivism. It should first be noted that the form of holism these paradigm analytical Marxists reject is a holistic dialectical obscurantism. It is something that goes with the Hegelian conception that I criticized in the first lecture and briefly repeated in Section I of this lecture. The holism I adopt is the kind that has been called, perhaps somewhat misleadingly, meaning or semantic holism, and *perhaps*, as I consider later, it is compatible with a methodological individualism that carefully distinguishes itself, as it should, from an *atomism*.

I shall first state and defend how I construe holism and then I shall move on to specify, explicate and defend the kind of historicist I am. In the course of doing this I shall attempt to give something of a justification of both holism and historicism.

I am as much opposed to Hegelian dialectical holism (sometimes called *radical* holism) as are Elster, *et al.* It is a holism that tends to be—indeed almost always is—obscurantist. Sometimes, as we have seen, it gets somewhat cleaned up but unfortunately still not thoroughly. My holism is what Andrew Levine has called a Quinean holism (Levine 2003). It has characteristically been called a meaning holism or semantic holism. Ned Block well defines it as “the doctrine that the identity of a belief content (or the meaning of a sentence that expresses it) is determined by its

place in the web of beliefs or sentences comprising a whole theory or group of theories” (Block 1996, 488). I would add, in order to make that characterization less rationalistic, that it has, and crucially, a set of practices so related. Such an addition leaves holism (as Block has just characterized it) “not clearly distinct from what has been called molecularism (a view which characterizes meaning and content in terms of relatively small parts of the web [of beliefs and sentences] in a way that allows many different theories [or sets of practices] to share those parts” (Block 1996, 488). ‘Holism’, however, has been given many different or partially different meanings (uses) and consists in many different kinds.

Methodological holism—a distinct species of holism—is a doctrine, like methodological individualism, concerning what is to count as a proper or at least a coherent *explanation*. It is not clear, for example, that one could not consistently be a meaning (semantic) holist and be a methodological individualist. Whether one reasonably or justifiably could is another matter. (We seek consistency, but that by itself does not yield adequacy.) But what it *is* to achieve reasonability or justifiability here is not clear. That aside, I doubt if many (indeed if any) analytical Marxists would reject meaning holism, but at least the most paradigmatic of them press the importance of being methodological individualists.

Should we, as good analytical Marxists, follow suit? Before we try to answer that, we should specify what we take methodological individualism to be. It has been, and still is, characterized in different ways. As Chandra Kumar points out, even Jon Elster (the analytical Marxist—by now a former analytical Marxist—most prominently concerned with arguing for methodological individualism) has in his numerous writings characterized it in several ways (Kumar 2008). However, Elster’s definition in his *Making Sense of Marx* gives a conception of methodological individualism that squares with what many conceive it to be. He defines it as “the doctrine that all social phenomena—their structure and their change—are in principle explicable in ways that only involve individuals—their properties, goals, beliefs, and actions. To go from social institutions and

aggregate patterns of behavior to individuals is the same kind of operation as going from cells to molecules” (Elster 1985, 5). However, Elster, as any Marxian or perhaps anyone else who has at all carefully thought about it, rejects atomism. Atomism rejects the notion that relations between individuals and, as well, social entities (classes, corporations, courts, etc.) are genuinely explanatory, claiming instead that all predicates properly applying to individuals are *monadic*. Atomists (but not methodological individualists) maintain, for example, that explanations of why capitalism tends to overproduction and crises or why, since 1975, inequalities have been growing is fully explained by causal processes internal (and completely so) to individuals. Levine, *et al.* remark:

The atomist would insist, in other words, that only entities which are fully constituted non-relationally are explanatory. On the face of it, atomism seems plainly unsustainable. In our everyday lives we exist within a network of relations to other people—as parents, siblings, employers, customers, and so on. These relations appear to be explanatory, and also, it would seem, irreducible: being a parent, for instance, necessarily involves another individual, the child (Levine *et al.*, 1987, 70).

Methodological individualism, which is often confused with atomism, shares with atomism the view “that social explanations are ultimately reduced to individual level explanations” (Levine, *et al.*, 1987, 71). But there is this important difference between them. Methodological individualists, as distinct from atomists, do not rule out or in any way reject irreducible relational properties from proper social scientific explanations or indeed the understanding of the lives of human beings. In giving social scientific explanations we often must go beyond just appealing to beliefs and desires of discrete individuals characterized by monadic predicates to inherently relational (dyadic) predicates. For many purposes, at least, appeal to relational predicates denoting relational properties of individuals is crucial, and indeed essential, to description and explanation. If we are to make in some contexts even remotely adequate descriptions and explanations, we must be able to speak of parents and children, brothers and sisters, employers and employees, teachers

and students, oppressors and oppressed, doctors and patients, and so on, though we should realize that some of these are society-specific. Some primitive societies, e.g., a hunting-gathering society, have no employers-and-employees or doctors-and-patients (though they may have *somewhat* functional equivalents). Modern societies will have no masters-and-serfs, though, again, they have its somewhat functional equivalents. We socialists hope that someday we will have a society—indeed a world—with no oppressors and oppressed or its functional equivalents. But we will never have a society without parents and children or at least something like it, as the short-lived experiment of the Shakers exemplified. The central point is that we will never have proper descriptions or explanations of social life and human behavior without the utilization of an appeal to relational properties which in being described must use dyadic predicates.

That notwithstanding, it is trivially true that among human beings there are only individual physical human beings; there are no supra-individual human beings or persons, though there are the super-rich. When asked to count the number of people in a room, we can identify and count them without appeal to such relational properties, though sometimes there are in the room some very tiny human beings (members of *homo sapiens*) as well as much bigger and talking ones holding them. We will typically then distinguish, appealing to relational properties, between parents and infant children. But even then we need not do it though even here we will have the dyadic distinction between big and small *homo sapiens*. If our concern is just to count the number of human beings in the room, we will count all such objects without differentiation between big and small or between talkers and non-talkers. Still, our descriptions and explanations of human life would be severely impoverished if we could not utilize relational properties in our explanations where those distinctions are relevant, as it often plainly is. If we tried to describe human life and proscribed relational properties, we would surely go very wrong. But methodological individualists, or at least those who do not *try* to equate methodological individualism with atomism, do not do this and such a justified criticism of atomism does not touch them.

Methodological individualists, where they are at all clear minded, appeal to relations between and among individuals and reject atomism as resolutely as do Hegelian Marxists (radical holists). As Levine, *et al.* well put it, “Nowhere does Elster (or any other Marxist defender of methodological individualism) claim that those relations are reducible to atomistic properties” (Levine, *et al.*, 1987, 71). There are, so far as what are *literally* designated as persons is concerned, only individual persons out there with relational and atomistic properties and with physical bodies (a pleonasm) of a somewhat distinctive type, e.g., big brained animals with opposable thumbs typically ambulatory and usually making patterned noises after they have reached a certain size. We are both social animals and, without exception, physical animals (another pleonasm). There is nothing here that either a reasonable holist or methodological individualist could not and should not accept. So what, then, is this dispute between methodological individualism and methodological holism about?

Perhaps, as some Wittgensteinians and neo-pragmatists think, the allegedly distinct views collapse into each other when both are plausibly articulated (Kumar 2008). We physical beings are also, as Aristotle emphasized, social animals. An adequate methodological individualism is indistinguishable from an adequate methodological holism. It is only *radical (Hegelian) holism and atomism* that get in the way and intellectually muck up things. The three most central writings on this are by Kumar (2008), Levine, *et al.* (1987) and Levin (2003). I shall build on them but also in an important respect go my own way.

What I have called, following convention, meaning (semantic) holism shouldn't be called that. Of four philosophical giants of our time—Quine, Davidson, Wittgenstein, and Rawls—three do not have a theory of meaning and two reject talk of meanings altogether, yet are what I, as well as Ned Block, have (again following convention) called ‘meaning holists’. I think all four of them should be called holists with respect to belief formation and fixation, explanation and justification. Two explicitly, and Wittgenstein implicitly, importantly qualify their holisms by rejecting what

Quine calls a coherence theory (better called a *pure* coherence theory). Quine qualifies it by appealing centrally to observation sentences which are rooted in what he calls (misleadingly) stimulus meanings. Taking these sentences holophrastically, they provide crucial links with the world, though not foundations. Most but not all positivists (i.e., Otto Neurath as an exception) speak of foundations and of relying on Quinean observation sentences when we are trying to fix belief or explain belief. These observation sentences to be coherent must fit in a coherent pattern with a web of belief. Without them, a web would be empty, but without a web these candidate observation sentences would be incoherent. But then the web could not constitute a web of belief (Nielsen 2008b). Rawls, in trying to get our beliefs into what he calls wide reflective equilibrium, appeals centrally to what he calls considered judgments in wide reflective equilibrium. These considered judgments have, according to Rawls, and I think correctly, some *initial* credibility. They are not just unreflected and unconsidered intuitions that just move us to action or intuitions which we must just accept on blind faith (Nielsen 2007; 2008a). They are *considered* judgments. Neither Quine nor Rawls are unqualified pure coherentists nor is Wittgenstein. (What also needs to be kept in mind is that Rawls rejects what he calls ‘rational intuitionism’, a view that Prichard, Ross and Sidgwick held; indeed G. A. Cohen has come to hold. Considered judgments should not be confused with that.)

However, getting a coherent pattern of beliefs, judgments and convictions is crucial. And this is so for all of the holistic philosophers I have mentioned. We determine the contents of a belief, explain beliefs, determine the use of a term or a sentence, justify a belief or a judgment, by determining its or their place in the web of beliefs, theories, sentences or practices, but not uniquely since the individual beliefs, convictions or judgments that we forge into coherence have *some* independent force as well. As Quine observed, our claims about the world are not confirmed or infirmed individually but only in conjunction with theories of which they are a part. For Rawls, we do not fully or even nearly so justify a moral belief individually but as being a part of the web of

our considered judgments at different levels of abstraction and our understanding of certain key relevant facts and theories about the world (Rawls 1999, 286-302; Nielsen 2008a, 219-52). (That is what distinguishes *wide* reflective equilibrium from *narrow* reflective equilibrium—something that G. A. Cohen misses in his critique of Rawls (Cohen 2008, 243).)

This holism is distinct from radical or Hegelian holism. Radical holism is the view that to be a genuine cause of anything it is necessary for it to be a macro-social category, to wit an institution like capitalism, a state, a government, the legal system, a class, a corporation, and the like. It believes like these, and they alone, according to radical holists, that do the real explaining. Particular relations among individuals are said by these Hegelian holists to be epiphenomenal with respect to social explanation. They are, as Levine, *et al.* put it in opposing them, “generated by the operation of the whole and in their own right they explain nothing” (Levine, *et al.*, 1987, 73). Moreover, to actually explain anything, according to these Hegelians, is to explain how it is part of the unified whole or the totality. We have seen in the first lecture how inadequate, indeed incoherent, such *radical* holism is. We must not identify meaning (semantic) holism with it.

This meaning holism is the kind of holism that I am defending, though, as I have indicated, I do not like the term. Both those taking a Quinean and a Rawlsian turn are such holists. In the conflict between Donald Davidson and Quine, though I am, with my old attachment to positivism, attracted by Quine’s appeal to observation sentences and to stimulus meanings—to what I, like Putnam, would call Quine’s empiricism but what Quine himself calls his naturalism. But I am also attracted (indeed more attracted) by Davidson’s counters. Still, I find myself unable firmly to decide which way to go there. But what is important for what I am arguing is that here in both cases we get what I have called semantic holism and certainly not a Hegelian, Althusserian or any other kind of holistic obscurantism.

What I do want to pursue a bit is whether one could reasonably be a *meaning or semantic holist and a methodological individualist*. Recall Elster’s definition of methodological individualism

“as the doctrine that social phenomena—their structure and change—are at least in principle explicable in ways that only involve individuals—their properties, their goals, their beliefs and actions” (Elster 1985, 5). Properties there include relational properties such as being a parent, employer, teacher, friend, enemy, oppressor, exploiter and these properties are irreducible. This makes individual humans, since they have such properties, irreducibly *social individuals*. With that, the distinction (or alleged distinction) between methodological individualism and methodological holism becomes more problematical. Also, there are such non-reducible concepts as corporations, religions, capitalism, classes and the like. There are, that is, some non-reducible social entities and there are irreducible *dyadic* relations such as friend or colleague. Moreover, there are social entities that do explanatory work. Think of Carl Schmidt’s distinction—a key distinction for him—between enemy and friend in state relations.

Could a meaning or semantic holist consistently and reasonably believe all genuine explanations must be in terms of individuals? Could she never coherently speak, for example, of class conflict or conflicts between states without speaking of the genuine explanatory elements being the behavior of individuals or assuming that for an explanation to be genuine it could at least *in principle* be put in terms of individuals? Of course she could, where it is just a question of just using shorthand for an explanation of what certain individuals would do. Suppose I say, ‘The Philosophy Department at Calgary voted for the new program.’ What I mean is that professors Jones, White, Petrovic, Walsh, and Major (members of the department) voted for the measure and that they outnumbered the professors (individually specifiable) who abstained or voted against the new program in what was agreed by all members of the department to be a decision to be made by straight majority vote. There are a lot of situations where a translation into the concrete yields such an individualist explanation. But perhaps not for all? And even in the above example non-monadic properties are appealed to, for example, ‘member of the department’. Moreover, suppose we say ‘With the coming depression there is increased fear, anxiety and anger in the population and

that will result in increasing class consciousness among working people and increasing conflict with capitalism'. I am not interested *here* in the truth or falsity of the just mentioned sentence, but I am interested in its meaning (use). We do not here have something like either an extensional or an intensional equivalence between that sentence and some individualistic paraphrase as in the department example. There is no specification of how many individuals among the population would have to be so affected before this would be said to obtain, i.e., to be true, anymore than we would have to be able to specify the *exact* number of individuals that were for Mubarak's ouster before we say that a considerable majority was for it. There is, as well, no specification of how many people would have to react in a certain way before we could say that class consciousness or class conflict obtained in a given society. Suppose I say, to take another example, 'Humanity would not tolerate torture' or 'Humanity believes that torture is an intolerable evil under all circumstances'. There, again, things are different. It is actual people who have those beliefs; it is people, not humanity, that find things tolerable or intolerable. Humanity or peoples are not something that think and believe. And it is individuals, and not classes, that are conscious. But are the above remarks about humanity or peoples thinking that torture is intolerable or not tolerating torture innocuous perfectly intelligible shorthands as well as is my remark about class consciousness, like my statement about the Philosophy Department votes, remarks that are something like an innocent counterpart of something that could be made in terms of talk of individuals? No, not exactly. We can't give either an extensional equivalence or an intentional one for the above examples as we can in the department example and it is just arm waving if we say that *in principle* we could. We need to give some indication at least of how this is possible. We can give polls as evidence or give graphic examples as evidence or (translating into the concrete) as at least exemplifications. But, it will be said, they could hardly be decisive enough; that there could be enough and sufficiently varied exemplifications or instantiations to count powerfully for the class claim or humanity claim, their useful metaphorical quality notwithstanding, to be a genuinely

plausible and to not be holistically obscurantist. But these examples could be telling expressions of what could have a potentially evidential political resonance. That is, they could be couched in genuine causal statements in what Elster metaphorically calls the nuts and bolts necessary for good causal explanations to be vindicable. They token the supremacy of evidence. No talk, however plausible, about what could have happened can trump evidence of what did happen. A plausible tale that Napoleon could have escaped St. Helena's will not override the evidence that he did not.

I am not saying that all good explanations are causal explanations or that all understanding, even scientific understanding, consists in the finding of causal explanations or that this is a *unique* aim of science or anything like that. I don't think that science has any *unique* aim. But I am claiming that: (i) the above claims about class, state and humanity are doing something that requires causal explanations for their vindication; (ii) causal explanations, often at least, require some causal *exemplifications*; (iii) if there is no movement in that direction, those types of explanations are suspect; and (iv) we are not going to get extensional or intensional equivalencies here yielding a reduction but exemplifications or instantiations. If they are sufficiently numerous and varied, they are enough for vindication, though (as always) a fallible one. Again, beware of the quest for certainty. (Point (iv) does not admit of a precise non-contextual explication but is none the worse for all that.)

III

In their section on anti-reductionism versus methodological individualism, Levine, *et al.* make the following claims. I shall examine their rationale and, where they leave us with questions, risk an answer.

1. The reductionist ambitions of MI cannot be realized.
2. Nonetheless, micro-foundations for macro-theory should be elaborated.

3. Defenders of MI take anti-reductionism to signify a commitment to *radical holism*. Defenders of radical holism regard MI to be atomistic.
4. MI is distinctive in maintaining that only relations of and between individuals can be *irreducibly* explanatory. Thus, MI denies that social categories themselves are ever irreducibly explanatory. [Thus, when we have an appeal to class, we have something that is not irreducibly explanatory.]
5. It is true, but trivially so, that if there were no people there would be no societies. This underwrites the claim by Levine, *et al.* that the methodological assumption that causal mechanisms or causal processes involving individuals are implicated in all social explanations that are genuinely explanatory.
6. The question is not whether individual levels of analysis can be eliminated but how they should be linked to macro-level social analyses.
7. Methodological individualism maintains that macro-level phenomena can always be reduced to their micro-level realizations, at least in principle. Anti-reductionism rejects this.
8. To understand why such a micro-reduction is not always possible, it is important to introduce the distinction between *tokens* and *types*. A particular token-event (the only kind of token-event there is—say, a particular strike at a particular Wal-Mart store—may be subsumed under a type but is not identified with it.
9. We might, however, get token-token reduction (reducing tokens to other tokens). A particular sit-down strike at a particular Wal-Mart at a particular time (i) may also be characterized and explained as (ii) an event in which Walmart employees occupied that Walmart store and refused to leave. Both (i) and (ii) describe, though somewhat differently, the same token event. They describe the same content.
10. The genuine problem is not with point 9, but concerns the reducibility of (i) macro-social *types* to micro-individual *types* and (ii) macro-social *types* to micro-individual *tokens*. Anti-reductionists argue that (i) is not in general possible and that (ii) is never possible. Why do they maintain those things? Are they justified in doing so? And why are these problems thought to be problems? Levine, *et al.* claim they are problems because science has explanatory possibilities beyond token-type explanations and showing how token-events warrant, though are not identical with, type explanations. Beyond, that is, why or how this of that organism survived or that firm survived we may want to explain what various objects or processes or some tokens have in common. What, for example, makes capitalism capitalism or socialism socialism or what makes workers class conscious or what is a revolutionary situation? It doesn't seem plausible to say these are either *how* questions or they are pseudo-questions. But do these questions commit us to *essentialism*? If they do, then are we not on the wrong track?

11. When the properties cited in answer to such questions supervene on properties at the micro-level, the explanations provided by the macro-theory will not even in principle be reducible to a given micro-account.

I shall specify what I take—I hope not dogmatically—to be the veridicality of these propositions, and where I take them to be controversial I will specify their controversiality for the assessment of methodological individualism. I will do this for the eleven propositions in order.

1. To be established and clarified in the conclusion.
2. To be explained in the section following this.
3. Both claims are plainly mistaken, indicating the falsity of both atomism and *radical* holism, both of which can and should be set aside.
4. A true and distinctive claim and a crucial way of characterizing such a claim.
5. What is claimed is true, indeed trivially so, and what it underwrites is plausible and indeed probably true.
6. True and crucial.
7. Anti-reductionism and anti-methodological individualism is warranted here. Moreover, the claim here is crucial. The question—a central one—is to see *why* this is so.
8. True.
9. True.
10. True, I believe, but controversially so.
11. True, I believe, but also controversially so.

Levine, *et al.* give a very astute explanation of why 9, 10, and 11 are true. Since I cannot improve on it, I will take the liberty of quoting it in full.

Methodological individualists are type-reductionists with respect to social phenomena. But to insist on type-reductions as an a priori methodological requirements is plainly unwarranted. The feasibility of type-reductions is an empirical question. It *could* be the case that type-reductions actually are possible in this domain. But they almost certainly are not. Type-reductions

would be possible if the relation between social phenomena and individual properties were like the relation between water and H₂O. But in so far as the relation of social facts to their micro-realizations is like the relation of mental states to brain states or like the relation of fitness to physical properties of morphology and physiology, type-reductionism will prove to be a fruitless quest.

Consider the fact that capitalist societies have strong tendencies towards economic growth. This property is explicable, in part, as a consequence of the competitive character of capitalist markets, which generate innovations and continual investments that, cumulatively, produce growth. This process, in turn, is explained by the survival of those firms which most effectively make profits in the market. Survival and profit-making, in this explanation, are similar to “fitness” in evolutionary biology. For each token instance of economic survival, we can identify a set of decisions made by individuals with particular beliefs, preferences, information and resources that explains why a particular firm survives. However, there need not be anything in common *at the micro-level* between the mechanisms that enable firm X to survive and the mechanisms that enable firms Y or Z to survive. X may survive because of the passivity of workers (enabling capitalists to introduce innovations without resistance); Y because of the ruthlessness of the owner; Z because of the scientific/technical rationality of the management team, and so on. The social-level explanation of growth in terms of the macro-processes of competitive market relations, therefore, can be realized by a vast array of possible micro-mechanisms. Accordingly, token reductionism is possible in this case, but type reductionism is not.

In short, the reductionist program of methodological individualism fails because science has explanatory projects beyond the explanation of token events. Besides asking why this organism or that firm survived, we also want to explain what various objects and processes have in common. When the properties cited in answer to such questions have multiple realizations at the micro-level, the explanations provided by the macro-theory will not, even in principle, be reducible to a micro-account (Levine, *et al.* 1992, 119-20).

It is said by Levine, *et al.* to be *in principle* possible to carry out the type-type reductions that methodological individualists want. But they also say this is cold comfort, as we have no idea at all what it would be like to do so. (How could we then know that it is in principle possible?) And as Levine, *et al.* also assert, it is almost certain that we cannot in fact do so. It, they add, is a fruitless quest (Levine, *et al.* 1992, 78). This talk seems to me confusing and overly problematic. How, for example, can we justifiably or even intelligibly say it is in principle possible if we have no idea at all what it would be like to do so? Isn't this mere arm waving?

The central reason for this skepticism concerning MI is rooted in recognition of the diverse explanatory projects that science has. I will fasten on two of them that have crucial relevance here. Sometimes we want to ask *how* questions. How, for example, was it possible in the recent (2008) recession for so many banks to fail so spectacularly? One answer is that they massively made risky loans that in turn could not be repaid. But we might not just want to know how it happened but *why* it happened. One possible answer is greed and the desire to make a fast buck on the part of officers, particularly the higher officers, of the banks. Both of these *may* be bad answers to both of their respective how-and-why operations. But they, or at least they seem to, illustrate both that and how these questions are distinct. Sometimes we may want to know how capitalism or socialism works or fails to work. We will, however, also want to know what socialism or capitalism is. We also might want to know why capitalism has persisted and why socialism failed in Russia and China and why it has persisted in Cuba. That is not the same as knowing how it failed or persisted. (We might want to say that in certain respects China is an incredible success story. But it isn't an incredible *socialist* success story for it has transformed itself into a corporate capitalism with lots of *laissez-faire* mechanisms.) We do not need to go—and should not go—essentialist here. We could rely on family resemblances. Or do what and why questions reduce to how questions? Is that implausible and too reductive? I think so. Sometimes we just want to know what capitalism is and what socialism is, and not just what are (if any) their 'mechanisms'—their nuts and bolts, their cogs and wheels, as Elster puts it metaphorically. We do not *just* want to know what causes or could cause (what brings about or could bring about) capitalism or socialism and how it works or could work. However, we want also to know what they are and why they either are or are not desirable and feasible. I do not deny for the feasibility question, and even for the desirability question, that how questions are relevant, but they do not reduce to that and they are not alone relevant to the why or that questions.

Even, to shift gears, if we adopt methodological individualism's own terminology and ways of conceptualizing things, it fails. It does not even begin to give us what could come to 'explanatory full coverage'. It is explanatorily enfeebled. We should not even adopt their talk of mechanisms, as Elster, Roemer and Cohen do. We should recognize that sometimes to explain or to have a scientific understanding is not to find a mechanism, though it sometimes is. Science doesn't *always* consist in having a reason for a mechanism and to apply it to all sciences is to talk of something that in some of them is not used at all or is infrequently used. And to speak of either macro-foundations or micro-foundations is not germane for such modest non-radical, non-Hegelian holists such as Quine, Davidson, or Rorty. It is a vocabulary, a conceptualization, for which they have no use. Setting things up in this way may very well lead socialists, Marxists and emancipatory social scientists (or just plain social scientists) into a lot of fruitless endeavors. They no more need it than a thorough going secularist needs or can accommodate the concepts of sin, redemption, and grace. (At most they could give some quasi-functional equivalents involving redefinitions.)

So if MI requires reductionism—the reduction, say, of macro-explanations to micro ones—MI is plainly a non-starter. Levine, *et al.* show that even if we play according to the rules of MI we cannot get such reductions. Even with Cohen's ideal of analysis we cannot get it. Chandra Kumar's article (the other cutting edge article in the debate about MI) points out that MI has meant many different things and, as we have seen, even Elster has characterized MI in many different and sometimes at least seemingly conflicting ways (Kumar 2008). But any characterization that tries in any way to reduce macro-social phenomena—talk of states, class, corporations, institutions, capitalism, socialism, religions, ethnic groups—to talk of individuals will fail. It is not only atomism and radical holism that fail but methodological individualism as well. Moreover, the very distinction between MI and MH is unclear.

Kumar, however, surprisingly speaks of non-reductionist methodological individualism (Kumar 2008). If that very problematic notion is admitted and not treated as an oxymoron, as it

would be by most methodological individualists *and* critics of methodological individualism (and certainly by Levine, *et al.* as well as by Elster who ends up saying that to explain is to provide a mechanism), then we need another argument against what is now being conceived as methodological individualism to decisively refute MI or to show a way that the dispute between MI and MH is now being so ill conceived that we should ignore it. That argument would show that anti-reductionism (at least here) is vindicated and here it is indeed the only game in town. (Something that Levine, *et al.*, Kumar and I all believe but not exactly for the same reasons.)

What I want to establish, *assuming* that MI is a reductionist view, is that, in spite of MI (so conceived) being false, as sometimes construed by Elster (as we have seen) and followed by Roemer and Cohen, on to something important, even though it is mistakenly taken to establish or even render MI plausible as Levine, *et al.* (following one of Elster's characterizations) characterize it.

What, then, is this 'rational kernel' of methodological individualism? What should be kept from it after it, as construed above, has been rejected? It comes to this: without any reduction. Individual properties can sometimes help explain social properties and vindicate their not being illusory properties. Is it not the case, to use conventional terminology, that micro-level analyses are *sometimes* importantly relevant to macro-theory? How (if it is) is this so? It is sometimes, for some purposes, important for claims at the macro-level to gain a micro-analysis specifying causal pathways to macro-accounts. Empirical conditions must be specifiable to give confirmation or infirmation to macro-theories or to macro law-like empirical generalizations or what has been called 'accidental generalizations' (e.g., 'All the books in her library are in English'). This need not be a statement-by-statement confirmation or infirmation. Quine has shown us that such a matching of each statement with a statement of the conditions of its verification is often not possible. But if the practices in question are to count as genuinely scientific ones, there must be causal links of individually specific sorts to the practices. *To be scientific practices they must not be without*

evidential warrant (Nielsen 2008b). It does not mean that each specific macro-statement must be verifiable (confirmable or infirmable) but that the system as a whole must admit of recognizable causal links—that *some statements must be verifiable (confirmable and infirmable)*. Without that, a system of thought would not be scientific. It would be, like radical holism, crucially untestable. Scientific practices must have evidential vindication.

Something like this was Quine's advance over Carnap and Hempel, even at their verificationist last and most sophisticated stage. Suppose I say 'A long and severe depression will give rise to a revolutionary situation'. I am dealing in types here. I am asserting that a certain category (a revolutionary situation) will, under certain conditions, probably come into existence. When I make a claim like that it is not like asserting that 'There is water on Mars' is a testable claim. We do not, with 'revolutionary situation' get any single thing like H₂O molecules for water. This is so because with a revolutionary situation we do not get a reduction. But we do get, though only if *some* directly individually observable things obtain, scientific warrant for the claim. We get truth-conditions or at least assertability-conditions. That is, we require certain distinctive token-events. But there could for similar situations where different token-events could yield evidence for there being in a revolutionary situation. It is not like one thing, namely H₂O molecules, that establishes that there is the substance water. There are different things that count as evidence for there being a revolutionary situation. But *some* such of these conditions must obtain for there to be warrant for there being a revolutionary situation. If, for example, militant sit-down strikes occur in Moscow, Montreal, Rome, Shanghai, Stockholm, Paris, Berlin, New York, and London, that the military in all those places are mutinying and the governments in all the countries with these towns have lost control of the effective means of repression, we have with such token-events evidence, indeed good evidence, for our being in a revolutionary situation. These are not the only indicators or even the necessary ones that will indicate that a revolutionary situation obtains but they are indicative of a revolutionary situation. There are no necessary and sufficient conditions that will give material

equivalents as we have between water and H₂O. There are a myriad of quite different things—different causal processes—which can indicate, exemplify, or instantiate that a revolutionary situation is occurring, but there is no reduction of revolutionary situation to all or even any of these exemplifying things. But without even the plausible possibility of *some* varied specific evidential things (token-events), there is no warrant, or perhaps even intelligibility, for speaking of a revolutionary situation or the obtaining of any other social type of explanation.

This allows Kumar to speak of a non-reductionist methodological individualism, but that could just as well be expressed as token-event evidence for a type, namely, methodological holism. This, in any event, could be called, though misleadingly and indeed mistakenly, methodological individualism. But while it refutes radical holism, it is equally compatible with an anti-reductionism or, as Levine shows in another writing, such a rational kernel is equally compatible with a Quinean semantic holism (Levine 2003). Thus it does not establish methodological individualism or even make it more plausible than such a Quinean holism. And, as we shall argue when we return in more detail to our discussion of Kumar, there are independent reasons for favoring such a non-radical, non-Hegelian holism. To summarize: We can get type-type reductions and token-token reductions but not type-token reductions. But we can, and usefully, get type-token *exemplifications* or *instantiations*, though they will be many and varied, but still crucial for they yield a way, and a vital one, of distinguishing science from mere speculation. They do this by showing how scientific systems or practices must be at least holophrastically be confirmable or infirmable.

IV

As I have indicated, I believe that Levine, *et al.* and Kumar are the major players in the current state of the holism/methodological individualism dispute—a dispute which I hope is dwindling away. Kumar's account comes later than Levine, *et al.*'s (2008 as distinct from 1992).

But things often move slowly in philosophical discussion. Kumar acknowledges the importance of Levine, *et al.* and makes some crucial points similar to theirs, but articulates important considerations which hopefully bring the dispute between MH and MI towards termination and opens up distinct vistas which are indicative of something of a way in which an analytical Marxism could prosper which departs from orthodox analytical Marxism (Roemer, Cohen, Elster, and Wright) while still retaining (and happily) an analytical spirit, though with a distinctively pragmatist twist. It is a turn which is my own as well, though I have not in the past applied it to the MI/MH dispute. I shall specify and critically discuss some of these themes. But first I shall point to what on the surface at least is an important difference between Levine, *et al.* and Kumar which, I *suspect*, is a difference that, when carefully inspected, turns out to be one which makes no difference and thus should be ignored by pragmatists and, I think, should be ignored by everyone. Levine, *et al.* wants to *resolve* the dispute between methodological individualism and holism by resolving it in favor of anti-reductionism which for them is a modest, broadly Quinean holism. Kumar, in a good Wittengensteinian and neo-pragmatist spirit, wants to *dissolve* it: to show it is a spurious problem—what used to be called by the logical positivists a pseudo-problem. When, according to Kumar, either MI or MH get stated with adequacy, they collapse into each other. There is then nothing left here to dispute about. The dispute dissolves like sugar in water, to use Wittengenstein’s analogy. I am often, indeed typically, partial to such dissolution claims in philosophy. And even Levine sometimes talks this way as well. It seems to me true of the realism/anti-realism dispute, the compatibilism/hard determinism dispute, and the mind/body dispute. And, as Levine, *et al.* and Kumar note, there is a similarity between the mind/body problem (pseudo-problem?) and the MI/MH problem (pseudo-problem?).

However, the rational kernel point tends to point in favor of the resolution view rather than the dissolution view. The non-reducibility of any form of MH to MI shows that MH: (1) cannot be reduced to MI; (2) achieves things that MI cannot achieve but wants to; and (3) is inescapable. Even

with all this accepted, the rational kernel point reveals there is still something in MI, though mistakenly expressed, which is important—the thing it wants to achieve but cannot, namely a theory which is both testable *and* social. This *seems*, at least, to count towards the resolution rather than the dissolution view. Or again perhaps there is no pragmatic difference and thus, as we pragmatists say, no real difference. Be that as it may, the strong, basically Davidsonian, points made by Kumar for meaning (semantic) holism (points that I shall return to), to the contrary notwithstanding, the ‘rational kernel’ argument shows that all is not dross that is methodological individualism while Davidson’s meaning holism arguments still show MI’s strict falsehood. This seems, at least, to count for the resolution view, though Kumar reasonably thinks otherwise. *Perhaps* ‘resolution/dissolution’ is much ado about nothing? (Wittgenstein speaks in both ways.) This seems to be so particularly when it is kept in mind that the rational kernel point, justified though it may be, is perfectly compatible with anti-reductionism and the rejection of an MI that seeks a reduction along with the claim, though seemingly non-acceptable to Kumar, that a ‘methodological individualism’ that is non-reductive is a contradiction or an incoherency.

Where it seems to me we stand—or should stand—is with a *meaning holism* that is also a methodological holism which accepts the rational kernel claim and still takes it that all forms of methodological individualism (by definition, if you will) must be reductive. But one can, and should, be a meaning holist and a methodological holist while still accepting the rational kernel argument—an argument which does not require reductionism and is not properly characterized as individualist, but reveals what is valuable in methodological individualism though mistakenly put by it. Does this count as a vindication of meaning-cum-methodological holism or does it count as a dissolution of the whole problematic? I remain ambivalent and yet I guess and reasonably hope with Kumar that it counts for a dissolution view. In any event, at least the alleged importance of the problem or so-called problem of MH versus MI is greatly diminished. It doesn’t call for the passion

invested in it by, on the one hand, Hayek and Popper, and, on the other hand, Cohen and Elster. The whole dispute, as Rorty might put it, seems to engender terminal dreariness.

Before we conclude it is more much ado about nothing, should we not reflect that when we go through all the to-and-fro here we end up, with both Levine, *et al.* and Kumar, with a conceptual terrain having been considerably cleared up. However, without concluding it is much ado about nothing, we still might conclude that for us Marxists or otherwise socialists, it was love's labor lost. We Marxists and socialists (they need not be the same, as they are not, for example, for Chomsky and Chavez or historically for Michel Bakunin) could have better spent our time. I shall in my penultimate lecture turn to suggestions about how we on the Left (Left intellectuals, if you will) should spend our time while benignly neglecting such issues. Here (in lecture three) I return to Kumar's arguments for taking a meaning holist cum anti-reductionist stance (I think they fit like hand and glove) and then move on to my characterization and defense of historicism. I shall argue that holism and historicism have an affinity. But still one can consistently be a holist without being a historicist. Quine, for example, was a holist, but he certainly was not a historicist and ditto for Davidson. What holism and historicism, articulated in hopefully perspicuous and persuasive forms, should provide here is what a Marxian, wishing to travel *philosophically* light, but still in some way philosophical, needs by way of an intellectual or conceptual orientation.

However, to return to Kumar, his abstract sets out the bare bones of what he argues. It reads as follows:

The debates of the 1980s and 1990s on methodological individualism versus methodological holism have not been adequately resolved. Within analytical Marxism, G. A. Cohen, John Roemer, Jon Elster and others have come down in favour of methodological individualism as part of the effort to make analytical Marxism more 'scientific' and 'rigorous' than earlier versions of Marxism. In doing so they have presented methodological individualism as a necessary ingredient in ridding Marxism of obscurantism. This view is here challenged from a pragmatist philosophical perspective. It is argued that, from such a perspective, the debates between the individualists and holists should have been dissolved rather than resolved in favour of the individualists. It is suggested that such dissolution would even strengthen

analytical Marxism by redirecting analytical energies towards real social and political problems in the contemporary world and away from endless methodological debate (Kumar 2008, 185).

Kumar argues for the viability of meaning holism, anti-reductionism and methodological holism as do Levine, *et al.* but, in contrast to them, in a way that encompasses important points that methodological individualists argue for, Kumar shows that these views can be coherently held and put together without going methodological individualist. Kumar argues as follows:

1. Marxism does not need to be grounded—indeed, should not and could not be grounded—in MI. Yet MI, though mistaken, is a theory about what counts as an acceptable, properly formed scientific form of explanation in the social sciences (Kumar 2008, 188). It is a theory which asserts that all social theories, where genuinely scientific, refer only to individuals or must be reducible, at least in principle, to theories which refer only to individuals. But this bit of theorizing, though seductive, Kumar claims as have I, is still mistaken.

2. Kumar thus rejects Cohen's claim that we must represent "molar entities [macro entities] (such as quantities of gas or economic structures) as are arrangements of their more fundamental constituents" (Cohen 2000, xxiii-iv). "Analysis," as Kumar puts it, "in the narrow sense [a sense embraced with enthusiasm by Cohen]...obliges the theorist to 'represent' macro-level social realities like 'economic structure', 'class conflict', 'global capitalism', 'the state system' and so on, in terms of their 'more foundational constituents' *assumed to be individuals*" (Kumar 2008, 190). In the context of Marx's theory of history, Cohen says, "to claim that capitalism must break down and give way to socialism is not yet to show how behaviors of individuals lead to that result. And nothing else leads to that result *since behaviours of individuals are always where the action is, in the final analysis*" (quoted in Kumar 2008, 190; italics mine). But there is no non-contextual perspectiveless 'final analysis'. What is the 'final analysis', where one's spade is turned, in one context or practice is the beginning in another. What will be the 'final analysis' depends on what we are looking for, what is at issue, what assumptions we make, what we want to or feel a need to

explain or understand, and the purposes (*including different scientific purposes*) we have, that is to say, our perspective. Just as there is, except for certain purposes, no ‘in the final analysis’, except contextually and contingently, when for certain purposes or just out of exhaustion an examination temporarily comes to an end, there is no last word, full stop. That is more of the illusory quest for the Absolute and the non-contingent.

3. Be that as it may, can’t we get—don’t we actually have—empirical laws (scientific laws), sustaining counterfactuals, that are essential for much of social science and certainly for Marxian social science? Don’t we sometimes get them, even over big issues, by attending to intentions and similar type beliefs and to the desires of individuals—something that cannot be captured extensionally by extensionally-oriented physicalists? However, aren’t there sometimes matters that can adequately be characterized only by monadic predicates applicable to individuals? Could not persons be, for the purposes of setting out such laws, *only so characterized*, where what we are interested in getting are causal laws that would be the equivalent of the nuts and bolts, the cogs and wheels, that are the causal processes that show how macro-level phenomena work through the agency of individuals? But why must they, or should they, be characterized only in monadic predicates? Why not dyadic predicates as well? As far as I can ascertain, there is no reason to make such a restrictive claim. But that is not to ditch methodological individualism properly distinguished from an atomism.

However, stress on referring to individuals somewhere along the line in carrying out a confirmation/infirmation, whether described in monadic or dyadic predicates, is not a reduction. But, as I have gestured at, it might indicate the existence of a rational kernel that leads us to go in that way individualistic. Our, that is, testability claims—something that is crucial for science—are at least often individualistic. We seem to be led to say with Cohen that that is where the action is. (I think Cohen is giving us to understand that is not only where the action is, but that is also where it *must* be, at least if we would be rational.) But still we do not have here an MI reduction and there is

no one place where the action must be that will clinch our claims. As context and our purposes differ, so that is where the action is differs. Sometimes it is individuals, sometimes it is not. Sometimes we speak of class actions, sometimes of individual actions.

However, that aside, Kumar effectively deploys a Davidsonian argument to undermine a defense of MI. The attribution of a belief (intentional or otherwise) requires that we are able to verbalize it in a sentence. If, to use Kumar's example, I attribute to someone a belief that she is underpaid by her employer, in doing so I am automatically and unavoidably attributing to her a host of further beliefs, namely, "that there are employers and employees, that there is an employer-employee relationship, that employees are paid by their employers, that there are standards of payment such that one can be underpaid, and so on indefinitely" (Kumar 2008, 198). I can't just attribute that one belief to her without attributing many, many other beliefs. This way, we get a web of belief. We either get what Levine calls Quinean holism or its country cousin, molecularism. To recognize someone as a language user, I must be able to attribute such beliefs to her. Even to understand her, we must share some language together—some unavoidably public language. Furthermore, to understand her as a language user I must understand that she is a person and with that understand something of what it is to be a person. A language user could not just be a machine, even a machine making the correct patterned noises.

People, of course, can, and often do, have differences of belief and different wants and needs, but they have these only against a broad background of shared belief, interpretation and understanding. Without that we could not even come to disagree or even have beliefs. Beliefs, not even intentional ones, cannot be just in the head and language cannot be private, though with our having a language we might be able to work out a *contingently* private code that would be hard but not impossible to crack.

Moreover, in attributing a particular belief to someone we holistically and automatically attribute many more related beliefs to that belief and to her—"related by our own standards of

inference" (Kumar 2008, 198, italics mine). We cannot attribute beliefs and desires to someone without having a language that we share, though it need not be the same native language. But there must be a language that we in some degree share. So any language, as both Davidson and Wittgenstein stress, is necessarily a shared public language, at least shared by some language users and in principle at least shareable by all language users. "*Meanings in that way are as social as can be*" (Kumar 2008, 197). To have a belief, want or intention—any belief, want or intention at all—is to have something which is language dependent (public language dependent, to be pleonastic). *In that way* there are no private beliefs or understandings. To understand something or to have a belief or intention or want at all, is to have something which is language dependent and thus social or publicly interpersonal. "Individuals [persons] are physically separate from each other but our thoughts and desires have an ineliminably social character" (Kumar 2008, 197). This is true of intentions as much as any other type of belief. So the above defense of MI fails.

4. However, that is not the end of the story. Relatedly to the above, we should recognize that the very contrast between methodological individualism and methodological holism is problematic. Here Kumar's spin on neo-pragmatism, indebted as it is to Rorty's way of putting it, is very evident (Rorty 2007, 89-104; Nielsen 2005; 2007). It also has its roots in John Dewey. People who have deep metaphysical urges such as Rajeiv Bharghasa over these issues will be dissatisfied, but, I think, controversially of course, that those neo-pragmatists along with Wittgenstein (though without his anguish) and some Wittgensteinians are right in setting these metaphysical issues aside as something we have good reason to say adieu to (Bharghasa 1998; Rorty 2007). In any event, Kumar briefly here gives us some persuasive claims for not turning or trying to turn these matters into 'profound' ontological problems.

[T]he very contrast between individualism and holism is problematic. Suppose we say that individuals are the 'fundamental constituents' of society: society only exists insofar as individuals do. But conversely, individuals are social beings, members of societies. Should we then say that society is the 'fundamental reality' from which individuals emerge? If this is

regarded as an absurd way of speaking, why is it any more absurd than the claim about individuals being more 'fundamental'? Do we have any useful or plausible idea of what a human 'individual' is that is not an idea of a social being, always related to, associated with, interacting with or having interacted with, other individuals? From a pragmatist perspective, the whole idea of getting clear on what is *ontologically* more fundamental, the individual or the social (or collectivity), is a bad one. In some contexts, for some purposes, it is better to focus on individuals; in other contexts, for other purposes, it may be more useful to talk about institutions, social structures or groups. Why think that one of these ways of talking better represents social reality 'as it really is' than the other? If, as pragmatists stress, language is not a medium for representing the intrinsically real, but simply one more important capacity humans have evolved that helps us to cope with our environments and our lives, then to ask which vocabulary is more fundamental in the sense that it represents reality apart from any interests, needs or purposes that we may have, is to ask a bad, fruitless question. For a pragmatist, the question whether the individual or the social is more fundamental should itself be questioned: It should always be asked, 'more fundamental in what sense, in which context and for which purposes?' (Kumar 2008, 191-92).

However, pragmatism aside, Kumar gives some further arguments that have *some* overlap with Levine, *et al.*'s claims. Kumar remarks that methodological individualism encourages us to look for micro-foundations at the 'level of the individual'. But all human individuals are social individuals (social beings, social animals). To identify a human being as a being with beliefs, intentions, desires, thoughts, we must identify and take into account his social relations with other social individuals. There are, to repeat, only individual persons out there. But these individual persons are inescapably and ineluctably social beings. We do not identify a person by simply observing a moving patterned noise-making physical object, but also, and fundamentally, we identify a person as a social being who has relations with others persons with intentions, beliefs and desires which (or *at least* most of which) are social (dependent on socialization and enculturation).

There are no bodiless persons or supra-bodily persons (whatever that means), but likewise there are no persons who are not social animals having relations with and to each other. A person must, for example, have or have had a mother and a father. Persons, of course, are such macro-

objects from *some* perspectives and for *some* purposes, but we are never just macro-objects (just discrete members of the class of spatio-temporal objects of medium size).

5. The very distinction between macro and micro is context and purpose dependent as is going from the complex to the simple. By contrast, Elster and Cohen contend there is something not-context and non-purpose dependent, namely going from the complex to the simple. Elster and Cohen urge that analysis should reveal this. (There are shades here of Locke and logical atomism.) But they ignore the fact, or at least the very plausible claim, that these matters—distinguishing the macro and the micro and going from the complex to the simple—are context and investigative purpose dependent. The fundamental micro-constituents as well as what is taken to be a macro-constituent are not the same for economics as it is for psychology or again for chemistry as it is for physics. Moreover, the fundamental constituents for all inquiries, sometimes even in the same domain or discipline, at all levels, is not the same. Everything here is time, context and purpose dependent. Here we see the importance of perspectivism.

Science apart, if we are asked, without a context and without a distinct purpose in mind, to count the number of objects in a room, we cannot do it—indeed even begin to do it. Does a speck of dust count as an object? What about a microbe, a scrap of paper on the floor, a marble left by a child? Macro/micro is a discipline, practice and purpose relative distinction.

6. The strongest version of MI is the notion that any legitimate social explanation can in principle [at least] be reduced to explanations of the characteristics of individuals (individual persons). If it is not so reducible (at least in principle) methodological individualism so construed has been refuted. But, as we have seen, individual persons cannot be atomistically construed. Individual persons here have dyadic predicates applied to them. They are fathers, husbands, employers, slaves, maids, dominated or dominating, old or young, and the like. They are not (in the relevant sense) non-social persons. All individual persons, unlike all pebbles on a beach or microbes under a microscope, are social individuals. The very way we identify someone as a

person is to identify her as a social or potentially social individual (very young babies). This refutes methodological individualism. It refutes it either when we characterize it as Elster does where individuals have social relations or when we try to deny that they do. The latter alternative yields something that is plainly false. The former alternative yields something in which MI (as Elster and many others characterize it) collapses into MH or, if you will, MH becomes identical with MI. Terminal dreariness seems at least to be upon us.

V

A second way in which I am a maverick analytical Marxist is in my *historicism*. My historicism is a *minimal* historicism indebted primarily to the somewhat different accounts of historicism given and defended by Isaiah Berlin and Richard Rorty. Historicism, I shall acknowledge, has been understood in many different ways. In preparing for this third lecture, I visited, and in some instances revisited, the classical literature on historicism as well as some contemporary versions. Probably not unsurprisingly, I found myself half wishing that I had never called my views 'historicist'. While finding many of these views insightful, there are many things I disagree with or find problematic in the views of the paradigmatic classical historicists: Giambattista Vico, Johann Gottfried Herder, Ernst Troeltsch, Frederick Meinecke, and Benedetto Croce as well as some contemporary Continental philosophers, namely Hans Georg Gadamer, Gianni Vattimo and Santiago Zabala. I shall, for the most part, put their views aside and stick with my minimal *somewhat* stipulative characterization—perhaps better called a reformist characterization—which I will seek to elucidate and defend. But I do not want to give to understand that I have not in my views been influenced by classical historicists and their contemporary Continentals so that between my views and theirs there is only the name in common. Rather, I take myself, perhaps too stipulatively but I hope not arbitrarily, as defending what I take to be the rational kernel of such views.

Rorty characterizes historicism as “the idea that our philosophical vocabularies and problematics are attempts to deal with contingent historical circumstances rather than ‘perennial’ or ‘basic’ ones” (Rorty 2006, 152). [I would delete ‘philosophical’ in the above statement and replace it with ‘our most significant social and/or political vocabularies’. That is vague but, as I conjecture Rorty would agree, not all so affected vocabularies or problematics are even in the *weakest* sense philosophical, even in Wilfred Sellars’s sense of little *p* philosophy (Rorty 1982, xiv-xviii).

Berlin claims, as Rorty emphasizes too, that historicists “hold that human thought and action are fully intelligible only in relation to their historical context...” (Berlin 1991, 77). Both claim that *we can gain no substantial standpoint or perch that is history-transcendent enabling us to explain, understand and assess things in a way which is not time and place dependent. We can gain no such standpoint or viewpoint about any significant substantial social matter.* That can be nothing more than a philosopher’s or theologian’s dream—something that many people want but no one can get. This squares with but is not entailed by some standard dictionary definitions of ‘historicism’ as the theory that social phenomena are determined by history and the tendency to regard historical change, development and contingency as the most basic aspects of human existence.

Historicism is often thought to be a relativist or at least a historical relativist view. Both Berlin and Rorty deny that this is so. That we can’t in any significant way overleap history or gain an understanding, let alone a critical perch, that is not historically dependent doesn’t mean or entail or require what relativists, or at least extreme relativists, maintain, namely, “that every view is as good as every other. It [historicism] doesn’t mean that everything now is arbitrary or a matter of the will to power or something like that” (Rorty 2006, 126). Such relativist views, as Rorty rightly maintains, are absurd and historicism does not assert, entail or imply anything like that. A historicist need not be a nihilist *pace* Vattimo and Zabala (Vattimo 2010; Zabala 2009). (I should

add, however, that what is more properly characterized as ‘relativism’, particularly as historical relativism, is not as absurd as the conception of relativism that I have just characterized.)

Berlin denies that historicism implies even, what is a more reasonable relativist view, namely a historical or cultural relativism. The *alleged* relativism of Vico and Herder, paradigmatic and founding historicists, Berlin contends, is not what he calls a ‘true relativism’ (Berlin 1991, 77). A ‘true relativism’, on Berlin’s reading, is a view that is not of an 18th century vintage (Vico’s and Herder’s time) but one of a 19th century vintage. It is the view that men’s outlooks are unavoidably determined by forces of which they are often unaware (Berlin 1991, 78). It is indeed often extremely difficult to even fleetingly become aware of and take to heart how our outlooks are so determined—or perhaps we should say instead conditioned. It is very difficult to change them or gain an ideology-free outlook. However, Vico and Herder, as much as philosophers of the Enlightenment, believed not only “that passions and ‘interest’ could unconsciously mold values and entire outlooks, but they also believed that critical reason could dissipate this and remove obstacles to objective knowledge both of fact and value” (Berlin 1991, 78). Contemporary forms of relativism, setting aside its silly form (a form that, as we have seen, Rorty rightly rejects as just silly (Rorty 2006, 126), have come to have a different character than anything Vico or Herder recognized, let alone thought to be valid, namely, the view which *after* their time came to be known as a relativist view, to wit (1) the view that we are caught in incommensurable discourses or social practices that we cannot transcend and (2) the view that no social discourse or practice or set of practices has epistemological, ontological privilege or moral or normative political superiority to or over any other. A view or practice or set of practices is instead no more than a product or products of their time and place. We cannot non-question-beggingly and non-ethnocentrically critically assess the viability of any of these activities, though with a careful concrete, imaginative and empathetic understanding gained by placing ourselves either actually or with a sympathetic imagination into the life of these other outlooks, we can come to understand them (Croce 1921;

Collingwood 1946). But even with this we cannot stand back and critically claim superior cogency for any one of them except ethnocentrically and question-beggingly and thus illegitimately. We have no such ahistorical Archimedean point, though we have many such in good faith unwitting pretenders. We have, and can have, no culturally transcendent perch from which to make such assessments or such a critique. There is no 'standpoint of the universe', no 'view from nowhere', by which we can do it.

This historical and cultural relativism, as we have seen, is foreign to both Vico and Herder (Berlin 1991, 78-90). They, like the classical figures of the Enlightenment, thought there were viewpoints from which we could not only understand but could come to clearly and objectively assess and critique these distinct viewpoints, distinct *Weltanschauungen*, and ascertain whether or not they were mistaken. Vico and Herder did not differ from the classical Enlightenment in thinking that we could objectively assess such viewpoints, but they differed from them over *how* we could do it. They, that is, did not differ from them in the belief *that* we could do it, but over *how* we could do it. For Vico and Herder it required, in a way d'Holbach and Condorcet never dreamed of, empathetic understanding, what later came to be called *versthen*.

Later actual historical relativists and the kind of minimal historicists I am defending had or have the kind of skepticism—sometimes a thorough skepticism—concerning an 'absolute perspective' or an 'ahistorical perch' that could comprehend all that classical Enlightenment figures such as d'Holbach and Condorcet thought they had and, somewhat differently, Kant thought he had, and still more differently Hegel thought he had. These 'minimal historicists' usually thought with the classical historicists (Vico and Herder) that peoples have their distinctive viewpoints and that we can only understand other viewpoints by imaginatively and concretely entering (so to speak) the world—the *Weltanschauung*—of these other peoples—people of other times or places. But, though I am inclined to think any historicist (minimal or otherwise) should so reason, the minimal historicism that I am committed to need not accept this last claim. Such a historicist need only

claim that we cannot significantly overleap history, that we cannot get in a significant way a history-transcendent point of view. Peoples have their distinctive viewpoints and we cannot in some ahistorical manner just view matters in an utterly ahistorical way. There can be no 'point of view of the universe' (Sidgwick) or 'view from nowhere' (Nagel). We need not claim that one viewpoint is as good as another but only that we can be in no position to gain the kind of absolute perspective necessary to make such critical judgments. Historicists believe that unless we can gain some reasonably detailed and concrete understanding of other times and climes, we shall be locked in our own cultures with an ethnocentric and parochial view of the world. Berlin remarks:

Unless we succeed in doing this we shall not understand what these earlier men lived by, spiritually as well as materially. They [Vico and Herder] are not telling us that the values of these societies, dissimilar to ours, cast doubts on the objectivity of our own, or are undermined by them, because the existence of conflicting values or incompatible outlooks must mean that at most only one of these is valid, the rest being false; or, alternatively, that none belong to the kind of judgements that can be considered either valid or invalid. Rather, they are inviting us to look at societies different from our own, the ultimate values of which we can perceive to be wholly understandable ends of life for men who are different, indeed, from us, but human beings, *semblables*, into whose circumstances we can, by a great effort which we are commanded to make, find a way, 'enter', to use Vico's term. We are urged to look upon life as affording a plurality of values, equally genuine, equally ultimate, above all equally objective; incapable, therefore, of being ordered in a timeless hierarchy, or judged in terms of some one absolute standard. There is a finite variety of values and attitudes, some of which one society, some another, have made their own, attitudes and values which members of other societies may admire or condemn (in the light of their own value-systems) but can always, if they are sufficiently imaginative and try hard enough, contrive to understand—that is, see to be intelligible ends of life for human beings situated as these men were (Berlin 1991, 79).

This is a historicist view certainly but it is also *pluralist*, not historical relativist. Berlin asserts that while "there are many objective ends, ultimate values, some incompatible with others, pursued by different societies at various times...but their variety cannot be unlimited for the nature of men, however various and subject to change, must possess some generic character if they are to be called human at all" (Berlin 1991, 86).

A thorough going relativism—what Berlin calls a ‘true relativism’—would not acknowledge this. A ‘true relativist’ would claim variability all the way down and that we can make no utterly trans-culturally or trans-historically critical judgments that have any significantly substantive bite. However, Berlin maintains we can and must, if we would be fully rational, recognize a universal substantial bite about certain claims about human nature, claims that any rational being much accept to be rational. Both Vico and Herder and the classical Enlightenment figures claimed, and Berlin claims rightly, that this universality obtains.

A minimal historicism, however, is concerned to claim that knowledge of human affairs has an irreducibly historical character and that there can be no ahistorical perspective yielding an adequate understanding of human nature and society. It need not deny that all historical perspectives are constrained by non-historical features, e.g., that humans are mortal, that humans have distinctive sexual drives, drives that all normal human beings have, drives that are of a permanent and non-cyclical type contrasting with the cyclical drives of other animals. Compare dogs here with human beings. Moreover, human beings are unique in being language users, that they alone have a sense, though often rudimentary, of history: they are unique in making historical narratives about themselves as determinate cultural beings. Some of these claims may be false; *perhaps* (for example) some other animals have the rudiments of language, but, if true, as these claims at least appear to be, they are non-historical claims that attain for all human beings or all normal human beings. They, if that is so, are true of all (normal) peoples in all societies and in all periods of history since the emergence of *homo sapiens*. But while these things may be true, and indeed there probably are pan-human constraints, they leave room for plenty and often a very important variability and lead to many things that go way beyond these constraints. Berlin thinks these pan-human generic traits yield something that gives us some significant sense of what it is to be essentially human.

Rorty's form of historicism is in a way more extreme than Berlin's and mine as well. Rorty would say, I suspect, that there is an implicit and perhaps unacknowledged *essentialism* in Berlin's view of human nature and humanity. Berlin claims that "differences between entire cultures" have certain 'natural kind type' limits that are built into our very conception of being human. But Rorty claims, as do I, that neither humans nor human cultures have such an essence. Human beings have no center. 'Humanity' or 'peoples' do not name a natural kind, though perhaps '*homo sapiens*' does. Non-essentialists, if they want to go philosophical, can view humans, Rorty tells us, "as a centerless web of historically conditioned beliefs and desires..." (Rorty 1991, 192). *Here historicism goes all the way down*. But, as Rorty himself acknowledges, a historicist need not so view humans—he can, but he need not, take such a philosophical stance—any more than he need view them in Berlin's essentialist way, a way that reflects another philosophical stance. A minimalist historicist could benignly ignore such issues in his articulation of historicism. He could, that is, consistently ignore such philosophical issues. They are metaphysical (ontological, if you will) or epistemological issues historicists can benignly ignore (Rawls 1991, 175-96; 1999, 288-314).

These Berlinish philosophical views can be *made* into *conceptual* truths by making stipulations. But we need not make such stipulations and stipulations do not establish or make essences. Such philosophical views are not just built into our natural languages or into the way thought must inescapably be and a minimal historicist who wants to so view human selves as centerless webs of belief can do so but she need not do so. She could ignore such matters and go on with her historicism without these (or any) philosophical trimmings. Reasonableness *allows* her to go in for philosophical trimmings but *does not require it*. No such conceptions are built into our language or into inescapable thought ways. There are no facts of the matter here yielding an 'objectively true' answer (another pleonasm) or a well warranted substantive empirical answer about 'the human essence'. A historicist can just say, without bothering her head about such philosophical matters, that historicism is the claim that *our knowledge of human affairs has an*

irreducibly historical character and that there is and at least seemingly can be no ahistorical universalizing perspective that yields an adequate understanding of the life of human beings sans phrase. This she need not take to be an *a priori* truth, a philosophical postulate, but to be an empirical claim which she believes to be well warranted.

There is another distinction that might be useful here. There is a *strong* form of historicism that might be contrasted with *weaker* forms. A weaker but still substantial view reads (to repeat) as follows: our knowledge or understanding of human affairs is time and place dependent. There is no ahistorical perch (standpoint) from which to understand such matters. Here we have substituted ‘there is no’ for a strong form which says ‘there can be no’ and ‘there can be no empirical laws here’. The weaker view turns a historicist view away from being a philosophical generalization or a controversial law-like claim—controversial because law-like claims sustain counterfactual claims and in social domains that is very problematic. What is unproblematic and travels philosophically light is that there could be true but possibly false empirical generalizations, what are called accidental generalizations, e.g., ‘All the books in her library are in English’. This case can be made from the perspective of a weak form of historicism. It is a claim about how things are, not a claim about how things *must* be or can only be. Historicism, I defend, is a claim that when we study history and societies reasonably carefully, we will come to see that this is how it turns (of course, contingently) out to be, namely, it turns out to be that all significantly substantial knowledge of human affairs is time and place dependent. This does not mean that there cannot be a contingent *directionality* to history. But this is something, if true (as I think it is), that we have discovered or will discover to be the case. It is something that possibly could be false but perhaps is not likely to be false. But, true or false, it is an empirical claim and thus contingent and a claim that is without the pragmatic or self-referential contradictions of stronger forms of historicism.

Which, if either, form of historicism would it be more reasonable to adopt? The strong form tells us that our knowledge or understanding of human affairs (moral, aesthetic, political, economic,

even of our most securely scientific and mathematical practices) *cannot* be other than time and place dependent. There can, so a strong historicism has it, be no ahistorical perch—no ahistorical Archimedean point—from which to understand and assess such matters. But we need not give such hostages to fortune by making such a strong claim. A weak form of historicism can more reasonably read as follows: humans live in a world which has different, or partly different, practices. They are there just like our lives. They are not, and perhaps cannot, except ethnocentrically, be cross-culturally normatively ordered. Views and practices change; they typically rise and fall over time. There are, that is, different views and practices that themselves change, sometimes disappear and new ones sometimes come into being. Traditions are not written in stone. And such a practice orientation need not at all connote a commitment to conservatism. Historically, things are always in flux. But that does not make history a chaos or just one damn thing after another, though sometimes it can be. There can in certain respects be progress, most obviously (though not only) in the natural sciences. But people have no utterly non-ethnocentric cultural or historical ordering of things. This is, as far as we are able to ascertain, just how it is. Perhaps it might have been different or will become different, but our long historical and different cultural perspectives make that dubious.

My minimal historicism is a still weaker form. This *weaker* historicist view that I adopt is a kind of ‘meta-historicism’. It is (to explain) the claim that we have, as a matter of fact have, such historical limitations and that there is no good reason to think we can transcend them in the sense that we will gain some ahistorical standpoint yielding significant comprehensive culturally and historically transcendent normatively important truths. As far as we can reasonably expect, we cannot plausibly obtain such an objective or impartial way, some importantly transcendent way, to understand human affairs or at least human social affairs. Such a ‘meta-historicist’ claim is the best way, so it turns out, to understand human affairs. That is, we should understand them as in all significant respects being time and place dependent. That is why I call my weak historicism,

somewhat eccentrically, a *meta-historicism*. That is the way, so I propose, to conceptually organize our understanding of such matters. There is no sufficient reason to think that we will get anything about human affairs that is *significantly* historically transcendent. I remain fallibilist about this too so as to avoid tumbling into a pragmatic contradiction.

That does not mean that things cannot progress, but that it will always be by the lights of some distinctively historical and cultural peoples. For us—we moderns, we social democratic liberals, we socialists, we communists—all assess things by our own lights; there is nothing more transcendent for us. Indeed, how else could we assess things? And all people and peoples, whether they recognize it or not, are in that predicament. It could be called ‘the humanocentric predicament’. To self-consciously so see things is the best way—the best warranted way—to conceptualize things. But keep firmly in mind that this is a *proposal* concerning how to more perspicuously view things. I don’t deny—what is obvious—that other people and other peoples can and do make other proposals. But I do claim that this is the most reasonable one in this domain. I don’t deny that it could be mistaken. I am a fallibilist. But I do not see how it could be otherwise. And the burden, so I believe, is on the Absolutist to show how it is, or reasonably could be, otherwise. Here is a place for me, as Wittgenstein put it, where my spade is turned. Do not all of us, somewhere along the line, come to such a point?

This is, of course, a far weaker claim than the strong historicist claim that that is how things must be. My weak historicism is still weaker than even the weak but still a stronger historicist claim than mine, namely, that for us to have any kind of nearly adequate understanding of how things are is to recognize this as a matter of empirical fact is how things must be. My weaker version of historicism does not say this is how things are; that this is, as a matter of fact, how it is. My ‘meta-historicism’ is still weaker than the view which just makes the above weak historicist claim. I claim that there obtains a number of ways to conceptualize and order human affairs, but that the best one, the most practically efficacious one, is such a ‘meta-historicist’ one as the one that

I propose. This still weaker version of taking historicism does not assert that this historical variability actually tracks how things are (though, of course, it might, very likely might) but that this is the way that things, by way of attaining maximal clarity, should be viewed. It can properly be said to give fewer hostages to fortune than the other versions (the strong version and the more straightforwardly weaker version).

However, both of the weak versions travel philosophically light by making no controversial philosophical claims or indeed no philosophical claims at all. In making mine—my meta-historicist view—I simply make do with the *proposal* that says to think of human affairs most plausibly and reasonably we social beings should view such things as importantly, though not necessarily exclusively, as being historically and culturally dependent. In this we should recognize that we should think historically and give great weight to so thinking. But I do not mean for a moment to deny that history may have—indeed, like Marx I think it does have—a *causal* directionality (though not a teleological one). But if so, this is an empirical matter and, as such, this claim might be false. True or false, it is an empirical claim, not a metaphysical or purely speculative one.

However, as Berlin says, *understanding does not mean or entail acceptance or endorsement* (Berlin 1991, 86). A historicist can be, but need not be, a relativist or an utter moral skeptic, accepting as a relativist all moral views or all culturally or historically cultural views as ‘equally valid’ (assuming that such a notion is intelligible) or (more plausibly) as a moral skeptic, skeptical that any moral point of view can be more adequate (full stop) than any other. But she could also doubt that and claim instead that we have no knowledge of what the one true or most adequate moral point of view would be (Nielsen 2001, 1141-45). But can we know this to be true? Well, of course not. What else is new? But isn’t this the most plausible thing to believe? Call it what some contemporary Italian hermeneuticists call oddly ‘weak thought’ or even nihilism as opposed to metaphysical thought (Vattimo 2010; Zabala 2005). But isn’t this, whatever we call it, our humanocentric predicament?

All the minimalist historicism that I would defend and the kind of historicist that I am are people who claim that moralities are historical products differing over time and place. They do not go on to say that they are equally acceptable or 'equally valid'. (I put this in quotes for it is actually incoherent. A claim is either valid or not. Something cannot be more or less valid or equally or unequally valid.) We could very well be doubtful about characterizing *the* (or *a*) moral point of view as something that is 'required by reason' or by the considered judgments of *all* reflective and reasonable human beings. It could reasonably be doubted that is something that we in the geopolitical North have an overlapping consensus about or have much of a prospect of getting such a consensus about, to say nothing about getting a worldwide consensus above (Nielsen 2008a). In this way it is reasonable to be skeptical and historicist; to be, as Rorty puts it, against Absolutism (Rorty 2006, 126).

Whether that change comes to an *evolving* historical change or just to something new under the sun, a minimal historicist can leave open—indeed, *qua* minimal historicist should leave open. She will reject all forms of Absolutism, be a thoroughgoing fallibilist, contextualist, and perspectivist, rejecting the notion of *the* moral point of view, and rejecting relativism in the sense of the belief that (i) all values and norms are equally valid or sound, and (ii) that cultures are windowless monads or black boxes that are incomprehensible by someone from another culture except in brute terms—terms that would never yield even an approximate moral or political understanding, an overlapping consensus or reflective equilibrium. I am not claiming this is somehow conceptually or metaphysically (ontologically) necessitated, though I do think, as a matter of fact, there is no plausible alternative.

The weak views are either something that could be determined empirically *or* something that rests on a proposal about how to understand human affairs. In saying, as the strong view does, that our views of human affairs—e.g., of morals, politics, economics or religion—*must* be understood historically, we at least seem to land ourselves in a pragmatic contradiction. We make a

substantive ahistorical claim in claiming that all substantive views concerning human affairs must be historical; we thus unsay what we are trying to say. We, that is, make an ahistorically significant substantive claim in trying to deny that there can be such claims. However, we should note that the straightforwardly weak claim, though a claim that is not as weak as my so-called meta-historicist claim, is itself clearly a view that successfully steers us away from the risk of being caught in a pragmatic or self-referential contradiction. It does not say that historicism must be true.

Similar things obtain for Rorty's articulation of a historicist claim. Rorty remarks, "If, like Hegel and Dewey, one takes a historicist, anti-Platonist view of moral progress, one will be dubious about the idea that moral progress can be more than the systemization of the widely-shared moral intuitions of a certain time and place" (Rorty 2006, 369). Substitute, as we readily can, 'is' for 'can be' and we get something that is more plainly amenable to empirical confirmation or infirmation. We can examine anthropologically or sociologically the actual moral and political views which have obtained historically and where we get ones where there has been and still is a considerable consensus—what Rawls calls an "overlapping consensus"—we will then see that they are moral or political views which are systemizations of what for a time and place have been widely shared beliefs embedded in practices. But when we compare them in their importantly substantive detail with other views we will see that in spite of frequent superficial similarities they will importantly differ. There are for a class, culture or several related cultures widely shared for a time moral intuitions (considered convictions or judgments) of that time and place, but when we spread our view wide, we will get substantively different views. There will be highly abstract minimally substantive moral views that are the same or similar across cultures but they, like the so-called natural moral law, will be very thin (Nielsen 1991, 41-84). We get, for example, the idea that some control of sexuality and some form of matrimony are pan-cultural and pan-historical. But that leaves us with the thin idea that in all cultures sexuality is regulated, but how it is regulated will often widely differ from one culture to another, often leading to considerable cross-cultural

misunderstandings. We, of course, *have many such cross cultural regularities but their cross cultural content (their common content) is very thin.* And there are across the board very great differences and often conflictual ones. To take three more examples, all societies have some form of religion or magic (sometimes they are mixed or blurred, perhaps inextricably) but often they are very different such that not infrequently adherents of one religious or magical belief system or set of practices hardly recognize some of the others as having such a belief system or set of practices. They hardly see the foreign religious belief system and practices as religious. They may think of them as mere superstitions. Believers in a religion that is a religion of salvation such as Judaism, Christianity or Islam will typically hardly recognize a religion of inner enlightenment such as the lesser vehicle Buddhism or Confucianism as a religion. And this can and often does obtain for the others as well. Buddhism will often be seen by Christians or Islamists not to be a religion but just as system of rather strange moral beliefs and practices. *Perhaps*, to use another rather different example, it is agreed everywhere and everywhen that unnecessary suffering is to be avoided. But what is to count as 'unnecessary suffering' or even sometimes is to count as 'suffering' will widely differ across cultures and times. *Perhaps*, again to switch the example, it in some general form is universally accepted by all cultures and at all times that lying is wrong. But, again, what counts as 'lying' will be widely contested as well as when exceptions to its wrongness are to be tolerated. This will obtain within cultures and between cultures and at different historical times. What is *universally agreed upon* in examples like these is thin soup whose value is exaggerated.

Where ethical and moral beliefs, codes, practices and political cultures have sufficient substance to be action-guiding, they substantially vary over historical time and cultural space. And we have no ahistorical skyhook that has gained cross-cultural and cross-historical consensus while still being sufficiently substantive so that we can without an arbitrary *persuasive* definition say that all rational and reasonable persons living at any time or place would agree on them. ('Rational' and

'reasonable' and their different cognates at different times and places also get differently construed.)

However, such matters would attest only, if at all, to *a factual* historical and cultural relativism, not to an ethical or moral relativism and certainly not to the belief that all ethical and moral views are equally valid or equally sound. (Again, query the very intelligibility of such a notion.) In this way a historicist need not and perhaps (very perhaps) should not be a relativist. Perhaps she should be a moral skeptic, meaning that *she should reject the idea that we have a coherent idea of what the one true morality would be*. Indeed, *pace* Isaiah Berlin and John Gray, we do not even have a cogent idea that there is a diverse though limited number of *substantive objective values* that, while not infrequently conflicting and *perhaps* sometimes even being incommensurable, still are, as Berlin and Gray claim, somehow objective. They regard some of them, while being equally objective, as still being irreconcilable. These values supposedly equally constrain us and should do so. But there is no way of showing which one, if any, is top dog or even the more adequate or that they equally constrain us or that all of them constrain us. Rather, some constrain some and others constrain others. To think we can, they say, is a rationalist's dream and often a dangerous one. They regard these allegedly objective values as equally constraining but—they say—they are irreconcilable but still objective and they are not all constraining to all. They all, so it is often said, should bind us (whoever we are) to the limits of a 'truly human' morality: a morality that is recognizably something that a genuinely human being as distinct from barbarian will have. It will thus yield a pluralism but somehow *not* a relativism or a moral skepticism (Berlin 1991, 70-90; Gray 1995, 96-130). But while there are paradigm cases about some who are barbarians, there is wide disagreement about who is a barbarian and who is not.

A historicist, as I construe her, though not as Vico or Herder do, cannot be a consistent historicist and accept the idea that there can be a coherent conception of *the one true morality or a universal morality* with a substantive normative punch, with what is distinctly 'a truly human'

morality. Still, like Berlin or Gray, a historicist, even a minimalist one, could be a pluralist accepting a range of diverse and sometimes conflicting moral beliefs which would together, though not in one way, constrain what would count as a moral point of view and what all would count, if anything, as 'truly human moralities' but none as *the one truly human morality*. Yet still, as Berlin and Gray think, we have an objective morality. But a historicist, as I have construed her, *need* not accept that last claim of Berlin's and Gray's. She could be skeptical, as Rorty is and as I am, that any such objectivity or Absolutism could be known to be true or known to be warrantably assertable. A historicist could utilize what might be called a hermeneutical method to imaginatively and scrupulously 'get inside' an alien point of view in order to understand the purposes that such to them alien people have and in this way come to understand how these very different beings are recognizably human agents in the world with people having very different aims and conceptions of how life is to be lived. There are very different people that are not just seen as brutes by such hermeneuticists, behaving in causally predictable ways, but instead as persons acting in intelligible ways, ways which are recognizably human. But talk of '*truly* human' behavior or of behavior '*truly* worthy of a human being' would be dropped. Its attractive heuristics, but that is all. Where we need substance, we get heuristics; a cynic might not unreasonably say, hot air.

Still, if we succeed in so proceeding, will come to understand better (including more fairly) people and peoples, including the so-called brutes. And by understanding them we will recognize them as at least having, rudimentary as they may be, aims and a conception of how life is to be lived. Some may seem brutish to us moderns and indeed they may be brutish. (Remember Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.) Even Malinowski, as we can see from his diaries, so reacted to some of those he studied so perceptively. But some among us may be brutish, too. It would not be too hard to name names. But our so concluding *may* signal a limited understanding on our part. But if we learn to look at things in a historicist way, we may at least come to understand that even very different others are not just brutes but human beings with purposes and life plans. Historicists

teach us to think in that way and Vico and Herder have pioneered the way. We must be wary of concluding that 'these brutes' are beyond the pale and we must be wary of claiming that their conceptions of how to live are 'brutishly' rudimentary. But we should also be wary of being too wary, too. Not everything that goes on in any society at any given time and place is, morally speaking, tolerable. Think, to take a rather mild example, of arguments going on now in France and Québec about the wearing of the burka. Think, to take a more robust one, of the expelling of the Roma. And to take a more extreme one, think of the behavior of Gadaffi or of the sanctioning of torture by Bush. (I do not say they are equally horrific, but they both very much behave or have behaved in horrific ways.)

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TOWARD AN EMANCIPATORY SOCIAL SCIENCE

Lecture 4: A Marxian Social Science without Philosophical Foundations, a Philosophic System, a Philosophy Theory or even a Meta-Philosophical Account

I

I shall argue here, certainly controversially, that in the three previous lectures, the philosophical issues raised and the philosophical stances taken (including my own holism, historicism, perspectivism, fallibilism, and pragmatism) do little to make a case for socialism, against socialism, or for a plague on all such matters. They are philosophical trimmings (to use Brian Barry's phrase) that are optional in asking 'Why not socialism?' or 'Why socialism?' or 'Shall we benignly or non-benignly neglect or set aside or deconstruct such matters?'. A strong case can be made, or so I shall argue, for not immersing oneself in such arcane philosophical matters if one is politically concerned. If one wants to concentrate on the struggle for a better world, one should set them aside. (I don't, of course, say all intellectual issues, including Marxian ones, should be set aside, but these arcane philosophical issues should be. Here I am a Wittgensteinian philosophical therapist.)

I shall maintain that a group of broadly Marxian social scientists, arguing carefully and most of them rigorously, make a strong case for socialism and for an emancipatory social science without raising such philosophical issues or even presupposing them. If someone wants to give their accounts philosophical trimmings, they can. Some philosophical accounts are better than others and some accounts fit better with their arguments and non-philosophical accounts than others. But there is no practical or political need to do so. I claim as much, though, of course, perhaps

mistakenly, for my own pragmatism, fallibilism, holism, perspectivism, and historicism. But there is no practical or political need to do so. These social scientists need not take such philosophical sides or concern themselves with such matters. And philosophers setting out such philosophical positions, even when they do so cogently, will and can do little to strengthen—or indeed weaken—these social scientists’ work or to strengthen or weaken the case for socialism. Pragmatism, holism, fallibilism, perspectivism, and historicism are mainly of value in shutting down metaphysical, epistemological, metaethical, normative ethical and normative political theories—all of them, in one way or another, philosophical theories. Some such theories, as we have seen in Lectures 1, 2, and 3, have often mucked up our accounts of Marxian emancipatory social science. It shall be the burden of my account in this lecture to show how our Marxian social science can travel philosophically light without loss. This will seem to many, both Marxians and non-Marxians, as needlessly paradoxical, provocative, and, to some, downright wrong. Some might even think my claim is absurd, very *partipris*, and caught in pragmatic contradiction. I shall try here to show how central issues in Marxian social science can and should so travel philosophically light.

In my last lecture (Lecture 6), I shall turn to metaphilosophical arguments to show how we can and should avoid metaphysical, epistemological, metaethical, and normative ethical and normative political issues and theorizing. I will take a more direct route here and argue that these issues do little to either make or unmake the case for socialism or do much to put it on the political agenda.

I want to make one qualification here which I think will be seen in Lecture 6 to be no real qualification at all. Sometimes, as I shall try to instantiate as I go along, I use conceptual analyses that may turn out to be useful in clarifying our use of concepts, proceeding, much as Wittgenstein did, to relieve conceptual confusions and blocks where our language, due to philosophical interventions, goes on a holiday. I do employ in places such a philosophical technique—a

metaphilosophical technique, if you will—but, as Wittgenstein argues, it is an activity and not the articulating of a theory, a system or any foundationalism, nor a presupposing of any of them.

II

When Jocelyne Couture and I were jointly giving a seminar principally on imperialism, globalization and global poverty to some graduate students in the Department of International Relations and Politics at Rhodes University in South Africa, I was struck by how philosophy did not play much more than a bit part (and an excisable one at that) in the literature concerning these issues. Philosophy, that is, has little to say concerning imperialism, globalization, colonialism, neo-colonialism, oppression, domination, exploitation, and even global poverty. The texts (not textbooks) we were studying in our seminar owed little to philosophy. They were *principally* texts by Marxian social scientists. There was one text by a philosopher, Thomas Pogge, but it is primarily a work of social science (Pogge 2002). The texts we studied were well informed, sophisticated, non-doctrinaire, and written with clarity and with considerable argumentative skill and rigor without the slightest touch of postmodernist obscurantism or literary beautification. But the authors do not write like philosophers (*sometimes* Pogge aside) or consider philosophical issues, not even (at least not in any detail) the issues of the Marxians that I discussed in the previous lectures. It is not clear that they even presupposed any of them or that when they did (if they did) that they needed to. They mentioned, though without much characterization, historical materialism and mentioned some of the issues of what Erik Olin Wright calls sociological Marxism (a central claim being that social being determines consciousness). But they mentioned these matters rather in passing. The issues of methodological individualism, the defense of and challenges to dialectics, and questions of holism, perspectivism and historicism did not concern them, though some of the authors (for example, David Harvey) used the word ‘dialectics’ freely but rather unproblematically

and untechnically. The issues they did discuss included imperialism, neo-colonialism, the State, capitalist over-accumulation, ideology, exploitation, oppression, bureaucracy and corruption, globalization, crises of capitalism, the media, neo-liberalism and its hegemony with the worldwide (or nearly so) acceptance of TINA (There Is No Alternative) of neo-liberalism. But what most philosophers would recognize in their discussions as philosophical issues played little part. (*Perhaps* the discussions of the state are somewhat of an exception.)

They were, Pogge and Jan Scholte (a sociologist) aside, Marxians and socialists out to articulate and examine the issues mentioned above and, in doing so, to characterize and defend a socialism for the 21st century. This articulation and defense was made with an acute awareness of the problems to be confronted and with an in-depth awareness of the way the old Soviet and Maoist models went wrong, and of the abdication of socialism on the part of *contemporary* social democrats (Anderson 2000, 7-9; Panitch 2008; Harvey 2005).

Most of them were also as clear, each in his or her own way, as the analytical Marxists. But their writings still had a thorough political, social and economic texture. Indeed, they were thick with such texture, and with historical understanding, and were for the most part free of political moralism—though still with an acute normative sense but without an addiction to moral *theory* or normative political *theory* or to moralizing. They wrote more like resolute political realists with a firm sense of *real politik*, though without renouncing their Marxianism. I refer to such writers as Perry Anderson, Mike Davis, Carl Boggs, David Harvey, Eric Hobsbawm, Chambers Johnson, Peter Gowan, Giovanni Arrighi, Robert Brenner, Colin Leys, Leo Panitch, Michael Parenti, Tariq Ali, Boris Kagarlitsky, D. L. Raby, Gopal Balakrishnan, Atilio Boran, Jayati Ghosh, Alan Freeman, Bouvestara de Sousa Santos, Marta Harnecker, Michael Lebowitz, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Samir Amin, among others. (See bibliography.)

As I continued to study these authors and their intellectual and political kin, I gradually came to the conclusion that their way of writing and the problems they consider is principally

where the action is (to use G. A. Cohen's phrase) rather than with analytical Marxists (orthodox and maverick) or even the best of Hegelian Marxist philosophers. However, perhaps as a bit of a philosopher's hangover and in spite of what I have said about thick descriptions, I worry about the implicit, and sometimes explicit, normative element in such social scientists' work; and, donning my philosopher's cap, and still in spite of what I have just said, I worry about their normative clarity and force. These writers, as much as Marx, Lenin, Lukács, Althusser, McCarney and Jamenson, reject political moralism (the idea, roughly, that we can understand and change the world by astutely, sophisticatedly and rigorously moralizing concerning it). For the most part they write like political realists, yet they all believe (unlike political realists) that a better world is possible and, like Marx himself, write to help address such a matter and to help make it possible. But, again like Marx, they realize that this cannot, *at least in any proper way*, be done without understanding the world and without an awareness of the difficulty of changing it, including an understanding of how deeply capitalist ideology can blur or massage our understanding and the extent and effectiveness of capitalism's power—sometimes naked power. However, there is, their political realism notwithstanding, a residue of utopianism in their work with the acute need of a vision and an enriched sense of where we on the Left want to go (Panitch 2008, 181-212). For most of them there is an awareness of the need for a vision, as this is so for political leaders such as Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez. Some try to articulate what it would come to and explain why we need it. For many, it is implicit rather than clearly articulated or sometimes not even articulated at all.

I also came to wonder how, if at all, the often rigorous and perceptive philosophical analysis of analytical Marxists—either the orthodox ones (Cohen, Roemer, Wright, and Elster) or the maverick, holistic and neo-pragmatist sort (myself, Kumar, or Wood)—could, for example, help a Marxian emancipatory social science to decipher the world and to conceive of a better (even a *somewhat* better) world, and in doing these things to help change our world into such a better world. It might help in bringing about a better world by breaking some blocking ideological cramps

through refuting some basically ‘positivist’ conceptual puzzles dismissive of the appeal to thick descriptions or of the very idea of there being coherent talk of the possibility of there being a better world. Isn’t this conceptual deconstruction sometimes helpful? But even if so, it is still small potatoes compared to what the radical social scientists I have listed above are doing. Analytical Marxism in a rather scholastic mode is mostly more fiddling while Rome burns; a good intellectual exercise and, for some, good fun, breaking some philosophical cramps, e.g., those of Hegelian or Althusserian Marxism or of scientistic thinking, but hardly aiding much in the struggle to attain a better world or even a rather more decent world. It is something that would help us escape at least the worst barbarism; a barbarism which for us (people living in the last quarter of the 20th Century and the first quarter of the 21st Century) is a daily occurrence and something that we have come to feel is almost natural (Hobsbawm 1997, 217-770. For that possibility we need to turn to the work of those social scientists and social scientists like them.

III

Against what I have just been saying, it may be objected that I am ignoring here an intellectual division of labor. People doing analytical Marxism—whether in an orthodox way, as Cohen, Elster, Wright, and Roemer do, or in a heterodox and holist way, as Wood, Kumar and I do (for Kumar and myself, a Marxianism with a pragmatist twist)—ask a certain range of questions, questions that have been front and center in the last three lectures. In contrast, Marxian social scientists such as Arrighi, Anderson, Panitch, Gowan, Hobsbawm, Harvey, *et al.*, raise for the most part different kinds of questions. Both, it could be claimed, are crucial in our political and intellectual lives and we should not sacrifice or ignore one for the other.

My ‘fiddling while Rome burns’ response, in effect, raises a question of priorities. We live in (to put it mildly) a dreadful world and it, at least arguably, is getting worse. I use the metaphor ‘pigsty’ for what goes on in the Third World concerning all the unnecessary deaths and the

conditions of life of great masses of people there. And I use the metaphor 'global insane asylum' for how it goes globally (taking the world as a whole) concerning, crucially, global warming as well as crises about food and water exacerbated by our growing world population (Davis 2010). These are exacerbated, as well, by constant longstanding wars. The above metaphors seem to be appropriate metaphors, not *parti pris* wildness. 'Pigsty' calls to mind the condition of life of the poors of the world (an enormous mass of people) concentrated, but not exclusively, in the South. 'Global insane asylum' calls to mind principally how we are approaching global warming: the depth of our denial of the urgency here and, with that, our typically doing so little about it and the conditions of our oceans.

These are the kind of issues that animate the work of such social scientists as Davis, Harvey, Gowan, Arrighi, *et al.* They articulate in a telling way the horror of contemporary human life and what is to be done about it. Cohen, *et al.*, even with all their good willed, principled, open underlying intentions (socialist intentions), do not confront this horror and the demands it makes in an effective way. They concern themselves with arcane issues principally of interest to philosophers and with little relevance to our political lives—to what some have called 'real politics' (Geuss 2005; 2008).

We have seen in the previous lectures: (1) analytical Marxists trying to clean the Augean stable of the obscurantism of Hegelian and Althusserian Marxism; and (2) their attempt to refute—thoroughly demolish—radical methodological holism and replace it with methodological individualism without succumbing to either economic or political liberalism or to what *they take to be* the historical relativism and contextualism of historicism. In turn, we have seen maverick analytical Marxians, while also remaining committed socialists and Marxists, articulating a form of holism (including methodological holism), historicism and contextualism. And we have also seen something of those who, while rejecting quietism or defeatism and remaining good socialists, think that these two philosophical sides are taking in each other's dirty linen. Some (Kumar and myself)

take a Jamesian and Deweyian pragmatist turn when we claim that a ‘contest’ between putatively different practices that makes no empirical or otherwise practical difference constitutes no difference. There is, we claim, nothing of substance that divides them. That is not the Peircean claim that what makes no *logically possible* difference to experience is no difference. That Peircean turn is usually thought by philosophers to be the more adequate form of pragmatism. But that, I believe (like Richard Rorty), is mistaken (Rorty 2007, 34). If we get concerned with such modalities we shall be led down the metaphysical garden path. This would not happen if we delete ‘logically possible’ from the above Peircean formula. The way to go instead is as Rorty puts it bluntly (following William James): “If a debate has no *practical* significance, then it has no *philosophical* significance” (Rorty 2007, 34). What difference, we should ask, to our political, economic or social practices would it make if we were Cohen or Elster-like methodological individualists or Rorty, Kumar or Nielsen-like methodological holists? I think such a philosophical dispute, with its epistemological and metaphysical jostling, is good philosophical fun for some of us and, as well, demands rigorous conceptual work. But, good fun or not, conceptually demanding or not, nothing that matters affecting social-political-economic events or practices issues from that—nothing, in other words, that affects our lives. (For some of this fun, see the clearly drawn and argued issues between Richard Rorty and Pascal Engel in Rorty 2007.)

Instead, look at the matters with which social scientists such as Panitch, Parenti, Harvey, *et al.*, concern themselves. They are concerned with the increasing diversification and fragmentation of the working class and with, under such circumstances, the disappearance of the *proletariat* (a class that is *in* society but not *of* that society). What, they ask, are the prospects for socialism in such a world? How do we get—if we can—an agency that is determined (committed) to changing radically societies (the world) and has (or could come to have) the capacity and the power to do so and, moreover, has the capacity to change such a world into a world with something like a socialist motivating rationale and a socialist *ethos* and indeed into a socialist reality? Traditionally, in the

modern period a militant industrial working class was at least plausibly taken to be the class that would do the requisite altering (Levine 2003). This was what classical Marxists saw as the indispensable agent of radical social change for a transformation of the world. But the proletariat seems to have disappeared. Indeed some think it *might* have never existed (Levine 2003). Still, there are a lot of oppressed, dominated, savagely exploited people around, for the most part from the working class and the underclass (the latter abundantly in the South but also, though less abundantly, a growing group in the North). The underclass is what South Africans call 'the poors of the world'. They are either the very marginally employed or not employed at all and many have no experience of employment (Wilson 1987; 2006). These people worldwide are in massive numbers in both the South and North, though, as I have just remarked, more so in the South. They do not count as the traditional proletariat but more like what used to be pejoratively called *lumpen proletariat*. Together these people—the most wretched of the earth—along with a working class with full-time or substantial part-time jobs (though not infrequently increasingly insecure and wage-depressed jobs) constitute what has been called the *multitude*. This entire multitude, though in varying degrees and in varying ways, is dominated, oppressed, exploited or not even fortunate enough to be exploited. Moreover, it is not only fragmented, but often in conflict. In varying degrees and manners these people provide by their very position in the world useful ways for our capitalist masters to set them against each other and thus deflect their revolutionary potential.

It is difficult, but *perhaps* not impossible, to plausibly regard such a divided and fragmented multitude as providing the agency for changing the world: for it, that is, to radically transform the world into the beginnings of a socialist world. But we have, to put it mildly, no consensus about that even on the Left. The obtaining of a socialist society has now at best a tenuous plausibility in societies sufficiently developed to bring it about and sustain it. But it is even more distressing to reflect on its chances to go, as it must, worldwide. It is hardly possible (*pace* Stalin) to have socialism stably exist in one country. It can, of course, start in one country but, as Rosa

Luxembourg stressed, it must quickly spread or it will in time be doomed. Even continent-wide (say, all of Latin America), it will not be firmly stable. Socialism, to continue to exist stably and to bring the kind of human flourishing it promises, must be worldwide or nearly so. And that is a daunting prospect. But however unstable it may be, we must not halt the struggle to build socialism where we can. Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, for example, must be, if this can be done, strengthened and protected from outside destroyers. They can, and do, make life better for more people than it otherwise would be, but we can achieve the full promise of socialism only when it goes worldwide or at least nearly so.

To carry this out worldwide, must we have, or must we come to have, a replacement for the classical proletariat—the proletariat, as I and Levine have characterized it, of workers (principally industrial workers) *in* society but not *of* that society? (That is their pre-revolutionary situation, but not their post-revolutionary situation. Their revolutionary situation is a transformative one.) Do we have, or can we come to have, a revolutionary or otherwise fundamentally transforming replacement here for such a proletariat? Will the multitude described above have the will or capacity to bring about such a transformation of the world such as we once reasonably expected from the industrial proletariat? Will they be and remain too divided? And if this multitude cannot, who can? Are there other alternatives for achieving socialism? Without the classical proletariat, are we not lost?¹ Here we have a cluster of problems that we on the Left should be centrally concerned with. But the philosophical problems analytical Marxians, both orthodox and heterodox, are concerned with shed very little light on such crucial issues. They, or so at least it seems, only reveal some paths not to be taken. But this, we should remind ourselves, is not nothing, though little more.

IV

Historical materialism is, of course, a central claim of Marxism, both analytical and classical. It is a theory of epochal social change and of a worldwide trajectory of history—a history which (properly understood) has a *causal* directionality but not a *teleological* one (Cohen 1978, 19). It claims that the forces (powers) of production historically have a tendency to develop throughout the world, though sometimes they stagnate in certain parts of the world for a while (sometimes in previously leading parts of the world). Sometimes they even regress for a time, but in the long run the productive forces develop worldwide (Nielsen 1993). When the productive forces develop to a certain stage, something that over time will happen (if global warming or some other such catastrophe does not shut us down permanently), they will come in time to fetter the extant relations of production and after a time the relations of production will change into relations of production better fitted for the extant forces of production. (We have here an *analogue* to a Darwinian adaptation.) When such fettering on a large scale occurs, we have times of fundamental change in and of society and of the world, if it is on a large enough scale. And that, not infrequently over time in one way or another, will be—or so it plausibly is claimed by Marxists—a revolutionary change.

With this theory of productive change, classical historical materialists believe, as *capitalist* forces of production continue to develop, they will eventually come to fetter capitalist relations of production and this will lead—indeed must lead, Classical Marxists believe—to a transformation of capitalist relations of production *into* socialist relations of production and with that into a socialist society and eventually to a socialist world or, as most Marxists have thought since Rosa Luxemburg, into either socialism or barbarism.

This classical historical materialism was based on a strong and inclusive understanding of historical materialism. It was Marx's and Engel's conception and that of the other classical

historical materialists following in their wake. It led classical Marxists to have a certain kind of historical optimism: a sense that history was on their side. These Marxists thought, as most of us did and many still do, that barbarism could not stably obtain. After all, the 1000 Year Reich only lasted twelve years. But is an indefinite prolongation of Orwell's world of *1984* so unrealistic? Barbarism, albeit somewhat more moderate, has been very enduring. And capitalism has proved more flexible and accommodating than many of the earlier Marxists thought. We must be careful about talk of 'late capitalism'. But I certainly do not mean by this to suggest that we give up hope and struggle.

People, as Cohen's historical materialism has it, are sufficiently rational—if you will, instrumentally rational—so that we can reasonably hope that they will act to prevent any barbarism from stably obtaining. But so far (2011) barbarism is doing remarkably well. We thought, and some of us still think, that in the long run barbarism will just not stably obtain. So we, fortunately, are left with, most Marxists believe, the *empirical* inevitability of socialism. History is, after all, on our side. Socialism is the next stable stage of development for the forces and relations of production (taken together, the modes of production). This was (though in an illusory manner) taken by Hegelian Marxists to be the trajectory of historical teleology. Analytical Marxists of all stripes, as we have seen, will have none of that. History has, as those Marxists see it, *a directionality, though not a teleological one*, but rather a causal and for some a causally functional directionality (Cohen 1978; 1982; 1988). Still, for them either socialism or barbarism will be our fate and, given our rationality and capacity for reasonableness, it will more likely, many such socialists believe, be socialism.

That, Marxian though I am, is a historical optimism I do not share, though I hope that it will obtain and firmly believe we should struggle to make it our fate. But I have no belief that it will likely be that state of affairs. Nor do I have now, as I did in the past, either the optimism of the intellect or of the will that such a state of affairs will obtain, but have rather the *firm determination*

to do my best to help make it happen.² That is one of my deepest convictions and commitments. If someone wants to dismiss this by calling it voluntarism or utopianism, then so be it. Labels do not scare me. But a demonstration that socialism is neither on the agenda nor could be for it simply would not work would deeply depress me, though, unless the latter was certain, I would not give up the struggle. The inhuman nature of capitalism would ensure that. I agree with Michael Moore that capitalism is just plain evil, though philosophers are not supposed to put things so bluntly. But not an astute Marxist historian like Eric Hobsbawm. He writes, "It [the secular left] has been too frightened to say that capitalism is a moral evil. I think it will start saying it again" (Hobsbawm 1999, 58).

Marx, Engels and classical historical materialists had (as I have remarked) a strong and inclusive historical materialism. It was what Cohen initially (1978) explicated, reconstructed and resolutely defended; he also correctly attributed this account of the trajectory of human history to Marx. This is the account that was set out by Cohen in his classic *Karl Marx's Theory of History: A Defense* (1978). This book, while generally and rightly acknowledged to be a landmark, was subject to intense and sustained critical examination, much of it well met by Cohen. However, Cohen's account of history's trajectory in his later work in part changed. He did not abandon his belief in a distinctive historical directionality of history or his conception of functional but still causal explanations. But he no longer defended a strong and inclusive account of historical materialism but what he called a weak and restricted one (Cohen 1998, 155-82). This was echoed in one form or another by other historical materialists (e.g., Joshua Cohen 1986 and Andrew Levine, *et al.*, 1992).

I, like many others, thought (and still think) that this change on Cohen's part was a proper one and that it yields what very well may be an account which is correct, or nearly so, about historical reality, i.e., about the causal directionality of the trajectory of history (but see Beehler 2006).

However, my interest is not to establish (or for that matter disestablish) that but rather to ask what, with a weaker and more restricted historical materialism of the sort most analytical Marxists now endorse, this means (if it means anything) for the case for socialism. It does not undermine the rationality or the reasonableness of the case for its possibility or even for its likelihood. (I do not *just* mean its *desirability* if achievable, but a case for the reasonability of a belief in not only its desirability, if achievable, but its *plausible achievability*—what might be called its feasibility (Cohen 2009; Wright 2006).) But, it does, if my claim and Cohen’s argument are correct, undermine a justified belief that socialism’s occurrence is empirically certain or empirically inevitable or that there is a socialist TINA (there is no alternative).

I think it is the case that without socialism the only likely alternative is barbarism in one form or another (that is, at least, more of what we have now and perhaps something far worse). The world in many places is indeed a pigsty with thousands of unnecessary deaths daily owing to remediable typically substandard living conditions. Globally it is like an insane asylum with, e.g., our foot dragging, tokenism and state of denial about climate change, rather than throwing our energy and intelligence into struggling resolutely—setting aside questions about short-range cost effectiveness—against global warming realizing the devastation that it very likely will bring to our collective gates. This is a genuine possibility—even a probability—yet we do very little to try to combat this. This seems to me to be, given what it threatens, a form of collective insanity. Are we doomed to this (Davis 2010)?³

Perhaps we could get a capitalism with its capitalist major players being both clearheaded and with human faces, or somewhat more human faces, than we typically see now, willing to act with dispatch. That’s more than a mere logical possibility, though I do not think (a very depressing thought) it is very likely that we will get it. Perhaps our masters will be sufficiently rational—even

self-interestedly rational—so that capitalism will alter itself such that it will not lead us into a disastrous global catastrophe. (The results of Copenhagen should not make us hopeful.) Perhaps we will get something that reflects intelligence and determination and that is neither a capitalist nor a socialist mode of production. Perhaps, politically speaking, it will become a statist non-capitalist plutocracy, even an authoritarian one with a smiling face and a *rhetoric* of benignness. And perhaps that plutocracy will have the intelligence, determination and capacity to save us from manmade climate-inspired destruction. *Perhaps* such an otherwise unpalatable regime will take our world out of its current threatening situation, utilizing a regulated and planned market and an authoritarian rule that will be something under the circumstances of a resignedly tolerable plutocracy but not quite a dictatorship with its predictable brutalities. Something, in other words, that is not so extreme in its brutalities and oppressions as the Nazis or the Soviet Union under Stalin or Chile under Pinochet, but still strong enough to maintain order under stressful conditions and with efficiency, compelling—not relying on elections—the populace to obey the powerful people who run that order with a *gloved* fist. Perhaps this is what China or Russia or even the United States under a somewhat more charismatic and rather more *populist* Cheney-type will become? (I say Cheney-type rather than Bush-type because Cheney is brainier.) More like Obama?

Historical materialism has gone from claiming that socialism will inevitably follow the demise of capitalism, to claiming it to be an *empirical* inevitability, to claiming it is probable that it will occur, to claiming it is an empirical (not a merely logical) possibility that it might possibly obtain with the demise of capitalism (Levine 2003). What needs to be done now, after the abandoning of any claim to the inevitability or certainty of a socialist future, is to try to ascertain whether it is possible or even probable that it will stably obtain or that it at least is reasonable to believe that it is possible, i.e., that it could (not *merely* logically could) stably obtain and that this is also desirable (Levine 2003). With any of these things made plausible, we should try to think through strategies and tactics for attaining socialism in the 21st century (Cohen 2009; Wright 2006;

Lebowitz 2006). This may sound like a recipe for defeatism, but it should not be. Rather, with a pessimism of the intellect and with steeled determination facing a realistic understanding of our situation, we keep on struggling and fighting for socialism.

Defeatism and pessimism can and do plague us on the Left. We would not be honest with ourselves if we did not recognize that. But we, with all our energy, determination and with whatever intelligence we can muster, should seek to give good reasons for the belief that our commitment to socialism is not unreasonable or irrational or utterly utopian. It is also important to show, if we can, that it is not unreasonable or irrational to resolutely hang in there without such assurances and to struggle to attain a socialism in the 21st century. But, unfortunately, the situation could as likely lead to cynicism or to resignation *à la* Hegel. We on the Left should *not* concern ourselves with who gets the highest grades for likelihood—socialism or anti-socialism—but only with validation of our claims that socialism is reasonable (at least in the weak sense—the sense that Cohen gives in his last statement of historical materialism) and that minimally it is not unreasonable to believe that it could obtain and be sustained, and that, everything considered, it is desirable and more so than any capitalism (Wright 2006).⁴ With this, we should get to work trying to build socialism, keeping firmly in mind the horror of actually existing capitalisms, particularly when seen globally, and the inadequacies of the other post-capitalist solutions, including post-modernist post-capitalism. (I do not mean that we should *wait* until a socialist option is intellectually secure, but that we should act now to build a 21st century socialism [Lebowitz 2006 and 2010] with some of us, at least, being concerned to intellectually sustain its reasonability and plausibility.)

Levine thinks that we can make a reasonable case for the coming into being of socialism and with that overcome defeatism and quietism without telling ourselves just so stories (Levine 2003; 2007). That does not mean that socialism is *the most* plausible trajectory of world history, but that it is *a* reasonable and desirable one. (In parts of the world, e.g., South America, a socialist *ethos* is

growing and in some places there we are even getting something like the beginnings of a socialist reality. We are in the process of building socialism (Harnecker 2005; Lebowitz 2006 and 2010; Daby 2006.) We Leftists can, and should, even against the odds and where its prospects now look bleak, struggle for a socialist order with a determination of the will, with intransigence and with resoluteness, and with a tough-minded understanding of our situation, but without letting our determination to intelligently and forcibly resist slacken (Anderson 2000; Elliot 2008). Achieving fundamental social change does not happen overnight and the process goes up and down. It has been, is now, and will continue to be a struggle. There was a long transition from feudalism before the capitalist order was established. The same thing will be so for us and without any assurances that it will be established. But the big worry now is that time is running out with global warming.

In our darkest moments we may come to feel that a commitment to achieving socialism throughout the world, which is the only way (*pace* Stalin) we can stably achieve it, is pretty much like Kierkegaard's commitment to Christianity. But this resolve of ours is not *just* a resolve. And it need not and should not be taken as an article of faith. Rather, using our intelligence, we must—morally must—if we can, muster reasons (soundly grounded reasons) for believing that socialism is reasonable, possible, achievable and desirable, though the case here is, as it generally is for complex substantive matters, up for argument and subject to gaining evidence. We should be here, as elsewhere, fallibilists and pragmatists. Carefully gathered evidence, soundly interpreted, *should* always be triumphant. We should always insist on the supremacy of evidence (Hobsbawm 1997, 273). The spirit of Marx should be melded with that of John Dewey. For Kierkegaard, there was a commitment to Christianity, even, as he stressed, a Christianity (for him the only genuine kind) that was a scandal to the intellect. Faith in Christianity is something we would have to crucify our intellects to have and, he thought, we should do so. Indeed, Kierkegaard intensely and passionately believed that that should be done. Commitment to socialism does not require anything like that. But it is not, to put it mildly, marked out for a plainly sustainably successful occurrence. Still, to

believe that socialism may ever become a reality does not require an act of faith, let alone a crucifixion of the intellect, but it does, as things stand now, require a betting and acting against the odds.

I turn, with these things in mind, to another powerful religious thinker, Pascal. With our firm commitment to socialism, as with Pascal's belief in Christianity, we *may* have everything to gain and nothing to lose in struggling for it. But again note with my 'may' there is the fallibilist feature here which is not in Pascal. Moreover, many working class people now, particularly in the North, do not have nothing more to lose but their chains. They have, among other things, their houses which not just a few of them have recently lost. There are some working class people, even in the North, who are living a very precarious life in poverty or on the edge of poverty. Many, some who live in tent cities, for example, come very close to having nothing to lose but their chains. Indeed, where they fall into the underclass, they might wish again, as the better of two rotten deals, to be wage slaves with all its exploitation and domination. It is better to have a job and be exploited than to be without a job and on the edge of starvation. Not infrequently, our life choices are between two rotten alternatives, though usually they are not as stark as that, at least in much of the North. Moreover, this is not at all just the lot of the improvident; it is widespread and becoming more so.

VI

The slogan socialism or barbarism comes—to make it something more than a slogan—to the belief that without our gaining and securing socialism, many poor people (with many more people becoming poor) will continue (perhaps even in more pronounced ways) to live under a harsh, brutal, authoritarian rule without secure civil liberties and often without even the little but indispensable decencies of life. We will live in a world where there is actually scant respect for persons. It is not hard to feel that many who govern us do not care about us. Some are adept at

making nice sounds, but that is about all. (Indeed, we are close to that now. There is little, in reality practically nothing instantiated, of the cosmopolitan slogan ‘The life of everyone matters and matters equally’.) Perhaps we will fail in making socialism a reasonable expectation? The welfare state (inadequate as it was), if it still exists at all, is weakening and throughout the world; poverty, insecurity and exploitation are on the rise. In such a circumstance, as indeed even for many of us in our *relatively privileged* circumstances who will read this, it is both rational and reasonable to fight for socialism. We—taking ‘we’ collectively—have much to gain and less to lose, though just as *individuals* we may sometimes have a lot to lose; indeed, perhaps in some circumstances, our lives. Perhaps, if Oblomov-like we just take our ease, we may well, depending on our circumstances as individuals, do nothing that is irrational or unreasonable. As individuals, indeed we can sometimes do so; we can, if we are reasonably fortunate, just go on living at our ease without a care in the world and do nothing irrational, unreasonable or improvident. Yet just taking our ease in such a circumstance is incompatible with taking a decent moral point of view (Nielsen 2001, 1141-45). And we cannot ask, if we would be moral beings, ‘Why take a decent moral point of view?’ (Nielsen 1989, 167-206; see also here Note 8).

The socialism and, following socialism, the communism of Marx and Engels, assumed a world with abundant resources, indeed a world of growing abundant resources and a steady development of the productive forces. That was a plausible assumption for them in their time, but it no longer is. Global warming and population growth (particularly when taken together) have put an end to that. Global warming is causing more and more land to become desert and more and more land to become salinated and more sea ice to disappear from the Arctic, raising sea levels. With these things our arable land will be considerably reduced, very likely disastrously so. With our increasing population and diminished arable land, global demand for and need for food and water will continue to increase and our seas and rivers will become more and more polluted. Our oceans are in the process of becoming dead seas if nothing is done and quickly. Here the world’s

governments must work together and with dispatch. But again, next to nothing is done. *Perhaps*, reasonably managed, what is left of our world and left of our population after such devastations will suffice to sustain some of us. But that is problematic. Even what we have now seems to be insufficient. Worldwide while a minority frequently overeats to its increasing ill health, many go hungry and distressingly so. Even dehydration leading to death of children is not uncommon. But *perhaps* there will emerge quickly enough practices of different distribution and orientation, giving rise to a different *ethos* and to different lifestyles. But going on as we do now, there is horror for the majority looked at worldwide and, for increasing numbers of the minority, obesity leading to increasing health problems and for increasing health costs. The world in the year I was born (1926) had a population of 2 billion people; now (2011) it has over 6 billion and by mid-century, if population projections hold, it will have 9 to 10 billion. It is unclear how such a population can be fed, indeed even whether it can be fed, particularly given the march of global warming. (I do not blame global warming on the South's increase in population. That is not causing global warming. It is principally the North that is responsible for it and it should pay its carbon debt.)

VII

Our world very likely will become less like Marx's world of projected abundance and even more like Hobbes's state of nature where life will be nasty, brutish and short. It very likely will be a world of vicious and devastating wars where people desperately struggle to survive and where it will be survival of the fittest and the best positioned if indeed anyone can survive at all. This does not appear to be a world where cooperation, reciprocity and solidarity can obtain or a place where the full development of human beings can obtain. How can we—or can we—make and sustain socialism or any kind of decency in such circumstances? Perhaps we shall live largely on synthetic food and in climates that will just barely be tolerable with no air conditioning. The specter of something like a Hobbes-like state of nature haunts our world. We must, and with haste, face the

assault on our natural environment that is going on, for without that battle faced and won we can have no socialism or even anything like decency. Indeed, we cannot have capitalism either for long. The probability is that we will have an increasingly indecent world. It is likely, if we can continue to live at all, our lives will not be decent. We need to face that probability and struggle against that background. But, as if we were drugged, we are doing precious little against poverty, climate change or domination. We—collectively ‘we’—go on fiddling while Rome burns or living in a state of denial, though the Arab Spring and non-Arab places inspired by it, e.g. Spain and Wisconsin, give us some spaces for hope.

Is it reasonable in such circumstances to expect socialism or even to have spaces of hope for socialism? I believe—though this is contestable—that only with socialism will anything sufficient be done to combat climate change and its disastrous effects. *Perhaps* that is too partisan on my part, but in the capitalist world there is little being done concerning it even when it is staring us in the face. But the science is firmly there. Greed and the short term interests of capitalists—particularly the big capitalists—stand in the way. *Perhaps* they will wake up and see that doing something extensive and in a hurry is in their long term interests. Otherwise, all of us (big capitalists included) will get it in the neck. But, for example, the capitalist lackey Steven Harper keeps on mouthing that we cannot afford it when the reality is that we cannot not afford it. Struggling for socialism is hardly something reason *requires*, though it is still something that reason *permits*, if we can speak in these terms at all. It is these issues that should grip our attention and do gain the attention, in a wide side, of the ‘pragmatic Marxists’ and other socialist public intellectuals that I have mentioned and not the arcane issues of analytical Marxists and their philosophical opponents.

VIII

I turn to another issue about which both analytical Marxists and 'Philosophical' Marxists more generally have little to say but concerning which our pragmatic Marxians (taking 'pragmatic' now in a wide sense) mentioned above (Panitch, Ali, Gowan, Lebowitz, Harvey, *et al.*) have a lot to say. It concerns the strategies and tactics to be used in building socialism for the 21st century. What are good strategies and tactics and what are bad ones? Which ones are the more feasible? That is something with which our pragmatic Marxians have been and are concerned with, and indeed rightly so.

I have always said that there should be no enemies on the Left. We indeed should not be sectarian. But that should not mean that anything goes or that no strategies and tactics are better than others. It is one thing to say we have no or even perhaps can have no 'grand theory' that will settle everything and it is another to reject or treat casually the deployment of careful reasoning and the attempt to get our strategy and tactics as nearly right as we can get for a time and context. Many Marxists will want more, but it is not clear that they can get it. And they may regard more pragmatic Marxists as in effect enemies and sometimes that feeling will be reciprocated. We will invariably have comrades whom we regard, and sometimes not without good reason, as seriously mistaken and sometimes even harmfully or stupidly so. In such circumstances we should resolutely resist them, hoping that we are not being stupid ourselves or too partisan. But that does not mean that we should regard them as enemies or, in turn, take it that those on the Left who oppose us regard us as enemies, though *sometimes* they unfortunately might. But even when it is difficult not to regard them as enemies or (something different) as fools, we still should seek to cultivate a climate of discussion and careful reasoning and not be doctrinaire, unwilling to listen and to be arrogantly dismissive. We should listen carefully and encourage those with whom we are talking to do likewise. We need for everyone on the Left a culture of careful conversing with each other. We,

on the other hand, must not regard a political party with a program—though not one built in stone—as a little debating society. That would also be as disastrous as would being doctrinaire. The problem is to find a balance. The balance to be worked out can hardly be non-contextually generalizable and non-specific situation articulatable.

Still, could not a Leninist and an old fashioned Social Democrat (one who still believed in the achievement of socialism) manage to reasonably and sometimes profitably discuss? Could not Fidel Castro and Olaf Palme reasonably have discussed? (Castro, in his account of his own life, speaks well of Palme (Castro 2007, 449).) We socialists certainly should not regard ourselves as beyond criticism or challenge or treat as an unacceptable deviation any rejection of our take on things. (Indeed, the use of 'deviation' should disappear.) This, of course, is an expression of fallibilism. Something like that should be carried over from liberalism to socialism and to communism without our becoming captured by liberalism's often wishy-washy nature or inability to defend itself, adopting the absurd postmodern spirit of 'anything goes'. Socialism is not that, but it also cannot be a genuine socialism and be fanatical and authoritarian. Yet it must not paralyze action. But do not at all take this as a criticism of Castro, Chavez or Morales. A lot of capitalist criticism of them to the contrary notwithstanding, they are not fanatics (Chavez and Harnecker 2005; Raby 2006; Barrett *et al.* 2008, 69-97 and 215-31).

IX

There are at least three ways in which what I have been saying can be challenged. (1) I may be too much of a catastrophist with my talk of our being gravely threatened (perhaps even with extinction), principally through climate change and population growth acting together, if we do not do something drastic and soon. I claim, that is, that we are facing a situation which importantly resembles Hobbes's state of nature. Some will claim that I exaggerate here. (2) I can also be challenged that I am not facing squarely enough that socialism has been so defeated, so vanquished,

that it is no longer even on the political agenda. (3) I can be challenged as well on my claim that socialism is necessary to save us from a climate change disaster (if such there be). To save ourselves from that, assuming it is as urgent as I think it is, some will say that we don't need socialism but only a more rational humanized capitalism. Capitalism, it will rightly be noted, has repeatedly changed in the face of challenges. How can we, or can we, be so confident that capitalism will not weather the threat of climate change and not, and even rapidly, change again and in such a way as to overcome this threat, if there is indeed a genuine threat? Do we socialists know or have good grounds for believing that we couldn't come to have a green capitalism that will save us from what at least appears to be a disaster? (I have no doubt that it is a looming threat. I only put it in this hypothetical way so as to not shut down argument.)

I shall first consider the catastrophist challenge (Panitch 2008, 181-212). Yes, like many others, I do think we live in very threatening times. The ice caps are melting, the permafrost may very well melt extensively and release increasingly more dangerous levels of methane (more heat-trapping than even carbon) into the atmosphere, water levels are rising in some places and there are droughts in others, our rivers and seas are becoming increasingly polluted, some of our rivers are becoming increasingly unreliable to utilize for irrigation, deforestation and desertification continue unabated, the total world population is growing, the world (most drastically, the South) is facing increasing food and water shortages, and a billion people go to bed each night hungry. These things are interconnected and there is considerable scientific consensus that climate change and population growth are the principal causal agents for the threatening of human life. (But we also should not forget that nuclear threat remains. See Harrison 2010.) And, most particularly here, it is climate change which exacerbates ills that our growing populations experience. It is the peoples of the South—where most of the population growth is occurring—that are most threatened by climate change. There is a growing population living on increasingly non-arable land that can no longer grow what is needed. Without the increasing desertification and invasion by the sea of land that as

a result has ceased to be cultivatable, we could *perhaps* absorb population growth. But with such effects of climate change already starting and which are very likely to increase, it seems, at least, impossible to sustain the population growth which by mid-century will be 9 to 10 billion people. So climate change and population growth come together in what Brian Barry has called a lethal cocktail (Barry 2005, 261-75).

There is, of course, disagreement about the details concerning climate change and ocean change. But the general outlines of this are firmly accepted by climate scientists and oceanographers. There are indeed climate change skeptics, but they are, with a very few exceptions, from outside the relevant scientific community. The relevant scientific community (principally climate scientists) may, of course, be mistaken. Loners in scientific communities have *sometimes* turned out to be right, against the thrust of consensus in their scientific communities. Think of Galileo and Darwin. Both are good examples of people kicking against the pricks who turned out to be importantly right. Though they had new evidence that needed to be reckoned with (for Galileo new methods and for Darwin both old and new problems), they were not like the present day climate change naysayers (including the few scientific ones) just against new proposals engendered by new conditions.⁵

Concerning climate change considerations now (2011), if we are going to be rational and reasonable we must be *methodological* conservatives here utilizing a precautionary principle (Barry 2005). The principle we must use here, if we are being reasonable, is the same as we use when we decide whether or not to take an umbrella with us. If we are walking some distance to work and if there is some reasonable chance it will rain, then, if we are reasonable, we will take an umbrella, even though it is a mild encumbrance. We do not require overwhelming or even anything very like the strong evidence that it will rain before we, if we are reasonable, will take an umbrella, just a reasonable likelihood. We should adopt, and indeed for more obviously pressing and conclusive reasons (to put it mildly) than for our taking or not taking an umbrella, the

precautionary principle *vis-à-vis* the reasonable possibility of climate change and that it might be devastating. Too much is at stake there not to be risk-averse. All we need or should have to be justified in resolutely acting to cut down climate change (if we can) is a reasonable possibility that, if we go on acting as we have been and still are now, climate change might with some reasonable probability become devastatingly severe. Given that disastrous results might reasonably result from it for all of us, we must (rationally *and* morally ‘must’) take whatever means we can muster to resist it and urgently, even at considerable costs. To see things in these terms is not catastrophist but is just being reasonable, rather than being irrational, concerning our survival. Here we should be *methodological* conservatives applying the precautionary principle (Barry 2005).

I turn now to the second challenge. Maybe socialism isn’t in the ballpark or even likely to become so for the present and perhaps ever. It could be said of me and of G. A. Cohen as well, that we have ignored too much the depth of the historical defeat of the Left that Perry Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm so well chronicle and, as we have seen in the First Lecture, Andrew Levine, doing as well. However, Anderson, Hobsbawm and Levine have done this without abandoning their socialism. A few decades ago, as Anderson pointed out, there was a vibrant Left and with it, in many parts of the world, mass socialist movements. By our decade—he wrote this in 2000—all this is gone and with it, of course, the socialist movement as a vibrant movement (Anderson 2000). Now we have no even approximate mass base; moreover, there are a dwindling number of militants and socialist intellectuals (not that socialists cannot and often should be both). Many radical intellectuals or formerly radical intellectuals retreat into the ivory tower, something that itself is becoming less secure and attractive than it once was. This now is not so much from political pressure as from the increasing commodification of education, making universities too much like business institutions. That aside, there have indeed been mass defections from the ranks of the Left by intellectuals. To chronicle this as Anderson does, led Boris Kagarlitsky (an able Russian militant and Marxist intellectual) to charge Anderson with a betrayal of the Left (Kagarlitsky 2000). Here, as

able and soundly on the Left as I take Kagarlistky to be, he is being intemperate and mistaken. (For a fairer and more balanced critique of Anderson, see Achar 2000.) To acknowledge that socialism has, particularly in the West, ceased to be a widespread ideal and a mass movement that attracts many public intellectuals and activists and that “Marxism is no longer dominant in the culture of the Left” is to make what at least appears to be a true, albeit saddening, observation. It *may* be somewhat of an exaggeration, but there is without doubt a considerable amount of truth to it (Anderson 2000). It is to accept it as a fact, on Anderson’s part, but certainly not to laud it or bow down to it or take it as a guide for action or to say or imply that socialism’s defeat is forever. Anderson does say, like Immanuel Wallerstein, “[A] decade does not make an epoch. The neoliberal grand slam of the nineties is no guarantee of perpetual power. In a longer historical perspective, a more sanguine reading of time can be made” (Anderson 2000; Wallerstein 2006). But what Anderson does stress, and I think correctly, is that “the only starting point for the Left today is lucid registration of historical defeat” (Anderson 2000, 6). But defeat today doesn’t mean no new rising and victory tomorrow. A lost battle need not mean a lost war. (Is this what some say is my optimism of the will? If so, so be it.) Anderson is following Marx here in being tough minded and politically realistic. Anderson also well says in his *Spectrum*, “But to be defeated and to be bowed are not the same. None of these writers [he refers to some prominent radical intellectuals he is discussing] has lowered his head before the victors. If a dividing line is wanted between what has become the Centre and remains the Left it would be here” (Anderson 2005, xvii).

Philosophers and social scientists have sought to understand, interpret and re-interpret the world—in Anderson’s phrase, to “decipher the world”—while the point (the Marxian point) is to change it. But Marx also stressed, and showed by his practice, that there would be no at least proper changing it, or perhaps even possibility of stably changing it, without a thoroughgoing understanding of it. This most fundamentally requires for us living in our time an understanding of capitalism, including very urgently contemporary capitalism, and its movement. There is no

coherent willing the end without willing the necessary means to the end. There is no sound socialist changing of the world, as Anderson again following Marx stresses, without a thorough understanding of how it works and without centrally grasping how the forces of production develop and change the relations of production and as well, including in different circumstances, how politics goes and can go. This requires not moralism, not even *centrally* a vision of how the world should be, Marxist or otherwise, but a thorough political realism. We need this realistic understanding for our vision not to be 'sweet singing'.

However, could Anderson so confidently have written what he wrote in 2000 in 2008-09? In 2000 he wrote, though in a deeply saddened mode, of the worldwide omnipotence of neo-liberalism. With capitalist globalization (something that, like it or not, was becoming a global reality), neo-liberalism was not just a North American-British phenomenon or even just a European-North American-Japanese phenomenon. It has spread nearly worldwide and in its neo-liberal form of something having a family resemblance to it. Neo-liberalism in the context of capitalist globalization had become the only political and economic game in town. It was theoretically inspired by Hayek and Friedman and its popularity politically inspired by Thatcher and Reagan. Neo-liberalism claimed to be, with the backing of Hayek and Friedman, the only genuine way to efficiently run an economy of any complexity. This was taken to mean thorough *laissez-faire* where, unavoidably, what is freedom for the wolves is death for the sheep. Things have become *somewhat* different since 2008, though perhaps only temporarily. Now neo-liberalism lies in tatters, or at least nearly so. Some right-wing intelligentsia, reasonable and informed intelligentsia, would disagree. But their stance is becoming more difficult to sustain. Still, Keynes, but not socialism, is back, or at least some *ersatz* form of Keynesianism is. The 2008 economic meltdown was a great shock to the economy, almost pushing the whole world from a severe recession into a depression. And it seems to be something that is still threatening. We *seem* to be coming out of some of it now (2011), but in a wobbly and insecure fashion. Unemployment is high

(9% in the United States in 2009 and 2010; 90% among the Roma in northern Hungary). We may also be in for a double dip. If this continues or if the recession otherwise morphs into a depression, we *may* get militant anti-capitalist groups advocating some form of socialism, but we *might* get a militant fascist authoritarian or even totalitarian post-capitalism instead. (Remember the fate of the Weimar Republic). And there are some signs of fascism, or something like fascism, returning to the North, both in Europe and North America.

However, there are encouraging developments in Latin America of either socialism (in Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador) or social democracy (in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay, and Brazil). If, as they *might*, the social democracies in Latin America morph into a genuine socialism, we might get a Bolivarian revolution, particularly with the United States tied down in two unpopular and costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that are at least seemingly unwinnable, and from which, despite their unpopularity, the United States finds it difficult to extract itself. In the Arab world there are movements away from being puppets for American Imperialism. Of course, these things might not continue. The United States might, however, for fear of the re-emergence of the Vietnam syndrome caused by the loss of that war, grimly hang on—in some form or another in Iraq or Afghanistan or in both—with surge after surge, perhaps with the use of more and more troops or private militias, and at continued, and perhaps growing, expense. These things may very well generate increased socialist sympathies, resolve and capabilities. That aside, we must realize that the American Empire, even in what looks like its decline, is still very powerful and very extensive (Johnson 2004; Hobsbawm 1999; Hobsbawm 2009). (They have military bases in 100 countries and the U.S. has by far the largest military in the world. But all the same, the U.S. Empire might go down.) There are other scenarios *perhaps* more plausible than mine, but the Bolivarian revolution has some considerable plausibility and it is something to hope for and, more importantly, to struggle to make an enduring reality.

Contemporary socialism, unlike its historical ancestor, is by now skeptical about the capacity of social science, Marxian or otherwise, to predict the future. No socialists, as much as they differed about other things, were agreed in their belief in the inability of social science to predict the future (Gray 2009). Hayek, in particular, stressed that socialism utilizing social science, quite apart (he claims) from socialism being undesirable and implausible, has no capacity to make claims about the future, something that is essential to it. It also was, he famously claimed, indeed the road to serfdom. (But, I would parenthetically ask, if the future is as unpredictable as Hayek thought, how could he know or even reasonably believe it was the road to serfdom?) Perhaps, after all, social science can develop such predictive powers, at least to some limited degree, such that we are not altogether blind concerning the future. But many Marxist social scientists are also skeptical about social sciences' predictive capacity. Perhaps, that notwithstanding, contemporary socialism, particularly if it takes the form of a market socialism, can use markets like capitalism does—I don't say that capitalism *only so* uses markets—for information about demand, while still struggling to keep the frame of a socialist society and eventually of a socialist world. After all, actually existing capitalism—capitalism that we have now—politically and economically frames the world or tries to, and sometimes with considerable success. It seeks to do this not only for capitalist societies but for a capitalist world—a world it takes to be the whole world. Capitalist globalization doesn't think that history has no *directionality*: that it is just one damn thing after another. Capitalists, now as always, their ideology to the contrary notwithstanding, engage, and thoroughly, in central planning; they do not leave everything up to the market. Think of military spending, for example. The very existence of America's global imperialism is proof of central planning. Again its ideology to the contrary notwithstanding, not only is big beautiful but super big is still more beautiful (*pace The Economist*, January 23-29, 2010, 11-12). Moreover, in the face of neo-liberalism socialist planning is being done in Cuba, Venezuela and Bolivia and between them. Perhaps it can be shown to stably obtain and, as well, to come to have a wider scope. Cuba is opening up in certain

ways but things still go according to plan. (After all, socialism in Cuba has persisted even under great external harassment, particularly from the United States.) There is in the U.S. planning, economic and otherwise, all over the place. But the central thing to see is that even with its privatization and deregulation, a lot of state central planning goes on as it does in its giant corporations. *Laissez-faire* is myth and ideology.

Latin America is changing in a way that is increasingly socialist friendly. First Latin America, then the world. (Is this a slogan of a *mere utopian hope*?) There is, on the non-merely utopian side, beginning to be the stirrings of a new socialism for the 21st century (Lebowitz 2006 and 2010). Perhaps socialism's defeat was not as complete as Anderson thought? There still remain committed socialists reasoning intelligently and with a firm determination of the will to achieve socialist societies and eventually a socialist world. Socialism has not been—popular opinion in the North (at least) to the contrary notwithstanding—shown to be a non-starter.

However, we must recognize that an unrelenting political realism and Marxianism belong together (Anderson 2000). You can't have one without the other. Only if socialism becomes a political moralism, as *some* humanist socialism does, will it become something unscientific or non-scientific and illusory. But by this I am not assuming, as it might seem, a conflict between a scientific outlook and a moral orientation. (Levine is good on the complementarity of these. Levine 2005.)

X

I now turn to the third challenge, to wit, that of challenging my stressing the importance of socialism in combating the combined threat of climate change and population growth. I have, it can be argued, not considered sufficiently the possibility that we might get a less rapacious, less short-term greedy, more rational and reasonable capitalism than we have now. Capitalism might, that is, come to see that its long-term interests—indeed, its very survival—would involve acting in an

environmentally responsible way. We should also recognize that German, Scandinavian and Japanese capitalism, at least until recently, have been different in some important respects from American or British capitalism. They would perhaps more easily become sustainably more environmentally friendly. After all, capitalism has frequently proven itself to be flexible and changeable with changing times and situations. And it has overcome crises. Why could it not 'get real' and face realistically the prospects of global warming and ocean destructive deterioration while still keeping its orientation to accumulation and competitiveness and maintaining its commitment to overall profitability, but—and indeed rationally—in this way look to its long-term profitability and with that to its long-term interests? Why can't it come to operate, though its ideology will not express it this way, with 'short-term restraint of greed for long-term maximizing of greed'? Why should capitalists be so dumb as to cut off their noses to spite their faces? They will certainly, if they are just tolerably intelligent, act to protect their own survival, as far as they can. And why shouldn't we assume tolerable intelligence?

Still, plausible as this sounds, I see little of this on the ground, even living in Quebec which, for North America, has a rather good environmental record. Capitalists, by and large, lack (or at least clearly seem to) intelligent self-interest, caving in as they do to short-term greed—and that baffles me. Think of the Alberta Tar Sands. But this is not sufficient reason to claim that there cannot or will not emerge capitalists who are not so dumb or so captured by short-term greed that they will let such behavior rule the day, though the oil industry—spectacularly BP—certainly leads us to be skeptical of that. Concern for their long-term interests, particularly under the circumstances, is, after all, being 'greedy smart'. They need not be motivated by a socialist caring for others while expecting reciprocation between people: to care and to be cared for (Cohen 2009, 38-43). Just rational self-interest, and not such a socialist orientation, could lead them to take resolute measures to combat global warming. Reciprocity here could be thoroughly greedy capitalist market reciprocity and not a part of a non-market socialist reciprocity. Only more

capitalists under changed circumstances would need to become greedy smart: to be capitalist persons of good morals but not morally good capitalist persons.

I have made clear that I, like any genuine socialist, very much want capitalism to disappear as rapidly as reasonably possible and indeed thoroughly. But if I, like Anderson, can be sufficiently tough minded, I will realize that whatever socialism's long range prospects (if there are, for *homo sapiens*, long range prospects at all), socialism as it is now (2011) is at best weakly on the agenda. We now have a very scant prospect of getting socialism, even its beginnings, in the next couple of decades. For this, as Immanuel Wallerstein wisely counsels, we must think in terms of the next twenty-five to fifty years (Wallerstein 2006). But the need for drastic changes in our response to climate change and its *at least* seemingly catastrophic effects is an *immediate* urgency. *We cannot reasonably wait for socialism to prevail. We have to make the appropriate climate change with capitalism running the show now.* We must, that is, get effective action now. And that is what we are not getting in our capitalist societies. Canada, for example, has just elected a conservative government that is Neanderthalish about these matters as well as many others. It acts in ways that are obviously not in most people's interest, yet masses of Canadian people voted for them under the illusory belief that that is the way in which security lies. We may, as I am, be very pessimistic about anything sufficiently effective being done. But we, with resolution, intelligence, and non-evasion must—morally must—struggle now, while regretfully acknowledging both the present omnipotence of capitalism and the at least present irrationality of capitalism. Situated as we are now, capitalism is, while remaining our cross to bear, our only short-term hope to gain *operational sanity* concerning climate change *with sufficient dispatch* to save us from disaster. We must want (at least in the climate change situation) capitalists to become greedy smart. That is the most and the best that we can reasonably expect from capitalists. (I speak here of the class and not necessarily of individuals.) I am not (to understate it) very hopeful that they will become greedy *smart*. Greedy they will remain, that we can rely on, but greedy *smart* or even greedy semi-smart is

another matter. But where immediate action is required, that is what we have to work with. For the present we are stuck with the capitalist order. Capitalism *might* in time take a more reasonable self-interested turn. But we see very little evidence of this. BP's actions in the Gulf are a grim reminder of this. Still, in the *short* run capitalism is the only thing we have to go on in the battle to adequately contain climate warming or, where the battle is already lost, to search for ways to live with it and to minimize its effects. Capitalism (the capitalist order) for now—and it is now where matters are so urgent—is the only thing we have to go on to act against the looming disaster and to act quickly enough to stop it or at least limit it. It is so horrible to deal with such short-term greedy and irrational forces. Think of the climate change deniers in the U.S. Congress. But what is most demanding now is to stop, as much as can be done, the drift of climate change. This is very depressing but we must not stick our heads in the sand⁶

When we look at what the capitalist powers are actually doing, it is appalling, depressing and indeed frightening for our future. The rapaciousness, greed, rationalization and denial prevalent now are mind boggling. If you live in North America, just look around and see what little is being done: a few windmills, a miniscule number of electric cars, a few more bicycles, more conscientious recycling, somewhat better lumbering practices—but those measures by themselves are mere band-aids. Look at Canada, probably the worst sinner here. Stephen Harper, a true son of the Alberta tar sands and a genuine Bushite, is positively Neanderthal in his climate change policies and someone, I am told, who supported the Apartheid regime in South Africa. Obama is obviously somewhat better—to shift to the most important player here, the United States—but he has repeatedly under threat diluted his ideas under pressure from Congress (including from many of his own party, particularly the Democrat Blue Dogs) and from capitalist corporations (the only kind of big industry or small the United States has) to a point where his policies are hardly even mildly progressive or give us much grounds for hope. Indeed, we could *perhaps* hope that his climate change policies will fail, given their plain inadequacies, and that that breakdown will ignite a

powerful drive from outside for a genuine change. Yet, we might well be skeptical here that anything like this will happen and it also *might* be thought that some crumbs are better than none. (And note, parenthetically, that we might say one thing for climate change and another for health care and military activity.)

There is also a conflict between North and South—between, that is, the developed and the developing countries. China and India, to take prominent examples of rapidly developing countries, rightly do not want to pay for the North's sins, for what colonialism (capitalist colonialism) has done (Said 1994). But going on to sin themselves does not help take us out of this looming hell. Some damaging of the environment may be necessary for them to catch up. But Canada and the United States, neither of which needs to catch up, are persisting with their environmental sins. They do not have the South's excuse for polluting. (But, we need also to ask, India and China may catch up or partially so, but at what price?) The North should—indeed it has an obligation rooted in past wrongs—massively to help the South while still developing themselves a much cleaner energy policy. China, India and other developing countries must also develop such environmentally friendly policies themselves while still maintaining their right to catch up, but not at the expense of contributing to their self-destruction (and the destruction of everyone else). China seems to be on the road to doing something positive here in an innovative and impressive way and on a scale that befits its status as a new emerging imperial power (*The Economist* 2010, Vol. 333, no. 8660, 16-18). There appears to be in China—and somewhat more mutedly in India, too—some understanding of the imperative to change our monstrous environmental situation. Things move slowly where they move at all even while there is an urgent need for things to move rapidly. Europe is *somewhat* better than North America on this, but they still have a long way to go, as we all do, before we can sleep. But while we may not be sleeping, we—speaking of us collectively—are in a deep and irrational state of denial.

I wrote a first draft to what I am saying here on the eve of the Copenhagen Conference on Climate Change. Hopes for many of us were not high before the Conference and more generally they were no longer high as the Conference closed and afterwards—even for some (not me) who had high hopes on the eve of the Conference. Indeed, for me and many others, whatever few hopes we had have been thoroughly dashed. There was, going into the Conference, little evidence that our masters of the world—the doers, shapers, and shakers of the capitalist order—would move quickly enough to save us (including themselves). So we—the world’s populations—find ourselves between a rock and a hard place. There is not (at the moment) sufficient socialist or other strength to force a change—not to get anything like what Morales said was necessary—and there is not a sufficient capitalist awareness (even of their own long range self-interest) to motivate them to action of the sort required to avert disaster. There are some tentative steps being taken by our capitalist societies—in Europe a little more so than in North America—but unfortunately (I’m inclined to say tragically) they are feeble and it looks like they will be too little and the necessary steps, if they come at all, will come too late. But if that is so, it will be no consolation at all to us on the Left to say ‘We told you so’.

So, if we can be at all realistic, we should have a deep pessimism of the intellect here, but we should not be resigned (Hegel-like or otherwise) or reconciled, but instead be unbowed and committed with every means at our disposal, meager as they are, to gain, against the grain, a more decent and indeed sane world. We will probably lose, but we should neither be resigned nor reconciled to defeat. If we must go down, we should not go down without a fight. That may sound like mere bravado, given what is at stake. Normally, moralism is to be avoided, but that may be all, for the time at least, that we have left here.

XI

In closing, I want, stepping back, to consider an objection to what I have been arguing in this lecture and in the previous one—an objection that comes trippingly on the tongue. It consists in saying that I have unwittingly unsaid what I initially wanted to say and indeed said. I have shown not that we can have a Marxian social science without philosophical foundations, philosophical guidance and the like; rather, I have in effect shown philosophy's clear value in Cohen's, Sober's, Wright's and Levine's cleaning up of some obscurantism that badly damage Marxism. Moreover, they have helped Marxism along by a clear articulation of historical materialism, a central element in Marxism, in showing how it is a causally directional empirical theory of epochal social change and not a metaphysical teleological view of scant coherence (Cohen 2001, 241-88; Levine et al., 1992). They reconstructed historical materialism limiting it and in doing so, while cutting back its scope and inclusiveness, they have enhanced its plausibility without diminishing the critical importance of historical materialism. I have also shown in my discussions of holism and historicism in the previous lecture how philosophical analysis properly deployed can rid holism and historicism of obscurantism, incoherence and implausibility—something again that is important for Marxian social science. This has all be done by (1) close textual analysis and (2) crucially by what used to be called conceptual analysis and, Wright apart, by philosophers doing philosophy. (I should add parenthetically that Wright, though not a philosopher, is exceptionally philosophically literate.)

These things being so, we do not have a case, contrary to what I have been arguing, for claiming the poverty of philosophy or saying farewell to philosophy, but just the opposite. What I have unwittingly evidenced is the value of philosophy done in a proper analytical way and, as well, being in touch with important empirical realities: economic, social, political and historical realities.

I have never denied these things. I have claimed that philosophy can sometimes be of value in the cleaning of the Augean stable and of the sometimes value, considerable value, of clarity. No more than Cohen do I welcome obscurantism. But I have resisted making a fetish of clarity. Still, the arguments about methodological holism and methodological individualism have been a useless distraction now yielding terminal dreariness as have, though to a lesser extent, the onslaught of analytical Marxists on holism and historicism.

Moreover, the treatment by G. A. Cohen, Joshua Cohen and Levine et al. of historical materialism has been of considerable value and not irrelevant to real politics and the actual socialist struggle. By making increasingly cogent analyses, it has helped by updating Marxian theory, though I have also attempted to show that is not as valuable, even when it is done well, as it usually is by the September Group and the actual more deeply driven empirical work of people like Harvey, Wallerstein, Hobsbawm and Davis, among others. Philosophers' work is not as valuable as that of people like those just mentioned for engaging in the struggle to change the world with the understanding necessary to make it a 'genuinely better world'. The deepest aim of Marxists is to make and sustain a genuinely better world, a world that would make for the fullest possible human flourishing. Philosophy, its frequent self-understanding to the contrary, plays a second-order role here—a role that is in reality a very minor role. To concentrate on things most of the analytical Marxists concentrate on—spectacularly Cohen and Roemer—is an unfortunate mistake. Concentrating on that perspective is not a perspective that an economically and politically conscious as well as a morally attuned person would seek unless they were deluded or so deeply skeptical about the effectiveness of any effort to make the world a better place that they have abandoned having any hope for there to be a better future for humanity, let alone any incentive to struggle to achieve a better future for humanity or even a belief in its possibility. Those of such skeptics who remain philosophers may just go on day-to-day, Oblomov-like, entertaining themselves by trying to unravel paradoxes that interest them.

I am not saying that such a perhaps bitter and/or perhaps even cynical skepticism and inactivity is unreasonable. But I firmly believe in the desirability, particularly of intellectuals, to struggle to help to achieve a better world and to resist sinking into such Oblomovism. (Am I being too non-rationally moralistic here?) For me—but with what reason?—I must struggle for a world where all, if they are not collapsed incorrectly by illness or by old age, will have a flourishing life, where the interests and needs of everyone are honored, where all compossible interests and needs are met where possible and where there is vigilance against evasiveness by stress on ‘where possible’. Such a struggle will take the interests of humanity, the moral flourishing of humanity, to heart. In trying to do this we should side with forces trying to be clearheaded concerning what that comes to and try as well with all our might to achieve it.

We will not let ourselves say, though we at times may despairingly feel it, ‘Nothing can be done so let us go on fiddling where it gives us pleasure or surcease.’ We have a genuinely human world to gain.⁷ I do not say, Pascal-like, that we have nothing to lose. Taken *individually*, we may have a lot to lose, including sometimes in the struggle for our lives or, less dramatically, our acceptance in our workplaces or in our society. Think of the frequent fate of whistle-blowers. Think more extremely what it would have been like for a German to struggle against the Nazis or someone of the Communist elite in the Soviet Union to struggle against Stalin.

However, if we are to be moral beings, we must actively, even where it is dangerous, where it is possible for us to do so, side with the neglected, dominated or brutalized.⁸ As I write this, we are in the middle of the Libyan and Syrian struggles to overcome brutal domination and to gain what has been called ‘The Arab Spring’. That this would plainly be a good thing is not in doubt for most of us in the geopolitical North or for masses, but not all people, in the Arab world; but certainly *not* for some Arab elites or for some capitalist forces and their supporters in the North. But even with that, there is not any doubt for most people in the North (even with its *realpolitik*) and for the masses of people in the Arab world what should be a moral point of view concerning

these struggles. I am tempted to say that is what *the* moral point of view requires, but a little knowledge of anthropology and history makes one resist that temptation. There are people who are not irrational who oppose such humanitarian intervention. Can we say with justification that *reason* requires it? But does reason, either 'pure' or 'practical', establish it?

All the above aside, it should be noted that the discussion of historical materialism, holism or historicism do little to help solve the pressing concrete moral and political problems with which to wrestle; the things that really matter to us as moral beings. The philosophical considerations that energize analytical Marxists and some of their philosophical opponents do not even attempt to do so. That is not what they are concerned with. Moreover, and differently, they do not lead to a philosophy of Marxism and ditto for a *philosophical* socialism or an attempt to articulate and defend the *philosophical* foundations of or for socialism. There are no such things. To claim so is all blather, but Harvey et al. show that even so there is work and important challenging work, not just academically but as well for our common lives together. It is work that is intellectually and morally demanding. Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* were right in saying that philosophy is to science as onanism is to coitus.

Notes

¹ I have been asked if it is pure daydreaming to think that a change in *ethos* might come from the middle class and even from the elite themselves if only because they are driven by pressures of necessity. I don't know if it is pure daydreaming or not to think of this as a feasible possibility. The historical record does not encourage such thoughts. There have always been members of the elite, the upper classes and the middle classes who have become 'class traitors' and struggled for radical change, e.g., Condorcet, Engels, Marx, Lenin, Kropotkin, Bertrand Russell, Noam Chomsky, and Edward Said. But the middle class taken as a whole has never come over or even a large portion of it and capitalists, except occasionally a few individual capitalists, have never come over. (Is it reasonable to expect that in our extreme circumstances they will?) In the later Section X, I discuss to what extent capitalists, pushed by global warming problems, are likely to change and go over to a different orientation than they have traditionally occupied. It is possible, but there is little to encourage us to think it is likely. I wouldn't bet my ranch on it. Still, given the urgency, we must struggle for that while keeping our socialist options open.

² Does this contradict the title—the pessimism of the intellect and the optimism of the will—of the collection of essays of my political writings that David Rondel and Alex Sager are bringing out? No, not for the essays they are using. They fit Gramsci's slogan. But in my latest writings the slogan should be changed to 'The pessimism of the intellect and the *determination* of the will'. I am increasingly pessimistic about the fate of socialism, but I am more determined than ever to struggle for it.

³ I was asked here 'Should you use something less strident?' Perhaps? Being a fallibilist philosopher, I should perhaps prefer it. But given what is at issue, I shall stick with my stridency.

⁴ Usually we can say that if something is reasonable then it is desirable, but not always. Two things could be equally reasonable and one could be desirable and the other less so. Should we say that they are both desirable but, though equally reasonable, one is more desirable than another? However, nothing could be desirable if it were not reasonable *or* not unreasonable. Being reasonable or not unreasonable is a necessary condition for being desirable.

⁵ I am not saying absurdly that social science equals socialism. Otherwise there could not be a social science that was not socialist. But that is absurd. There is plenty of social science that is not socialist. Some are even anti-socialist. But socialism deploys social science for a distinctive purpose and many of its distinctive claims and methods are social science claims. Its scientificity consists in that (Levine 2003).

⁶ There is no contradiction here. Capitalism now (say at time t1) is all we can now or in the foreseeable future have to get a handle on climate change. It will not provide, if anything does, the means, the deployment of science and the mobilizations of human activity, to produce the necessary means to achieve the taming of it. Yet, given the urgency for action now, to curb it we must for the time go with capitalism. For now it is the only game in town. We are in a TINA situation. However, at time T2 with climate change at least minimally under control, what we should then do is concentrate on the ending of capitalism. Moreover, socialism's coming into being under those conditions would certainly not reverse the climate control gains achieved should they occur under capitalism. The unlikelihood of their occurrence under capitalism should make us fight now for both climate change and socialism, though for *now* we should give priority to climate change. Perhaps capitalism's very likely inaction will stimulate a fight for socialism. But the nagging fear is that that struggle will occur too late.

⁷ 'Human world' may be troublesome for some. Certainly we do not mean any world with *homo sapiens* in it. We mean something which in considerable part has a moral sense. The world 'human' in such a context has a thick descriptive use. It is, that is, a term that is both descriptive and normative and inextricably so. We cannot isolate a purely normative part from a purely descriptive part. A human world is one where human

life is respected, where there is a reciprocal caring by human beings and for human beings (human beings care and are cared for). There is a respect for all human beings and for all of their rights, a world where human flourishing is cherished and where all compossible human needs are something to be, as far as possible, met and where compossible wants as well, though needs trump wants, are met. Only wants which harm others or undermined needs are proscribed. *Something* like this is believed by all progressives (social liberals, social democrats, communists and socialist anarchists). We progressives all believe *something* like this, though we will give it different nuances. But there are plenty of other people who do not: fascists of all kinds, absolute monarchists (such as in Saudi Arabia), racists of all kinds, clannists of all kinds, highly educated white administrators in the former Colonial world who take people of color to be inferior, religious adherents who are Jewish, Christian or Moslem fundamentalists or dogmatists who would undermine rival faiths or non-faiths, members of the upper classes or strata with their beliefs that they are justified in dominating and ruling the lower classes or strata. All of these people do not have what I have called a progressive orientation. Their non-progressive, indeed typically anti-progressive, orientations are generally rooted in ignorance and prejudice by their not having sufficient empirical knowledge with fact-sensitive normative views rooted in that knowledge. Rather, they have normative views without such grounds that are often little more than prejudices. However, is this true of all people having all such non-progressive orientations? Are all highly educated members of the elite caught up in ignorance and prejudice when they feel superior to illiterate persons from the slums incapable of work and just driving drugged-up in the world without aim? If the highly educated person is reflective and genuinely educated, he/she will recognize that there but by the good fortune of a privileged background go they. But such a person may recognize and knowledge that while still feeling superior. Must that be a matter of self-deception or prejudice? They *may* feel guilty about what results from their good luck, but they may still continue to feel their superiority. If they do, must they be self-deceived or in some way irrational or suffer from a rational defect? Whatever we say here, still we progressives (characterized as I have above) will stick with our cosmopolitan and egalitarian belief that the life of everyone matters and matters equally while fully realizing that is not what everyone believes and that is not at all the way the world goes. Does the position we are in here come down to what the existentialist philosopher Sartre believed, the logical empiricist Ayer believed all his adult life and the Swedish philosopher Hågerström believed, namely that we have here an inescapable matter of decision and commitment and not a matter of knowledge or grounded believe (something that Rawls rejected from his doctoral dissertation on to his final writings)? Are we (*pace* Rawls) caught up in such a decisionalism?

⁸ What I will say here is not unrelated to what was said in the previous note. From the passage just before note 8 in the text, the question 'Why should I be moral?' raised its ugly head and with that what most philosophers think is its confused head. If 'Why should I(any person) be moral?' is confused with the question 'Why should *we* be moral?', then it is an utterly absurd question devastated by a straightforward Hobbesian response. If we did not have some form of morality, or at least some regulation of social life, life would be nasty, brutish and short. Moreover, many philosophers, H. A. Prichard and W. D. Ross preeminently, think 'Why should I be moral?' is a senseless question. It comes to asking 'Why morally ought I to do what I morally ought to do?' which is of a class with 'Why are all round things round?'. The supposed question 'Why should I be moral?' is a logically absurd question and 'Why should we be moral?' has an unproblematic, obvious straightforwardly Hobbesian answer. I can agree about 'Why should we be moral?' but I think things are not so plainly settled about 'Why should I be moral?'. I also agree with Rorty that no even mildly reflective and informed person who thinks about how to live her life would take seriously 'Why should I be moral?'. It is on a par with 'Why not boil babies?'. What goes on here, Rorty would say, is just Philosophy. It is the arguing whether the tree we see in Moore's garden really exists or whether it is just a sense-datum. Whatever answer we give to 'Why should I be moral?', we say something idle or nonsensical—something that makes no practical difference to our behavior. We would, except when we are doing Philosophy, never ask that question. We would have to be in Hume's Philosopher's closet to do so. Such disputes between philosophers make no practical difference. Nothing is going to change in the lives of people, including philosophers, no matter how they answer that question or dispose of it. It is a paper nihilism. What makes no practical difference is no difference. Still, the passages just before note 8 seem at least to drive us to see that if we push disagreement over morality hard enough, we finally run out of reasons and just have to choose what to be committed to, what to do. We just have to decide without compelling reasons what it is we are to do, what kind of person to be. That we morally ought to do what the moral point of view tells us we morally must do is

tautological and thus empty. But why ought a person do what he morally ought to do because that is what he morally must do? Remember that not all 'oughts' and 'shoulds' are moral ones, e.g., 'You should put butter on your toast after you toast it, not before.' Why must a person do what he acknowledges is the moral thing to do? He could rationally ignore, except prudentially, what morality requires of him. But what it is prudent to do need not be the moral thing to do. Why shouldn't he free-ride and be a person of good morals rather than a morally good person, a person of good morals doing discretely whatever he wants or whatever is in his interest with moral considerations only being prudentially or instrumentally regarded? Why is the discrete immoralist any less rational than the through-and-through morally willed person, Kant's person of good will? There seems at least that there is nothing non-question begging that we can say. All we can do is fall back on Rorty's claim that we never ask this question, even to ourselves, in any real life discussion or reflection about what is to be done. Why do what is acknowledged to be the morally overriding thing to do never comes up in real life situations and what (*pace* Cohen) makes no practical difference makes no philosophical difference either. But why accept that and why cut off such a question even when it arises only in a philosopher's closet? Isn't 'Why do the morally acknowledged thing?' as bad a question as asking 'Why believe that time is real?' or 'Why believe there are any physical things?'. But is it? That it is doesn't seem so evident (Nielsen 1989, most particularly 167-206 and 269-300).

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TOWARD AN EMANCIPATORY SOCIAL SCIENCE

Lecture 5: Some Final Twistings and Turnings

I

In this final lecture, I shall first return to the issue I discussed in the last half of Lecture 2 (Sections III-VI), that is, the issue of whether, and if so how, a social science could be emancipatory and still be scientific. That, it is perhaps natural to think, is impossible because incoherent. I argue that we can have an emancipatory social *theory* that is normative, though it may not be through and through scientific, but it need not, for all of that, be unscientific or anti-scientific. As well, I shall argue, we can have an emancipatory orientation and we can have with it, *as an adjunct* to that social theory an emancipatory *social science*. Moreover, it is also reasonable, but perhaps mistaken, to think this *social science* itself, or indeed any social science, cannot be normative. In *that* way, perhaps the Weberians were right; but, I also argue, they were wrong in thinking that history—taken as a social science—could be written in a purely normatively neutral vocabulary. But how, one still might ask, could it be *emancipatory* and still be a social science? Does not the very notion of ‘being emancipatory’ connote being normative? And how can something be normative and still be scientific? There are a lot of entanglements here and I shall try to untangle them.

In Lecture 1 I assessed Joseph McCarney’s complicated and striking argument that social science can be emancipatory without being normative. I argued that McCarney’s complicated and subtle argument that an *emancipatory* social science can be non-normative fails and I raised the issue in Lecture 2 of whether the very idea of something being a science connotes something that is non-normative. Is a science when formal non-normative (its rules of formation and transformation

apart)? And when non-formal, is it not simply empirical (its rules of procedure apart) and thus non-normative? Or is this 'thus' suspect? It is empirical, at least, in the wide way Quine stressed that a science must be, i.e., empirically at least weakly verifiable. Without that you would have mere speculation without scientificity. This would turn history into a provider of 'just so' stories. So how then can we—or can we?—have an emancipatory social science, something that has scientificity and is still emancipatory?

History is not, and could not become, a *natural* science. Isaiah Berlin well argued that (Berlin 1980, 103-42). (It is even very strange that it would be thought, particularly by someone as perceptive as Berlin, that that would need to be argued.) But it is now typically claimed to be, a *social* science, as much as is sociology, social and cultural anthropology, and social geography. History needs to make accurate descriptions of past matters, often—indeed almost always—interpretive descriptions. But in doing that, it often, and typically quite unavoidably, uses thick descriptions, descriptions utilizing thick concepts that have both a descriptive and normative component, but components that cannot be untangled (Putnam 2002). This would seem to make history unavoidably a 'normative science', or at least a normative discipline, after all. To say, for example, that 'blacks were oppressed under apartheid' need not be to say that *that* oppression was, everything considered, always wrong—though for morally speaking right thinking people (to make a moral remark myself), the oppression of blacks under apartheid is rightly taken to be so. But someone who thought that oppression was wrong need not think that *that* oppression, everything considered, was wrong while still believing that oppression itself (any oppression) was always *prima facie* wrong. She might also believe—though I think she shouldn't—that anyone who wished to be scientific over that matter should confine themselves to remarking that though most people in our societies think oppression is *prima facie* wrong—indeed in that way evil—that not all people think that the oppression of blacks under apartheid was wrong, everything considered. They might think—wrongly I, of course, believe—that though oppression of blacks is wrong *prima facie* it was a

necessary evil to keep South Africa well ordered, to make the society still less evil than that society already was. Without that, many believed there would have been chaos, mayhem and barbarism. Still, looking at the matter purely scientifically, in saying 'Under apartheid blacks were oppressed' a person might not necessarily be either condemning or condoning *that* oppression but merely reporting it, making a description—true or false—of what most white people as well as *some* non-white people, or at least many white people, in that particular society believe.

Description, even 'interpretative description', is one thing; *endorsement* or *condemnation* is another. But still sticking with a purely scientific view, we could recognize that the very word 'oppression' normally has a negative force. That is a fact about the use of English. To not recognize that would be to fail to recognize how the language-game is played. With a reasonable understanding of English, a person would understand that 'oppression' has such a negative force. But that itself cuts no moral or otherwise normative ice one way or another. 'Oppression' itself in most contexts has a negative normative force and oppression is *prima facie* wrong. But that does not tell us which oppression or even that any oppression is to be condemned or not condemned, full stop. Not much of normative import can be done with meta-ethics. *Perhaps* properly done it is normatively neutral.

That notwithstanding, we still should recognize that 'oppression' could be used *in some contexts* by some users, say scientific ones, without that negative force, though to properly understand 'oppression' we would have to know that it normally has that negative force. But where it is not so used, we would, to properly understand what is going on, still need to understand that normally 'oppression' has such a negative force. But where a scientist uses 'oppression' purely scientifically, such as to say, truly or falsely, 'In Bahrain there is more oppression than in Saudi Arabia', she as a historian is reporting, interpreting and perhaps potentially explaining the activities and practices, including the moral beliefs and practices, of a certain people at a certain time and place. She need not be speaking in a normative mode. In doing so, she is, that is, neither endorsing

nor not endorsing those beliefs or practices—or at least she need not be. And where she is, she is doing something that is going beyond science—perhaps, better said, just being non-scientific. (I didn't say she is being unscientific.) She must restrict herself, however, as a historian to being purely scientific. That is, or so it is natural to say, what being scientific requires of her. *Qua* social scientist she is not, as Eric Hobsbawm might remark, in the *judgment business* (Hobsbawm 1995). But *au contraire*, or so it can be contended and as Hobsbawm's practice bears out, as a historian she should not limit herself to a purely descriptive, interpretive and explanatory account (Hobsbawm 1999; 2008). An historian as well seeks to decipher some parts of the world and in doing so uses thick descriptions and this is an activity that is unavoidably both normative and factual in an inextricable mix. To describe the Afrikaner belief system and practices accurately during apartheid (think of the *Bruderbund*, for example) one would have to say blacks and other non-white populations, though in varying degrees, were oppressed. Speaking as an historian she need not condemn it nor condone it, but speaking scientifically—could she be condemning or condoning it? Or would she be going beyond her vocation as a scientist? Moreover, while most post-apartheid white South Africans think that black South Africans were oppressed under apartheid, they (where they understand English) recognize that 'oppression' normally has a negative force. (Things do not go differently in Afrikaans.) Some of them also thought that during the time of apartheid in South Africa. However, many whites nevertheless thought then that apartheid was, all things considered, justified. In some cases, Afrikaners (and some others as well) didn't even think much about oppression or perhaps even think that blacks were oppressed. They didn't think much about such matters, as most people do not think about such matters in their societies. How many reasonably well-heeled people, for example, in the United States lose sleep thinking about how many people in their society have no health care or typically go to bed hungry or have lost their homes? People usually go along with doing the thing done in their societies. Think of Nazi Germany. Think also of the United States, Canada, Israel and Iran now. (I am not suggesting by this that they are as bad as

were the Nazis.) But over issues, *if* seriously considered, well-heeled people in many societies where things go badly are in denial and suffer gross self-deception. In the South African case, blacks were plainly oppressed and by an Afrikaner regime (though many English-speaking South Africans thought, even when they didn't say, "Thank God for that regime!"). A historian will describe these things and explain those beliefs. Her central aim is in understanding. In all these cases they will have an understanding that 'oppression' has a negative normative use, but also that it has descriptive use and that here we have, as I have remarked, an unscrambled, and indeed an unscrambleable, entanglement of the descriptive and the normative. There is something here that often over time leads to a conflictual situation.

It is in some respects like someone who says that war is evil. She could go on consistently to say that war is still sometimes justified as the lesser evil. Evil is always wrong (indeed, that, in Wittgenstein's wide sense, is a grammatical remark). Still, she could also think and say that *sometimes* war is the lesser evil. Where this is so and where there is no avoidance of it without doing or allowing something still worse, then we should do the lesser evil. One, for example, should in those circumstances go to war knowing that it is evil but also knowing that in that situation it is the lesser evil. Most of us who fought on the Allied side during World War II thought that war was justified, though many did not then think that about World War I and not a few thought that some momentous things that were done during the Second World War (for example, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki or the bombing of Dresden) were plainly not justified. Indeed, some think, as I do, that they were criminal. Knowing that in war, however, one acts or does not act, one does some evil. The thing in that situation is to try to ascertain the lesser evil. This, of course, is not usually easy. And if by abstaining one would make the situation even worse than it otherwise would be, then, morally speaking, one must do the lesser evil. (I should add that one does not have to be a utilitarian to think that.)

Historians, as all social scientists, use terms that are normatively freighted—terms that often have an inextricably entangled normative and descriptive use. As Hilary Putnam puts it, there is in our discourses a pervasive entanglement of fact and value (Putnam 2002). Nonetheless, I am *tempted* to argue that we cannot while remaining scientific use these thick descriptions to *endorse or dismiss or condemn*, though historians can and do use them to describe, interpret and explain. Science, I am inclined to say, to be genuinely scientific, must be normatively neutral. It can't be in the *judgment* business. But in many contexts it cannot be an even nearly adequate social science if it restricts itself to a normatively neutral vocabulary. Still, as I have said, endorsing or commending is one thing; reporting, interpreting, describing or explaining is another, though *sometimes* to describe in a certain tone of voice is also to endorse or condemn. Perhaps sometimes the very use of thick concepts without scare quotes just is to some degree to endorse or condemn or to in some other way evaluate. But describing with such a vocabulary one need not have such a tone of voice. To understand *sometimes* is to forgive, but it is not, and should not, always be so (Nielsen 2006, 175-98). And, where we are acting in a purely scientific manner, it cannot be so. Such reporting cannot be an activity of forgiving anymore than it can be an act of endorsing or commending or condemning. Yet things here remain to some degree problematic.

II

There are more twisting and turnings. When we think about science, at least when the scientific engine is idling, what we have said above *seems* to be what we should say. But often historians, even very good ones, seem, at least, not to be so proceeding—not to be making such assumptions. They seem *not* to be giving themselves such strict rules of conduct (Hobsbawm 1995; 2008). My account here, and a lot of such philosophical accounts, may be accused, perhaps fairly, of being artificial and useless scholastic constructions. Historical practice, even the very best historical practice, seems, at least, not to conform to it.

Historians describe, give figures, talk about individuals, societies, trends, cite statistics, make interpretations, make generalizations, and try to decipher historical events. But they also make assessments of—judgments on—peoples’ and societies’ actions, for example, the reasonableness of government strategies, the plausibility or reasonableness of their war or economic strategies or even sometimes of the justifiability of their going to war and the like. They sometimes make damning assessments—including moral assessments—of whole worldviews, e.g., Eric Hobsbawm on Nazi worldviews. In fine, they make all kinds of moral and otherwise normative endorsements or critiques of historical events along with their describing them, interpreting them, explaining them, deciphering them well or otherwise (Hobsbawm 2008). Of course, they also ask more limited causal questions, too. For example, why didn’t the Nazis attempt to make peace after their defeat at Stalingrad? Their generals must have known the game was up. Why did the apartheid regime make the transitional arrangements they did with the ANC at just the time and in the way they did? What were the long term consequences of the decisions they and the ANC made together and how well did it serve black liberation? (Notice that we have here something both plainly morally normative and descriptive. Must we say there was no scientific component here?) Was slavery coming to a rapid end in the United States and would it have done so as rapidly (or even nearly so) without the Civil War? Why at a later time did six million Afro-Americans move from the South to the North? Wasn’t this very much like an immigration? Was the war economy in the United States in World War II essential to taking it out of its economic depression or even more generally ending the world’s depression? Was its role in the war and right after it crucial for its later global hegemony? Did the Nazi regime pull itself out of the Depression earlier than the democracies? If Trotsky rather than Stalin had replaced Lenin, would it have made any deep and lasting difference to the Soviet Union and to the fate of communism? (Or is this for history an illegitimate, purely ‘could have’ question?) If the Nazis had been less racist or even less irrationally

racist (more like the British in India) and less murderous to the populations of the Soviet Union, would there have been the determination to resist the Nazis on the part of the Russian peoples?

Of course, these kind of questions engender many *how* questions as well as *why* questions and many different smaller questions. How racist and murderous initially were the Nazi practices? Did this square with original *Italian* Fascist policy which was initially so admired by part of the American capitalist class? (Ford, for example.) Was Mussolini such an anti-Semite as Hitler? How much cooperation with the Nazis of some segments of the Soviet populations was there? The Ukrainians, for example? Did the Nazis, when they invaded Russia, expect such a long war against the Soviets? Did the Americans expect such a tenacious and long resistance by Iraqis after the defeat of Hussein's army or later in Afghanistan by the Taliban? How well, if at all, were the Americans prepared for these two things? Did they and do they even later have any reasonable emergency plans for coping with such situations? How reasonable was it to expect that the Nazis' Hungarian and Romanian allies flanking them at Stalingrad would be able to hold long enough for the Nazis to capture Stalingrad? Why did the Nazis choose to attack Russia first and only after that turn to Britain? Why did they open, seemingly irrationally, two fronts? Given Germany's national interests, or at least its war aims, was it a reasonable thing to do? Was their irrational genocide harmful to their own war effort? Not just from what is now known, but from what could reasonably have been known then?

Here we have a sampling of the kind of questions historians ask or, as time goes by, will ask. Sometimes they are questions that just require the best (most accurate) descriptive answer that can at the time be garnered; sometimes also a causal and/or interpretive answer is required for the question's adequate answer. That is, the historian sometimes needs accurate description, careful interpretation, good causal analysis and good (accurate) confirmation or disconfirmation procedures. Sometimes they need good statistics; sometimes to make judgments about what it was reasonable to believe or do (thereby bringing in an evaluation, perhaps even a moral one);

sometimes they need *judgments* requiring moral evaluations. All these are in the historian's domain and often in his toolbox and in his practices. This does not square—or so it seems at least—with my *idealized practice* of how history should go, how we are to have a really scientific history. (Isn't any other kind of history just so storytelling and thus *ersatz* history? Or is this too positivist of me?) Be that as it may, that is what they do. That is how they—or at least many of them—practice their art. Are we philosophers (or anyone else) to be more restrictive and say that history is only *a genuine science* where it sticks to strictly morally non-evaluative matters? Isn't this too essentialist? My approach seems rather high-handed and arbitrary on the part of a non-historian. Are we to say that in historians' practices, when they depart from my conception of a scientific way of doing something, reveal their non-scientificity, meaning either that they are ceasing to do history at all or that there is scientific (social scientific) history and a non-scientific (not anti-scientific) history? Perhaps we have here 'speculative history', the things Herodotus, Hegel, Spengler and Toynbee did while by contrast what Thucydides, Hume, Marx and Namir did was scientific history? The latter, when push comes to shove, rely on observation, plainly an empirical matter, while the former, or not so crucially, do not. There lies the mark of scientificity, even if sometimes such testability is very indirect as Quine illustrates. (Contrast him with Hempel and Carnap who had a much more limited conception of indirectness.) This is not—or so I assert—just positivism in a post-positivist age. And it need not be *scientistic*. But my conception still might be mistaken. It might be too restrictive. But are we to open the floodgates? Do we do it here? And can philosophers prescribe rules for how historians must proceed if they are to be genuinely historians or, if that is not a pleonasm, 'scientific historians'?

III

History *may* very well not have scientific laws (generalizations that sustain contrary fact-conditionals). It has generalizations, of course, but accidental generalizations, like all Janes's books

are in English, and generalizations—non-law-like ones—that are, at least, generally contextual and admit of exceptions (Berlin 1990, 103-42). And they cannot be metaphysical as Hegel's thought often is. But they also cannot be *merely* speculative and still be history. There must be some empirical constraints. We cannot go wild as Hegel and Fichte did.

Does this exclude moral evaluations? Not unless we exclude a lot of things that practicing historians did and do, including historians who do not take a speculative route (as Hegel, Toynbee or Spengler did), but are wide ranging and deeply interpretive, sometimes evaluative, including morally evaluative, but also are widely regarded by other historians, who might take different ideological stances, while still regarding these historians as first rate un-ideologically enfeebled historians—historians that are empirically responsible. I shall take a look at the work of two such contemporary historians, Eric Hobsbawm (University of London) and Perry Anderson (UCLA) and with a passing glance at Tony Judt (New York University) all of whom seem at least to violate what I have taken as the methodological lines for a scientific history. If they do, then my conception of 'scientific history', I shall concede, is mistaken and needs a rather central modification. I should not then just stick with my stipulations—made here and more extensively made about social science generally in Lecture 4—no matter how plausible they seem. Or am I conceding too much?

Hobsbawm's work abounds, as does Judt's and Anderson's, in thick descriptions (terms that are both, and inextricably, normative and descriptive, such as 'rude', 'indolent', 'deserving', or 'rapacious'). We could hardly do history without such thick descriptions. But, as Hobsbawm rightly stresses, the historians' world is what happened, not what could have happened (Hobsbawm 1995, 5).¹ But to gain an understanding of what happened, the historian requires accurate description and testable (if only weakly so) descriptions, explanations and interpretations. He wants, for example, to record accurately and to understand the Great Slump or understand why the Soviet Union collapsed so suddenly. For a proper understanding in both these cases, as well as others, he requires both accurate description normally rooted in investigation and explanation. What

happened, how it happened, and why it happened—what caused it to happen? And for these he requires the use of thick descriptions: the use of terms that are both (and unscrambably so) descriptive and evaluative. But does not the evaluative part inescapably, at least somewhere down the line, involve judgment? Hobsbawm wants an historical understanding that is without judgment, but doesn't his very use of that thick descriptive vocabulary often involve judgment? And indeed doesn't he make judgments—say, most obviously, of the Nazis and while he is writing history? Doesn't this make a 'value free' account impossible? And doesn't this, if we take history, as we should, as a social science, make my case for the scientificity of social science (or at least of history) impossible? Shouldn't this lead us to deny what I do not want to deny—that history is a social science and that to be such it must make, and exclusively so, claims that are in some way empirically testable?

Consider what Eric Hobsbawm says about the end of the Second World War—what the Russians call the Great War. Both of the most directly involved nations among the victors and those among the vanquished lay at the end of the war in ruins (to say something plainly both evaluative and descriptive). By contrast consider the economy, wealth, and power of the United States which profited extensively from the Second World War. Its lands were not destroyed or even harmed, and the small reduction of its population did not economically harm it. But Russia, the country that defeated the Nazis, was extensively destroyed. Its towns and much of its countryside lay in tatters. Its economy, developed by its five-year plans, was undermined, its agriculture shattered, and nearly a quarter of its population killed. Though absolutely essential, defeating the Nazis with their brutal thrust for empire took a devastating toll. Germany and Japan, two of the Axis powers, were also devastated. Their industries were destroyed and most of their towns were bombed, many nearly to the ground. Japan not only suffered that, but it also suffered atomic destruction at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and its other cities—Tokyo, for a spectacular example—were gutted with great loss of life by conventional bombing. The United States, Canada, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand

apart, there was great devastation on both sides during the war. But, while France, Britain, and Italy were badly damaged, that damage was not nearly as extreme as with the Soviet Union, Germany, and Japan.

With the United States' power jacking it up—the Soviet Union aside—the recovery was rapid, particularly in Germany and Japan. This was to the advantage of the United States as well as to Germany and Japan. U.S. aid went to France, Italy and Britain as well, but to a lesser extent and thus their recovery was slower. But for all these countries, there was aid. I should add that the Soviet Union was on its own after the war. The Cold War began early. The Soviet Union was essential in defeating Nazi Germany and in that defeating got help from their wartime allies. But after that, such communists could be, and were, ignored, though the need of the Soviet peoples was great—perhaps greater than in any other country. This, it needs to be said, was not all the United States' fault. Stalin, fearing American control, refused aid (Judt 2005).

Hobsbawm's account of these matters, along with his account of the Golden Age (1957-73) of capitalist advancement, is insightful and thorough. It was an advancement that went along Keynesian lines. But during the Golden Age of capitalist advancement, as he points out, there was not only increased wellbeing for the working class, but also a depoliticalization of it. Many workers no longer had nothing to lose but their chains; they now had cars, pensions and sometimes even houses. However, since 1973 things have been going downhill for working people.

Hobsbawm's account of these matters was given (not exclusively, though unavoidably extensively) in a thick descriptive vocabulary, that was effectively descriptive, sometimes explanatory, often interpretive *and* often, as can be seen from above where I closely follow him, with a normative and indeed sometimes with a moral edge. Typically normative, sometimes normatively moral-edged, accounts are engendered by or locked into an empirically factual account. (I did not say entailed by them.) We frequently get descriptions, interpretations, understandings, as well as explanations that are not normatively neutral. Rather, they (*pace*

Hobsbawm's explicit denial) are not infrequently judgmental and yet are an integral part of his historical account. (I am inclined to say that of any even remotely adequate historical account.) We should also come to recognize these accounts can be reasonable and sometimes even compelling. They are historical accounts that make such claims (including making such judgments); we would never have an extensive account of what happened in the past that had any adequacy without the making of such claims. But being such thick descriptions, there still remains the existence of the empirical. Hobsbawm, for example, speaks of

... the leadership of the "Red Khmer" party, a particularly murderous combination of the Paris Café Maoism of their leader, Pol Pot (1925-), and the armed backwoods peasantry bent on destroying the degenerate civilization of the cities. The new regime killed its citizens in numbers enormous even by the standards of our own century. They eliminated around 20 percent of the population before it was driven from power by a Vietnamese invasion which restored a human government in 1978 [note the normative use of 'human' here]. After this—in one of the more depressing episodes of diplomacy—both China and the U.S. bloc continued to support the remains of the Pol Pot regime on Anti-Soviet and Anti-Vietnamese grounds (Hobsbawm 1995, 451). (For another, perhaps even clearer, example, see Hobsbawm 2008, 145.)

This remark quoted from Hobsbawm reveals two things: (1) that, as the last sentence shows, by the use of "more depressing episodes of diplomacy", a straightforward moral remark is being made in an historical account and (2) that "murderous Café Maoism" and "human government" function as thick descriptive terms or phrases that also give the whole sentence a distinctive morally normative force. Both reveal that a bit of history—a bit of social science—that can be both normative *and* descriptive at the same time. (His 2008 passage noted above does the same thing.) At least apparently, neither is compatible with my account of what social *science* to be a science should be.

I want finally, as far as my discussion of Hobsbawm is concerned, to note an extended passage from the last two pages of Hobsbawm's *Age of Extremes* (1995). Here we have, particularly in the light of the 583 pages that have gone before, a very powerful moral statement as well as an economic and political statement, all made in the course of writing history. A statement, however,

that is not *just* moral or otherwise normative but is also rooted in a stern and unflinchingly non-evasive factual conception of how things have been and a testable conception, and so factually significant conception, of how things may well go and what we must try to do in facing them. It moves us, steels us, gives us a sense of our humanity, and of a caring about that humanity and about human dignity. It shows something of our sapience. It surely belongs to historical writing and of the highest order. Yet, it clashes—or at least seems to—with my account of the *scientificity* of social science. *If* that is really so, then so much the worse for my account of scientificity. Hobsbawm writes:

We know that behind the opaque cloud of our ignorance and the uncertainty of detailed outcomes, the historical forces that shaped the century [20th century] are continuing to operate. We live in a world captured, uprooted and transformed by the titanic economic and techno-scientific process of the development of capitalism, which dominated the past two or three centuries. We know, or at least it is reasonable to suppose, that it cannot go on *ad infinitum*. The future cannot be a continuation of the past and there are signs, both externally and, as it were, internally, that we have reached a point of historic crisis. The forces generated by the techno-scientific economy are now great enough to destroy the environment, that is to say, the material foundations of human life. The structures of human societies themselves, including even some of the social foundations of capitalist economy, are on the point of being destroyed by the erosion of what we have inherited from the human past. Our world risks both explosion and implosion. It must change.

We do not know where we are going. We only know that history has brought us to this point and—if readers share the argument of this book—why. However, one thing is plain. If humanity is to have a recognizable future, it cannot be by prolonging the past or the present. If we try to build the third millennium on this basis, we shall fail. And the price of this failure, that is to say, the alternative to a changed society, is darkness (Hobsbawm 1995, 584-85).

Here, as befits an ending of such a book, we have generalizations of a sort that are perfectly in place in a historical account (Berlin 1980, 103-42). But we also have a powerful moral statement, though hardly of a type that we would find in a book of moral theory. However, its force is not at all diminished for all of that. It comes in the form, as we have seen, of what some philosophers call *thick descriptions*—*the use of thick concepts*—*where fact and value are inextricably*

entangled (Putnam 2002). Factual claims are being made that are also evaluative or normative. If in *The Age of Extremes* we have read nothing of it that has come before, we will still in these last pages see that. Hobsbawm's dark closing remarks have that status, but the force of them and a sense of their veridicality will be very much enhanced from a reading of the text, particularly if we think much of it, as I as well as many others do, as generally compiling as a historical account of the world from 1914 until now. But even if, like Tony Judt (another historian of considerable merit) and Edward Said (a formidable literary scholar and public intellectual), we have reservations concerning some crucial parts of it, indeed even have rather fundamental criticisms of it, we will still feel, as they do, the moral force of those concluding remarks (Judt 1995; Said 1996). We will feel that to the extent that Hobsbawm has often gotten it approximately right, has accurately and perceptively interpreted and explained his subject and "often remembered what others forgot" (Hobsbawm 1995, 3). He has deciphered the times of which he is writing with reasonable accuracy, penetration and that with the moral evaluations he takes from his account we still have good reasons to take to be apt. Moreover, they should, if we take them to heart, be morally compelling. But even if we do not so react, we can still acknowledge their attraction and power. We should recognize this is how we should see the world if Hobsbawm's account is factually on the mark. And even if we do not think that it is, we should acknowledge that *if* his factual claims were on the mark—were factually justified or nearly so—then we should recognize that his account is, morally speaking, an appropriate way to respond. (After all, fact and value are entangled here.) Perhaps it is even *the* way—the responsible way—that a rational and reasonable person should respond, at least in a socially liberal (I did not say neo-liberal) society. (I take 'rational' and 'reasonable' as John Rawls does. See Rawls 1993, 48-60 and Nielsen 2008, 227-36). Is there anything here that departs from or negates a scientific orientation or that rubs against the scientificity of his account? I do not think so. And there is much here that is profoundly moral.

However, Hobsbawm also says that the historian's "major task is not to judge but to understand and even what we can least comprehend" (Hobsbawm 1995, 5). But that is not to say that *qua* historian he can never be *judgmental*. Some remarks, being thick descriptions (using thick concepts), are unavoidably both judgmental and can be—and may well be—a part of an accurate historical account. His description, quoted earlier, about the leadership of the Red Khmer party involving a murderous combination of Paris Café Maoism and an armed peasantry bent on destroying the degenerate civilization of the of the cities was certainly also normative and indeed morally so, but it was also a factual claim (*perhaps a disputable factual claim*) as well; the very language he uses being a thickly descriptive account, a description made in certain circumstances. And arguably a true one: a claim that is *justified* by being warrantably assertable. Suppose, to take another example, one was what is now called an embedded journalist with an Allied army in the Second World War just entering a concentration camp which had been recently and hurriedly abandoned by fleeing Nazis as the war was nearing its end. Suppose the journalist was to give an account of what he saw. If some such thick descriptive words such as 'beastly', 'sickening' or 'grossly inhuman' were not used by this journalist, the account would have been plainly *factually* (as well as morally) inaccurate, indeed enfeebled. It would have been obviously badly off the mark as a historical report. Thick descriptions can sometimes be factually accurate and be utterly appropriate *and* deeply moral; indeed they in some circumstances are what are required for accuracy.

Hobsbawm goes on to remark, reminiscent of Hegel and Joe McCarney, concerning the Nazis that it is an *understanding* that is difficult to achieve; the *judgmental* part is easy. Moreover, as Hobsbawm remarks, "To understand the Nazi era in German history and to fit it into its historical context is not to forgive genocide. In any case, no one who has lived through this extraordinary century is likely to abstain from judgment. It is understanding that comes hard" (Hobsbawm 1995, 5).

Secondly, though Hobsbawm holds forth against prophecies and predictions as not being in the historian's job description, he remarks that while historians "can speculate about the future in the light of their understanding of the past, their business is not that of the racing tipster. The only horse races they can claim to report and analyse are those already won or lost" (Hobsbawm 1995, 5). But this dark speculating about the future is exactly what he does at the end of his book and, it seems to me, quite appropriately. Is it scientific? Well, it is not independent of his factual—here empirical—claims. But that does make it scientific.

I also think there is, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, no genuine conflict here. The *main task of the historian is understanding*: to get an accurate account, if she can, and an insightful deciphering of the part of the past that she studies—its societies, peoples, institutions and practices. But she can also *make judgments*, particularly when they 'follow' from her understanding.² This is particularly appropriate at an ending of a book like Hobsbawm's *Age of Extremes*.³ Moreover, it is what is appropriate for what I am concerned to argue here for the scientificity of history. Hobsbawm's descriptions, deciphering and judgments (normative claims) are empirically confirmable and infirmable. And so here we have the scientificity that I have been claiming for history.

IV

As Aristotle reminded us, one swallow doesn't make a spring nor one fine day. Hobsbawm, eminent and influential on a later generation of historians that he has been, still *may* be atypical. *Perhaps* most historians, even very able ones, use fewer thick descriptions and eschew placing moral assessments in their historical texts? I shall also look briefly at two other eminent historians: Perry Anderson (UCLA) and the late Tony Judt (NYU). Anderson, like Hobsbawm, is a deeply scholarly *non-parti pris* Marxist historian while Judt is a late social democratic defender of capitalism and someone who might be called a *social liberal*. They both have given powerful

historical accounts, deciphering important segments of history (Anderson 2009; Judt 1995; 2005). They both frequently use thick descriptions and make moral judgments much in the manner—*methodological* manner—of Hobsbawm though, particularly for Judt, not always with the same or even a similar substance. I shall illustrate this briefly for each. (Anderson, not unsurprisingly, is closer to Hobsbawm than Judt.)

Judt, in a long, often forceful and at times perceptively critical examination of Hobsbawm's *Age of Extremes*, writes:

The fact that the Soviet Union purported to stand for a good cause, indeed the only worthwhile cause, is what mitigated its crimes for many in Hobsbawm's generation. Others might say it just made them worse. In any case, the end of communism was a source of much happiness for many millions of people, even if that happiness has been diluted by the difficulties that followed, and it rather calls into question Eric Hobsbawm's conclusion that "the old century has not ended well." One is tempted, after all, to ask, "For whom?" The somber, almost apocalyptic tone of the final section of the book obscures the fact that the Eighties were also a decade of liberation for many, and not only in Eastern Europe. It is certainly true, as Hobsbawm says on more than one occasion, that no one any longer seems to have any solutions to offer to the world's problems, that we are tapping our way through a global fog, that we live in a world where "the past... has lost its role, in which the old maps and charts which guided human beings... no longer represent the landscape through which we move." But it is not self-evident that confident large-scale solutions of the sort we have lost were ever such a good thing—on balance they did a lot more harm than good (Judt 1995).

Here we see one historian criticizing another and making some moral judgments opposed to the one criticized. Do we just have problematic ideological responses here?⁴ Both nonetheless are using thick descriptions in their attempts to decipher history and both are making firm moral judgments that they take to 'follow' from or to be justified by their factual accounts. They utilize the same methodology though they in an important part make significantly different moral claims and have different moral visions. But in both cases they have moral visions—though different moral visions—rooted in their respective decipherings of history. Moreover, their deciphering of history is in part rooted in their moral visions. There we have in both cases a thorough entanglement of fact and value. We do not here have anything by either that smacks of value-neutrality or of some

crucial valuations which are fact insensitive (Putnam 2002; 2004). Neither tries to gain such a 'value-free' Archimedean point—or thinks that such a thing is possible. Writing history, nonetheless, is not and should not be just moralizing—even political moralizing. Still, large historical accounts at least do not stand free of moral outlooks or moral evaluations. However, this does not make moral principles, standing alone, king. Getting the facts as nearly right, seeing how they hang together, perceptively arranging them and relating them coherently is imperative. But do we escape, or entirely escape, ideological problematics here? Are we reasonably free from that here?

Be that as it may, let us turn now to Perry Anderson's magisterial, thoroughly researched, carefully descriptive and organized, interpreted and explanatory powerful book, *The New Old World* (Anderson 2009). He also has a similar *methodology* to that of Hobsbawm and Judt. Anderson's book abounds in relevant and perceptive thick descriptions and acute and otherwise normative evaluations rooted in his deciphering and providing an astute historical account that is not shy or evasive of moral and otherwise normative assessments. I shall conclude this section with only a few rather randomly chosen examples from the many that could with equal force have been chosen from his elaborate and closely worked account.

The New Old World gives an exhaustive and penetrating account of what Anderson takes to be the core of contemporary continental Europe (principally Western Europe), namely of France, Germany and Italy and with a careful account of the European Union where he starts off with its initial conceptualizations and ends with its subsequent discontents, including its current (2008) ones. He also strangely, but interestingly, focuses, though more briefly, on Cyprus and Turkey in coming to grips with what he calls 'the Eastern Question', oddly with no detailed consideration of Russia.

Now to turn to my randomly selected exemplifications of how with him, as for Hobsbawm and Judt, normativity is embedded in is factual historical narrative. In discussing the European Union, he remarks:

That said, the effect of its calque of American virtues for European users is simply to reproduce the constitutional blankness it criticizes—as if Evangelical faith and the US congressman were conceivable, let alone desirable, implants in the body politic of the Old World. No original proposals for Europe eventuate, in a case that dissolves into vagueness just where the sharpest clarity is required (Anderson 2009, 122).

And in his last section, entitled “Prognosis”, he writes:

Brussels is a lair of decisional processes of staggering complexity, confounding executive and legislative functions—no less than thirty-two different procedures that ‘only specialist lawyers and trained functionaries can follow’. Three-quarters of the Council’s decisions, approved without discussion, are pre-packages for it in the obscure recesses of Coreper; while at a lower level, hidden from public gaze, subterranean connexions between national bureaucracies and the machinery of the Community multiply. Ninety per cent of the lobbies infesting the extended committee system in Brussels are business organizations of one kind or another. Trade-union, environmental, consumer, feminist, or other ‘public interest groups’, by contrast, make up, all told, about 5 per cent. In real terms, the budget administered by the Commission amounted in the nineties to less than 1 per cent of Union GDP. Of this, by the end of the decade about a third was spent on Cohesion Funds, more redistributive territorially than socially. Overall, social expenditure by the EU is a miniscule one-hundredth of the total laid out by national governments. In such conditions, no ‘visible or significant relevant layer of European social citizenship’ exists. Monetary union, on the other hand, has created an extremely strong economic boundary for the Eurozone, patrolled by the ECB. But, so far, lacking any institutional goals other than price stability, it ‘looks more like a rigid system for disciplining member states’ behaviours rather than like an instrument functional to common EU interests and economic hegemony’ (Anderson 2009, 516).

And on the next page he adds:

In such a system, issues of legitimacy—over which European elites occasionally agonize, to comic effect—never arise. For legitimacy involves, by definition, principles, for which mere performance—capable at most of securing a passive assent, something very different—can never be a substitute. The resulting order is incoherent (Anderson 2009, 517).

Anderson concludes *The New Old World* with the remark:

Without clarity of means or ends, the Union seems to many adrift. Yet its apparent lack of any further coherent finality, deplored on all sides, might on one kind of reckoning be counted a saving grace, permitting the unintended consequences that have tracked integration from the start to yield further, possibly better, surprises. In principle, dynamic disequilibrium allows for that. In due course, a prolonged economic recession might reignite the engines of political conflict and ideological division that gave the continent its impetus in the past. So far, in today's Europe, there is little sign of either. But it remains unlikely that time and contradiction have come to a halt (Anderson 2009, 547).

In these passages and in many more that could have been cited there are thick descriptions galore with an unscrambled entanglement of fact and value and with a determinate moral orientation rooted in his factual account. (Again, I do not say 'entailed by'.) In deciphering the world, Anderson takes into consideration, accurately and perceptively, a certain comprehensive moral outlook—though no moral philosophy or moral theory goes with it. He is obviously judgmental here and is as well pervasively and descriptively accurate. There is, of course and rightly so, a stress on understanding, as there is in Hobsbawm, sometimes without moral judgment but very often with an understanding that is also judgmental and, *pace* Hegel and McCarney's reading of Hegel as well as McCarney's own account, something yielding both understanding and judgment. 'Judgmental understanding' is not an oxymoron. Indeed it would be rare for much deep understanding not to be judgmental.

A fact-value entanglement yields a judgmental understanding that is both empirical—and thus testable—and normative. (Shades of John Dewey here.) So such historical writing, even when it is normative, has the scientificity that I have adumbrated, often following Andrew Levine (see Lectures 1 and 2). I did not make this plain earlier, but it should be made plain. It is essential to see that judgmental understanding is not *only* normative. Indeed, we cannot get this where we employ thick concepts. Normativity and descriptivity are inextricably linked.

I do not mean to suggest that in making moral claims, even general ones, Anderson is doing or attempting to do moral philosophy, moral theory or normative political theory. He is not setting out claims such as a philosopher, say a utilitarian or Kantian deontologist or Rossian pluralistic deontologist or a meta-ethicist (cognitivist or non-cognitivist) would. Neither he nor Hobsbawm nor Judt are taking a stance on the logical status of moral utterances or on 'moral foundations' or on the nature of or the very possibility of moral knowledge. Rather, they worry about whether humanity will have anything like a decent future or indeed even have any future, whether we are headed for a crisis that will deepen into a catastrophe that will lead us into a new dark age or whether there is a reasonable prospect for there being a better life for us and, if so, what form it will take. They make no effort to define 'better life', quite reasonably taking it for granted that we have some understanding of what this is.⁵ Instead, they try to decipher our histories, digging out, where they are doing the history of the 20th Century, remembrances of things we have forgotten, chosen to forget, are in denial of, or have never known. They seek understanding of this world—its peoples, institutions, the life that went on there, its social dynamics, its economy. Unlike the Enlightenment historians (or part-time historians) Voltaire, Hume and Gibbon, they do not seek to collect over time historical generalizations—typically comparative historical generalizations—and to draw moral principles from them. Hobsbawm, Anderson and Judt make moral assessments alright, and often deep and perceptive ones, but that is not their main aim. Their main aim is understanding and decipherment but this also yields judgments. Berlin well reveals, by contrast, the 'unhistoricality' in theory and typically in practice of Enlightenment writers of history.

Voltaire's interest in history was to show how men were much the same in most ages, and how the same causes produce the same effects. The purpose of that was to show what we were like sociologically: what kind of ends men sought after, what kind of means did not bring them about, what kind of means did bring them about—and in this way to create some kind of science of how to live well. The same is true of Hume, who also spoke in much the same way. He said that most men in most circumstances, obeying the same causes, behave in roughly the same fashion. The purpose of history is not simply curiosity about what happened in the past, or desire to revive it, simply because we feel passionately interested in what our ancestors

were like, or because we wish in some way to connect the past with ourselves, to see what it was that we grew out of. That was not the principal spring of these men's interest. Their main aim was simply the accumulation of data upon which general propositions could be constructed, telling one what to do, how to live, what to be. That is the most unhistorical possible attitude that can be taken towards history, and it is the fairly characteristic attitude of the eighteenth century, including great historians who, despite themselves, wrote great history, such as Gibbon, whose ideals were a great deal inferior to his actual performance (Berlin 1999, 29).

V

History is neither democracy by example nor a tale of our emancipation or of reason. It is a discourse about the past that tries to be accurate: to do as best it can to tell it like it was. We should think of it, as we look at the 20th Century and of what we have seen of the 21st, principally as a tale of folly, brutality, inhumanity, destruction, repeated catastrophes, wars and the like. These for the most part have been appalling times and things do not seem to be getting any better. Socialism, the great hope of the 19th and 20th centuries, is on the ropes. Social Democracy has become acculturated to capitalism. Capitalism—by its greed, drive for profit, indifference to the downtrodden, and its misconceived conception of what rationality and reasonableness comes to—has destroyed or eviscerated the welfare state it once, under pressure from labor and what capitalists regarded as 'the Red Menace', had created and sustained (Barry 2005, 251-60). Hobsbawm is right: the world, unless it is to be a world of darkness, cannot go on as it is. It must, to be a human world, change and radically. Our present future prospects with the combination of global warming and population explosion (particularly in combination) are lethal. Such a future is utterly untenable. Hobsbawm is also on the mark in claiming that both the Soviet style command economy and capitalist market economies with their deregulation and privatization have shown themselves untenable. They both work very badly and have led to disasters. We need a social economy—not an economy propelled by individualism, greed and profit—that answers to human needs and human wellbeing. This should be its priority. And we have come to see that that will not

be served by following the profit motive as a central priority. But it should as well be an economy and not activity *simply* driven by moral goals.

This is the direction in which we must go if we would be reasonable and achieve our wellbeing in the contemporary world. Otherwise, we will get something even worse than what the 20th Century and, so far, the 21st Century have brought us. Even if we think—mistakenly, I believe—that we no longer need emancipation but just decency, our future, if we go on as we have been going, does not look at all encouraging. It does not afford decency for vast numbers of the world's peoples. The likelihood that we will get even decency is minimal. Hobsbawm is right that we do not know where we are going. And the prospects do not look bright.

So even if I have laid out a coherent and reasonable conception of an emancipatory social theory and an emancipatory social science, we are still a long way from emancipation or even decency and a humanly tolerable life—though we must remember again that the lower classes (strata, if you will) have tolerated the intolerable; they have lived for a long time in dreadful conditions. We do not have to talk of gulags, concentration camps, Guantanamo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Mexico, Israel or Iran but of what is happening in the United States, a plutocracy masquerading as a democracy (Parenti 2010); a state with an economy that produces and accepts a lot of unnecessary misery. Yet it is a state of incredible wealth (Davis 2006).

Perhaps Hobsbawm and I (and indeed not a few others) have been too catastrophist (Panitch 2008, 221-23)? Have we not a somewhat skewed view of the history of the 20th and 21st centuries? Surely it has the features that Hobsbawm powerfully and carefully adumbrates. But it has other features as well which he (and I) have neglected, namely, the arising extent and power of fundamentalist ideological and religious practices and the conflict that goes with Jewish, Christian and Moslem fundamentalisms. There has also been the rise and growing influence of the number of intellectuals, the importance and extent of nationalist movements, the emergence of the cultural phenomena of modernism and so-called postmodernism, and most particularly, the global

importance of East Asia. The historical import of *some* of these phenomena can be put in question, but still they complicate Hobsbawm's gloomy picture. (*Pace* Edward Said, they *may* reinforce it.) However, Edward Said's careful and insightful discussion of Hobsbawm—principally of his *Age of Extremes*—raises these issues and critically probes them. Said ends by asking if there are not “greater resources of hope in history than the appalling record of our century seems to allow” (Said 1996, 222). He goes on to ask “whether the large number of lost causes strewn about does not in fact provide some occasion for a stiffening of will and a sharpening of the cold steel of energetic advocacy. The 20th Century, after all, is a great age of resistance, and that has not completely been silenced” (Said 1996, 222). Of course it hasn't and we on the Left should be grateful to Said for reminding us of this. There must be, as he well puts, “a sharpening of the cold steel of energetic advocacy.” (But note that is a moral ‘must’.) We must put our energies and determination firmly into doing this and doing this intelligently and without evasion or self-deception. We do not know what spaces of hope we have. *Perhaps* they are less now than in 1995 when Said wrote that. With the depth and persistence of the recession (perhaps better called a depression) and the seemingly endless ongoing wars and threat of new wars (Libya, Iran and Yemen), we do not know whether our current state of affairs will not go on and on. *Perhaps* the horrors will be even greater. We just don't know. But the spaces of hope are not closed down entirely. Said is right there. We are in no position to know what the future will bring, but we are, with a sense of what we have now and have had in our past, in a position to stiffen our will and to sharpen the cold steel of our advocacy and resistance. This resistance must continue and accelerate. It is glued to our very sense of humanity and is not to be up for debate.

Notes

¹ Yet historians (including Hobsbawm) who do contemporary history (write, that is, about the 20th Century and/or what they have seen so far of the 21st Century). When they think they have spotted a trend they sometimes conjecture about the future. That may well be chancy, but it does not seem to me to be illegitimate for historians to be doing this, indeed, if you will, historians *qua* historians doing it. After all, much of science is chancy. If you want to go on about what historians *qua* historians can be doing, then that seems to me to likely to be a bit of essentialist scholasticism. Moreover, such historians are among the best placed to make such conjectures, if they are made at all. And why shouldn't they be made? Does it run against the necessary testability of science?

² 'Not follow' in the strict—the extreme—sense, is what most philosophers use when doing philosophy; for example, when they argue about 'ought' not following from 'is' in moral discourse. But they, and everyone else recognizes, that 'Stop' follows in a commonsense matter from 'There is a car coming'. There is no room for the question whether you should stop unless the person wishes to commit suicide or doesn't care whether he lives or dies. Then for him 'Why should I stop?' is a real question. See Stephen Toulmin (2001) and also his *Uses of Argument* (1958)

³ Hobsbawm, in *Age of Extremes*, narrates a great sweep of history from 1914 until 1991. He tries to decipher that period. Notwithstanding his remarks about what historians can and cannot do, it is appropriate in the light of what he has discerned to make some conjectures about what the future, perhaps with some reasonable likelihood, will be. This is particularly true when they concern untoward things that may be if we do not act with dispatch. We need not, and should not, be on the quest for certainty here. That we cannot get.

⁴ Some think Judt is on the mark here. That is fair enough. However, we should take note that, free of ideology in a pejorative sense, as perceptive an observer of the social scene (including centrally the political and economic scene) as Tariq Ali is refers to Judt as "a Cold War academic". Neither Ali nor Judt are themselves demagogues or ill informed. They both are able public intellectuals and acute and knowledgeable observers of our social world while remaining people of deep and well-defined political convictions (Ali 2000, 358). But they have political convictions that sometimes (and deeply) conflict: can we ascertain which, if either, is more nearly on the mark? Here take note of how Stephen Toulmin speaks of such issues. See Toulmin 2001.

⁵ For a clear and forceful exemplification of what it isn't, see Lance Topley, "The Worst of the Worst," *Boston Review* Vol. 35, no. 8 (Nov/Dec 2010: 30-35). With an awareness of such institutions so functioning, we can know without any doubt that their ending would lead to a better life in our societies. And such exemplifications can easily and in abundance be brought forth if we look with a non-evasive eye at our societies. For this we do not need one ounce of philosophy or a definition of 'a better life'.

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