

## **TOWARD AN EMANCIPATORY SOCIAL SCIENCE**

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

#### I

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

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

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

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

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

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

## II

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### III

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### IV

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## VI

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

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

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

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

## VII

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

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

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

## VIII

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

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

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

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

## IX

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## X

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

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

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

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

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

another matter. But where immediate action is required, that is what we have to work with. For the present we are stuck with the capitalist order. Capitalism *might* in time take a more reasonable self-interested turn. But we see very little evidence of this. BP's actions in the Gulf are a grim reminder of this. Still, in the *short* run capitalism is the only thing we have to go on in the battle to adequately contain climate warming or, where the battle is already lost, to search for ways to live with it and to minimize its effects. Capitalism (the capitalist order) for now—and it is now where matters are so urgent—is the only thing we have to go on to act against the looming disaster and to act quickly enough to stop it or at least limit it. It is so horrible to deal with such short-term greedy and irrational forces. Think of the climate change deniers in the U.S. Congress. But what is most demanding now is to stop, as much as can be done, the drift of climate change. This is very depressing but we must not stick our heads in the sand<sup>6</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

## XI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Notes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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*Note: This bibliography contains not only references to the citations listed in the text but, as well, references to the broadly Marxian and otherwise radical social scientists listed in Section II.*

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