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SOCIALISM AND ETHICS

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WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

SOCIALISM AND ETHICS

Howard Selsam

DIRECTOR, JEFFERSON SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE



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CONTENTS

	Introduction	7
I.	Capitalism and Ethics	14
II.	Changing Conceptions of the Good Life	37
III.	The Basis of Moral Judgments	63
IV.	Science and Ethics	100
V.	Society and the Individual	124
VI.	Family, State, and Nation	146
VII.	The Meaning of Freedom	188
	Reference Notes	215
	Index	221

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

When this book first appeared the Moscow and Teheran conferences were still in the future. Full unity of the United Nations for coalition warfare against the Axis and for peaceful world reconstruction after the defeat of the fascist powers was yet to be achieved. The agreement at Teheran of the three great powers—of Britain, the world's greatest empire; the United States, the world's most advanced capitalist democracy; and of the Soviet Union, the great nation of socialism—to work together for winning the war and for building a peaceful future, changes fundamentally many of the issues raised in the following pages. The primary effect of this promised harmony of the great capitalist powers and the world's only socialist state both ensures the future of socialism and gives a new lease on life to capitalism. This co-operation creates conditions which give to capitalism a future which could not have been foreseen when this book was written. So long as capitalism can expand productivity and help to raise the living standards of all the peoples of the earth it will be progressive politically and socially. This is not opposed by anything set forth in this volume, but rather is supported by its basic theses.

The changes made in the text for this edition are purely minor. The author has not sought to "revise" it by bringing it up to date. This imposes upon the reader the task of interpreting the book in the light of the new prospects for the future. It requires recognition by the reader throughout that the issue before us today is not capitalism versus socialism but the effective operation of the world's economy for the well-being of all nations and peoples.

H. S.

January, 1945

INTRODUCTION

With most of the population of the earth involved in a titanic military conflict, and the future of all mankind at stake, it is evident that men must give thought to the principles upon which they have acted and seek a firmer foundation in fact and value for their future conduct. Never was there such chaos, disorder, and destruction of life and property. But never, also, was there such a conscious opportunity for men to create a new and better world. This is the day of Armageddon that ancient prophets envisioned, and in a most real sense it is a struggle between the forces of good and evil to determine the future of the world. Everything depends upon the outcome of the mortal military conflict between the United Nations and the fascist forces of the Axis. Some men are confused because, while all is evil on one side, not all is good on the other. While this is true, it is superficial, for without the destruction of fascism there cannot even be the question of good or evil, there can be no possibility of moral choice.

The world's material crisis is reflected in a moral crisis. Religious teachings and classical moral ideals are invoked confusedly, and in general there is a profound lack of systematic moral analysis. Some progress in this direction has indeed been made in the course of the present struggle. The Atlantic Charter, the doctrine of the Four Freedoms of President Roosevelt, the conception of a peoples' war and the coming century of the common man of Vice-President Wallace are landmarks in this direction. Freedom is acquiring a new meaning. War, poverty, isolationism and world unity, fascism and democracy, capitalism and socialism, have more than ever in these days become moral problems as well as economic and political ones. But the old morality of another age helps us little. To say that these are moral problems is not to say they can be solved by prayer or ethical formulae. It is to say that they involve the ill or welfare of human beings, the conception of a desired or better state of things, which constitutes the basis of judgments of right and wrong—the only true subject mat-

ter of ethics. But the traditional ethics is sick with the very disease of the world whose product it is. A new ethics is needed, a new morality, freed from the taint of an exploiting economic class and of a ruthlessly acquisitive society. But is such an ethics possible? Where is it to be found? Will it help us to judge correctly and to chart a right course in a tempestuous world?

For ages countless men worked and died without benefit of a theory of ethics. They were toilers, not professional moralists. They labored ceaselessly, not knowing the teaching that only a life devoted to things intellectual is supposed to be worthy of man. They sacrificed for family, clan, and class, ignorant of the philosophical doctrine that self-interest is the sole motive of conduct. Often they dealt kindly with one another out of human warmth and compassion and felt that they had done well, little knowing that a philosopher would teach that only actions performed for duty's sake were truly moral. They struggled and fought for the good things of the earth, little reckoning in fact on promises of heaven. Yet moralists proclaimed that without hope in a future life men would cease to live and procreate. These common men and women may not have known what was "good," but they knew what they wanted and needed.

As civilization developed, a certain favored few, almost invariably removed by their class position from the mere struggle for existence, asked themselves the purpose of life: What is just and good? What is wrong and evil? What is the ideal life of man? These were the moralists, the prophets, and the philosophers. They asked profound questions and gave profound answers, but unfortunately they suffered from two major shortcomings. Being divorced, usually, from the struggle for the material necessities of life, they sought the good in something abstract and rarefied, or in some mere subjective state of their own being. And, secondly, being the beneficiaries of a particular economic and social order they invariably tended to identify justice and the good life with their kind of society and its perpetuation.

On the one side there was the unreflective life of men bowed down by the labor and cares of production and reproduction; on the other was the realm of speculative thought and inquiry so divorced from the actual struggle for the maintenance of life as to make it appear that the Good must be found elsewhere than in these processes. And it could not be otherwise in virtue of the division of labor that split

society into more or less openly antagonistic classes, one of which produced the necessities of life for both itself and the other. As this has been the situation of the larger part of mankind since the beginnings of the written word, it is natural that all speculative ethics should in one way or another have reflected and been conditioned by the class relations of men. A striking illustration of this is found in the ethical thought of Aristotle, for whom slaves, women, and poor men generally were incapable of a life of genuine virtue. But what is much more important and far-reaching is the pervasive attempt to limit discussion of ethics and the good life to questions of virtue, or good and evil actions, divorced from all consideration of the concrete conditions of life. Thus it is that the whole classical tradition of moral thought, valuable as many of its contributions are, has remained to this day preoccupied with limited questions of right and wrong centering around the conception of the virtuous individual, and has remained blissfully neglectful of the broader and wider idea of the concrete material and cultural welfare of mankind at large.

It is a truism that every society tends to produce the "virtues" (and frequently also the vices) necessary for its own preservation. But with the rise of political society based upon the private ownership of property, virtue and vice are considered in terms of their service to the maintenance of the particular property relations concerned, and undergo changes as the nature of these relations change. If anyone doubts this he need only reflect on the change from the medieval prohibition of lending money at interest as usury to the changed attitude of the Church or to Benjamin Franklin's glorification of saving because money is a generative thing and begets more money, which, loaned out, begets still more money, *ad infinitum*. But the important consideration for the understanding of the contemporary world from an ethical viewpoint is neither that moral conceptions change nor that they are relative to particular economic and social orders. In so-called enlightened circles both these propositions have become commonplace. The really important consideration is that the class nature of all historical society has deprived our moral codes and ethical theories of an adequate foundation in the concrete needs and conditions of life and hence of genuine relevance to the problems and struggles confronting men in the contemporary world. This is true equally of spiritualist ethics, supposedly derived from the commands of a God or of

a moral conscience, and of rationalist ethics founded on such principles as self-interest or individual pleasure.

To many thinkers who recognize the problem, the solution has seemed to lie in the finding of "eternal" and all-pervasive principles above the class conflicts in society. The results of this approach, however, are unsatisfactory, inasmuch as the attempted application of such principles collides with existing property relations, which cannot be changed by the unsupported weight of mere moral precepts. And further, the claim to eternality and universality is often a cloak which conceals the basic acceptance of the *status quo*. The final upshot of this attempted application of "eternal" principles to a stubborn reality is only a further sharpening of the conflict between what is and what ought to be, or in other words, between fact and value.

One expression of this metaphysical approach is found in a slogan which has even penetrated certain sections of the labor movement: "A fair day's pay for a fair day's work." But who shall determine, and by what criteria, what constitutes either a fair day's pay or a fair day's work? The capitalist owner of industry seeks the longest working day he can get for the lowest possible wages. The worker just as naturally seeks the highest possible pay for the shortest possible hours of labor. To the liberal bourgeois this contradiction is easy to resolve. The capitalist, he argues, should get a fair return on his investment and the worker enough leisure to procure necessary recreation, and sufficient money to maintain himself and his family in "decency" or "in accord with the American standard of living," or something similar. But the substitution of other terms for fairness brings the problem no nearer a solution. What constitutes a fair or reasonable return on investment? What determines a decent standard of living? As Marx saw it in *Capital,* after a lengthy analysis of the working day in British industry, there is here an opposition of right to right, and he concluded that "Between equal rights force decides."[1]

This recognition of the relationship of forces denies the liberal position altogether. If the working day at any given time is a result of the relative strength of the opposed forces—collective capital, or the capitalist class, and collective labor, or the working class—then traditional moral concepts play at best a negligible role and the individual simply has to take sides. But then the two forces pitted against each other seem to be in amoral conflict, and the side with which one allies

himself is determined for the most part by his class position in the economic set-up, but also sometimes by intellectual and ethical considerations. The class struggle does exist, as a matter of fact, despite all attempts to exorcise it out of existence, and Marxism believes that, given the capitalist antagonism of economic interests, recourse to "pure" and "eternal" principles of fairness and justice is not only fruitless, but tends to conceal the real underlying conflict, which must itself be overcome. The concept of fairness in the relations of capital and labor is equivalent in the long run to the fairness of the participants in a bull fight: there are rules, but no matter whether this or that matador goes down, the bull is always killed. The worker must always yield profit to him who purchases his labor power or the purchaser goes bankrupt. All moral judgments as to how the worker does so or how much profit he yields imply acceptance of this relationship. Such is the essence of liberal morality. It insists that the bull be given a square deal and be stabbed strictly in accordance with the rules of the game. But what if these relationships are themselves unjust, morally wrong? From what standpoint, in terms of what standards, however, can such a judgment be made? This is the great ethical problem of our time.

Marx is accused by some economists of having a moral bias, represented by his concern with the working class, and thus of not being "scientific." He is accused by some philosophers of denying all moral considerations and of occupying himself exclusively with scientific economic analyses and predictions.

These two criticisms, taken together, indicate an essential feature of Marx's whole thought. Marx was a great economist, his position involved moral considerations, and he devoted himself to the cause of the working class. What these critics fail to understand is that his being a scientific economist, his working class alignment and his moral judgments mutually require and supplement one another, as the present work will endeavor to show. Meanwhile, it should be made clear that there is no contradiction in Marx's identifying himself with the working class side in the struggle while yet denying an abstract right by which the two sides can be evaluated. The solution is that Marxism believes there are moral principles in terms of which the class struggle can be evaluated but holds that they lie within it and not over and above it. Or, in other words, in opposition to bourgeois

liberalism, and as a result of his concrete historical analysis of the nature of capitalist economy, the Marxist holds that moral superiority lies on the working class side because the modern working class, in its struggle for better conditions which ultimately leads it into a struggle for socialism, carries with it in its own *class* code the only truly *human* ethics. On the other hand analysis reveals that the claim to moral impartiality, to an ethics above classes, is either an illusion or a conscious instrument for maintaining existing class relationships. How and why this is so is one of the purposes of the present work to indicate. Here it is sufficient to observe the apparent contradiction in the claim that an alleged non-partisan or super-class morality is actually partisan and incompatible with genuine human progress, while an avowedly partisan and working class morality represents the greatest human well being and therefore, in its terms, the highest objective morality.

But what is the basis of judgments of right and wrong? What is the good life and how can it be determined? On these questions, again, Marxism provides an answer that has elements of both relativism and absolutism. Marx maintains that "Right can never be higher than the economic structure and the cultural development of society thereby determined," [2] and yet at the same time he believes absolutely in the right and justice of the modern proletariat. The resolution of this problem as well as an analysis of the whole question of the basis of judgments of right and wrong is the subject of the third chapter of the present work. The first chapter seeks to present the great moral issues of our age as a product of the historical development of capitalism in its rise and decline. Chapter Two surveys some of the changes in moral ideals that have occurred in human history. It tries to portray the truth of Marx's statement quoted above, especially the way it refers to the clash of values between contemporary capitalism on one hand and socialism and the socialist movement on the other. The fourth chapter is concerned with the ways in which values and facts (as exhibited by scientific investigation) have been separated in the contemporary bourgeois world and how through Marxism they can be reunited for the scientific determination of good and bad, better and worse, and the good life generally.

The remainder of the work deals with some of the fields in which moral controversy and confusion especially reign, and seeks to develop

the Marxist approach to such problems. Here the task is made easier by the existence of a socialist society in the Soviet Union which already provides in part a solution of many of the knottiest ethical problems which have confronted mankind. In the concluding chapter the meaning of three fundamental concepts involved in all consideration of values is analyzed. Two of these, necessity and freedom, have existed in moral thought since the ancient Greeks. The third, the concept of progress, emerged during the French Revolution and has troubled moralists increasingly, since capitalism has consistently failed to fulfill its promises of unlimited progress except, with large qualifications, in the sphere of the development of the means of production.

It should be clear to everyone that the ethical questions referred to above as the subject matter of this work underlie every controversial social and political question in the world today. Masses of people in a war-torn world are aware that they are confronted with a choice between progress and reaction, freedom and slavery, democracy and fascism. And in every other important problem confronting us: from the best way of defending American democracy to the surest way of destroying fascism in the world; from the abolition of racial antagonisms to the solution of the problems of unemployment and of poverty in the countryside; from the peaceful relations of sovereign states to the elimination of colonial exploitation—reference is necessarily made to one or another set of values.

Marxism, which has been so often accused of seeking to eliminate moral considerations from human life and history, emphasizes rather the moral issues involved in every situation. It does so, however, not by standing on a false platform of absolute right, but by identifying itself with the real needs and interests of the workers and farmers, the middle classes and professionals, the Negro people, the exploited peoples of the colonies and the socialist citizens of the Soviet Union. It stands, in short, on the platform of "the whole of advanced and progressive humanity" and believes that in doing so its position alone accords with the highest morality. Rather than repudiating, Marxist socialism embraces and gives new meaning to the great moral utterances of the prophets, sages, and philosophers of the past. Its single moral aim is to bring to fruition the desire that men may live abundantly.

I. CAPITALISM AND ETHICS

Just at the beginning of capitalist economy in England, over four hundred years ago, Sir Thomas More wrote his *Utopia*. In it he criticized the first signs of nascent capitalism and pictured a society in which all property was socially owned. He could not envision the immense developments in man's productive capacity that capitalism would bring about, and thus his utopian society rested on existing productive techniques. But he did see vividly the evils of the process of primitive capitalist accumulation, that is, the amassing of wealth by means of expropriating people from the soil, piracy, colonial plunder, and the like, which precede the exploitation of wage-labor in industry. Some of the evils More observed are not only strikingly modern but symbolize the capitalist order of society. Sheep were to More the symbol of this new acquisitiveness, this new production for the market, this transformation of values whereby commodities become more important than men.

"Your sheep," More's utopian spokesman says to the English Cardinal, "that were wont to be so meek and tame, and so small eaters, now, as I hear say, be become so great devourers and so wild, that they eat up and swallow down the very men themselves. They consume, destroy, and devour whole fields, houses, and cities.... And though the number of sheep increase never so fast, yet the price falleth not one mite, because there be so few sellers. For they be almost all come into a few rich men's hands, whom no need forceth to sell before they lust [wish], and they lust not before they may sell as dear as they lust."[8]

What the sheep did to More's husbandmen, the tractor does to the Oklahoma farmer today. For what is in question is not sheep or tractors driving men from the land but new economic relations. Under capitalism these relations take on a purely impersonal character, so much so that they seem not to be relations of men at all, but purely objective relations of commodities, to which moral judgments are

impertinent. In its beginnings a humanist such as More could question whether the practices of this new economy were good and right in terms of their effects on human lives. But the new system came and it has achieved truly marvelous things in industry, commerce, and agriculture. Great concentrations of capital, large-scale manufacturing, mechanized and scientific agriculture, production by wage-labor for a national and then an international market have raised man's capacity to produce the material goods of life to a level Thomas More and his contemporaries could never have dreamed of. Nevertheless, after four centuries, we must re-examine this system of economic relations to see once more on a new level how it advances or thwarts the needs and interests of men. For ethics, as will be explained later, the central problem is not whether capitalism *has been* a good or bad system, but whether it *is*—as a result of its own operation, accomplishments and limitations—the best system we can have *now* for ordering human economic relations.

In the economic sphere capitalism has brought an almost inestimable increase in man's control over nature for the satisfaction of his material needs. By its development of steam and electric power and the harnessing of them to great machines it has made it possible for ever fewer workers to produce infinitely more of the necessities of life than all men could have produced four hundred years ago under the most ruthless slave system. Technological progress has been such that in America, for example, where capitalism has had its fullest and freest development, least hindered by remnants of feudal relations, if our industrial plant were operated to capacity and all desiring work were employed (in peace-time production, of course), every man, woman, and child could live in conditions undreamed of by a Reformation primitive communist Thomas Muenzer or a humanist Catholic utopian socialist Thomas More. In agriculture—as a result of scientific agronomy and the use of machines for plowing, cultivating, planting, and harvesting—a small portion of the population can produce more than enough of the most appetizing and nutritious foods for all the population, in contrast, say, to Tsarist Russia, where 80 per cent of the population were never able to produce enough food for the bare subsistence of themselves and the other 20 per cent of the people. And by similar developments in the means of transportation there is no part of the earth so inaccessible that its inhabitants could not have whatever

they need from any other part, or contribute some item of use somewhere else.

These are facts needing no elaboration here. The important point is that they are not merely accidental products of capitalism. They could not have come about under any other previous system of economic relations. Slavery, for instance, precluded the development of machinery and the harnessing of power. Feudalism could not by its very nature produce goods in an organized way for a national, not to say an international, market. Private capital, a free market, wage-labor on the part of free laborers, and the incessant competition for profits were required. One cannot say, of course, that modern industrial development cannot come about in any other way. In the Soviet Union it has been accomplished almost entirely without private capital and at a far greater tempo. But previous capitalist development elsewhere made Soviet accomplishments possible, so that historically the fact remains that only through capitalism has such productive development been achieved.

In the social and political sphere the capitalist order of society also brought about startling transformations. The ideas of individual and political freedom, of parliamentary government and democracy, of equality of rights for all people are historically a product of the capitalist order. They are not separable from the vast development in productive power but are its prerequisites and concomitants. These ideas and institutions were evolved in the struggle of the rising bourgeois class against the old order and, although their form was far from perfect, they proved themselves appropriate to the new economic relations. The very ideals of the right of every boy and girl to all the education their parents can afford without regard to social background, race or creed, and of the right to enter any profession or business irrespective of family rank or status are colossal achievements, even though capitalist practice has been far from attaining them. The genuine hatred of fascism on the part of many sincere believers in the capitalist system indicates a democratic bourgeois conscience loth to forsake some of its great achievements.

Finally, in health and medicine, recreation and basic cultural possibilities, capitalism has achieved wonders undreamed of a few centuries ago. The death rate drops steadily and the life span increases. Great plagues are as extinct as the dodo or the dinosaur. Many of the physical

ills that have cursed humanity have been conquered, while others, such as blindness, deafness and bodily deformity have been alleviated. The majority of the population in the capitalist countries are not only literate but also have a technical competence and at least a speaking acquaintance with some of the culture of the ages. In recent years the moving picture and the radio, in spite of their shortcomings, have brought not only recreation but the materials of culture to the great masses of people and even to the most outlying regions. Parks, playgrounds, beaches, camps, and automobile travel have made healthful recreation possible for millions who knew no such thing only a generation ago. The past few years in America have brought, largely through union labor contracts, vacation periods with pay to workers in the basic industries. The credit side of capitalism looms large to the anonymous millions whom no previous form of society offered more than endless blind drudgery on the brink of starvation, beset by ill health and early death.

What has all this to do with ethics, with right and wrong, virtue and good conduct? The good life, the traditionalist says, can be lived under any conditions and some spiritualists see mankind "going to the dogs," becoming "soft and flabby," through its concern with material goods and the resultant turning away from the "higher spiritual realities." Every material blessing to the masses of people has been attacked on such grounds. But if ethics has to do with the concrete well-being of people, with their ability freely and consciously to pursue their goals, and the harmonious adjustment of these goals one to another, then the foundation of ethics lies in the economic and social relations within which the broad business of living is carried on. Again, as will be seen later, the ethics of any age is an outgrowth of, and is relevant to, the actual conditions of life of that age, and therefore the examination of these must precede any attempt to judge morally or to set significant norms. The trouble with most ethical systems is that they have divorced judgments of virtue and right conduct from the social setting in which alone they have meaning.

On the debit side of capitalism lie a host of conditions which all agree are not as they should be. Whether they are held to be necessary products of capitalist economy or difficulties that it has yet to overcome, they nevertheless are a scourge to hundreds of millions of people and a cause of alarm to the few who fear that their own status may

be lost unless these conditions can be improved. Briefly these evils are poverty and unemployment, colonial oppression, racial and religious discrimination, economic crises, war and world disorganization.

If Thomas More could be alarmed at the way large-scale sheep raising was driving peasants from the land into impoverishment and destitution, how much more would he be alarmed by the picture of chronic unemployment in England since 1880, or the one-third of the people of the richest country on earth living on sub-subsistence incomes? Because of the increased productivity of both industry and agriculture, poverty, whether absolute or relative to the higher standards of living that capitalism has made possible, is an anachronism. Yet poverty is a tragic reality for at least thirty million people in America, and relative poverty a reality for seventy million more. Capitalism has separated the overwhelming majority of the people from the ownership both of the land and of the tools of production. They are entirely dependent upon their labor power being desired by owners of factories, mines, means of transportation, and so forth. And unless they are strongly organized they are paid by their employers the lowest wages their situation forces them to accept. Under capitalism a man is in business, as he says, not for his health but for profit. And stockholders are people who, having acquired money in excess of their current needs, convert this money into capital—that is, they invest it directly or through brokers, expecting to receive a profit in the form of periodical dividends. Most coupon-clippers never ask where this interest comes from or inquire into the pay or working conditions of the workers in the industry from which their profit is derived. They demand only that the dividend checks come regularly. While nearly ten million people in America own stock of some sort and thus share to a very small extent in the profits of capitalist enterprise, 25 per cent of this stock is owned by some 10,000 persons, while 75,000 persons own half of all corporate stock held by individuals.[4] These therefore are the real owners of our industry. They control what shall be produced, what wages shall be paid, what working conditions shall exist, and even what governmental policies respecting big business shall be followed.

These 75,000 persons are in their turn divided into two groups. A few score families own a controlling share in the most strategic and important industries and thus control the policy of most of our eco-

nomic activity. They have amassed fortunes so fabulous that few can even imagine what it would mean to own such wealth. They live in palatial mansions, have their own private steamships and private railway cars, and migrate like birds with the changing seasons. But these people do not actually direct the vast industrial enterprises they own. Frequently they know little about them. Often at a cost of $200,000 or $300,000 a year, they employ experts who do all the work for them, and whose one job is to bring in the profits. These financial oligarchs have a widespread net of social relationships, and they intermarry much as kings used to do for strategic economic or political ends. Figures for 1937 show, for example, that 15 of our 200 greatest corporations were controlled by three families (the du Ponts, Morgans, and Rockefellers) and that their holdings in these corporations were valued at $1,400,000,000.[5]

Most of these great owners of industry have never met or even seen close-up a single worker whose labor contributes to their fortunes. Often their names are not even known by their workers, sometimes many thousands in number. The relationships are purely impersonal. All is governed by laws and contracts. I hire you to work at so much per day, week, or piece, as long as I can profit by your labor. You must work hard and faithfully and I will pay you regularly—as long as I choose. If I can't make a profit by making aluminum, like Mellon's Alcoa, I will stop making it and stop employing you. If I can make more profit by making less aluminum—since I have seen to it that no one else in the country and few others in the world can make aluminum (and I have agreements with these others; we understand one another)—I will make less. I will do this regardless of your desire to work in my plants or the desire of people for aluminum pans at lower prices, or regardless of the need of our country for much more aluminum for its defense. Such is the pattern of relations of owners and workers. But what has this to do with ethics? Only this—it means that tens of millions live in poverty, that millions more can find no source of livelihood, and that all the economic activity of the country and of the whole capitalist world is governed fundamentally by the interests of these owners of the factories, mills, mines, and railroads.

The anachronism of poverty in the industrially advanced countries arises from the fact that capitalist economic relations are designed to produce profit primarily and commodities only secondarily. A factory

is not built to make shoes because people want and need shoes. It is built because, people needing shoes, a profit can be made by producing them. Under no other condition are shoes made, and no more shoes are made than each manufacturer thinks will ensure the maximum return on invested capital. It is the same with all other consumer's goods—from pins to automobiles and houses. It is the same with capital goods—from machines to the machines that make the machines. Hence it is that the poorer the people the less money can be made by making goods to sell to them, so that an undue portion of our industrial machinery operates in producing so-called "luxury" goods for the relatively few. But more important still is the fact that capitalist competition continually and at an accelerating rate increases productive capacity by technological improvements, requiring a greater capital investment in plant structure and equipment in proportion to the capital that goes into wages. This results in two important consequences:

1. The rate of profit decreases. The worker may be driven ever harder, yet no matter how wide the gap between what he receives in wages and the amount of the company's profit from each worker it employs, so much more capital per worker employed is invested that the rate of return constantly diminishes. When this rate reaches a certain point, which varies temporarily from industry to industry, holders of capital withdraw their money because of the poor return, refuse to take further risks at such poor promises, decline to invest in new enterprises, and refuse to enlarge plants and even to produce new productive machinery.

2. The workers, who with their families are the majority of the population in the more advanced capitalist countries, not receiving in pay the value of the commodities they have collectively produced, have a total spending or consuming power far below the level of their production. Nor can the farmers, impoverished in different ways, buy these industrial products. Nor can the upper classes, for no matter how conspicuously they may consume, there is a limit to the houses they can live in, the food they can eat, or even the yachts they can sail the ocean on. And even they have to have savings, reserve capital, which is in reality accumulated labor from the past ready to hire new labor-power in the future, ready to be thrown here or there when new developments in technology are required by competition. Their

capital *must* bring in new *capital*—not merely give them purchasing power and luxuries—or else they go out, they or their descendants, out of the capitalist game.

As a result of this private control of capital there is an increasing gap between productive power and the buying capacity of the majority of people. The latter can never keep up with the former, else there would be no profit. Thus more goods are produced than the people can afford to buy, no matter what their needs and desires may be, no matter what distress or death results from their separation from the things they have produced, or could produce if given the opportunity.

These phenomena are two sides of one and the same process, and together they create what is known as an economic crisis. Crises have been coming periodically in the capitalist world for more than a century. They used to come about every nine or ten years, but they will not go on forever as some capitalist theorists hoped they would and others feared they might. For something new has appeared. The transition from earlier capitalism to imperialism has disturbed the cyclic rhythm of this dizzy dance with wars on a world scale and crises no previous economy could have envisioned. Crises and wars have been intensified, millions have been thrown out of jobs and made to face starvation; millions more have been driven from their homes in cities or from the land they have worked, with nowhere to go, nothing to do, thrown on the scrap heap as truly as a wrecked car goes on the rusty pile of junked automobiles that line our countryside. Millions are forced into arms in the fascist countries and sent out to shoot their neighbors in order that the owners of the economy of one country may rule or dominate the economy of other lands, in order that they may grab up profitable colonial markets or sources of raw materials, and control the whole world's resources and markets for their profit.

The year 1914 marked the outbreak of the first World War, the first great distinctively imperialist war. By imperialism is meant capitalism in its monopoly stage; capitalism that has forsaken both within individual countries and internationally its old competitive, individualistic, *laissez-faire policy*. It is the capitalism, not of individual entrepreneurs, but of great banking institutions and gigantic monopolistic corporations. To survive, it had to shelve its earlier ideas of free trade,

of a free labor market, and its conception of free and unrestricted competition. It had to become even more impersonal. It had to bring every section of the world under its control and domination, and thus proceeded to occupy and exploit every portion of Europe, Asia, and Africa. It had to do this to find new markets for its cheap manufactured products, which its own people could not buy, and new sources of raw materials, which its relatively overdeveloped industries must needs feed upon. The first World War put an end to the traditional cycles of capitalist crises. It brought collapse, a dizzier boom, and a more devastating, worldwide collapse in 1929. It led to a new form of capitalism in the defeated countries. Italy, and then Germany, developed this fascist form in which all democratic achievements of the older capitalism, with its parliamentary forms, rights of workers to organize, and civil liberties, were discarded.

Now a global war is in full swing. It began as part of a great imperialist design to turn German and Japanese aggression against the Soviet Union. Its first fruits were the destruction of almost every country of Western Europe and the enslavement of their peoples. The leaders of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics had foreseen this fascist menace and joint imperialist-fascist plot. They sought for more than a decade to prevent it. They worked for the total disarmament of all powers, or for any system of world arms limitations. When this failed they sought to establish a system of collective security together with a network of bilateral non-aggression pacts. They tried to employ the apparatus of the League of Nations to place an international embargo upon an aggressor nation. They knew that if the governments and peoples of the remaining democratic powers would stand together the impending catastrophe could be averted. But there were powerful elements in the non-fascist capitalist countries who feared the Soviet economic system more than they disliked fascism and imperialist war. They hated it because it had removed one-sixth of the earth from all possibility of imperialist exploitation; they feared it because its successful construction of a socialist society menaced imperialism by the influence of its example on the impoverished colonial peoples, and the more alert sections of the people everywhere. Thus, instead of a united and strong stand against any threat of aggression, the appeasement policy triumphed; the policy of giving the potential aggressors what they wanted as a bribe to attack the country of socialism. Spain was

thus given to the fascist coalition, then Austria and Czechoslovakia. All these appeasement efforts exhibited one pattern—let the Axis powers destroy and dismember the Soviet Union and leave Western Europe and America alone. But this was not the way it happened. The "holy war against bolshevism" turned out to be an attempt to enslave all countries and all peoples.

Thus the world is now involved in a desperate struggle, not between capitalism and socialism as had been planned by some reactionary capitalists, but between capitalism in its more progressive and democratic form allied with socialism in a struggle to maintain national independence against the fascism of the Axis powers. Had it not been for capitalist fear of the growing strength and the example to all peoples of a successful socialist economy, this war would not have been possible. Fascist aggression could have been stopped in its incipiency if reactionary groups among the dominant economic powers in the democratic capitalist countries had not preferred a fascist war against the country of socialism to united action with the Soviet Union to stop fascism. As it is, there are many in Britain and America who fear nothing so much as a victory of the Soviet Union over their pretended enemy, Nazi Germany.

The world picture of the twentieth century is not a happy one. The two greatest wars the world has ever seen, separated by an economic collapse more severe than had ever before been known and by continued warfare in one part of the world or another during the twenty intervening years; the virtual enslavemennt of half the world's population in the colonial empires of the imperialist powers, and the similarly wretched condition of the farmers, unemployed, unskilled workers, and impoverished middle classes in these countries themselves—this is capitalism 400 years after Thomas More saw the sheep devouring English towns. On the credit side of the century stands the great actual and possible control of nature through science, invention, and the unprecedented development of technology. Also the growth of trade union organization, the great Chinese struggle for national independence, and, at the present writing, the fight of the United Nations against world fascism. But in the field of social accomplishment stands primarily the Soviet Union, the century's greatest accomplishment and hope. It offers the example of one-sixth of the world, consisting of innumerable national groups, speaking about 160 languages, building

a society based on the public ownership of the means of production and dedicated to the principle of equal social, political, and economic rights for all. The Soviets sought to show the superiority of socialism through its peaceful development. But blindness, stupidity, and insensate greed in the capitalist world have forced them to show socialist superiority by its strength, by the power of the socialist organization of economy, together with the heroic devotion of the Soviet people to their system and its fatherland.

Capitalism has had its opportunity. It has had its day and more than its day. It promised everything, accomplished much, but its declining days do not make a pretty picture. Socialism, instead of being a Utopian vision, something, in the words of Thomas More, we "may rather wish for, than hope after," actually exists on a vast scale, bringing a new life to nearly two hundred million people. The way that was charted theoretically and scientifically by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels has been realized in fact by V. I. Lenin and Joseph Stalin. Unemployment, the capitalist anomaly of poverty in the midst of plenty, racial hatred and inequality, the exploitation of man by man have been abolished.

But what have these things to do with a study of ethics? While the ethics books largely ignore these questions, anyone who listens to the radio, reads our newspapers and magazines, engages in any social or political activity knows that here lies the central moral problem of our age. It underlies every ethical question our contemporaries discuss. Every discussion of freedom or personal integrity, of rights and duties, of justice and equity, of the family, home, and country, of peaceful world organization and human brotherhood has its roots in the nature of decaying capitalism and the challenge of nascent socialism. Is the question one of a League of Nations, a United States of Europe, or British and American union? Is it one of marriage, divorce, and the preservation of the family; of crime and punishment, religious freedom, or trade union rights; of "cost of production" for farmers, surplus commodities for the unemployed, or the amount of the educational budget? Whether it is any of these or infinite others, it is a moral question involving long-range value considerations and it is inevitably colored today by the co-existence of capitalism and socialism as different forms of human economic relations. Not since the American and French Revolutions has the civilized world faced so directly and in-

escapably such questions as the following: What constitutes the good life? Is there progress and what are its criteria? Is there anything worth fighting for and, if so, what is it? In virtue of what quality or character is something worth shedding my blood or your blood for? Is human life a matter of "dog eat dog" and may the "fittest," the most ferocious, survive, or is that a way of life that destroys itself in the very process?

These are the great ethical questions of our day. Concerning that there is very little argument, as any magazine or newspaper or public lecture bears witness. What is not understood, what is deliberately slurred over, concealed or ostentatiously denied is that the economic issue, the question of capitalism or socialism, is inherent in the questions and is implied in every answer. Unfortunately, most writers on ethics, themselves inextricably bound to the existing order by threads of which they are not generally conscious, can think of ethical problems only in terms of the capitalist system. But for reasons which will be shown in later chapters, most do not stop even here. They generalize and eternalize as if there were no particular order of society at all, as if all their problems were pure and abstract, independent of such existing conditions and historical developments as have here been sketched. The special purpose of the present book is to show how the economic and moral problems before us are inextricably bound together, and, secondarily, to show that socialism, rather than leaving ethical considerations out of the picture, represents a fusion of objective social science and the highest ethical ideals of the ages.

If one agrees that our two greatest problems today are poverty and wars of aggression, then textbook ethics has missed the point. But more basically erroneous is the view that if something is a moral problem it is therefore not economic, not material, and not to be approached with the instruments modern science has forged. We must steer between these two equal errors, both of which are products of bourgeois thought. Let us take a few simple examples. Millions of children in New York City need a summer vacation period in the country. In the Catskills is a camp with houses, bunks, swimming pool, and all other equipment for a hundred children or more at a time. The camp is going to ruin and the children suffer in the hot streets of the city because no one sees any profit in bringing the two together. Millions of families want oranges for their children. They contain Vitamin C,

necessary for normal growth. Orange growers burn and dump oranges that they cannot sell at a profit, and there is no profit in making oranges available to the children of the lower income groups of the population. Millions of Americans, nearly half the population, live in sub-standard houses, lacking adequate ventilation, sufficient space, proper toilet or bathing facilities, and so on. Millions of building trades workers have been unemployed. No one can profit by hiring them to build houses for the millions ill-housed, because those millions do not have incomes high enough to make housing for them profitable. They do not have incomes high enough, in turn, because it pays no one to hire them for higher wages than they now receive—if they receive wages at all. Millions need more cotton cloth for bedding and clothing and house furnishing. Yet the government, prior to the 1942 war production program, paid cotton growers to grow less cotton so that the price would be kept high enough for a profit on cotton growing, even though the demand for profits deprives millions of needed goods.

In the cultural field the same situation is found. An untold potential audience exists for the theater, for music, and the other arts, but these are either enterprises carried on for profit or, like the Metropolitan Opera, are privately controlled institutions to which the public may contribute but from which it is effectively barred by economic considerations. The WPA theater, music, and art projects bore witness to the interest of millions of Americans in artistic enterprises when they could be made available.

Now every one of these questions is economic and moral: economic because they involve the production and distribution of commodities; moral because they have to do with the way human beings live, in plenty and sufficiency or in hardship and want. But they are also political; that is, they involve government policy, political theory and practice. There are a host of such problems. Thousands live in a congested area of a modern city, with no greenery, smothering air in summertime, no areas for children to play but the deadly streets. In the other part of the city, where people with higher incomes live without congestion, are large parks and playgrounds. Why is this? It is not a question of profits. Again, colleges and universities compete for students, utilize every publicity device to increase or maintain their enrollment. Countless boys and girls wish a college education, are prepared for it, would benefit themselves and society by it, but they cannot

afford the fees, the cost of living away from home for four or more years. There is no direct question of profit here, for the institutions lose money on every student. Why, then, this gap between resource and need? Even though direct profit for some individual or corporation is not involved, indirectly all the economic forces of capitalist society operate in these cases, as in a thousand others equally clear and obvious. And are they not moral questions? Do they not involve equality of opportunity to secure good health and education, and hence involve the social and economic status of individuals and families for generations to come?

These problems will have to be examined specifically. Take the college problem first. Why are young people denied admittance to our colleges, inadequate though they would be if all could enroll? One candidate is a Negro. He cannot be admitted no matter what his past record and intelligence. That is the college policy. Some colleges allow a few Negroes for prestige and for broadmindedness' sake. But why such discrimination? Fundamental is the fear lest the millions of Negro people in America should demand their due. Together with this is the desire to keep the Negro people as a great reserve labor market to work anywhere for the lowest possible wages. Or the applicant is a Jew. These people, too, need to be kept "in their place." They are, by force of circumstances, competitors in the business, professional, and other markets with their Gentile brothers who "got there" first in this rapacious society and mean to stay "there." Besides its vicious discrimination, this policy has been tragically shortsighted. Today there is an actual and acute shortage of physicians and yet for years Jewish youth who desired to study medicine were forced to travel to England, Scotland, Vienna, or even Syria because the doors of American medical schools were closed to all but a small number of them. Then there is the boy or girl who simply does not have money enough to pay the fees. True, the college offers scholarships to exceptional under-privileged students, but the college system ignores the actual facts of the situation. Besides those without enough money, there are those whose parents need support, need a new wage-earner in the family, not to mention the almost limitless numbers in addition who, by the crudity, the poverty, the narrowness of the environment their economic status has kept them in, do not know enough even to desire a college education. But why are they in this environment? Whether their parents

are diamond cutters, dressmakers, iron molders, coal miners, or petty shopkeepers, the economic system cannot provide them with higher incomes—or at least no one has discovered how to do so.

As for the parks and playgrounds, it is true that no one is profiting here, at least not directly. But who are the town's aldermen, who is its city director, what is the economic position of its mayor or councilmen? They either come from, or now live in, the better areas. That is where they and their friends live. They are the solid portion of the community, the good tax-paying citizens. Is it not the taxes they pay on the real estate they own that keep the city going and make its parks possible? The poorer sections are indeed a drain on the better sections—their maintenance costs more than the taxes they bring to the municipal treasury, in police protection, fire protection, etc. That is true, but it is the poor who pay the rents that not only pay the taxes but help to keep in luxury the people in the better sections, and they provide the labor from which the profit of the "best people" is derived. Is it not a case of people whose economic power gives them political power and social prestige conferring upon themselves social benefits that they are unwilling to confer upon the poor, while the poor are without the political authority to confer such benefits on themselves in proportion to need?

In the international sphere we find that similar questions of poverty and war are paramount, are economic and moral at the same time, and raise crucially the issues of capitalism and socialism. For example, there are the "rich" capitalist countries and the "poor" colonial countries. Indonesia provided much of the world's rubber and tin, much of its manganese, not to mention such consumer's goods as tea and coffee. Yet its sixty-five to seventy million inhabitants lived in the most abject poverty. Why, since their land has such inestimable wealth in the form of commodities and industrial raw materials essential for the rest of the world, can its people not have, by all purely rational considerations, a high living standard? Is not the answer to be found in the fact that they cannot sell in the open market the materials they produce in exchange for the goods they need for a decent life? Instead, their land is owned and their resources are plundered by imperialism in order that the great capitalist trusts and cartels may obtain essential raw materials at the lowest possible cost in the interests of profits for the stockholders. One of the famous eight points of the Roosevelt-Churchill

declaration, the Atlantic Charter, is indeed that all nations should have free access to the necessary raw materials. This point, however, will be effective only if it is extended to all nations, including India and Ethiopia, Indonesia and the Philippines, Puerto Rico and the other Caribbean countries, the Malay Peninsula and wherever colonial exploitation still exists. Or, to take a simpler example, the capitalist powers desire the colonial world as a market for their manufactured goods, and yet it cannot be an adequate market so long as the living standards of the people are not tremendously raised. But they can be raised only by establishing industries in these regions, which would then compete with imperialist home industries, or by paying higher prices for the raw materials and other commodities these countries produce, which would again cut into capitalist profits. There is a West Indian ballad which tells how the sugar cane has driven out the mangoes and grapefruit and other plants which provided sustenance for the inhabitants, thus bringing malnutrition and starvation in payment for the production of one of the world's essential foods. Thus are produced on an international scale the evils of single-crop agriculture, imposed by superior economic, and hence political, forces, comparable to the imposition of cotton growing on the Southern states of the United States.

Advanced thinkers have dreamed for decades of a rational world order, an order in which each section of the world, each state and each people produced the things that they could produce best and freely exchanged those products for the things they most needed and desired from other peoples. Thus would be eliminated, they imagined, the causes of poverty on a national scale, of poor relatives in the world's family of peoples, and the causes of war at the same time. Yet, in spite of such dreams, fascist aggression has involved us in a greater and more horrible war than ever before. The dreams vanished and the bubbles broke because they did not realistically take into account the actual nature of the dominant world economy today. The dreams were dreamt either by economists who, clinging to the capitalist system, ignored moral considerations and dreamt, not of world equality and brotherhood, but of a super-imperialism, or by moralists who ignored the actual nature of capitalist economy, especially in its imperialist developments.

Lincoln Steffens tells a story which passed around in Paris among

correspondents at the time of the Versailles Peace Conference. Whether true or not, the story forcefully presents the conflict between the moving forces in international relations and the desire for world peace and brotherhood. One morning, the story goes, Clemenceau suddenly exclaimed to Lloyd George and Woodrow Wilson: "One moment, gentlemen, I desire before we go any further to be made clear on one essential point." They asked him what it was. He said he had heard talk about a permanent peace, a peace to end war forever, and he asked them: "Do you really mean that—do you, Mr. President, really mean what you say?" Wilson said he did. "And you, Mr. Lloyd George?" Lloyd George said he meant it. Then Clemenceau continued: "Very important, very important. We can do this; we can remove all the causes of war. But have you counted the cost of such a peace?" The others hesitated. "What costs?" they asked. "Well, we must give up all our empires and hopes of empires. You, Lloyd George, you English will have to come out of India, we French out of North Africa, you Americans out of the Philippines and Puerto Rico, and leave Cuba and Mexico alone. We must give up our trade routes and our spheres of influence. And yes, we shall have to tear down tariff walls and establish free trade in all the world. This is the cost of permanent peace; there are other sacrifices. It is very expensive, this peace. Are you willing to pay the price, all these costs of no more war in the world?" They protested that they didn't mean all this. "Then," Clemenceau is reported to have shouted, "you don't mean peace. You mean war." [6]

And war it has been! War against the new Socialist Republic, war in South America, in the Balkans, in the Near East, in Manchuria, China, Ethiopia, Spain, until finally most of the countries of western Europe are overrun by the fascists and the Soviet Union and the United States are attacked. During this period only one fervent voice was raised consistently in the councils of the nations at Geneva against this slaughter of men and destruction of nations. This was the voice of Maxim Litvinov, foreign minister of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, warning the capitalist nations that "peace is indivisible" and that they were preparing a horrible holocaust in which they themselves might go down. Now the Soviet Union is waging a life and death struggle in a military conflict that dwarfs anything the first World War knew. At the same time it is the greatest moral conflict

in human history. On one side stands brutality, reaction, oppression and degradation—capitalism naked, with all its historical achievements negated, the brutal rule of economic gangsters. On the other side stands all the good of the past and hope for the future, all that was progressive in the evolution of modern civilization, the product of the great historical struggles of the people seeking a better life. That one part of the anti-Hitler forces is socialist and the other part capitalist is immediately of far less importance than that both are democratic and forward-looking. For the issue confronting the peoples of all the United Nations today is not capitalism or socialism but the defense of their lands, their progressive institutions, and their right to determine their own destinies by their own action. This is the great struggle of our day and our central moral problem, for unless Hitlerism is destroyed there will be no place for ethics in the world.

Within this central framework of the problem of the military destruction of fascism are contained all the great moral problems confronting men of the twentieth century. They are all problems of human relationships and they all involve questions of good and bad, right and wrong, better and worse. Their collective solution is the great single ethical task that men face. Technology has reached undreamt of levels, disease has been largely conquered, and longevity greatly increased. All the means for the realization of a better life for every man, woman, and child on the earth are at hand. Yet poverty and wars of aggression persist as the twin evils of the modern world.

This is in no way to imply that there are not still a host of ethical problems, of adjustments and improvements in human relations such as those of husband and wife, parent and child, the individual and the social community to which he belongs. But it does mean that these other problems are secondary and cannot be dealt with on the proper level until poverty and war have been eliminated. The finer adjustments of human living together, parents and children within the family, workers in the same industry, professionals in the same sphere, urban and rural dwellers, the young and the old, are ethical questions too, just as are those of conserving land, keeping cities clean, proper regard for one another's "personal property," care for the artistic and cultural heritage of the past. But all these phases of human life are related to the basic ways in which men make a living and hence to the economic relations of men. While not to be ignored, they

must be regarded as subordinate to the solution of the problems of poverty and war.

Yet on these great questions most books on ethics remain discreetly silent. A brief glance at a few recent American textbooks will prove illuminating. There is Professor James H. Dunham of Temple University, author of *Principles of Ethics.* His chief concern is with "the implications of the acts of the individual." A second work, entitled *Ethics and Social Policy,* by Professor Wayne A. R. Leys of the Central Y.M.C.A. in Chicago, does better. Leys regards ethics as concerned with real problems of life, but when he lists these problems he categorizes them as educational, legal, economic, family, medical, and political. Now in one sense ethical problems do fall into such various categories, but the very division conceals the fundamental character of the economic relations as bearing not only upon questions of poverty and war but on every other subject he discusses. A third book, *The Problem of Choice,* by Dr. W. H. Roberts, after treating economic justice as one among many other good things, closes with religion as the only possible foundation for moral improvement, thus taking the basic problems of man today out of the realm of scientific understanding altogether.

The fact is that ethics is still largely conceived in terms of individual *virtue* and that, in so far as our vast and complex social problems are recognized and dealt with, the tendency is to treat them as if they arose solely from individual moral shortcomings and could be solved by individual moral betterment. Behind this is the uncritical assumption that if only all men would be properly *ethical* in their activities and relationships all problems would thereby be solved.

But this assumption raises once more in striking form the question suggested at the beginning of the present chapter. Under capitalism, by its very nature, human relations appear as commodity relations, as objective relations in a market. It is important to emphasize, as Marxism does, that these economic relations are still human relations and that all the concealment they undergo through the buying and selling of labor power, and so on, does not change this fact. But it is quite another thing to believe that economic problems are simply moral problems and hence to conclude that they require for their solution only moral men, not changed economic relations. Under feudalism and slavery the relations of men were both economic and

personal: *I* give *you* certain protections in return for your giving me a portion of your produce from the land you till and certain additional services. Or, as under slavery, I buy you and own you, or am bought and owned by you. All your labor is at my command and disposal and in return I must feed you, clothe you, and provide for your children. If I am a *good* man, do not seek too great extravagance or display, have regard for your welfare as a person to whom I have a certain responsibility, you may live a relatively comfortable life. We know that historically this was only too seldom the case, but the point is that it could be the case *if* I were properly minded.

Under capitalism there are no such personal relations. The market is an inexorable master. My enterprise must show a profit and a certain given level of profit at a particular time or I go under, I am bankrupt; my competitors underpay their workers, undersell me, accumulate greater reserves for plant expansion and technological improvements, which enable them to force me out of business. The system operates as inexorably as a Greek tragedy, little caring for moral goodness, or for kindness or fairness in economic relations. We know the story of innumerable capitalists who have shown good will at their own peril. They are forced out of business and the field is left free for their less moral competitors. The individual owner may not want to reduce wages, may not desire to speed up his workers or to dismiss any, may be willing to deal with the union, but his latitude of operations is limited, and factors out of his control may determine the fate of his workers. Then, too, there is the "philanthropist in business," the "old man," so touchingly pictured by corporation advertisements. He loves his employees, builds model homes and even cities for them, helps them to organize baseball teams and even looks after their religious needs. Of course, he is angry at the suggestion of a union for his paternalistic community and fights it bitterly; but, he says, he does so only in the interests of his workers who are better off under him than they would be if they paid dues and were bossed by "some outside agitator" or "labor swindler." The story of this has been too often exposed to need further comment here. Hershey, Pennsylvania, and Endicott, New York, will go down in history as semi-feudal towns that were neither ideal nor, in the long run, successful.

But such personal ownership, whether "philanthropic" or otherwise, is relatively unimportant today. Only about 35 per cent of the total

volume of business in America is individually owned, 92 per cent of our manufacturing is done by corporations, and "there is no such thing as individual private enterprise left in communication or in the utility business." [7] The fact is that our American economy is no longer either "free" or "private." The vast and impersonal corporations, pyramids of corporations, interlocking directorates, with ultimate control by great banking interests far removed from the scene or process of manufacture, are the significant factors in American economy today. When Wendell Phillips said, "Rich men die; but banks are immortal, and railroad corporations never have any diseases," he was expressing this fundamental feature of capitalism in its imperialist phase. One of Nietzsche's titles well characterizes capitalist economy: *Beyond Good and Evil.* Within capitalism moral judgments are largely irrelevant and meaningless. This is not to say that there are not better and worse owners, directors, foremen, managers (and their relatives in politics, councilmen, congressmen, judges, senators, and presidents). It is to say that the nature of the economy imposes certain limits on the best of intentions and *operates totally irrespective of human values.* Few among us have not had the experience of the best intentioned employer, supervisor, department chairman or principal, mayor or boss of any sort saying: "It hurts me as much as it does you; I hate to do it, but there just isn't the money,"—or, "We would like to pay the union scale, but we couldn't stay in business if we did,"—or, "I know it's not right but the 'community,' the 'public,' the 'higher-ups' just don't understand." It is plain that such problems may arise in other systems of society, but the point here is that under capitalism they must always be solved in the long run in the interests of the *system,* regardless of ethical considerations.

To say that such is the nature of capitalism is not to deny that personal moral values—such as integrity, honesty, kindliness, generosity, co-operativeness, and just plain humanity—are not to be adjudged good and to be sought after. They exist and have existed and are necessary for human welfare now or any other time. Further, without them there could be little thought of a better social order. Capitalism does not especially encourage such virtues, as is often admitted, in spite of frequent comparison of business ethics with the ethics of sport. The toady and the stooge, the informer and the stool-pigeon, the opportunist and the cheat are only too natural products of cutthroat

capitalist economic relations and their social and political counterparts. The very existence of unemployment, from unskilled workers through the professions, forces countless persons into line, corrupts their integrity, silences their better judgment. This is because the price of forthrightness is often enough the loss of livelihood, the blacklist, permanent unemployment or loss of one's long-prepared-for profession. Few, for example, without personal experience, comprehend the demoralization of whole college faculties in the presence of a witch-hunt such as that of the Rapp-Coudert Committee of the State Legislature in New York City's municipal colleges.

Those who proclaim that the evils from which our world suffers are primarily moral are not far wrong. They are right in charging that greed and avarice and selfishness have ruined modern society. They are wrong in not seeing that these vices are inevitable concomitants of an economic order which profits the few at the expense of the great masses of people. It is easy to speak as such moralists do. It is done in the best circles, in the most fashionable churches. But let one of them say that capitalist economy is at fault and that the people must take over and administer our economic life, and he is in danger of ostracism, is denounced as having betrayed American principles, is branded as an agent of a foreign government, or is even arrested as seeking to overthrow our form of government by force and violence.

But the problems of ethics, of human welfare, of right human relations are with us still. These are not problems to be solved by abstract deduction from "eternal" moral laws. Nor can they be solved by moral exhortation, by telling men that they shouldn't fight, shouldn't seek profit or preferment, shouldn't fail to aid the poor and the unemployed. They can be solved only by substituting for the system that breeds poverty and war and their attendant human vices a system that by its nature unites men co-operatively for the fullest achievement of their personal and social good. But the capitalist class and those who, because of their real or fancied interests, identify themselves with this class do not and cannot want to effect this substitution. The class of workers, small farmers, and those who through direct personal interest or moral considerations identify themselves with the workers and farmers can alone have the will, the courage and the power to effect this change.

To say that the problems of the contemporary world, poverty and

aggressive war, are moral problems is not to say that they are not economic in origin. It is also not to say that they can be solved otherwise than by economic, social, and political action. To say significantly that our problems are moral is to take morality out of the classroom and the textbook and to identify it with the concrete processes of human living. This is to affirm that the struggles against poverty, against fascism, against wars of aggression and all that makes for these things are the great moral struggles of the twentieth century, and that they center today in the destruction of fascism. If this be true, then to be moral today means to be a militant defender of the rights and interests of the people and of all the institutions through which these interests can be maintained and strengthened. Above all it means to fight for that freedom embodied in democratic institutions and national independence without which there can be no possibility of further progress.

II. CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF THE GOOD LIFE

When Don Quixote rose from reading romances of noble knights rescuing fair ladies from villainous marauders and donned his armor to set out on a crusade for righteousness, he was simply confusing old values with new, forgetting that times had changed. A *Don Quixote* of our own day could be written in terms of the young man, fresh from a college course in the philosophy of Horatio Alger, who, armed with a college diploma, sets forth to climb the ladder of success, marry his employer's daughter, and become director of a great steel corporation. The sad stories of countless Quixotes and Algers could be told: stories of men, often enough gallant, who sought to meet new times with ideals and moral values derived from an order already past all hope of revival.

The fact is that there have been as many conceptions of the ideal man and of the good life as there have been types of social and economic organization. The same holds true for conceptions of goodness or virtue, with which traditional ethics has been predominantly concerned. The content of the idea of virtue is always determined by reference to an ideal type of human personality: actions and attitudes being judged as virtuous when they lead to or exemplify the ideal type, and as vicious when they are in contradiction with it. Thus it is that ideas of right and wrong in human conduct change in accordance with changes in the conception of the ideal man or the good life, and this ideal changes with the mode of living of a people, with its economic organization, technological development, and accompanying institutions. It is the purpose of this chapter to portray the changing moral conceptions which have accompanied some of the major historical revolutions in the economic organization of society and especially to indicate how this process is operating in our own day of sharpened conflict between the old and the new.

But the question is asked: Are there not certain invariable conceptions of human good, existing independently of any particular culture

or type of social organization, with similarly invariable judgments of virtue and vice? Every people have believed that there are such moral invariables or eternal moral truths and that they, above all other peoples, possessed them. Philosophers, likewise, from the Greeks to our own day, have sought to discover these eternal verities, but they have inevitably been limited in their quest by the society of their own time, even when they have been in rebellion against it. The resultant contradictions in what was held to be eternally good caused other philosophers to despair of such an enterprise altogether and to believe that moral judgments are purely a matter of personal taste. Indeed, in early eighteenth-century England and again in the decade after the first World War, the doctrine was taught that ethics is simply good taste and that virtue, therefore, is merely refinement. But even these moralists had then to define good taste, or, in other words, to create an objective basis of moral evaluations in terms of some fixed or universal principle of good taste. This effort led them back to something like the very moral absolutism they had discounted at the beginning.

Meanwhile, there exists one particular set of moral principles that has gained wide acceptance as embodying the very essence of morality and thus as universally true and eternal. This code was thought to have been inscribed upon two tablets of stone by God himself and given to Moses on the top of Mount Sinai. As Spinoza rightly observed, Moses had to go up to a high place to meet God, because in the Mosaic conception God dwelt up in the sky. When the contents of these tablets are examined, two conclusions can be drawn. The first is that they were peculiarly relevant to the kind of society Moses was seeking to forge out of the scattered, oppressed tribes of Israel: a patriarchal society based primarily on small-scale agriculture and the private ownership of grazing cattle. The Tenth Commandment: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's" is clearly an expression of the needs of such a society.

The second conclusion that is derived from an examination of these commandments in their social-historical setting is that they are applicable in other societies and in other historical periods only after considerable qualification and reconstruction. Few of us today, for

example, have oxen or asses or menservants and maidservants, and thus this commandment is either obsolete or it must be applied to other kinds of property. If we were really to reconstruct it and make it as significant in terms of the dominant types of property today as it was for the ancient Israelites, it might read like this: "Thou shalt not covet a bank's or corporation's real estate holdings, a company's factories or cheap labor supply, an individual's stocks and bonds, or his yachts and limousines." If the commandment seems thus to have more of a class character than it had in the original, this is simply due to the changes in economic relationships that have taken place. When we make such changes as are necessary to fit this law to contemporary America, the commandment may mean that sharecroppers or tenants must not covet the soil they till, nor all of us collectively covet the vast industrial plant upon which our life as a people depends. The Southern slave-owners, for example, might well have used the "manservant" and "maidservant" clause as a divine defense against the Abolitionists. If this commandment is desired to have such meanings in the contemporary world, then let us be clear about its implications for modern life. Otherwise, we should not speak of the eternality and absoluteness of the Ten Commandments.

But, the objection is raised, the other commandments cannot be disposed of so easily. "Thou shalt not commit adultery," "Thou shalt not kill," and "Thou shalt not steal" are surely eternal moral principles. Precisely what is stealing, however? Is the expropriation of American oil properties and sub-soil rights in Mexico stealing on the part of the Mexican people? If one seeks to reply that the companies rightfully owned the oil, then the argument is shifted from moral right to legal right. Then, either the two *rights* must be identified or we must ask, with the great American Quaker of the eighteenth century, John Woolman, whether all the legal documents in the world can *rightfully* make the land we all depend on jeopardize our common interests.

Few are willing to maintain in principle that everything legally right is morally right, for even those who hold that morality is God-given generally agree that laws are man-made and *may,* in any particular case, be morally unjustified. And we all feel that there is a certain justification in the acts of an outlaw such as Robin Hood who robs the rich and gives the booty to the poor. At least similar legends

exist among many people, like that of Jesse James, or the Irish "Brennan on the Moor, who stole from the rich and gave to the poor." Was the Emancipation Proclamation theft? The slave-owners held that it was, inasmuch as it was the confiscation of their major form of property without compensation. The Russian revolutionists, likewise, were accused of stealing the privately owned property that they confiscated and socialized, and the Protestant Reformation and accompanying bourgeois revolutions were similarly accused of stealing Church property. Were such acts as these contrary to God's eternal law as expressed in the Eighth Commandment? Either a yes or no answer to this question requires the interpretation of the commandments in terms of more fundamental moral principles and thus reveals their limited and relative character. Furthermore, it has often been observed that the commandment not to steal would have little meaning in a society not based on the private ownership of property, and where each received "in accordance with his needs."

The commandment "Thou shalt not kill" may seem to possess more universality, but again examination reveals difficulties. No society of any historical significance has found this rule observable. In subsequent laws given Moses at the same time, God is reported to have distinguished eight different crimes for which the death penalty was to be exacted—for which men were to kill other men. Real or supposed enemies at home or abroad have been thought to have been legitimately and rightfully put to death, either by the private citizen defending his life or home, by the official executioner of the state, or by the armed forces of one state pitted against those of another. John Brown, with the sense of righteousness of an Old Testament prophet, deeply conscious of the commandments, still believed that victory over slavery was such a spiritual and human goal as more than to justify the shedding of blood in its behalf. If, he reasoned, the evil system of slavery, the oppression of black by white, can be overcome only by violence on behalf of the enslaved as it was maintained only by violence on behalf of the enslavers, then let there be violence. For what is a life here or there, Brown asked his conscience, compared to this scourge of America? Clearly, then, men generally believe killing is right in its place, as the Mosaic society itself believed, and the commandment requires elaborate qualification before it serves as a real moral guide, and then its qualifications destroy its universality. For different historical so-

cieties find different justifications for the killing of men by men.

The question of adultery, and sex relations generally, will be discussed in Chapter Six. It is sufficient to remark here that the Israelites of the Old Testament seem to have had few scruples against a rich man having multiple wives or concubines, and historical analysis indicates that the ideal of monogamous marriage did not originate so much in moral scruples as in the needs of orderly property inheritance.

It is possibly this critique of moral eternals on the part of the Marxist that engenders such criticisms as that of John Middleton Murry, who in his *Heroes of Thought* writes: "The bias of Marxism is toward the elimination of the moral and religious processes from history." Disregarding for the moment the far from subtle and completely unjustifiable lumping together of "moral" and "religious," the Marxist's reply to Mr. Murry is simply that Marxism does not believe that moral considerations have been primary ones in determining historical movements and that it does believe there is a higher human morality than that codified up to the present in societies based on the division of labor and the private ownership of the means of production. The Ten Commandments are an important landmark in human social and moral progress. Representing the summation of the long experience of a people who had known slavery and suffered oppression and bondage, and who were now seeking to create for themselves a unified and organized society, they gave expression to basic needs and profound aspirations. Because the problems were so fundamental, these commandments have served as a guide to future ages. But this in no way relieves us of the task and the responsibility of modifying and reinterpreting these moral principles in the light of *new* experience, new conditions, and new times. Indeed, only by doing this can we do justice to the deep moral conviction and insight that was contained in them at their conception.

A similarly brief analysis reveals a corresponding abstractness and lack of generality in other Biblical moral maxims. "Love thy neighbor as thyself" sounds offhand like good advice, but those who have sought to apply the doctrine have found great difficulty in determining who is their "neighbor." If it is all mankind, then Christians have been patently guilty of not observing it, as the occurrence of "Holy Wars" reveals, both against the "infidel" and between opposing Christian sects. In such instances the concept of neighbor seems painfully

limited to those who share the same belief. For most people it is limited not only in this way but also by geographical closeness as well, ranging all the way from the people in the same house, through those in the same street, city, state or nation. Christian Socialists, who say that they want socialism to come through love rather than hate, frequently charge that Marxists teach class hatred instead of brotherly love. But mutual hatred between exploiters and exploited existed before Marx, and it can be said generally that "Love thy neighbor" has been confined within class boundaries from which it has seldom strayed except in the form of charity or benevolence. But charity and benevolence not only give luxurious feelings to their practitioners but through helping to mitigate the pettiest evils of any given order of class society help also to perpetuate the existing class relations and major evils. As the saying goes: "The rich will do anything for the poor except get off their backs."

Concretely, what does the commandment to love thy neighbor really mean? Our neighbors are good and bad. Are we to love them indiscriminately? That seems to be in violation of other moral commitments. Are the people of the democratic countries to love Nazis, Ethiopians to love Mussolini, and the Spanish people General Franco, or any oppressed group their oppressors? Obviously, the commandment, without elaborate qualifications, runs counter to other commands to love the good and hate evil. Neither can we believe that such undiscriminating love is fruitful. Slaves and Abolitionists did not and could not love the Southern plantation owners, and if they had not sufficiently hated them and the system they represented, would slavery have been abolished? Evils do not exist abstractly but through human beings, and not to hate the doer of evil, the human cause of misery and wretchedness, is in fact to betray moral principles altogether. "Love thy neighbor," then, is, like the other maxims examined, as ignored in practice as it is celebrated in precept, and is also today as in previous ages of doubtful desirability on the part of the oppressed and abused. The real problem is to create such conditions as will make all men really "neighbors." It will not then be necessary to *command* love, for love will follow from the very relationships of men.

One meaning of contemporary efforts to solve pressing economic and social problems by reference to biblical maxims was well illustrated by an address to educators recently by Mr. Lammot du Pont,

President of E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company. Mr. du Pont, whose ancestors were invited to this country by Thomas Jefferson to manufacture explosives for the struggling new republic and whose family have been profitably doing so ever since, spoke in a panel on the subject, "How Can Economic Illiteracy be Reduced?" Mr. du Pont said that modern economic theory did not permit students and children the proper approach and that this was to be found in the Bible with its declaration: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." "This," he continued, "is an injunction that a vast majority of men think is as good today as when it was first written." Now this is not altogether a bad doctrine and the Russian Bolsheviks have incorporated it in their new constitution of 1936 in the somewhat revised form: "In the U.S.S.R. work is the obligation and honorable duty of every able-bodied citizen, in accordance with the principle: 'He who does not work neither shall he eat.'" [8]

It would be charitable to assume that Mr. du Pont and the Bolsheviks do not mean precisely the same thing. The latter meant that no one shall live in ease by the labor of others in virtue of his ownership of capital, or, in other words, that there is no room in their society for parasites. Mr. du Pont seems to mean that as a result of the sin of our first parents God enjoined that bread should come hard to the majority of men, who were condemned by Adam's disobedience to labor for a chosen few. For surely he does not mean that he eats *his* bread in the sweat of his brow. More seriously, it is to be inferred that Mr. du Pont believes it divinely ordained that the great masses of mankind are committed to hard labor in spite of the fact that modern means of production are such, if properly utilized, as to provide all men with an adequate standard of living and to free them from excessive drudgery and fear of insecurity. Is there anyone who can completely escape the suspicion that Mr. du Pont finds this biblical maxim useful today for the creation of a servile army of laborers to work in the du Pont rayon and dynamite vineyards and for the justification of those economic relationships through which he and his family have so handsomely prospered?

It is men, after all, who must interpret biblical maxims and apply religious principles to current moral questions. As Abraham Lincoln clearly saw, with regard to slavery, men will tend to find interpretations not hostile to their interests. In a note jotted down for his speeches

during the debates with Douglas, Lincoln discussed the theological argument as it was used to defend slavery and showed that in the case of a minister who owned a slave it would be exceedingly difficult for him to decide the issue in the slave's favor. For the minister sits restfully in the shade while his slave provides his bread in the burning sun, and if he decides that God wills the slave to be free he will have to leave his comfortable position to go out and work for his own bread. Under such circumstances, Lincoln asks, will he "be actuated by the perfect impartiality which has ever been considered most favorable to correct decisions?" No one, he says, thinks of asking the slave's opinion on the question.[9]

Just as it is impossible to find eternal moral principles in the form of commandments and maxims, it is impossible to find eternal justice embodied in statutes and legal codes. Just as a given maxim becomes obsolete through changing conditions, so does a principle of legal right require reinterpretation in each new epoch, and, in periods of far-reaching social reconstruction, complete overthrow and a replacement by a new principle meeting new situations and needs. As the young Abraham Lincoln said in Congress in 1848, "It is a quality of revolutions not to go by old ideas or old laws; but to break up both, and make new ones."[10] It is more readily understood that legal interpretations change than that moral principles change, and few think of the idea of justice itself as an evolving social product. Why this is so was expressed most cogently by Frederick Engels, Marx's life-long collaborator:

> At a certain, very primitive stage of the development of society, the need arises to co-ordinate under a common regulation the daily recurring acts of production, distribution and exchange.... This regulation, which is at first custom, soon becomes *law*. With law, organs necessarily arise which are entrusted with its maintenance—public authority, the state. With further social development, law develops into a more or less comprehensive legal system. The more complicated this legal system becomes, the more its terminology becomes removed from that in which the usual economic conditions of the life of society are expressed. It appears as an independent element which derives the justification for its existence and the reason for its further development not out of the existing economic condi-

tions, but out of its own inner logic, or, if you like, out of "the concept of will." People forget the derivation of their legal system from their economic conditions of life, just as they have forgotten their own derivation from the animal world. With the development of the legal system into a complicated and comprehensive whole the necessity arises for a new social division of labor; an order of professional jurists develops and with these legal science comes into being. In its further development this science compares the legal systems of various peoples and various times, not as the expression of the given economic relationships, but as systems which find their justification in themselves. The comparison assumes something common to them all, and this the jurists find by summing up that which is more or less common to all these legal systems as *natural law*.

However, the standard which is taken to determine what is natural law and what is not, is precisely the most abstract expression of law itself, namely, *justice*. From this point on, therefore, the development of law for the jurists, and for those who believe them uncritically, is nothing more than the striving to bring human conditions, so far as they are expressed in legal terms, into closer and closer conformity with the ideal of justice, *eternal* justice. And this justice is never anything but the ideologized, glorified expression of the existing economic relations, at times from the conservative side, at times from the revolutionary side. The justice of the Greeks and Romans held slavery to be just. The justice of the bourgeois of 1789 demanded the abolition of feudalism because it was unjust.... The conception of eternal justice therefore varies not only according to time and place, but also according to persons, and it belongs among those things of which Mülberger correctly says, "everyone understands something different." While in everyday life, in view of the simplicity of the relations which come into question, expressions like right, wrong, justice, conception of justice, can be used without misunderstanding even in relation to social matters, they create, as we have seen, hopeless confusion in any scientific investigation of economic relations, in fact, much the same confusion as would be created in modern chemistry if the terminology of the phlogiston theory were to be retained. The confusion becomes still

> worse if one, like Proudhon, believes in this social phlogiston, "justice," or if one, like Mülberger, declares that the phlogiston theory no less than the oxygen theory is perfectly correct.[11]

The above passage touches upon so many ideas that it is impossible to take them all up at this point. Engels' central notion, that of law originating in the need for regulating the relations of production and exchange and the subsequent apotheosis of justice as something fixed and absolute, is expressed here, of course, only theoretically. But Professor Alban Winspear's recent work on Plato, *The Genesis of Plato's Thought,* is devoted to a detailed and scholarly account of precisely how this process operated in ancient Greece. Professor Winspear shows in rich detail that the concept "justice" arose only when the previously existing communal ownership of the land was being destroyed, and it represented, on one side, a demand for a more equitable economic order, and, on the other, the rationalization of the new economic relations. He shows further, as Greek civilization developed, how the new struggle between a land-owning aristocracy and a rising commercial class allied with free artisans expressed itself ideologically in conflicting world views centering around conflicting claims of "right."

The concluding sentences of the quotation from Engels show why he and Marx avoided moral categories in their scientific analysis of the nature of the capitalist mode of production. That they did so does not mean that ideas of justice were inoperative in their analysis of the nature of capitalist political economy, but merely that a scientific understanding of this economy and of its necessary transition to a socialist economy could be arrived at better if the moral questions were momentarily held in abeyance. The only alternatives were either to use traditional moral concepts in traditional ways (which would lead to reformism rather than to scientific socialism because of the class content of these concepts), or to engage in an elaborate reconstruction of ethics based on dialectical and historical materialism. This latter course would not only have appeared to impede the scientific study of capitalist movement but would have tended to create the erroneous impression that the analysis of capitalism was deduced from the ethical presuppositions, when as a matter of fact the opposite was more nearly true—namely, that ethics was for Marx and Engels derived from the scientific understanding of the laws of economic and social processes.

But not only do moral conceptions change with changing social and economic forms. This has been recognized and accepted by many thinkers, although they can never do full justice to the proposition because of their tendency to bring the process to a close with contemporary, hence capitalist, morality. What Marx and Engels essentially contributed was that in class society—and all historical societies have been class societies—moral judgments and their foundations differ for the different and opposed classes. The one profound qualification that Marx and Engels made, however, is that "the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas"[12] and hence that the real cleavage of interests and needs of different social classes is hidden behind an apparently common ideology. Thus it is that we find in the ancient world a slave and an emperor sharing a common philosophy, and in the modern world industrialist and worker sometimes believing in the same ideal of individual enterprise. The conflict is real, nevertheless, even if not reflected in the minds of the subordinate class. It is illustrated in all collective bargaining and becomes obvious when adjoining stories on the same page of a daily paper carry headlines such as "U. S. Steel Cuts Wages 10%" and "U. S. Steel Announces Increased Dividends." A recent work on the psychology of industrial conflict[13] contains among other things an account of the unionization of a plant. In parallel columns are given a union organizer's history of the day-to-day struggle and the company superintendent's story of the same events. Each of these men is trying to be as honest and accurate as possible in his narration of the events as they occurred, yet in every paragraph there are evidences of the fact that they are looking through glasses of different colors.

It is a common practice, but none the less naïve, to dismiss such a phenomenon with the observation that the emotions of the conflicting parties prevent objectivity. The really important thing is that they are operating upon widely different standards of value, different ethical systems. The superintendent is, often unconsciously, judging every event in terms of the successful maintenance of the factory's business and profits; the organizer is, perhaps more consciously as a result of previous experience, watching the developments in terms of what workers need to maintain themselves and their families in decent standards of living and what is necessary for their own health and happiness. The fact that he must, under the profit system, consider

what demands the company can and cannot meet and still stay in business is beside the point; just as is the fact that the superintendent does not want "trouble" and would like to satisfy his men within what are to him "reasonable" limits. Different standards of value are here being employed just as they always are when stresses and strains accumulate within a class society and the dominant ideology begins to fray against the rough edges of class conflict.

An eloquent picture of this class division in its influence on men's moral judgments and their whole pattern of life (of which the moral system is but a limited phase) is given in the study *Middletown,* by Robert and Helen Lynd. These investigators found that "it is after all this division into working class and business class that constitutes the outstanding cleavage" in the representative American industrial town that they studied. They reported further:

> The mere fact of being born upon one or the other side of the watershed roughly formed by these two groups is the most significant single cultural factor tending to influence what one does all day long throughout one's life; whom one marries; when one gets up in the morning; whether one belongs to the Holy Roller or Presbyterian church; or drives a Ford or a Buick;...whether one sits about evenings with one's necktie off; and so on indefinitely throughout the daily comings and goings of a Middletown man, woman, or child.[14]

The point is almost too well known to be argued. If different standards and different sets of values were not in operation on the part of the rich and the poor, much of our public school education and newspaper and radio editorializing would not be comprehensible. For these are designed to inculcate in the masses of people and to keep constantly before them the moral "standards" of the ruling class. With ten years of disastrous unemployment behind it and no discernible solution ahead, our leading families make every effort to continue the illusion that the jobless are somehow to blame for their plight: that they lack self reliance, individual initiative, or, in short, that their morals are not all they should be. For if this is not the case then it must be admitted that something is drastically wrong with the economic order which cannot provide work for all. The unemployed demand jobs or relief. A section of the ruling class cries, "You don't want to work," and at least in one instance when a young man, broken

by years of unemployment, reached a state institution for mental disorders, he was pronounced as suffering from *dementia praecox* because he held that the country ought to make it possible for all to work. To the unemployed man and his family it seems that a wrong is done and that society *ought* to provide the opportunity for work. This is a moral judgment as truly as is the loftiest sounding dictum of Kant. And it arises out of necessity. Just as much of a moral judgment is Roger Babson's reply that the unemployed, by being so, show themselves to be nature's misfits and hence deserve to fail. Others of the ruling class, who see the impossibility of the unemployed finding work, seek to avoid the moral issue by talking about "society's inexorable laws." This interpretation, too, arises from necessity, for otherwise the capitalist class would have to admit its failure and abdicate as a class—something no class has yet done voluntarily, that is, through moral considerations.

One further example of class ethics may be taken from the controversy over taxing excess profits made in war industries. Organized labor, as well as the lower income groups generally, believes that excess profits in war industries should be banned on the principle that no one should exploit for his own profit our country's vital struggle to maintain its national independence, especially since this involves sacrifices and hardships for millions. The *New York Times* gave editorial expression[15] to the classic capitalist ethics on this question. It is of course good, the *Times* argued, that no one profit excessively from the nation's defense program, but, it continued: "Important as this objective is, however, it is necessarily subordinate to another objective—to insure the promptest and fullest production possible for defense. No form of tax is desirable if it stands in the way of this major end." Since, the editorial continued, it is the armaments industries which need most encouragement to expand, any tax that fails to encourage or actually discourages such expansion is "a very expensive and dangerous tax for the Government to impose." What precisely does this mean? This capitalist ethics of national defense may be expressed somewhat as follows: "Our country must be defended. Defense requires armaments and men. Conscription is the democratic way of getting the men (so an adjoining *Times* editorial ran). But we capitalists will produce armaments only if assured the desired profits on our investments, for such is the nature of capitalism." The worker

views the question differently. He says: "Let us defend our country. We will volunteer or be conscripted as necessary, but while we are risking our lives, let us make sure that no one is making profits out of our sacrifice. Therefore capital must make sacrifices too." Again it is obvious that conflicting standards of value are involved and that the question of defense appears differently to opposite economic classes.

There is, then, as the ancient skeptic Pyrrho pointed out in the third century B.C., no universal agreement concerning right and wrong, concerning what is desirable and undesirable. But Pyrrho's conclusion that therefore suspension of judgment should be our rule is neither theoretically possible nor practically desirable. Men do make such judgments and it is impossible that they should not. But they make them relative to their needs and desires as these operate and mutually condition each other in particular societies and under the conditions in which men function in these societies. On one hand, as Pyrrho correctly observed, moral judgments are relative to one another. But on the other hand—and this Pyrrho and other skeptics miss—they are determined by the nature of men and the nature of the particular conditions of their life at any given time and place. Judgments of the good change as men's needs and desires change, and even if these remained relatively constant, different conditions would still necessitate different means of securing their realization, and the question of means is as much a matter of moral principle as is that of ends. Under different conditions the same means may attain different ends, or different means the same end. If there were any eternal and universal moral values this would be due only to invariant features of the nature of men and the nature of their social relations. But just as psychologists find it difficult to discover the former, so do sociologists and anthropologists fail to locate the latter.

Having shown the relativity of moral judgments, it is now desirable to inquire into the larger subject of men's conceptions of the ideal man or what is truly the good and proper life. Everyone knows that men not only form ideals for themselves as to what they most admire and seek to emulate, but that these differ startlingly for different men and different social classes. The growing child illustrates this in the way he sets as his ideal the bold G-man or the gangster, the successful banker or learned professor, the movie actress and woman of the

world or the home-loving mother, the eloquent preacher, the politician, labor organizer or soldier, as determined by each one's particular environmental influences. At the same time we know that a certain ideal is dominant in our time, just as others were in other times: dominant in the sense used above, that the ideas of the ruling class are the ruling ideas. Under capitalism the dominant ideal has been that of success, prosperity, economic status. Its precondition is not having to do manual work; its goal is economic independence, due to ownership of a business, income from investments, or just "working for oneself." Terrible sacrifices are sometimes made for the attainment of this goal and the competition for it is ruthless and incessant. The very nature of this ideal starkly reveals the contradictions and ethical bankruptcy of capitalism. The only ideal it can offer the members of society is one that by its nature is attainable only by a few at the expense of the many. It is such conceptions of the ideal life that constitute the heart of ethics, inasmuch as they are not only the finished expressions of the whole conception of value but are also the determinants of all other values and all judgments of good and bad.

The formulation and presentation of a society's ideals has been and still is the major preoccupation of literature and to a lesser extent of the other arts. From Homer to Dante and Shakespeare, from Cervantes, Boccaccio and Rabelais through Balzac, Flaubert, and Zola, from Melville or Whitman to Sinclair Lewis or Hemingway literature presents us with changing societies' dominant ideas of themselves, or, which is the same thing, with pictures of what they wish to be or to be thought of as being. Upon careful scrutiny even the picaresque novel and the most blatant realism reveal the standard of values of a society. An intense identification with the world he objectively describes or bitterly excoriates marks many an artist, such as a Flaubert, a Chekhov, or a Sinclair Lewis, who appears at first glance to be standing apart.

Anyone who has read at all widely can form for himself a concrete picture of the way the dominant class in a given society envisions itself and conceives its ideal life. A careful examination of a half a dozen current motion pictures will strikingly reveal the same phenomenon. We wish, however, to confine ourselves here to a brief survey of the civilization that immediately preceded our own—European feudalism —to show how its values and moral standards underwent a drastic revolution at the hands of the classes that laid the foundation of mod-

ern capitalism. Such an analysis will sharply reveal the major Marxist theses: (1) that moral values change; (2) that they change in accordance with changes in society's productive forces and its economic relations, and (3) that the dominant moral values at any given time are those of the dominant economic class.

The economic basis of feudalism was an agricultural economy that was essentially closed.[16] The economic unit, the manor or the monastery whose organization was of the same type, fed the people who lived on it. It produced the goods they consumed—their clothing, houses, tools. It was stratified, from lord or abbot down to villein or serf. These class relations expressed the prevailing mode of production. By an intricate process of subinfeudation, all land was held, in name, by the king, and granted to vassals on terms of services and dues to be rendered to him. These great magnates, in turn, granted parts of their domains to sub-vassals, on conditions of the same sort. The serf or villein, though not strictly speaking a vassal, owed services and dues of various sorts to his lord and held his land on those terms. There was thus a pyramid of exploitation based on the labor of the lowest class, and expressed directly in terms of a certain number of days of work (sometimes as much as five a week) due the lord, of certain quantities of produce due the lord, of certain rights the lord had, and so forth. The serf, though distinguished in important respects from a slave (of which the Middle Ages had no lack), was not a free man. A relic of his status comes down to us in our word *villain,* derived from villein or serf. That a word representing a social-economic relationship should be used as a term of moral disapproval eloquently testifies to the class origin and content of virtues and vices. It is as if in our society *worker* should come to mean "scoundrel," as it does to some industrialists and their politician cousins, simply because the needs and interests and hence the ethics of workers are at variance with those of the owners of industry.

Two competing hierarchies of exploiters struggled over the serf's labor, uniting, of course, whenever he strove to set himself free or improve his conditions. The Church pretended to suzerainty over all secular lords. Within the Church a different hierarchy exploited the peasantry, but in the same way. Indeed the higher priests and the nobles represented the same families, with few exceptions—the eldest

son keeping the title of nobility while the younger entered the Church with the idea of rising to a position of eminence and power.

The secular power of the Church lasted as long as its technical superiority. In the early stages of feudalism it had a monopoly of education, was the sole conserver of what was available of the classical heritage, was the most scientific cultivator of the land, and gave the social structure its literature, its lawyers and its law, its physicians and philosophers, its historians and such scientists as there were. As feudalism developed, the civil law was revived and after a bitter struggle supplanted the Decretals of the canon law in secular affairs. Lay chroniclers and lay poets arose, and even in the Church itself philosophers such as William of Ockham challenged the papal claims and espoused the cause of the emperor. Techniques developed outside the walls of the cloisters, largely as a result of the discoveries the Crusaders brought back from their contact with the superior Arab civilization (as illustrated, for instance, by the great Montgolfier paper factory founded outside Paris at this time).

The twofold nature of feudal exploitation is reflected in a double system of morality: the official morality of the Church and the lay feudal morality of the barons. The dominant military class preserved its exploitation against the peasantry by an overwhelming military supremacy, based on the possession of castle, horse, and armor. A single knight was more than a match for a whole troop of peasantry. The word *chivalry* is, as we know, derived from the word for horse; a chivalrous man is one who has a horse and by implication is supposed to act according to the code of horse-riding folk. This code of chivalry was plainly a class code; its duties were quite different towards those of the upper, horsey class, and those of the lower classes, who walked on foot (infantry, pawns). The knight was to be gentle to gentlefolk and harsh to the rabble; to protect the lady and use the "right of the first night" on the maid. Courage in war was a prime requisite of character, and skill in war almost as essential. Loyalty to the overlord, which expressed the feudal obligations, was constantly violated in fact, but nominally was inculcated in every youth. The feudal romances and the lays of the troubadours could furnish us a long catalogue, but the essential outlines of the brutal, worldly, gallant, grasping, free-spending and free-giving (because possessed of inalienable estates), military man, the ideal man, are clear.

The Church morality is also well known, and varies little from Augustine to Aquinas. From reading the ethical precepts of the period one would derive little idea at first of what kind of people lived at the time, or the kind of society in which they lived. The birth of a rudimentary trading class is, to be sure, reflected in the prohibition of usury (as the taking of interest was called), which is harmful to a landed aristocracy, clerical as well as lay, possessed of land and serfs but with no cash income to speak of. But in theory the morality of the Church was other-worldly, whatever its practice may have been. Thomas Aquinas treats at length of ethics, and, as in his philosophy generally, erects on Aristotle as a foundation a superstructure based on revelation and faith. Even his physics is on ethical foundations, for everything in nature, even if not endowed with consciousness or reason, moves toward some good. The world proceeds according to final causes and the supreme end is the supreme good, namely, God. All motion proceeds through a series of graduated links from God down through the superhuman intelligence of the angels to the highest and therefore most noble bodies, the heavenly bodies, and the sublunary processes which the heavenly bodies give rise to. But we cannot hope for our happiness in this life, except in feeble measure, for it consists in an intellectual cognition of God which is only partially attainable while we are immersed in the world of matter and sense. Our actions must be directed towards God, if they are to be good actions; and their goodness is constituted by the goodness of the will from which those actions proceed. And, according to St. Thomas, our will should be guided by reason, which orders all things towards God.

This is a hierarchical system as befits a feudal society, and its hierarchical nature and the confirmation of its teleological nature are brought out by that fundamental doctrine of Aquinas, *bonum et ens convertuntur* (Being and the Good are convertible). It is natural to ask at this point: What of evil? Does not evil exist? The answer, in Aquinas as in Augustine, is that evil is nothing positive but is merely absence or deficiency of being, and therefore of excellence; and this sophistical conclusion is supported by arguments such as that the harmony and reasoned order of the world require that some things should be better than others. It is not our purpose here to rake up the ashes of theology but merely to point out how neatly this serves to justify social stratification, subordination, and serfdom. Indeed, only a society

based on forced labor whether slave or serf develops such an ethical system, because only such a society needs such an ethics. The clerical ethics like the baronial ethics was a dominant class ethics. We look in vain for a code which expresses the needs and aspirations of the serf. The serf had only one virtue: to work and obey. His needs and desires did not count. How could they when his life counted for so little!

All through the feudal period complete hierarchy in principle was coupled with anarchy, tempered by forcible domination, in practice. The Roman law had all but died out, and a vast congeries of feudal law, written and customary, served for the regulation of social processes. The true basis of feudal government was force, and the Church too had its means of force, both visible and invisible.

Mankind has gone through a long period of evolution since those days. During the classic period of liberalism it was customary to describe this development as a transition from status to contract; that is, from a state of affairs where men's relations were defined once and for all by their social position, to one where those relations depend only on agreements freely entered into by men themselves. There is some validity in this distinction, but the thing to bear in mind is that this legal transformation expresses a historic economic and political change—the change from feudalism to capitalism.

This change, effected through long bloody years of transition at the dawn of modern times, certainly brought an increase in freedom, considered in terms of the new ruling classes. It increased the freedom of the trading and commercial classes and decreased the freedom of the lords of the manor (and of the higher clergy) by taking away from them such sacred rights as the right to take tolls, the right to exact unpaid-for work, the right to sell justice, and the "right of the first night." The effect on the villeins of these new freedoms of the bourgeoisie was varied. Some, notably in Holland, became independent farmers. Others kept their lands as tenant farmers. But for many, the effect of the transition to capitalism was to deprive them of their lands, which was one thing at least that feudalism had left them, and to turn them out as vagabonds, free to starve if they were not caught, and free to be branded or hanged if they were.

In accordance with these legal and economic changes, the status of the individual changed, and with it the ethics of society, that is, of the

new dominant social class. The virtue of loyalty, which expressed feudal obligations and feudal organizations of the productive process, gave way to the virtues of God-fearing honesty and law-abidingness. The virtue of gallantry yielded to chastity, as Cavalier yielded to Roundhead. Courage ceased to be the dominant virtue (since the military aristocracy whose profession was courage was no longer the dominant class), and was replaced by the virtues of exactness, saving, keen observation and shrewdness, qualities useful to and characteristic of the new dominant class, which ruled a more fluid commercial society. The taking of interest, harmful to a landed aristocracy, and therefore proscribed in feudal legislation and theology, was of the essence of a commercial civilization. Despite all the fulminations of the Church and prescriptions of the law, law and Church had to bow, and first surreptitiously and then openly they permitted it. Intellectual curiosity and self-confidence changed from deadly sins to admirable individual and social traits. Catholicism (whose motto was and is, "outside of the Church there is no salvation") gave way to Protestantism, where every man, in theory at least, is his own priest. Science received a new impetus, being called upon to furnish the expanding commercial economy with the new land and the new techniques which it needed, but for which the static medieval system had no use.

The new society needed a new type of man too; a Sir Galahad or a Parsifal would not do as a business man any more than the serf would do as an apprentice or factory worker. The sort of character a capitalist system needs is defined by a new ethics, based on the new social relations and modes of production. This new ethics begins to arise among the Protestants, and the connection between Protestantism, especially in its Calvinist form, and capitalism has been worked out by many writers, such as Weber, O'Brien, and Tawney. The basis of ethics may still lie, theoretically, in the other world but it is man's duty to strive to better himself in this one. The conception of the other world, too, undergoes profound changes—instead of a hierarchy there is one supreme absolute ruler and each individual is dealt with directly by that ruler without any intermediaries. This destruction of a heavenly hierarchy is a reflection of the opposition of the trading and banking classes to an earthly one, rooted as it was in property relations based on the closed economy of feudal services. The old order, meanwhile, defended its repression of free inquiry and free trade by appeals to a life

hereafter. The bourgeoisie intended to gain control of the earth, and its generally more progressive viewpoint gave it a tremendous advantage over the Catholic feudal party bent on maintaining its supremacy. The bourgeoisie sanctified its aims by an appeal to freedom: freedom of thought, freedom of trade, freedom of the individual to remove himself from the narrow manorial orbit.

This clash of ideals was the reflection of the clash of classes. The question of sincerity does not enter; no more does the question of the validity of the opposing ideals abstracted from their social and historical context. Endless discussions can be carried on about them, and no more satisfactory conclusion will be reached than the polemics of the opposing schools arrived at. If one side cries out freedom, the other cries out duty, tradition, unselfishness, justice. All these are fine things; but in order to choose or, still better, to try to get a maximum of both freedom and justice, we have to see how they apply in a given situation. Above all, we have to ask of systems that pretend to give a general description of the norms of human actions that at the very least they show how they assure to the mass of mankind, and to every individual, the prime necessities of life. On this basis, there need be no hesitation in saying that during the epoch of transition from feudalism to modern capitalism the bourgeoisie offered to the mass of mankind, or at least to a larger part of it than did feudalism, a larger supply of these elementary goods.

Capitalism produced more goods and distributed them better, making them more available. And capitalism did institute a reign of law, foster science and letters, increase social mobility and give more individuals greater opportunities for developing their faculties and for exercising them. The reason it was able to make these genuine improvements (we need not stress here at what a ghastly cost in life and suffering over hundreds of years) was that it made a genuine progress in the business of life: it was a more efficient organization of society in respect to those basic factors that make or break society. Feudalism went down because the productive forces had outgrown its productive relations, and not because freedom is intrinsically better than tradition. It was when the notion of freedom, interpreted according to Protestant capitalistic canons, coincided with the trends of a progressive economic system that it became the slogan of the class which dominated that new system. Such freedom does not come from on high or function

as a self-existing propelling force; it is an ideal which emerges in the minds of men under specific favorable conditions and is as broad or as narrow as those conditions make it.

The new ethics, vigorously denounced as anarchic and selfish by the apologists of the old order, became prevalent as the new economic organization of society got the upper hand. It developed a new type of man, new catchwords, and new ethical norms which remain today as the dominant concepts. Naturally, too, these were not expressed as the ideals of a powerful rising class but as universal standards, eternally true and proper for all men everywhere. Freedom was the cry of the bourgeoisie, and in their revolutionary heydey they meant real and important things by it, such as freedom to buy and sell all goods, including land, at pleasure; freedom to live in town or country, freedom for the worker to work wherever he chose, and freedom to trade anywhere and everywhere under conditions determined alone by buyer and seller. Above all, it meant the freedom to acquire property and to use it or dispose of it as one desired. The colonial American, James Otis, for example, thought it to be a law of God and Nature and the basis of the British Constitution that "a man shall quietly enjoy and have the sole disposal of his own property." Representative government was seen as the means whereby the protection of property could best be assured, and thus the broader distribution of private property brought with it and required the extension of democratic rights.

Freedom, in short, is based on property, but property does not consist in mere possession; it is a right, a social relation publicly acknowledged, defined, and guaranteed. This means that the law must now be supreme over against any other powers in the body politic (expressed frequently in the phrase "the rule of law rather than the rule of persons"), and requires the suppression of any private armies, such as the feudal lord's retainers, and the setting up in their place of a single public organ of force, the modern national state, to enforce private property rights. The only way that property may now be taken away from its owner is by legal means, that is, in accordance with the capitalist rules of the game.

This brief account helps to show how capitalist ethics is based on private property, as is the law in which that ethics is enacted. The fundamental principle on which our law operates is freedom of contract, which may be expressed in three rules: (1) freedom of negotiat-

ing contracts; (2) enforcement (by the power of the state) of contracts thus arrived at; and (3) independence of all others than the contracting parties (that is, no one is bound by another man's contract). Something of this new sacredness of contracts is reflected in Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice,* much to the consternation of most of the characters of the play. Can a financial arrangement, represented by a signature on a piece of paper, be more important than a human life? But wasn't the contract *freely* entered into by both parties and isn't it therefore absolutely binding? Such is the problem of this Shakespearean play—a problem central in the transition from feudalism to capitalism.

Moral justification was necessary for the "freedom" given the individual under this system as opposed to the way in which he was curbed and restrained in the medieval hierarchy. Protestantism provided the theory *par excellence* for accomplishing this task. Luther and the other reformers discovered that a priesthood was not necessary for salvation, inasmuch as the individual had within himself, in his own reason or his conscience, the means both of a moral life in this world and of salvation in the next. Thus arose the whole bourgeois cult of the individual and his conscience and the assurance the moralists gave that if each of us followed his own inner light all would be well with society. The Quakers were the special apostles of this doctrine, but it was Immanuel Kant who gave it philosophical formulation in his teaching that there is within each individual's inner self a moral law, obedience to which is the highest duty and, in fact, the basis of all obligation whatsoever. In this general way bourgeois moralists sought to justify their hard-won freedom and to prove that it alone was conducive to the highest social well-being—not anarchistic and subversive of true religion and ethics, as their opponents claimed.

But these questions of the foundations of ethics can better be reserved for the following chapter. Our concern here is with the ways in which a new morality arose in response to a new economic order and sought to justify that order by laying claim to eternal truth. From our vantage point it is easy to see that this morality was based on the isolated individual and his isolated wealth, isolated in his portfolio in the form of papers giving him legal claims, and freed from the social connections and the measure of social responsibility that the tangible immobile wealth of the feudal lord or squire entailed. These isolated men of wealth were endowed with bourgeois freedoms: freedom to make inter-

est, to move and trade, to make contracts and have them enforced. Law thus became the essence of bourgeois society, or the moneyed interest, in Burke's phrase, as force coupled with a hierarchical view of the world had been the essence of the feudal or landed interest. The reign of law meant the triumph and reign of the business man, and the end of the baron's lawless violence and interference with business. But this was bourgeois law, not law in the abstract, for there is no more reality in abstract law than in abstract morality. The sphere of law is, in fact, but a portion of the sphere of morality—the portion codified and made subject to punitive measures on the part of an impersonalized state power.

Whereas Kant achieved most in the effort to create an *ideal* basis for bourgeois morality in the old world, Benjamin Franklin was its greatest practical exponent and mass leader in the new. In Franklin come together in one magnificent focus all the strains and tendencies of the new bourgeois man. In theory and practice he was its perfect flowering, combining in himself its individual self-reliance, its practical shrewdness, its piety towards the market-place and the benevolent workings of the laws of the free-market, and its whole philosophy of success. When William Penn proclaimed that we wouldn't trust a synod to determine the value of a coin, why should we therefore trust it with the salvation of our souls, he was expressing in an inverted form the heart of capitalist ethics as it was to be represented later by Franklin.

In his youth Franklin made the final necessary transition from New England Calvinism (itself a transitional stage) to full-fledged secular capitalist morality. It is non-religious in the sense that the emphasis is entirely on this life and the means of being successful in it, although Franklin believes that there is a benevolent deity who has given us as moral laws what our own reason would discover anyway to be to our own best interest.

Franklin sees the world as intelligently designed to ensure man's well-being if he but practices certain simple homely prescriptions for success. Thrift, industry, honesty, and exactness in meeting one's contractual obligations are the best policy, and taken together they will not fail to enable a poor young man to make his way in the world. Evils, such as poverty and failure in business, are due to some shortcoming in fulfilling this prescription, and can be remedied only by the

widest inculcation of these virtues. But thrift is the cornerstone of Franklin's system, for thrift means the possession of money and money has two remarkable uses. A small sum paid out in interest can earn its possessor the use of an amount many times its size (with which more money can be made), or, a larger sum lent out at interest brings in rich returns. Either way, borrowed or lent, money, Franklin says, is "of the prolific, generating nature." Money begets money, and its offspring begets more money, in a gloriously unlimited process. The proverb "To him that hath it shall be given" was for him a basic moral truth and at the same time a social-economic law.

Other men may have been greater theorists of capitalism but it would be hard to find one who expressed as much of its spirit as Franklin and who did so with such enthusiasm. This world of freedom of movement and private business enterprise in which a boy of ability could succeed so long as he followed certain simple rules was a new and great phenomenon. It is little wonder that Franklin and others saw it as the product of a wise providence and conceived its rules to be eternal moral maxims. But as capitalism developed, its contradictions of great wealth and poverty, of vastly increased production amidst the growing poverty and misery of the workers in the industrial centers, became apparent to more socially sensitive men. Yet capitalism had life in it, and although a god with feet of clay, many men in Western Europe and America could still be inspired by Franklin's vision—because capitalism still could both develop the forces of production and open new and real opportunities for young men and women whom any previous system of society would have doomed to repeat the narrow cycle of the restricted lives of their parents. This progressive phase of capitalist economy has probably lasted longer in America than anywhere else, but today it is a dissipated dream and Franklin's words have become either hypocrisy and lies or a challenge to build a new social order on solider foundations. And this requires a new code of conduct and a new ideal of the good life.

The morality of a growing capitalism is now outworn. Thrift and industry, not to mention honesty and integrity, no longer assure success. A girl in a Five and Tent Cent Store could have worked every day of the week and every week of the year since the birth of Christ, at Five and Ten Cent Store wages and saved, without benefit of interest, every cent she earned and she would still possess but a paltry and

insignificant fraction of the wealth of Barbara Hutton, who has never done a day's work in her life.

Free enterprise, once an inspiring and progressive ideal, has become the stock-in-trade of a handful of powerful multi-millionaires—only an instrument for maintaining their domination over the economic processes and hence over the whole life of the people. A new ethics and a new morality is necessary, for the old has outlived its meaning and its usefulness. Capitalist precepts as distinct from the traditions and forms of democracy are as tinkling cymbals and they have no hold on the lives of people, because they have nothing to offer men in their actual daily living. Instead of bringing men together in united effort towards their fullest collective well-being, capitalism divides and enslaves them.

Two worlds and two moralities are in conflict today as at the breakup of feudalism. Then it was with the teaching of obedience and the threat of hell-fire that reaction tried to stem the tide. Today it is with demagogy, anti-Semitism, red-baiting, and incitements to race hatred and to distrust of the socialist Soviet Union that the exploitative system of capitalism challenges the forward-looking world that looks towards the progressively rising living standards and the improvement of the conditions of life of all the peoples of the earth. A new ethics has arisen. It is the ethics of the world movement for socialism but at the same time it provides a basis for the united action of all progressive and freedom loving peoples.

But on what is the new ethics based? What is the basis of judgments concerning questions of right and wrong, better and worse? Is there any foundation for moral judgments that are more than idle rationalizations, and can the ethics of socialism genuinely lay claim to being the ethics of all progressive humanity? Is there progress and are there any standards whereby it can be defined? These are a few of the questions modern thinking men have sought to answer concerning ethics. The remainder of this work will seek to show the outlines of the new socialist morality as it relates to contemporary problems, and it will draw especially upon the writings of Marxists and the new moral ideals and practices developing in the socialist society of the U.S.S.R.

III. THE BASIS OF MORAL JUDGMENTS

Amidst the diversity of human ideals and changing ethical conceptions one factor remains constant. Man is a moral animal, and in all societies and civilizations he creates ideals of what he wants his life to be and judges things and events as good or bad in so far as they help or hinder him in pursuing these ideals. This ability to create a picture of what he wants to be, and to order and judge things accordingly so sharply differentiates man from all other animals that it has been considered proof that man possesses something apart from his body, an immaterial soul, which enables him to be a moral being. Such an assumption, however, is both gratuitous and superfluous because man's moral behavior can be explained by his constitution and his social life. A creature of fears, hopes, and desires, he lives in a world that may disappoint his aspirations, a world of doubt and uncertainty, which may fulfill or thwart his plans and purposes.

Just as men's judgments of good and bad and of the ideal life change in different societies and differ for different classes of men in the same society, so, too, do men's theories change about the nature of good. Different moral systems thus arise, involving both different theories concerning the nature of good and evil and different explanations of what it is that makes something good and something else bad. We do not need to study the history of thought to see this, but have only to look around us and examine how men do in fact arrive at their judgments of right and wrong. If we ask why one should not steal or lie, for example, we shall be given a bewildering variety of answers. One will reply, we should not do these things because they are wrong, or because our "conscience" or "inner voice" forbids them. This is an evasion, not an answer, for the question is, why are they wrong? Why does our conscience forbid them? Another will answer, it doesn't pay, for you may get caught and suffer the consequences. A third will say that God forbids these actions and that His will determines right and wrong. A fourth will reply that in the long run

one's own self-interest, peace of mind, or happiness will suffer from such acts. And a fifth will answer that society cannot function smoothly if men lie and steal, and that therefore these actions, being inimical to society, are bad. Other answers will be given, but analysis will generally reveal that they are variations or combinations of one or another of those suggested.

Making moral judgments is a constant business of men, although, unfortunately, most traditional ethics has tended to limit morality to mere questions of virtue and vice and to ignore the larger aspects of man's life. But as the French Encyclopedist, Helvetius, wrote: "Morality is only a frivolous science if it is not combined with politics and legislation," [17] and, further, "One recognizes the hypocritical moralists on the one hand in the indifference with which they regard the vices that disintegrate empires, and on the other hand in the passionate anger with which they rage against private vices." [18] Problems of sex, for example, have occupied an inordinate place in traditional morality, overshadowing the great questions of human economic, social, and political life, of which they are merely an integral part. This has been due largely to the fact that, except in periods of great upheaval, morality tends to be limited by the dominant class to questions of virtue, regarded as the property of individual men. This limitation has served as one way of avoiding the critical examination of a social system in terms of how it meets the really exigent needs and desires of the masses of men, or, in other words, in terms of its moral values.

Returning to the question concerning the foundation of moral judgments, let us examine a few other concrete problems before actually studying the most fundamental types of moral theory. If we were to ask a number of people why they believe that democracy is good or bad we should receive answers comparable, in terms of their modes of approach, to those in answer to the question why lying or stealing is bad. Democracy is good, we will be told, because (1) "the voice of the people is the voice of God"; (2) it is the only system which recognizes the supreme dignity of the individual; (3) it gives the common man a chance to share in the determination of the laws under which he lives and thus makes him more satisfied and the state more stable; (4) it is the political counterpart of the ideal system of free business enterprise (this, of course, identifies democracy with capitalism); (5) it gives the

masses of men the power to resist and overcome exploitation by the few and thereby the possibility of raising their material conditions and culture to a new level.

Similarly, we will be answered that democracy is bad because (1) "there was no such government in Israel" (John Winthrop); (2) it is contrary to nature because it means the control of the higher elements of society by the lower, the intelligent by the ignorant. "The people... seldom judge or determine right" (Alexander Hamilton in American Constitutional Convention); (3) democracy is slow, cumbersome, and inefficient; (4) only those who have a distinct interest in preserving the *status quo* can ensure good government (Hamilton in Constitutional Convention); (5) democracy is always in danger of going to extremes—the people tend to abuse their power and pass laws detrimental to the propertied interests.

It is clear that everyone of these two sets of answers is a moral judgment involving a reference to some principle or standard of good. Yet traditional ethics, preoccupied as it is with the concept of virtue, tends largely to ignore just this fundamental type of moral question. Furthermore, it is plain that not only the ordinarily recognized moral questions but every problem of politics and economics is, in a very real sense, a moral problem. It is to the lasting credit of Plato and Aristotle that, in spite of their class bias and the limits imposed upon them by Greek slave society, they recognized that every social and political question involves prior consideration concerning the good, and that politics, therefore, presupposes a system of ethics.

When men apply such terms as *good, just,* or *right* to things, acts, or situations, they mean something markedly different from what they do when they use such words as *big, small, hot, cold,* and the like. For all of the former group of terms implies that things or acts are as we want them to be, or, what comes to the same thing, are as they *ought* to be. And their opposites, contrariwise, mean that things are not as they are desired or wished for, and hence that they *ought not* to be as they are. The crux of all questions of ethics or morality is—on what grounds *do* men and *ought* men make this particular kind of judgment?

This position may seem to run counter to one modern ethical tradition, which took as its basic problem the origin, or source, of moral obligation. For this tradition, from Kant to Kropotkin, the problem

of ethics was: why *ought* a man act morally, or, from what is the idea of *duty* derived? That this is a misconception of the problem can easily be seen the moment we recognize that, by and large, men do not ask the question, should they do what they believe to be good and not do what is bad. In calling something good or bad, they mean generally that they should or should not do it. Or, better still, they call something good because they will or desire it, and thus the problem is not why *ought I do* the good, but how *ought I judge* something to be good. In short, what is meant by *good,* and how can men determine what it is?

It is generally recognized that simply to describe how men do make judgments of right and wrong, or of moral obligation, is not itself ethics, but simply history, sociology, or psychology. Granted that these studies must enter into any ethical discussion, still they themselves are not ethics, for they only describe how men make moral judgments, whereas ethics is concerned with what really is *good,* and hence with how men *ought* to make such judgments. The classical moralists realized that it is not enough to describe how men make moral judgments. One must indicate how they should make such judgments. Yet from the Marxist point of view these ethical theories are themselves socially and historically conditioned—reflecting, as we saw in the preceding chapter, the conditions under which they were formulated. But does Marxism itself, then, provide an ethic, a basis of determining what is good and consequently of judging acts and events by such a standard?

It will be well to begin by examining briefly the most general theoretical way in which Marx and Engels approached fundamental philosophical and moral problems. To those untutored in the history of philosophic thought, their approach may well seem so natural and reasonable as to require little comment. To the professional philosopher, however, it comes as a shocking departure from traditional modes of thought because the Marxist approach radically cuts through centuries of speculation, involving all the abstractions (however valid or helpful within their proper limits) human thought seeks to operate with, and because it begins with what really is primary for all thinking. In the *German Ideology* Marx and Engels wrote:

> The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only

be made in the imagination. They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way.[19]

Applied to ethics, this means that instead of starting with supernatural commandments, an innate moral law, an *a priori* principle of self-interest, sympathy, and so forth, we start with the actual concrete life of men in society. We start not with the individual man but with men entering into multifold relations with one another and with nature in the production of the material conditions of their life. It further means for ethics that every theory of right and wrong is, as a matter of fact, derived by men from this total complex of their life as it exists, historically conditioned, at any given place and time. Finally, it suggests that the test of any ethical theory is to be found in the way in which it actually operates within this complex of human relationships.

In the same work Marx and Engels develop further this basic position of historical materialism and show in more detail its opposition to all non-historical and idealist approaches:

> In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. In the first method of approach the starting point is consciousness taken as

> the living individual; in the second it is the real living individuals themselves, as they are in actual life, and consciousness is considered solely as *their* consciousness.[20]

These two passages are so charged with meaning that it would take many books to explore them fully, but one or two important ideas may be brought out by contrast with common viewpoints. An American historian, Professor Philip Van Ness Myers, wrote a whole volume some years ago to prove that "not only does moral progress constitute the very essence of the historic movement, but the ethical motive presents itself as the most constant and regulative force in the evolution of humanity."[21] He holds further that: "It is largely because Europe has been constantly getting a new conscience that its history has been so disturbed and so progressive."[22] It might be pleasant to think that moral ideals thus control man's destiny, but such a thought is nevertheless unjustified and erroneous. The problem still remains: Where does the ethical motive come from, what was it that constantly gave Europe a new conscience? It was just this kind of *idealist philosophizing* as opposed to *social science* that Marx and Engels were seeking to destroy, yet fully knowing that it will continue so long as class-divided society continues. Another striking contrast is to be found in an essay by Professor R. M. MacIver, which sets out to refute Marxism. MacIver writes:

> An economic system, a political system, a religious system, all systems of human relationship, exist only through the conscious experience of them. Take away that experience and they leave not a wrack behind. Likewise, a technological system, apart from the contriving consciousness, is neither technology nor system. The engines and the guns become merely curious shapes of metal and the houses and gardens are houses and gardens no more....[23]

Here, too, we find idealist philosophy masquerading as social science. Consciousness determines existence, the Columbia professor tells us, and not vice versa as Marx and Engels maintained. The real meaning of this doctrine appears later in the same essay where MacIver writes that the unity of a society is subjective, consisting in "thought-forms, myths, creeds and dreams" and not in material elements. In short, as with Myers, ethics is primary and the material life of men in society secondary. This position not only makes a science of society impossible

but seeks to reduce to mythical elements the multitude of concrete material ties that bind men together and provide the basis for linguistic, political, and cultural unity. Finally, it provides no way of accounting for the ethical notions and systems men create, but makes them an incomprehensible product of a disembodied consciousness.

Let us now sketch the outlines of the Marxist approach to ethics, postponing the elaboration of Marxist ethics itself until after the major classical theories have been examined. First, ethics is a human creation, a reflection in consciousness of the needs and desires, hopes and aspirations, of actual men. Second, this reflection arises always out of the concrete material conditions of human life, the actual processes and relations whereby men produce the necessities for their life and its reproduction. Third, moral conceptions change as the material conditions of life, the forces of production and the productive relations, change, and can at no time be higher than the economic structure (a slave society, for example, cannot believe in the brotherhood of man, any more than a feudal society can believe in individual liberty and equality). Fourth, in a society divided into conflicting economic classes, moral conceptions reflect class divisions and become either justifications for existing economic relations or demands for change in these relations. Fifth, a demand for a change in economic relations is the demand for the transfer of economic and political power from one class to another, and the moral justification of such a demand lies in the claim of this second class better to control and administer the productive forces in the interests of society in general.[24] Sixth, such concepts as good, right, justice, and the like must derive their meaning, on the basis of the above propositions, from the actual life conditions of men in society at any given time, and must refer to these conditions or proposed changes in them in accordance with the needs and interests of a larger or smaller portion of the social community. Finally, it follows that ethics is a social phenomenon, having no meaning for an isolated individual, a Robinson Crusoe on a desert island. It comprises a complex pattern of ideals and obligations, with ideas of the good life and of justice and right as the keystones. Conversely, it follows that there can be no society or human group without ethics. Social life is impossible without some principles, rules, ideals prescribing how individuals shall react one to another and meet common situations. From this standpoint, the fact that duty or obligation, the "ought," has

loomed so large in theories of ethics is evidence of a discrepancy and a strain between what men actually tend to do under a given situation and what existing ethical codes would have them do. From the Marxist viewpoint, the goal of ethics consists in such a perfect identity of individual tendencies, desires, etc., and the social needs and ideals that all men, in doing what they want to do, would be doing what they "ought" to do, and *vice versa.*

Having thus sketched an outline of the Marxist approach to ethics, it will be desirable to examine briefly some of the major historical theories. This will enable us better to evaluate the Marxist contribution and to understand the conflicting methods employed for judging historical events and contemporary issues. The world is today engaged in a struggle for power between the forces of fascism and those of democracy. This struggle overshadows the conflict between capitalism and socialism and it must be successfully concluded before the latter question can again become uppermost. It is more or less generally understood that one phase of the existing world struggle is the irreconcilable conflict of moral ideals, but often this moral conflict is expressed confusedly and inadequately. Marxist ethics can and does provide a clear and firm foundation for the criticism of the moral evaluations employed in behalf of fascism. It can show more consistently than any other ethical system the moral basis for the war against fascism and how this war not only takes precedence over the struggle for socialism but is today its very precondition.

It should be noted that if the differences between democracy and fascism were merely a matter of their respective ability to accomplish a commonly accepted purpose, then the question of their relative merits could be settled by an objective, impartial investigation. This is a trap into which many liberals have fallen, and it leads to the attempt to "combine the best features of each," to refer each to some common yardstick. But, as we shall show in the following chapter, this is a total impossibility and the doctrine serves merely to conceal the fundamental cleavage between the two worlds. No previous ethical theory could take cognizance of such an opposition (except, of course, by ascribing one set of values to God and the other to a devil—which may be good enough for some purposes). This is because no previous ethical system attempted to find the roots of the moral values and ideals of any given people and time in the concrete conditions of or-

ganized social life. Ethical theories arose in the first place because of the impossibility of agreement concerning the moral values or desired ends of men and society. A Marxist ethics is possible because moral disagreements have their determinate causes like all other phenomena of nature and society, and a Marxist ethics is necessary because it alone provides a logical and scientific solution of what would be otherwise either irreconcilable antinomies, in the form of simple expressions of taste, or mere confusions of language concealing an underlying agreement. In short, conflicting moral values are neither accidental on one hand nor illusory on the other, and their solution is found in social action, not in mere speculation.

Since religious or spiritualist ethics has been dominant in history and since so many of the other approaches have arisen in opposition to it, we can best begin with an examination of traditional religious viewpoints. These have dominated Western ethical thought in spite of the fact that as early as Plato an attempt was made to sever the idea of the good from any conception of supernatural edict.

In one of his less idealistic dialogues, Plato presents Socrates, under indictment for impiety, conversing with a young man named Euthyphro, who is prosecuting his father for the killing of a servant. Socrates, pretending to be shocked by Euthyphro's action, exclaims that Euthyphro must certainly have extraordinary knowledge of piety, holiness, or the good to proceed thus against his own father. Euthyphro succumbs before the flattery and admits that he, above other men, knows how to distinguish piety from impiety. So Socrates, pleading his ignorance of such knowledge and stressing his need for enlightenment in order to defend himself against the indictment, begs the young man to tell him what piety is. Euthyphro falls into the trap and glibly explains that what pleases the gods is pious or good and what displeases them is bad. A beautiful argument ensues in which, after much sparring, Socrates asks Euthyphro whether an act is good because it pleases the gods or whether it pleases the gods because it is good. This is a damaging question. It undermines the basis of a supernaturalistic ethic, and logically marks the beginning of the rationalist revolt. For, Plato has Socrates point out, if something pleases the gods only because it is good, then its relationship to them is purely incidental to its nature and no definition of the good has been given. The clear

implication is that the good must stand on its own feet and be good for quite another reason than supernatural religion can advance.

Yet theology, especially as developed in the Christian tradition, has sought for nearly two thousand years to identify God as the source and basis of all good. This has been done either by making the good depend on the arbitrary decrees of God's will (Duns Scotus), with the resulting difficulty that God could will that murder be good if he so chose, or by holding that God is all goodness (Thomas Aquinas), with the result that he could not will the wrong to be right because that would be contrary to his nature. In the first case goodness has seemed to suffer, and, in the latter, God's power or the free exercise of his will.

A further difficulty arises from this attempt to found ethics on the supernatural. It appears in the confusion of two assertions that are frequently not distinguished. One is that without God there could be no good or evil, better or worse. The other is that without our believing in God we could not make any moral judgments. These are two quite different propositions. This appears the moment we ask how they can be verified or refuted. In the first place, it is common consent that there is a valid distinction between good and evil, while it is at least possible to doubt the existence of God. It is like arguing from the unknown to the known instead of the other way around. Yet the argument still appears in Sunday sermons, as in one by the Reverend Harry Emerson Fosdick on August 11, 1940. Dr. Fosdick said: "The mystery of evil in a world where there is a good God is difficult to solve. The mystery of goodness in a world where there is no God seems impossible to solve." Why should goodness be a mystery without God? Only by supplying a number of missing premises can the argument become meaningful.

One of these is the age-old claim that nature and man are intrinsically or inherently evil and that only through supernatural intervention is man capable of good. But this both assumes God as a starting-point and ignores the concrete fact that men judge things to be good or evil in so far as they promote or hinder the satisfaction of the needs and desires of the society or the special social classes or groups to which they belong. Or, is Dr. Fosdick employing the second argument mentioned, namely, that without belief in God men could neither judge what is good nor follow out their judgments in practice? This, how-

ever, is an empirical proposition, which can be answered only by concrete evidence. The question was argued extensively in eighteenth century France, often in the form, "Is a society of atheists possible?" and the general conclusion was that the motives of human conduct were far less the hope or fear of a hereafter than the desire to live well here and now. The French philosophers also pointed to isolated individuals who led highly moral lives without benefit of clergy. Today, on a large scale, we have conclusive empirical evidence from the Soviet Union that believers and non-believers alike can unite in a common moral endeavor. Religion and morality in the Soviet Union are questioned less by partisans of God than by partisans of fascism. It is well to remind ourselves again of Spinoza's dictum that men do not desire something because it is good, but that, contrariwise, they call it good because they desire it. Although needed qualifications will be added later, Spinoza implies, as does Socrates' question to Euthyphro, the belief that the good does not require supernatural sanction.

Despite the tenacity with which the view has been held, there is no evidence that without belief in God men would throw off their clothes, commit rape, arson, and murder, and return to the life of the jungle. The fact is that religious faith can be found to co-exist with any known type or level of social development and with the best and worst forms of human behavior. If it is true, as Montaigne once said, that in the religious wars God's cause alone would hardly be able to raise a single company, it is also true that "defense of the Faith" has been used in rallying people for an unjust war. Fascism, imperialism, war, unemployment, and the other ills that beset humanity today cannot be ascribed to loss of faith, for they exist in a world dominated by one or another religious creed. It can be argued that this is because the ideals of religion have never been put into practice, but no matter how true this may be, one can only ask why they have not been practiced. Again the answer is either the spiritualistic one that men are evil by nature and seek material gains rather than the things of the spirit, or the materialistic one that our social-economic order operates through and encourages other motives and incentives than those professed by Christianity and the other great religions.

To return to Socrates' discussion with Euthyphro, it must be noted that his motive was not to establish that justice and good were deter-

mined by human needs, but to free them from bondage to particular Greek religious conceptions in order to regard them as super-mundane and eternal. Only in this light can the whole trend of Plato's ethical thought be understood. He wanted to establish justice and right as eternal verities, transcending the judgments of individuals and social classes and freed from contemporary Greek controversies concerning the gods—controversies which were themselves reflections of social conflicts. Dr. Gregory Vlastos has ably shown in a paper entitled "Slavery in Plato's Thought,"[25] that Plato's conception of justice, as well as his whole conception of the universe and man, rested upon the analogy of the relation of master to slave. Professor Alban Winspear in his two books, *Who Was Socrates?* and *The Genesis of Plato's Thought,* has pretty conclusively demonstrated that what Plato found in his ethereal and transcendent realm of Ideas concerning the nature of justice and right was precisely what an Athenian gentleman of the old land-owning class, in his struggle against the alliance of commercial and artisan elements, might have put there.

Such is the story of all other historical attempts to found ethics on some "higher," "metaphysical" principle, supposed to be above the transient and material world in which men have to maintain their life and solve their complex personal and social problems. Just as philosophical idealism is a more subtle form than traditional religion of the spiritualistic view that spirit is primary and matter secondary, so in ethics it is a more sophisticated way of saying "the Lord saith," or "God commands."

Of all modern idealistic moral systems that of Kant was the most successful and has had the greatest influence. Kant lived in still feudalistic East Prussia during the second half of the eighteenth century and viewed from afar the beginnings of the so-called industrial revolution in England and the rise of the bourgeoisie to power in the French Revolution. He, too, would affirm the sacred rights of the individual and the other ethical principles of the bourgeois order, but since there was as yet no revolutionary middle class in Prussia he could do this only in theory—only in the form of eternal moral laws. Thus Kant, while of the bourgeois world, was not in it, and its principles appeared to him, with his early pietistic training, as dicta of the moral consciousness inherent in each of us. In fact, Kant insisted that his moral principles were so fundamental and so general as to apply

not merely to men but to all rational beings whatsoever. He was able to argue in this manner because he believed that they were laws of reason itself and hence laws of anything rational. Thus time, place, circumstances, while determining the particular content of the moral law, are not of its essence. It appears as above all conditions, even that of man himself, and Kant could exclaim in holy wonder: "The starry heavens above us and the moral law within us!"

This moral law, Kant believes, each rational being carries within himself. Thus it contains, at one and the same time, the glories of the Platonic absolute idea of the Good, universal and transcending the world of space and time, and the more humble requirement of Protestant-bourgeois morality of being within each individual, no matter how mean or exalted his station in life. According to Kant, it is that without which there neither would nor could be any ethics at all, for it is the unconditioned obligation (he called it the "categorical imperative"), the "Thou shalt," the demand that we do our duty, no matter what the cost. The character Frederick, in Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance,* is a satirical facsimile of Kant's moral hero who does his "duty for duty's sake." Now Kant, of course, is forced to admit that this moral law never tells us just what our duty is—it tells us only that we should do it. The injunction conveniently puts an end to all possible dispute as to whether I *ought* to do my duty, for the meaning of duty lies precisely in my obligation to do it. Kant thinks he has solved a problem by making it a command of a mystical moral law within us, but the suspicion remains that he has merely asserted that a command of our nature says we ought to do what we ought to do. It is a sad commentary on the bourgeois world that one of its greatest theoreticians, having rejected any theory of happiness or self-interest as the source of morality, could find nothing better than this empty and abstract principle—the emptiness and abstractness of which is so eloquently testified to by Kant's vehement insistence that it holds not only for men but for any and every possible rational being. In other words, in Kant's desired bourgeois society if happiness and individual interest were not to be resorted to for the guidance of human behavior, no other *human* principle could possibly be substituted for them.

Kant found that all commands of the moral law could be expressed in the general formula: "Act so that the maxim of thy action may be

a principle of universal legislation," which means, more simply, that in every situation one should act as one would wish it to be a rule for all men to act in that kind of situation. This principle has some of the virtues and fewer of the obvious shortcomings of its famous predecessor, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Kant was right, as a little examination reveals, in maintaining the superiority of his formulation, for it is applicable in many situations where the Golden Rule is not—all situations, for instance, where the action is not directed to another person. Stopping one's car at a red traffic light is a case in point. But, equally with the self-interest principle, which will be examined later, it assumes a homogeneous society in which the good of each is the good of all, and *vice versa.* It so strongly implies this, indeed, that one German philosopher, Herman Cohen, argued in 1905 that Kant's moral law stamps him as the founder of socialism.

This claim is far from true, for not only did Kant never dream of socialism (he was looking towards the extension of the bourgeois order of private property to Prussia), but the principle is inimical to the whole working class movement towards socialism. For Kant's moral law, pretending to stand above society and even nature, demands that the individual act as if society were perfectly and completely rational even when it is not. Thus, as Karl Kautsky pointed out in his *Ethics and the Materialist Conception of History,* it implies that all social ills are due to the evil in individuals and can be remedied only by the individual's improving himself. From the historical standpoint, Kant's principle was a regression rather than an advance, for the French materialists, especially Helvetius, had already developed, however crudely, an ethics that pointed to objective social institutions and demanded that *these* be rational so that individuals, in following their own interests, would necessarily act for the common good.

One further principle of Kant's ethics has attracted considerable attention. It is a corollary of the moral law and runs something like this: in all actions you should look on man as an end and never simply as a means. What Kant has done here is to repeat the doctrine of primitive Christianity that all men, being children of God, are equal. Positively, it was Kant's protest against the feudal social relations around him, involving as they did the subordination of one person to another. Negatively, it was simply a philosophical expression of bour-

geois legalism, referred to in the preceding chapter, for which all men have equal contractual rights and obligations. Socialists believe sufficiently in this principle to wish to establish a society in which it will actually operate as opposed to capitalist society, which is based on treating the masses of men simply as means to the end of private profit. But scientific socialists, at least, do not work for a socialist society because of the dictates of a moral law within them or because of an abstract belief in the sacredness of the individual personality. And here lies one of the difficulties of all idealist ethical systems. They may serve as theoretical justification for existing institutions, but rooted as they are in metaphysical abstractions they fail to give the genuine guidance necessary for concrete and progressive social change.

When we examine Kant's own application or illustration of his moral law in concrete situations, another peculiar feature of the law comes to light. One example he gives is that of a person considering violating an oath he has given under duress. Using his principle that we should act as we would have all men act in a similar situation, Kant finds that the oath should not be violated because if all men did so under comparable circumstances, oaths would be meaningless and *society would suffer*. Here it becomes clear that the actual basis of Kant's moral law is to be found in his conception of what human society ought to be—a conception determined by his own environment—rather than in an eternal principle within us. In other words, Kant did precisely as we all do; he formulated on the basis of existing conditions the conception of a society better meeting his needs and desires and then made this the criterion of our moral conduct. His whole argument against happiness as the determinant of our moral behavior was based on his belief that if men were guided by their desire for happiness they would be led so much in their own individual ways as to make a rational society impossible. This is not a particularly high tribute, incidentally, to the nature of bourgeois institutions. It is far inferior to that paid to them by the self-interest school. This difference probably owes more to Kant's religious background, with its emphasis on "man's sinful nature," than to anything else.

Many other examples of idealistic ethics could be examined, but Kant's system is sufficiently representative for our purposes. Exactly like conventional spiritualist thought, idealist systems pretend to derive their criterion of good and bad, the nature of the good, and

the "faculty" whereby men differentiate and choose right from wrong, from something above the actual toiling, struggling world of men and women with all their amazingly rich complex of hopes and fears, loves and hates, desires and aversions. It is no wonder that, having departed (in their own illusions) from the concrete world of men, the idealist philosophers have brought forth theories so remote and so devoid of concrete guiding power. Of course, they found in the world above, the imaginary realm beyond space and time, only what they took there. It is thus that they always return to earth with a principle that sanctions relationships and institutions which could not so easily be justified on purely rational grounds by scientific examination of the nature of men and of their actual social relationships.

It is understandable, therefore, why the idealists, while making many valuable detailed contributions to moral theory, have provided, just like conventional spiritualism, principles that serve better to maintain what is than to secure what ought to be. The reasons for this may be briefly summarized: (1) they ignore the scientific study of men and their complex motivations, needs, and desires (psychology and social psychology); (2) they ignore the concrete nature and development of human social life and all its manifold institutions (anthropology, sociology, political economy, etc.); (3) for the real needs of real men they substitute the imagined needs of man in the abstract, or, in other words, of an imaginary man; (4) they make social betterment dependent upon the improvement or reform of individuals rather than upon the adjustment or reordering of objective institutions; (5) under the claim of seeking and obtaining eternal moral truths, they glorify the ideals of a particular class and make them consonant with all humanity; (6) they tend to set forth as the good or the ideal something so remote from actual desires and practices as to be inoperative on one hand and lead to hypocritical cant on the other—most cynics, for example, are disillusioned idealists; (7) and most important of all, they provide the basis for the substitution, especially at critical times, of a so-called spiritual ideal for the fulfillment of the concrete needs of actual men—to paraphrase Scripture and a famous queen, men ask for bread and the idealists offer them spiritual cake with a frosting of eternal virtue.

It is with the last of these that we are most concerned at present, for on the practical side this is where the greatest clash of idealism and

Marxism occurs. It seems to have been this aspect of idealism or spiritualism that caused Marx to exclaim that real humanism has no greater enemy (*The Holy Family*). The argument that religion or idealist philosophy may at one time have helped to set before men ideals useful for social life is beside the point, for it ignores the fact that spiritualism is itself a human creation and that its ideals were in the first place, therefore, expressions of human needs and aspirations. Spiritualism has created, for one thing, the question: does the end justify the means? This question can arise only if the goals we seek and the practice whereby they can be attained are judged by different standards. As will be explained in the last chapter, such a dualism is accomplished only by the creation of moral absolutes so supreme that no practical social end can possibly be equated with them.

"The sacredness of personality," "the higher things of life," "individual freedom," "inviolability of contracts," "discipline and hardness of character," "sanctity of the home"—these are a few of the idealistic slogans invoked whenever it becomes necessary to protect vested interests against radical change. Each one of these phrases expresses something which is or has been a positive good under definite conditions. Each, therefore, strikes a sympathetic chord in our hearts at one time or another. Their strength and their weakness consist in this: they may serve a progressive function one moment, a reactionary purpose the next—they do not provide, in their idealistic context, any concrete criteria by which their service to men under given conditions may be evaluated. Has the Soviet Union solved the problems of unemployment, of "poverty amidst plenty," and given the material and cultural goods of life to the multi-millions of working people? Then the spiritualist may answer: "But what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" or, "But the individual has no freedom"—as if freedom were something in a vacuum rather than men collectively solving their social and economic problems.

An interesting case study of this problem is presented in a philosophical editorial in the *New York Times,* of August 25, 1940. The *Times* said:

> Freedom means differences of opinion. It means political experimentation. It means change. We differ, experiment and change under a Constitution rigid only in its basic protections. We shall never be unanimous. We can never achieve a perfect

> and finished form of society. We do not even want to, for to do so would be to arrive at stagnation and death-in-life. We seek for the ultimate justice. We move toward it. We never reach it. Always the new questions arise, always the recurring doubt. It is only of freedom itself, of the democratic method, that we dare not doubt.

As lofty and noble as this paragraph sounds, especially its closing sentence, a Marxist has grave doubts. Except for the staccato sentences it might be a quotation from John Dewey; its idealism tempered with the *idea* of experimentation. We want a perfect society, but of course we can't attain it. We want justice but we can never reach it. Why? Because, the *Times* says in effect: to achieve them we might have to limit the freedom of a few to prevent abuse of power by the rich and powerful. Because we might have to suspend the *due process clause* of the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments, and such confiscation of property the *Times* regards as interfering with freedom. In short, we like the capitalist system and mean to keep it, the *Times* really says, regardless of its failure to eliminate poverty and prevent imperialist wars of aggrandizement and subjugation.

In opposition to the material goods that men need in order to live and to live well, and that a materialist ethics stresses as fundamental, idealism, as we have seen, tends to place emphasis on such ideas as "hardness of character," "sacrifice," "discipline," as comprising the real good or virtue of a people. Mussolini and Hitler have both known how to use these to turn aside the demands of their people for a better life. In recent years we have found our own literary men, politicians, and many philosophers and ministers of the church frequently preaching in a similar vein, failing to distinguish between these qualities and the ends by which alone they are ever justified. A glance at the report of Sunday's sermons in any big city Monday paper will be sure to reveal at least one such sermon. An especially fascist one was preached at the Union Methodist Church in New York City on August 26, 1940. The Reverend C. Everett Wagner said that the American people have become soft and must become hard; they have built their life around "the purpose of making life comfortable and secure"; they need discipline and the school of hard knocks. And the Reverend Wagner continued: "Persons must be fortified to face the unpleasant realities of our modern life as a part of the new plan for totalitarian

living." Capitalism, war, fascism, poverty, unemployment, lynching are thus dismissed as realities of our modern life. The aim of the American people should not be to defend their democracy, to live well, to secure better housing, to produce more effectively, to work shorter hours, to eliminate race hate and inequality, and to operate their economic machinery so that it produces for them the things they need—their aim should be hardness (ruthlessness?), discipline (Storm Trooper rule?). This point of view must be seen as no accident but as a logical working out of the basic elements of the idealist approach. Only materialism can provide an ethics in accordance both with the concrete needs of men and the highest standards of conduct human culture has yet attained.

In marked opposition to idealism in ethics, there has existed from early historical times another school, committed to no supermundane assumptions, seeking to determine what men do in fact most value. On this basis many social theorists have sought to determine how the state and society might best be constituted to make the principle of individual action produce as much social harmony as possible. We can label this school of thought hedonism or self-interest ethics, for it found pleasure, happiness, or personal interest the mainspring of all human behavior. Employing the assumption that the good was what men in fact desired, they thus converted a psychological theory of behavior into an ethical system. In general this was closely linked with a materialist philosophy and was often considered the only possible materialist ethics.

Aristippus (fifth-fourth centuries B.C.) is credited with originating this mode of thought. He believed that all men seek pleasure and only pleasure, no matter in what they find it, and that pleasure therefore is the only good. Almost immediately men realized that there were certain difficulties in this theory. Pleasures are often of short duration and are sometimes followed by pain. On the other hand, certain pleasures, especially those attending satisfaction of basic appetites, are proportionate to the preceding painful desire. How can these pleasures and pains be equated? Is it better to have an intense pleasure for a shorter period or a milder one for a longer time? Is it better to have more pleasure with attendant pains or less pleasure and less pain, or more pleasure over a short life, proportionately, or less over a long life? Now the very nature of these questions and controversies reveals

something of the shallowness and abstractness of hedonism. These are not the questions that concern the masses of men. They are, by their very nature, limited to an idle class having nothing to do but amuse and entertain itself and seeking only to find the best sort of amusement. Again, as many people have observed, the conscious seeking of pleasure often stands in the way of its attainment. Furthermore, as everyone could see, the pleasure seeker does not exist in a vacuum and must sooner or later, unless he is an oriental despot, or a billionaire, consider the effect of his actions on the pleasure of others and their resultant reactions upon him. In other words, a social principle has to be introduced in the interests of the individual pleasure theory itself, just as Aristippus recognized that a maximum of pleasure required reason and self-control.

Epicurus, who is erroneously associated with this pure pleasure theory, sought to solve many of these problems. He believed that not pleasure so much as freedom from pain was the good that men desired and the governing principle of their conduct. To live in calm happiness was preferable, he thought, to a life given to riotous pleasures with ensuing pains. It is worth foregoing many pleasures in the interests of this tranquillity, and in keeping with his theory Epicurus lived a quiet, modest, and relatively frugal life, "cultivating his own garden."

This theory, while an improvement over that of Aristippus, has two obvious shortcomings: social atomism and quietism. To be a genuine ethical theory it must be capable of application to and by men at large. Is it the ideal for all men, taken individually, or is it limited to some at the expense of the rest? How is my tranquillity, for example, to be equated with another's lack of it that mine may require? Or, if it is the ideal for all men, on what principle may individual sacrifices be required for promoting the general tranquillity? And, if sacrifices are required, either the individual accepts voluntarily his diminished tranquillity, which runs counter to Epicurus' theory of motivation on which his ethics rests, or if they are not, then a new moral principle is needed to justify the exercise and acceptance of social coercion. In short, the theory rests upon a conception of society as merely an aggregate of so many separate and totally independent units and is thus unable to meet the actual facts or the needs of social life.

Quietism is apparent throughout Epicurus' life and thought and is inherent in his whole theory. In its failure to account for men's love

of excitement and adventure, of zestful pleasure even at the cost of pain, of heroic self sacrifice for a social end, it fails to account adequately for the complex motivations of men and thus fails as a description of the goals that men seek. For example, Epicurus cannot think of justice as more than an expression of expediency, "to prevent one man from harming or being harmed by another." This expresses a negativism common to so many thinkers of Epicurus' day—the twilight of the golden age of Greece. At its best it is a noble if somewhat somber attempt to lead a rational life in a confused world, to advocate a scientific approach to nature and life in a society based on oppression and requiring superstition for its very existence; at its worst it is an escapism possible only to a few who are content to cultivate their gardens even if the rest of the world goes to the dogs. It could not inspire or influence the masses of the Graeco-Roman world, who subsequently found in Christianity an expression of their hopes in this world and salvation in the next.

The pleasure philosophy, as it was called, was pushed aside for many centuries. It reappeared in the Renaissance, later in England in appropriately moderated form, and reached a new peak in eighteenth-century France. A calculus of pleasures was seriously talked about, but the intense and pressing social problems and the resultant demand for radical change on the part of the middle class and its intellectuals brought about a thoroughgoing reconstruction of the whole hedonistic outlook. Helvetius led the way, not without some personal sacrifice, for his book *De l'esprit* was publicly burned by the Paris executioner on its appearance in 1758 and its author was forced to flee the country. Helvetius seems to have believed that he was doing for human behavior what Newton had done for moving bodies, that is, uncovering the basic law of all human action. He appears to have presumed further that just as an orderly solar system ensued from the operation of the law of universal gravitation, so might an orderly and harmonious society ensue from the basic law of human behavior. This law was that men acted in every situation in the way they conceived to be to their interest—self-interest was the principle of all behavior. But (and here is where Helvetius' genius appears) men are a product of their environment, and thus what they conceive to be to their interest is determined by custom, tradition, and education. He adds the premise that men are fundamentally equal in natural endowments.

Helvetius passes no judgments upon what men find to be to their self-interest—except how do their actions affect what other men believe to be to their self-interest? He says, for example, in a striking passage in the work referred to, that the virtuous man is not the one who sacrifices his pleasures and passions to the public interest, since that is impossible. Rather is he one whose strongest passion is in such conformity with the general interest that he is almost always virtuous by necessity.[26] And this hopeful representative of the youthful French bourgeoisie voices the opinion that it is all a problem of education. Men were just not taught properly to evaluate correctly their interest, for otherwise there would be perfect social harmony. But this is not as ingenuous as it at first appears. Education meant for Helvetius the whole of the influencing environment, not merely something taught in schools and ignored outside. It meant what a society actually through its organization and functioning makes people value, seek, desire, or shun. Therefore, he can legitimately conclude that social institutions are at fault if men are brought into conflict through the operation of this natural law of self-interest. But such conflict is precisely what has happened so often in the past and what prevails in the present, Helvetius thought. Society extols a virtue but rewards the corresponding vice. Existing institutions and moral teaching separate our interests from those of our fellows, whereas our own rational self-interest teaches us that each individual can live happily only through the harmony of our individual interests.

Karl Marx wrote concerning this whole school of eighteenth century French materialistic moralists:

> No special acuteness is required to perceive the necessary connection of the original goodness and equally intelligent endowment of men, of the omnipotence of experience, custom, and education, the influence of external circumstances on men, the extreme importance of industry, the justification of enjoyment, etc., with communism and socialism.
>
> If man receives all his impressions and forms all his conceptions from the world of sense, and derives his experiences from the world of sense, it follows that the empirical world ought to be so constructed as to offer a wealth of truly human experiences.
>
> If enlightened self-interest is the principle of all morality, it

> follows that the private interests of men ought to coincide with human interests. If man is not free in the materialistic sense, that is to say, is free, not by reason of his negative strength to avoid this and that, but by reason of his positive strength to assert his true individuality, then man must not punish the crimes of individuals, but destroy the anti-social breeding places of crime, and afford to each person sufficient social scope for the expression of his or her individuality. If man is formed by circumstances, then it is only in society that he develops his real nature, and the strength of his nature must be measured, not with the strength of the isolated individual, but with the strength of society.[27]

Marx does not mean that Helvetius and his associates were socialists or communists, nor that they had developed a satisfactory ethics for communism. Rather, he seeks to show that the radical bourgeoisie in its revolutionary period developed a revolutionary ethic that transcended its own particular interests and needs. Marx elsewhere wrote that no particular class can claim to rule without pretending that it does so in the name of the general rights of society.[28] And this particular section of the bourgeoisie, in making its claim, did contribute substantially to moral theory. We need not investigate further the kind of society Helvetius or his disciple Holbach envisioned under the dictates of this moral theory. It is sufficient here to understand how the principle of self-interest was developed by them into a demand for a rational society. Holbach makes it clear that a rational society is one which can make men happy, and that this requires, first, that it supply them with the material necessities of life, and, second, that it do so in such a way as to bring about an identity between the interest of each individual and that of all others. This in no way implies a society or state standing over and above the individuals but merely refers to the total assembly of individual relationships that constitutes society.

The further history of this doctrine is found largely in England in the form of Utilitarianism as developed especially by Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. But this "development" of Helvetius emphasized the shallow side of his doctrine at the cost of its profounder aspects. As Belfort Bax, a latter nineteenth-century British socialist, put it, "enlightened self-interest" became the ethic "of the full belly and the full pocket." Theoretically, the doctrine makes the mistake of identify-

ing the driving force of human behavior with the goal that is sought. Aristotle beautifully pointed out in his *Nichomachean Ethics* that man finds in all his voluntary actions some satisfaction to himself, but the nature of this satisfaction is as broad and ramified as is the nature of human selves. One man finds his satisfaction only in his belly or other sensual appetites, while another finds it in honor, in artistic achievement, in scientific discovery, or even in sacrificing his "self" for others—a group, class, or society with which he has identified his self.

Thus self-interest is at best an ambiguous description of the motivation of human conduct, and, as interpreted by the bourgeois theoreticians, is totally incapable of accounting for individual sacrifices either of the capitalist or the worker in behalf of his class, his country, or his desired order of society. Only by a fantastic stretching of the term can the heroic sacrifices of the early Christian martyrs and of all others who have died for a cause they believed in be described as motivated by "self-interest." In all such cases men sacrifice personal interest and even life itself in behalf of an ideal that has become *their* ideal—the good of their people, their class or their nation. Self-interest, then, is a totally inadequate account of actual behavior. Furthermore, especially in the hands of the English writers, the doctrine assumes the existence of atomic individuals apart from their manifold and dynamic relationships which constitute society.

Historically, one may say that the Helvetian ethics degenerated from a militant demand for the transformation of social institutions to meet the actual nature and needs of men into a defense of existing institutions as allegedly based on the interests of men and a consequent sermonizing in the effort to force men's interests into the existing social and economic molds. The cause of this degeneration lay in the false economic assumption that capitalist productive relations operated in the interests of all. In the attempt to make them do so the moralists preached to the capitalists the need of moderating their rapacity in the interest of their perpetuation as a class. They declaimed to the workers on the marvelous operation of natural law in and through the capitalist system whereby the good of each was the good of all. Today the doctrine is dead, theoretically and practically, because it no longer serves as a revolutionary challenge, or as a plausible defense. People will fight to the limit for the preservation of democratic institutions, but not for capitalist "free enterprise." Certainly, in its fascist

form, capitalism cannot be made to appear to the *self-interest* of the people.

Like so many of the ethics of spiritualism, with its emphasis on the salvation of the individual soul, this self-interest ethics which claims to be empirical and practical is dissolving as the early capitalist individualistic, *laissez-faire,* competitive economy gives way to economic and political imperialism. While, to paraphrase Bax, the bourgeois man can think of no good that is not centered in the individual soul or pocketbook, the worker finds his individuality merged in the collective existence of his class of producers. The very social nature of large-scale industry that has merged the labor of the individual in that of the group has likewise fused the interests of the individual laborer with that of the laboring class as a whole. Marxist ethics begins where capitalist theory left off, but at the stage to which capitalist practice has brought the overwhelming masses of people.

There is one other great ethical tradition which impinges upon us whether we choose or not. Often it is called the negation of ethics. But it is real, nevertheless. It often crops up in unexpected places. It asserts that the sole determinant of value is force or might. It is not exactly represented by the slogan "might makes right." It can more adequately be expressed as the belief that there is no other meaning of right than what in fact exists, and that this is the result solely of the victory of the stronger force. When we put it in this form we can recognize the doctrine as widely held. "The right side always wins," for example, is often but another way of saying "The side that wins is always right," which seemingly is quite a different proposition. And similarly, when William James says: "The right is only the expedient in the way of our behaving," he is implying that whatever we may do is right so long as we "get by" with it, or, in other words, the right is what succeeds.

Although widespread and existing in many disguised forms, the doctrine that we may most conveniently call "might makes right" has been more often believed and practiced than openly expressed and theoretically developed. Yet a few bold souls have dared to affirm it as the basis of right and justice. Whether these thinkers deserve fame or infamy, they were at least honest. They brought out into the open for candid examination what only too often has lurked in the shadows of idealist cant or pure "empirical" objectivity. Men such as

Thrasymachus, Machiavelli, Hobbes, Hegel, and Nietzsche, to mention only a few, were willing, in one way or another, to affirm that those who have the power are right and that weakness therefore is the greatest sin. No ruling class has for long had the courage to accept this doctrine, for it is double-edged—it carries the dreadful implication that if they who rule lose their power they have thereby forfeited all claim to rule. It will be well to examine the power or "might makes right" ethics through a few of its historical developments.

Plato, in the opening book of his *Republic,* presents a group of young Athenians discussing the nature of justice. One of these men, the sophist Thrasymachus, claims that "justice is simply the interest of the stronger." This has for centuries been held up to students of Plato as the height of infamy without considering that Plato may have been most unfair to his opponents. Professor Winspear has tried to reconstruct Thrasymachus' position in his *Who Was Socrates?* He finds that Thrasymachus was really saying something like this: the rulers of society always define justice in accordance with the needs and interests of their rule; if another class ruled, justice would change in accordance with their class interest and hence with the principles of their rule.

Many centuries later, a sensitive Florentine courtier, Machiavelli, deeply concerned over the divisions and conflicts among the city states of Italy as well as with the factions within each state, asked how these petty and insufferable quarrels, jealousies, and intrigues might be brought to an end. He envisioned a great national state ruling over the whole land, but he saw that the attainment of such a state required tremendous coercive power. He honestly believed that this state could come about only through a strong prince able to overcome the other princes and thus to rule undisputed over a wide area. Thus he asked of a prince only that his rule be strong and successful, in terms of the maintenance of order and the extension of his power. Plainly, it is beside the point to accuse Machiavelli of worshipping force, when he lived in a situation where among conflicting forces he could only hope that the force tending toward the suppression of conflict and the unification of his people would triumph. Like so many others in history who were impatient to have a task accomplished, Machiavelli looked for a strong man to do it, but it is a far cry from his relatively progressive ideal of a unified Italy out of incredibly petty divisions to

fascism's reactionary efforts to maintain by brute force the tottering rule of an historically outgrown bourgeoisie.

In Thomas Hobbes we see again the sharp line of demarcation between an ethics that places a peculiar premium on power or force, in the interest of some ideal, and moral nihilism that denies all values whatsoever. Hobbes wanted one thing and he wanted it badly—peace, both within the state and between states. Being moderately well off himself, he asked only for protection and security against breakers of the peace, whether they were criminals, social revolutionaries, or foreign states. Thus again, as with Machiavelli, Hobbes made the power to maintain order the touchstone of a good state, rather than the advancement of the widest welfare of its citizens. There is one peculiar feature of this theory that Hobbes ran violently up against in his own life time. What if the existing state cannot maintain itself and is overthrown by revolutionaries, who in turn create a stable and solid order? A friend of the monarchy, Hobbes fled to France when the Cromwellian revolution broke out in England. But to the horror of his fellow exiles, when he saw that the Puritans had established a stable order he made his peace with them and returned to England.

The moral idealism of Machiavelli with his dream of a unified Italy and of Hobbes with his fervent hope for peace and stability tends to be displaced in the succeeding centuries by the sanctification of the state because it is the state and of the existing structure of things just because it exists. The whole *power* position degenerates into a frantic desire to bet on the winning horse. Thus while the power ethic often starts with some system of values, as opposed to moral nihilism, these values are sacrificed in practice to the interests of expediency. Furthermore, the "might makes right" theory often amounts to the sabotage of any progressive movement and then to the attempt to climb on the bandwagon when it shows promise of success. Such is the history of the world's opportunists and renegades, great and small. Asking, not which side is right, but which will win, they veer from side to side with every shift in the course of the battle. Thus a moral view that at times could find certain historical justification degenerates into a totally immoral skin-saving device, and becomes the negation of all moral values.

But there is one special form of the "might makes right" theory that must not be ignored. It is the capitalist form, *par excellence,* at-

tempting to justify as the highest good the ruthless exploitation of the working class, the insensate struggle for colonies, the whole "dog-eat-dog" basis of the capitalist system, especially in its most predatory imperialist stage. And here the capitalist apologists took their cue from a great discovery in another field, made by a kindly, warm-hearted Englishman, Charles Darwin. Herbert Spencer led the pack with his slogan "survival of the fittest," a social and logical perversion of Darwin's principle of natural selection. It is a logical perversion because it converts Darwin's principle of biological evolution through the elimination by nature of those plant and animal characteristics not conducive to the individual's survival, and, contrariwise, through the selection and perpetuation of those characteristics conducive to survival, into the theory that those survive that *ought* to survive. "Fittest" is converted from a description of those who do in fact survive into the moral judgment that they are the "best." It is what we have called a social perversion because it takes a principle from the non-human world of nature and attempts to apply it without qualification to the whole history of man and his societies, as if there were no features or elements in human society not reducible to those of the animal world.

Speaking for the big Manchester manufacturers, Spencer developed a whole social philosophy on this foundation. The elements of his theory can be simply presented. It is a fundamental law of nature that all matter evolves from a simple to a complex form. Human society and history come under this general law. It is a law of the biological world that the fittest or best survive. Therefore, this is the means of social evolution too, and the great danger is that man may interfere with this marvelous natural law, and upset the evolutionary applecart by aiding the less fit, the inferior, to survive. Spencer accordingly opposed every progressive measure of his day—public education, public medical service, wage and hour laws, etc.—as contributing to the survival of the unfit. Thus he sought to give both *natural* and *moral* justification to ruthless British industrialism and British world supremacy. But the Nazis have made it clear that such a theory as Spencer's, logically carried out, spells destruction for civilization.

We still have Spencerians among us, at home as well as abroad. Dr. Samuel J. Holmes of the University of California, in an address to a group of scientists a few years ago, stated the Spencerian position

so clearly that it requires little comment. Professor Holmes said that the Darwinian code, an outgrowth of Darwin's evolutionary theory, accepts cruelty, lust, deceit, cowardice and selfishness as intrinsic "virtues," but disapproves their abuse (a pathetic case of *moralizing* on Dr. Holmes' part). He continued:

> Man's traits, in so far as they are a part of his inheritance, owe their origin and biological meaning to their survival value. All natural traits and impulses of human beings must therefore be fundamentally good if we consider the good as the biologically useful.
>
> Cruelty, selfishness, lust, cowardice and deceit are normal ingredients of human nature which have their useful role in the struggle for existence. Intrinsically they are all virtues. It is only their excess or their exercise under the wrong conditions that justly incurs our moral disapproval.[29]

In short, this fascist perversion of Darwinism would have it that there is only one moral criterion—survival. American capitalism has gone a long way since Benjamin Franklin. Nothing better reveals the degeneration and rottenness of a social and economic order than the nature of its theoretical defense. This theory is the supreme "transvaluation of values," for it pronounces that the only moral principles of human society in the twentieth century are the laws of the jungle. The "dog-eat-dog" ethics has come into its own.

We have surveyed the three main historical types of ethical theory. None of them gives real guidance or leadership to the peoples struggling against fascist aggression. None throws light on the problem of men everywhere who seek a peace that will put an end to war forever. None expresses and gives direction to the demand of the working peoples and colonial masses for a world reconstruction that will destroy oppression and provide all with the necessary goods for a decent life. The various forms of spiritualist ethics, while supporting high moral ideals, are not definite and concrete enough to provide a clear prescription for social progress. The hedonistic and utilitarian systems are too individualistic to offer genuine guidance in solving the institutional problems of the contemporary world. The resort to might, finally, provides justification only for the forces of fascism and reaction. These theories are not adequate, principally because of the changed conditions brought about by capitalism.

Primary among these is the fact that for the first time in human history mankind has the facilities for producing sufficient material goods for a decent life for all. It must be the economic or productive relations of men, therefore, that are responsible for existing poverty and exploitation. But these economic relations, based as they are on the private ownership of the economic machinery or instruments of production, involve the division of society into opposed economic classes. Between these groups, the capitalists and the masses of people, whose leadership lies primarily in the industrial workers, there is a consequent struggle for power. This struggle, beginning in strife over very concrete conditions, such as wages and hours and conditions of labor, constantly drives towards the control of political power, which on the one hand is the expression of economic power, and on the other its precondition.

The story of this struggle for the control of the forces of production of modern society has often been told. It is not our purpose here to recount it. All the writings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, all the pronunciamentoes of the Soviet Union and the world socialist movement deal with it. Our task is simply to present and analyze the ethical theory, the basis of moral judgments, which has arisen out of this struggle and is implied in it and guides it. The basic theoretical presuppositions of this ethics have already been outlined. Ensuing chapters will deal with particular aspects of it and with its application to certain special areas of human behavior. The present problem is to indicate the general basis of ethical judgments of Marxist scientific socialism and to examine its claim to superiority over traditional ethical theories.

First, it must be constantly borne in mind that Marx and Engels denied that moral ideals, moral considerations, are central in human life and social evolution. Moral theories and ideals arise out of individual needs and social processes, and while they react upon them, they remain subordinate to these needs and processes, which have their own specific laws of operation. Thus a need is satisfied or a social development occurs not simply because it is right, but because the need demands satisfaction and the development follows the laws of economic and social processes. It follows that Marx and Engels believed that socialism would succeed capitalism not merely because it is a better or juster system, from an ethical standpoint, but because capitalist economy, creating the contradictions and antagonisms that

it does, will be overcome and the people that overcome it will be led by their own needs and interests to establish socialism.

Second, inasmuch as there are no moral principles standing over and above the needs and desires of men, and since these needs and desires are generally torn asunder by the actual conditions of the class divisions of society, there are only two genuine positions upon which moral judgments can be based. These are the positions or standpoints, the needs and interests, of the bourgeoisie and of the proletariat. Put in another way, if the needs and desires of men alone make a thing good (as Spinoza insisted), and if these are divided along class lines in an irreconcilable conflict, then there is no alternative but to accept and identify one's own interests and desires with those of one or another party to this conflict. Perhaps for the greater number of men this choice does not exist, at least as a conscious one, for their position in society tends to impel them in one direction or another. Social compulsion leads them far more than theoretical considerations. But for others, such as intellectuals and professional people, a deliberate decision must be made. The question arises, therefore, whether there are moral considerations in terms of which the decision for one or the other party in the class struggle may be made. This question, it must be noted, is not the idealist or liberal one whether there are moral values over and above the class struggle in terms of which it can be resolved, but is rather: are there moral values inherent in the class struggle whereby one may make a decision for one side or the other?

The fact of class conflict, however, in no way implies that co-operation is impossible. In fact, at certain historic periods the interest of both classes dictates such co-operation. The American Revolution and the Civil War were brought to a successful conclusion only through the alliance of various social and economic classes and their devotion to a common goal. In the same way the war of the United Nations against the Axis powers can be carried through victoriously only by the merging of interests, the transcendence of differences on the part of both capital and labor—not for an abstract common interest but for their particular class interests, which under existing conditions require co-operation for their fulfillment. More simply, American capital, if it is to save itself as an *American* capitalist class, must have the support of labor. Labor, likewise, knows that if it is to save both America and itself, it must not split hairs or force issues with capital, but have

capital as a full partner in the struggle. The recent history of France and of appeasement generally shows that labor is the most steadfast partner in this alliance. This is not so because workers, taken individually, are by nature more *moral,* but because, as the Marxist analysis indicates, the needs and interests of the working class more decisively compel it to oppose fascism, to preserve national independence, to fight on the side of freedom and progress, than do the needs and interests of capital dictate to it a clear policy and a firm line.

Third, the Marxist conclusion is that the scientific analysis of the capitalist mode of production reveals its inadequacy to provide the material goods for the masses of men that they require and that its own development of the forces of production makes possible. In other words, the means of production that capitalism itself has developed to such a high level have outgrown the capitalist productive relations, that is, the private ownership of these productive forces. One expression of this contradiction is recurrent economic crises, with their paradox of misery and unemployment because there are too many goods, or more accurately because the falling rate of profit has caused a withdrawal of capital from production. Another expression is imperialist war, whereby rival capitalist groups seek to find new outlets for stagnant capital, cheap sources of raw materials, and new markets to sell their surplus commodities at a profit. Still another expression is fascism or the seizure and control of all state power by a highly organized clique of rapacious monopolists, aided by demagoguery and gangsterism, and directed towards absolute economic mastery at home and plunder and enslavement abroad. Its first innocent appearance is in the form of the notion of a *planned, rational,* or *managerial* capitalism. But since social planning in the interests of a few requires an ever-narrowing ruling group—as social planning in the interests of the masses requires a constantly broadening base—it moves towards the most brutal rule of a handful of monopoly capitalists.

The Marxist analysis reveals further that only the socialization of the means of production can bring about their operation in the interests of the masses of people and the further development of the productive forces. The only force in society that is both desirous of this socialization, this next step in the development of human economy, and capable of carrying it through is the working class, with its intellectual, farmer, and colonial allies. Its interests require it to do this,

to abolish the capitalist mode of production and with that the capitalist class and the working class itself as a distinct social class. The working class can liberate itself thus only by liberating all society from the yoke and limitations of capitalist economy. Therefore, the Marxist conclusion is, the working class by its very position in the productive system is forced to struggle in the interests of the vast majority of mankind. Its needs, therefore, create for it an ethics that is at one and the same time a class ethics and a human ethics embracing actually or potentially all men.

Here we have an apparent anomaly that causes mechanical-minded intellectuals no end of difficulty but that class-conscious workers and all who have learned to think dialectically can easily understand. The attempt to solve current problems by appealing to so-called universal moral truths, to the "common good," to humanity in the abstract is in danger of being an idle gesture and even of beclouding the real issues. On the other hand, appeals to and actions in behalf of the working class, while giving superficially the appearance of being concerned with the good of only a part of humanity, turn out to be in fact the only true humanism. This is the paradox of Marxist ethics, but it was created by the conditions of the modern world, not by Marx's thought. The elaboration of the economic and political details underlying this conception is to be found in all the works of the great Marxists and need not be repeated here. But it cannot be too much emphasized that Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin and others, while generally not talking about moral values, humanity, and so forth, were constantly guided and inspired by the ideal of a rational, classless human society in which the good of each was the good of all. They hesitated to talk about it, as the quotation from Engels in the preceding chapter indicated, because they did not want to confuse their scientific analysis of social and economic processes with utopian socialist moralizing, and because they properly feared that the bourgeoisie had so cornered the market of terms and expressions such as "justice," "universal right," "the greatest good of the greatest number," and so on, that their own moral ideals were in danger of being confused with those of the class enemy.

To sum up, Marxist ethics, basing itself on the actual needs, desires, and aspirations of actual men, finds within the contradictions and antagonisms of the capitalist world that the needs and ideals of

the working class most completely coincide with those of all mankind. Marxists believe, therefore, that the working class is supremely right in its struggle to defeat fascism, and in its struggles to create the necessary conditions for its own emancipation—so right, in fact, that its actions cannot be judged by the criteria that are the ethical expression of the capitalist class. This is not because the goals of the working class are good in and of themselves, but rather because they are the sole means to general human progress and the widest human good. Thus the Marxist does not examine each strike, each labor struggle, or each revolutionary uprising of workers, farmers, or colonial people to see whether in every particular case the ethical canons of the bourgeoisie are observed. He examines them only in terms of whether they will or will not advance the cause of the oppressed masses. It is precisely here that the Marxist and the reformist part company, for here is found the heart of Marxist ethics as distinct from all other ethical ways of thinking. This is not because the Marxist has no ethics but because he has an ethics that is so solidly rooted in the whole historical and social processes of men that it refuses to take the standpoint of the dominant class as final. He thus refuses to judge the class struggle today solely by the canons that capitalism itself created for its own justification and perpetuation, even though he takes over and defends the best of these against the fascist counter-revolutionists.

An American socialist, Morris Hillquit, in his early years of activity, gave succinct expression to this Marxist concepton of the working class developing out of the needs and interests of its own struggle, its own morality which was at the same time the highest morality of our age. Mr. Hillquit wrote in 1909:

> The modern working class is gradually but rapidly emancipating itself from the special morality of the ruling classes.... And as the struggles of their class against the rule of capitalism become more general and concrete, more conscious and effective, there grows in them a sentiment of class loyalty, class solidarity and class consciousness which is the basis of a new and distinct code of ethics. The modern labor movement is maturing its own standards of right and wrong conduct, its own social ideals and morality. Good or bad conduct has largely come to mean to them conduct conducive to the welfare and success of their class in its struggles for emancipation. They admire the true,

militant and devoted "labor leader," the hero in their struggles against the employing class. They detest the "scab," the deserter from their ranks in these struggles.

The two historical slogans given to the modern socialist and labor movement by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "The emancipation of the workingmen can only be accomplished by the workingmen themselves," and "Workingmen of all countries, unite, you have nothing to lose but your chains, you have a world to gain!"—may truly be said to be the main precepts of the new morality of the working class....

This new morality is by no means ideal social morality. It is the ethics of struggle, class ethics as yet. But just because it is the ethics of a subjugated class engaged in the struggle for its emancipation, it is superior to the prevailing ethics of the class bent upon maintaining acquired privileges. The workingmen cannot abolish the capitalist class rule without abolishing all class rule; they cannot emancipate themselves without emancipating all mankind. Behind the socialist theory of the existing class struggle lies the conception of a classless, harmonious society; behind the conception of the international solidarity of the working class lies the ideal of the world-wide solidarity of the human race. The ideals of the modern socialist and labor movement thus generally coincide with the scientific conceptions of absolute morality.[30]

V. I. Lenin in a historic address to the Third Congress of the Youth Communist League in the Soviet Union in 1920, had considerable to say about communist morality.

Lenin told the Russian youth:

The whole object of the training, educating and teaching the youth of today should be to imbue them with communist ethics.

But is there such a thing as communist ethics? Is there such a thing as communist morality? Of course there is. Often it is made to appear that we have no ethics of our own; and very often the bourgeoisie accuses us Communists of repudiating all ethics. This is a method of shuffling concepts, of throwing dust in the eyes of the workers and peasants.

In what sense do we repudiate ethics and morality?

In the sense that it is preached by the bourgeoisie who derived

> ethics from God's commandments.... Or instead of deriving ethics from the commandments of morality, from the commandments of God, they derived them from idealist or semi-idealist phrases, which always amounted to something similar to God's commandments.
>
> We repudiate all morality derived from non-human and non-class concepts. We say that it is a deception, a fraud, a befogging of the minds of the workers and peasants in the interests of landlords and capitalists.
>
> We say that our morality is entirely subordinated to the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat. Our morality is derived from the interests of the class struggle of the proletariat.[31]

Lenin continues by describing the nature of the old society. It was based, he says, on the principle "rob or be robbed, work for others or make others work for you, be a slaveowner or a slave," and he adds that the workers and peasants created a new society with a new education directed against the psychology which says: "I seek my own profit and I don't care a hang for anyone else." And, finally, in one sentence Lenin expresses the essence of the Marxist conception of ethics: "Morality serves to help human society rise to a higher level and get rid of the exploitation of labor."[32]

Ethics, in short, is good only as anything else is good, for what it can accomplish, for the direction in which it takes men. To sum up, morality consists of the principles whereby men guide and evaluate actions as leading, or not leading, towards the widest possible fulfillment of their material and cultural needs and desires. Inasmuch as every gain in the standard of living of the masses of people is a step in that direction, Marxists judge it good; and inasmuch as only the socialization of the means of production can solidly establish such gains for all people and lay the foundation for unlimited human material and cultural development, it is the highest good and hence the moral standard by which all acts are to be judged—until, of course, it is attained. Then, the exploitation of man by man being abolished, and men unitedly and harmoniously working for the common interests of each as the basis of the greatest good of all, ethics as we have known it will be so transformed as to be beyond the possibility of significant speculation. That is why the great Marxists have been so loth to talk

of the socialist future—now no longer a remote possibility but an actuality for close to two hundred million people—and after outlining certain few basic features have been content to assert that it will evolve into communism, or a society based on the principle: *From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.*

IV. SCIENCE AND ETHICS

During the second Roosevelt administration a series of conferences was held by the Department of Agriculture with groups of leaders in the social sciences—economists, political scientists, historians, anthropologists, sociologists, and social psychologists. At these conferences, questions of the desirable objectives of our national society and of rural life in particular came up for discussion, but the social scientists chose to ignore these questions. They did so on the ground that as scientists they could be concerned only with problems of fact, while questions of objectives or ends belong in the sphere of values and thus are the special property of philosophy and religion. Accordingly, the Department called in philosophers and religious leaders to solve the problem of the objectives of American agriculture.

This may seem like a peculiar division of labor to the unsophisticated, but it represents a strong and respected tradition in modern thought. Scientists, this tradition runs, deal only with questions of fact, with what is the case, with the world and human society merely as it *is*. They can also predict what *will* happen if a certain experiment is performed or a certain course of action embarked upon. But, the theory goes, they neither can nor should attempt to deal with values, that is, with what ought to be the case, with what course of action is desirable, or with what constitutes a good life. Philosophy and religion, on the contrary, are presumably preoccupied purely with values rather than with what is the case. Philosophers and theologians may be ignorant, from a scientific standpoint, of the nature of the world, of men, and of social and economic processes, but they reputedly know what men *ought* to be and what the ideal life is.

This divorce of fact and value, and of the two groups who specialize in each, appears even more perverse when viewed in concrete detail. The social scientists, for example, can compute how many of those who raise our crops own the land they till. They can determine the relative efficiency of sharecropping and of other forms of farming, the

causes of soil erosion and its effects on the farm population, the relatively lower intelligence quotients of children in rural areas as compared with those of city children, the effect of an impoverished diet on health, the rate of growth of mechanization of American agriculture with its resultant increase in production per farmer and the accompanying separation of hundreds of thousands of farm families from the soil they had previously tilled. They can also determine, by rigorously scientific means, the major needs of our rural population with regard to housing, clothing, food, and the like, as well as what they need in educational and cultural services to bring them up to the level of city dwellers of moderate incomes. One would think that this alone could occupy the social scientists for some time to come, without their having to appeal to philosophy and religion. Why then, do they make this divorce between what *is* and what *ought to be?* Was Professor Morris R. Cohen correct when he answered this question by saying, "Those who boast that they are not, as social scientists, interested in what ought to be, generally assume (tacitly) that the hitherto prevailing order is the proper ideal of what ought to be?"

How can philosophers and religious leaders determine "the desirable objectives of our national society or our rural life?" They must do so by deduction from some abstract principles concerning either man's ultimate good in this world or the prerequisites for his salvation in the next, or else they must become social scientists and seek to do the job that those who are technically better trained and equipped have so woefully neglected. Is there any alternative to the scientific determination of values in any given place and time, by a thorough knowledge of existing conditions, of men's needs and desires, and of the actual processes whereby these may be fulfilled, other than that of speculation concerning what men *ought* to desire or how they *ought* to live? And is there not danger that such speculation will be derived from *a priori* principles concerning the nature of man and his goals—principles based upon the interests of a ruling class, present or past?

Few will deny that men's needs and desires, and the means of fulfilling them, the ways whereby men can control themselves and their environment are possible and actual objects of scientific knowledge. Yet outside of Marxism there exist the greatest confusion and a predominant attitude that somehow science and value judgments are hopelessly and forever distinct, if not actually irreconcilable. And

where attempts at harmony are sought, the technique is mainly idealistic, proceeding to make all science anthropomorphic and to sow values broadcast throughout the world of nature. This approach gives the illusion of solving the problem, but only by denying the objective validity of scientific method and its fruits.[33] The roots of this separation of fact and value lie deep within the bourgeois system and its world view. It is safe to say that the opposition would never have arisen if the developing bourgeoisie had not found it necessary to compromise the science it required for its commerce, metallurgy, and technology generally, with those elements of the old religion that were both useful for keeping the masses quiet and for justifying its system of private ownership and profit. In the most militant and progressive stages of the rise of the bourgeoisie, its philosophers sought to create a moral science, but, as we shall try to show, they were doomed to failure by the impossibility of reconciling the actual processes of capitalist economy with the needs and aspirations of the masses of men.

An illustration of the unfortunate consequences of the current separation of science and value and the resultant division of labor between scientists and *philosophers* is the report of the Philosophy Conference held by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.[34] A representative group of American professors of philosophy attended the conference, together with representatives of the Department. Under the heading of "Desirable Objectives of Rural Life," a number of principles were agreed upon by the conferees. The first was that "the *security of land tenure*—whether in the form of relatively unencumbered ownership or long-lease tenancy—is essential to the well-being of farm life." Clearly, the phrase "relatively unencumbered ownership" has no scientific definiteness. How many mortgages does this allow, how much of the farmer's income may go to interest payments? Long-lease tenancy may give security of tenure but under what terms and at what costs to the living standards of the farm family? And how conducive to the realization of the next recommendation is any tenant farm system—whether the owner himself lives and farms nearby, or is a bank or insurance company in a distant urban center?

The second recommendation is that there be stimulated "a greater responsibility," a "moral responsibility" "to *preserve our land resources* on behalf of the national welfare." To this end, the philosophers say, there should be invigorated in the nation "a healthy sentiment which

may yet develop into a patriotism of the soil—a fair equivalent in the United States of the peasant attachments that characterize the older world from which our populations have sprung." Again it must be asked how tenant farmers can get this "patriotism of the soil," this concern with protecting the land they till, which is not now and can perhaps never become their own? Compare such a recommendation with the concrete situation of agriculture in America as presented fictionally but concretely in *The Grapes of Wrath,* or scientifically and analytically in Anna Rochester's *Why Farmers Are Poor.* Nothing is said by the philosophers about sharecropping, about the vast land holdings of the insurance companies, about the colossal gap between the prices the farmer receives for his products and the prices paid by the city consumer for processed agricultural commodities. And, similarly, not a word is said about the inevitable abuse of the soil that goes with the backward agricultural set-up of large parts of the South, with their single-crop economy and the desire on the part of owning corporations to wring every last cent of profit from the soil each year. Fact and value are completely dissociated, and the inevitable result is the conversion of a scientific social problem into a problem of "moral responsibility," and an objective, natural, rational concern on the part of tillers of the soil with the future of their land into a mystical "patriotism of the soil" for which more backward European economies are taken as the model.

The third recommendation ignores actual conditions even more, and as a consequence has more definitely reactionary and fascist implications. Its thesis is that the country offers "the maximum opportunities for *realizing the normal cycle of human life.*" Suggestive of the French anarcho-syndicalist, Georges Sorel, whose philosophy influenced Mussolini and fascist ideology generally, is the philosophers' emphasis on the rural home as "central to the desirable type of life," and as "developing a distinctive and invaluable frame of mind." This is a reactionary point of view inasmuch as it is based on the *permanent* separation of rural from urban life and the glorification of the economically and culturally backward rural home. Further, it points toward the development and maintenance of a distinctively "peasant" mentality as an ideal. Logically carrying out this idea, the conferees extol "the increasing self-subsistence on the farm, as regards food, clothing, and shelter," and "the improvement of home conditions, by

intelligent work rather than by the expenditure of money." The true reason for this approach is found in the following sentence of the report, where regard is expressed for "the rounded human expectation of life, for owner, tenant, and the hired help as well." In short, the existing capitalist frame-work of American agriculture must remain untouched and *values* can only be sought within the very class relationships that have created the capitalist *agrarian problem*. A scientific examination would reveal the need for a radical reconstruction of American agricultural relations: the elimination of owner, tenant, hired-help relationships; the completest possible mechanization of all agricultural processes; the integration of farm and urban communities through economic and cultural exchange on equal terms, and thereby the breaking down of the existing distinctions and cleavages between urban and rural life.

All of the above provides an appalling example of what happens when scientific analysis and moral evaluation are separated through a division of labor—when the scientific investigation of a situation in terms of actual human needs and possibilities is shunted from its proper course. The result is that moral judgments of "philosophers" are substituted for scientific analysis, actual conditions are ignored, and the concrete means whereby human needs can be fulfilled in accordance with technological developments are neglected. Social scientists alone can solve such a problem, but only when out of loyalty to science they are willing to free themselves from the shackles of existing economic relationships; only when they include in their sphere the whole domain of human needs and the possibility of their fulfillment provided by the control of the forces of production, both industrial and agricultural, which modern society has attained. But to do this means to be *radical,* to go to the roots of the problem and ask: What changes in economic (class) relationships are necessary if our rural population is to have the fruits of modern industrial development and its resultant increased cultural possibilities, and if the urban communities are to possess the full fruit of the soil modern technology makes possible?

Opposed to this division of science and ethics is the Deweyan philosophy, which holds that science, reason, *intelligence* can solve all problems. According to those who hold this theory, if we would only use the "method of intelligence," as opposed apparently to *force,* all diffi-

culties would be solved. But their science is a pseudo-science that categorically eliminates from the picture the actual nature of men and of existing social forces. Thus it operates in a theoretical vacuum. The difference between John Brown with all his faults and the general run of Abolitionists lay in the fact that he recognized that the force of the slave-owners on the side of evil would go down only before a superior force on the side of justice and right. And the slave-owners rebellion in 1861 proved the correctness of Brown's understanding. The science or intelligence that could have solved the slavery problem in the United States could only have been a science that recognized that two social orders were by their own inherent nature engaged in mortal combat, that the systems of slave labor and of free labor could not continue to exist side by side, and that no amount of reasoning could solve the slavery problem. Applied to the agricultural situation in America today, this means that either *science* must take the position it so often takes, that it has nothing to do with the ends sought but only with descriptions of conditions actually existing, or it must deal with the *whole* problem in terms of the needs of the urban and rural populations, with the possibilities modern technological developments offer for both agriculture and industry, and with the forces that prevent these possibilities from being realized. Dewey's whole approach is tantamount to the denial of class conflict and of irreconcilable social forces. Thus it affirms the basic rationality of the capitalist order.

The inadequacy and subtly reactionary nature of the Deweyan approach gives us a clue concerning the preconditions for the scientific determination of values or, in other words, for a science of ethics. First, paradoxically, there must be agreement on the desired ends of human social life, such, for example, as health and shelter, reproduction and recreation, security and sanity, and an ever-expanding richness of experience, for *all the people*. But does not this agreement presuppose a *moral* judgment that is not itself scientifically arrived at? It is precisely here that historical materialism, the Marxist science of society and history, or more exactly, the science of the ever-changing history of society, enters. If the controlling factor in the evolution of society is the development of the forces of production, and if these forces can develop only by supplying more people with ever more of the material necessities and goods of life, then it follows that the scientifically determinable direction of social development is towards this

end. Slave society arose and gave way to feudalism, feudalism to capitalism, and capitalism, in part of the world, to socialism, and in each transition the moral ideals that arose were themselves generated out of the historical process, and reacted upon it. And within these larger patterns of economic relations similar movements occurred, such, for example, as the transition from mercantilism to *laissez-faire* capitalism and from that to monopoly capitalism. The direction of development, except for artificial and ultimately unsuccessful attempts to check and stifle them is towards increased productive facilities and their fuller use. But this is possible only with greater consumption, with an ever-widening market, which requires an improved standard of living for wider masses of people. All that tends in this direction or allows for the possibility of such development can thus scientifically be called progressive, and all that militates against it is reactionary.

When we apply this historical materialist method to American agriculture today we see at once how meaningless is the attempt of the "philosophers" to formulate "the desirable ends of our rural life" without a scientific study of the whole economic scene and how thoroughly unscientific is the position of the social scientists that they cannot concern themselves with the values of rural life. At the present writing an interesting insight is provided into this problem by the concern of Nazi spokesmen with the Soviet collective farms in the territory still occupied by the German armies. To keep them, they say, is to allow socialism, which is intolerable, and to seek to break them up and restore individual farming under conditions of mechanization is to reduce seriously the productive capacity of the farms so necessary to Nazi war economy. In short, the collective farm is scientifically desirable but socially and politically incompatible with the capitalist economic structure.

What the social scientists really mean when they say they can only describe facts and not determine objectives is that if they were to recommend the changes in the economic relationships necessary for agriculture to attain the productivity that science and technology now make possible, they would come into conflict with capitalist economy.

To sum up, science can operate in the value sphere and can determine values only if all can and do agree that the values of human life are scientifically determinable. And the precondition for this agreement is a scientific theory of history and society. In other words, if we

take a completely scientific materialist approach to human life, then science and ethics are harmonious, and if we do not, then they are necessarily and forever at odds. The present dilemma of existing bourgeois theory lies in the fact that if the capitalist world used a thoroughly scientific standard it would have to abdicate. It does, to be sure, use scientific methods to determine its accepted values, profit, maintenance of the profit system, and so on, but it cannot apply them, with the exception of a war situation, to the determination of wider goods and must hence deny that there can be agreement on what these goods are. Thus it is that bourgeois philosophy can offer as the solution of all problems only the inacceptable alternatives of "logical positivism" —that science and value are unrelated—or of pragmatism, with its vague and abstract talk of the "method of intelligence."

Before examining some ways in which science can aid in the determination of specific moral values, it will be instructive to look at historical attempts to make a science of ethics. From Thomas Hobbes, inspired by seventeenth-century physical science to construct a mechanics of human social behavior, to Herbert Spencer in the nineteenth century, who sought to solve all ethical and social problems by the biological touchstone, "survival of the fittest," there is a persistent attempt to free ethics from supernatural origins and sanctions and to root it in the nature of man and the world at large. Looked at historically, this whole movement promised much and achieved little. Hobbes and Spencer are fitting termini of this movement and far superior to many intermediate thinkers in that each strove to find a natural standard in terms of which every doctrine, act, or piece of legislation could be measured and judged.

Much of the intervening ethics, in its preoccupation with refuting the notion that only in virtue of a supernatural endowment (a soul, a spiritual faculty, or something of the kind) could man be moral and different from the brute beasts, misconceived its problem and confused ethics with the psychology of moral conduct. Instead, for example, of asking such questions as: In virtue of what is this or that good? or: What is the basis of moral judgments? they asked the questions: How is it that man can have any notion of a good (as if he would *naturally* not be expected to)? and: What is it in man's nature that causes or enables him to act in accordance with what he believes to be good

(as if, of course, there were some peculiar divorce between the good and what men normally seek)?

Once it is noted that there was an implicit opposition here to the Church, and its teaching that man was a divine being and only in virtue of his non-natural essence could he be moral, we find two opposed tendencies. One of these was towards so-called altruism, the other towards egotism. According to the first, man is naturally benevolent (Shaftesbury); has within himself a sense of proportion or taste that leads to harmonious social relations (Hutcheson); or, finally has inherited from his animal ancestry an instinct of mutual aid towards other members of his species that makes a co-operative society possible (Kropotkin, Kautsky, and others, based on elements in Darwin and other biological studies). According to the second, or egotist tendency, man is inherently, naturally selfish, but in his self-seeking is necessarily led by reason or by objective conditions to act in ways socially useful (Hobbes, Mandeville, Helvetius, Adam Smith, Bentham).

Both schools regarded themselves as scientific, inasmuch as they were seeking to determine, by analysis of actual facts, the conditions and causes of morality. But not only was their science often purely speculative and destined to be replaced by scientific psychology and anthropology. Too often it was not really ethics, in so far as it did not try to answer the question: what constitutes the good and determines the good life, and hence, what is the basis for, or justification of, judgments concerning right or wrong, better or worse? Whether man acquires his "moral" tendencies or inherits them, whether he is "naturally" moral or society makes him so was not answered scientifically —the preconditions of an empirical psychology and anthropology were not present—but what was more important, this was not the real problem. It became the problem for moralists partly because they were seeking to find an explanation of, and a justification for, the fact that society under capitalism seemed to be progressing when yet its basic principle was each man for himself and the devil take the hindmost.

Notwithstanding any insistence to the contrary, underlying every theory of ethics, whether avowedly scientific or frankly spiritualist, is a conception of a desired or better state of things. And man is too social an animal to even think of a personal goal apart from some conception of what society ought to be if that personal goal is to be possible. It always happened, therefore, that a philosopher's concep-

tion of the nature of man was more or less directly derived from his conception of the ideal society or social environment.

Thomas Hobbes excellently illustrates this. On the one hand he starts, or thinks he starts, with a mechanistic analysis of man and his society, as if it were a problem in mechanics to be solved by complex laws of motion. On the other, he actually proceeds from his conception of the ideal state of society and deduces therefrom the moral and political rules and principles that men must observe *if* this state of society is to continue. Unfortunately, Hobbes' social ideal was very limited. It consisted solely of stability, peace, the absence of civil or foreign war, of social disturbance of any kind. From this starting point he shrewdly deduced the principles that the sovereign and the subjects must observe and called them "laws of nature." Of course they are in reality only the laws that must be observed if Hobbes' type of society is not to undergo any change. Nevertheless, they are *laws* in the significant sense that without them social disorder will ensue. An analysis of one or two of them will make the picture more concrete.

Hobbes' first "law of nature," or "dictate of right reason," is "that peace is to be sought after, where it may be found; and where not, there to provide ourselves with helps of war." He believes that from this follows a second law: "that the right of all men to all things ought not to be retained; but that some certain rights ought to be transferred or relinquished." The reason for the second is that it is necessary for social peace, because otherwise all men would claim the right to all things and they would thus find themselves in conflict and war would ensue. His third law is "that men perform their covenants made." If they do not, covenants are vain, the right of all men to all things remains, and they are back in a state of war. This law is to him the source and origin of justice, for without a covenant whereby men relinquish and transfer certain rights, no action can be unjust. Injustice, in fact, has no meaning aside from "the not performance of covenant." [35] Here appears Hobbes' virtue and limitation as a social philosopher. Justice and injustice are human creations, the product of human relationships—a significant advance over Platonic and supernatural theories of justice. It is true, also, that social instability and disorder ensue from the failure by men to accept existing covenants or relationships.

Hobbes fails, however, to provide any standard whereby these ex-

isting relationships may themselves be morally evaluated, and thus defines all conformity with the *status quo* as *just* and all violations of it as *unjust.* This is clearly inherent in his setting up of stability as the highest good, and yet it involves him in an internal contradiction, inasmuch as stability cannot be maintained unless human covenants or relationships conform to men's needs and are subject to change as these needs and the conditions for their fulfillment change. Hobbes did successfully deduce principles of human conduct from his conception of an ideal society. His fault lay in his conception of the ideal as static, in his desire for peace above all things else, since this led him both to put a brake upon progress and to sanctify anything simply because it existed.

To conclude, Hobbes wanted "peace" so passionately that he was willing to sacrifice every other social ideal for it. Justice, equality of opportunity, a decent living standard for all the people, he was willing to surrender in the interests of stability. Thus the only demand he makes of any form of society or government is that it *succeed,* and success is defined solely in terms of the power to maintain the *status quo.* Hobbes was a great theorist and he achieved a science of conduct, but his limited and unhistorical goal was not itself derived from a scientific study of societies in their historical process of change but from the interests of his class in not having their privileged position disturbed. And the position of this class of landed gentry deprived it of the possibility of a scientific understanding of the laws of social movement. So it was that Hobbes' most noteworthy effort at moral science came to grief because neither sovereign nor subjects would in fact act in accordance with his "laws of nature." This failure should be a warning today to those who place their economic security above general social well-being and the fuller development and utilization of the forces of production—to those, in short, who place their security on an unscientific foundation. For such "security" is insecure, and their houses are built on shifting sands. No longer is it the mere *personal* property, the homes, yachts, and limousines of the rich that the masses covet. Now it is the control of the economic life of a people that is at stake. It is the collective ability of the owners of capital to determine what and how much is produced, simply in terms of their profit, that is challenged as *unscientific* and *unethical.*

Two centuries after Hobbes we find another Englishman trying

to create a science of society. This time he is not a friend of the landed gentry but of Manchester manufacturers. His name is Herbert Spencer. Feudal England has given way to capitalist England, and the physical sciences to the biological as the model for the social scientist and the moralist. Spencer generalized from the fact of biological evolution a theory of cosmic evolution, and from the Darwinian principle of natural selection he derived a social *law* of the *survival of the fittest.* Thus equipped he set forth to show that the world of private enterprise and ruthless economic competition is the best of all possible worlds because more than any other it is in keeping with the law of nature and promotes the survival of the fittest. Of course, in doing this, Spencer was not endowing the Manchester manufacturer with moral virtue, but was simply defining "fittest" as those who "survive," a trick which converts the expression into a pure tautology. Actually, Spencer is not tautological, for he really defines "fittest" in terms of the dominant economic class. And his method gave the appearance of a scientific approach while actually it enabled him to evaluate every form of conduct, every legislative enactment, every institution, in terms of its service, or disservice, to the manufacturing class.

A few examples from his *Social Statics* serve to illustrate Spencer's procedure. He attacks all attempts at social reform—at limiting the hours of labor, government housing projects for "the laboring classes," public health measures, and so forth—as attempts "to make up for defects in the original constitution of things...," as efforts "to supersede the great laws of existence." These laws of nature eliminate the unfit: they are nature's ways of dealing with her failures; and therefore it is immoral for man to interfere with nature's wise and beneficent workings. The same principles are used by Spencer to denounce any system of public education. He says: "In the same way that our definition of state-duty forbids the state to administer religion or charity, so likewise does it forbid the state to administer education." One of his arguments is: "Conceding for a moment that the government is bound to educate a man's children, then, what kind of logic will demonstrate that it is not bound to feed and clothe them?" He calls any system of public education an attempt "to spread education by artificial means," and opposes this to the natural means—"the sense of parental responsibility," and thus he condemns public education as

preventing the development of this responsibility and self-restraint. Those parents who lack the responsibility and self-restraint necessary for the education of their children (at expensive private schools, of course) "must be left to the discipline of nature, and allowed to bear the pains attendant on their defect of character."[86]

These few illustrations make it clear that Spencer is a pseudo-scientist who is elevating into "laws of nature" the brutalities of a *laissez-faire* capitalist economy and who justifies this by the claim that if only men will not interfere the system will work out for the best. Behind this ethical front, however, he reveals the real reasoning of his manufacturing-class friends in the following passage: "Inasmuch as the taking away, by government, of more of a man's property than is needful for maintaining his rights, is an infringement of his rights...; and inasmuch as the taking away of his property to educate his own or other people's children is not needful for the maintaining of his rights; the taking away of his property for such a purpose is wrong." This passage makes clear Spencer's real motivation, and it makes a mockery of his claim to be either scientific or ethical. But what is more, his whole analysis reveals the impossibility of a capitalist moral science. Class interests prevent both scientific objectivity and humanly desirable moral standards.

Clearly this is, to use Bacon's expression, science as one wills, and rather than being a social scientific approach to problems of ethics, it is a false ethical approach to the problems of social science. Yet it had a tremendous vogue and appealed to many thinkers both because it served to justify the worst features of *laissez-faire* capitalism, and because it did this with the appearance of scientific objectivity. Many leading capitalist thinkers dreamed of having their society stand on its own feet, free from all theological shackles and sanctions, justified by natural science, and by that alone. Yet behind Spencer's own system lurked the unknowable, which came finally to be written with a capital U. It was the final blessing of an unknown and unknowable Deity on the virtue of ruthless competition, the guarantee that the profits wrung from the wretchedness of the working class would ultimately be sanctified. Today almost everyone knows that this was pseudo-science. Yet it was one of the most significant bourgeois attempts at scientific self-justification and still reappears in various disguises in public forums, and in newspaper and magazine articles and editorials.

Among many other attempts at a capitalist science of ethics was one that, because of its revolutionary origins in eighteenth-century France, still deserves attention and was discussed in the preceding chapter. Though with English roots, it was raised to a new level by Helvetius before it returned to England in the thought of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. With all its shortcomings, due to the limited historical perspective of its proponents, and the intellectual limitations their class position imposed upon them, it still stands as a landmark of hard-headed and progressive thought. It is necessary to remember, in this connection, that until Marx and Engels, socialism remained utopian while bourgeois thought was becoming increasingly scientific. It is a far cry from the militant "socialism" of Thomas Münzer and the socialist fantasy of Thomas More to the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels, but the three intervening centuries brought about both the practical triumph of the capitalist economic order and its theoretical expression in economic and political science and in the attempt to achieve on all-embracing science of morals.

There have been many recent "systems of sociology" which claim to present a system of value judgments derived from a scientific study of society, but these have for the most part been less scientific and more idealist than the systems we have discussed. Spengler, Pareto, and Sorokin are three such system creators, and their work has been treated voluminously in the periodic press. Nevertheless it has contributed nothing to the development of scientific psychology, anthropology, or economics, or indeed, to the actual ethics on which contemporary capitalism operates.

Until the first World War and the coming of socialism in one-sixth of the world, a portion of the bourgeoisie of every national state had one principle in terms of which every act and event might be judged. This was satirically presented in a parody of English history, *1066 and All That,* in which every thing, person, or event is evaluated as a good thing or person, or as bad, depending upon whether it or he helped England to become "top nation" or hindered her. With one qualification—namely, that what constituted "top nation" was defined entirely on behalf of the capitalist class and its interests—this test offered a clear and simple foundation for all moral judgments. But since 1917 the problem has been complicated by the conflict between the desire of each nation to be "top" nation, and the need for preserving the

very foundations of the capitalist system against the rising forces of socialism. Thus the ruling class of every capitalist country has been torn between its desire for national supremacy and its stake in preserving its class position. This dilemma is responsible for much of the moral, as well as political, confusion of the past two decades.

All this clearly illustrates that we do not have here scientific standards of evaluation. Judgments based simply on race, class, religious, or national preference have no objective or scientific standing—they are merely the expressions of group or caste interest, and must obviously be in conflict with expressions of opposing group or caste interest. But the problem of scientific moral evaluation cannot easily be dismissed. That is why the Nazis have sometimes gone to the trouble to try to *prove* the supposed German racial superiority, and the Southern Bourbons their theory of white supremacy. That is why Japanese spokesmen try to prove that the "new" Japanese order for the Far East is *better* for the peoples of the Orient than anything else—better for both concrete living conditions and the preservation of spiritual values. That is why the reactionary elements in France tried to prove that since capitalism itself was at stake, and since its destruction would bring such evils to all people, from physical hardship to the loss of national independence, all necessary sacrifices must be made for the preservation of capitalism.

But are any of these judgments made on truly scientific grounds? Do they stand the test of concrete empirical investigation of all their claims? Almost all of them obviously cannot because their standard is such that scientific test is impossible. You cannot prove a theory of mystical blood superiority, or a theory that capitalism alone preserves freedom for the individual. In the latter case there could be real scientific investigation if freedom were defined in Marxist terms, as it is in a later chapter of the present work. But those who use the term most freely tend to give it such a twist that it becomes intangible and hence unverifiable by any empirical tests.

Without examining all the alternatives, one can clearly see that the only possible empirical standard for value judgments must be found in the historical materialist doctrine that the ever increasing development of all the productive forces of human society and the resultant improved living standards for all people are at one and the same time the index of social evolution and the rational goal of mankind. This is

something for which we have the scientific equipment today to judge empirically. We can examine and measure the concrete living conditions of people—physical, cultural, and psychological. Just as we can prove that such and such a dietary deficiency causes rickets, pellagra, or other diseases, so we can show that such and such home, school, or other environmental conditions will produce a higher incidence of neurotic personalities. We can prove that changed environmental conditions can raise or lower the intelligence quotient of our children and produce a higher or lower incidence of juvenile delinquency and crime, just as we can demonstrate that changed working conditions, and home conditions as well, raise or lower the output per worker. In short, we can know and control the psychological factors that make for greater social productivity and hence higher standards of living, with the resultant freer personalities, just as truly as we can control the technological factors. And from the Marxist point of view, these are all ethical questions. They are, indeed, the basic ethical questions.

No mechanical standard, such as an index of the industrial and agricultural output per worker, enables us to measure the level of civilization and thus the moral well-being of a people. There are many complicated factors. Questions such as: How long can the existing productivity last? What percentage of the population is required to keep discipline and to exercise coercion over the workers? In what direction is the birth rate moving? Are the materials produced to be consumed by the population of the country or are they war materials, useful to a people only in so far as they protect or advance their national independence, and thus ultimately promote the production of consumer goods? What the Marxist maintains is that our society stands or falls on its ability, in the long run, to increase productivity, and to raise the living standards of all the people. Otherwise there comes to be a discrepancy between the productive forces and the productive relations (the economic structure), and revolution ensues.

Thus we have as our standard not the mere social stability of Hobbes or the abstract "greatest happiness of the greatest number" of the Utilitarians, but the dynamic and concrete raising of the material level of human life, through the ever-more efficient production and wider and more adequate distribution of all the possible products of human labor that are beneficial to life and conducive to the fuller development of man's varied potentialities. To the objection that this last is

beyond the sphere of scientific knowledge, the answer can only be that unless society is thus rationally organized these cultural goals cannot be themselves rationally determined.

To many, at first sight, this Marxist approach in its hard-headedness seems dry and cold in comparison with the lofty moral sentiments of the philosophers, moralists, prophets, and artists of the ages. But closer examination reveals that it embraces and puts on a solid foundation the great moral utterances of history, in so far, that is, as they were humanistic and not supernatural, and had this world, not heaven, as their goal. A moment's examination reveals how natural it is that Marxism should do this. For these pronouncements, these visions and aspirations, were the expressions of a deep desire that men may live freely and abundantly, be masters of themselves and their natural environment, reap the fruits of their own labor and possess recreation and leisure for health and happiness. But in the past these goals were possible only for *some,* because *others* must needs toil to provide these few with the material prerequisites of the good life. Slaves, serfs, and the modern proletariat and colonial peoples were doomed, by the necessary conditions of society's productive forces and their accompanying productive relations, to be material instruments whereby the few could realize the good life.

But three centuries or so of capitalist development have now made it possible, through technological advance, for machines to serve in this capacity instead of men. This is reflected in the Marxist science of society, which, recognizing the unity of man's material and cultural life, shows how it is now natural, inevitable, and in accordance with man's greatest moral aspirations to reorganize economic and social relationships in accord with modern productive possibilities.

Having asserted that Marxism provides the only scientifically determinable foundation for moral judgments, it is necessary to call to mind the fact that every great age of the world was one in which there was a high degree of abundance of material goods and leisure—at least for the few. This was true of the great civilizations of Egypt, Babylon, Greece, Rome, the free Italian Cities, and the centers of civilization of the modern world. Not only have these past civilizations fallen because they did not provide sufficient material goods for the masses of their people, but their cultures also grew stagnant, artificial, and philistine, because they were limited to the courts, salons, and drawing-

rooms of the privileged classes and thus lost contact with the masses.

The aim of Marxism is not the leveling down of culture but its elevation through providing it a genuine base in the whole life of a people. This is not only in the interest of the people but equally in the interest of culture. For we know that the healthiest and most robust stages of the cultures of the past were precisely those at which there was the greatest spread and the widest participation. The novelist Gustav Flaubert, in his *Sentimental Education,* thought of socialism as an attempt to bring civilization down to the level of the barracks. It is rather the effort, based on the concrete needs and demands of the modern working class, to bring to flower a new culture based on the whole life of a free people who have attained the material conditions, education, and leisure requisite for participation in culture and for the creation of it. Thus the goal of Marxism is not a mere "satisfied belly" but the achievement of the material conditions for all people to participate in the great cultural achievements of the past and to create anew.

Scientific methods have long been used to determine the goals of the dominant economic classes and the methods for realizing them. A Jamaica planter in the eighteenth century instructed his overseers quite methodically and apparently accurately concerning the use of the slaves under their dominion. The planter had calculated that, considering the original investment in a slave, the current interest rate on that sum, the cost of upkeep, the working life of his slaves should be seven years. If they were driven harder and thus died sooner, there was a declining rate of profit. If they were not driven sufficiently hard and worked longer than that, the rate declined too. Using similar methods, Benjamin Franklin calculated that slavery in American manufacturing could never compete with free labor in the British mills—and slavery was not used in American manufacturing.

The modern industrialist uses similar methods in calculating the number of hours and the speed at which the "belt" is operated. Likewise we can calculate accurately just what kind of housing can be built, profitably, for what income levels of our population—a calculation on the part of the experts employed by real estate operators that has resulted in the fact that private industry "serves only the upper third income group and part of the middle group," and "has failed to build a house for the lowest third in the last hundred years." Mr.

Nathan Straus, Federal Housing Authority Administrator, attributed this condition to the high interest rates which prevented private industry from making a profit on such ventures.[37]

Similarly, a report of the United States Public Health Service discloses that "three out of every ten city and village families do not have enough money to spend for food to get a good, completely adequate diet," and that from the point of view of disability and economic loss, nutritional diseases constitute the greatest medical and public health problem in the United States today. This group, Dr. Sebrell points out, does not include that undetermined group that lacks an adequate diet because of ignorance, carelessness, or improper dietary habits. Illuminating in this connection is the report of Dr. Isidore Lubin, Commissioner of Labor Statistics of the United States Department of Labor, to the Temporary National Economic Committee in 1938, showing in detail what the market for oranges would be if, for example, $250 a year could be added to the income of the wage-earner families in the income group of $1,250 a year and less. He estimated that the average expenditure for oranges of this group was 75 cents a year and that this wage increase would raise it to $2.89 a year, or for the group as a whole from four millions to fifteen millions a year. In short, millions of people in the United States would eat more oranges if they could afford them, and large numbers of people could be usefully employed in raising oranges if they could be sold. We must remember, too, that oranges are an exceedingly valuable, an almost necessary, article in our diet. For we are not concerned here merely with people's desires, which may or may not be based on actual requirements, but with their needs.

The section of Dr. Lubin's report from which the example of oranges has been taken provides an illuminating illustration both of how far science can go in determining human needs, and hence social values, and the extent to which it is limited by capitalist economy. Starting with the fact that American industry is geared to large-scale production and that it must therefore depend upon markets that can consume the output of mass-production methods, Dr. Lubin shows that it cannot profitably maintain itself on its sales to the mere 2.71 per cent of our families with incomes of more than $5,000 a year. "Nor, indeed," he continued, "can American industry maintain itself on the sales to the income group that receives $2,500 or more. The

families in this group comprise less than 13 per cent of all our families and in numbers constitute a population approximately equal to that of the State of New York.... It is evident that mass production can't depend upon those families for their existence. Even in the income group of $1,250 and above we only touch approximately one-half of our families. Fifty-four per cent, some 16,000,000 of a total of more than 29,000,000 of our families, fall below the $1,250 income level. In other words, half our market in this country for our industrial output lies in families that earn less than $1,250 a year."

Now what would happen, Dr. Lubin asks, if every wage-earner family that had $1,250 or less a year to spend had its income increased by about $2.25 a working day or to about $1,500? Basing himself on 5,200,000 such wage-earner families not on relief in 1935 and 1936, Dr. Lubin found that with this increase these families would spend approximately $800,000,000 a year more on food, $416,000,000 more on clothing, $613,000,0000 on rent, $213,000,000 on fuel, light, refrigeration, $385,000,000 on automobiles and other transportation, $234,000,000 on recreation, and $208,000,000 more on doctors and medicine.[88]

This is a striking example of scientific method applied to such basic problems of value as the need for food, clothing, shelter, recreation, and medical care. These are the goods the masses of people would consume more adequately and abundantly if they had the means. At the same time these are the goods and services our economy wants to sell them, *at a profit.* This increase of only $2.25 a working day, Dr. Lubin further testifies, "would have a tremendous effect upon the output of industry and upon employment. I might go a step further and say that if there were moderate increases in the incomes of all families and single individuals receiving less than $2,500, you could reasonably expect that most of our surplus capacity in the United States would disappear, and in many industries our present capacity would run far short of the demands by the population of the country."[89]

But here our scientific analysis runs up against the existing economic order. Science can tell us what our people need and want, and what would be good for them and for the efficient functioning of our capitalist economy. It cannot achieve this good because our economy is not built on rational and scientific bases. This is both an illuminating picture of how far science can go in calculating needs and desires and

how limited it is by the capitalist structure. Who is going to give these millions of families this additional income? Yet plainly, from Dr. Lubin's report alone, a rational economy could and would do so in the interests of its own effective operation. Under capitalism science can show only what good things would result if such and such were done. It cannot do these things. Under socialism the science of society is free to achieve these desired ends.

What social scientists really mean when they say they cannot tell what ought to be, but only how given objectives might be attained, is that they refuse to indicate remedies and directives with regard to ascertained or ascertainable needs that go beyond existing economic frameworks. But, and this can be shown by innumerable concrete references, they can also tell perfectly easily by scientific techniques where both real needs and actually desired ends come into conflict with these existing economic structures.

All of this raises the age-old question of the relation of needs and desires. Treated idealistically, as it generally was, it too often remained a mere opposition between what an individual, a class, or a people in general wanted, and what someone thought they *ought* to want. But in more and more spheres we have reached the possibility, if not the actuality, of determining what men ought to want in terms of what they actually need within the possibility of scientific determination. Most animals, in a state of nature, exhibit a remarkable parallel between what they need for their life and preservation and what they seek. But with man and the animals he has domesticated there is only too often no such direct relationship.

Dr. Curt Richter of Johns Hopkins University worked on one phase of this problem with rats. He set up what has been called his "cafeteria system" whereby the rats choose from separate sources the amount of various separate elements required and not required for their diet. He found a remarkably close correlation between what they needed, even under special conditions determined in advance, and what they selected in their "cafeteria." In man, due to the greater range of his appetites, his early social environment, and so on, there is relatively little such correlation. But this too can be scientifically determined. We *do* know certain foods that are good for children and adults but that they may not like nearly so much as other foods that are not only not required by their systems but inimical to their proper

physical development. We can show equally objectively that certain sanitary conditions are needed that people "naturally" (which, of course, always remains determined by a particular social environment) not only might not seek but actually rebel against. Education, for example, has sometimes had to be *compulsory,* not to mention inoculation against smallpox, or needed precautions in cases of epidemics such as the forced quarantine system. Similarly, it is not too fantastic to suggest that there are cultural needs, in the sense of requirements under given conditions for the development of healthy and stable personalities, that can be empirically arrived at, and that may run against opposed desires under certain conditions. When we look at our whole educational system, this appears as a truism, but it is little enough reflected in our theories of the "good" and its scientific determinability.

The chief reason, obviously, for this conflict, is to be found in the fact that what people need is one thing and what the dominant economic class would like them to desire is something different. It is so different, in fact, that it not only cannot be determined scientifically, but runs counter to any scientific approach. Thus Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen finds that "labor, in its quest for social justice, is in danger of stressing the wrong thing—security, rather than the Christian principle of liberty."[40] The significant feature of his argument is that the "Christian principle of liberty" is identified with the private ownership of property. But inasmuch as the dominant form of property today is the ownership of the means of production it is this that Monsignor Sheen is equating with Christian liberty. In similar vein we find Roger W. Babson, the oracle of the stock exchange, saying: "If they (the unemployed) can't climb out after being helped, they should fail—that is nature's method of showing them they are wrong. The WPA is a hospital for inefficient people." These spokesmen for big business criticize the people's desires in relation not to the needs of the people but to the needs of the capitalist system. Workers *want and need* security and the unemployed *want and need* jobs, so that the problem is not one of conflicting desires and needs but of conflicting *class* interests and needs.

This problem brings up sharply the reason for the fact that there can be no bourgeois science of values: namely, that there is no ultimate community of interests between the class that owns the instruments

of production and the class that operates them. And not only is there no economic community (as opposed, for example, to a common national interest); there is not even indifference, for a worker's gain is a capitalist's loss, just as in the long run the opposite holds. Interests may be in community, hostile, or just indifferent. Here they are directly hostile, or in contradiction. Spinoza clearly saw this distinction when he stressed that in so far as men are guided by reason they seek things they can all have, but when they follow their passions they seek goals that by their nature some can have only at the expense of others. Since this is the case in the capitalist world, a capitalist science of values is impossible. The working class, on the other hand, by its very position in the productive process can have such a science, since its existence does not require the existence of capitalists—although capitalists, to exist, require workers. Hence the standpoint of the working class provides the only possible basis in a capitalist society for a science of values, since its goals and interests, its needs and desires, guided as they are by the necessity for abolishing all exploitation, are *rational* in Spinoza's sense, and thus involve no internal contradiction.

Another way of putting the case is that the use of science in determining values implies or requires a community of interest. In a world where there is no community either science must take a standpoint that aims at attaining community (which involves the recognition of existing conflicts or hostility of interests), or it is doomed to be a pseudo-science that closes its eyes to the most salient facts of the very world it is supposed to deal with empirically. Such is the status of much liberal thought today, which lays claim to a *scientific* approach to social problems. Deweyan pragmatism provides a perfect illustration. Closing its eyes to class conflicts and even to contradictions existing among great capitalist concerns and the imperialist states themselves, this pragmatism sets up as ideals collective bargaining, a League of Nations, and in general the principle of mediation in all possible disputes. But mediation implies in the long run a community of interest, and the Deweyan ideal of sitting around the conference table generally results in a form of compulsory arbitration, where the instrument of compulsion is not rational determination but the strongest force among the opposed parties. One fears that the goal this method aims at and achieves is represented in international affairs by Munich and appeasement rather than by collective action against the aggressor.

Any science that lays claim to dealing with social problems in our society without recognizing the existing objective contradiction of interests is in the paradoxical position of claiming to be knowledge that ignores the central features of the thing known. Without overlooking the limited and partial possibilities for good inherent in a League of Nations or in the conference table in industrial disputes, one must remember that the causes of war between nations and of industrial warfare under capitalism must themselves be scientifically known and then eliminated. And such a decisive result may require something quite different from "mediating" the various presented claims. Science can show the way to peace and prosperity only by recognizing the contradictions in the world in which it must operate and by taking the historically dictated standpoint of that class whose interests are alone in harmony with scientifically feasible objectives.

The realization of a thoroughgoing and complete science of values is, however, a practical task as well as a theoretical objective. While it is now possible, ultimately it requires the creation of a society in which the goals of all are rational, and hence, in Spinoza's terms, harmonious. Then it will be possible scientifically to determine just what all men's needs are, the relations of these to their desires, and how they may be realized. As long as the needs of one class, group, or nation conflict with those of others, science must take sides with those classes and groups whose needs are harmonious with, and require the fuller development of, our productive forces, as is clearly the case today between the democratic states and the Axis powers. Only when such conflicts are eliminated can there be a true and pure "method of intelligence," or scientific method, for the determination of human values and the solution of human problems.

To work for this, then, is the task of science today in the very interest of scientific method and knowledge itself. For any other course leads to obscurantism and scientific reaction. The truly intelligent method is not to try to reconcile the irreconcilable, but to take the standpoint necessary to eliminate conflicts from human social life. The moralist must be scientific today, and the scientist partisan. Only thus can a rational human society be achieved—the ideal of all the great moralists in history.

V. SOCIETY AND THE INDIVIDUAL

The story of the beginning of modern philosophy is told by the traditional historians almost as if all lay in darkness and then suddenly out of a clear sky Descartes proclaimed: "I think, therefore I am." Many morals can be drawn from this conventional picture. Negatively, it is obviously true, as Descartes' shrewd contemporary, the materialist-inclined monk Gassendi, pointed out, that Descartes got all his ideas from his society and that his thinking was no more proof of his being than his walking, eating, or any other activity. Again, Marx indicated that the philosopher does not come into the world, any more than any one else, knowing himself and then moving on to the knowledge of other persons and things, but rather knows himself by the reflection of himself he sees in those around him.

On the positive side, Descartes was giving voice to the new world that was being opened up, its rebellion against authority and the dead weight of the past, the new self-reliance of using one's own reason instead of going to the Church to learn if a doctrine is true. He was expressing a powerful current which the discovery of the New World, the rise of modern physical science, the growth of trade and commerce and of great merchant centers, and the Protestant Reformation had set in motion.

This was the current of individualism, of self-reliance. Leonardo da Vinci, Paracelsus, Giordano Bruno, Francis Bacon, Martin Luther, John Calvin—all exhibit such individualism, though it remained for Descartes to give it full philosophical expression. The individual, the self, is the new focus or center of interest and attention, whether it be for salvation in the next world or for success in this. Of course, this individualism, which was born in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was no more fully grown then than a chick is a full grown hen. Yet it became a distinctive feature of our modern world, growing gradually for long periods and making sudden leaps again as at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Germany. Or for periods it

moves backwards as in Puritan New England, again to be brought forward by Jonathan Edwards with his renewed personalizing of religion and his emphasis on individual salvation. Descartes could say, in seventeenth-century France, "I think, therefore I am," but it took a Remy de Gourmont in nineteenth-century France to say that these words, *Cogito ergo sum,* were the three most sublime words ever to be uttered by man.

Individualism became the dominant motif in philosophy, religion, ethics, and social life. In its beginnings it liberated tremendous energies in business, science, and culture. Anti-feudalistic, whether Protestant or Catholic, its apostles opposed the monolithic nature of the Catholic Church and the hierarchical structure of feudalism. The individual was to be liberated from all bonds to other individuals. Each person was to have equal rights before God and in the affairs of men. Whether the conflict is between the doctrines of the Church and the Scriptures, or between Aristotle's word and experimental evidence, *I* must decide the truth in accord with my "lights." In its later stages, in its decadence, individualism has lain as an incubus on modern thought, and as a deterrent to progressive social action. It is the purpose of this chapter to trace something of the growth and decline of this cult of the individual, to exhibit its progressive and reactionary phases, to work out its implications for a theory of the world and of human life. Is self-interest the principle of all human behavior? How is self-sacrifice possible? What is the meaning of selfishness and unselfishness? Does society exist for the individual or the individual for society—or is this not a proper question? Is the present war being fought for individual liberty? Is individual liberty compatible with class loyalty? What is the relation between healthy individuality and the cult of individualism? Is capitalism consonant with individuality? How does socialism contribute to the development of the individual? These are a few of the questions contemporary ethics must answer.

One Catholic writer, professedly hostile to capitalism, lays all of its evils to the individualism born of the Protestant Reformation. He says that the Reformation, in attacking the unity and integrity of the Church, "undermined the foundations of the only power which was strong enough to keep in check the unbounded avarice and selfishness of man, and thus opened the way to the conception of a society

of individuals, all guided simply by their own self-interest, indifferent alike to the welfare of the community and to the dictates of the moral law."[41]

Overlooking the religious and moral bias here, especially the reference to the "natural" selfishness of men, we have a clear expression of the principle on which capitalism is built. Its standpoint is that of the atomic individual, an isolated unit, neither conditioned in his ideas, feelings, or motivations by the society in which he develops, nor capable of judging anything except in terms of what it has to offer him. Is it any wonder that, with this as a starting point, so much of the energy of moralists was devoted to the discovery of some principle in man to account for any social cohesion, or any interest in the welfare of others? Or is it strange that one of the problems that arose for philosophy was how "I" can know the existence of any other persons, inasmuch as "I am given only my own sensations"?

Every field of human thought and activity came under the sway of this cult of the individual. As society revolved about the individual competitive capitalist, there arose the "great man theory of history," the stress on the musical performer expressing *his* individuality in whatever he played, the poet or novelist in whatever he wrote, the measurement of personal worth in terms of wealth acquired, or, wanting that, in terms of some other competitive achievement or even of personal idiosyncracies. And the more the individual separated himself from his fellows, the more did his self-alienation lead to loneliness, pessimism, *weltschmerz,* eccentricity and suicide.

Religion, rather than stemming this tide, joined in it by stressing personal salvation while vainly preaching unselfishness and the sacrifice for others. But sacrificing for others, as individuals, is still individualism, just as striving to outdo all other men in humility is an expression of extreme egotism. When Jonathan Edwards wrote: "When I ask for humility, I cannot bear the thought of being no more humble than other Christians. It seems to me, that though their degrees of humility may be suitable for them, yet it would be a vile self-exaltation in me, not to be the lowest in humility of all mankind," he was giving expression to the same self-centeredness which dominated his revivalism. And while the Catholic Church tended in general to denounce individualism and the concept of individual liberty as anarchistic and pagan, the Protestant Churches took credit upon themselves for laying

the foundation of individual freedom and of liberating the individual human soul from all fetters.

In the nineteenth century, individualism became self-conscious and developed into a cult in inverse proportion to the real actual opportunities capitalist society offered for the full and free development of individuals. Thus there arose *groups* of young men of the middle classes who, in protest against the increasing mechanization, regimentation, and standardization of the society around them, sought to cultivate their individuality not by healthy relations to the world but by turning in upon themselves. They built walls around themselves, and everything that emerged within these walls was *theirs* and hence good, and everything outside seemed to constitute a threat and was bad. What they took for themselves, however, was only too often an inverted reflection of the world outside, and in cultivating their "own gardens" they frequently raised a crop of noxious weeds.

Germany in 1800, still largely feudal and divided into many petty states, and inspired by the principles of the French Revolution that were still so far from realizable in its backward condition, produced a number of intellectuals who, finding so little outwardly to turn their energies to, proceeded to the cultivation of their own personalities. Thus a healthy and revolutionary insistence on the rights of individual human beings, as represented in the American Declaration of Independence and the French *Rights of Man,* was converted into a philosophy of self-conscious individualism.

The young theologian Schleiermacher, in his *Soliloquies,* published in 1800, gave striking expression to this new phase of individualism. Man's highest calling, Schleiermacher believed, was to develop his own personality, to allow his own inner nature to unfold itself, to resist all outward forces and tendencies so that his own inner self should hold sway. To Schleiermacher this was the path of freedom; to take any other course was to become a slave of fate. Tempered by a pious humanism, his teaching, if unsocial, was not anti-social, but four decades later another German carried out this individualism to its logical conclusions. Max Stirner's *The Ego and His Own* presents us with the atomic individual bourgeois self in all its miserable nakedness. Here the self becomes the enemy of any and all collective human activity leading towards improvement in the conditions of human life, and the highest morality is found in the most insistent pursuit of the

narrowest personal aims. Individual strength is now identified with ruthless self-aggrandizement, while collective action is a sign of weakness.

Whereas Machiavelli and Hobbes had justified any use of force by the state power that was calculated to strengthen and preserve the state, we have in Stirner the justification of any action by the individual so long as he can reap benefit from it. But the doctrine does not work equally as far as the economic classes of modern society are concerned. Henry Ford, J. P. Morgan, or Basil Zaharoff would be a modern replica of Stirner's hero, but to the worker Stirner can offer only isolated sabotage or individual acts of violence—the choicest weapons in the arsenal of the police-spy and *agent-provocateur*. The proof that this individualism, or social atomism, is an ideological menace to organized effort by the people to improve their conditions is found in such words of Stirner's as:

> Let us therefore not aspire to community, but to *onesidedness*. Let us not seek the most comprehensive commune, "human society," but let us seek in others only means and organs which we may use as our property! As we do not see our equals in the tree, the beast, so the presupposition that others are *our equals* springs from a hypocrisy. No one is *my equal,* but I regard him, equally with all other beings, as my property.[42]

Or again:

> Away, then, with every concern that is not altogether my concern! You think at least the "good cause" must be my concern? What's good, what's bad? Why, I myself am my concern, and I am neither good nor bad. Neither has meaning for me. ...Nothing is more to me than myself![43]

The reverse side of this glorification of the individual is contempt for the "herd," contempt and hatred for those who are forced to labor and sweat for their daily bread. Thus Raskolnikov, the hero of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment,* believes that "nature had divided men into two categories: the first, the inferiors, the ordinary men whose function is merely to reproduce specimens like themselves; the second, the superiors." And he murders an old woman because, he says, he wanted to discover if he was merely a part of this common herd or a true "Man," who could transgress all human laws.[44]

Nietzsche carried out some of the implications of Stirner's individ-

ualism in his doctrine of the Superman, but in doing so he had to stifle his own humanity and was led into loneliness, despair, and insanity. Once, looking at a fountain in Rome, he was moved to exclaim: "My heart, too, is an overflowing fountain," but it was not flowing because egotism had closed up its well-springs. All of Nietzsche's thought, often acute, sometimes noble, reveals that the other side of modern individualism is the hatred of humanity.

Emerson and Thoreau represent a diluted American form of the modern worship of the individual. But they were already late, for at the time of the "Robber Barons" who were fighting, swearing, building railroads and establishing America's first monopolies, their ideal contained the nostalgic element of the individual self-sufficient landholder cultivating his own farm in an idyllic self-sufficiency. While Emerson expounded sweetly his appealing doctrine to well-to-do audiences, who liked him for the comfort he gave them in the feeling that in being most themselves (and in getting the most they could get) they were best contributing to society, Thoreau went to the woods and refused, by not paying taxes, to be a party to a government which tolerated slavery. Theoretically their teaching tended towards anarchy; practically it upheld and even glorified bourgeois society. Not an expression of healthy individuality in a world of other healthy individuals, it was, in its actual genesis, a pathetic attempt to preserve certain real human values in a world given over to greed and commercialism, to dismal textile mills and hard-driven Irish railroad construction gangs. Thoreau saw this sometimes, and he asked some pertinent questions. Why, for example, does a farmer till his soil all his life and die with larger mortgages on his land than he started with? Or, why is it that with factory methods we do not have enough clothing for everybody, unless it be that factories are built to make not clothes but profits? Why, he asks, might it not be better for a man to live in a tool-box along the railroad right-of-way, and be his own boss, than to toil unceasingly for the benefit of another for a house which he can never call his own?

Thoreau had a passionate distaste for exploiting anyone or for being exploited, but his individualism prevented his ever seeing how the exploitation of man by man might be prevented. He took the easier course in going to Walden Pond, and his self-centeredness gave him blinkers which shut out the sight of the millions of his fellow-Ameri-

cans who could not escape in this way. This is the very essence of individualism as practiced in the modern world: the struggle, largely vain, of each individual in isolation to solve problems which are social in origin and hence subject only to a social solution. Wendell Phillips did not lose his "individuality" in fighting and organizing for the eight-hour day. On the contrary, the working-class struggles in which he participated made him the man he was. Beside Phillips, the younger Greeley, and above all, Walt Whitman, to mention only three, there is a certain pallor about Emerson and Thoreau that time will only deepen. Emerson especially feared collective action, and whether as cause or effect, or a combination of both, he seems to have felt that entering into active relations with others, participating in a "movement" would somehow impair his own "individuality." But history and all our social experience reveal the fallacy of this, and teach us that a man becomes most "himself" when he works with his fellows for a common end.

Nowhere does Emerson better reveal the limitations of bourgeois individualism than in a passage in his essay, *The American Scholar,* where, after hailing as a sign of the times "the new importance given to the single person," he adds:

> Everything that tends to insulate the individual—to surround him with barriers of natural respect, so that each man shall feel the world is his, and man shall treat with man as a sovereign state with a sovereign state—tends to true union as well as greatness.[45]

Why each man should want to feel the world is *his,* why natural respect should be conceived of in terms of *barriers,* and just what the individual needs to be *insulated* from—these are questions whose very asking reveals something of the hidden premises of Emerson's thought. Also important here is the analogy of individual relations to those of sovereign states. There is no basis for such an analogy as a matter of fact. Individuals are not and cannot be related to one another within a society as sovereign states are related. It is not that Emerson meant to imply all of the things here inferred. He was a confirmed democrat, he loved his fellow men, and he aided the anti-slavery cause. But his emphasis on the single individual provides an inadequate basis, as Whitman was later to see, for that social cohesion and solidarity neces-

sary for the achievement of his own highest ideals under the conditions of modern life.

Emerson and Thoreau reveal another aspect of bourgeois individualism—fear of organized society and of its institutions. These are seen by them as external trammels on their freedom, limitations of their personality. Robinson Crusoe on a desert island, or a modern artist on Tahiti, becomes the ideal. But they forget that Robinson Crusoe or a Gaugin takes more with him than he finds there and is already a full-fledged product of an individualistic society. Not only is man a social animal "by nature," in the sense that he became man only in society, but also in the fuller Aristotelian-Hegelian sense that only in and through society can man attain his own "natural" development, and fulfill his potentialities. So much of modern psychology, from introspectionism to behaviorism, started with the isolated, atomic individual, and forgot that from the moment of birth man is willy-nilly formed by social influences, and that the human individual as such is a social product, in the total content of his thoughts, motivations, desires, and aspirations. *Litterateurs* and psychologists alike forgot the profound though simple truth that just as there is no society without individuals, there are no individual human beings without society.

Emerson's emphasis on the individual and his rights and freedoms has aided, however unwittingly on his part, the most rapacious elements in the development of American capitalism. "Individual liberty" has been abused by every self-seeking writer to justify his not depicting American life as it is actually lived today, and by every poll-tax Congressman as an argument against collective bargaining and the anti-lynch bill. It is the doctrine of the right of the scab to work during a strike or the right of an employer to drive any bargain he chooses. "I Write as I Please" may be a defiance of authority, but it too readily turns into a caprice that defies fact and truth as well. Some college presidents employ the reasoning that membership in a trade union or the Communist Party, inasmuch as, in their opinion, it takes away the individual's right to think out every issue for himself in a faculty meeting, is therefore inimical to academic freedom and must not be tolerated. "Individualism" is thus revealed as the social atomism it is and as an instrument of the ruling class for preventing any form of organized action on behalf of people's rights. The person who says:

"I could live in any kind of society, I am an individualist," is simply expressing with slightly more elegance the attitude, "I don't give a damn for anyone, I'm looking out for myself."

Finally, this philosophy of individualism provides the principal bourgeois argument against socialism. Taking its stand, not on the concrete well-being of the actual individuals that compose society, but on a theory of the abstract rights of abstract individuals, it condemns socialism as "regimenting" the individual by depriving him of his "sacred" right to own any amount or any kind of property and to do with it as he chooses. Often, of course, it says this less bluntly, but always on the ground of *the* individual, or *superior* individuals as against "society"—forgetting, conveniently, that this "society" consists of other individuals. The reactionary theologian Kierkegaard thus opposed socialism as one among many attempts to degrade individuals by equalizing all. As paraphrased by a recent writer, Kierkegaard held that: "It [socialism] is a function of resentment on the part of the many against the few who possess and exemplify the higher values; socialism is thus part of the general revolt against extraordinary individuals.[46]

Here is revealed the close of the cycle of bourgeois individualism. That which began as a positive, revolutionary demand for the emancipation of the individual from feudal and authoritarian restrictions and limitations has been turned into its opposite by the logic of capitalist development. For as Marx and Engels noted in the *Communist Manifesto,* "In bourgeois society capital is independent and has individuality, while the living person is dependent and has no individuality."[47] In its bourgeois form individualism has become a principal theoretical justification of economic exploitation and thus a hindrance to every movement that aims at the improvement of the conditions of life for the overwhelming majority of individuals. It thus reveals itself as a class doctrine—the very opposite of what it claims to be—and can be countered only by another class doctrine, that of Marxist socialism, whose aim is the liberation and fullest possible development of all individuals.

But besides individualism, capitalism created another social philosophy which is its direct opposite. The capitalist class achieved colossal things in the development of the forces of production and was able thereby to accomplish much theoretically, especially in its own behalf.

Its savants and philosophers were ingenious and could bring forth a multitude of theories, even contradictory if necessary, and have never depended on one theory if two or more might do better. Thus we have, as another product of the bourgeois world, a social theory that is the precise opposite of the theory of atomic individualism, and that is at the same time its logical product. This is the organic theory of society, developed first by Hegel, but now better known in its degenerate fascist form as totalitarianism.

Not concerned here with Hegel's whole social philosophy, which had progressive elements, but with the nature and influence of this theory as it has been used, and abused, during the past century, I shall merely describe the theory's salient features. Society is an organized whole, having a historical evolution, and in spite of, or at times by means of, the wills and desires of individual men, it is rational. It is superior to individual wills and desires, since these are subjective; it is the expression of reason objectified. Who are you or who am I to criticize that which is the product of centuries of development, that which has met the test of time, that which is embodied in the institutions, traditions, laws, philosophies, religions of the age? In fact, only by identifying our individual selves with this social whole or State are we anything. Apart from it we are nothing. To it and its institutions we owe everything we have, everything we are, our very personality. Our freedom as individuals consists precisely in self-surrender, in accepting as our own all the laws, traditions and institutions of the state of which we are a part.

Few know today that this doctrine received considerable attention in the United States during the post-Civil War period, appearing as a late contemporary of Emersonian individualism. St. Louis was its home, and a group of able men—who included lawyers and school teachers, of whom one became Lieutenant-Governor of Missouri and another United States Commissioner of Education—were its exponents. Henry Brockmeyer and W. T. Harris were the leaders of this movement. They published America's first philosophical magazine, the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy,* and members of the group taught at the Summer School of Philosophy at Concord, where the extreme individualist Bronson Alcott was Dean. The *status quo* was their God and Hegel was its prophet.

Against the individualism of the Emersonians, W. T. Harris posed

this question, to be asked of any philosophy: "What does it see in human history and the institutions of the family, civil society, the state, and the Church?" If it sees them as trammels upon individual freedom, as subordinate to the individual members of society, as purely natural phenomena to be judged by utilitarian criteria, then it is a sham and a delusion. For the individual is nothing without these institutions. They are expressions of a Reason inherent in the Cosmos, and have evolved out of rational necessity. Were they not such as they are, human reason would have to invent them, for they are the expressions of the same reason that is in us. Since reason cannot be against reason, it follows that our human reason must accept these institutions, reconcile itself with them, and claim them as its own. Then only is the individual free—when he identifies himself with the institutions, laws, traditions, around him, and asserts himself through them.

Under this conception, the state, organized society, can do no wrong, for whatever is, is right. Thus starting from principles opposite to those of Hobbes, who formed the state out of the wills of absolute atomic individuals, a similar result is attained. For Hobbes certain actions are wrong because they weaken the sovereign power and hence tend to plunge men again into disorder and confusion. For the St. Louis Hegelians they are wrong because they are contrary to the reason which the state embodies. The crucial point is that, in both, the real test is survival, the ability of the State to maintain itself, and for Hobbes this is ultimately a question of force, while for the Hegelians this same force is veiled in language of rationality.

As against extreme forms of individualism there is an important kernel of truth in the Hegelian theory. The individual exists only in, and develops through, a social milieu. *Certain* laws, traditions, institutions are at any given time rational in the sense that without them individuals cannot pursue their rational goals or attain their ends. Further, they have arisen out of determinate conditions and causes and are thus likely to serve some purpose and even perhaps to represent a step forward in human social evolution. But the St. Louis Hegelians failed to ask certain fundamental questions of any institution before they gave it the blessing of World-Reason. Does the given institution, law, or tradition, for example, actually operate rationally in terms of real human needs and desires? Does it continue to serve the purpose

for which it was originally designed? May conditions not have changed in such a way that a law that was brought into being to accomplish a rational end now thwarts the realization of that end?

Interestingly, Henry Brockmeyer exhibited individualistic traits similar to those of Thoreau before he "discovered" Hegel. He had fled to the woods and is said to have lived for two years alone with his dog. Rebelling against the pressure of organized society around him, he then went to the opposite extreme and sought to justify institutions just because they existed. But this is not an "either-or" proposition. Men cannot live and be men without social relations and institutions, laws, customs, traditions. On the other hand, these are made by men and exist solely for the well-being of the individual components. There is no good over and above the life of individuals in society. The question, should society serve the individual or the individual serve society, is a false question, which arises only when there is a strain between individual human needs and existing institutions. Society is something *more than* the separate individuals that compose it. But society can have no good, no end, no justification apart from its individual components. It is neither a person nor a thing, but a complex network of individuals standing in complicated relationships one to another.

Furthermore, in opposition to the Hegelian view, the only reason operating in history is human reason, and that is the reason of individuals. But what happens in history is never the result of any one individual's reason but is a peculiar product of a conglomerate of interests, needs, desires, plans, and purposes. What comes out may often be not what any one individual anticipated or even desired. Hence it may have the appearance of manifesting a mysterious destiny, a "Reason" above and apart from the individuals concerned. But to maintain that anything is the result of such a disembodied reason is pure mythology and bears no relationship to the actual historical process. The family, for example, can be shown to have evolved into its present monogamous form by devious processes and many changes that were not the product of pure reason, human or divine, but of changing human needs with changing economic relationships, increased knowledge of the process of procreation, and other derivative factors. The institutions and social relations of any given time are the necessary products of the activity of innumerable human individuals throughout previous periods, but do not necessarily represent any one

individual's conscious plan or purpose. Engels expressed this succinctly in the following passage:

> Men make their own history, whatever its outcome may be, in that each person follows his own consciously desired end, and it is precisely the resultant of these many wills operating in different directions and of their manifold effects upon the outer world that constitutes history.[48]

The individual cannot be the center of the picture, even though the picture is composed of individuals. On the other hand, society, the state, institutions cannot be treated as self-existent, inasmuch as they are simply the complicated patterns and structures of individuals in relationships. The question, does the individual exist for society or society for the individual? is a false question because it first separates individuals from their relationships and then asks whether the things related exist for the relationships or the relationships for the related things. The individualist viewpoint was valuable in its emphasis and insistence on the well-being of individuals as the sole standard of the worth of a society, institution, or state. Put more theoretically, it is the belief that the only thing that is good in the world is a good man (the less high-falutin meaning of Kant's dictum that the only good thing is a good will).

The Hegelian, or organic, theory contributed the indispensable recognition that good individuals can exist only through rational institutions. It contributed the further knowledge that the individual gains his freedom not apart from but in and through his relationships to other individuals and the institutionalized forms these relationships necessarily take. Many of Hegel's followers failed to see that institutions are good or *rational,* to use his own favorite term, only in so far as they promote the well-being of the individuals whose institutions they are, and that they cannot be measured by any other standard. The truth is found, as Hegel himself partly realized, only in the dialectical synthesis of the individuals and the complex of their institutionalized relationships—a synthesis that comprehends that neither exists without the other, but that the point of reference and the standard of measurement must always be the concrete well-being of actual individuals in their complex interdependence and inter-relationship. In short, for Robinson Crusoe on his desert island must be substituted the ideal of collective humanity seeking to solve similar problems. For

a mythical World-Reason embodied in institutions must be substituted, by actual effort in the remaking of men and their relationships, the best that human reason can attain.

In spite of the extremes of bourgeois individualism that have been examined, one should not underestimate the contributions capitalist economy and its theoreticians have made to the conception of the equality, rights, and freedom of the individual. In large part this was due to the nature of the capitalist mode of production, its need for private initiative in commerce and industry, and its need for a free labor market. These required the destruction of both slave and feudal relationships. The individual had to be made free to invest his money in any undertaking that seemed to promise sufficient profit and to sell his labor power to the highest bidder, whether in his place of birth or in a distant community. To Adam Smith this was "the obvious and simple system of natural liberty." (Though his whole work suggests that it was neither obvious, simple nor natural.) He describes it as follows: "Every man, as long as he does not violate the laws of justice, is left perfectly free to pursue his own interest his own way, and to bring both his industry and capital into competition with those of any other man or order of men." [49]

These goals could not be achieved in practice without their expression in theory, and thus the history of the rise of capitalist economy reveals both the history of the liberation of the individual from the fetters of previous forms of economy, and the expression of this liberation in doctrines of individual rights, the sacredness of the individual personality, the inherent social and political equality of individuals, and the like. Protestantism aided powerfully in this movement, especially some of its dissident sects, such as the Quakers and the British dissenters generally.

If anyone doubts this achievement of earlier capitalism he need only reflect on the fact that capitalism in the stage of fascism finds the need of destroying theoretically, legally, and in every other way the doctrine of individual rights and liberties. Thus the Vichy government of unoccupied France announced in its early months that "France definitely would turn her back on the individualism that has been one of the cardinal rules of her social-political system in the past." [50] The juridical counselor for the Ministry of Youth and Family said that the entire eighteenth-century legislation revolving around the rights of the in-

dividual must be revamped. "Officials blamed," it is reported, "the old code of individualism and declaration of rights of man for the growth of divorce, decrease in the birth rate and desertion of farms in France. They even went so far as to declare it resulted in a general weakening of the French race." Significantly, one of the concrete plans of the government was announced to be the revision of the old political system of one vote for each man, and the substitution in its place of a system that would give the male head of a family a vote for himself, his wife and each of his children.

These doctrines reveal the dilemma of fascist capitalism with respect to one of capitalism's most cherished achievements. Either destroy the individualism it painfully created, or run the risk of moving towards socialism. This dilemma arises not only because capitalism by its nature never could fulfill in practice its promises to the individual, but also because the very individualism it created presses on, for its own fulfillment, towards the socialization of the means of production. In America, however, "the rights of the individual" is still the battle-cry of some of the most outspoken apologists of Big Business. The true individualism that Thomas Jefferson fought for must be preserved against fascism and the Axis, but it must not be allowed to degenerate into merely the right of individuals to own the instruments of production. This degeneration can never take place so long as individualism is interpreted concretely and materialistically in terms of the actual well-being of the masses of individuals who constitute our society and whose interests are opposed to the few individuals who control our economic system.

Nothing more reveals the contradictions contained in the notion of the isolated, atomic, self-contained individual than an analysis of what is meant by selfishness and unselfishness. Traditionally, these two concepts are supposed to have a precise and definable meaning, to be opposite and mutually exclusive. It is not held, of course, that everyone is selfish or unselfish at all times, but that, while most of us fall in between in most acts, it is nevertheless possible to be pretty completely one or the other. Christianity has preached "unselfishness" and the glories of "self-sacrifice" for two thousand years without any remarkably fruitful results. True, the Church has given countless examples of heroic individuals devoted to the propagation of their faith, to the healing of human ills, and to the cause of the lowly and un-

fortunate. Among its martyrs are men and women who underwent every hardship and even death for what they believed. But science too has had its Brunos, and countless are the tales of artists who have suffered and starved in the cause of their own artistic integrity. Yet nowhere have there been such examples of "selflessness" and heroic sacrifice as on the part of oppressed and exploited groups such as the American Negroes during and after slavery, colonial peoples, and working people generally. In fact, the greater the hardships, risks, and dangers, the more, it seems, do men arise who are willing to sacrifice everything for the cause they believe in. The struggles and sacrifices of the Spanish people a few years ago, of the Chinese and Soviet peoples, of the fighters against the Axis everywhere, and of anti-fascists in Germany, Italy and the occupied countries give living proof of this aspect of human nature and discredit any doctrine that men act only for their own "self-interest."

What is meant, however, by an unselfish act? Can anybody voluntarily act contrary to his own will or desire? If one does, then he is acting against his "self" and we are involved in the contradiction of a "self" acting against itself. Can a man conceivably choose for himself a course of action he himself does not approve of or find some satisfaction in? Yet, we do use the terms selfish and unselfish to distinguish different kinds of people and different lines of conduct. Is it that one man acts more for himself and another more for others? But then the "self-interest" moralist says that the latter man finds pleasure for himself in so acting and is just as selfish as anyone else.

This apparent dilemma was beautifully resolved by Aristotle through a dialectical analysis of the self.[51] He begins by examining the term "self-love" when used reproachfully and says that it is used this way in describing "people who assign to themselves the greater share of wealth, honors, and bodily pleasures." But, on the other hand, the man who acts virtuously and honorably and performs the noblest deeds for the common weal is equally finding satisfaction for himself in so doing—satisfaction, in fact, for what Aristotle regards as the higher part of himself. In short, Aristotle recommends that men whose "selves" consist primarily in wealth or sensual pleasures be encouraged to be unselfish, while those whose "selves" are identified with rational principles, with the good of their friends and country, should be encouraged to the utmost selfishness as thereby all will benefit. This last

remark is obviously to be taken humorously, for what Aristotle means is that the distinction commonly made between selfish and unselfish persons or behavior is not properly a distinction between acting for one's own satisfaction and acting in some other way, but is a distinction between what one person's *self* consists in and what another identifies his interest and satisfaction with. Men always act so as to bring immediate or longer range satisfactions to themselves, but men's selves may be broader or narrower, and thus may find their satisfaction in anything from sensual pleasure to the welfare of their families, class, race, country, the advancement of an art or a science, or the achievement of an ideal society. The differences in men, in this respect, lie in the different things they identify themselves with, for the self is as broad or as narrow as the range of its interests and its satisfactions.

Once this dialectical conception of the nature of the self is understood, both the preaching of unselfishness and the doctrines of self-interest become relatively meaningless. Attention shifts to the question of what the actual interests of men are, to what men seek and find satisfaction in, and to whether or not these satisfactions work for or against the common good. These questions of the individual self and its satisfactions arose historically with the break-up of primitive forms of society, in which the *gens,* tribe, or clan completely dominated the individual and made it impossible for him to think of himself and his satisfactions apart from the group of which he was an integral part. And while this originally represented an important movement in the direction of the recognition and development of the individual personality, it brought a whole set of new problems in its train that only a new integration of the individual and society can solve.

The conditions of modern industry have done more to break down individual isolation, and the "selfishness" religion condemns, than all the moral teaching of the ages has done. This fact was well expressed by Belfort Bax who wrote:

> While the man of the middle classes can conceive of no goodness that is not centered in the individual—be it in his soul or in his pocket—the man of the working classes finds his individuality merged in the collective existence of the group of producers to which he belongs. The whole life of the working classes of today under the conditions of the great industry is a collective one, inasmuch as the labor of the individual is merged

in the labor of the group; the group again in that of other groups, and so on throughout the entire industrial and commercial system.[52]

The factor of class provides the clue in the modern world for the solution of the problem of the self. Class consciousness is as real a fact today as self consciousness, and once it arises it can dominate the whole life and thought of an individual. He identifies himself with his class, with its ups and downs, its advancements or its setbacks. His personal life is merged in that of his class, his self is identified with his class interests. He can think of no good for himself at the expense of his class, and for him nothing can be evil that is good for his class. It is among the workers that this class consciousness plays such a fundamental role in personal life precisely because, as the above quotation indicated, the very conditions of modern production tend constantly to instill class feeling in the mind of the worker. He builds the bridges and runs the subway trains; he makes the automobiles, steamships, and airplanes; he mines the coal and handles the power lines. These things give him a sense of power, and because they are all collective enterprises they give him a sense of solidarity. Capitalism, in bringing together in great factories thousands of workers for the production of a single commodity, and in linking enterprise with enterprise in such ways that if a particular group of die casters strike, a whole vast series of factories must shut down, or if one key industry is backward the whole economy of a country suffers, has itself given the lie to its own cherished theory of the isolated individual. The great assembly line of an automobile factory is more of a teacher of sociality, of human co-operation and class solidarity, than all the sermons preached from all the pulpits about unselfishness. Although one worker can rise to a high administrative position and leave his class, and another can become a "labor leader" who substitutes the interests of capital for those of labor, the vast majority know that they stand or fall together.

This degree of class solidarity is true of no other class in the contemporary world. The owners of industry, the bankers and industrialists, attain it to some degree. John Adams pointed out more than one hundred and fifty years ago that it was this class solidarity which enabled the wealthy, who are the few, to rule the poor, who are the many. Yet among all of them is the intensest competition and the most

ruthless struggle. They unite in the face of the common enemy, the organized workers, and support a competitor financially and in other ways while his employees are on strike. Or those of one country unite with those of another and largely competitor nation in the face of a common threat, but their common interest is torn through and through with conflicts and competition. Each looks primarily to himself for his own salvation and is ready to destroy his neighbor as soon as opportunity is favorable.

The middle classes, the small business men, professionals, teachers, and white collar people generally, remain the chief exponents of traditional bourgeois individualism. Their work is carried on often with the most extreme individual competition, and they feel themselves pinched between the capitalist and the workers. Having no class of their own in the sense of belonging to a definite group with a fixed relationship to the instruments of production, they sympathize with one or the other of the two great classes and tend to identify themselves either with the workers or the capitalists. Yet their traditional individualism besets them. They want to keep free from organizations that might require a specific course of action in specific situations. They like especially to judge every event in terms of abstract and absolute ethics—were the workers or the owners right in this case? They ask: Is a sit-down strike morally justified? Can teachers morally be members of a union? The so-called intelligentsia are the spokesmen of this group and indicative of its rootlessness in modern society. They keep the cult of the individual alive as well as its moralist expression in abstract and absolute ethics. They tacitly support a witch-hunt among teachers such as that of the Rapp-Coudert Committee in New York City and at the same time ask that the teachers be given a "fair" hearing. This is like asking that the Christian in the Roman arena be given a fair chance with a fair lion. But the existing social economic forces are destroying this kind of individualism and its abstract morality, and are forcing even the intellectuals into class alignments and resultant class consciousness.

While the middle-class intellectual often fears that his allying himself with the workers is incompatible with the preservation of his individual personality, the worker knows that only by class solidarity and class consciousness does he have the opportunity to express and develop his personality. The ethics of socialism, as Bax well expressed

it fifty years ago, seeks not "the ideal society through the ideal individual, but conversely the ideal individual through the ideal society." And accordingly it finds "in an adequate, a free and harmonious social life, at once the primary condition and the end and completion of individuality."[53] For socialism does not wish society to return to a primitive form for which the individual is nothing and the group or clan everything, but desires to advance to that fuller development of the individual personality that man's mastery of his productive forces now makes possible. The material condition for this higher synthesis of the individual and society is the abolition of the exploitation of man by man and the social ownership of the instruments of production. The ethical expression of this material basis is found in the individual with a full consciousness of his place in society and his resulting social responsibilities, and in the recognition on the part of collective man, or society, of its responsibility for the care and development of every single individual personality. Stalin expressed this succinctly when he said:

> There is no, nor should there be, irreconcilable contrast between the individual and the collective, between the interests of the individual person and the interests of the collective. There should be no such contrast, because collectivism, socialism, does not deny, but combines individual interests with the interests of the collective. Socialism cannot abstract itself from individual interests. Socialist society alone can most fully satisfy these personal interests. More than that: socialist society alone can firmly safeguard the interests of the individual. In this sense there is no irreconcilable contrast between individualism and socialism.[54]

Just as socialism can take over, employ, and raise to a higher level all the great developments of capitalism in the way of industry and technology, so does it preserve and advance all that was healthy and sound in the bourgeois teaching of the individual personality and its development. Capitalism has not been able to fulfill its promise with respect to either. It promised equal rights and opportunities for development to each individual, but the private ownership of social wealth has made a mockery of its promise. Socialist ethics not only claims in theory but must of necessity seek in practice to remove every impediment to individual development, inasmuch as its strength, the collective well-being, depends on the fullest development and hence

the greatest possible fulfillment of each individual. Walter Duranty reports from Moscow: "It has often been said abroad that the socialist system does not provide sufficient incentive for the individual. In point of fact, the U.S.S.R., as at present constituted, gives probably higher incentives to good laborers in any field than any other country in the world—as far, that is, as wages and good repute and the esteem of one's fellows, and even state decorations or special rewards, are concerned." [55] And this is equally true in the cultural life. The musician, poet, or novelist, the scientist and research worker, are cared for, aided and encouraged instead of being allowed the bourgeois privilege of starving in garrets while collectors or great corporations buy up the fruits of their genius for later exploitation.

While the greatest single obstacle to individual development has been the poverty of the great masses, with the accompanying limitations of education, movement, and so on, there are other hindrances that socialism strives to eliminate. Most important of these are the division of farm and city, of rural and urban life, the confinement of the overwhelming majority of women to the "slavery of the home," the separation of manual and intellectual work and workers, and the exploitation of so-called backward or inferior races. The first of these is accomplished through the industrialization and collectivization of agriculture, which not only raises the technical level of agricultural workers but brings them together into large communities, from which they travel to work their collective fields. The second, the liberation of women, is accomplished by the constitutional guarantees of equal rights with men in all spheres, maternity provisions in all employment, nurseries and nursery schools, mechanized household appliances, and the greater use of communal kitchens. The third, the elimination of the disastrous division of work by hand and work by brain, is achieved through the constant raising of the technical level of all workers and the integration of all brain work with the actual problems of industry, agriculture, and the people generally.[56] The last, the elimination of racial discrimination, is realized through constitutional guarantees against all forms of discrimination, and special and disproportionate aid to all peoples who have previously been exploited or especially underprivileged.

With these developments must and will come a new and healthier individualism, which recognizes not the abstract individual with abso-

lute rights over against the whole of organized society, but the actual concrete personality functioning in unity and harmony with the social whole. Walt Whitman, the great poet of American democracy, saw and understood this when he wrote:

> Not that half only, individualism, which isolates. There is another half, which is adhesiveness of love, that fuses, ties and aggregates, making the races comrades and fraternizing all.... The liberalist of today has this advantage over antique or mediaeval times, that his doctrine seeks not only to individualize but to universalize. The great word Solidarity has arisen.[57]

Whitman saw, further, with profound dialectical understanding, that we moderns needed a new patriotism to counterbalance our great advance in individualism and that the opposition of the two formed "a serious problem and paradox in the United States." "Must not the virtue of modern Individualism," Whitman wrote, "continually enlarging, usurping all, seriously affect, perhaps keep down entirely, in America, the like of the ancient virtue of Patriotism, the fervid and absorbing love of general country? I have no doubt myself that the two will merge, and will mutually profit and brace each other, and that from them a greater product, a third will arise." [58]

It would be hard to find a better statement of this problem and the direction in which its solution is to be found. Socialist ethics accepts it and makes it its own just as it embraces all that was sound and positive in previous conceptions of the individual personality and its development, from the Greek world to modern capitalism. It recognizes that this can be brought to fruition only in a collective society where, as a matter of fact, the good of all is the good of each, and where the best development of the individual is the highest guarantee of the widest social well-being. In this sphere, as in all others, Marxist ethics aims at the practical realization of the best ethical thought of the ages.

VI. FAMILY, STATE, AND NATION

The individual is not a member of an abstract society. In most cases today he comes into the world as a member of a family and leaves that family only to participate in the founding of a new one. Whether he likes it or not, and quite independent of his choice, he is also born into a political organization known as a state. And, further, he may find himself an integral part of a national group, which may or may not coincide with his political state.

So many of the ethical problems of the modern world arise from the nature of these three types of social groupings or organizations, and their inter-relationships, that they require special consideration. If the family is a good and desirable social unit, how did it originate and what is it good for? Is it a social necessity? What loyalties and duties pertain to its members? Under what conditions might the family be dissolved? What is and should be the role of sexual love in the founding of a family, and is there any place for it outside of the family? These are questions which men have been asking and answering throughout human history.

Similar questions arise concerning the state. Why a state in the first place? Was there always a state? Whence did it come? What are its obligations to its members, and what duties do they owe to it? Must there always be a state as we know it now? What principles govern or should govern the relations of one sovereign state to others? Are conflicts by force of arms among sovereign states inevitable? What is a nation? Should nation and state always coincide? Are multinational states possible? Should some nations or national groups be suppressed in the interests of others? What is meant by international law, and how does it differ from law within states? Can there be international law without international power or authority?

It can readily be seen from the previous chapters that these are both factual and ethical questions—that they concern both what exists, what is objectively possible, and what is desirable or good. While volumes

would be necessary to explore all the questions just asked, it might be of some value to see how the Marxist approach to ethics throws light on these questions and offers possible solutions to many of these most perplexing problems of the modern world.

1. SEX, MARRIAGE, AND THE FAMILY

The family as we know it, the modern family, is so much the product of the bourgeois world that many have supposed it incapable of surviving the transition to socialism. They fail to see that the family is steadily changing in the capitalist world—progressing with the extension of its democratic features, declining under reaction and fascism. They also fail to see that certain elements of a socialist society arise under democratic capitalism, such as women's suffrage and universal free public education, and that these changes have their impact on the family here and now.

A half century ago there appeared a large, well-documented Catholic treatise entitled *Socialism: Its Theoretical Basis and Practical Application,* by Victor Cathrein. Its section on the family in a socialist society opens as follows:

> The family is without doubt the indispensable mainstay of every well-ordered commonwealth. If socialism destroys the family it must necessarily be looked upon as the enemy of order, freedom, civilization, and Christianity itself.[59]

One need not here take issue with the first sentence, and the Marxist, in general, is not inclined to do so. Nevertheless, certain great thinkers of the past have not only not accepted this proposition but asserted its precise opposite. An Italian monk, for example, Campanella, in a utopian socialist work entitled *The City of the Sun,* written in a Naples prison shortly after the year 1600, vigorously attacked the family and forbade it in his ideal state because in his opinion it lies at the root of the desire for the acquisition of property through the system of inheritance. Thus, in his ideal society, children do not know their parents, nor parents their children, but all lead a communal life. To the Marxist it is clear that Campanella mistook a symptom for a cause and failed to see that the tendencies towards economic aggrandizement of the family were due, not to the nature of the family relation, but

to wider economic relationships that were perverting the proper function of the family unit.

The more important question raised by the above quotation is: Does modern or scientific socialism in theory or practice advocate the destruction of the family? This can and must be answered with an unequivocal "No." But before this answer and the reasons for it are fully canvassed, it will be well to examine Father Cathrein's argument as to why Marxian socialism is an enemy of the family. In so doing we will uncover an important conception and an actual historical form of the family. He admits that socialism does not aim "at the legal prohibition of marriage or at the compulsory dissolution of the family," but maintains that dissolution of the family "is the necessary consequence of socialist principles and demands." Why? Because, our Catholic father argues, socialism destroys the marriage bond through the following principles:

1. Its theory of equality of the sexes, the call for the "abolition of all laws which subordinate woman to man in public and private life" is inimical to the family. According to this Catholic theory, the unity of the family is thereby destroyed, because this unity "necessarily postulates one supreme head." Cathrein asks, who is to decide the dispute if man and wife disagree as to their dwelling place and similar affairs? [60]

2. The materialist tenets of socialism, which for him imply that "man has no higher aim than to revel in earthly enjoyment," are incompatible with marriage and the family, for if these are followed, "how can he be induced to bear the yoke of indissoluble monogamy?" [61]

3. Inasmuch as the stability of the family and the indissolubility of marriage rest chiefly on the education of the children, socialism, in wresting the education of the children from the parents and making it a function of the state, undermines the foundation of the family. To prove this aim of the socialists, Father Cathrein quotes the Gotha platform's demand for "Universal and equal education of the people by the state" and supports this with quotations from the Erfurt platform calling for compulsory public school attendance, and from the American Socialist Party platform, which advocates "education of all children up to the age of eighteen years, and state and municipal aid for books, clothing, and food." He admits that this is a logical socialist

demand for the reason that, "if socialism is to effect absolute equality in the conditions of life, it must first of all remove the universal source of social inequality, *i.e.,* unequal education; and this can be done only by making education a social concern." [62] Thus, he concludes, the chief duty of parents would cease to exist, and since, for the mere propagation of children a life-long and indissoluble union of the parents is not necessary, the integrity of the family receives a death-blow.

Some interesting conclusions can be drawn from the foregoing arguments. First, our Catholic opponent of socialism rests the family on the doctrine of male superiority and thus is willing in the interests of the *sacredness of the family* to keep women in a perpetually subordinate and inferior position. Does he not realize that this is to condemn one-half of the human race to permanent and irremediable inequality? The Marxist believes that there can be a partnership of equals, indeed, that no genuine partnership can exist otherwise. Significantly Cathrein is not only attacking socialism, but is in this criticism attacking the whole bourgeois conception of the family in the interests of a feudal conception. For socialism is here merely seeking to carry out more consistently the ideal of equality of the sexes that arose and developed in the course of the evolution of the bourgeoisie, but which the bourgeois world can never bring to full fruition. The question, "who is to decide the dispute if man and wife disagree as to their dwelling place and similar affairs?" is based on the assumption that unless the man decides all such questions the family will be torn asunder. What argument could be given, for example, why the woman should not decide? Matriarchal societies in which this was the case have been common. Men and women have learned to settle their disputes, by and large, co-operatively and harmoniously, and socialism merely seeks to remove all the hindrances and obstacles to this by making the woman in fact as well as in principle the social and economic equal of the man. And this will increasingly enable the common domestic problems to be settled by principles of love, comradeship, and mutual respect, and by a sense of social responsibility instead of by the fiat of one of the marriage partners.

Father Cathrein is willing to pay a high price for the male-dominated family that he believes in. But the question is not so much whether the family is worth this price, the price of the subordination of one-half the human race. Rather his position betrays a poor and limited

conception of the family itself. It is plain that only an economically and socially inferior woman would look upon her husband as her lord and master, and "count her subjection to him, her honor and freedom," in the words of the seventeenth-century John Winthrop of Massachusetts. It follows, therefore, that the struggle for woman's rights, and the emancipation of women from an inferior status politically, legally, and economically, sounds the death knell of the patriarchal family. But both women and conditions of the modern world demand women's freedom from every socially imposed limitation, including that of "slavery in the kitchen." The democratic capitalist and socialist worlds have this ideal in common, although the capitalist world has not gone as far in this direction, while fascism, with its brutalization of women, is attempting to destroy the painful gains of many centuries. Socialism is proud of its role in bringing about true equality of the sexes, and it vehemently denies that this equality destroys anything but an outworn and socially undesirable form of the family.

Second, Father Cathrein implies that the marriage relationship is in opposition to human happiness and that except for supernatural sanctions marriage would cease to exist. This is not very flattering either to human nature, after two thousand years of Christianity, or to the modern monogamous family. Socialists unqualifiedly deny it. It is indeed a dangerous admission for the spiritualist to make that "revelling in earthly enjoyment" stands on one side and "the yoke of indissoluble monogamy" on the other. For he confesses both that the *indissolubility* of the marriage bond is in conflict with human happiness and that the needs for human happiness run counter to the claims of spiritual beatitude. All that he is saying is, of course, that *marriage* ought to be inviolable and separation impossible in the interests of man's future life and other-worldly goal. But suppose there is doubt about a future life, and that belief in it is incompatible with a scientific approach to man and nature? Then he is confessing that there is no social, historical, worldly justification or foundation for indissoluble monogamy. But this is precisely the conclusion that the socialist, as a materialist, has reached, and he is joined in this by a large portion of the bourgeois world. The argument really turns attention away from the real problem, the family as a social institution, to the false problem of the family as a supernatural entity.

Third, in the education argument we have, as before, not merely an attack on socialism but an attack on the progressive democratic state as well. Here, however, the argument is even more confused, for nowhere in civilized society is education exercised as a parental function. The real question in Father Cathrein's mind, one suspects, is not the family against the state but the church against the state. The problem is not whether the family or some other institution shall educate the children but which institution is to perform this task. Thus it is solely a question of a church school system or of a publicly supported non-clerical school system. It is hardly a question of the family at all, for the permanence of the family and the indissolubility of the marriage bond are not affected so long as some super-family institution educates the children.

Nevertheless, one important issue is raised here, as appears in Father Cathrein's quotation from the educational plank of an early American Socialist platform. This is the question of state aid for books, clothing, and food for all children up to eighteen years of age—something we have gone a considerable way towards realizing, at least in principle, in New York City and other communities today. Soviet Russia has, of course, gone much further, with its support of qualified students through the years of higher education as well. Perhaps what the Church fears is that such a provision makes the adolescent and the young man and woman economically independent of their parents before they become wage-earners. We know well enough that during these years the family wields its influence over its children often through this economic dependence. Socialists here will plead guilty: they believe that the growing children should become more and more partners in the family rather than obedient subjects, and that the diminution of economic dependence, with its resultant greater freedom in the determination of the degree and kind of education to be had, occupation to be entered, and so on, constitutes a positive social gain. This is desirable, too, for the reason mentioned in the Catholic argument—the elimination of social and economic inequality through the elimination of unequal education.

These arguments against socialism in the interest of the preservation of the family are not convincing—because of the exceedingly limited and completely unhistorical conception of the family that lies behind them. For the interests of such a family are at odds with the

interests of economic and social progress, as can be seen even from an examination of the development of the capitalist world. Plainly, a new and more adequate conception of the family is necessary—one that is derived from an historical and scientific study of the origin of the monogamous family—one that can view the family in terms of its dynamic relationship to the struggle for the abolition of exploitation and the raising of society to a new and higher level. For by such a conception alone can the family overcome the limitations imposed upon it by the types of society that gave it birth and conditioned its development. All that has been argued here against socialism from the standpoint of the family is that socialism is incompatible with a certain limited historical form and conception of the family—a patriarchal family functioning for the most part as a self-contained and self-sufficient economic unit.

This argument about the family is an old one. Marx refers to it in the *Communist Manifesto*.[63] The Russian Bolsheviks were accused by the White Guards and by the world capitalist press of destroying the family and making a community of women. Interestingly, the argument had been raised much earlier against democratic movements in the eighteenth century. The Reverend Timothy Dwight, President of Yale University, attacked the democratic movement in America, in a Fourth of July Sermon in 1798, as planning for "exterminating Christianity...; for rooting out of the world civil and domestic government, the right of property, marriage, natural affectation, chastity, and decency."[64]

In spite of all assertions to the contrary, anthropology and history reveal that the family, like all other human institutions, evolved in the course of human development and that its major changes or stages were concomitants of marked changes in the productive forces and relations of men. Anthropologists find the widest variety of family relationships existing among primitive peoples today, and even in the short range of man's recorded history significant changes in the family structure are exhibited. All of these findings combine to make the divinely instituted family a pre-scientific myth and cast doubt on any claim that the family among us has reached its final and highest form.

Only a few of the broadest findings of the anthropologists can be presented here. Basic is the fact that some form of family relation

exists among all known peoples. Yet some of these forms are hardly recognizable to us as families. There are peoples among which the role of the father in paternity is unknown and where he functions as a social father to his wife's children, and where it is held that an unmarried woman *should not* have children because the family needs a male. There are families centering around the man, others around the woman, and often they are not sharply defined groups. There are families with many wives for one husband, and others with many husbands for one wife. A few quotations from a number of representative contemporary anthropologists will serve to indicate the reasons for this variety of forms:

> The ordinary Polynesian family was monogamous for economic reasons. There was no feeling against polygamy, but it was usually limited to chiefs, and even these rarely had more than three wives at a time.[65]

> It is essentially the wealth motif (among the Tolowa-Tututni) which makes the social wheels turn and which places the reciprocal social obligations of the institution of marriage in the light of money interests.[66]

> ...the minimum human social and economic institution cannot be less than the family. Actually, however, although the family is often the seasonal independent subsistence unit, additional social and economic factors require the unity and territorial autonomy of several such families, that is, the band.[67]

> When we say that "the family" exists in all known human societies, the definition of "the family" must be considerably modified. It cannot be taken to mean that type to which I shall refer as the biological family, *i.e.,* father, mother, and children, but must instead be interpreted as the permanent group which rears the children and gives them status in the community.[68]

Passing on from primitive peoples to the development of civilization, we shall examine Frederick Engels' principal theses on the evolution of the family in the civilized world. Engels held that the final victory of the monogamous family is one of the signs of the beginning of civilization and that it is founded on male supremacy for the purpose of breeding children of undisputed paternal lineage for the inheritance of the father's property.[69] Thus Engels concludes, from his

examination of ancient Greek society, that monogamy was not a fruit of individual sex-love and that it did not enter history as a reconciliation of man and wife, but rather as the subjugation of one sex by another,[70] coinciding with the first class divisions and the oppression of one class by another. And he adds: "Monogamy arose from the concentration of considerable wealth in the hands of a single individual—a man—and from the need to bequeath this wealth to the children of that man and of no other. For this purpose, monogamy of the woman was required, not that of the man, so this monogamy of the woman did not in any way interfere with open or concealed polygamy on the part of the man." [71]

The question now arises, if such be the origin of the family and its basis in the civilized world, what will be the effect upon it of the abolition, under socialism, of private property in the means of production? Engels answered this question in a way that confounds both the enemies of socialism and the cynics about monogamy:

> We are now approaching a social revolution in which the economic foundations of monogamy as they have existed hitherto will disappear just as surely as those of its complement—prostitution.... But by transforming by far the greater portion, at any rate, of permanent, heritable wealth—the means of production—into social property, the coming social revolution will reduce to a minimum all this anxiety about bequeathing and inheriting. Having arisen from economic causes, will monogamy then disappear when these causes disappear?
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> One might answer, not without reason: far from disappearing, it will, on the contrary, be realized completely. For with the transformation of the means of production into social property there will disappear also wage-labor, the proletariat, and therefore the necessity for a certain—statistically calculable—number of women to surrender themselves for money. Prostitution disappears; monogamy, instead of collapsing, at last becomes a reality—also for men.[72]

But, Engels asks, when the individual family ceases to be the economic unit of society, when the care and education of the children becomes a public matter, and when anxiety about the "consequences," which is today such an important consideration, disappears, will not monogamy disappear along with prostitution, leaving completely free

intercourse between the sexes? His answer is that a new factor has arisen in the modern world—individual sex love, or what is frequently referred to as romantic love. This love differs from the simple sexual desire of the ancients. Engels distinguishes several features of this new love: its reciprocal character, such a degree of intensity and permanency as to cause the two parties to regard non-possession or separation as the greatest misfortune and to risk life itself in its cause, and its new moral standard, which asks whether sexual relations and marriage arose from mutual love or not. This last took centuries to accomplish, and, outside of romances or among oppressed groups, did not become established until capitalism created "free" and "equal" people between whom intercourse and marriage were solely a question of their mutual and voluntary decision. Thus was established the doctrine that "every marriage is immoral which does not rest on mutual sex love and really free agreement of husband and wife." In short, love marriage was proclaimed a human right, not for the man only, but also for the woman.[73]

Much of modern literature, especially the novel, is devoted to the struggles for, and conflicts over, this ideal of marriage based solely on the mutual and reciprocal love of the contracting parties.[74] This form of love marriage must rank as one of the great achievements of the capitalist world, not found in any other form of society. Formally, it is but the extension of the idea of *contract,* described in the present work, to the realm of marriage and sex relations, but its substance is a new kind of love.

But, Engels continues, the ideal of this new love and marriage is incompletely realized under capitalism because of "all the accompanying economic considerations which still exert such a powerful influence on the choice of a marriage partner," and, he might have added, on the maintenance of the marriage state. With the abolition of capitalist productive relations no other motive will remain for marriage than mutual attraction, and since this new love between complete social equals tends to be exclusive, marriage based on it is monogamous.

Engels concludes this remarkable discussion with the following paragraphs whose completeness and succinctness require quotation in full:

> But what will quite certainly disappear from monogamy are all the features stamped upon it through its origin in property

relations; these are, in the first place, supremacy of the man, and, secondly, indissolubility. The supremacy of the man in marriage is the simple consequence of his economic supremacy, and with the abolition of the latter will disappear of itself. The indissolubility of marriage is partly a consequence of the economic situation in which monogamy arose, partly tradition from the period when the connection between this economic situation and monogamy was not yet fully understood and was carried to extremes under a religious form. Today it is already broken through at a thousand points. If only the marriage based on love is moral, then also only the marriage in which love continues. But the intense emotion of individual sex-love varies very much in duration from one individual to another, especially among men, and if affection definitely comes to an end or is supplanted by a new passionate love, separation is a benefit for both partners as well as for society—only people will then be spared having to wade through the useless mire of a divorce case.

What we can now conjecture about the way in which sexual relations will be ordered after the impending overthrow of capitalist production is mainly of a negative character, limited for the most part to what will disappear. But what will there be new? That will be answered when a new generation has grown up: a generation of men who never in their lives have known what it is to buy a woman's surrender with money or any other social instrument of power; a generation of women who have never known what it is to give themselves to a man from any other considerations than real love, or to refuse to give themselves to their lover from fear of the economic consequences. When these people are in the world, they will care precious little what anybody today thinks they ought to do; they will make their own practice and their corresponding public opinion about the practice of each individual—and that will be the end of it.[75]

Fortunately we have from the pen of the German Communist woman leader Clara Zetkin an illuminating account of some of Lenin's ideas on sex and love, expressed in conversations with her in the autumn of 1920, three years after the Russian Revolution.[76] Lenin

fully recognized the tremendous, natural and necessary effect of the revolution on the young people's ideas of love, sex relations, and marriage. He sympathized, understanding that the evils and conflicts that arose were accentuated by the constraint of the old order and the family laws of bourgeois states. He attributed this to the force of "holy property" and to the conventional hypocrisy of bourgeois society. He believed that "a revolution in sex and marriage is approaching, corresponding to the proletarian revolution." [77] But he deplored and denounced a new theory that was gaining a certain headway, the view namely "that in Communist society the satisfaction of sexual desires, of love, will be as simple and unimportant as drinking a glass of water." Lenin said of this:

> I think this glass of water theory is completely un-Marxist, and moreover, anti-social. In sexual life there is not only simple nature to be considered, but also cultural characteristics, whether they are of a high or low order. In his *Origin of the Family* Engels showed how significant is the development and refinement of the general sex urge into individual sex love. The relations of the sexes to each other are not simply an expression of the play of forces between the economics of society and a physical need, isolated in thought, by study, from the physiological aspect. It is rationalism, and not Marxism, to want to trace changes in these relations directly, and dissociated from their connections with ideology as a whole, to the economic foundations of society. Of course, thirst must be satisfied. But will the normal man in normal circumstances lie down in the gutter and drink out of a puddle, or out of a glass with a rim greasy from many lips? But the social aspect is most important of all. Drinking water is of course an individual affair. But in love two lives are concerned, and a third, a new life, arises. It is that which gives it its social interest, which gives rise to a duty towards the community.
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> As a Communist I have not the least sympathy for the glass of water theory, although it bears the fine title "satisfaction of love." In any case, this liberation of love is neither new, nor Communist. You will remember that about the middle of the last century it was preached as the "emancipation of the heart" in romantic literature. In bourgeois practice it became the eman-

> cipation of the flesh...I don't mean to preach asceticism by my criticism. Not in the least. Communism will not bring asceticism, but joy of life, power of life, and a satisfied love life will help to do that. But in my opinion the present widespread hypertrophy in sexual matters does not give joy and force of life, but takes it away. In the age of revolution that is bad, very bad.[78]

What are Lenin's underlying principles in the above analysis? He refers to one young man, talented and splendid, but from whom he thinks nothing good will come because "he reels and staggers from one love affair to the next." And he says he "wouldn't bet on the reliability, the endurance in struggle of those women who confuse their personal romances with politics. Nor on the men who run after every petticoat and get entrapped by every young woman." The revolution demands concentration, increase of forces from the masses and from individuals, and this does not square with orgiastic conditions. Here again Lenin is applying the same touchstone we saw in an earlier chapter. What is good for the revolution, good for the advancement of mankind through the creation of a classless society, is good; whatever hinders that is bad. But here we have a very concrete application, one which suggests that what builds a stronger, healthier, more cultured society of well-balanced individuals is both good for the attainment of the socialist aim and also is in accord with the best moral teaching of the ages. With regard to sex, marriage, and the family, it becomes increasingly clear that socialism takes over and embraces the great achievements of previous forms of society, and especially of capitalism, both in theory and practice. Socialism frees these achievements from the limitations they suffer through the inequitable and stifling economic relations of capitalism. It allows for the development of these human relations unhindered by all that degrades them and that confines them in molds imposed by limited economic conditions.

It has been hard for the traditionalist to conceive the dual nature of the socialist attitude towards these problems—the opposition to puritanism and rigid dogma on one hand and to licentiousness and promiscuity on the other. Many American "socialists" of the Greenwich Village era were less socialist than they were bohemian, while many of the puritanical opponents of easier divorce, birth control, or of any sex relations before marriage are less motivated by considerations of the real virtue and happiness of men than by adherence

to established traditions and existing institutions and a fear of social change.

It is not our purpose to explore in any detailed way the principles concerning sex, marriage, and the family as they have developed and will continue to develop in a socialist society. Marxists, unlike such utopian socialists as Campanella or Thomas More, do not try to regulate by fiat all these complex and infinitely varied relations of men. There is not and cannot be an absolute set of principles or regulations governing these matters. The bourgeois world has admittedly not been particularly successful in this direction, while fascism destroys all that has been acquired through centuries of civilization, in the interests of producing a race of ruthless robots bred only to labor and to die on the fields of battle.

In the Soviet Union a few clear and simple principles can be seen. Marriage ceases to be a sacrament and becomes a relation of two human beings based on love and equality. It may be formalized by registration or not, but in either case the partners are equally responsible before society for their offspring. Divorce is similarly a social function, discouraged by mild economic sanctions, and socially disapproved if hasty, careless, or too often repeated. Relations of the sexes outside of marriage or the establishment of a common habitation are matters of individual choice, except for widespread and deep-seated social disapproval of infidelity, promiscuity, too youthful infatuation, and the like. In short, the state interferes in these spheres of behavior only as much as is necessary for the proper care of children and the maintenance of the family. Social pressure is brought to bear only in so far as the general stability of individuals and groups and their healthy social relations are in danger of being impaired by Don Juans or similarly promiscuous women who are seen as a disturbing social force and as incompatible with the hard work that needs to be done to build socialism and protect it against fascist aggression.

But there is more to it than these more or less negative factors. This additional something may perhaps best be described as the conception or ideal of healthy, well-rounded individuals for whom sexual love is a desirable and necessary part of the good life and for whom this is best achieved in conjunction with the mutual respect, helpfulness, and devotion, the life-long companionship and comradeship of monogamous marriage. One of Spinoza's great moral ideas beautifully

applies here. The last proposition of his Ethics sums up his thought in these words: "Blessedness [can be translated as happiness or well-being] is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself; neither do we rejoice therein, because we control our lusts, but contrariwise, because we rejoice therein, we are able to control our lusts." [79]

In simple English, Spinoza means that virtue and lasting happiness are identical and that they consist in man's rational mastery of his life, a mastery that is itself a joy and the source of all true happiness. Applied to the present problem it suggests that a satisfactory sex life, marriages of love and devotion, sound happy families, with all that these mean for general human happiness and well-being, will not come from laws and statutes, nor from fears and inhibitions, nor from men's controlling of their passions negatively (the Stoic or traditional Christian notion of virtue which Spinoza is opposing), but from the leading of well-rounded and happy lives, from the conscious rational mastery by men of themselves and their environment. In short, men and women in a sane and rational society which allows for the fullest and freest development of their personalities will *know* the place sex should occupy in their lives. They will know the values of domestic felicity and marital love and will live lives freed both from the shams and pretences of bourgeois smugness, with the misery and bitterness it often cloaks, and from the tragedies and sufferings our society visits upon its "wayward" ones who are so unfortunate as to be caught or trapped by their own uncontrolled emotions.

2. THE SOVEREIGN STATE AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Whatever else every person in the modern world is, whatever else he belongs to, he is a citizen or subject of a state. He may participate in the making of its laws, or he may not. He may approve of the laws and constitutions of the state to which he belongs, or he may disapprove. In any case, he is a member of a political society, a body politic, and is subject to its rules. This state can reward him or punish him. It can make him do its will, and there is no higher authority to which he can appeal. He must pay taxes for the maintenance of this state, and risk or sacrifice his life in its armed forces, whether it be

for a good or a bad cause, for his personal interests or against them, and all-powerful sanctions are evoked to compel him to do so. The citizen may or may not be free to criticize or change the laws of his state, but it is not an incorporated body to which he can choose or not to belong. In rare instances, indeed, he may leave its jurisdiction by leaving its territories, but even this requires the permission of the state he seeks to leave.

Such was not always the case. The relationship was not always so absolute or so impersonal. This new state emerged from feudal society at the beginning of the modern world; in fact, its emergence marks the beginning of the modern world. It is the national, or sovereign state. It has definite geographical limits and its power is absolute within those limits. Its power is absolute, too, in its relations to other sovereign states—limited, that is, only by their individual or collective power expressed fundamentally through force, through armies and cannon, warships and aircraft. Within the individual states—except fascist states, of course—all relations of men are regulated by law in accordance with a set of basic principles called a constitution. Between states there may be treaties or signed agreements but there is no constitution regulating the relations of states, nor is there any sovereign power to enforce agreements.

The history of these sovereign capitalist states is a history of wars. Significantly, in the period of the rise of such states, Hugo Grotius endeavored to create a body of so-called international law to regulate the conduct of states in war as in peace. He himself says: "I saw prevailing throughout the Christian world a license in making war, of which even barbarous nations would have been ashamed; recourse being had to arms for slight reasons, or no reason; and when arms were once taken up, all reverence for divine and human law was thrown away; just as if men were thenceforth authorized to commit all crimes without restraint." [80] While the new states brought it about that the relations of individuals, groups, and classes were all regulated by law in the interests of stability and the maintenance and furthering of the interests of the dominant social or economic class, pure anarchy prevailed in the relations of states to one another. Thomas Hobbes, too, saw this in the seventeenth century and commented that "the nature of War, consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the times there is no assurance to the

contrary. All other time is Peace."[81] It is to be feared that under this theory there has never been peace in the modern world of sovereign states. Significantly, this is what Hobbes thought the relations of individual men to one another would be without a state to rule them.

From the sixteenth century onward the rising bourgeoisie brought into being the sovereign state with its regulation of trade and commerce over large geographical areas. This result was brought about through terrific turmoil and struggle both internally and in the relations of competing states. It played a central role in the development of the new capitalist economy, which could develop only in relatively large geographical areas and with sovereign states to regulate its internal and external relations. Today men are increasingly aware that the new economy has outgrown the limits of the old states, has become a world economy, especially since the advent of imperialism, with its development of finance capital, monopoly, and international trusts and cartels. Capitalism, in short, achieved the economic interdependence of the world, and the preconditions of economic unification. Yet it remains bound to individual sovereign states. Thus it is that a new round of wars arose, not for the consolidation of state power over a given geographical area as in the period of capitalism's beginning, but for the redivision of the world's markets and resources among rival imperialist powers. This struggle has culminated in the effort of the great bankers and industrialists of Germany, by their absolute control of state power through the National Socialist Party, to conquer the whole world for their own economic aggrandizement.

As our problems here are ethical rather than historical, are concerned with what can and ought to be rather than with what merely is or has been, history will be referred to only to the extent that it helps in solving such ethical problems as the following: What is the best form of the state? Does that state govern best which governs least? What is the purpose of the state, or what end should it serve? What obligations do the citizens have to the state? Is the state necessary, is it only a necessary evil, or is it an end in itself? Should the state regulate and control all phases of economic life in the interests of the majority of the people, or should it simply allow the free play of economic forces? Can there and should there be a world state or federation that would keep peace by force? Is one's state always to be fought for in any war in which it may be engaged? What is a just

war, an unjust war? What is patriotism? Can patriotism be brought to serve the best interests of all mankind?

While all of these questions have been asked, not all of them are answerable without careful definition of time, place, and circumstance. None can be answered abstractedly or universally for all states under all conditions, even though that is the way most of these questions have been discussed. For the Marxist these are all concrete questions which can be answered only concretely and specifically in a given historical context. This position is disconcerting to absolutists, for whom truth is Truth and good is Good, but the preceding chapters should have demonstrated the impossibility of the absolutist approach.

A few historical illustrations will further clarify the point. The Napoleonic wars began as progressive wars in defense of the revolution against reaction all over the continent, but ended as wars of plunder and spoliation.[82] Until Hitler's seizure of power in Germany, the League of Nations was primarily an instrument for maintaining British-French hegemony over Europe and the colonial world as established at Versailles and Locarno. And it was motivated in part by the fear of Russian socialism. After the Nazi withdrawal from the League and the admission of the U.S.S.R. it became an instrument, however ineffective, for the collective security of nations against fascist aggression. In the Jeffersonian era the struggle against a strong central government was largely a people's struggle against powerful economic elements whose rule they feared; but in the later thirties of this century it was largely a struggle on the part of big financial interests against a people's growing opposition to monopoly rule. Similarly, "states' rights" was in the Federalist period a movement of the people to keep a closer control over the government in their interests, whereas in the pre-Civil War period it was a doctrine of slave-owners for the protection and extension of slavery against the growing abolitionist movement. Again, the Chinese Communists opposed for ten years the policies of the National Government of China and then, with the Japanese attack on Shanghai, began fighting with and supporting the government of Chiang Kai-shek. Here the absolutists would protest that either they were wrong in the first period or wrong in the second, failing to see that the changed conditions and the changed policies of the National Government made the Communist position one of con-

sistency in terms both of the struggle for socialism and for a strong and independent China.

All ethical problems concerning the state refer ultimately to an analysis of its nature. Theories of the nature of the state involve opposed answers to two main questions: (a) Is the state desirable as a good in itself, or is it but a necessary evil? (b) What is the basis of state power: whose power is it and whose interest does it serve?

In answer to the first of these questions we have the popular eighteenth-century theory, best known to Americans through Tom Paine. According to this theory, the state is a necessary evil, required by man's wickedness, as distinct from society, which is produced by his wants. Or, again, "Society in every state is a blessing, but government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil." [83] Civil society, in this view, can exist without the state. "A great part of that order which reigns among mankind is not the effect of government," says Paine. "It had its origin in the principles of society, and the natural constitution of man. It existed prior to government, and would exist if the formality of government was abolished." [84] Paine believes, further, that everything government can usefully add to society can be performed by the common consent of society—without government.[85] This theory was shared in general by the Jeffersonians and has played a significant role in American history.

Arising historically in opposition to this view is the theory of Hegel, according to which the state is the divine idea on earth, the ultimate embodiment of Reason in human affairs. The modern national state is the greatest achievement of history, says Hegel. It is the unity of the subjective will and objective reason. Hegel has here, of course, a criterion of a good state. "A State is then well constituted and internally powerful when the private interest of its citizens is one with the common interest of the State." [86] But his tendency is to regard the state as absolute and to define its virtue by its strength. The real point is that the state is not evaluated in terms of its service to society, or the common good, but that everything else tends to be judged in terms of its contribution to the state.

In answer to the second question concerning the basis of state power we have the dominant bourgeois theory, according to which the state is above parties and classes, is the expression of a general will and rules society for the common good. This might be held equally for the

monarchical or the republican state, the difference consisting, according to this theory, solely in terms of who shall determine the general good and how it is best attained. A variant of this general position is found in the American Constitutional Convention debates, especially in the speeches of Alexander Hamilton and James Madison, according to whom the propertied classes are the reliable and stable elements in society and must therefore have the dominant share in government. As these "cannot receive any advantage by a change they therefore will ever maintain good government."[87] While this is frankly a class approach, it still contains the conception of a national interest, as opposed to the particular interests of groups or classes, but one that is best realized through the propertied elements in society.

Opposed to this traditional theory is the Marxist analysis of the state, which holds it to be primarily an instrument whereby a dominant economic class rules society in its own interest. The Marxist analysis concludes that the state is an apparatus devised by this economic class to order and arrange the basic relations of society in its behalf and in the interests of maintaining the existing economic or class relationships. A passage from Engels will help to concretize and clarify the Marxist position:

> As the state arose from the need to keep class antagonisms in check, but also arose in the thick of the fight between the classes, it is normally the state of the most powerful, economically ruling class, which by its means becomes also the politically ruling class, and so acquires new means of holding down and exploiting the oppressed class. The ancient state was, above all, the state of the slave-owners for holding down the slaves, just as the feudal state was the organ of the nobility for holding down the peasant serfs and bondsmen, and the modern representative state is the instrument for exploiting wage-labor by capital.[88]

Of course, the state, at least in its more democratic forms, does not appear in this class guise. Rather does it appear as a force standing over and above classes, regulating their relations impartially in the interests of the whole. Actually it tends to assume such a detached role, yet without social cleavage into opposed economic classes, together with the need of defending the nation against enemies without, such an apparatus as the state embodies is unnecessary and, indeed, inexplicable.

The practical importance of this conception of the state lies in its directives for social action, in its moral implications. To endorse unqualifiedly the bourgeois state is, then, to take sides in the economic struggle with the bourgeoisie. To try to do away with the state, as the source of all evil, as the anarchist would do, is to mistake an effect for a cause, a symptom for a disease. The only other possibilities are those of the liberal and the Marxist. The liberal admits evils in the state, but, declining to see it as an instrument of class rule, seeks only to reform this or that particular feature or shortcoming of it, while keeping the structure intact. The Marxist supports every progressive feature of the democratic state, works to make it better serve the interests and needs of the masses of the people, and fights against all reactionary elements within it. At the same time he seeks to transform it into an instrument whereby the majority of the people can reconstruct society in their image, for the ultimate purpose of creating a classless society. He believes that only thus can there be a true commonwealth, for as Thomas More wrote over four hundred years ago, "in other places they speak still of the commonwealth, but every man procures his own private gain." The Marxist believes that when the classless society is realized, and the danger of foreign military attack has disappeared, there will no longer be any need for a coercive force standing over and above society, an apparatus for commanding obedience. Rather, all social and economic relations will be freely entered into and administered by appropriate organs of society—such organs, for example, as even in our society administer a considerable body of relief, health care, education, and cultural services.

Engels expressed this idea in the statement, "The first act in which the state really comes forward as the representative of society as a whole—the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society—is at the same time its last independent act as a state." And Engels continues: "The interference of the state power in social relations becomes superfluous in one sphere after another, and then ceases of itself. The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and the direction of the processes of production." [89]

While this theory is basically true, Joseph Stalin has indicated that "certain of the general propositions in the Marxist doctrine of the state were incompletely worked out and inadequate." [90] He refers especially to the notion that the exploiting classes having been abol-

ished in the U.S.S.R. the state should die away. He continues his discussion by describing the two main phases the socialist state has passed through since the Russian Revolution. The principal functions of the state during the first period were (1) "to suppress the overthrown classes inside the country" which differed, Stalin says, from previous states in that "our state suppressed the exploiting minority in the interests of the laboring majority, while previous states had suppressed the exploited majority in the interests of the exploiting minority."[91] (2) To defend the country from foreign attack, and (3) "the work of economic organization and cultural education performed by our state bodies with the purpose of developing the infant shoots of the new, socialist economic system and re-educating the people in the spirit of socialism."[92]

The second period, from the elimination of the capitalist elements to the complete victory of the socialist economic system, was characterized by (1) the cessation of suppression inside the country, (2) the protection of socialist property from thieves and pilferers, (3) the function of defending the country from foreign attack, and (4) the full development of economic organization and cultural education by the state organs. "Now," Stalin said in 1939, "the main task of our state inside the country is the work of peaceful economic organization and cultural education. As for our army, punitive organs, and intelligence service, their edge is no longer turned to the inside of the country, but to the outside, against external enemies."[93]

In answer to the question, will the state remain in the period of communism, Stalin answers that it will if capitalist encirclement and the danger of foreign military attack continue; it will not remain but atrophy if the capitalist encirclement disappears and a socialist encirclement takes its place.

It is clear, then, that the socialist's opposition to the state is not an abstract opposition to authority, and is not an opposition to all acts of the state. It is, in fact, an opposition to the bourgeois form of the state by being a demand that the state serve all of society and represent all. But, as has been shown throughout, the Marxist believes the state can do this only through a change in its class character by which it becomes an instrument for the complete economic reorganization of society and the overcoming of class divisions. To achieve this goal it is necessary that the state represent the interests of the masses of people

and act authoritatively in their behalf as up to now the state has inevitably represented the capitalist class.

Two questions inevitably arise at this point. One is, if the state is an instrument of the bourgeoisie for its own protection and preservation, should workers have anything to do with it? Should they be concerned with working in it through elections, government boards, and the like; can they improve their conditions under it? The other is, should the working class and the people generally fight to preserve it against enemies without?

History answered these questions before "ethics" asked them. The people have utilized all the forms of democracy to protect and further their interests, and the history of the modern working class movement is in part the history of campaigns and enactments whereby the bourgeois state has been made to serve popular ends. And the people have fought for their national independence and integrity in spite of the frequent apathy the ruling class has exhibited. Patriotism may be the "last refuge of a scoundrel," but it is also and more fundamentally the heritage and birthright of the common people, who know that *foreign* rule can never be good for them, and that a divided country falls easily to the despoiler. The plain people and especially the organized working class may have been misled into wars of plunder, never into surrendering to the aggressor.

The patriotism of the people has been exhibited so frequently that it scarcely needs historical elucidation. From Napoleon's invasion of Russia to the fight of the communards of Paris in the Franco-Prussian war, from the struggles of the American colonists to those of the Spanish People's Republic, from the valiant fight of the Chinese people against the Japanese invaders to the unparalleled resistance to the Nazi invasion by the Soviet workers and farmers, modern history reveals the peoples' intensity and ferocity in defending their homes, their families, and their *country* against the invader. For despite internal contradictions, despite the class character of the state, the country is still the people's, and whenever they have the opportunity they will defend it.

The capitalist and previously entrenched ruling classes have not always shared the people's conviction. From the surrender of France to the Prussians by the "best people," from the "surrender" of Manchuria to the Japanese invaders in 1931 by the Chinese bourgeoisie, to

the forfeiture of Spanish independence by Franco and his millionaire supporters, or the more recent surrender of France to the Nazis by the Weygand-Laval-Petain group, we find that the dominant class elements, when their internal rule proves weak, are willing to betray their country, their national independence, their own rule of a tottering state for support from the enemy without. They hope that the invader, the foreigner, will divide the spoils with them. It was actually fear of the democratic system, fear of the French people's desire for social and economic reforms, fear of the French workers who under democracy were making gains in organization and in their living standards, that sent the reactionary sections of French monopoly capitalism to the national enemy. Through Hitlerism, these elements of the French bourgeoisie sought their desired end of destroying democracy. It was the recognition of this class conflict on the part of Hitler and Goebbels that made their plans for world conquest appear feasible. But it was only in those parts of the world where the people were deprived of any independence, that Axis conquest has had even the people's passive acceptance.

This patriotism of the people, when they have a land they can call their own, is the ethical meaning of the different actions of the people of the Philippines from those of Burma, Malaya, and Indonesia when the Japanese attacked. As long as the people have some hand in the affairs of their land, even to the most meager extent—as long as, to be more exact, there are elements of democracy in the state apparatus—the people fight to defend and preserve it. But, as Wendell Willkie expressed it in his Chungking statement, the people cannot participate effectively when they feel "that we've asked them to join us for no better reason than that Japanese rule would be even worse than Western imperialism." On the other hand, as long as the class controlling the state apparatus exists by such oppression and exploitation as to make it fear that its own people are more inimical to its class interest than is the ruling class of the enemy state, it will betray its own state, its own people, and ultimately its own national existence.

Superficially, to the undialectical thinker, this conflict between class interest and national interest might appear to involve an insoluble problem. Actually, the moral formula is simple, as might be inferred from earlier discussions. The state is, under capitalism, an apparatus for the rule of the capitalist class over society. In so far as this domi-

nant class is progressive—that is, can develop the productive forces in such a way as to extend the benefits of this increased productivity over society as a whole or in large part and can consequently extend political privileges to greater numbers of people—its state is progressive and deserves and receives the support of the masses of people against enemies within (such as the slave-holders in the American Civil War, or the Spanish fascists) and against all enemies without. Such a ruling class need not fear the people, for the latter will defend their homes, their culture, and their way of life, even though it is not unqualifiedly theirs. In so far as the ruling class is reactionary, cannot develop further its country's productivity (except for its own profitable war purposes), it must restrict the rights of the people and curtail their living standards in the interest of profits. It can then neither trust the people nor be trusted by them.

The people may, quite wrongly, under special conditions fail to defend their homeland, and the ruling class always errs in regarding the enemy state as a lesser evil. Yet it is not true that the people fight only when they have tangible guarantees of a better internal state of affairs. There are no such iron-clad guarantees in America today; yet seamen, miners, industrial workers, and the people generally are making heroic efforts because they demand that America be kept free from any foreign dictation. And they will make greater efforts and greater sacrifices still as they see all the apparatus of the government and all the resources of the country mobilized for the attainment of victory. For then they will know that they are fighting not only for their soil and for their "way of life" but for their nation, which has no other aim than to destroy the aggressor and to defend all the people and their common property.

To summarize, there is no contradiction between the Marxist theory of the state as an instrument of class rule and national patriotism and the people's fight for their homeland. Rather, this theory alone explains the otherwise inexplicable contradiction in the modern world between the people's eagerness to defend their homeland with all their hard won, though limited, rights and achievements, and the occasional apathy of the bourgeoisie, in spite of their apparent complete stake in the apparatus of government.

But what should be the relations of states to one another and how can their conflicts be avoided? Capitalism has made the world inter-

dependent, has united all peoples by unbreakable economic ties. One need only mention sugar, tobacco, tin, rubber, tea, aluminum, and comparable products to realize the modern world's economic unity. Capitalism has achieved this unity in an astonishingly short time. Further, it first placed on the agenda of mankind the question of what can be done to prevent war, not in terms of mere moral sentiments, but in terms of political and economic relationships. It began this as timidly as its own war-making propensities would allow, in Hugo Grotius' questions, whether there be not just and unjust wars, and whether there be not "a common law of Rights which is of force with regard to war, and in war?" [94] In short, the increase of trade and commerce, and the development of sovereign states independent of the power of the Papacy (Grotius' book was put on the *Index*) led to such wars as to cause Grotius to seek some instrumentality whereby the war-making propensity of states might be curbed and some of the evils of war mitigated. He opposes Christian pacificism, however, represented by such men as Erasmus, on the ground that by the Law of God and of Nature it is right to use force for self-preservation and where the right of another is not infringed.[95] He declares in an amazingly modern vein that the natural foundation for the relationship of states in peace or war is found in the principle that "a people which violates the Laws of Nature and Nations, beats down the bulwark of its own tranquillity for future time." [96] This is the bourgeois principle that intelligent self-interest dictates a state's relationships to other states, and that so long as this interest is properly pursued the relationships of states will be mutually satisfactory.

This position of the rising bourgeoisie was raised to a new and higher level somewhat more than a century and a half later by the aged Immanuel Kant, in his work *Perpetual Peace,* published in 1795. Kant here tried to lay down certain rules or articles by which perpetual peace might be insured. It is highly significant that the first of these principles was that "the civil constitution of every state ought to be republican," and that the second was "the public right ought to be founded upon a federation of free states." [97] But more significant still is Kant's recognition that it is the growth of the new economy that has made world peace both possible and necessary. Kant writes:

> It is the spirit of commerce that sooner or later takes hold of every nation, and is incompatible with war: the power of money

> being that which of all others gives the greatest spring to states, they find themselves obliged to labor at the noble work of peace, though without any moral view; and instantly seek to stifle, by mediations, war, in whatever part it may break out, as if for this purpose they had contracted a perpetual alliance.[98]

Further, Kant realizes that this new unification of the world produced by the "spirit of commerce" and the "power of money" has so united the world that in Maxim Litvinov's famous phrase "peace is indivisible." Kant says:

> The connections, more or less near, which have taken place among the nations of the earth, having been carried to that point, that a violation of rights, committed in one place, is felt throughout the whole, the idea of a cosmopolitical right can no longer pass for a fantastic exaggeration of right; but is the last step of perfection necessary to the tacit code of civil and public right; these systems at length conducting towards a public right of men in general, and towards a perpetual peace, but to which one cannot hope continually to advance, except by means of the conditions here indicated.[99]

This is a new and remarkable vision and it shows both how much the Koenigsberg philosopher was in the bourgeois world, and how that world itself was preparing the way for a solution of its own great problem of the conflicts of sovereign states. Kant could not possibly have foreseen how much had to happen, how much development had yet to take place before world peace was actually on the agenda of mankind, and, bourgeois as he was, he would have shuddered at the suggestion of the price that the bourgeoisie might have to pay for world peace—the dissolution of their order and its succession by socialism. Yet, only five years later, Johann Fichte nearly saw this great truth. In his *Vocation of Man* he raised the whole discussion of international peace to a new level by showing that war between states was the reflection and the product of the political-economic-social structure within states, that foreign policy, in short, was the expression of internal policy. He pictures the establishment of a "true State," one in which there is no oppression or no exploitation of man by man, as destroying the possibility of foreign war, "at least with other *true* States."[100] And he writes a truly prophetic passage which bears on the present world struggle.

> That a whole nation should determine, for the sake of plunder, to make war on a neighboring country, is impossible; for in a state where all are equal, the plunder could not become the booty of a few, but must be equally divided amongst all, and the share of no one individual could ever recompense him for the trouble of war. Only where the advantage falls to the few oppressors, and the injury, the toil, the expense, to the countless herd of slaves, is a war of spoliation possible and conceivable. Not from states like themselves could such states as these entertain any fear of war; only from savages or barbarians whose lack of skill to enrich themselves by industry impels them to plunder; or from enslaved nations, driven by their masters to a war from which they themselves will reap no advantage.[101]

Fichte continues to the effect that it is the duty of free states to unite among themselves to resist such aggression and, when necessary to their own security, to transform the states around them into free states like themselves. And he concludes this discussion with the summary: "Thus from the establishment of a just internal organization, and of peace between individuals, there will necessarily result integrity in the external relations of nations towards each other, and universal peace among them."[102] This, of course, is not to be taken to mean that Fichte was a socialist and meant socialism by a "free" state, but it does raise sharply the question whether any other form of society fulfills Fichte's conditions.

Since Fichte's work in 1800 the whole face of the world has been transformed. Germany attained a national state, and Italy likewise. America grew strong and prosperous, and commerce and industry rose to heights undreamed of. Capitalism was transformed from its earlier competitive stage into imperialism, manifested by monopoly, the dominance of finance over industrial capital, and the international struggle for markets, raw materials, and fields for investment. The whole world became dominated by a handful of great powers and these by a small number of big financial interests. War became transformed from a struggle between two states for particular goals—such as a given province, territory, or trade route—into a contest among groups of powers to determine which groups should dominate and have the lion's share of the world's economic wealth and the domination of the colonial countries.

Interestingly, again on a new level arises the question of international covenants for peace, and we have great international gatherings among the imperialist powers. These congresses draw up rules such as those of The Hague conventions, only to have the signatories plunge the world shortly afterwards into the first worldwide war. The rest of the story is familiar to us—centering, as it does, around the Russian Revolution and the establishment of socialism in the former domains of the tsars, the Versailles and other treaties, the creation of a League of Nations for the first time in world history, and the coming into power in Italy and then in Germany of fascist gangsters, taking over the whole state apparatus on behalf solely of the most reactionary sections of the great banking and industrial monopoly interests.

These fascist powers of Europe and their Japanese ally plunged the world into a new and more horrible holocaust. The democratic powers of Western Europe and America refused the ever-proffered proposals of Soviet Russia for collective security, for an iron-bound international pact to prevent any aggression anywhere. But in the course of the struggle itself that unity is being forged which peace could not bring.

As the aged Kant had foreseen, not men by their intelligence and will would solve the problem, but nature, their master. The lesson has been a horribly costly one. Victory over fascist aggression and reaction will bring to men as never before the problem of reconstructing the world so that such wars can never recur. This attainment of victory over fascism and the securing of a just and lasting peace constitute the greatest moral problem and challenge man has ever faced. Such statesmen as Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin see, too, that it is a problem inseparable from that of the economic organization of society and of the whole world's economy. The Marxist doubts if perpetual peace can come except with world socialism, the world organization of economy by all the peoples in their mutual interest, and the withering away of national states. But as that is not yet an immediately practicable goal, he will co-operate fully with all those sincerely endeavoring to achieve lasting peace. Certainly the war struggle itself—involving as it does the united efforts of the peoples of the free world—is creating a determination and power to secure such a unity of the victors, centering around the United States, the Soviet Union, Britain, and China, as to create or at least to foster those conditions necessary for world peace.

This peace will not be achieved by an "Anglo-Saxon" policed world—

the "Federation Now" of America and the British Empire, which has such a view in prospect—but only through the co-operative efforts of all the United Nations, together with the present colonial peoples and those now under fascist tyranny. Its basis lies in the principles of the Atlantic Charter applied to the whole world, in the economic security of all peoples, and the right of all to determine their own economic and social order so long as it is compatible (as fascism is not) with the rights and interests of all others.

Here again, in accordance with the whole of Marxist scientific and ethical thought, the working class has a special role to play. It is the class more than any other whose interest it is to bring about the total defeat of the fascist powers and to prevent any recurrence of fascism and wars of plunder and spoliation. It has no imperialist designs. In no country does it have interests opposed to those of the workers of another. Just as within each single country the needs of the working peoples coincide with the long-range needs and interests of all, so on an international scale the position of the working class in the modern world makes it the representative and bearer of the interests of all the diverse peoples of the earth. The organized strength of the international labor movement, its international unity, is thus the precondition of a peaceful world order, and the stronger the world labor movement the more certain is it that at the peace tables a true and lasting peace will be established. On an international scale, then, just as in each country, the Marxist finds in the working class, by virtue of its position in society, a unity of needs and interests with the highest human moral ideals. This unity makes its strength the surest foundation for the realization of the great vision that emerged from ancient Palestine, "Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men."

3. NATION, RACE, AND SELF-DETERMINATION

Everyone in the modern world is born into not only a family and a state. He is also a member of a nation, a people, a folk, having its own language, territory, economic life, and community of culture.

For he might have been a Roosian,
A French, or Turk, or Proosian,
Or perhaps Itali-an!

But in spite of all temptations
To belong to other nations,
He remains an Englishman.

These merry lines from Gilbert and Sullivan express the identity for the Western world of state and nation. The captain of the *H.M.S. Pinafore* could not really have ceased to be English and become a Turk or an Italian, but he might have taken allegiance to another state than that of his native land. The English nation was an amalgam of many peoples, including the Celts and Teutons, who were fused in the course of centuries into one people. The English state arose through an historical process whereby these peoples were welded into one political entity.

With the break-up of feudalism and the decline of the power of the Church at Rome came the development of the concept of independent nations, of sovereign states based on the real or assumed community of interests and language of the people inhabiting a given territory. Machiavelli was one of the prophets of this new development, passionately desiring to see one Italy, the whole of the Italian peninsula forged into one state. He wanted a united Italy because, he seems to have thought, the Italian people had a community of language, customs, and usages, and therefore constituted a nation. France and Spain had largely achieved such unity, but, in spite of Machiavelli, Italy was not destined to do so until more than three centuries later. This delay was due largely, as Machiavelli himself had foreseen and had struggled against, to the power and interests of the Papacy, which desired a divided Italy.

Many were the theorists of the new ideal of a national state, and interestingly we find the philosopher of the Dutch Republic, Spinoza, equating a people's having a definite territory to inhabit and possessing political autonomy within that territory with being "God's Chosen." That was to Spinoza the central meaning of the idea that the Jews were the chosen people, and he logically held that they were so as long as they possessed their national state and that any other people were equally God's chosen when they had a similar privilege. This makes it clear that Spinoza looked upon the new national state as constituting the highest gift a people could possess.

It was the forces of rising capitalism that brought about both this

amalgamation of peoples into nations with resulting consciousness of nationality and the formation of national groups into independent national states. In Western Europe these processes were for the most part simultaneous and identical. But in Eastern Europe, as Joseph Stalin has pointed out in his famous treatise *Marxism and the National Question,* first published in 1913, matters proceeded differently, due to the feeble development of capitalism and the leftovers of feudal disunity. And in the rest of the world, as we shall see, it was given to few peoples to achieve their nationhood and political sovereignty at the same time.

Stalin, himself a Georgian and a member of one of the repressed nations under the tsarist empire, gave special thought to the whole national question in the modern world. He conceives a nation as "a historical category belonging to a definite epoch, the epoch of rising capitalism," and recognizes that "the process of elimination of feudalism and development of capitalism was at the same time a process of amalgamation of people into nations."[103] Especially concerned with the national problems in Eastern Europe, Stalin shows how multinational states were formed and how they were based on the domination of the weaker nations by the stronger. He remarks that "what had been an exception in Western Europe (Ireland) became the rule in the East."[104] He shows how this domination of the weaker by the stronger leads to struggles in which the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations plays the leading role because, fundamentally, of the desire for its "own, its 'home' market." Stalin comments: "The market is the first school in which the bourgeoisie learns its nationalism."[105] But, he shows, the national question is not confined to the market. The economic struggle passes into a political struggle with all kinds of repressive measures employed by the dominant bourgeoisie to subdue its rivals, including limitations of freedom of movement, repression of language, restriction of schools, religious persecution, and so on.

But while this national struggle is fundamentally a struggle of the bourgeois classes among themselves, Stalin takes special pains to show that "it does not follow from this that the proletariat should not put up a fight against the policy of national oppression," because, "limitation of freedom of movement, disfranchisement, suppression of language, restriction of schools, and other forms of repression affect the workers no less, if not more, than the bourgeoisie. Such a state of

affairs can only serve to retard the free development of the intellectual forces of the proletariat of subject nations." [106]

But this is only one of the three great dangers of national oppression to the working class. The second is that it diverts the attention of the working people from their class interests, from social questions to national questions. The third is that national oppression not infrequently passes into a "system" of massacres and pogroms, which is only another form of "divide and rule." Stalin concludes this phase of his discussion with the following statement of the working-class position.

> The workers therefore combat and will continue to combat the policy of national oppression in all its forms, subtle or crude, as well as the policy of inciting nations against each other in all its forms.
>
> Social-Democratic parties in all countries therefore proclaim the right of nations to self-determination.[107]

Here we find the expression of the idea that, although the nation was a creation of rising capitalism, the working class becomes its protector and savior, and of the idea that the proletariat's very belief in internationalism requires it to defend and cultivate the nation. It was with these ideas in mind that Marx strongly attacked the notion "leftists" in his day were advancing that "all nationalities and even nations were 'antiquated prejudices.'" [108]

The nation and the national state are not to be dismissed as "bourgeois prejudices." They represent another one of the great achievements of the bourgeois world order, comparable only to the doctrine of individual freedom in its best sense. They are limited tragically, however, by two factors: (1) pseudo-nationalism, which places *my* nation above all others, and (2) the denial of nationhood to all peoples who, because of particular historical, economic, or other conditions, have been unable to create their own independent state. The first limitation leads to the distinction between nations as better or worse, as destined to rule or be ruled, the second to the distinction between nations and natives, natives being defined simply as people who have no independent state, and hence as people who are ruled and oppressed by others who do have one. Both of these tragic limitations or exaggerations of the idea of nationality are expressed in the confusion of nation and race, which is the confusion of a social-historical entity with

a biological-inheritable one. It should be clear already that a host of moral problems and judgments are implicit in the concept of the nation. One can say briefly in relation to these that the Marxist, rather than ignoring the nation and the resultant national question, takes it with unexampled seriousness.

But what is a nation? What does nationality consist in? It has been generally recognized that it has something to do with a community of language and culture. This conception is too vague, however, to be of scientific or precise application. Its indefiniteness, furthermore, makes much easier the confusion of nation with race, a confusion that is both scientifically unsound and socially tragic. A basically moral question lies behind every effort to define a nation, for it is never defined except for some use to which the concept is to be put, and this use always involves the idea of the "proper" or "best" relationships of peoples. Thus certain Americans with Anglophile tendencies, and with a desire for a super world empire, identify nation and language in order to justify a British-American world rule. White Americans who fear Negro economic and social equality deny the Negro a place in the American nation and at the same time refuse to grant him nationhood.

The only real and significant conclusion implied in any statement that a people constitute a nation is found in the principle of the right of self-determination. For, otherwise, the concept has no directive or functional value, and to classify people by nations is simply to recognize an existing social-historical fact. In the principle of self-determination lies the meaning of all national movements and of all anti-national prejudices. In simplest form, once the impeding and restricting elements of modern capitalist states and their inter-relations are removed, the national question is the ethical one: What justifies or entitles a people to the right of self-determination, which includes, of course, their right to form their own state or to throw in their lot with other nations to form a multi-national state?

It is clear at once that the basis of self-government or nationhood is not racial or tribal. Such modern nations as the American, English, French, Italian, or German are composed of many diverse peoples of different stocks or origins. Nor, on the other hand, does the state define the nation. For with the exception of the great modern national states, state boundaries have changed and shifted with changes in military

power, whereas national boundaries remain relatively stable. Furthermore, some of the national states established through the Versailles Treaty such as that of Austria were unsuited to separate existence because of economic interdependence with surrounding peoples and areas. It follows that whatever the criteria of a nation, of the right of self-determination, the nation does not necessarily correspond with the state, nor can and should every group that has the right of self-determination constitute itself an independent state.

But what, then, are the characteristics of a people that justify the claim to self-determination or nationhood? Stalin has defined these as follows: "A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture."[109] This does not imply the existence of fixed and permanent entities. "It goes without saying that a nation, like every other historical phenomenon, is subject to the law of change, has its history, its beginning and end."[110] Stalin's realism and scientific approach to this question is clearly expressed in his refutation of Otto Bauer's thesis: "A nation is the aggregate of people bound into a community of character by a community of fate," which leads Bauer to conclude that the Jews are a nation. Stalin answers:

> Bauer speaks of the Jews as a nation, although they "have no common language"; but what "community of fate" and national cohesion can there be, for instance, between the Georgian, Daghestanian, Russian, and American Jews, who are completely disunited, inhabit different territories, and speak different languages?
>
> These Jews undoubtedly lead the same economic and political life as the Georgians, Daghestanians, Russians and Americans respectively, and in the same cultural atmosphere as the latter; this cannot but leave a definite impress on their national character; if there is anything common to them left it is their religion, their common origin, and certain relics of national character. All this is beyond question. But how can it be seriously maintained that petrified religious rites and fading psychological relics affect the "fate" of these Jews more powerfully than the living social, economic, and cultural environment that surrounds them? And it is only on this assumption that it is generally possible to speak of the Jews as a single nation.

> What, then, distinguishes Bauer's nation from the mystical and self-contained "national spirit" of the spiritualists? [111]

The analysis just quoted illustrates clearly the thesis of Chapter IV of the present work—the unity of science and ethics. The answer to the ethical question concerning the basis of the right of self-determination of any people can be properly found only by careful scientific analysis of those groupings of peoples we call nations. And any failure here to be realistic and objective creates confusions of "rights" in the moral sphere. By far the worst of these confusions—one that instead of defining rights nullifies them and seeks to justify, not self-determination, but its opposite, subordination and oppression—arises from the identification of nation with race. This is at the same time a scientific and an ethical confusion and distortion: scientific, because no grounds can be found in biology, anthropology, or history for its groupings and divisions, and ethical, because it functions as an instrument of oppression and tyranny rather than as one of liberation and freedom.[112]

Few people realize how recent the biological concept of race is. Ancient peoples made distinctions between themselves and others, but they were either supernatural as was the distinction made by the ancient Hebrews, "Our God is better than your God," or cultural, as was that of the Greeks, which divided the world into "Greeks and barbarians." None was biological in the sense that the distinction was based on a conception of a biological or hereditary superior or inferior human species. There was not, for one reason, sufficient information, or even misinformation, to make such a distinction possible.

Competent authorities today seem to agree that the idea of race as we have known it since the advent of Hitler began in the nineteenth century as a political doctrine designed to combat both the working class, which was becoming increasingly self-conscious, and the movements for the abolition of slavery and against the subjection of colonial peoples. As Professor Ruth Benedict says, "Racism [the doctrine of racial inferior and superior peoples] was first formulated in conflicts between classes. It was directed by the aristocrats against the populace." [113] Although there were, of course, earlier efforts to distinguish social classes in terms of a presumed inferior and superior biological or racial inheritance, the classic formulation of the new racism was that of the Count de Gobineau, a French aristocrat who published his *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races* between 1853

and 1857. It was directed against the working class of both France and Germany and was a class doctrine strictly, not a nationalist one. He was defending the role of an aristocratic remnant in society against the rising proletariat. This racial cleavage, he believed, spreads through all nations and divides them into different classes. Professor Benedict observes that "Gobineau was neither pro-French nor pro-German.... He was pro-aristocracy. He hated patriotism, which he scorned as a Latin provincialism unworthy of his Elect."[114] Gobineau's work led to a vast accumulation of data designed to show that the workers, the unemployed, and all the economic underprivileged were in their inferior social position because of their innate characteristics, and conversely that the upper classes, the economically successful were so because of superior heredity, and that these two groups were composed of different races.

It is exceedingly significant that this class doctrine masquerading as science was transformed into the nationalist doctrine of the German Nazis. In other words, a theory justifying the rule by force of one class in a nation over another became transformed into a theory justifying the rule of one nation over another. The era of imperialism, involving the increasing monopolization of capital and industry and the intensification of the struggle for world markets, converted Gobineau's doctrine into one of biologically superior nations. Thus nationalism, which had arisen in the earlier stages of capitalism as a consolidating and progressive force, became divisive and reactionary. If the Jewish people became the special targets of persecution under this doctrine, it was partly due to the fact that they were the most widely distributed minority throughout the world with a common religious heritage. Thus they could be made a scapegoat for the ills suffered by every modern nation of the capitalist world, and at the same time their persecution would help both the German ruling class and the reactionary elements of the ruling classes in other countries. This serves to illustrate the fact that, in keeping with its origins, contemporary racism is both an ultra-nationalist and a class doctrine at the same time.

Finally, it must be kept clear that the concepts of race and of nation have nothing in common. A nation, "a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture," may be made up of

an intermingling of peoples with the widest differences of skin color, hair color and texture, eye and nose forms, head shapes, and so on, whereas biologically identical people may be completely distinct geographically and culturally and thus constitute different nations. In short, the very concept of race has little or no scientific justification and had better be eliminated from our thinking. The theory behind it is, first, that there are many distinct and different types of human beings, comparable to different species among animals, and that these types are due to the different stocks from which they have descended. Actually, the physical characters of the human species have assumed the form they have as a result of geographic segregation and inbreeding and the adaptive changes these factors have brought about. Second, the criteria on which the concept of race is based—such as color of skin, eye and nose forms, hair and eye color, hair texture, head shape, and the like—are largely insignificant with regard to the biological functioning of human organisms. With the exception of skin color, which is related to the ability to withstand the direct rays of the sun, these characteristics have neither any known physical or mental relation to the abilities of human beings to solve their life problems and to function effectively in society.

The whole idea of race is an example of a primitive conception of science as primarily classificatory, the idea that we know a thing when we have put it into the proper pigeonhole. And "race" seemed to provide an especially good set of pigeonholes for the classification of mankind, because its pigeonholes "stayed put" in virtue of the fact that its distinguishing characteristics were inheritable. Nevertheless, such a method fails to account for the long-range changes that have occurred and are occurring in the varieties of men. Furthermore, it distinguishes only among characteristics as biologically and socially insignificant as the different colors of sweet peas and is thus on a par with cataloguing books in a library by the color and shape of their bindings. The characteristics, for example, by which races have been defined are far less significant than are the individual and largely inheritable differences in the rate of heart-beat, in metabolism, in blood pressure, height, relative weight, relative development of the glands of internal secretion, and so on—differences that cut across all the so-called races.

The concept of different races of men is as scientifically worthless

as was the classification of animals in Plato's day into those that swim, fly, or walk on two legs or on four, which procedure culminated in the definition of man as a featherless biped. Today we know that whales, bats, and men are all mammals as distinguished genetically from the biologically different fish, reptiles, and birds. Finally, the characteristics whereby race has been defined and races distinguished are totally meaningless in terms of men's ability to live in society, pursue the various occupations, acquire, transmit, and develop culture, and engage in all the other activities that are essentially human.

Obviously the concept of race bears no relation to the right to self-determination of a people who have, through historical processes, been brought to occupy the same territory, who speak the same language, have definite economic relations and a common heritage of folk-lore, music and dance forms, habits of thought, and so on. This in no way means that every such people or nation will thrive best by having their own national state. Many considerations might lead them to unite with other nations—such as economic insufficiency or external enemies. But such a union must, if the ethical ideals of freedom from exploitation and oppression are to be realized, be both voluntary and on a basis of absolute equality. Lenin explained this in 1916:

> The right of nations to self-determination means only the right to independence in a political sense, the right to free, political secession from the oppressing nation. Concretely, this political, democratic demand implies complete freedom to carry on agitation in favor of secession, and freedom to settle the question of secession by means of a referendum of the nation that desires to secede. Consequently, this demand is by no means identical with the demand for secession, for partition, for the formation of small states. It is merely the logical expression of the struggle against national oppression in every form. The more closely the democratic system of state approximates to complete freedom of secession, the rarer and weaker will the striving for secession be in practice; for the advantages of large states, both from the point of view of economic progress and from the point of view of the interests of the masses, are beyond doubt, and these advantages increase with the growth of capitalism....
>
> The aim of socialism is not only to abolish the present divi-

> sion of mankind into small states and all national isolation; not only to bring the nations closer to each other, but also to merge them.[115]

It is an interesting historical paradox that in Eastern Europe, where capitalist development lagged behind that of Western Europe, and where instead of the development of nations into sovereign states, multi-national states were formed on the basis of the oppression of the smaller nations by the larger, there should have arisen, through the Russian Revolution, a new multi-national state based on the free and equal relations of its various national members and on the right of self-determination. This right was interpreted to mean "that only the nation itself has the right to determine its destiny, that no one has the right forcibly to interfere in the life of the nation, to destroy its schools and other institutions, to violate its habits and customs, to repress its language, or curtail its rights."[116]

This socialist doctrine does not mean that with the triumph of socialism all nations would at once be equal. There is a heritage of inequality to be overcome, as Stalin states in his report to the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party in 1921. But the existence of actual inequality among the member nations of the U.S.S.R. must be eradicated "by economic, political, and cultural assistance being rendered to the backward nationalities."[117] In short, instead of utilizing existing differences among nations as a justification for the exploitation of the more "backward" by the more "advanced," socialist ethics requires the giving of special and greater assistance to backward national groups in order that they may be raised to a higher level. This is in the interests of socialism itself, its stability and growth, for "the chain can be no stronger than its weakest link." Anyone can infer for himself what this moral ideal would mean with regard to nations or national groups throughout the world, including the Negro people in the United States. Numerous Marxists have shown that the Negroes in America are an oppressed national group.[118] Such a conception of the Negro people implies to the Marxist the existence of a special problem side by side with that of the interests of the whole working class, namely that Negroes are not only exploited as workers and farmers, but as a national group. This means that special efforts are required to secure their absolute economic, political, and social equality. Today this question of Negro rights and equality, however,

is not simply one of concern to the working class or to progressives generally, but to the whole American people. Nothing short of the fullest equality and special help to overcome the effects of centuries of abuse and discrimination can make the Negro people complete and effective participants in our war effort.

But how is this whole question of nations and their relationships connected with the general thesis of the present work: the thesis that the needs and interests of the working class provide the soundest foundation for moral judgments in the modern world? The answer is found in the basis of the Marxist view of the national question. This view is fundamentally that the proletariat can never liberate itself, can never attain its aims and needs, without destroying all oppression. In other words, without this position on the national question, the working class cannot ensure the maintenance of democracy and can never achieve its own ends of liberation from the yoke of capitalism. Such an approach is a far cry from typical bourgeois liberalism, which urges national liberation solely on humanitarian grounds, on grounds of abstract right. To the liberal the Marxist position involves the subordination of a moral ideal to limited class needs. On the contrary, however, the Marxist position involves both the rooting of moral ideals in concrete human needs and indicates the direction that must be taken if these moral goals are to be achieved. The Marxist does not subordinate ethics to something else, but, contrariwise, he finds ethical values in the concrete processes of history and society.

But, the question is asked, why maintain national groups and national cultures at all? Why not a world culture, one language, one historical tradition? These questions are raised by the doctrinaire who sees in nationalism only a limitation upon a world society, who sees it only in the form of the worst bourgeois national chauvinism. At the opposite pole are those who complain that a peaceful unified world order would be one of monotonous sameness, in which all variety, all color and contrast, would disappear. The theoretical foundation for the solution of this dilemma is found in the growing dialectical conception during the first decade of nineteenth-century Germany (related to the struggle for a unified German state) of unity in and through diversity, of a whole which *is* the interplay of its parts. The practical solution of the problem is contained in Stalin's slogan demanding a culture "national in form and socialist in content." This

is a conception of each people, each nation, freely developing its own distinctive culture and contributions in harmony with those of all others. It is not the ideal of one undifferentiated culture, but of the greatest richness through the utmost freedom of each group to develop its particular gifts derived from its diverse cultural heritages.

The aim of socialism, to repeat Lenin, is not only "to bring nations closer to each other, but also to merge them." But this merging is viewed not mechanically as the destruction of differences, but dialectically as their mutual stimulation and cross-fertilization.

It is with nations as with individuals. A healthy society depends not on individual uniformity and regimentation but on the fullest and freest development of each in the interests of all. A healthy world requires, not the extinguishing of certain national differences but their cultivation and widest interplay, creating a universal culture through each people's unique contributions. But the realization of this ideal requires a free world, the right of self-determination for all nations, the fullest economic equality through equal access to the world's resources, the mutual supplementation of the special abilities and contributions of each, and the guarantee of all peoples against aggression from without. These principles are developing through the process of the present world struggle of the United Nations against the Axis powers. The extent to which they will be fulfilled depends in large part on the co-operation of the capitalist countries with the Soviet Union and on the strength and clarity of the organized workers within the capitalist states. "Winning the peace" depends largely on the degree to which the victorious United Nations resolve upon and put into effect the principle of the equality and right of self-determination of all nations, of all peoples of the world.

VII. THE MEANING OF FREEDOM

Abraham Lincoln, in the midst of the Civil War, spoke of freedom as follows:

> The world has never had a good definition of the word liberty, and the American people, just now, are much in want of one. We all declare for liberty: but in using the same word we do not all mean the same thing. With some the word liberty may mean for each man to do as he pleases with himself and the product of his labor; while with others the same word may mean for some men to do as they please with other men and the product of other men's labor. Here are two, not only different, but incompatible things called by the same name, liberty. And it follows that each of the things is, by the respective parties, called by two different and incompatible names—liberty and tyranny.
>
> The shepherd drives the wolf from the sheep's throat, for which the sheep thanks the shepherd as his liberator, while the wolf denounces him for the same act, as the destroyer of liberty, especially as the sheep was a black one. Plainly, the sheep and the wolf are not agreed upon a definition of the word liberty; and precisely the same difference prevails today among us human creatures, even in the North, and all professing to love liberty. Hence we behold the process by which thousands are daily passing from under the yoke of bondage hailed by some as the advance of liberty and bewailed by others as the destruction of all liberty. Recently, it seems, the people...have been doing something to define liberty, and thanks to them that, in what they have done, the wolf's dictionary has been repudiated.[119]

In Lincoln's day the problem of liberty or freedom seemed simpler than it does now. Then it was primarily a question of overcoming one specific violation of human freedom, that involved in chattel slavery. Today the problem is tremendously more complicated both in fact

and in theory. Our world has other ways than chattel slavery whereby some men can do as they please with other men and the products of their labor. Fundamental to all of these are the relations of capitalist production which compel all those who are without their own land or tools to sell their labor power on the market to whoever wishes to purchase it for a profit. Built on this limitation of freedom are the more obvious and striking forms of the exploitation of subjugated colonial peoples, and the absolute enslavement of those under fascist tyranny. The last involves not only lack of economic liberty, and of any political, intellectual, or religious freedom, but utter brutality and degradation.

In a broad way these contemporary problems are covered by Lincoln's definitions of liberty and tyranny. His words represent a startling advance over the ideas of liberty of some of the early bourgeois leaders for whom it was nothing more than the right of a man to dispose of his property as he chooses. Lincoln substituted labor for property and a world of difference results. The idea takes on new meaning and a new concreteness.

It is significant that again when our country is involved in another war for national survival, the concept of freedom becomes enriched and enlarged. From a merely passive and abstract thing it is transformed into something vital, dynamic, and all-inclusive. President Roosevelt's doctrine of the Four Freedoms, adding as it does freedom from want and freedom from fear to the more traditional freedom of worship and of expression, represents new problems and a broader vision. Vice-President Henry Wallace's famous speech on *The Century of the Common Man* and the Office of War Information's pamphlet, *The United Nations Fight for the Four Freedoms,* develop further and give a rich and concrete filling to the President's doctrine. Again, as in Lincoln's time, this redefinition of freedom is a product of a very real need—that of rallying the great masses of people to the support of the war against the fascist powers. But its content is different and richer because of the vast and revolutionary changes that have taken place in technology on one hand and the developing interdependence of the world's economy on the other. As the Office of War Information's pamphlet admits:

> The proposal that want be abolished from this world would be pretentious, or even ridiculous, were it not for two important

recent discoveries.

One is the discovery that, beyond any doubt, men now possess the technical ability to produce in great abundance the necessities of daily life—enough for everyone. This is a revolutionary and unprecedented condition on earth, which stimulates the imagination and quickens the blood. Another is the discovery (or rather the realization) that the earth is one planet indivisible—that one man's hunger is every other man's hunger. We know now that the world must be looked at whole if men are to enjoy the fruits they are now able to produce, and if the inhabitants of the globe are to survive and prosper.

Freedom from want, everywhere in the world, is within the grasp of men. It has never been quite within their grasp before.[120]

That the term freedom needs constant redefining is both a tribute to its unlimited breadth of meaning and to its ubiquity among us. No word has been more dear to the modern heart or more often on modern lips. It is that, we hear, for which men have always fought or struggled, that for which men live and for which they die. Philosophers, poets, politicians, statesmen have sung its praises and promised its blessings. Often they were right, helping to express and to inspire ideals towards which masses of people were groping. Often, too, they were appealing to deep-rooted desires and aspirations in support of a cause not really desirable nor inspiring. The case of Finland in 1939 provided one of history's most striking examples. In the name of freedom a vast campaign was carried on by powerful forces to lead the common people of Europe and America to support the fascist-minded elements all over the world against the Soviet Union. Baron Karl Mannerheim, a fascist general-dictator, friend and ally of Hitler, was dressed up as a fighter for freedom. The significant thing about this whole disgraceful episode, and about all such deceiving stories, is that the *word* has such overwhelmingly powerful connotations for the modern masses that they can be counted on never to fight against it and always to fight for it.

But what does freedom mean? The term is commonly supposed to be obvious, clear, self-explanatory. There is a sense in which this is true, as will be shown later. But as generally used, it requires definition and clarification, and as Lincoln so eloquently showed, it means contradictory things to different persons in a class society. Lincoln,

with his ear to the ground, close to the working people of America, was able to give a concrete meaning to freedom, or liberty, but most writers who have used the term either do not define it or frame definitions so abstract and vague as to be meaningless or positively misleading.

The idea of freedom appears in every phase of our daily economic, political, and social life. The child claims his freedom to follow his own course regardless of his parents' desires. Parents claim their freedom to do as they will with their children, although in the modern world it is generally accepted that organized society rightfully does limit this freedom at many points. The worker claims his freedom to organize, to bargain collectively, or to strike. The employer insists upon his freedom to employ whom he will at whatever terms he will. Property owners maintain their freedom to do as they will with their property. The teacher defends academic freedom—the right to teach, write and act as his conscience and knowledge dictate. Anti-Semites have been known to insist upon their freedom to incite race hatred, while Southern Bourbons still descant upon their freedom to keep the Negro people "in their place," which includes for them the freedom of organized terror, discrimination, and lynching. Then there is freedom of the press, religious freedom, freedom of contract, and, most dear to the capitalist heart, freedom of enterprise. Colonial peoples and oppressed nations call for their freedom, and today the world is engaged in a titanic struggle for freedom as against fascist enslavement.

But what can a word mean that means so many things, that means contradictory things to different people and groups? The problem becomes further complicated when we remember that to many people freedom means essentially the doctrine of free-will, or that their wills are free to choose one thing or another indifferently, independent of all previous experience, surrounding circumstances, or of their total physical and mental make-up as it is constituted at any given time. Or, to the more sophisticated, it often means freedom from the coercion of anything material, the pure determination of actions and events by reason alone, the autonomy or freedom of ideas. Or there is the still more refined notion of freedom as existing solely in the realm of spirit, with its conclusion that we are free only in our thought and feeling, but that all actions (being events in the world of space and time) are un-free or determined by other events in the material world.

Then there is the extreme individualist conception of freedom as the absence of all restraint, as the freedom of anyone to do whatever any idea, whim, fancy or caprice dictates. Logically carried out, this, of course, is possible only in isolation and requires the forsaking of society altogether. But in a less extreme form it is the demand of the anarchist for whom any and all government is coercive and incompatible with freedom.

Of all these varied and often contradictory meanings given to the term freedom, the most dominant in our age, the one most invoked and most heralded, is that of freedom as synonymous with political democracy. The bourgeois-democratic system of government is the Alpha and the Omega of freedom, its beginning and final goal, we are taught in the schoolroom, by the daily papers and the radio, by the Sunday sermon, by the weekly and monthly magazine. Yet here, too, there are difficulties and contradictions, which reach a crux whenever conflict arises between the "free" acts of the representatives of the people and the "system of free enterprise" known as capitalism.

The 1941 Labor Day letter sent by the President of the National Association of Manufacturers to its members exhibits this conflict.[121] Are the people *free* to abolish the private ownership of the means of production through their democratic system of government? According to the National Association of Manufacturers, they are not, because that would destroy the freedom of the owners of industry, the possessors of capital. Alexander Hamilton and John Adams seem to have held the same view, for such action of the people would have been to them an instance of that "tyranny of the majority," which they called the worst form of despotism. But if so, it follows that our political democracy is not the be-all and end-all of freedom but is limited by a "higher" freedom, namely, that of private enterprise, that of private individuals to own and control the natural resources and productive forces of a country. Then we are faced, however, with the unpleasant predicament that those who have no productive property can have no freedom—and the overwhelming majority of us have no such property. It follows that the bourgeois state, however democratic its form, does not and cannot give freedom to the propertyless mass of its citizens. The common answer to this inference, of course, is that the labor of the propertyless is free, that they can freely dispose of their labor power on the open market. But this freedom is limited by the

conditions of the labor market, by the existence of a "reserve army of labor," by the ability of capital to profit from the utilization of this labor. The difficulty remains that political freedom is held to be subordinate to some more pervasive and more fundamental kind of freedom —the freedom of private enterprise.

Historically this idea of freedom was progressive and revolutionary. Like every concept of freedom it was not set forth as a mere statement of fact, of what is the case, but embodied, rather, a demand for a state of things that *ought* to be. It is this factor that gives to the idea of freedom its peculiar ethical value. Looking back over the different uses of the term given above, one can easily see that every assertion of freedom is a kind of declaration of independence, an assertion of *right.* It is an expression of a desire for what is believed to be a better state of things. As will be seen later, it is both means and end, both that which is desired as good and that without which this good cannot be attained. Thus it is that freedom appeared on the stage of modern history as a challenge and a promise, a demand for rights that were not willingly given and a promise of better things as the justification of this demand. Like all the great significant uses of freedom or liberty in history, this bourgeois use aimed at certain changes in existing class relations. But it appeared ideologically, not as a class concept but as a *human* concept, claiming to bring freedom equally to all men. When its leaders proclaimed that "men are born free," are "free by nature," they were asserting (1) that men are not in fact free, (2) that they ought to be free, and (3) that freedom must apply to all men equally.

The philosophers and historians who have for the past half century derided the concept of "natural rights" as ambiguous, historically false, and so on, have completely overlooked its revolutionary content, namely, the moral meaning and justification it gave to the bourgeois struggle for power. And it did mark a colossal step forward: the abolition of all ownership relations between persons, rule by law rather than by persons, equal rights of all before the law, the freedom of any individual regardless of his social background to engage in any enterprise on a free competitive basis with all others, habeas corpus, free speech, freedom of religion, and so on up to universal suffrage, free public education, and the freedoms from want and from fear of the Atlantic Charter.

These were truly great achievements. They had to be fought for in

wars and revolutions, in long struggles by gifted progressive leaders and intellectuals, in tireless efforts of masses of people. They are being fought for again on a world scale in a war that dwarfs every other struggle man has known. These freedoms are accepted, at least in theory, and practiced to a greater or lesser extent by all but fascists, whether native or Nazi, by all governments but those of the Axis powers. They constitute, negatively, the very definition of fascism as a monopoly capitalist rule which will sacrifice and destroy the whole content of bourgeois freedom in the interests of continued profits. Nevertheless, with all its historical achievements and contemporary value, this traditional bourgeois concept of freedom falls short of the mark. It contains internal contradictions and is both too narrow and too abstract.

The contradiction referred to is that mentioned earlier between free political institutions, equal rights, and so forth, and capitalist ownership of the machinery of production. One meaning of bourgeois freedom, in short, runs counter to another, and in the resultant clash one or the other must give way. Fascism and democracy represent the two opposed phases of this opposition. The first sacrifices the whole meaning of freedom to preserve capitalist enterprise, and thus represents the negation by the dominant economic powers of every achievement of modern capitalism except its technological progress. And it cannot maintain even this except through production for war and conquest. Democracy, on the contrary, implies that the people have the power, when they so desire, to negate "free" enterprise in the interest of *freeing* enterprise from the fetters of capitalist relations. They would do this in order to achieve the preservation and extension of all the concrete content the bourgeois conception of freedom possesses. But if this is the case, then the idea of freedom must be revised, its contradictions eliminated and its scope extended.

The concept of freedom must be raised to a new level. At the same time this new conception of freedom is not a mere creation of imagination. It arises logically out of the growing contradiction between the capitalist economic relations and the forces of production, which have outgrown these relations. This new conception of freedom is a product of the unsatisfied needs and desires of the masses of people for a decent standard of living, for economic and social security, for material and cultural advancement, against the modern background of almost un-

limited productive forces utilized for private profit rather than public use.

But is this a demand for freedom? Or is it the sacrifice of freedom in the interests of security and material goods, as many contemporary writers seek to maintain? Here is one of the knottiest and most crucial theoretical problems of our time. Is it true that people are willing to renounce freedom for security, to give up political democracy and freedom of speech for a guaranteed income and a "full belly"? Or, as it is sometimes put, are people willing to surrender the spiritual good of freedom for material goods—to deny their heritage for a mess of pottage?

The strange thing about this much advertised dilemma is that it does not exist. It is nowhere to be found in the modern world except in the minds of foreign experts and radio commentators who think that the masses of people in Germany and Italy actually chose fascism. Only a Dr. Faustus, caught in the meshes of extreme individualism, can think it a gain to sell his soul to the devil. The class-conscious worker knows better. He knows what the factories he works in could produce if production were their sole end. Labor-management committees for war production have further revealed what our industrial plant could do in peacetime if the only concern were with the maximum production for consumer needs and all production were planned for that purpose. The class-conscious worker knows that material progress, his own material betterment, can come only through *freeing* our total productive forces from the restraints the capitalist economy places on them. He knows that those who have been deluded by fascist propaganda to sacrifice freedom for security lost both freedom and security. He knows that he must cherish and safeguard every democratic right and that the only condition of surrendering any smaller freedom must be to gain a greater freedom. It is not freedom that is opposed to material goods and security, but the now outworn notion of freedom as private capitalist enterprise that is opposed to both.

What then is freedom? What can it mean if it is not simply democratic political institutions and private enterprise? Is there any yardstick of freedom by which every institution, every principle and practice can be measured? Marx and Engels, the co-founders of scientific socialism, believed there was such a standard, which is the same throughout history and yet measures every thing differently depending

upon time, place, and circumstances. It is at the same time a criterion of progress, that other sacred but poorly defined word of the bourgeoisie. For Marx and Engels history exhibited not only movement but direction, not merely changes but a rough though determinable pattern of change. Hegel had had such an idea, too, but to him the pattern or direction was determined mystically by the World-Spirit. True, Hegel was realistic enough to see that history was made by men, by human actions, but he never explained how, this being the case, the World-Spirit operated in giving history a direction. Somehow—and the only explanation the idealist Hegel could give is that Reason rules the world—somehow the strivings and struggles of men move history in the direction of ever greater freedom. Thus he had a conception of historical progress and found this progress in the extension of freedom, but unfortunately he never gave a sufficient economic or material meaning to freedom any more than he did to the cause of the progressive movement towards it.

Marx and Engels were the first to give a materialist interpretation of freedom, and they showed at the same time, through their study of history and economics and the dynamics of social change, why history moves in the direction of freedom. Thus their conception of freedom provides a yardstick of progress and a scientific basis for moral judgments concerning things and institutions. It was Engels who most explicitly set forth this conception of freedom and hence of progress. First, he wants to make clear that freedom does not consist in a free or undetermined will. It can be predicated significantly of men alone, but since men are, from the materialist viewpoint, natural phenomena, freedom must exist within that causal network of things and events in space and time and that we call Nature or the Universe. It therefore cannot be in opposition to the necessity with which an effect follows from a cause. Thus Engels writes:

> Hegel was the first to state correctly the relation between freedom and necessity. To him, freedom is the appreciation of necessity. "Necessity is blind only in so far as it is not understood."[122]

Idealists have interpreted this same doctrine at times to mean that we are free simply in virtue of our knowing why something happens just as it does and that it must happen in just that way. But this is

fatalistic and is far from what Engels means, as the rest of the passage indicates:

> Freedom does not consist in the dream of independence of natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends.... Freedom therefore consists in the control over ourselves and over external nature which is founded on knowledge of natural necessity; it is therefore necessarily a product of historical development.[123]

It is important to note at this point that Engels does not mean by "control over ourselves" merely the individual's self-control, but also the control by men collectively of the totality of their social, economic, and political relationships. This is certainly something men have had very little of, for few would be so bold as to claim that our institutions and relationships were entirely the product of rational human thought and planning. In so far, for example, as economic crises and wars occur quite contrary to our desires we do not have that *control* in which freedom consists. From this standpoint we are equally short of freedom if people go hungry because the science of agronomy and agricultural mechanization have not reached the point where we can produce all the food needed, or if sufficient food can be produced but people are unable to purchase it.

Engels goes on to show that "each step forward in civilization was a step towards freedom," and two of his examples are the discovery by early man of the production of fire by friction and the modern discovery of the steam engine. He might also have given the discovery of the written word, the invention of the printing press, or the American Revolution, except that he regards these as dependent upon developments in man's productive forces. And he believes that the modern harnessing of power to production, symbolized by the steam engine, represents forces "which alone make possible a state of society in which there are no longer class distinctions or anxiety over the means of subsistence for the individual, and in which for the first time there can be talk of real human freedom and of an existence in harmony with the established laws of Nature."[124]

In short, freedom consists not in free will, and not in the mere form of political institutions or in the mere growth of productive capacities. It consists in man's ability to control the conditions of his life, to

fulfill his needs and satisfy his aspirations. This is possible only if these needs and aspirations are rational, that is, in accordance with the laws of human beings and of nature at large, and only if man has the knowledge and power to fulfill them. Fundamental to this fulfillment is his mastery of the productive forces, which requires both adequate technology and such productive or economic relations as can utilize and develop these productive forces.

Capitalism for a time did both and hence marked a new step towards freedom. Now, particularly in its decadent form of fascism, it acts as a brake upon both, and hence retards progress and brings, not freedom, but slavery for great masses of people. For freedom has not been achieved on a world scale when there are wars of aggression. There is no freedom when men are unable to work because they own no tools to work with, when the farmer struggles with his plow, milks and feeds his cows, and yet cannot provide adequately for his family. We have not attained freedom when men want to work building houses, when men want houses to live in, and yet when neither group can fulfill their needs. There is no freedom when men want music and the theater and books, but when musicians, actors, writers can find no market for their accomplishments. And Engels means, further, that there is no freedom when men are segregated or deprived of opportunities because of race or color or economic class, or when men live in anxiety over the morrow and the hardships it may bring.

His is a totally new conception of freedom. It could come only when the productive forces had reached the point where the basic material needs of all men might be satisfied. And it could be developed only by men who identified themselves with the "have-nots" of modern society, with the workers, who produce all and who receive so little, with the unemployed, who are not even given the opportunity to work. But is freedom, then, a state in which all are satisfied? Does not that mean lethargy, stagnation, a merely satisfied animal existence? Is not man condemned by the nature of things to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow? Does he not become "soft" if life is too easy? Marx sought to answer these and other questions in a brilliant passage in *Capital.* It occurs in a section where he is treating of the whole capitalist period of history as concluding the "prehistoric stage in human society." Marx writes:

> In fact, the realm of freedom does not commence until the point is passed where labor under the compulsion of necessity and of external utility is required. In the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of material production in the strict meaning of the term. Just as the savage must wrestle with nature, in order to satisfy his wants, in order to maintain his life and reproduce it, so civilized man has to do it, and he must do it in all forms of society and under all possible modes of production.
>
> With his development the realm of natural necessity expands, because his wants increase; but at the same time the forces of production increase, by which these wants are satisfied. The freedom in this field cannot consist of anything else but of the fact that socialized man, the associated producers, regulate their interchange with nature rationally, bring it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by some blind power; that they accomplish their task with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most adequate to their human nature and most worthy of it. But it always remains a realm of necessity.
>
> Beyond it begins that development of human power, which is its own end, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can flourish only upon that realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working day is its fundamental premise.[125]

Marx here distinguishes two levels or realms of freedom. The first is bound to necessity, inasmuch as men must work to live whether they will or not; the materials necessary for life must be produced. But how they do this is another question. Do some labor inordinately, losing their humanity in their labor, while others live luxuriously, and often tediously, because the workers produce the goods for all? Is this necessary social production so organized as to produce the maximum of good things with the least possible labor from all? Does the productive system operate rationally so as to give all men at all times the best possible living standard that the current development of science and technology makes possible? Do men have to work so long or so hard and fast that there is nothing left for them in their "free" hours but to eat and sleep in order that they may again labor as before? And is the great bulk of our labor performed under conditions ade-

quate to and most worthy of human nature? The answers to these questions are obvious under capitalism, and the only possible conclusion is that men have not yet attained freedom even in this lower, economic sphere of human activity. Men are not yet free so long as they are subject to those features of nature and their society that compel the overwhelming majority to a hard life of unremitting toil.

But why make freedom consist in these things? Why not in things of the intellect, in equality before the law, in equal political privileges for all, in equality of opportunity? The Marxist answer follows from the whole standpoint of historical materialism. Before men can employ their intellects, stand before the law, exercise political privileges, they must eat, drink, be clothed and sheltered, and produce the means therefor. This productive activity constitutes the material basis of human life, and thus determines life's most primary, most fundamental, most influential and pervasive character. The curse pronounced upon Adam when he was driven from the Garden bears witness to early man's recognition of this. It is the modern intellectual who has most forgotten it, for he is less aware, because of the nature of capitalist economic relations, of the fact that only by other men's labor is he free to think. If there is no freedom in the basis, can there be any in the superstructure? Much truth though there is in the dictum that man is by nature a political animal, he is first of all by nature a laboring, a tool-using animal. If charity begins at home, freedom *begins* in the farm and the factory, in the mine, mill, and shop. Marx means, finally, that economic freedom is not something we can add on to political freedom, but is the precondition of all other freedoms, makes them possible and sets their measure. Bourgeois economic relations are freer in the senses given above than feudal and slave relations, and to just that extent has political freedom developed. Significant new developments in social and political freedom are possible just to the extent that economic freedom can be extended. One further thing is to be noted in Marx's interpretation of freedom. It provides a standard whereby any stage of human evolution can be measured. Men, in so far as they are distinguishable from the lower animals, possess some degree of freedom, no matter how primitive they are; and at the other end of the scale, so long as they remain men, progress is still possible—perfect freedom is never reached.

The second sphere of freedom Marx refers to is not separated from

the first. It is not something that begins at the close of the working day. On the contrary, it is rooted in the labor process itself. It is possible on a wide scale—that is, for other than a chosen few—only when the productive forces have reached such a development that all the necessities of life (which themselves increase) can be produced without overpowering and stultifying toil, and wearying hours for anyone. Utopians have often dreamed such a dream, but they either left it in the sky, or, confined by the limited productive forces of their day, could picture freedom as compatible only with universal frugality. Such a reformer as the American Quaker, John Woolman, for example, desiring a goal similar to that of Marx could not think of the indefinite expansion of the productive forces of mankind, but only of the limitation of human desires and needs to the barest minimum. Woolman saw that if all men labored, and none had superfluities, then three or four hours of daily toil would be all that was required from anyone, and that then men would be free to develop their distinctively human powers. But to Marx this would mean going backwards, or at best, economic stagnation, upon which artistic, intellectual, and social stagnation would follow. The goal is good, but it can be reached only by increased productivity—indeed, only by ever-increasing productivity. "The development of human powers as an end in itself!"—this is the socialist ideal, and it is part of the classic intellectual tradition of the Western world. Plato and Aristotle, Spinoza and Hegel, all shared this view of human good, and to a greater or less degree made it their definition of human freedom. The difference is that Marx, in his social-historical setting, was able to understand the preconditions of this ideal and to chart a path for its realization.

The content of this conception must be supplied by each generation for itself. This is so for the simple reason that human nature is subject to infinite change and development. We do not know what human powers or capacities or potentialities are until they have to some degree come forth. But what powers men exhibit at any given time is a function of previous history and the existing conditions of life. Marx, it is significant, avoids the narrow stress on purely intellectual powers that characterized the classic philosophers. It is reasonable to believe that he would include the whole gamut of peaceful human pursuits—all those distinctively human activities that men can engage in without harm to their fellows—from the arts to the sciences, from sports to

travel. To be sure, in claiming for all men the pastimes, hobbies, and more important pursuits of a privileged few, Marx doubtless envisages a transformation of these activities corresponding to the transformation that would take place in the masses of men for whom these activities were for the first time possible.

Interestingly an American philosopher, theologian, and college president, James Marsh, of the University of Vermont, had a similar social ideal before Marx. That he believed it possible of realization under capitalism is not here important. The significant thing about Marsh's vision is that, like Marx's, it has a firm material basis in the ever greater development of the productive forces. Marsh believed, for example, that universal education in America would, by raising the technical efficiency of all workers and farmers, lead to continual inventions and discoveries that would increase labor productivity, and hence bring greater material well-being and shorter hours of labor, which would in turn accelerate man's mastery of productive forces and bring the possibility of a life of wholesome recreation and creative activity to all men.[126]

This, then, is freedom, and Marx makes its basic premise the shortening of the working day. But shortening the working day is both means and end. On the one hand, freedom from necessary labor over a wider portion of the day *is* freedom; on the other, it is a necessary condition for an effective struggle for freedom, as worker and capitalist alike have understood. And, finally, the struggle itself for shorter hours of labor has been and remains to the present day the hub of the whole working-class effort for better conditions and socialism. This beautifully illustrates the Marxist conception of the unity of means and end, which will be discussed at length for its general theoretical significance and for the light it throws upon such questions as the relation of political democracy to economic freedom or that of the dictatorship of the proletariat to a classless society.

Meanwhile one cannot but notice that a basic assumption in Marx's conception is that of the dignity and worth of the human personality, for the whole conception consists in the possibility of each individual's freely developing his own potentialities. The significant thing is that Marx, unlike so many bourgeois ideologists, does not set forth this development as an abstract theoretical absolute, but in taking the standpoint of the working class, of the oppressed element in our society,

he is calling for the abolition of all that stands in the way of the fulfillment of this conception. The difference is between those who use this principle to justify the existing order by some verbal magic and those who would carry it out to its logical conclusions in a socialist world order. For a radical note is inherent in this principle, and Immanuel Kant, who gave it its most important development, expressed the worth of the human personality in the demand that "man must be used as an end only, never as a means." This, too, is part of what Stalin meant when he said, "It is time to realize that of all the valuable capital the world possesses, the most valuable and most decisive is people, cadres." [127]

The 1941 Conference on Science, Philosophy, and Religion in Their Relation to the Democratic Way of Life, held at Columbia University, expressed as the *common factor in its viewpoints* insistence on "the dignity and worth of the human personality." "World reconstruction," the Conference report said, "must take this principle as its basic postulate. Any theoretical derogation from the respect due to the human personality, like any political or economic use of one person as a tool in the hands of others, tends to break down the whole structure of civilized life, and is in itself a negation of one of the most significant aspects of human culture and civilization."

This is a most noteworthy and commendable statement of principle. Extended not only to single individuals but to groups, classes, and nations, it coincides with the morality of socialism. Although its framers may not have thought so, it is certainly incompatible with capitalism which consists essentially in "the economic use of one person as a tool in the hands of others," or, expressed somewhat more accurately, "the economic use of many persons as tools in the hands of a few."

It is not too much to say that the Marxist conception of freedom, as expressed in the two quotations from Marx and Engels, includes every great ethical ideal of the past, in so far as it was this-worldly and not other-worldly. And still it differs from every preceding statement of man's goal by basing itself solidly on man's mastery of nature, of the material conditions of his life. In other words, it was the first conception to bring all economic relations and all economic activity into the sphere of ethics. It is finally differentiated from all previous systems by its scientific analysis of how this freedom is to be attained. There is a goal of men, an end towards which, whether blindly or in

full consciousness, they strive. This goal is called freedom, but Marxism gives to the concept a new meaning—it is now the name for the totality of human goods, satisfactions, and aspirations—fundamental to which is the mastery and rational control of the processes of the production of the material conditions of human life.

Thus freedom becomes, not one ethical concept among others, not something just good in a limited way for itself or for some other end, as free speech or free political institutions are so often held to be, but the condition and pattern of all goods. It embraces every ideal from that of the "abundant life" to security, from rationality and justice in all human relations to the highest development of man's creative powers. And, finally, it is never an end only or a means only. It is the unity of means and end because it is not a state of being, a utopian's static attainment of blessedness, but the dynamic process of achieving human goods. Only when freedom becomes process does it lose the abstractness that it has in bourgeois thought, which so easily converts it into an empty sound or even into a dangerous shibboleth. And then only can we solve the problem that is the bugbear of contemporary liberals—the problem of the relation between economic and political freedom—or that other confused problem of the relation between culture and economic well-being.

We are now in a position to formulate a workable definition of progress—one that provides an unlimited goal and at the same time an ever-applicable measure. It is not, in the long run, incompatible with the Utilitarian standard, "the greatest good of the greatest number," but its difference in concreteness and scientific determinability is striking. The Marxist, too, believes in the greatest good of the greatest number, but he asks: How is this good defined? and how are greater and lesser goods of a greater or smaller number of persons evaluated? May not, for example (supposing we knew what the good was), a greater good for a few offset a lesser good for many? The principle was satisfactory for well-wishing liberals, but useless in aiding the actual judging of social changes. Finally, ignoring the class structure of society, in the one place where it might have proved serviceable—in the evaluation of specific legislative enactments—there was no acceptable scientific basis for determining what the greatest good of the greatest number consisted in. When the president of a great metropolitan university can denounce labor for its laziness in not wanting to

work as many hours as it used to, and can declare that it does not know its own good, then it is obvious that such a principle is valueless in practice and befogging in theory.

Then there are a host of spiritualist theories that, although they may stress certain important features of humanity's progression, fall short in concreteness and completeness. Further, since under capitalism there have been certain notable setbacks to such goals, disillusionment sets in, and writers cry that there is no progress, or hold it to be purely cyclical with an invariable return to barbarity after every ascent upwards. One of these spiritualist goals is the growth of religious sentiment—something impossible to define or determine. Another is the rise of the sacredness of the individual personality. This was analyzed earlier, and it is sufficient to say here that its value is lost by the persistent contemporary attempt to assume that the modern parliamentary capitalist state has completely realized it and therefore that progress, like the history of England in a famous parody, has come to a full stop. Again, almost every word written today about the individual in capitalist society is turned into a justification of the private ownership of the means of production, although it can be shown that this is the greatest present hindrance to individual freedom for the masses of men.

There is also the *aesthetic* theory, which would identify progress with artistic activity and appreciation. But this, too, has fallen upon evil days, which have often distorted and perverted the element of truth it contained. Taking a symptom for a cause, it would make life serve art rather than art enrich life. It became the ideal of a clique, especially in the second decade of this century, lost all contact with contemporary movements in the arts, especially those coming from the people themselves, despised the radio and the popularization of the classics, and ended in an aesthetic Catholicism and a general nostalgia for the glories of the past.

The above theory of progress was in part a revolt against a crude materialist theory, associated commonly with the name of George F. Babbitt, which took American technological progress, along with many of the vulgarities of the new generation of businessmen as the essence of progress and civilization. Not so prominent now as in the years immediately preceding the crash of 1929, this vulgar materialism has engendered its revolt in the form of appeals to asceticism, in warnings

against "softness," and even in the denial of any material standards of progress. But the crassness of a particular stage of capitalist expansion is not to be confused with the vast increases in human productivity, with man's mastery of his material environment that capitalism achieved and that socialism has been carrying forward in the Soviet Union.

The moral is that there can be no meaningful theory of human progress that denies or ignores the material basis of human life and the development of productivity, and none that attempts to define progress in terms of the particular economic relations of capitalism. The former tends always towards obscurantism and reaction, making the Yogi or the Anchorite sitting for twenty years atop a column the essence of human perfection. The latter, defining progress in terms of capitalism, is not only materially wrong because analysis reveals that capitalist economic relations have come into conflict with the further development of the productive forces, or, in other words, because the profit motive impedes the expansion of the market necessary to the fuller utilization and development of the productive forces. It is wrong also because it inevitably tends—as the rise of fascism in Italy, Germany, France and other countries proves—to forsake its material basis and to take refuge in such concepts as race superiority, the sacredness of the soil, and similar unscientific and reactionary slogans.

Marx and Engels developed a theory of progress that is actually in accord with history, that gives full due to the material factors, and that yet does not stop short with the mere accumulation of material goods. *Progress is the growth of freedom,* and therefore consists in the increasingly rational control of the material environment and all the conditions of human life. This control, as seen above, involves at least three distinguishable factors: (1) the growth of industry and technology, or, in other words, of productivity; (2) man's collective mastery of his economic relations and the total conditions of production and distribution; (3) man's ability, through such mastery, to develop his distinctively human qualities. These can be integrated and summed up in the concept of progress as the continuous movement from necessity to freedom. By these criteria there has obviously been progress, and just as obviously neither capitalism nor socialism can be regarded as the be-all and end-all of progress.

Socialism, according to Marx and Engels, still contains too many

features of previous types of society to be possibly regarded as the last word in human social organization. Its slogan, "From each according to his abilities and to each according to his contribution," its wages system, and the concomitant employment of the economic motive seem to the Marxist still too limited and restricted. But the social ownership of the means of production represents, nevertheless, that organization of society without which further progress is impossible. For socialism, by its nature, so increases the productive capacities of socialized man as to make the further development materially possible by providing an economy of overwhelming abundance, and through its form of organization creates both the motive and the practicality of the transition to a higher stage of society. Fundamental to the Marxist conception of the communist organization of society is the production of goods in such quantity and by such relatively little labor on the part of all—every man being skilled technically and thus the division between manual and mental labor removed as well as that between urban and rural labor—that individual men and women will naturally through their understanding of themselves and society perform the labor they are best fitted for. And, as a result, each will be able to receive from society, or the total wealth of social production, all the things necessary to satisfy his rational needs.

Let those who think this a mere dream reread Thomas More's *Utopia* and re-examine the social motives for work and even fighting and dying to protect social progress now observable in the Soviet Union. The trouble with More's utopian society was that the time was yet so unripe for it, in terms of the forces necessary to achieve it, that it could only remain a vision of what society *ought* to be but was not, and could not be. But the four intervening centuries have brought about such a development of productive capacities and the creation of such a force in the working class, with all its farmer, colonial, and intellectual allies, as to make this transition both possible and necessary. Further, it is most important to note that Marx and Engels do not attempt, as More did, to draw up blueprints for such a society. They only present communism as the inevitable consequence of a socialist order and as the precondition for the further development of man's mastery over himself and external nature. In short, it is both freedom and the possibility for the further attainment of freedom. It is a stage in the illimitable movement of human progress. It is an

ethical goal rooted deep in the nature of man and his changing relations to his fellows and the world in which he lives.

The Marxist believes that this goal, in the form not of an end but a process, is scientifically realizable, and that it is made inevitable by the forces of human life and history as manifested in the contemporary world. Further, he believes it represents the highest ethical ideal—that alone in terms of which all conduct can be judged, and all laws, institutions, and social forms evaluated.

Here an important place must be assigned to the great prophets and moral leaders of the past. Moses and Jesus, Confucius and Aristotle, Epicurus and Spinoza, Thomas Aquinas and Thomas More, all teach a rational life for man, the control of his passions in the interest of peace and harmony, the ordering of society by something better than "dog-eat-dog," the fulfillment of the unlimited human capacities for knowledge, enjoyment, and creation. They were all, naturally, limited by their place and time, and it is necessary to note these temporal and social limitations. But they also wanted something better, and more or less clearly held out a vision of a rational order of society. Marxism has sometimes been accused of possessing just this moral bias, but too often its accusers thought of morality as confined to the Judaic-Christian tradition or to the theorizing of idealist philosophers. But Marxism regards this great tradition, like others of East and West and like the great rebels themselves against this tradition, as products of human life itself, as creations of man reflecting more or less truly the desire and need of the masses of mankind for security, peace, and all the material and cultural goods of life. Too often ethics has been thought of as the mere conception of the good individual, as a formula or prescription of virtue. But the greatest moral teachers have recognized that it has to do equally with the good society. Marxism stresses that the rational organization of society is the precondition for the production of truly good individuals, and that virtue is empty unless it can command sufficient force to insure its own dominance.

If progress is the movement towards freedom and freedom itself is a process without limits, is there, then, any absolute standard, and are we not left in the purely relative? In other words, how can anything be measured or evaluated by a standard which itself has no absolute limits but is always relative? The answer is to be found in the conception, referred to earlier, of freedom as a process. From this it

follows that freedom is both means and end, both that by which something good is attained and the attained good itself. In fact, these are two sides of one and the same process, for that which brings men more freedom is itself freedom, while that which it brings is simply more freedom, *ad infinitum*. For example, the taking up of arms by the American colonists against Britain was an act of freedom, at the same time that it led to the Declaration of Independence—a further development of this freedom—and this in turn made possible, through the success of American arms, the establishment and consolidation of the new independent republic, which meant a new level of freedom. Or, again, the strike of Ford workers of 1941 signified a new stage of freedom of these workers, and this in turn led to the union victory, which raised this freedom to a new level through the settlement contract, while this in turn brought increased freedom in the form of better working conditions and pay, as well as in the heightened consciousness on the part of the workers of their power through organizational solidarity. Today it is strikingly evident that the war against international fascism is not only a struggle to maintain freedom on the part of those people who have it but requires for its successful prosecution a constantly increasing freedom for all those peoples engaged in the struggle.

The curse of nearly all traditional ethics has lain in the separation of means and ends, as if they bear no organic relation to each other. Certain things have been regarded as good or bad in terms of themselves, as fulfillments or achievements, while other things have been judged good or bad as means to these ends. As a result, different standards have come to be applied to what are really two phases of a continuous process. This is represented in the controversial question: Does the means justify the end? Actually the very phrasing of the question implies that not only are means and ends separated but that different standards are applied in judging them.

People who think in these terms ask whether the Quakers connected with the Underground Railroad for the escape from slavery of American Negroes were justified or right in lying to protect the slaves in their care and to protect the system whereby their escape to the North and Canada was made possible. They did lie and they did it consciously and systematically when required by the government power of the slaveowners. The real question was: Did the struggle against

slavery mean an increase in human freedom? If it did, then the answer logically follows that the struggle itself represented the growth of freedom and was not to be judged by abstract and absolute concepts of right and wrong, however important they may be generally as necessary to freedom, but which here would have involved the denial of freedom against the consolidated power of the slaveowners. This principle was clearly expressed by William Lloyd Garrison when he wrote:

> Cost what it may, every slave on the American soil must be liberated from his chains. Nothing is to be put in competition, on the score of value, with the price of his liberty; for whatever conflicts with the rights of man must be evil, and therefore intrinsically worthless.[128]

Similar analysis must be applied to every human activity in the direction of freedom, a few examples of which are the slave revolts of ancient Rome, the Cromwellian revolution, the American, French, and Russian revolutions, John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, the great strikes of the modern labor movement, the Protestant Reformation, or the Soviet trials and execution of traitors, spies, and saboteurs. This does not imply that it is easy to determine in every given case in what direction freedom lies and how it is best attained. It does mean that means and end cannot be abstractly separated and judged by different and even conflicting standards.

Great things are not easily attained and men must be continually aware of the danger of judging forces, movements, institutions, and acts in terms of their own smug comforts or loyalties, clothed in high-sounding moral phrases, rather than in terms of the highest moral good, freedom. This is the error of such contemporaries as John Dewey and Aldous Huxley, who oppose the only genuine movement towards socialism today on the ground that the means determine the end, and since the necessary means are not satisfactory to them, they remain content with the capitalist world with its poverty, unemployment, and aggressive wars. They ignore, for one thing, that the means necessary for the attainment of socialism are determined far less by the nature of socialism than they are by the nature of capitalism. And this is equally true of every great progressive movement. It is not the *new,* not *that which is yet to be,* that determines the means to be employed, so much as the *old, that which is.* It was not freedom from chattel

slavery that determined the *means* the Abolitionists employed, but the nature of the slave-owning power, as Thoreau saw when he wrote that opponents of resistance to the slave power think that the remedy would be worse than the evil. "But," he replied, "it is the fault of the government itself that the remedy *is* worse than the evil. *It* makes it worse."[129] Similarly, it is the nature of capitalism and not the nature of socialism that determines the means required for its attainment.

Behind this whole means-end controversy stands the great but pathetic Immanuel Kant, whose categorical imperative becomes: "I will be good, no matter the cost to others," and which today degenerates into: "I sincerely believe in a better world but I cannot condone the means used to attain it." It should be plain that this is equivalent to saying that there are two different sources or foundations of the good, one of the good as a means and the other as an end. This does not mean that socialists repudiate the basic moral principles of the human race. They affirm them and follow them. They seek a society in which the great moral principles of the ages may effectively operate, but they refuse to accept any ethical system that places general principles such as "Thou shalt not steal," "Thou shalt not kill," above the welfare of human beings living in society. The Soviets, for example, in collectivizing agriculture, had to sacrifice a good deal, and many people suffered great privations as a result of the tremendous movement for collectivization. This was sad and tragic, but it is little to pay for the prize of no more famines, no more hunger for nearly two hundred millions of people; it is little to pay for the acknowledged solution of one of the modern world's most horrible problems and evils—famine amidst potential plenty. And what in fact was the alternative? The whole future of civilization will acknowledge its debt to the Soviet collectivization program which both enabled the U.S.S.R. to produce agricultural products more abundantly for its civilian and military needs and made possible the "scorched earth" policy and the vast guerrilla warfare against the Nazi invaders. What the Dewey school of moralists teaches is equivalent to saying: "Collectivization of agriculture would be a wonderful thing, providing all with abundance of foodstuffs, eliminating poverty from the countryside, raising immeasurably the cultural level of the farmers. But—the wealthy peasants will resist; they will sabotage; force may have to be used; therefore, we must forego the good of collectivization." And they say pre-

cisely this about any movement towards socialism, simply because they apply one set of standards to the ends desired, and another to the means necessary to attain them. Such, too, is the vicious dilemma of those who at least profess to desire a democratic victory over fascism and the maintenance of a free America but who do not wish it so long as the Soviet Union is an ally. Rather defeat, is their slogan, than victory by such means!

This analysis brings us to such questions as those of bourgeois democracy as opposed to proletarian democracy, economic freedom in Herbert Hoover's sense of individual ownership of the means of production versus regulation of all economic relations by the people's power. Or again, similar moral issues are involved if it is a question of individual power at whatever social level versus completely collective decisions, or if it is the question of free speech for fascists in a democracy or free advocacy of capitalism in a socialist society. Under what circumstances, on what moral grounds, may complete democratic rights of individuals or groups be denied or curtailed? Is the democratic process so sacred that it must always be maintained, even under conditions that are certain to bring its downfall? Is it such a thing, as some contemporaries insist, as can never survive the slightest limitation, and hence is "damned if it does, and damned if it doesn't" resist its enemies?

These are certainly some of the most perplexing and debated questions of our time. Most of the difficulties, however, arise from the same confusion over means and ends analyzed above. Has political democracy contributed to human freedom in the sense defined? Immeasurably! Is it an end in itself? Clearly not, if freedom as the dynamic process of realizing human good is the only end in itself. But this does not mean that it is a mere means. It is good in so far as it advances freedom, which it always does unless it is paralyzed by formalisms and abstractions which serve not the interests of the people but those of a dominant minority.

Political democracy must here be distinguished as a living reality, as the instrumentality for the expression and execution of the people's needs and interests, from the fetishism of mere forms which may or may not serve this end. In short, there are both the substance of democracy and its forms, and the latter must necessarily change with changing conditions if the former is to be maintained. Democratic

processes are in general a feature of increasing freedom, and their sole test is the extent to which they function in giving freedom. They are not a mere means to something else, for they are a feature of the good or end itself.

On the other hand, they are not the whole good but, in the long run, an inseparable feature of any good society. There is great danger inherent in making political democracy either an end or a means alone, for insoluble problems arise from either. There could have been democracy in Spain today, and possibly no world war taking place, had the working class parties of Spain and the leaders of the Republic been more concerned with the extension of the substance of democracy than with some of its traditional forms, and had thus cleaned out from all economic, political, and military control the hostile elements of the land-owning and aristocratic classes. Of course, there would have been a terrific outcry that this is not democracy but dictatorship, but a few million lives might have been saved, and democracy might have been secure in the world today.

Economic freedom must be examined similarly in terms of its actual content at any given time, in terms of its function and the direction in which it is moving. In the sense of each person doing as he pleases economically, it was once a tremendous progressive force. Today under capitalism not only is it a misnomer, for a small group of finance capitalists dominate the scene, but appeals to it are reactionary. In the construction of a socialist economy there is new economic freedom, in a higher sense, of a people, led by the organized workers, freeing their economy from the fetters of capitalist control and making it amenable to the needs and rational requirements of the whole society. And this in turn gives way to economic freedom in the still higher sense of an economy actually functioning freely and consciously for the highest good of all. At each level, economic freedom has specific meanings in terms of what the freedom is free *of* and what it is free *for,* and only dismal confusion arises from the failure to make such distinctions.

Finally, it follows from this dynamic conception of freedom that it can never be diminished by any measures that increase the people's power and enable them the better to control the political, economic, and cultural features of their life. Thus the rule of the majority of people, following the lead of the organized workers, having for its

aim the socialist reconstruction of society is no more a step backward in the way of freedom than was the American disfranchisement of slave-owners and of those who bore arms against the government during the reconstruction period following the Civil War. On the contrary, the latter action was an attempt, partly abortive because of the conflicts of interests on the Northern side, to bring about a democratic reconstruction of the South. Exactly the same was true during the period of the American Revolution, when tories had their property confiscated and were deprived of all political rights. The point is that such transition periods are not steps backward from freedom simply because they restrict certain rights and put obstacles in the way of certain groups, but are great steps forward, representing new, though temporary, forms of the people's growing freedom. This position is in no way to be confused with the "success" or "workability" criteria of American pragmatism, for the simple reason that pragmatism has forsaken and denied any long-range conception of freedom or good by which success or failure may be judged.

Lincoln's observations on liberty are as significant today as when they were first uttered. There can be no agreement on what liberty is so long as society is divided into different classes with conflicting interests. The opposed conceptions of freedom arise out of this very conflict of interests, Lincoln shrewdly observed, and the people once again will repudiate the definition in the wolf's dictionary. Driven partly by necessity that is blind, and increasingly by the necessity that is the product of understanding, men will strive for a better life, for a more rational society, for economic equality and hence for the social ownership of the means of production. This is the struggle for freedom, under the conditions of our day and age. And this struggle itself is moral or right because freedom is the highest good and that alone by which all acts and institutions can be judged.

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INDEX

Absolutes, Moral, 37-46, 163.
Adams, John, 141*f.*
Altruism, 108.
Anarchism, 129, 166.
Aquinas, Thomas, 54.
Aristippus, 81*f.*
Aristotle, 9, 65, 86, 139*f.*
Atlantic Charter, 7, 28*f.*, 175.

Babson, Roger, 49, 121.
Bauer, Otto, 180*f.*
Bax, Belfort, 85, 87, 140.
Benedict, Ruth, 181*f.*
Bentham, Jeremy, 85, 108.
Brockmeyer, Henry, ed. *Journal of Speculative Philosophy,* 133.
Brown, John, 40, 105.

Calvinism, 56, 60.
Campanella, T., 147.
Capitalist crises, 20*f.*
Categorical imperative, 75*ff.*
Cathrein, Victor, 147-52.
Charity, 42.
Chivalry, 53.
Class consciousness, 96*f.*, 141*f.*
Clemenceau, G., 30.
Cohen, Herman, 76.
Cohen, Morris Raphael, 101.
Columbia University, Conference on Science, Philosophy, Religion, 203.
Communism, principle of, 99.
Contract, freedom of, 55*f.*
Culture, 117.

Darwin, Charles, 90, 108.
Darwinism, ethical perversion of, 111.
Democracy, capitalist limitations of, 192; freedom and, 212-14; various judgments of, 64*f.*; versus fascism, 70.
Descartes, R., 124.
Dewey, John, 104*f.*, 122, 210, 211.
Dostoyevsky, F., 128.
Dunham, J. H., 32.
Duns Scotus, 72.
du Pont, Lammot, 42*f.*
Duranty, Walter, 144.
Dwight, Timothy, 152.

Edwards, Jonathan, 125, 126.
Egotism, 108, 126, 128*f.*
Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 129*f.*
Engels, Frederick, absolute justice, 44-46; approach to ethics, 66-70; evolution of family, 153-56; freedom, 196*f.*, 206*f.*; the state, 165*f.*
Epicurus, 82*f.*
Erasmus, 171.
Eternal moral principles, 10-12; *see also* Absolutes, Moral.

Fascism, 7, 124; versus democracy, 70, 194; destruction of individual rights, 137*f.*
Feudalism, 52-57.
Fichte, J. G., 172*f.*
Flaubert, G., 117.
Fosdick, H. E., 72.
Four Freedoms, 7, 189.
Franklin, Benjamin, 9, 60*f.*, 117.

Garrison, William Lloyd, 210.
Gassendi, P., 124.

Gobineau, Count de, 181*f.*
Gourmont, Remy de, 125.
Grotius, Hugo, 161, 171.

Hamilton, Alexander, 65, 165.
Harris, W. T., 133*f.*
Hedonism, 81*ff.*
Hegel, G. W. F., 131-36, 164, 196.
Helvetius, 64, 83-86, 108.
Hillquit, Morris, 96*f.*
Hitlerism, 31, 169.
Hobbes, Thomas, 89, 107, 109*f.*, 130*f.*, 134, 161*f.*
Holbach, Baron d', 85.
Holmes, S. J., 90*f.*
Hoover, Herbert, 212.
Huxley, Aldous, 210.

Idealist ethics, 74-79.
Individual, The, 136*f.*, 143, 202*f.*
Individualism, 124-32, 137*f.*, 142.

James, William, 87.
Jews, 27, 176, 180*ff.*
Justice, Eternal, 44*ff.*

Kant, Immanuel, 60, 65*f.*, 74-77, 136, 171*f.*, 203, 211.
Kautsky, Karl, 76, 108.
Kierkegaard, S., 132.
Kropotkin, P., 65*f.*, 108.

Law and ethics, 39, 44*f.*
League of Nations, 22, 163.
Lenin, V. I., 24, 97*f.*, 156*ff.*, 184*f.*, 187.
Leys, W. A. R., 32.
Lincoln, Abraham, 43*f.*, 188-91, 214.
Litvinov, Maxim, 30, 172.
Lloyd George, David, 30.
Lubin, Isadore (T.N.E.C.), 118*ff.*
Luther, Martin, 59.
Lynd, R. & H., 48.

Machiavelli, N., 88*f.*, 128, 176.
MacIver, R. M., 68.
Madison, James, 165.
Marsh, James, 202.
Marx, Karl, a fair day's work, 10; approach to ethics, 66-70; avoidance of moral categories, 46; class basis of moral judgments, 47; French materialist ethics, 84*f.*; freedom, 195-202; individuality and capital, 132; moral judgments, 11*f.*, self-knowledge, 124; theory of progress, 206*ff.*
Marxism, conception of freedom, 203*f.*; means and ends, 202*f.*; scientific ethical standards, 115*ff.*; *see also* Marx, Karl; Engels, Frederick.
Materialism, historical, 105*f.*, 114*f.*
Means and ends, 204, 209-14.
"Might makes right," 87-91.
Mill, John Stuart, 85.
Montagu, M. F. Ashley, 218.
Montaigne, F., 73.
More, Thomas, 14*f.*, 23, 113, 166, 207.
Moses, 38.
Muenzer, Thomas, 15, 113.
Murry, J. M., 41.
Myers, P. V. M., 68.

Nat'l Ass'n of Manufacturers, 192.
National Socialism, 162; *see also* Hitlerism, Fascism.
Needs and desires, 120*f.*
Negroes, 27, 179, 185*f.*
New York Times, 49*f.*, 79*f.*
Nietzsche, Frederick, 128*f.*
Nihilism, moral, 89.

Office of War Information, 189.
Organic theory of society, 133-37.
Otis, James, 58.

Pacifism, 171.
Paine, Thomas, 164.
Patriotism, 145, 168*ff.*
Peace, 171-75.
Penn, William, 60.

Phillips, Wendell, 34, 130.
Plato, 65, 71*f.*, 74.
Pragmatism, 122; *see also* Dewey, John; James, William.
Progress, 105*f.*, 196, 204-09.
Protestantism, 56, 59.
Pyrrho, 50.

Quakers, 59, 209.

Racism, 181-84.
Richter, Curt, 120.
Roberts, W. H., 32.
Rochester, Anna, 103.
Roosevelt, Franklin D., 7, 189.

St. Louis Hegelians, 133*ff.*
Scepticism, moral, 50.
Schleiermacher, F. E. D., 127.
Self-interest, ethics of, 83-86, 139*ff.*
Selfishness and unselfishness, 138-41.
Sexes, equality of, 148*ff.*
Shakespeare, William, 59.
Sheen, Mgr. Fulton J., 121.
Smith, Adam, 137.
Socrates, 71.
Sorel, Georges, 103.
Spencer, Herbert, 90, 107, 111*f.*
Spinoza, Benedict, 38, 73, 122, 159*f.*, 176.
Spiritualist ethics, 71-73, 78*f.*, 205.
Stalin, Joseph; socialism and the individual, 143, 203; the nation, 177-81, 185; the state, 166*f.*
Steffens, Lincoln, 29*f.*
Stirner, Max, 127*f.*
"Survival of the fittest," 90.

Temp. Nat'l Econ. Com., 18*f.*, 33*f.*, 118*f.*
Ten Commandments, the, 38-42.
Thoreau, Henry David, 129*f.*, 211.
Thrasymachus, 88.

U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Philosophy Conference of, 100-04.
U.S.S.R., achievements, 23*f.*; at war, 30*f.*; collective farms, 106, 211; industrial development, 16; marriage and sex, 159; member nations of, 185; peace policy, 22; religion and morality in, 73.
Utilitarianism, 115, 204.

Vichy Government, 137*f.*
Vlastos, Gregory, 74.

Wagner, (Rev.) C. E., 80*f.*
Wallace, Henry A., 7, 189.
War, 168-75.
Whitman, Walt, 145.
Willkie, Wendell, 169.
Wilson, Woodrow, 29*f.*
Winspear, Alban D., 46, 74, 88.
Winthrop, John, 65, 150.
Woolman, John, 39, 201.

Zetkin, Clara, 156.