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# Marxism and Secular Faith

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*It has been argued by Mancur Olson and others that Karl Marx's theory of revolution is logically defective in that from its premises one cannot draw Marx's conclusion that workers will unite to revolt against capitalism. Workers who might wish for large social changes are confronted with a collective action problem that Marx fails to appreciate—so runs the criticism. The critics are assuming that Marx is reasoning from a Hobbesian premise to the effect that insofar as they are rational, individuals act always to fulfill narrowly self-interested goals. This article denies the assumption. In particular it is urged that to make sense of Marx's optimistic hopes about the likely outcome of successful majoritarian working-class revolution, one must attribute to him a secular faith that most people are disposed to play fair with others. This disposition is relatively weak and only sporadically effective in determining behavior, but in the right revolutionary circumstances, Marx hopes, it might play a considerably greater role in this respect. (A circumstance on which Marx places great weight is material abundance.) Being optimistic about the future, Marx cannot be as cynical about human motivation in the present as commentators often take him to be.*

In the middle of the seventeenth century an astute political scientist wrote, "Of all Voluntary Acts, the Object is to every man his own Good" (Hobbes, 1968, p. 209). If we treat this statement not as a tautology but as a broad empirical claim, we may render it so: each person always acts with the aim of satisfying narrowly self-interested goals. One might quibble about how to interpret "narrowly." How narrow is narrow? In the tradition of political analysis that was inaugurated or at least given a hefty push forward by Hobbes, acting from narrowly self-interested motives can include acting to benefit friends and family members whose interests have become incorporated into the self-interest of the agent. The crucial denial is that people ever willingly act to sacrifice "their own" interests (including the interests of those near and dear to them) for the sake of mere strangers or for the sake of a mere perception of moral duty. Call this claim the "assumption of egoism." Obviously for this assumption to do useful explanatory work, it need not be strictly true, just close to true. If self-sacrificing conduct motivated by altruism or devotion to morality sometimes occurs, but too infrequently and on too small a scale to alter political outcomes significantly, the simplifying assumption of egoism will suffice for political theory. The assumption of egoism figures in a

venerable research program in political science that is very much alive and kicking.

As one of the great innovators and eccentrics in social theory, Karl Marx is hard to pigeonhole in terms of the category just described. Critics have seen in Marx both a penchant for generalizing social science invoking the assumption of egoism and an anticipation of hermeneutic and critical theory methods geared toward the normative interpretation of culture (e.g., Habermas, 1971, pp. 25-63; 1973, p. 238; and Gouldner, 1980). In this article I consider an interpretation and criticism of Marx that place him squarely in the Hobbesian camp. To defend Marx from the criticism, I argue, one must deny that Marx accepts the assumption of egoism (but this denial does not call in question Marx's commitment to generalizing social science).

Marx's theory of social change postulates that people are sometimes motivated to action by class interest, and that some of these actions crucially influence historical development. In the words of the *Communist Manifesto*, "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles" (Marx & Engels, 1976b, p. 482). The upshot of Marxian social theory is that certain nasty features of capitalism render life unpleasant for capitalist workers. Workers can improve their group situation through collective action; in fact, as a group they would be better off if capitalism were abolished. Hence, the theory concludes, once workers comprehend their situation they will be disposed to undertake collective action to ameliorate their lot under capitalism and to do away with capitalism altogether when prospects are good that revolutionary action will succeed.

The premises of Marx's argument are open to

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challenge at many points. In 1965 Mancur Olson objected to its logic (Olson, 1965/1971; see also Tullock, 1971, and especially Buchanan, 1982). On Marx's own premises, according to Olson, he ought to have concluded that although it is in the interest of the workers as a group to revolt against capitalism, such action is not in the individual interest of any worker, so that workers if rational will not revolt. In this article I rehearse the Olson criticism and show how Marx might have defended himself against it. For this project I accept two ground rules: 1) any view imputed to Marx must square reasonably well with his texts, and 2) to count as a *defense* of Marx, an interpretation of his thought must not only evade the criticism under discussion but also propound on his behalf a view that is at least *prima facie* plausible and worthy of further examination in the light of present social science knowledge.

### The Problem

Consider a good that is *collective* with respect to some group in the sense that if any person in the group consumes some of the good, it is not feasible to exclude any other group member from consuming some of it. Assume that the members of a group are *rational self-interested* in the sense that each member of the group acts efficiently to maximize his own expected benefit. Consider a group of  $N$  persons for whom a particular good that might be produced is collective. A *feasible supplier* of this good for  $N$ , let us say, is any subgroup for whom the gains from supplying the good exceed the total cost of supplying it. If the smallest feasible supplier in  $N$  has so many members that any member's contribution toward provision of the good is imperceptible to other members and will not affect any other individual's decision whether or not to contribute, the group  $N$  is in Olson's terminology "large." No individual of a "large" group has a rational incentive to contribute toward provision of the collective benefit, according to familiar dominance reasoning.<sup>1</sup>

The application of this simple apparatus to Marx's theory is straightforward. According to Olson's Marx, socialist revolution—along with lesser benefits from smaller-scale class struggle—is a collective good for the class of workers,

<sup>1</sup>Notice that in the extreme case where a collective benefit will not be obtained unless all members of a group contribute toward its provision, the incentive to take a free ride on the contributions of the others disappears, regardless of the size of the group. For a thorough explication of Olson (1965/1971), see Hardin (1982, chaps. 2-3).

but the workers constitute a "large" group, so none has a rational incentive to make a contribution toward the collective cause.

To put the point in another terminology, as suggested by Russell Hardin (1982, pp. 25-32), Olson is saying that the logic of proletarian revolution mirrors the logic of a many-person single-play Prisoner's Dilemma (PD). Even though all would benefit from the hoped-for revolutionary action, none has good reason to initiate it, so the revolution will not occur unless revolutionaries behave irrationally. The notoriously observable absence of revolution in the industrially advanced countries, where Marx predicted revolution would occur, appears to be only one among many examples of the suboptimal voluntary provision of collective goods that neoclassic economic theory leads one to expect as a matter of course.

### First Solution: IIPD

In single-play PD, cooperation is not rational. But in indefinitely iterated prisoner's dilemma (IIPD), cooperation may be rational.<sup>2</sup> In this section I explore, and finally reject, the suggestion that the logic of many-person revolutionary class struggle should be modelled as the logic of many-person IIPD.

Iterating a PD opens up possibilities of rational cooperation, because each player must consider the possibility that what he does now may affect the behavior of others on future plays (see Luce & Raiffa, 1957, pp. 97-102). In an iterated PD, dominance reasoning does not support the strategy of "always defect." If a PD is to be iterated an unknown number of times, there can be coordination equilibria—strategy pairs such that no player would benefit from a change of strategy by any one player—provided certain conditions are met, chief among them 1) that each player's strategy dictates a punishing response to defections by others, and 2) that each player holds the probability of further repetitions of the game to be sufficiently high and the number of probable repetitions to be sufficiently large so that the long-run prospect of sustaining cooperation promises greater gain than the short-run temptation of defection.

Differences in the incentives facing agents in many-person as opposed to two-person iterated PD suggest that even if cooperation does occur in some many-person versions, it is likely to limp along at suboptimal levels. Roughly, the dif-

<sup>2</sup>For analysis of PD repeated a fixed number of times, where the number of iterations is common knowledge to all participants, see Schick (1984, pp. 68-76).

ference is that in two-person IIPD, punishing a non-cooperator directly benefits the punisher, whereas in many-person IIPD, cooperators cannot punish the defection of free-riders in subsequent play without harming themselves by denying the benefits of cooperation to all. Nonetheless IIPD analysis might well be the appropriate explanation of instances of ordinary or trade-union class struggle, brought about by labor-management conflicts of interest that are expected to recur into the indefinite future. "Ordinary" class struggle contrasts with "extraordinary" class struggle, the latter being marked by the expectation that a fundamental change in property relations throughout society is possible in the very short run and by a greatly increased willingness on all sides to break the customary rules of the ordinary class struggle game.<sup>3</sup> Even if ordinary class struggle should prove to be explicable on the model of self-interested rational behavior in many-person IIPD situations, extraordinary class struggle is Marx's abiding analytical concern and the linchpin of his doctrine.

An extraordinary class struggle is unlikely to form a pattern that is amenable to IIPD analysis. IIPD-style reasoning seems inapplicable to the moment of revolution, when the game being played is unique and nonrepeatable and known to be such by the players. To be sure, one can often analyze a single outbreak of revolt into a connected series of events each of which can be viewed as a single play of a game. But there are disanalogies between this scenario and IIPD. Strategic interactions that can be represented as IIPD often owe their character to the presence of stable institutions that guarantee that the game is likely to be repeated over and over, but such institutions may disappear or become problematic in the chaos of approaching revolution.

Mulling over the dynamics of street protests that occurred in St. Petersburg in February, 1917, Trotsky observed, "A revolutionary uprising that spreads over a number of days can develop victoriously only in case it ascends step by step, and scores one success after another. A pause in its growth is dangerous, a prolonged marking of time, fatal" (Trotsky, 1964, p. 117). Suppose Trotsky's conjecture holds. The revolutionary process then decomposes into a series of games each of which (after the first) occurs only if a sufficient level of cooperation has been attained in the preceding game. It is not known in advance

how many games must be played to determine the success or failure of the revolutionary outbreak, but in the nature of the case the sum of payoffs for the complete series is pretty much fixed independently of how many games intervene between the present one and the final decisive encounter (what matters is, for example, not how many street demonstrations occur but whether or not they topple the regime). I take it to be plausible also to suppose that when the decisive game occurs, in which successful cooperation would ensure a successful revolution, the decisiveness of the encounter is common knowledge to all or at least presumed with high probability. But this last point destroys the IIPD-like appearance of the series.<sup>4</sup> If rational self-interested cooperation through the series is explicable, this can only be because the structure of payoffs in the last decisive game is *not* PD, rather assurance or some other matrix that renders cooperation individually rational. If this final encounter is PD, in anticipation of this sad ending would-be revolutionaries if rationally prudent will decline to join at the outset. Either way, IIPD analysis turns out to be not pertinent.

To put the same point another way, any positive joint payoff for mutual cooperation, compared to mutual defection, in the early encounters of a revolutionary crisis will just consist in an enhanced likelihood that the movement will not fizzle out before a decisive engagement in which winning the battle would mean winning the civil war. But if the assumption at the outset must be that in the end everything hinges on a single contest, then the dynamic of mobilizing revolutionary forces must be quite unlike the dynamics of building trade union support, where there can be joint positive payoff for cooperators at many points along a path that extends into the indefinite future.

Besides being essentially single-play, extraordinary class struggle differs from ordinary class struggle in the number of participants required to sustain it. Other things being equal, one would expect that the larger the number of players in a many-person IIPD, the smaller the prospect of cooperation, owing to rising costs of explicit or

<sup>3</sup>A taxonomy of varieties of extraordinary class struggle is beyond the scope of this essay. Extraordinary class struggle can be political (aimed at replacing the government or overthrowing the state) or social (aimed at wresting control of economic enterprises) or both.

<sup>4</sup>The example in the text concerns extraordinary class struggle directed toward a coup. Consider a revolution that follows the syndicalist pattern of a wave of enterprise occupations. Each occupation decomposes into a series of games, but if a single encounter is believed to be decisive, the point in the text holds here also. Or one could consider the players to be collectives of workers in a number of enterprises, and the question for each collective is whether to join in a wave of enterprise takeovers. This issue, if PD at all, is once again single-play PD.

implicit bargaining, bluff, and strategy. When Marx writes of class struggle as a constant daily fact of capitalist society, he is thinking of small-scale conflicts pitting a few workers against a single capitalist. Despite the common label, the class struggle that in Marx's theory is expected to precipitate the demise of capitalism is a very different phenomenon, involving at least transnational common struggle by the working class of several European nations for transcendent aims.<sup>5</sup> The large number of participants involved in Marxian scenarios of revolution itself militates against the prospect that the possibility of cooperation among rational egoists in IIPD situations could explain how such a revolution came about, should one ever occur.

Marxist usage of the term "class struggle" tends to accord this honorific label to small-scale disputes involving small numbers of workers arrayed against their bosses, even if a successful outcome of the struggle for those few workers would be disadvantageous to other members of the working class. Generosity in classifying fractional conflict as class struggle usually proceeds either from the hope or the prediction that fractional conflict will set in motion a process leading to more conflict on an increasingly wide scale and culminating in class struggle more strictly construed as struggle by the entire class or in the interest of the entire class. But insofar as IIPD-style cooperation is assumed to be the driving force of class struggle, the expectation that parochial or balkanized disputes could merge smoothly into unified revolutionary struggle looks to be misplaced.<sup>6</sup> The motivations that might ignite the one will not spread to the other. The two processes are apparently discontinuous.<sup>7</sup> From the fact that workers cooperate with each other in small-scale and geographically concentrated conflicts in which defection from cooperation can readily be

detected and the threat by cooperators to cease cooperating if defectors do not pay their dues can be credible, a rationally self-interested person will not infer that it is reasonable to cooperate in large-scale and geographically dispersed interactions in which such detection is difficult and such threats are bluff.<sup>8</sup>

### Second Solution: Selective Incentives

Perhaps the best way to escape a PD trap is never to be caught inside one. Commentators have found several sources of selective incentives in situations that would otherwise be PD. These are holes in the trap. A brief review of the prospects for explaining the emergence of class struggle by these means is in order.

One idea is that cooperators might credibly threaten selectively to punish non-cooperators, thus diminishing the attractiveness of the free ride strategy. In this connection Olson mentions the violence and coercion that appear to be endemic to labor dispute in American history (Olson, 1971, pp. 66-76).<sup>9</sup> But a full explanation of how

<sup>5</sup>As evidence of the immaturity of the French working class in 1848, Marx cites its failure to perceive the need for a European revolutionary war against England (Marx, 1978b, p. 56).

<sup>6</sup>For another argument supporting this claim, see Roemer (1979, pp. 763-767).

<sup>7</sup>Rosa Luxemburg aptly characterizes this discontinuity: "With the psychology of a trade unionist who will not stay off his work on May Day unless he is assured in advance of a definite amount of support in the event of his being victimised, neither revolution nor mass strike can be made. But in the storm of the revolutionary period even the proletarian is transformed from a provident *pater familias* demanding support, into a revolutionary romanticist for whom even the highest good, life itself, to say nothing of material well-being, possesses but little in comparison with the ideals of the struggle" (cited in Holmstrom, 1983, p. 315).

<sup>8</sup>Closely related to IIPD possibilities is the possibility of interdependent strategy choice. A situation that otherwise meets the conditions of single-play PD will still fail to be PD unless players' strategy choices are independent in the sense that no player is able to adopt a strategy that makes his choice of play contingent on what others do on that very same play. This is a strong assumption and one may wonder whether it holds true or even approximately true in real-world conflict and cooperation settings. For example, suppose that after a snowstorm neighbors have preferences regarding the shoveling of snow from their sidewalks that form a PD configuration. The situation will not be PD if each neighbor can remove the snow from his own walk while simultaneously watching to see that every other neighbor is doing the same. Is the formation of class struggle the soluble snow-shoveling problem writ large? Obviously, the greater the number of shovelers and the more geographically dispersed they are, the more difficult it will be to make one's own choice of play on a particular move contingent on the choices of others. And equally obviously, extraordinary class struggle involves large numbers of geographically dispersed agents (although monitoring technology can to some degree reduce the importance of geographic dispersal). Pending detailed analysis of individual cases, it does not seem that the Olson criticism will fail to apply to Marx's analysis owing to absence of independent strategy choice.

<sup>9</sup>Barrington Moore sensibly observes that in a revolutionary setting, "There is liable to be a good deal of bullying by militants to force laggards into line and sustain the appearance of solidarity" (Moore, 1978, p. 321). Buchanan rather broadly claims that Marx does not countenance the use of intimidation to motivate proletarians to join in struggle (Buchanan, 1982, p. 93).

cooperation might emerge and become stable is unlikely to be forthcoming from this quarter. For so far we have not been informed how cooperation rises to the point at which there is a substantial body of cooperators who find themselves irked at the non-cooperating behavior of a few. Even if we assume an initial state of cooperation, with just a few defectors, the sanctioning of these defectors will be costly, and the gains to be had from sanctioning will be shared among all cooperators regardless of who joined the sanctioning posse. The collective action problem replicates itself at the level of organizing the imposition of sanctions.

Another idea is that initiators of cooperation will anticipate the creation of an ongoing organization that will channel a stream of profits to the original founders. Union organizers will become trade union officials; today's revolutionaries will be tomorrow's commissars. Individuals with entrepreneurial talent alert people to opportunities for lucrative collective action, are paid by those people to organize cooperation, and perhaps attract initial followers by promising them shares of the expected payments (Kavka, 1982, p. 457).

Whatever its merits, this entrepreneurial account of the origins of class struggle appears to be inconsistent with Marx's expectation that class struggle in capitalist society will promote an egalitarian society free of hierarchy—as the *Communist Manifesto* puts it, “an association, in which the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all” (Marx & Engels, 1976b, p. 506).<sup>10</sup> A more ground-level difficulty is that the account suggests motivations for organizers, but supplies no reason whatsoever for members of the target population to pay these organizers, join their incipient organizations, and initiate cooperation under their direction (Laver, 1980, pp. 204-208). Organizers and entrepreneurs of class struggle may promise selective benefits to potential supporters, but on the assumption that all parties to these discussions are individually self-interested, why should the masses believe that the fledgling trade unionists or revolutionaries out

of power will keep their promises once installed in power? Bygones are bygones for a self-interested utility-maximizer.

A third selective incentive that might supply rational motivation for self-interested members of “large” groups to contribute toward provision of collective benefits is negative contribution costs. If the act of contributing is valued for its inherent pleasures, apart from further consequences, these pleasures might offset the gains from free-riding sufficiently to motivate contribution (Hirschman, 1982, p. 86). One cannot enjoy solidarity and sibling camaraderie by sitting on the side lines but only by joining in the fray. Trivially, the solidarity of participants is available only to participants, but even vicarious solidarity would tend to be inhibited by the awareness that one is shirking participation. However, doubts intrude. One may wonder whether in many cases these participation benefits correctly fit into the category of strictly self-interested satisfactions. Why does banter with one's mates on a protest parade seem more zestful than banter with the same mates in a pool hall? If the answer is that one especially values contributing to a good cause in concert with one's friends, then the desire that is being satisfied is mixed in character, partly moralized rather than fully self-interested. Moreover, if participation benefits only flow from collective action that has reached a certain threshold size, the PD problem recurs for individual contributions to the initial stages of cooperation below the threshold level (Buchanan, 1982, p. 95). Another limitation to the participation benefits explanation of collective action is that participation benefits often are ephemeral, but collective action ordinarily must be sustained and steady in order to be successful. Reiterated, the initially fascinating union meeting becomes a crushing bore.<sup>11</sup> If the collective goal can be reached in one exciting leap, all may be well, but if many leaps are required the pace slows to a dull trudge, and free-rider conduct beckons.

The fading-joy limitation is particularly pertinent to what I have called “ordinary” class struggle, while the threshold difficulty applies with special force to extraordinary or revolutionary class struggle.

Regarding all selective-incentive explanations of how collective action arises, one issue is whether the stipulated incentives really are sufficiently strong and prevalent to motivate contribu-

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But Marx would surely accept that a proletarian movement democratically organized may rightfully use informal analogues of conscription for military defense. I agree with Buchanan, however, that a movement that is sufficiently well organized to enjoy access to means of coercion has already solved its collective action problem, so coercion cannot explain how collective action begins.

<sup>10</sup>The inconsistency arises, of course, only if entrepreneurially minded revolutionaries are correct in their belief that they can parlay leadership in the struggle into power and privilege in its aftermath.

<sup>11</sup>In a June 6, 1983 *Los Angeles Times* interview, long-time radical activist Dorothy Healey offers a bemused perspective on the joys of participation: “I hate meetings . . . My life has been absolutely filled with meetings. That's what the Left is . . . one big meeting” (Horowitz, 1983, p. 7).

tions in the case at hand. Another issue for us is whether Marx's texts suggest that he himself thought that selective incentives explain the emergence of class struggle. Without going into this latter issue I will just mention that the answer seems to me to be that he did not.

### Marx on Motives

Participants in class struggle as Marx conceives it are motivated by a desire to promote their common class interest. This entails that the participant is willing, at least to some extent, to sacrifice his personal interest and even the interest of his fractional subgroup within the working class to the general interest of the international working class. Marx is optimistic that this wide cooperation will be forthcoming. In an interview with a journalist regarding the alleged conspiracies of the International Workingmen's Association, he comments, "Formerly, when a strike took place in one country it was defeated by the importation of workers from another. The International has nearly stopped all that. It receives information of the intended strike, it spreads that information among its members, who at once see that for them the seat of the struggle must be forbidden ground" (Marx, 1974, p. 395). The compulsion in Marx's "must" arises from a sentiment of caring for fellow members of one's class, not a perception of where one's individual self-interest lies. In a loftier tone, Marx observes, "It is one of the great purposes of the Association to make the workmen of different countries not only *feel* but *act* as brethren and comrades in the army of emancipation" (1974, p. 86). The members of this army strive to defeat the opposing forces of capital, but their aim is emancipation not for themselves alone but for humanity. To be motivated by class interest in the relevant sense is *not* to be disposed to promote the welfare of one's own class at the expense of the welfare of all other classes. Class interest is not supposed to induce proletarian fighters to wrest an advantage for their class at the expense of the desperately poor, chronically unemployed underclass, for instance. This is so despite Marx's judgment that the lumpenproletariat is more likely to furnish mercenaries of the established order than allies of the revolutionary cause. In short, the "interest" component of class interest becomes thoroughly attenuated under inspection. Fully class-conscious workers aim to promote the interests of the international working class because they subscribe to a theory (namely Marx's) according to which promoting working-class interests is the best available strategy for improving the future for humanity generally.

Marx's accounts of struggles in which the participants lack full class consciousness also refer to

motives beyond egoism. In a well-known passage of *The Eighteenth Brumaire* (1979), Marx makes an invidious contrast between the French working class, capable of bold political action to defend its interest, and the French peasantry, incapable of such initiatives, at least in the historical period under review (1848-1851):

The small peasants form a vast mass, the members of which live in similar conditions, but without entering into manifold relations with one another. Their mode of production isolates them from one another, instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse. The isolation is increased by France's bad means of communication and by the poverty of the peasants. Their field of production, the small holding, admits of no division of labour in its cultivation, no application of science, and, therefore, no multiplicity of development, no diversity of talents, no wealth of social relationships (Marx, 1979, p. 187).

Marx expects the reader to infer that, in contrast with the peasant's situation, large-scale industry does admit of extensive division of labor, the application of science, and so a wealth of social relationships among the industrial workers. Some have seen in this passage a glimmering of the idea that an anomic pattern of social relationships lacking repeated encounters among potential cooperators will tend to prevent the emergence of cooperation in PD situations (Hardin, 1982, p. 184). But the vision of working class politics that Marx contrasts to his sketch of peasant existence is too epic, too grand to be reducible to this sensible, mundane thought.

While mordantly cynical in some respects, Marx's description of clashes and battles in February-June 1848 is entirely uncynical in its presentation of the bold and self-sacrificing motivations of revolutionaries past and present. "But unheroic as bourgeois society is, yet it had need of heroism, of sacrifices, of terror, of civil war and of national battles to bring it into being" (Marx, 1979, p. 104). Marx observes that after the February revolution, "the Paris proletariat . . . revelled in the vision of the wide prospects that had opened before it" (p. 109). The dazzling view here alluded to is not merely one of more efficient means ready to hand for satisfying proletarians' narrow self-interests, but rather a perhaps utopian vision of a better world for all. This vision motivates collective action, even hopeless action, in the story Marx tells. Praising the heroism of the Paris proletariat in the street fighting of the June days, Marx comments, "At least it succumbs with the honors of the great, world-historic struggle" (p. 111). Generalizing about proletarian revolutions in the modern era, Marx observes that they "recoil ever and anon from the indefinite prodigi-



ousness of their own aims, until the situation has been created which makes all turning back impossible" (p. 107). This does not mean: a situation is reached in which every revolutionary calculates that his expected personal payoff from the strategy of retreating or deserting the cause is less than the expected personal payoff from the strategy of going forward. Rather the idea is that a point is reached at which turning back would renege on a commitment to one's most ideal self-image, to be realized in the attainment of the most prodigious aims by heroic means. This is Marx the German Romantic, not the sober Victorian political economist.

Let's return to the peasant side of the worker/peasant comparison Marx is making. Notice that what Marx is specifically attempting to explain is not how workers are able to cooperate in collective action for common goals while peasants fail to act collectively. Rather he is trying to explain why the peasants' main political intervention was to vote for authoritarian rule in December, 1848, while workers had managed to mount sporadic active resistance to constituted authority between February and June. The act of casting a ballot for Louis Bonaparte may express the class viewpoint of the peasantry but is not—for all its lack of grandeur—in the individual self-interest of any given peasant (even on the assumption that Bonaparte's election would be in the collective interest of the peasantry). The problem Marx is trying to solve is simply not the problem Olson accuses Marx of failing to solve.

The same conclusion is suggested by Marx's emphatic statement that voting for Bonaparte was an intellectual error on the part of the peasants. The vote cast expressed their viewpoint, not their rational interests. As Marx puts it: "The Bonaparte dynasty represents not the revolutionary, but the conservative peasant . . . not the enlightenment, but the superstition of the peasant; not his judgment, but his prejudice . . ." (p. 188). The problem is not that the peasant's rational calculation of his individual self-interest inhibits him from acting with others to secure a collectively optimal outcome. The problem in Marx's jaundiced view is that the "rural idiocy" of peasant life precludes his taking an objective and enlightened view of his class interests. Whatever disposition to sacrifice self for class that peasants possess will come to naught as long as ignorance and other intellectual vices vitiate their perception. When Marx characterizes the French peasantry as unable to enforce its class interests, he is not denying the capacity of the peasants to initiate a jacquerie. He is denying that anything will come of such actions. His reason is that the peasantry lacks "manifold relations" and a "wealth of social relationships." I suggest putting a cognitive

gloss on these phrases. The modern world is complex, but the benighted peasant does not encounter its complexity, whereas the industrial worker, whose social experience is more various, is more prone to adopt sophisticated social theories reflecting this modern complexity. So at any rate Marx hopes.

### Human Nature: Marx's View

If Marx does not hold that narrow self-interest supplies good reason for individual participation in class struggle, on what motivational assumptions does he then rely? If class struggle is the motor of history, what propels the motor?

The clue I propose to follow is to ask what view of human nature must be assumed in order to make sense of the millenarian aspect of Marx's thought—his assumption that whereas "(i)n all revolutions up to now the mode of activity always remained unscathed and it was only a question of a different distribution of this activity . . . the communist revolution is directed against the preceding *mode* of activity, does away with *labour*, and abolishes the rule of all classes with the classes themselves . . ." (Marx & Engels, 1976a, p. 52). For on the assumption that humans under capitalism are rational egoist utility-maximizers, Marx's optimistic expectation is utterly at odds with his own theory. The Marxian expectation I am querying is not the prediction that the proletariat will wage a successful revolution against capitalism; rather it is the prediction that postcapitalist society will be classless, egalitarian, tolerably free of injustice in basic social institutions. Society abhors a vacuum. If a ruling class is suddenly displaced from power, a remarkable opportunity presents itself for rationally self-interested agents to wrest power for themselves, to consolidate their advantage, and to extract profit and privilege for themselves from their positions of power. Only if *per impossible* each individual's power precisely and continuously balances the power of every other individual will rational egoists caught in the turmoil of revolution fail to move to an equilibrium recognizable as the formation of a new class society.

Any interpretation must reckon with Marx's failure to address this issue directly.<sup>12</sup> Occasion-

<sup>12</sup>A sketchy but pertinent comment appears in *The German Ideology*: "Both for the production on a mass scale of this communist consciousness, and for the success of the cause itself, the alteration of men on a mass scale is necessary, an alteration which can only take place in a practical movement, in a *revolution*; the revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the *ruling class* cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class *overthrowing it* can only in a



ally Marx seems to hint that the distinguishing factor in the approaching working-class revolution is that for the first time it will not be a segment of society that takes power, but a homogeneous class comprising virtually all members of society. According to Marx a capitalist society ripe for revolution has a simplified class structure consisting of a tiny minority of capitalists and their allies surrounded by an undifferentiated mass of unskilled workers. After the revolution, in this scenario, society takes control of society. Society will have no stake in securing vested interests against itself. In the words of the *Communist Manifesto*, "All the preceding classes that got the upper hand, sought to fortify their already acquired status," but the proletarians "have nothing of their own to secure and to fortify" (Marx & Engels, 1976b, p. 495; see also p. 485). Despite appearances, this passage does not engage the problem just posed. Marx's claim rests on an extreme version of his class-polarization thesis, which has proven to be false, but even assuming its correctness for the sake of argument does not help with the difficulty. Assume a huge homogeneous proletariat united by the need to cohere in struggle to oust the capitalists: once this struggle is successful one should expect to see this proletariat rapidly become heterogeneous as individuals scramble to do as well for themselves as they can by fishing in the troubled waters. Having nothing of his own, a rational egoist will have all the greater motivation to grab something that will become his own to secure and to fortify.

I submit that the problem of rendering intelligible Marx's reasons for optimism about the future of society will prove intractable unless we are willing to jettison the assumption that Marx is assuming that individuals are always motivated solely by narrow self-interest. The explanation of why Marx fails to elucidate the connection between his cynicism about human nature and his utopianism about the future of society is simply that Marx does not embrace cynicism, so there is no connection to be elaborated.

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revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew" (Marx & Engels, 1976a, p. 53). Marx's idea here is that participation in revolution is ennobling. This is plausible, but so is Brecht's frequent theme that participation in revolutionary activity hardens and coarsens. Even supposing that Marx rather than Brecht is correct on this point, there will be a wide range of individual degrees of involvement in revolutionary activity, and in any reasonable scenario a majority of the population will not be actively involved to a significant extent: hence they will not fully undergo the revolutionary character transformation that Marx says is crucial.

An alert reader might well object that Marx believes that human nature changes and develops throughout history, so it is not inconsistent for Marx to suppose the individuals formed in capitalist society will be rational egoists while individuals formed in postcapitalist society will have quite other motivations. Indeed it is the process of class struggle itself culminating in revolution that transforms individuals or enables them to transform themselves from selfish individuals into socially minded citizens.

It is certainly true that Marx holds that human nature changes in important respects throughout history. The hunger of a savage differs from the hunger of a civilized gourmet (Marx, 1970, p. 147). *The German Ideology* states emphatically if somewhat vaguely, "The difference between the individual as a person and whatever is extraneous to him is not a conceptual difference but a historical fact" (Marx & Engels, 1976a, p. 81). But from the fact that Marx believes that human nature is changeable in some respects it does not follow that it would be inconsistent for Marx to claim that in some respects human nature is unchanging (Cohen, 1978, p. 151, makes this point).

The claim that Marx believes that human beings are nasty (egoistic) in class society and become nice (altruistic) in the transition to classless society, I will call the "standard view." I have urged that if the standard view is correct, then Marx is after all vulnerable to the Olson criticism, for he provides no coherent account of how purely self-interested persons can unite to overthrow capitalism, much less inaugurate communism. Nor does Marx offer even a rudimentary beginning of an account of how, on the assumption that capitalism is eliminated and communist institutions are installed, these institutions will work to alter human nature away from egoism and toward communalism. To me these considerations suggest that we should reject the standard view if we can elaborate an acceptable alternative, and the alternative I propose is that Marx believes that a concern for others, a moral concern, is a stable component of human motivation throughout history, but one that is all but submerged by adverse circumstances that persist invariant up to the demise of capitalism.

Before adumbrating this "moralized" view of Marx's beliefs about human nature, a preliminary and apparently decisive difficulty must be faced. My view attracts the obvious objection that Marx frequently expresses a tough-minded cynicism about human nature and shows great ingenuity in ferreting out possible selfish motives for what superficially seems to be philanthropic and idealistic action. Any interpretation such as mine that denies that Marx loudly laments the universal bourgeois egoism that capitalist institutions

engender thereby refutes itself—so goes the objection.

To illustrate how this objection can be defused, I will examine a typically cynical comment by Marx and Engels that happens to be cited by Olson in support of the standard view, of which he is himself an adherent. This famous passage from the *Communist Manifesto* runs as follows: "The bourgeoisie has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash-payment.' It has drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation" (cited in Olson, 1971, p. 104). To read this passage correctly one must distinguish between 1) an ideology that describes and rationalizes ordinary or normal social behavior, 2) people's actual ordinary social behavior, and 3) the full range of people's desires only some of which are expressed in ordinary social behavior. The passage quoted just above deals with 1) and 2), not 3). Marx and Engels are saying that capitalist ideology predicts and prescribes narrowly self-centered behavior, whereas feudal ideology prescribed and predicted unselfish behavior in conformity with the norms of religion, chivalry, and so on. Actual behavior under both feudalism and capitalism was for the most part narrowly self-centered. To this extent capitalist ideology is more accurate and less hypocritical than its feudal counterpart. But to say this is not to pronounce at all on the topic of 3). On this last point the passage quoted is strictly noncommittal. In fact it is fully compatible with the further assertion that most people's strongest preference is to cooperate with others on fair terms, but people inchoately recognize that the going terms of actual social cooperation are fixed beyond their control, so the preference they mainly act upon is to do as well for themselves as they can rather than play the role of sucker in a dog-eat-dog world. This indeed is the gist of the position Marx holds on my interpretation. I don't say the quoted passage requires this further gloss, only that the two are fully consistent. Pointing to Marx's cynical quips does not begin to settle the interpretive issue.

The thought I am relying on here is straightforward: people's actions are determined by their desires in conjunction with their beliefs, so even a very strong desire coupled with a belief that the desire is unrealizable may not show itself directly in behavior. Of course, if Marx or anybody else does wish to advance the hypothesis of a latent preference, he is obliged to provide empirical evidence, perhaps of an indirect sort, to the effect that the latent preference postulated is really present and not merely the social theorist's fantasy.

Marx's remarks on ideology do supply materials from which one could begin to construct such a case. People's proclivity to accept ideologically biased theories of fairness and, I would add, sometimes to act on their ideology even against their own perceived interests, is plausibly interpreted as reflecting a powerful psychological pressure to think that one is on the whole behaving fairly where this pressure is blocked by dim recognition that one's acceptance of genuinely fair shares would entail intolerable personal sacrifice. My object here is not to marshal evidence but to mark how one might do so on Marx's behalf and to note that Marx is properly sensitive to the hazards of putting forward unfalsifiable claims about human nature.

Setting the issue of evidence aside, I want to take as a clue to Marx's core beliefs about motivation his thought that an egalitarian society is possible only on the basis of the enormous wealth that is accumulated under capitalism. That increased wealth enhances prospects for egalitarianism is explicable only if one assumes that Marx ascribes to human nature a set of motives or dispositional traits roughly along the following lines:

- 1) Persons strongly desire a commodious existence.
- 2) Persons desire to cooperate with others on fair (equal) terms.

At least two phrases in these statements are subject to variation in meaning owing to the varying pressure of prevalent social ideology: "commodious existence" and "fair terms." But here I leave aside the complications that would have to be introduced into this account in order to incorporate Marx's ideas on ideology.

Under conditions of scarcity that according to Marx have characterized all of human history down to the mid-nineteenth century, cooperation on fair (equal) terms among all members of society would have been incompatible with the enjoyment of a commodious existence by any member of society. In this sense 1) and 2) conflict. People have tended to resolve this conflict in their impulses by restricting—or acquiescing in the restriction of—the scope of their desire to cooperate: the disposition to cooperate on terms perceived to be fair is normally effective only within groups, such as family, clan, caste, class, race, nationality, with which the individual identifies herself to a greater or lesser extent. Being gregarious, people for the most part do not behave as egoists. Being less than thoroughly altruistic, people for the most part confine their concern for others within the boundaries of salient group identity. Marx's particular

emphasis is on the salience of economic class identity. Summarizing, we have:

3) When cooperation with all on equal terms precludes commodious existence for any, people will tend to confine their willingness to cooperate to their group memberships—among which economic class looms large.

Attributing 1)-3) to Marx interprets him as holding that class oppression is necessary for social order throughout human history up to the point when capitalist economic abundance creates the possibility of a commodious existence for all. By “class oppression” I mean a division of the benefits of social cooperation among classes that is both unfair and coercively enforced. When there is not enough to go around, people will cluster in groups that struggle for a larger-than-average share. Class oppression is “necessary” for social order in the sense that social order is brought about by it and could not exist without it. To see that class oppression creates and sustains social order, it suffices to note that an egalitarian division of benefits in a nonaffluent society would be a standing temptation, greater than human nature could bear, to violent social conflict and civil war. Oppressive social order is of course unstable at times, but an egalitarian social order yielding a pinched and cramped standard of living for all is necessarily unstable, given human psychology as Marx perceives it. Provision of a commodious existence to some engenders loyalty to the providing regime, and a regime cannot survive unless it elicits such loyalty. But provision of a commodious existence to a privileged section of society is tantamount to class oppression.

G.A. Cohen has recently denied that class oppression is instrumentally necessary to social order throughout human history down to the time of capitalist abundance (Cohen, 1978, pp. 207-213). (He also denies that Marx's texts show whether or not Marx himself held this view.) In support of this denial, Cohen points out that there have been stable precapitalist oppressive societies in which a ruling elite extracts a surplus from a peasantry that is self-directing in its economic production and seems to receive no favors from the elite. It might be thought that in such circumstances the taxing or pillaging ruling elite does not, merely by its oppression, contribute anything at all to the maintenance of social order. Although plausible, such an inference would be mistaken. By filling the top position of privilege in a hierarchy, the ruling elite preempts the fierce conflict for that top slot that would prevail in its absence. As Marx famously puts it, the overcoming of alienation requires a high development of productive forces because, in the absence of abun-

dant wealth, equality of shares means only that “*want* is merely made general, and with want the struggle for necessities would begin again, and all the old filthy business would necessarily be restored” (Marx & Engels, 1976, p. 49).

Taken by themselves, 1)-3) do not say what will happen in the situation of economic abundance that in Marx's estimation is capitalism's signal achievement. In a capitalist society, the desire for a commodious existence and the desire to cooperate with all members of society on equal terms are, in principle, both satisfiable simultaneously. With a lessening of the conflict between 1) and 2), the tendency to parochial restriction of the willingness to cooperate begins to weaken.

4) When 1) and 2) are jointly satisfiable for all members of society, individuals tend to develop a desire to cooperate on an increasingly wide basis, with all others who are willing to reciprocate cooperation on the same equal terms, ultimately with humanity generally.

Of course this impulse to harmony is all but stifled: “The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare upon the brain of the living” (Marx, 1979, p. 103). Marx singles out two complementary inhibiting factors.

5) Once having acquired power and privilege far above the average, individuals will not voluntarily relinquish the positions of advantage that confer these extraordinary benefits. (In short, power corrupts.)

According to Marx, besides the resistance of the privileged capitalist class, the other solid obstacle blocking the development of postcapitalist harmony is the passivity of the underprivileged class.

6) Low social status, lack of experience in getting one's way in the world, and denial of the means of commodious existence when these means are not objectively in scarce supply, all tend to inhibit people's willingness to enlarge the scope of the “others” whom they see as potential partners in reciprocal cooperation. Contrariwise, success in the pursuit of advantages by the disadvantaged will tend to break down this inhibition against reciprocal altruism. (In short, powerlessness corrupts.)

Poor conditions force people to struggle narrowly for their self-interest and, especially insofar as their struggles meet with frustration, persuade them that they are not just poor but poor people. In contrast, successful class struggle educates people toward desirable character traits.<sup>13</sup> Or at least

<sup>13</sup>A recurrent theme of revolutionary analysts of Marxian persuasion is that the experience of small-scale

there is an other-things-being-equal tendency in this direction, which, as Marx acknowledges, many adverse factors can deflect.

I am conjecturing that Marx is committed to claims somewhat along the lines of 4) through 6). I have no direct textual evidence for this attribution. Moreover, 4)-6) as they stand are too baldly stated. Contrary to what 5) seems to assert, it is not true that no king ever voluntarily abdicates the throne. It is not part of my present purpose to introduce the exact hedges and qualifications that would be needed to render 4)-6) weak enough to be invulnerable to obvious historical counterexample yet strong enough to support Marx's theory of proletarian revolution. What I do want to claim is that assumptions close to 4)-6) must be in the back of Marx's mind when he asserts that all history is the history of class struggle, that proletarian class struggle will produce a desirable end to class struggle, that voluntary resignation of power by a capitalist ruling elite is not a possible alternative route to this desirable end of class struggle, and that the process of proletarian class struggle will not be inimical to the widespread development of the citizenly virtues that will be needed in the commonwealth that is to arise in the final aftermath of class struggle. I want to claim that if one is to interpret Marx as espousing or at least gesturing toward a coherent theory, suitably refined versions of 4) to 6) will be essential parts of it.

The general level of wealth in society obviously affects the prospects for successful class struggle.

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and localized conflicts can increase the participants' willingness to join in the very different activities of extraordinary class struggle. For example, Rosa Luxemburg writes, "Political and economic strikes, mass strikes and partial strikes, demonstrative strikes and fighting strikes . . . all these run through one another, run side by side, cross one another, flow in and over one another" (Luxemburg, 1925, p. 37). This would make no sense if the idea were that the practise of conditional cooperation by rational egoists in IIPD situations will increase the willingness of any egoist to cooperate non-egoistically where IIPD conditions do not obtain. But it can make sense to suggest that witnessing altruistic or morally motivated behavior on a small scale can enlarge people's sense of possibilities, disabuse them of ultracynical beliefs about the motivations of others, and thus increase their disposition to take risky initial steps toward large-scale cooperation (the success of which can in turn stimulate local protest activity). Cooperation with neighbors can induce one to cooperate with strangers who are also cooperating with their neighbors, but only if the basis of neighborly cooperation is not I'll-scratch-your-back-if-you-scratch-mine, for this arrangement cannot be extrapolated to cooperation with strangers at a distance, not at any rate in the range of cases of concern to Marx.

Spartacus in ancient Rome did not have a chance, but the modern proletarian has a more realistic basis for hope. The greater the wealth at the disposal of the ruling class, the greater the incentive to make concessions to underclass demands, and such concessions inaugurate a cycle of increasing proletarian self-esteem, self-confidence, and widening cooperation.<sup>14</sup> Wealth does not guarantee a successful end to this cycle, but wealth's absence guarantees its failure: "Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society and its cultural development conditioned thereby" (Marx, 1978a, p. 53).

The thumbnail psychology sketched so far does not specify the exact strength of the motives it postulates. In this vagueness the sketch is true to Marx's thought. To round out the sketch, some account of ordinary versus extraordinary motivation is wanted. According to Marx, a time of social crisis and revolutionary upheaval can elicit unstinting heroism from people who do not in ordinary times give any indication of this potential for self-sacrifice. What explains this?<sup>15</sup> Marx believes:

"Against Marx's view, Lipset marshalls some evidence for the claim that the granting of substantial concessions including "full political and economic citizenship" to the working class dampens its radicalism (Lipset, 1982, p. 2).

<sup>15</sup>John Roemer has an explanation that is very different from the one I offer (Roemer, 1978, 1979). He denies—and I concur—that IIPD reasoning is a very likely candidate for explaining "convulsive action" such as mass strikes. His further description almost suggests that convulsive action is irrational; the crowd is seized with madness. "The participants act, in a sense, despite their better judgment. They do not calculate rationally whether or not to strike, walk out, or fight the police. People are pushed, they retreat, they seek individual solutions; they are pushed farther, conditions become intolerable, some incident occurs, and there is an eruption" (1979, p. 763). No doubt workers like other people sometimes behave irrationally, but explanations of collective action on this basis will never vindicate Marx, who predicts that workers will engage in convulsive class struggle *and* that they will have *good reason* for doing so. Rather differently, Roemer also suggests that collective action proceeds not from irrationality but from a switch from individual to collective rationality. He doesn't elaborate, but I think he means that workers identify with their own class and act for its good rather than their own. But I have pointed out that the group identification in class interest is, in Marx's account, progressively generalized and moralized. Fully class-conscious workers act for the good of humanity. A revolutionary time arises precisely when ordinary people begin thinking self-consciously about the role they might play in world history, like Paris Communards. Roemer (1978) has a further interesting suggestion. Insofar as they perceive themselves as "participants in a highly social production process who operate under

7) Extreme situations can elicit extremes of behavior; in particular, a revolutionary social crisis can elicit extremes of heroism (as well as of dastardly conduct).

In a time of crisis, the possible gains and losses from bold collective action or its absence are greater than in normal times. Under favorable crisis circumstances, the expected gain to the collective from one's individual participation, discounted by the probability that one's action will bring about the desired outcome, may be spectacular. Hence, whatever altruistic willingness one has to sacrifice oneself for the collective will be far more likely to express itself in action at such times. The cautiously prudent person who becomes a bold revolutionary need not have undergone any drastic character change. Rather what has changed is the ratio of collective benefits to individual costs consequent upon bold action. Similar considerations explain how a prudent, seemingly virtuous person may give vent to extreme vice in a time of turmoil. (See Barry, 1970, pp. 30-32.)

The truth of 1)-6) all at once would not support the conclusion that it is ever rational for any individual person to revolt against capitalism. For 1)-6) at most warrant inferences about what people will want, not about what they will do. Desiring to cooperate with others on a reciprocal basis, I may yet reasonably refuse to cooperate if I lack good reason to believe others will reciprocate. Many persons could be in this position: all of us want to cooperate and none of us believes a sufficient number of us want to cooperate. The intensity of this problem increases as the number required for cooperation increases, because establishing the trustworthiness of strangers is difficult, so the problem will be severe for the emergence of class struggle. A further obvious component of the problem is that those who stand to lose if class struggle succeeds will have an incentive to, as it were, snip the telegraph wires that threaten to carry information that would promote mutual trust among wary class members. Moreover, one may suspect that elements of ordinary

working-class culture will tend to inhibit growth of trust. If the individual harbors moralized desires that strike him as utopian, the resultant dissonance may lead him to want to deny their existence even to himself. A public display of cynicism that aims to persuade the agent himself may be the upshot of this dynamic and may in turn reinforce a similar dynamic in others. Finally, beyond the ignorance *that* others are willing to cooperate, class struggle may also be blocked by ignorance of *how* others are willing to cooperate. People may agree to man the barricades but be unable to agree on which barricades to man, and in this case, too, revolutionary action will fizzle.

The problem of misinformation and mutual distrust, though formidable, hardly seems intractable; it is essentially the difficulty of achieving a coordination equilibrium in a large-number assurance game with multiple coordination equilibria. This problem is helped toward solution by growth in mutual knowledge of players' preferences and strategy choices, whereas a PD situation is only entrenched by mutual knowledge of strategy choices.<sup>16</sup> The problem is rendered less formidable if people's disposition to cooperate includes a willingness to go the first mile rather than merely to reciprocate cooperation by others. We can distinguish a reciprocal and an anticipatory cooperator: the former is disposed to cooperate if and only if he believes others will cooperate also; the latter is disposed to cooperate on the first play (at least where the cost of initial cooperation is not excessive and there is no conclusive reason to believe others will not cooperate) and to continue cooperating on subsequent plays if sufficient others have cooperated on the previous move. In the absence of 1) any initial evidence of a widespread cooperative spirit and 2) excessive first-play cooperation costs, a population of anticipatory cooperators will succeed in establishing cooperation where a population of reciprocators would fail. In this sense a revolution may require the "faith that moves mountains."

### Conclusion

The human nature assumptions I have ascribed to Marx are very far from constituting a testable

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completely binding constraints" (p. 155), workers do not think in terms of optimizing choice among a range of possible strategies. But this suggestion is wrong. Capitalism may severely restrict workers' freedom but could not entirely eliminate it—even a slave has options. Nor does Roemer's association of a "no choice" mentality with the psychology of convulsive action seem plausible. In time of upheaval worker-radicals debate strategic choices with gusto. Exhilarating political argument widely shared is an important component of the sense of liberation experienced in periods of social turmoil.

<sup>16</sup>More accurately: strategy choices here may become interdependent if, for example, information about players' strategy choices becomes available serially. If one player announces his intention to meet others at the czar's palace, the others will follow suit even though many other meeting places were equally eligible before this announcement. (What looks like revolutionary authoritarianism may sometimes be a way of marking as salient one solution to a coordination problem.)

theory. At best these loose assertions form a vision or proto-theory from which a theory might be constructed. But hardly any progress has been made in producing nontrivial theories of human motivation from a nonegoist starting point, so in this respect Marx's analysis has not been superseded. The assumption of rational egoism that he eschews, despite its clarity and elegance, is at variance with established facts of political behavior that any political theory must comprehend. There is spadework yet to be done on the conceptual territory Marx begins to survey.

The doctrine that I have put in Marx's mouth says only that people have some disposition to be moral, where being moral includes cooperating in single-play PD situations, that this disposition is inhibited by material scarcity, which tends to increase the incentive for violating moral norms, and that capitalism for all practical purposes eliminates the necessity of material scarcity. Marx is a moderate millenarian. But the doctrine, if weak, is far from trivial: it denies that human dispositions are indefinitely malleable at the hands of the social environment. When there is not enough to go around, people will fight to advantage themselves over others, and class-divided society inexorably follows. When there is enough to go around, an egalitarian society is feasible, in the sense that its coming would make no improbable demands on human nature, and the measure of "enough" to go around is the per capita income of England after the middle of the

nineteenth century. My characterization of Marx's thought as "millenarian" is not intended to carry any pejorative stigma. Marx is not alone, nor obviously wrong-headed, in resting his normative theory on secular faith that human nature permits the possibility of wide social cooperation to bring about a just or egalitarian society. But the promissory notes in the writings of Marx and others of his ilk who take a "soft" line on human nature have yet to be converted into cash.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup>If, as I urge, introducing moralized motivation can save Marx's theory from the charge of incoherence levelled by Olson, it is otiose to deny that Marx's writings are amenable to interpretation in terms of theories of individual rational choice along the lines of expected utility maximization. Holmstrom (1983) asserts that Marx does and Marxists should reject the expected utility approach in favor of a new socialist theory of rationality, but she says very little about what such a theory of rationality might amount to. Nor, it should be added, does Marx even implicitly commit himself to criticism of a time-bound bourgeois theory of rational choice. If I am right, there is no specifically Marxist motivation to cast about for any such criticism or theory. Gary Becker writes, "The combined assumptions of maximizing behavior, market equilibrium, and stable preferences, used relentlessly and unflinchingly, form the heart of the economic approach as I see it" (Becker, 1976, p. 4). On my account, the Marxist will want to flinch and relent by postulating stable moralized alongside stable egoist preferences (or equivalently by postulating moral inhibitions that can constrain maximizing behavior).

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