TWO

CONSEQUENTIALIST INTERPRETATIONS
OF MARX

Even if it can be shown that Marx's primary values are freedom (as self-determination), human community, and self-realization, this does not yet settle the question of what general sort of moral theory he actually holds. Depending on how these values are explicated and defended and how they are related to a theory of right (as applied to actions, general rules for action, and/or social institutions), Marx's implicit moral theory might turn out to be a species of any one of a number of moral theories. Is Marx a utilitarian, his objections to this school of thought and especially raking criticisms of Jeremy Bentham notwithstanding? If so, is he a hedonistic or eudaemonic utilitarian? Or is his moral theory most plausibly interpreted as prefiguring contemporary utilitarianism, which takes the satisfaction of preferences (or considered preferences) to be the basic nonmoral good to be maximized? Is Marx, instead, a nonutilitarian consequentialist, for example, a perfectionist, a self-realization theorist, or a consequentialist who takes freedom to be the basic nonmoral good to be actualized without further giving a utilitarian justification of freedom? Or does he, instead, hold a deontological or mixed deontological moral theory? If so, is he a natural law theorist, a rational-will theorist, a Kantian, or a deontologist who takes principles of social justice and/or human rights as basic?

In the present chapter I argue against the claims that Marx is a straightforward utilitarian and that the three primary values are, in fact, reducible to considerations of utility in any sense, (e.g., pleasure, happiness, welfare, or the satisfaction of preferences). I also argue against the claim that he is a nonutilitarian consequentialist: he is not, I argue, a consequentialist of any sort. His moral theory, I suggest, is a mixed deontological theory, a theory of right action or obligation that recommends the promotion of one or more types of nonmoral good—freedom, human community, and self-realization in Marx's case—but holds that the criterion of right action is not simply the maximization of the nonmoral good. This type of moral theory holds that there are other right-making characteristics of actions, rules for action, and/or social policies and institutions, for example, treating people as ends in themselves or treating people fairly or respecting people's rights.

In this chapter and the next, I am primarily concerned with rationally reconstructing Marx's implicit moral theory (or set of moral views) rather than with arguing that Marx or Marxists should accept a certain moral theory. These two questions are distinct—the first is an exegetical question and the second a question of substantive moral theory—and it is quite possible for them to have divergent answers.

Consequentialism, Utilitarianism, and Deontological Moral Theory

Marx's moral perspective has been identified, at one time or another, with almost all of the types of moral theory mentioned above. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such evolutionary socialists as Eduard Bernstein and Karl Vorlander found Marx to be a Kantian. While explicitly rejecting morality as "ideological" and "unscientific," such "scientific socialists" as Engels and Karl Kautsky can often be found to be implicitly espousing a rather unsophisticated brand of utilitarianism. Since Engels and Kautsky viewed their own work as a continuation and elaboration of Marx's views, it seems fair to surmise that they found him to be a proponent of the same approach though, of course, even to suggest that Marx was operating with a moral theory during the height of the era of Scientific Socialism would have been a faux pas of major proportions—at least among orthodox Marxists.

More recently, such disparate philosophers as Adam Schaff, Derek P. H. Allen, and Allen E. Buchanan have suggested that Marx's moral evaluations are basically utilitarian in nature. John Somerville, Richard Miller, and Hilliard Aronovitch, on the other hand, defend the view that Marx is a nonutilitarian consequentialist who demands the maximization of all or some of the following values: self-determination, self-realization, and mutuality, i.e., human community or solidarity. Those who take the latter position usually see important similarities between the moral views of Marx and those of Aristotle. However, all of these interpretations see Marx's moral views as consequentialist in nature. By "consequen-
utilitarian” theory of G. E. Moore—seems particularly troublesome in this respect.

"Maximization" may be interpreted as the maximization of the sum total nonmoral good, of the average nonmoral good (mean or median), or any weighted alternative thereof. This will make no difference for our purposes. The main points we shall be concerned with in judging the various consequentialist interpretations of Marx are: (1) the nature of the nonmoral goods to be maximized and (2) the strategy of maximization per se.

Contrary to this sort of interpretation, a number of recent and contemporary philosophers see Marx as holding a deontological or mixed deontological moral theory. Sidney Hook made this suggestion in Towards Understanding of Karl Marx in 1933. Eugene Kamenka—while stressing Marx’s acceptance of the values as freedom (as self-determination), human community, and self-realization—takes the same general position in a more recent work, The Ethical Foundations of Marxism. Even more recently, Marxist humanists of the Yugoslav Praxis group—such as Mihaelo Marković and Svetozar Stojanović—have stressed Marx’s commitment to the concept of human dignity as well as to freedom (as self-determination) and self-realization and have concluded that Marx is not a utilitarian but some sort of deontologist. George Brenkert takes a similar position in various articles and in his book Marx’s Ethics of Freedom. He argues that Marx is a mixed deontologist who takes freedom and human autonomy as his most fundamental values.

By a “deontological” moral theory I mean, with Frankena, any theory “which does not make the theory of obligation entirely dependent on the theory of value, holding that an action may be known to be right . . . even though . . . it does not by being performed, bring into being as much good as some other action open to the agent.” By a “strict deontological” theory I mean one that holds that “an action may be known to be right without consideration of the goodness of anything,” i.e., without bringing under consideration the production of any sort of nonmoral good whatever. (This, I take it, is Kant’s position even though in his detailed arguments for particular moral maxims he often brings the production of certain nonmoral goods under consideration.) Arguably, Robert Nozick is also a strict deontologist.

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 76.
4 Ibid.
By a "mixed deontological" theory I mean a moral theory that considers the production of the (specified) nonmoral goods as a relevant consideration but holds, nonetheless, that the right action may not be the one that maximizes the nonmoral good. The production of the nonmoral good may be constrained, for example, by principles of its distribution or by other principles of right that are not themselves validated on the basis of their production or maximization of the nonmoral good. John Rawls and William K. Frankena are examples of contemporary moral philosophers holding mixed deontological theories.

Sometimes it is difficult to decide how to classify a particular theory or theorist. For example, if we are to take his explicit proclamations as good coin, J. S. Mill is not a mixed deontological theorist even though his theory contains both principles specifying the nonmoral good to be maximized and principles (of justice and human rights) that seem to govern its distribution. According to Mill, his principles of justice and human rights are secondary moral principles that are validated by the fact that, if recognized and followed, they will in the long run maximize utility. Consequently, he is committed to the claim that if such principles of justice and human rights did not, in fact, maximize the nonmoral good over the long run, they would not be justified as moral principles and their "violation" would not be, as such, a moral wrong—a thesis, one suspects, that would be difficult for Mill to swallow, despite his explicit statements. Mill—like most sophisticated utilitarians—would, of course, insist that this question is purely academic since the requirements of utility and those of our commonsense notions of justice do not, in reality, diverge. Nevertheless, if one could get Mill (or any other consequentialist) to take the side of the requirements of justice over those of utility even in purely hypothetical situations, one would thereby prove that she or he is, in reality, a mixed deontologist rather than a true-blue consequentialist. Despite his explicit proclamations to the contrary, I believe a strong case can be made for the thesis that J. S. Mill is, in reality, a mixed deontologist in consequentialist clothing.

As long as we are on the subject of J. S. Mill—Marx's great contemporary—there are two observations worth making on the connection between these two figures. First, the utilitarianism that Marx criticized was not that of J. S. Mill but that of Bentham, James Mill, and the French Encyclopedists. Second, to the extent that Marx knew of J. S. Mill's views, he actually expresses considerable respect for certain of them. As to the first point, George Brenkert notes that

Marx's criticism was made primarily against Holbach, Helvetius, Bentham, and James Mill. John Stuart Mill's work on utilitarianism, as well as his monograph entitled Utilitarianism, did not appear until long after Marx had settled his philosophical conscience with regard to utilitarianism. ... the utilitarianism Marx had in view was hedonistic, quantitative, and dependent upon associationist psychology for its answer to egoism.

As to the second point, Marx was not undiscerning in his assessment of the various utilitarians. In volume 1 of Capital, for example, after calling Bentham an "arch-Philistine" and "that insipid, pedantic, leather-tongued oracle of the ordinary bourgeois intelligence of the 19th century," Marx is quick to note that "it would be wrong to class [men like J. S. Mill] with the herd of vulgar economic apologists." Marx makes this assessment after approvingly quoting the following passage from Mill's Principles of Political Economy: "The really exhausting and the really repulsive labours instead of being better paid than others, are almost invariably paid the worst of all. ... The more revolting the occupation, the more certain it is to receive the minimum of remuneration. ... The hardships and earnings, instead of being directly proportional, as in any just arrangements of society they would be, are generally in an inverse ratio to one another." In terms of their moral perspectives the two are, in fact, in certain respects quite similar.

With these definitions and clarifications in mind, let us proceed to examine the claim that Marx is a utilitarian of one sort or another.

5 Brenkert, "Marx's Critique of Utilitarianism," p. 199.
6 Marx, Capital, vol. 1, p. 611ff.
MARX'S MORAL PERSPECTIVE

Marx as a Utilitarian: A Critique

As mentioned previously, many writers take Marx to be basically a utilitarian. There does not, however, seem to be a consensus as to what type of utilitarian he is. Ignoring the differences between maximizing sum total utility, average utility, and so forth, the various types of utilitarianism are differentiated according to their specific theories of the good. Hedonistic utilitarianism takes pleasure to be the summum bonum, the intrinsic good to be maximized. Eudaemonistic utilitarianism considers happiness to be the highest good. Preference utilitarianism takes the satisfaction of preferences—regardless of their causal connections to pleasure and pain or happiness and unhappiness—to be the highest good.

Among contemporary writers, the Polish Marxist philosopher Adam Schaff takes Marx to be a eudaemonistic or perhaps even a hedonistic utilitarian. In the English-speaking world Derek P. H. Allen is one of the most tenacious defenders of the utilitarian interpretation of Marx. Although it is sometimes not clear whether Allen interprets Marx as a eudaemonistic or a preference utilitarian, he claims, of Marx and Engels, that "their arguments are the kind used by utilitarians although not expressed in utilitarian vocabulary...the arguments which support their moral judgments are utilitarian in all but name." Examples of these utilitarian arguments are, according to Allen, those in favor of free trade and of certain cases of colonialism. Marx and Engels were in favor of free trade (i.e., against national tariffs) because "the free trade system is destructive. It...pushes the antagonism of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie to the extreme point. In a word, the free trade system hastens the social revolution." Similarly, they were in favor of British colonialism in India because, according to Allen, the question for them was, "Can mankind fulfill its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about the revolution." Allen's reasoning seems to be that since Marx obviously believes that communism will satisfy more people's needs and/or preferences than capitalism does or can, his decision to support the long-term interests of the proletariat over its short-term interests is simply a piece of utilitarian reasoning. It is dubious, however, that these arguments in and of themselves prove that Marx is a utilitarian or, more generally, a consequentialist. As Brenkert points out in his article "Marx and Utilitarianism,"

The simple appearance in Marx's writings of the consideration of consequences is not sufficient to establish that Marx is a utilitarian. The crucial point is in what way the consequences are regarded. He may accept principles of efficiency which are subordinate to a non-consequentialist determination of moral ends.11

In a subsequent article ("Marx's Critique of Utilitarianism"), Brenkert explains that

a non-utilitarian need not reject principles of efficiency—principles which approve of something being done because it promotes a certain end. The crucial point is that the end promoted is not itself justified simply on the basis of its consequences. This point can be illustrated by reference to Kant, whose ethics (I assume) is non-controversially non-utilitarian. In "Perpetual Peace" Kant argued that governments should be representative because such governments are less likely to make war. This is an argument which takes consequences into account; but it does not therefore follow that the ethical theory which underlies Kant's views on war, governments, human actions, etc., is a utilitarian one. So it is with Marx's views. True, he does consider the consequences of various actions. It would be absurd for him not to do so. But such considerations do not undercut the argument...that Marx was not a utilitarian.12

The mere fact that Marx considers consequences in his moral reasoning does not settle the issue of whether he is a consequentialist (e.g., a utilitarian) or a deontologist in his implicit moral views. Therefore, let us proceed with our examination of utilitarian interpretations of Marx. Allen E. Buchanan—while offering a number of important caveats—also gives Marx's moral theory a utilitarian interpretation. In considering how it is that Marx can condemn capitalism and commend socialism in his later works once he has given up the normative concept of "species-being" or "truly human nature" of his early works in favor of a purely

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9 Ibid., p. 192.
10 Ibid., p. 196.
descriptive "Protean core concept" of human nature, Buchanan proposes:

One initially plausible answer is that the Protean concept focuses on the idea that human history is basically the activity of satisfying needs and that Marx's sole criterion of evaluation is simply the extent to which this activity is successful. On this interpretation, capitalism is condemned not because it is unjust or immoral, or because it does not accord with human nature, but because it fails at the constitutive task of all human societies: it fails to satisfy needs. Communism, then, is not superior because it better measures up to principles of justice, or other moral ideals, or because it actualizes human nature, but simply because it better satisfies needs. And progress in history in general is to be gauged by the same simple criterion of satisfaction. . . . On this interpretation, success in the satisfaction of basic and nonbasic needs, or of needs and desires, is Marx's ultimate evaluative yard-stick.13

On this interpretation, in other words, Marx is best reconstructed as a preference utilitarian. Buchanan goes on to argue that Marx favored only the satisfaction of undistorted preferences, that is, preferences people would have in a nonexploitative society in which social relations are clear rather than opaque, as they are in capitalism. (We shall return to this issue presently.) There is, however, one more point we should note before leaving Buchanan's initial analysis and turning to Marx's explicit and nonexplicit (but reconstructable) criticisms of utilitarianism. Buchanan's interpretation is based on attributing to Marx the primary demand that human needs be satisfied and, as Buchanan notes,

"needs" should not be interpreted narrowly as "subsistence needs," for Marx makes it clear that while communism will do a better job of discharging the first task of human society its superiority is not limited to this. The full satisfaction of basic needs is for Marx only the prerequisite for the pursuit and satisfaction of the need for creative production and for the all-around development of the autonomous, socially integrated individual.14

The important point here is that the concept of needs seems to imply a moral perspective on which it is more important to satisfy needs than to satisfy desires or preferences that are not needs and, if one further distinguishes between basic and nonbasic needs, that it is also more important to satisfy basic rather than nonbasic needs. If it is the case that Marx—according to Buchanan's interpretation—does not merely give a somewhat greater weight to needs but, instead, gives to them an absolute preference over desires or preferences that do not qualify as needs, then it cannot be the case for Marx that (even) a great number of mere desires or preferences on the part of some people ought to be satisfied at the cost of not satisfying other people's needs. If this is a correct reconstruction of Buchanan's interpretation of Marx, then Buchanan may not—strictly speaking—be interpreting Marx as a utilitarian or a consequentialist because he is implicitly attributing to Marx a principle of distribution of the nonmoral good and not just a principle of maximization. (The reason I say "may not" is that one could claim that this principle of the priority of needs has the status of a secondary moral principle which, if followed, will maximize utility in the long run.)

Let us retrace our steps, however, and first examine the claim that Marx is a hedonistic or eudaemonistic utilitarian who takes happiness as the good to be maximized in a narrow sense of the term, the sense indicating only satisfaction or contentment rather than, say, human flourishing. Adam Schaff claims, for example, that "Marx's point of arrival, the object of his endeavors is man in general, the happiness of every human individual."15 Marx is a humanist, Schaff claims, where "by humanism we mean a system of reflection on man which, regarding him as the supreme good, aims at providing in practice the best conditions for human happiness."16 In A Philosophy of Man, Schaff writes that "Marxist theory . . . leads to the general position that may be called 'social hedonism'—the view that the aim of human life is to secure the maximum happiness for the broadest masses of the people, and that only within the compass of this aim, can personal happiness be realized. . . . social humanism is indeed a variety of 'social hedonism.'"17

However, whether or not someone who calls for the maximization of happiness is a eudaemonistic utilitarian, as I am using the term, depends on whether we give a broad or narrow interpretation to the term "happiness." On the narrow interpretation, eu-

13 Buchanan, Marx and Justice, pp. 28-29.
14 Ibid., p. 29.
16 Ibid., p. 181.
17 Schaff, A Philosophy of Man, p. 60.
daemonic utilitarianism is very similar to hedonistic utilitarianism. They are both concerned to produce the most satisfying states of mind, but whereas hedonistic utilitarianism believes such states to consist solely of occurrence states of pleasure (and the absence of pain), the eudaemonic utilitarian believes that other states of mind besides pleasure and pain are intrinsically valuable and usually takes into consideration dispositional as well as occurrence states. (Happiness is, after all, more of a dispositional than an occurrence property of persons.)

There is, however, a broader interpretation of "happiness," according to which to speak of human happiness is to speak of human well-being or human flourishing—concepts that are not completely cahsable in terms of such states of mind. "Human flourishing" seems to indicate growth and development, satisfaction and successful or productive activity as well as desirable states of mind. That there is such a broader concept of happiness seems to be borne out by the fact that eudaimonia, the term used by Aristotle to refer to activity in accordance with human virtue or excellence, can be translated as "happiness," "well-being," or "flourishing."

The proposal that Marx is a hedonistic utilitarian or a eudaemonic utilitarian in the narrow sense is perhaps the easiest to refute. As we have seen, he values freedom, self-realization, and human community and does not attempt to reduce them to the pleasure that the realization of these values tends to produce. Marx condemns Fourier, for example, for attempting to reduce "free labor" to the notion of play and claims, "Really free labor, the composing of music for example, is at the same time damned serious and demands the greatest effort."

Perhaps the hedonistic utilitarian could invoke the doctrine of psychological hedonism at this point and maintain that the composer or artist who suffers to create and even the stranger who rushes into a burning building to save a child's life are in pursuit of the greatest balance of pleasure over pain (once we calculate both physical and psychological pleasure and pain) and thus maintain that this quote from Marx doesn't prove that he rejects hedonism as a theory of the good. But there are two points to be made against this suggestion. First, the proponents of hedonistic psychological egoism can remain faithful to their doctrine in the face of the above counter-examples only on pain of emptying their "theory" of all empirical content.

(What could possibly count as evidence against this theory if the example of the complete stranger rushing into a burning building in an attempt to save others does not?) Second, the interpretative question concerning Marx's substantive moral views does not hinge on whether or not the composer is really doing what is going to maximize the balance of pleasure over pain or happiness over unhappiness but, rather, on whether or not Marx would hold that the composer's activity is commendable or laudatory even though it does not maximize pleasure or happiness. It seems quite clear from our previous discussion that Marx would see the composer's labors as laudatory or "worthy of human dignity" even if they did not maximize pleasure and, indeed, even if they created a substantial deficit of pain over pleasure or dissatisfaction over satisfaction in the composer's life. We need only remember that in Marx's concept of human nature the two essential (and transhistorical) human capacities are those for free, conscious, creative activity and for human community and that Marx's characterization of human nature is not purely descriptive but also evaluative. That is, even in his later works Marx is not only claiming that human beings have these two capacities but is advocating they be realized. (One need only review such passages as the one on the realms of necessity and freedom in the third volume of *Capital* to see that this is true.)

Even the attempt to reduce Marx's three primary values, which provide the moral basis for his evaluative characterization of human nature (or his normative concept of the human individual) to secondary moral rules for the promotion of pleasure is implausible—and for the same reasons. It seems clear that he would remain faithful to these principles even if their acceptance and implementation would not produce the greatest balance of pleasure over pain in the long run. His very concept of human nature as a bundle of capacities or potentialities that can be objectified and realized only through activity or praxis seems to be the antithesis of the classical hedonistic utilitarian's view of human nature as a collection of appetites to be satisfied. Marx asks, for example, "What is life but activity?" and continues, "In the type of life activity resides the whole character of a species, its species-character; and free, conscious activity is the species-character of human beings." The basic notions in Marx's vision of human beings are
activity and realization; the basic notions in the hedonistic utilitarian's vision are appetite and satiation.

A related reason to reject the utilitarian interpretation of Marx is that the utilitarian is generally committed to an individualistic, egoistic conception of the individual's interests vis-à-vis the general interest (or common good). As shown in chapter 1, Marx's value of human community, as incorporated in his normative concept of human nature, sees as possible and recommends the transcendence of the distinction between individual and social interests, and the private and public good. Now whether the total coincidence of the individual and social interest is possible is perhaps dubious, but it is clear that—to whatever extent this is possible—it is favored by Marx. Compare, for example, the following two passages, the first from an 1853 New York Tribune article in which Marx comments on the phenomena of desperation and suicide in the bourgeois societies of his era, and the second from the Paris Manuscripts in which he reflects upon what for him must have been a harbinger of future communist society:

What sort of society is it, in truth, where one finds several millions in deepest loneliness, where one can be overcome by an irresistible longing to kill oneself without anyone discovering it? This society is not a society; it is, as Rousseau says, a desert populated by wild animals.\(^{26}\)

When communist artisans form associations, teaching and propaganda are their first aims. But their association itself creates a new need—a need for society—and what appeared to be a means has become an end. The most striking results of this practical development are to be seen when French socialist workers meet together. Smoking, eating, and drinking are no longer simply means of bringing people together. Society, association, entertainment which also has society as its aim, is sufficient for them; the brotherhood of man is not an empty phrase but a reality, and the nobility of man shines forth upon us from their well-torn bodies.\(^{21}\)

That Marx held human community or mutuality to be intrinsically valuable seems beyond doubt. (We shall do well to keep the latter passage in mind when we consider the purported "problem" of revolutionary motivation at the end of chapter 4.)

\(^{26}\) Cited in Eugene Kamenka, The Ethical Foundations of Marxism, p. 36.

\(^{21}\) Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, p. 176.

happiness of those in the exploited, subordinate positions (and no other alternative set of social arrangements offers a greater balance of pleasure over pain or happiness over unhappiness). But in this case such relationships of dominance and exploitation are—for the utilitarian—morally justified. This would obviously be an objectionable assessment to Marx and must therefore count against interpreting him as a utilitarian.

But why is this? Why is it that Marx would find such an assessment objectionable? As we have already seen in chapter 1, one reason is that he views such relations of dominance and exploitation as constituting violations of freedom, which is perhaps his most cherished and deeply held value. Another reason, I submit, is that Marx finds the fulfillment and, indeed, the very existence of desires for dominance and feelings of social superiority morally objectionable. He believes that such desires (for dominance, power over others, symbols of material wealth) are created, or at least promoted, by capitalism and will not be characteristic of the completely socialized and humanized individuals he believes will populate communist society. Although one might be tempted to go from this fact directly to the conclusion that Marx denies one of the utilitarian’s basic theses—namely, that all desires are prima facie equally worthy of satisfaction—one must proceed carefully at this point. There are actually three different theses involved here: (1) every desire is prima facie equally worthy of satisfaction; (2) some desires are better than others; and (3) capitalism produces distorted desires, and socialism (or communism) will produce undistorted desires on the part of individuals.23

Let us examine these three theses in reverse order. It is clear that Marx holds the third thesis. He believes the structure of capitalist society gives rise to such “distorted” desires as those for dominance and of symbols of material wealth. He believes that the structure of capitalism gives rise to the fetishism of money, commodities, and capital and the associated desire to be materially—as opposed to “spiritually”—wealthy. In Marx’s vision of communist society, on the other hand, in place of the wealth and poverty of political economy, we have the wealthy man and the plentitude of human need. The wealthy man is at the same time one who needs a complex of

human manifestations of life, and whose own self-realization exists as an inner necessity, a need.24

While, for the most part, it is only Marxists and other opponents of capitalism who accept the third thesis, a great many more people accept the second one. Although there is not universal agreement on this point, it is my contention that Marx is among them. He writes, for example, “The pleasure of all hitherto existing classes and estates have inevitably been either juvenile and tedious, or else coarse because they have always been divorced from the over-all life-activity of individuals.”25 In his earlier works he also often distinguishes “animal” from “human” functions or desires and “civilized” from “crude” or “barbarous” needs.

Within the system of private property . . . needs become an ingenious and always calculating subservience to inhuman, depraved, unnatural, and imaginary appetites. Private property does not know how to change crude need into human need.

. . .

No eunuch flatters his tyrant more shamefully or seeks by more infamous means to stimulate his jaded appetite, in order to gain some favor, than does the eunuch of industry, the entrepreneur, in order to acquire a few silver coins or to charm the gold from the purse of his dearly beloved neighbor. . . . The entrepreneur accedes to the most depraved fancies of his neighbor, plays the role of pander between him and his needs, awakens unhealthy appetites in him, and watches for every weakness so that later on he may claim remuneration for his labour of love? [emphasis added].

In his later works as well it seems obvious that Marx holds that some desires are better than others (e.g., the desire to cooperate as opposed to the desire to dominate), but the question we must now ask is whether or not he holds the first thesis, that all desires are prima facie equally worthy of satisfaction. Although Marx disapproves of some desires, there is, to my knowledge, no evidence that he thought such “distorted” desires hadn’t even a prima facie claim to being satisfied. Most of these desires, of course, should

24 Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, pp. 164–165.
26 Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, p. 168.
27 Ibid., p. 169.
not be allowed to be satisfied on Marx’s view, because this would entail harm to others, e.g., a limitation on the freedom of those in subordinate social positions. Furthermore, he undoubtedly thought that people with undistorted as opposed to distorted desires are in some sense better or more worthy and that a society that produces individuals having undistorted desires is better than one that does the opposite. This does not mean, however, that he would have disagreed with William James’ famous dictum—“Take any demand, however slight, which any creature, however weak, may make. Ought it not, for its own sole sake, to be satisfied? If not, prove why not”—at least when applied exclusively to human beings.

If we assume that Marx accepts the first thesis, however, there are still two ways we can reconstruct his view, depending on what position he takes on the second thesis, i.e., that some desires are better than others. If we interpret Marx as not holding this position, if we take him to agree with Bentham that—all things being equal—pushpin is as good as poetry or, more to the point, the desire to dominate is as good as the desire to cooperate, then we could, as Buchanan notes,

evaluate a given form of society according to the extent to which it succeeds in satisfying the desires which it engenders. We judge that there is progress in history if (in general) later social forms do a better job of satisfying the desires they engender than earlier forms did in satisfying the desires they engendered. On this reading, Marx criticizes capitalism only for its failure to satisfy, or to satisfy fully, the desires characteristic of capitalist man, while he praises communism for its ability to satisfy fully the distinctive desires of communist man.

But in reality, of course, Marx does not think all desires are equally worthy but, rather, that some desires are better than others. “He recognized,” writes Kamenka, “... that human demands are not ultimates: that we might as well judge a society by the demands it creates as by the demands it satisfies.” As Buchanan notes of the previous suggested strategy for evaluating societies:

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29 Buchanan, Marx and Justice, p. 29.
30 Kamenka, The Ethical Foundations of Marxism, p. 95.

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This interpretation ... cannot be right, for it overlooks Marx’s emphasis on the qualitative differences between the desires of capitalist man and those said to be distinctive of communist man. The former Marx portrays as slavish, destructive, in conflict with one another, and grounded in a consciousness that is distorted by the alienated social relations of class-divided society.

But this brings us to a perennial problem with utilitarianism, namely, that it leaves no room (or very little) for a critique of the preferences people happen to have. J. S. Mill tried to provide grounds for such a critique with his “choice criterion of value,” but it is doubtful that this modification really solves the problem. After all, we may still condemn some of the Marquis de Sade’s preferences and activities, even if he had experienced a broad range of desires and activities and thus had met the condition of Mill’s choice criterion of value.

In an attempt to get around this criticism of utilitarianism and thus improve the chances of successfully interpreting Marx as a utilitarian, Buchanan goes on to claim:

A promising way of capturing Marx's emphasis on the qualitative differences between communist and capitalist desires might be, then, to understand it as corresponding to a distinction between distorted and undistorted desires. Marx describes communism as a form of society in which relations among persons are no longer distorted, but rather transparent and thoroughly intelligible. In communism the gap between the surface appearances of social life and the underlying reality—the chasm Marx strives to bridge in Capital—will no longer exist. Utilizing this distinction, we might then say that for Marx the superiority of communism is not simply that it makes possible the fullest satisfaction of the desires it engenders, but that ... Communism, and only communism, makes possible the fullest satisfaction of those desires which persons at this state of history would have or would develop, were their consciousness, and hence their desires, not distorted by the positions they occupy in class-society.

This maneuver is, of course, the familiar one of attempting to save utilitarianism by qualifying the desires whose satisfactions
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to be maximized, but with a new, Marxist twist. The normal, non-Marxist version of this strategy is simply to qualify the desires to be maximized as considered or something of the sort. (This is more or less a rendition of J. S. Mill’s choice criterion of value. It is also the sort of utilitarianism Derek P. H. Allen puts forward as being adequate to account for Marx’s moral reasoning.) The Marxist twist added here is to demand, further, that these desires not be distorted by (distorting) social relations.

To say these desires are “distorted,” of course, is to do more than describe them; it is also to evaluate them (negatively). In attributing the distinction between distorted and undistorted desires to Marx, we might have in mind Marx’s normative conception of human nature so prevalent in his early works. On this view, distorted desires deviate from human nature, whereas undistorted desires conform to human nature and, by doing so, are “truly human.” One might, on the other hand, attribute this distinction to Marx without invoking the notion of “truly human” as used in his early works. But if this is done, one must keep in mind that—on pain of attributing a particularly gross form of the naturalistic fallacy to Marx—one cannot merely say that distorted desires are those that appear in capitalism and undistorted desires are those that will appear in communism. It is clear that “distorted” and “undistorted” are evaluative terms in this context and that their (negative) evaluative meaning must come from something more than the mere fact that they are bound to appear in different forms of society.

Perhaps the force of this strategy actually derives from the fact that—if Marx’s theory of fetishism in capitalist society and associated theories are correct—the desires that arise in communist society come closer to being the product of fully effective, deliberative rationality than do those that arise in capitalist society or, in general, in the context of “distorted” social relations. The former arise under conditions in which social relations are viewed clearly, and the latter arise under conditions in which the nature of social relations is obscured. Still—if one is assuming only a narrow, means-ends view of rationality—the fact that certain desires are arrived at more rationally than others cannot account for the fact that they are better, worthier, or more commendable—something Marx also clearly believes. Furthermore, Buchanan’s strategy seems to put an immense burden on an empirical theory—the “materialist theory of consciousness,” which is to “explain both the distortions of consciousness in pre-communist society and the evolution of undistorted consciousness in the transition from capitalism to communism”—that has not even been developed. If this is the risk one must take in order to interpret Marx successfully along utilitarian lines, one naturally tends to wonder if there might not be better alternatives. Buchanan, for example, admits there is one that may even be “more promising”:

Either the superiority of communism and the radical defects of capitalism are to be gauged by the standard of the satisfaction of undistorted desires or by reference to a set of ideals, including autonomy and community, which are not reducible to the standard of satisfaction. The former strategy is unsatisfactory because it either commits us to the yet unsupported view that undistorted desires will turn out to be the very desires Marx attributes to the members of communist society or to the uninspiring claim that communism is superior simply because it maximizes satisfaction, where the qualitative character of the desires is itself of no significance. The second strategy, though more promising, is also not without difficulties: it leaves us with a set of distinctive normative ideals which can be and have been challenged. To say that these ideals are not adequately supported by Marx is not, of course, to say they are unsupportable.

It is this second alternative that I am putting forward. It remains to be seen, however, how such moral ideals as autonomy or freedom (as self-determination) and self-realization figure into an adequate interpretation of Marx as well as into an adequate Marxist moral and social theory if these two happen to diverge. Even if we agree that such moral ideals are to play the roles mentioned by Buchanan, there are still two ways they can be utilized in a theory of moral obligation or right action: (1) as nonmoral goods to be maximized or (2) as the basis for principles of right that are not dependent on the maximization of the nonmoral good. In the next section I hope to show that the former (maximization) strategy will not do as an interpretation of Marx’s moral views and that a better interpretation is that they form a sort of mixed deontological moral theory. I shall argue, further, that an adequate Marxist moral theory cannot be a form of utilitarianism or (nonutilitarian) consequentialism because all forms of consequentialism have certain crucial faults.

98

Ibid., p. 31.

99

Ibid., p. 35.
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Marx and Nonutilitarian Forms of Consequentialism

Even if I have shown that Marx is not a utilitarian, I have not yet demonstrated that he is not a consequentialist of any sort. I shall now argue against the thesis that Marx is a nonutilitarian consequentialist.

Most of those who interpret Marx's implicit moral theory as a form of nonutilitarian consequentialism see substantial similarities between Marx and Aristotle. John Somerville goes so far as to claim, "In a sense, Marx equals Aristotle minus aristocracy plus historical science." Although Aristotle and Marx, according to Somerville, agree that "value arises out of the built-in needs, desires and potentialities of development of man" but from Marx's standpoint... though Aristotle understood correctly the relation between ethics and politics, value and science, social theory and social practice, what Aristotle lacked was a significant theory of history, a theory about the causal dynamics of large-scale socio-historical changes, and the effect of these changes upon ethics, politics, value, science, theory and practice.

Somerville also notes that for Aristotle "there is a word for the overall good that everyone wants: happiness." From these comments we can presumably deduce that the following characterization of ethics is meant by Somerville to apply to both Marx and Aristotle:

Ethics must be a theory of how to attain human happiness. What human happiness is and how man can attain it naturally depend on the kind of being man is, on how man is made, on his needs, wants and potentialities, all of which is empirically determinable. Two things stand out: man is a rational animal, and man is a political animal. So the attainment of happiness depends primarily upon two things: the full development and application of man's intelligence, and the setting up of a society whose institutions are deliberately geared to the attainment of maximum human happiness.

... Somerville, "The Value Problem and Marxist Social Theory," p. 54.
= Ibid.
* Ibid.
w Ibid., p. 53.
= Ibid., p. 54.

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Somerville, at first glance, appears to be giving a eudaemonistic utilitarian interpretation to Marx. This depends, however, on whether we give a broad or narrow interpretation to "happiness." On the narrow interpretation, happiness is simply contentment or satisfaction—a particular state of mind. But we must keep in mind that Aristotle's term eudaemonia can be interpreted as "well-being" or even "flourishing," as well as "happiness." The point is that if we interpret Somerville to be claiming that Marx and Aristotle are proponents of happiness in the broader sense, then it is no longer clear that he is classifying them as eudaemonistic utilitarians as opposed to nonutilitarian consequentialists. At any rate, I shall group Somerville's interpretation with those who see Marx as an Aristotelian, perfectionist, self-realization theorist, or some other sort of nonutilitarian consequentialist.

Alan G. Nasser sees Marx as wholly an Aristotelian in his ethical perspective and interprets him as having the position that the actualization of whatever is, in fact, the "end" or "function" of human beings is the ultimate criterion of value and thus the ultimate determinant of the good for human beings. According to Nasser, we find both in Marx's early and mature writings a normative philosophical anthropology whose partial function is to provide a basis for his condemnation of the capitalist mode of production. This feature of Marx's critique of capitalism is firmly rooted in the naturalist tradition which recognizes an implication from human nature to morality. The form of reasoning employed by Marx, which I shall call "the ergon argument," is found in its pure form in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, and is used by both Aristotle and Marx to support commendations and condemnations whose import is functionally ethical. . . . there is an undeniably ethical component to Marx's critical social theory, and ... this ethical element is based upon a normative anthropology, a "concept of man which . . . serve[s] as a standard against which his present existence . . . [is] measured and criticized."

But, Nasser continues, the general notion of the human good, well-being or happiness, can be given a specific sense only if man's natural function or ergon is first identified. This can be accomplished, Ar-
istotle thinks, by determining the kind of activity that the human species, and only the human species, can perform, taking into account its characteristic structural organization. The good for man will consist in the performance of his function, the exercise of his specifically human powers, throughout a complete life. This form of reasoning, the ergon argument, presupposes the following three claims: 1) that it makes sense, and is correct, to say that nature endows man qua man with a special function to perform, 2) that this function can be ascertained by determining the kind of activity that distinguishes *homo sapiens* . . . from every other species, and 3) that such activity is (the moral) good for man.\(^4\)

Nasser concludes from this that Marx has “an historically modified self-realization theory of ethics. Self-realization involves the ‘free’ and ‘creative’ exercise of those powers that define man’s *ergon*”\(^5\) and, furthermore, that it is the fact “that the continued existence of capitalist relations of production precludes the actualization of his possibility [which] is the basis of Marx’s ethical case against capitalism.”\(^6\)

Now there can be no doubt that Marx and Aristotle have a similar view of human nature as a bundle of capacities whose realization constitutes the proper functioning and, therefore, the happiness and flourishing of human beings. But it is altogether another question whether or not Marx’s views on morality can be completely assimilated to Aristotle’s. It seems especially suspect that Marx would have been amenable to all of the metaphysical and quasi-metaphysical assumptions outlined by Nasser in the second passage quoted above—especially in his later works in which he had gotten away from the Hegelian problematic of essence and existence and in which he explicitly condemns philosophical theories of the human essence. Of course, the mere fact that Marx would have rejected this way of speaking does not prove that his views are not actually best captured by it.

Perhaps the strongest reason for rejecting this strict Aristotelian interpretation of Marx’s moral views is that the three assumptions outlined by Nasser above are not necessary to an adequate interpretation of them. They are, in fact, so much extra baggage. All one needs to do to reconstruct Marx’s position adequately is to point out that the capacities for free, conscious, creative activity and for human community are attributed by Marx to human beings on a species-wide basis and are, in addition, approved or commended by him. This seems an adequate account of Marx’s views without dragging into the fray the claims that “nature endows man qua man with a special function to perform,” that “this function can be ascertained by determining the kind of activity that distinguishes *homo sapiens*,” and that “such activity is”—ipso facto—“(the moral) good of man.”

Furthermore, from the point of view of the adequacy of a moral theory, these particular assumptions and self-realizationist theory as a whole, may well be found wanting. In his classic article, “Alienation and Self-realization,” Kai Nielsen points out that there is no one capacity or one small set of capacities that is distinctively human:

Suppose . . . we mean by “realizing yourself” essentially what Aristotle meant, namely that to realize oneself is to develop those capacities which are distinctive of *homo sapiens*. . . . The rub is that man—if he can correctly be said to have any function at all—can be said to have many distinctive functions; that is to say, there are many things which are peculiar to man—that men and only men do. Even if being able to reason or more plausibly to carry on rational discourse and act in accordance with what is deliberated upon is distinctive of the human animal, so is having guilt feelings, the capacity for anguish and alienation, to drive automobiles, to slaughter one’s fellow human beings and other creatures with complicated weapons, etc., etc. There are a multitude of things which are distinctive of man.\(^4\)

Furthermore, it is of no avail to claim that the moral good of human beings consists in realizing their *essential* capacities or characteristics because “essential” here seems to be functioning as an evaluative term. This move thus begs the question. As Nielsen argues:

In defending Aristotle, people may reply to the above argument by saying that to find the function of a thing we not only need to find what is distinctive of it but we also need to find its “essential characteristic” . . . . With respect to this argument, it should be noted that “essential” in “essential char-

\(^4\) Ibid., p. 486.
\(^5\) Ibid., p. 500.
\(^6\) Ibid.
characteristic" itself functions evaluatively. Thus, in order to specify the function of man or self-realization, one must invoke some unspecified but still more fundamental normative criterion to establish what counts as an "essential characteristic." There are many activities which are distinctively and peculiarly human but some are more important than others and thus are more essential. . . . But then we still have not decided how we ascertain what is more or less valuable. Certainly we do not do it by appealing to a criterion of self-realization, for we have to know already what counts as a more essential and hence more valuable characteristic in order to know what would count as attaining or approximating self-realization.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 24.}

Thus the self-realization cannot be the basic intrinsic good because it presupposes a more basic criterion by which human capacities can be judged as worthy or unworthy of being realized. Some writers believe this objection can be met by specifying that an "essential" capacity is a "fundamental" capacity, i.e., a capacity whose fulfillment is a precondition for the fulfillment of other capacities. They assert that for human beings this is the capacity for self-determination. But breathing and rationality are also fundamental in this sense, so one wonders if an evaluation is not really being made in singling out self-determination as the capacity whose fulfillment constitutes human self-realization.\footnote{See Hilliard Aronovitch's article, "Marxian Morality."}

Furthermore, besides having "internal" faults, self-realization theory has "external" faults as well. The main one is that a self-realizationist moral theory cannot, in and of itself, account for considerations of justice. Interpreted as an egoistic theory, it is oblivious to possible conflicts between one's own interests and those of others. Interpreted as a universalistic consequentialist theory, it gives us no criteria for resolving conflicts of interests that are bound to occur between persons, each of whom is pursuing his or her own self-realization. In fact, if self-realization theory is understood to call for the overall maximization of the realization of certain human capacities or potentialities, then it is bound to be open to counter-examples from considerations of justice. Those possible or actual situations where the maximization of the overall realization of human potentialities means that some individuals will not be allowed to realize (or have the means to realize) only what is clearly an unjustly small number of them are bound to run counter to considerations of justice and thus cast doubt on the viability of self-realizationist theory.

Finally—though I shall take this up in more detail later—a strict form of self-realizationist theory with no provisions for human autonomy or freedom (as self-determination) may turn out to be outrageously paternalistic. While it may be morally permissible for parents to force their children to take piano lessons, certainly it is not permissible for society to force an adult human being to engage in activities against his or her will on the grounds that by means of such activities the individual's—and thus society's—realization of "human" capacities will be maximized.

Hilliard Aronovitch, in his excellent article "Marxian Morality," also gives an Aristotelian (or quasi-Aristotelian) interpretation of Marx's moral views, but one more sensitive to Marx's commitment to freedom (as self-determination) and human autonomy.

A basis is . . . needed for arguing that a classless society together with its moral principles can be counted as morally superior alternatives.

Marx does provide such a basis. He does so with his conception of human nature. That conception serves as the foundation of a morality of self-realization, a morality centering on the principle . . . that calls for the full and free development of individuals.\footnote{Aronovitch, "Marxian Morality," p. 361.}

And furthermore:

Marx's philosophical anthropology, his conception of human nature, makes it possible for him to evaluate different social systems, patterns of social relations and even individual courses of conduct by reference to whether and how far they manifest the free and consciously directed shaping by men of their world and themselves. Marx's philosophical anthropology gives him the leverage on which to build a system of ethics . . . the foundation for his theory [is] that the realization of human nature is the criterion of the good.\footnote{Ibid., p. 364.}
what is uniquely human in them but that they must develop that capacity without which they cannot pursue the development of any other capacity.'\textsuperscript{49} This capacity, according to Aronovitch, is the capacity to

shape my circumstances and myself, [for] unless I realize my capacity for doing these things, I cannot set myself to realizing any other, further capacities; whether I get to develop any further capacities and which ones and to what extent—all these things are then subject to the vagaries of circumstance or the whims of others.\textsuperscript{50}

"Another key difference between the Marxian and the Aristotelian kinds of self-realization," according to Aronovitch, is that "self-realization . . . is . . . as much a matter of making or constituting myself as it is of affirming a pre-given self . . . .\textsuperscript{51} A third divergence we might note is that Marx subscribes to the concepts of human dignity and the equal moral worth of all human beings and thus is committed to fundamental equality not only within classes but between classes. This presumably leads him to a principle of \textit{equal} freedom (as self-determination) and thus casts considerable doubt on the interpretation of Marx as a nonutilitarian consequentialist as opposed to a strict or mixed deontologist.

These considerations lead naturally to a more detailed comparison between Marx and Aristotle. Even though Marx, as a champion of freedom and self-determination, would have had no truck with such paternalistic and (presumably) unjust social institutions as slavery—whereas Aristotle would and, in fact, did—there are still those who argue that both are nonutilitarian consequentialists. In "Marx and Aristotle: A Kind of Consequentialism," Richard Miller traces some of the similarities and dissimilarities in the moral theories (or perspectives) of these two great philosophers. "Marx, like Aristotle," Miller claims, "judges societies by the kinds of human lives they create."\textsuperscript{52}

As against rights-based morality, both judge institutions by the kinds of lives they promote and judge proposed rights by assessing the consequences of embodying them in institutions. At the same time, their general conceptions of the kinds of lives worth promoting are highly similar, and emphatically

opposed to utilitarianism. In short, as political philosophers they are non-utilitarian consequentialists.\textsuperscript{53}

Furthermore, Marx and Aristotle have similar notions of what is intrinsically (nonmorally) good. "Aristotle's main arguments appeal to the alleged superiority of self-sufficiency, intrinsic desirability, and humanity.\textsuperscript{54} Marx sees "self-expression and mutuality . . . as goods of great intrinsic importance,"\textsuperscript{55} and one of his central concerns is "the promotion of self-control (i.e., control over one's life) and allied goods of dignity, self-expression and mutual respect."\textsuperscript{56}

Where Marx and Aristotle differ most is on the issue of equality between persons. Aristotle—as a result of the structure of the society in which he lived—was an \textit{anti-egalitarian} . . . at least so far as \textit{inter-class equality} is concerned. Although all persons within a particular class must be treated equally with respect to the division of social goods, even here Aristotle adds that this holds only to the extent people are equal in relevant respects. Applied to the interclass division of goods, this means that the upper classes—being, on his view, inherently more capable of enjoying higher cultural goods and achieving higher levels of perfection—are to be given the proportion of social goods they need to lead the best lives they can, regardless of what this means for the lower classes. As Miller notes:

Whether he is judging individual ways of life or whole societies, Aristotle employs fixed, hierarchical rankings of human capacities in which what is less than best should, so far as possible, contribute to the activity of the best. In the best life, he argues, a man subordinates everything else to the best activity, the contemplation of eternal truths, concerning things that do not change, engaged in without consideration of practical human concerns . . . . Very few, he concedes, can approach this ideal. A more feasible way of life is one in which non-intellectual activities, in particular perceptual activities and the fulfillment of appetites, serve as means for the greatest exercise of intelligence in a broad sense, i.e., the capacity for rational and insightful thinking. . . . In the \textit{Politics}, when Aristotle turns from individual ways of life to whole city-states

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., p. 366.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., pp. 365-366.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p. 373. See also chapter 1 of Charles Taylor's \textit{Hegel}.
\textsuperscript{52} Miller, "Marx and Aristotle: A Kind of Consequentialism," p. 326.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., p. 323.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p. 349.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p. 332.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 343.
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he follows a similar pattern. He unhesitatingly ranks political arrangements according to the quality of the best lives they promote, quite apart from costs to the majority. For example, his ideal society is an aristocracy in which leisureed philosophers, political leaders, and military men are provided for by the farming of their slaves and the handiwork of artisans and tradesmen who are excluded from politics. ... The non-slave non-citizens are consigned to inferior lives, in part through their political exclusion, even though they are not innately incapable of leading good lives. ... By contrast, Aristotle ranks as merely the best version of a bad arrangement a democracy of small farmers, all of whom can exercise significant moral virtues even though they lack sufficient leisure for the best sorts of lives.97

However Marx's commitment to equality between persons and to egalitarian social arrangements is ultimately analyzed, it is clear that he has such commitments. In volume 3 of Capital, for example, he states:

It is one of the civilizing aspects of capital that it enfoces this surplus-labour in a manner and under conditions which are more advantageous to the development of the productive forces, social relations, and the creation of the elements for a new and higher form than under the preceding forms of slavery, serfdom, etc. Thus it gives rise to a stage, on the one hand, in which coercion and monopolization of social development (including its material and intellectual advantages) by one portion of society at the expense of the other are eliminated; on the other hand, it creates the material means and embryonic conditions, making it possible in a higher form of society to combine this surplus-labour with a greater reduction of time devoted to material labour in general98 [emphasis added].

It is important to realize here that Marx is not merely predicting this sort of social equality but advocating it. Although—as we have seen with reference to "Critique of the Gotha Program"—he thinks that it is "in general a mistake to make a fuss about so-called distribution and put the principal stress on it,"99 this is only because "any distribution whatever of the means of consumption

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is only a consequence of the distribution of the conditions of production themselves"100 and, consequently, according to Marx, "with the abolition of class distinctions all social and political inequality arising from them would disappear of itself."101 Nevertheless, in this document he goes on to espouse a principle of distributive justice for the first stage of communism, namely, to each according to her or his labor contribution. His only regret is that this principle may not really ensure equality since it still gives advantages to those endowed with "natural privileges," which allow them to produce more and thus receive a greater share of the social wealth in return. Even more importantly, in the "Critique of the Gotha Program" Marx is primarily considering equality of distribution in the "means of consumption," not equality in the distribution of all social goods or all primary social goods (in Rawls' sense). He is not, for example, considering equality in the distribution of freedom. Had he been, there is no doubt that he would have called for its equal distribution. This is, in fact, borne out by Marx's call—in the Communist Manifesto—for "an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all"102 [emphasis added].

One important distinction between Marx and Aristotle, then, is that even though both are concerned with human activity, development, and self-realization, Aristotle is a perfectionist and Marx is not. Aristotle holds that human perfection is the intrinsic good that ought to be maximized (or at least vigorously pursued). Thus the realization of human perfection—even on the part of a few individuals—is of overriding importance. For Aristotle, the development of the highest human capacities to the highest possible level is to be promoted regardless of the detrimental effects this policy may have on anyone or everyone else. The overriding ideal is excellence or perfection, and all other considerations are to be subordinate to promoting this end.

Although Marx's ideal of full human development or realization can be understood only in light of his great regard for the higher human intellectual and artistic activities and the cultural products to which they give rise,103 he is not a perfectionist in the above

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97 Ibid., p. 348.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid., p. 392.
103 Among later Marxists, Trotsky expresses the same high regard for these sorts of cultural activities and products—as well as the human individuals who excel with regard to them—when, in a somewhat utopian passage concerning the nature of future communist society, he writes: "It is difficult to predict the extent of
sence since he does not hold human perfection as an overriding normative (or moral) ideal. To promote the perfection of a few at the expense of the many would, in fact, be absolutely anathema to Marx. One of his major criticisms of all past societies is that they allowed the promotion of human excellence on the part of a few (i.e., members of the ruling class and allied intellectuals and artists) at the expense of the many. This, for Marx, is quite simply intolerable. Whereas for Aristotle it is the development of human perfection per se that is of primary importance, for Marx it is the human individual who is of primary—indeed exclusive—importance. Furthermore, an essential part of his notion of the individual is the intrinsic dignity of each and every human being. This conception accords to each the respect due to him or her as a human individual and prohibits any conditions (e.g., inequalities in freedom or extreme inequalities of wealth) that would undermine human dignity or self-respect.

The main points to be made here are (1) that Marx is committed to the equal intrinsic dignity of human beings and thus to equality in the distribution of freedom, and (2) on these grounds he would reject any moral principle that would violate the principle of equal freedom on the part of all. This means, in particular, that he would reject unfettered self-realizationist or perfectionist theories that demand the maximization of self-realization or human perfection, since such a policy may benefit some at the expense of others and thus interfere with the latter parties’ freedom.

Furthermore, this means that Marx would reject any paternalistic violation of freedom called for by such maximization principles. Derek P. H. Allen, in defending his interpretation of Marx as a preference utilitarian, makes the same point. Marx, he claims,

believed self-development was one way of being free, not the only way of becoming free. Free activities would include, inter alia, those performed in the free time of post-capitalist society;

self-government which the man of the future may reach as the heights to which he may carry his technique. Social construction and psycho-physical self-education will become two aspects of one and the same process. All the arts—literature, drama, painting, music and architecture—will lend this process beautiful form. More correctly, the shell in which the cultural construction and self-education of Communist man will be enclosed, will develop all the vital elements of contemporary art to the highest point. Man will become immeasurably stronger, wiser and subtler; his body will become more harmonized, his movements more rhythmic, his voice more musical. The forms of life will become dynamically dramatic. The average human type will rise to the heights of an Aristotle, a Goethe, or a Marx. And above this new peak will rise" (emphasis added) (Literature and Revolution, p. 256).

and “free time . . . includes leisure time as well as time for higher activities.” Activities proper to free time are those which individuals prefer: it is in just this sense that surplus-time is free. Freedom from socially necessary labor to do as a person desired was one thing for Marx, and free development another. Doubtless he hoped and expected they would coincide. But he did not require that they should do so for men to be free. He did think it would be best if free time were used “productively,” in developing essential powers.64

Post-capitalist society will permit “the complete development of the individual”; but free, i.e., self-development, by creative activity, not development simplifier, is the greatest good. This distinction is crucial because in their free time men will be able to choose between “higher” and “lower” activities. Better they should choose “lower” than that they be forced to choose “higher.” Marx would think it less disdulite that someone freely choose pushpin than be afflicted with poetry. Inflicted poetry might cause him to develop, but not to self-develop. Better the fool satisfied than forced to become a dissatisfied Socrates. The point of overthrowing capitalist conditions of enslavement in “lower” activities is not to substitute slavery in “higher.” If anyone prefers idleness to education, and if there is no evidence that he will come to change his mind, then there is no utilitarian justification for setting him on the path to learning; nor, I suggest, would Marx think it justified. This is how overall Marx appears to reason. And it is how a consistent utilitarian must reason.65

Thus, Allen agrees that Marx’s value of self-realization would not take precedence over his value (or principle) of freedom (as self-determination). But, perhaps contrary to initial appearances, I am not here bringing to bear Allen’s arguments for interpreting Marx as an antipaternalist primarily for additional support of my own thesis that Marx is of an anti-paternalistic bent. Rather, I bring them under consideration at this point to provide the background for what shall be my final and—I hope—decisive argument that Marx cannot be interpreted as a utilitarian or a consequentialist of any sort. The point I want to make is that Allen’s own anti-perfectionist argument (which he offers to shore up his utilitarian inter-

65 Ibid., p. 199.
pretation of Marx) can be decisively turned against his own and, indeed, against any utilitarian or consequentialist interpretation of Marx. While Allen is correct, I think, in asserting that Marx would not find it morally permissible to force someone to engage in higher cultural activities against his or her will, it is not because, as Allen asserts, “Marx would think it disingenuous.” For what if doing so did maximize utility? What if forcing someone with an abundance of musical talent to develop that talent did make for that individual’s greatest happiness or greatest satisfaction of preferences and/or for the greatest happiness or greatest satisfaction of preferences for society as a whole? Would Marx, under these conditions, claim that forcing someone to engage in such activities is morally permissible? If he really is a utilitarian, the answer must be yes! In fact, on the strict utilitarian’s view, it would not merely be morally permissible but morally obligatory to force people to engage in such “higher” cultural activities against their will under these conditions! Anyone who has really read and understood Marx, however, knows that Marx would never have submitted to this moral judgment.

Similarly, Allen’s claim that “better the fool satisfied than forced to become a dissatisfied Socrates” does not represent Marx’s rationale behind his anti-paternalistic position. Marx does not object to interference with an individual’s freedom under these circumstances because it produces dissatisfied (but more cultured) individuals, but because interference with an individual’s freedom is a bad thing in and of itself. Again, we can ask “What if such a policy generally turned out a satisfied Socrates?” Would Marx, then, be in favor of such paternalistic intervention? Of course not! It can be deduced from these considerations, I take it, that Marx would not accept the moral principle that requires this moral judgment and is, ipso facto, not a utilitarian.

Now it might be suggested that Marx could still be a rule utilitarian who accepts the principle of freedom (as self-determination) as a general rule on the basis that doing so maximizes utility in the long run, but this is not plausible because exactly analogous counterexamples apply in this case. That is, we can construct a case in which accepting the principle of freedom (as self-determination) will not, even in the long run, maximize utility—however one wishes to define utility—and then ask ourselves if Marx would give up the principle of freedom (as self-determination) under these conditions. Again, I suggest that the answer for him would be an emphatic No! Furthermore, utilitarianism—in any form—will have these sorts of counter-intuitive results from Marx’s point of view.

One might attempt to salvage a consequentialist interpretation of Marx’s moral views by suggesting that the sole nonmoral good he wishes to maximize is freedom, but this view will not work either. Although Marx is certainly in favor of more freedom rather than less, he also demands, as we have seen, equal freedom. This is where my analysis of Marx’s moral perspective diverges from Brenkert’s. Although Brenkert thinks Marx is a mixed deontologist who takes freedom (as self-determination) as his primary concern, he insists that “Marxist freedom is not something which can be unjustly distributed as can income, wealth, and the like... it is mistaken to treat freedom as one among many social goods which require distribution.” But such passages as those already cited suffice to refute this view. As Norman Geras writes:

Communist society is a better society in Marx’s eyes and capitalism [is] condemned by him at least partly because of the way in which the former makes such “goods” [as freedom] available to all where the latter allots them unevenly and grossly so... His critique in the light of freedom and self-actualization is itself in part a critique in the light of a conception of distributive justice, though it is so in part only, since there is also an aggregative aspect involved.

Richard Arneson concurs:

Issues of fairness in distribution (whether or not we label them “justice” concerns) are at the center of all Marx’s objections to capitalism. With regard to freedom, for example, what bothers Marx about capitalism is not simply that it supplies too little of this nice non-moral value. Rather, the problem is the skewed distribution of freedom which a market economy enforces, and the superiority which Marx claims for socialism is supposed to lie in socialism’s tendency to correct this maldistribution. To my knowledge Marx never even begins to argue for the dubious claim that under socialism the aggregate of freedom (measured how?) will be greater than the aggregate of freedom under capitalism. Marx’s claim in this regard is plainer and more plausible: under socialism the distribution

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\* Brenkert, _Marx’s Ethics of Freedom_, p. 158.

\* Geras, "The Controversy about Marx and Justice;" p. 72.
of freedom will be more equal, hence better and (one may as well say) more fair.66

Thus, although Marx's concept of freedom is broader than Rawls', he can be interpreted, with Rawls, to be demanding a maximum system of equal liberties (or freedoms), but he cannot be interpreted as demanding the maximization of freedom simpliciter. The reason is that in some possible worlds the maximization of freedom will make for an unequal distribution of freedom. In the next chapter I shall offer a more detailed reconstruction of Marx's concept and theory of freedom and show how his notion of economic exploitation is related to it.

66 Arneson, "What's Wrong with Exploitation?" pp. 220-221.

THREE
MARX'S THEORIES OF FREEDOM AND EXPLOITATION:
A RECONSTRUCTION AND DEFENSE

In this chapter I shall first argue that Marx's concern for human dignity and his (implicit) demand for an equal distribution of the primary good of freedom make him a mixed deontologist. Then I shall attempt to reconstruct his concept and theory of freedom. I argue that freedom, on Marx's view, is to be interpreted as the opportunity for self-determination where this is taken to indicate both negative freedom, i.e., freedom from the undue interference of others, and positive freedom, i.e., freedom to determine one's own life to as great an extent as is compatible with a like opportunity for all. Since Marx is an egalitarian, he is also committed to an equal (or nearly equal) distribution of these social goods. Thus the demand for negative freedom must be interpreted as the demand for a maximum system of equal liberties. Similarly, the demand for positive freedom must be interpreted as including both the right to equal participation in all social decision-making processes that affect one's life and the right of equal access to the means of self-realization. Finally, in societies still characterized by moderate scarcity, the right of equal access to the means of self-realization must be interpreted as entailing, first, the right to an equal opportunity to attain social offices and positions and, secondly, the right to an equal opportunity to acquire other social primary goods (income, wealth, leisure time, etc.). (This is not to say that Marx explicitly takes these positions but only that it is a reasonable reconstruction of his views.) In the final section I shall analyze Marx's concept of exploitation with an eye toward its connection with freedom or other moral values or principles.

Some may object to this reconstruction of Marx's concept of freedom on the grounds that it relies on the concept of justice (namely,