LECTURES AT FUDAN UNIVERSITY

RAWLS AND MARX:

DISTRIBUTIVE PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTIONS OF THE PERSON

LECTURE THREE

A CONSTRAINED 1844 MARX:

DISTRIBUTIVE PRINCIPLES AND THE POLITICAL ATTITUDE OF CONCERN

I. Transition from Lecture Two

1. I ended the last lecture by placing the young Marx within the intellectual context of the mid-nineteenth century. I argued that in some important ways his views were in line with the views of other writers at the time. I argued that he should be seen as part of a broad mid-nineteenth century conversation. What I want to do today is to try to bring the young Marx into the conversation of the early twenty-first century. In order to do that I will be urging that his views should be modified in two ways. First, we must reject his insistence that we should think only about societies that have overcome material scarcity. And second, we need to modify Marx’s philosophical anthropology. Specifically, we need to alter his insistence in 1844 that the good life for human beings consists primarily in the transformation of the material world in the labor process. That is too narrow a picture of what can count as the activities that could be constitutive of a good human life.

I will give an argument today that Marx, suitably adapted, would accept principles of distribution that are more or less in line with those of Rawls. I will then argue that there remain deep differences between the two writers, a difference first between the basic political attitudes that the two writers highlight, and, second, a difference between their conceptions of the person.

II. Marx and Distributive Principles

1. Let’s begin with the issue of scarcity. A central premise of Marx’s 1844 picture of true communism is that society is beyond material scarcity.[[1]](#endnote-1) This is also his premise at the time that he writes the “Critique of the Gotha Programme.” There Marx explicitly says that the “From each” and “To each” criterion requires that “the productive forces have . . . increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly.”[[2]](#endnote-2) Marx’s deep belief here is fairly clear. He believes that as long as there is material scarcity any society will inevitably exhibit basic social conflict. As he and Engels put it in *The German Ideology*, with vulgar directness, if a society has not transcended material scarcity, “die ganze alte Scheiße” – in English, “all the old shit” -- is inevitable.[[3]](#endnote-3) Marx seems to believe that as long as those circumstances that Rawls calls the “circumstances of justice” continue to obtain there can be no peaceful and conflict free society.

Now, I believe that this is a counsel of despair that we should reject. To a great extent material scarcity will always be with us. Of course, the human species should be able to house and to feed everyone in a decent way. Still, there will never be enough goods for each person to have everything that he or she desires. It is in the nature of human desires – and this fact about our nature is not to be regretted – that, as new opportunities arise, so do new desires. There is nothing wrong, say, with wanting to own a computer, and then in wanting to own a more up-to-date and powerful computer. It is a tool for the expansion of human possibilities. Marx above all should be sympathetic to this consequence of human productivity. But if our desires keep pace with our productivity, then there will always be a gap between what we all want and what we can all have. I take a central task of political philosophy to be to find, to develop and to argue for a morally compelling set of distributive principles – that is, to find a morally defensible way to handle the gap between what we collectively want and what we collectively can have. If the work of the young Marx is to be of more than merely historical interest, it must be capable of guiding us toward some such set of principles. In fact, I think that it can do so.[[4]](#endnote-4)

Suppose, then, that Marx were to accept that there will be material scarcity, and suppose that he were to agree that we need something like rules or principles to regulate society in light of the fact of scarcity. What rules or principles would Marx favor? My answer to that question is the first part of today’s lecture.

2. I am about to make a set of arguments about Marx. These arguments are based on the texts of Karl Marx, the German writer and revolutionary who lived from 1818-1883. However, I want to see what those texts can tell us about what Marx would have said had he done two related things: accepted that no human society will ever be beyond the need to find principles for distribution, and accepted that to discuss moral notions is not simply to succumb to some reigning ideology or form of false consciousness. I want to bring Marx into our current discussions.

I am going to make three claims about a Marx who accepts the fact of scarcity, at least in the sense of accepting that human desires will always extend beyond human productive capacities, and so sees the need to find principles or rules of some sort to regulate how various things in human life are distributed. My first claim is that such a Marx – call him a *Marx who recognizes constraints* or a *constrained Marx* – would accept something along the lines of Rawls’s first principle of justice, that is, Rawls’s principle of equal liberty. By that I mean that a constrained Marx would accept that a decent society would be a society in which human beings would have a great deal of freedom to do as they see fit.

Let me defend this claim by citing places in Marx’s texts. First, there is the long passage that I quoted last time from the “Comments on James Mill” in which Marx gives a sketch of a society in which human beings would have produced, as Marx puts it, in a genuinely human fashion. In such a society individuals would choose to engage in this or that form of productive activity, depending upon which activities they find to be sustaining to them, to constitute their individual form of self-realization. To engage in such activity, to find the kind of activity – or the many kinds of activities -- that fit the person that you take yourself to be seems to require the opportunity to explore various aspects of yourself. I have claimed that these 1844 remarks should be read as an anticipation of the idea of “From each according to his ability,” but where that idea is focused on individual self-realization rather than on social duty. But of course it is only under conditions of liberty that can agents discover which activities they do well and enjoy doing. A person must have the opportunity to try many things, in effect, to engage in what Mill called “experiments of living.”[[5]](#endnote-5)

Let’s also look at the famous hunting and fishing passage from *The German Ideology*. That passage says that under communism I will be able to hunt or to fish or in general that I will be able to do things, as Marx and Engels say, “just as I have a mind” to do them.[[6]](#endnote-6) This, too, suggests that under communism I may choose my activities, and, again, properly doing so is possible only under conditions of liberty. In very much the same vein, *The Communist Manifesto* insists on the need for the “free development of each.”[[7]](#endnote-7)

In many of his texts of the 1840s, then, Marx seems focused on the thought that a good society – a true communist society – would provide the conditions under which individuals could freely develop themselves and their talents. Two things should be said about this. The first is that, as I mentioned last time, here Marx is very much in line with a wide range of social thinkers of the time, including such writers as Mill, Matthew Arnold, and Oscar Wilde. One might even find a trace of overlap with Nietzsche. All of these writers emphasize the need for society to provide the conditions that make it possible for individuals to develop freely. Not all believe that the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all – Nietzsche clearly denies this. Nevertheless, the stress on individuality is common – probably descended ultimate from Goethe in many of these cases.

The second thing to note is that it is not clear what is the *content* of the liberty that Marx seems to presuppose would obtain under communism.

Let’s take this slowly. What does seem clear is that Marxian liberty needs to involve freedom of movement, freedom of association, freedom of speech and freedom of the press. For the deep idea here is that each person must have the opportunity to find the activities that count as her individual form of self-realization. But for such an opportunity to be real and valuable, a person must be exposed to a wide range of ideas and possibilities. And here I think that we should appeal to a common argument – one associated with Mill although I doubt that it was original with him – that says that freedom of speech and freedom of the press and freedom of association are preconditions for people to be able to develop themselves as they see fit. It is only by having the opportunity to learn from others, to be challenged by others, and so forth that one can really be in a position to make up one’s own mind about what is worth doing in life. That is, only under such conditions can one really make up one’s mind about whether -- to return again to the passage from *The German Ideology* -- one finds it better to hunt or to fish or to rear cattle or to be a critical critic, and in what combinations. One cannot figure out what counts as one’s own form of self-realization unless one has been able to see at least something of what the world has to offer and one is genuinely in a position to judge what fits one the best. So Marx’s insistence on the free development of each requires that under communism there must be a wide range of individual liberties. I suspect that it requires that there must be something very much like the range of individual liberties that liberal writers standardly advocate.

Of course, the Marx of the 1840s thinks that this will all simply happen within a communist society. He thinks that within such a society there will be no need to protect liberty because no one will interfere with liberty. He thinks that under conditions of abundance, no one will have any reason to interfere with another person’s choices. Nor will there be any state apparatus that has a reason to interfere with those choices. So although Marx does seem committed to the value of and to the need for individual liberty, he never stresses the need for anything like a “principle” of liberty because he never sees the need to protect something that he believes will not be threatened.

It is also the case that because Marx thinks that there will be no need for substantial political institutions, he does not usually talk about elections and voting, and so forth. He does talk briefly about such things later in his life, for instance, in his essay on the Paris Commune. There he makes a few remarks about voting processes. He praises the way that, in the Paris Commune, “all positions of administration, justice, and instruction, [were filled] through election by universal suffrage, the elected being at all times subject to recall by their constituents.”[[8]](#endnote-8)

However, I think that we should not put very much weight on these remarks. They are not part of a considered view of politics and political participation. In any event, for the moment I want to keep to the texts of the 1840s. Still, I also want to try to understand what the basic picture in those texts might imply once we see ourselves as subject to scarcity and so as subject to the need for political institutions. Here, I want to invoke a point that is often made, namely, that participation in the practice of ruling and being ruled is itself a means of self-development. Remember that Marx endorses the ideal of what, in *The German Ideology*, he calls the “all-around realization of the individual.”[[9]](#endnote-9) He, himself – the actual Marx – thinks that this will not involve participation in ruling and being ruled because he thinks that there will simply be no ruling and being ruled – there will be no political institutions of the kind that philosophers have traditionally discussed.

Marx thus thinks that there will be no room for the development and exercise of a form of practical reason that the ancients – most notably, Aristotle – prized very highly. Here, I believe that Marx is deeply mistaken. Given the fact of scarcity, there will always be a need for political institutions. And given the need for political institutions, there will always be a very great need for individuals who can exercise practical wisdom within those institutions. And that means that there is now available – and that there will always be available – the opportunity to exercise what ought to be seen as a very valuable human capacity, namely, the capacity to exercise one’s practical wisdom as someone who works within political institutions of one kind or another. And *that* means that the development of the all-around individual – at least the development of such an individual in the world as it is and will always be – ought to involve the opportunity to participate in institutions of self-government. And so I think that a constrained Marx ought to insist that people must have the liberty to participate in self-government.

Marx’s essay on the Paris Commune proposes a specific form of such participation. Whether that is the wisest form or whether it should be seen as Marx’s last word on democratic institutions can be left aside. My point is that once Marx accepts the need for political institutions, he should also accept that an element in a full, well-rounded human life involves participation in the institutions of self-government.

3. So much for my first thesis about a constrained Marx. My second thesis is that a constrained Marx would be a prioritarian with regard to material distribution. Here, I need to lay out a couple of preliminary points, admittedly in too abstract and general a way. The first has to do with the metric for distribution. We have seen that Rawls uses the metric of primary goods. This fits well with a view that is in some ways Aristotelian, focusing as it does on the conditions under which agents can be in a position to exercise various valuable capacities. I will make no claim about the metric that a constrained Marx would find congenial other than to note that, for Marx, it will also be important that each of us have the opportunity to develop and to exercise a range of capacities. I think that Marx would also be moved by the motivation that pushes Rawls to the idea of primary goods. However, I will leave open whether Marx would think that the metric of primary goods is in fact the best way to satisfy that motivation.

The other thing to present is the idea of prioritarianism. I mentioned this idea briefly in my first lecture, but I want to say a bit more about it here. I take prioritarianism to be the view that in matters of social distribution some sort of significant priority should be given to improving the well-being (however this is understood) of those who are currently worst off. For Rawls, this priority is *lexical*: social distribution must *maximize* the condition of the worst off. Other prioritarian views are weaker in terms of the weight that these views put on priority for the worst off.

My claim about a constrained Marx is that he would be *some sort of prioritarian*. This means that Marx would not be a pure egalitarian. After all, a pure egalitarian would not give *priority* to the worst off. A pure egalitarian would insist that we should eliminate any distinction between the worst off and the better off. A pure egalitarian believes that everyone should get exactly the same. So if the young Marx is, as I believe, a prioritarian, then he is not a pure egalitarian. He does not see any value in equal distribution for its own sake. Textually, this is most evident in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* where Marx criticizes what he calls “crude communism.” Such communism, he says, “is only the culmination of . . . envy.” Marx goes on to reject what he calls “levelling-down” on the ground that it “negates the *personality* of man in every sphere.” He writes that such crude communism (which is to be distinguished from Marx’s own “true communism”) “wants to disregard talent, etc., in an *arbitrary* manner.”[[10]](#endnote-10)

These remarks are interesting. The accusation that the goal of equality for its own sake is a form of envy is a very old accusation. Indeed, it is an accusation that is still with us. That Marx uses this language seems to me to show that he does not care for equality for its own sake. He cares rather that each person have the opportunity to lead a decent life. It is also interesting that Marx criticizes crude communism for disregarding talent in an *arbitrary* manner. That is, Marx seems to think that there is a proper role to be played by differences in talent among people – that merely eliminating such differences would be unjustifiable. And it seems clear that Marx believes that the right role for talent to play is stated in the phrase “from each according to his abilities.” But remember, this is not the assertion of a *duty* to use one’s talents for the public. It is a description of how individuals under true communism would find their own individual fulfillment.

If we now return to the “Critique of the Gotha Programme,” we can also see that the idea of “to each according to his need” has nothing to do with a simple stress on equality. The “Critique of the Gotha Programme” is actually very instructive. In that text Marx examines payment by labor time as the distributive principle for the transitional stage to communism. With payment by labor time, if I work for an hour, I get X in pay. If I work for two hours, I get 2X in pay.[[11]](#endnote-11) Marx has two complaints about this standard. First, he says that if labor is “to serve as a measure, [it] must be defined” by both “intensity” and “duration.”[[12]](#endnote-12) Labor time must be calibrated to productivity. Those who are more productive, either within a given hour or by working more hours, would therefore receive more pay. But workers’ capacities surely differ along these dimensions. Marx’s point is that payment by labor time would have to reflect this difference in workers’ pay. The more productive workers would be paid more than the less productive workers precisely because they are more productive. Marx calls this feature of payment by labor time a “defect.” He seems to think that wage differentials due to such factors would be unjustifiable and would disappear under communism.[[13]](#endnote-13) This rejection of arbitrary variations among human beings as a basis for differential distribution is of course wholly in line with Rawls’s thought. So although Marx seems to reject any rigid equality of pay, he also rejects the idea of pure payment for productivity as being unfair to those who are less productive, presumably through no fault of their own.

Marx’s second criticism of a system of payment for productivity is more important: it ignores differential need. He writes: “[O]ne worker is married, another not; one has more children than another, etc.”[[14]](#endnote-14) Marx’s focus on need suggests giving priority to those most in need, that is, to those who are worst off. In addition, Marx believes that communists would have equal concern for one another’s individual well-being, and it seems plausible that agents who have such concern will tend to focus on the condition of the worst off. If I care equally about each, the plight of the worst off will probably tug hardest at me. It seems likely that a constrained 1844 Marx would consider some sort of prioritarian principle to be the least bad of the distributive possibilities open to a communist society that, as with any real world society, will be subject to scarcity.

The claim that I am making here is admittedly speculative. Still, as a way to determine the view of a constrained 1844 Marx, it is worth engaging in at least a bit of speculation. Thomas Nagel has argued that parents who love their children equally will be prioritarian in their distributive decisions.[[15]](#endnote-15) So let’s imagine a family in which the parents love their children equally or, as I will put it, the parents have equal concern for each child’s well-being. How would such parents distribute resources among multiple children?[[16]](#endnote-16)

The initial baseline that the parents would choose is likely to be equal distribution. Each child would receive an equal share of resources, however “resources” is to be understood. Yet at a second look, the different children’s different needs would likely lead to deviation from this baseline. Piano lessons for one child might cost more than soccer participation for another child. I take the parents’ underlying goal to be to provide each child with adequate training and opportunity so that she can develop her talents and interests. This will sometimes mean that more money must be spent on one child than on another. Now, parents do not distribute resources so as to maximize anything. The goal of the inevitable trade-offs is to enable each individual child to have the opportunity for a decent life.

Of course, families are not societies. Nevertheless, when we extend the family analogy, I think that we will continue to be prioritarian. We could ask each citizen to imagine herself as analogous to being a parent of all the others. Or perhaps it is better to ask each of us to imagine that she is the sibling of all other citizens. Here, then, is our thought experiment. Each of us is to imagine herself as caring equally for all her siblings and to imagine that they care equally for her and all the others. Call this an *impartial sibling/citizen standpoint* or simply an *impartial citizen standpoint*. It involves equal concern for the well-being of all individual citizens.

Something very much like this does seem to me to be the attitude that Marx’s communists would have toward one another. Remember his reference to the “love” that communists would have for one another. I am trying to read this in a way that is consistent with Marx’s texts but that can make sense when we are talking about the relations among citizens of a society with many hundreds of millions of people. I will come back to this point shortly. For the moment, I want merely to urge that citizens who care about one another’s individual lives would probably be prioritarian in their choice of distributive rules.

I concede that I have not provided a rigorous argument. Still, I believe that what I am claiming does capture the ethos of a Marxian view. I should note several things about the argument – such as it is – that I have just given.

First, the conclusion is that Marx would be a prioritarian, *not* that he would be in favor of some sort of aggregative view like utilitarianism. I have insisted that the young Marx favors individual development and so its institutional precondition, namely, substantial individual liberty. As such, there is a limit to any utilitarian tendency we can read into Marx. Beyond that, however, given that Marx’s focus is on individual development, I think that he would be opposed to purely aggregative views in which one person’s development and well-being is sacrificed to promote a greater aggregate good such as, say, the maximization of average utility. Remember the line from *The Communist Manifesto*, “The free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.” The emphasis on the free development of each would be at odds with any aggregative view.

The second thing to note is that I have tried to put Marx within the tradition of the impartial spectator or impartial judge, but that I am adjusting him in a specific way. Now, in its usual form, the impartial judge tradition describes a certain standpoint by characterizing a being that would take that standpoint. So Adam Smith’s impartial spectator is precisely, that, namely, he is impartial. In the twentieth century, Roderick Firth attempted to characterize such a view in very general terms. What Firth calls an “ideal observer” would be, Firth says, “omniscient with regard to non-ethical facts” and “omnipercipient.” Firth’s view is that the ideal observer occupies the standpoint of morality *per se*.[[17]](#endnote-17) I want to emphasize that when I talk of an impartial citizen or of an impartial member of Marx’s true communist society, I am *not* claiming that such a citizen or such an impartial member of communist society occupies *the* moral standpoint. I am merely claiming that *for the purposes of determining how to distribute things within a communist society*, it would be useful to examine that question from the standpoint of a member of that society who is equally concerned for the well-being of all other members of that society.

To put the point a little differently, the impartial citizen does not only respond to phenomena – as Smith’s spectator and Firth’s observer do. Rather, the impartial citizen *chooses* *on behalf of others*. In effect, the standpoint of the impartial citizen models a particular moral conception of the person, specifically, a conception of persons as free, rational beings, capable of equal concern for the well-being of each individual. My key thesis – adapting Nagel’s claim about distribution within a family – is that the impartial citizen, so understood, would focus on the condition of those in her society who are worst off.

(In fact, although there is not space to give the argument, I believe that plausible knowledge constraints on the impartial citizen would lead to a condition that is much like the original position, and so would lead to reasoning that is similar to – although not identical with – the reasoning in the original position.)

The final thing to note about this argument is that I leave open precisely what form of prioritarianism Marx would prefer. However, I suspect that he would have a deep reservation about using Rawls’s Difference Principle itself.[[18]](#endnote-18) I think that Marx would have a difficult time accepting the Difference Principle as the best prioriatarian rule. As I have argued, Marx is not committed to material equality for its own sake. The fact that the Difference Principle countenances some degree of material inequality would not prompt a Marxian veto. Nevertheless, a principle that depends in a central way on self-interested incentives – as the Difference Principle does -- fits badly with the 1844 Marx’s view of communists’ motivations. Marx has a large place for the pursuit of individual self-realization. He does not stress the sacrifice of one’s own good. Nevertheless, his communists act in significant part from concern for one another’s well-being. Further work in this area would need to determine whether there is a way to make peace with individual incentives (and so perhaps with something like Rawls’s Difference Principle) without the social world in question ceasing to be what even a constrained 1844 Marx could find acceptable.

4. We have arrived at a place that might seem strange for Marx. I have turned him into a writer who supports some sort of principle of individual liberty as well as some sort of principle of prioritarian material distribution. Yet in fact this is not a strange place for Marx to be if we think that his ideas can help us to deal properly with the reality of scarcity. Indeed, I have simply placed Marx within the central tradition of progressive western political thought. More generally, I have placed Marx in a modern Aristotelian line of thought in which what is crucial is that individuals all have the opportunity to develop a wide range of individually chosen valuable capacities. Let’s go back to the famous slogan from *The Communist Manifesto*, “The free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.” That slogan affirms the normative thesis that I am attributing to Marx – that a good society provides the conditions for the free development of each individual. It then adds to that normative thesis about the human good an empirical thesis about the conditions for that good to be realized, namely, that the condition for any individual freely to develop is that all have the opportunity to do so.

Marx phrase from the *Manifesto* will enable us to look at a third thesis about a constrained Marx. That thesis says that Marx would give priority to liberty. Textually, it seems clear that Marx hopes that there will never be a need to balance liberty against the various goods that enable individuals to develop their capacities. That is the meaning of the thought that the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all: we cannot get general free development unless each individual develops freely, but if each individual develops freely, we can in fact get general free development.

Unfortunately, this is too easy. There will inevitably be situations in which economic progress or economic efficiency or some way of understanding the content of the general good will require some form of limitation of liberty. The fact that there will inevitably be instances of this sort of conflict is a staple of liberal political thought, and liberal political thought almost always takes the position that individual liberty should not be limited – at least that it should not be limited unless what is on the other side of the scale is clearly very, very important. For instance, most liberal political philosophers believe that there are few if any circumstances under which it would be permissible for the government to prohibit or even severely to limit citizens’ liberty to demonstrate and to hold peaceful protests. Even if maintaining the peace and protecting the demonstrators would be very costly, most liberal political thinkers argue that this is a cost that needs to be borne.

Would our constrained Marx agree? I would like to think that he would agree, but the imagined situation is so far from what his texts discuss that it is, I am afraid, hard to say what Marx’s view would be. I *think* – but I am very far from sure – that a constrained Marx would usually come down in favor of the priority of liberty. This is because Marx is so focused on the all-around development of the individual. Past a certain stage of material plenty, a stage that most economically developed societies have reached or could easily reach, I think that Marx would agree with Rawls that individual development is facilitated more by having the opportunity to do things, to be exposed to ideas, to engage in activities with others, and so forth than by having more material goods. I want to emphasize that there is considerable room here for debate – still, I think that, on balance, a constrained Marx would say that liberty should override most other considerations.

III. Adapting the 1844 Marx’s Philosophical Anthropology

1. The second way that I would like to adapt the 1844 Marx has to do with his philosophical anthropology. I have argued that other nineteenth century writers were similar to Marx in stressing that a good human life involves the exercise of a broad range of human capacities. However, at times the 1844 Marx seems to limit the relevant capacities to those capacities that are part of the process of transforming the material world for human use. The 1844 Marx thinks of this emphasis as something that has hitherto been overlooked. Thus in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* Marx declares that “the history of *industry* and the established *objective* existence of industry are the *open* book of *human essential powers*.”[[19]](#endnote-19) He calls this a “large part of human labor” and “a wealth of human activity,” and he criticizes previous writers for having seen in this merely “‘*need, common need*.’”[[20]](#endnote-20) Here, Marx is insisting that earlier writers’ stress on the activities of politics, of philosophy and of religion have missed what is central to human nature. His view of which human capacities to exercise puts the stress on human capacities that the ancient Athenian philosophers, to take one example, would have despised.

I want to keep in mind several things here. The first is that the praise of work, including ordinary labor, was in fact not at all unusual in Victorian culture. We can find it in many a novelist of the period, such as Joseph Conrad, whose most virtuous characters are often the characters who attend to ordinary work and who find satisfaction in doing so. Once again, Marx is more in the mainstream than he seems to realize.

The second thing to keep in mind is that Marx, himself, is often unclear about whether the crucial human activity is the kind of work that one does in order to satisfy basic human needs. In the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* Marx does not praise only the kind of labor that is involved in satisfying basic human needs. He also writes that animals produce “only under the domination of immediate physical need, while the human being produces even free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom from it.”[[21]](#endnote-21) In this passage Marx seems to be saying that genuine human flourishing consists in exercising *whichever* capacities one freely finds most valuable to exercise. Here there is not a stress on the capacities that are used in the ordinary process of daily labor.

At different times during his life Marx seems to have had different views about this issue. By the time that he writes *Capital* he seems to think that labor to satisfy basic human needs – *necessary* labor – is *not* the sphere of human flourishing. For instance, in volume three of *Capital* Marx says that “The realm of freedom actually begins only where labor which is determined by necessity and external expediency ceases; thus in the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production.”[[22]](#endnote-22) Much earlier in his life, however, in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, the central stress *does* seem to be on the activity of material production to meet basic needs.

2. Let me pause briefly to make a scholarly claim about all this. Keeping now just to the work of 1844, there are three reasons to think that the 1844 texts should be taken to favor necessary labor as the activity central to the good life.

First, Marx insists in 1844 that his account differs from traditional accounts, but traditional accounts agree that necessary labor is *not* the sphere of the good life. Whether one should philosophize, worship God, or rule the polity, these activities are all distinct from necessary labor. If Marx is merely favoring some other non-necessary activity, his view would be much less distinctive than he thinks.

Second, a great deal of Marx’s 1844 work consists of a criticism of labor in a capitalist society. This criticism is of the labor that workers must do in order to earn a wage, and such labor is clearly the production of basic consumption goods, the labor necessary for the species’ survival. Now the 1844 Marx’s primary criticism of this labor under capitalism is not that it exists at all -- that its quantity should be reduced or that it should be entirely eliminated (perhaps done by machines) -- but rather that it is, as he puts it, “alienated.”[[23]](#endnote-23) The fact that labor is alienated under capitalism is supposed to be a deep and basic criticism of capitalism. It is supposed to show that capitalism is *essentially* at odds with a good human life. But the alienation of labor can be this and show this only if the kind of labor that is alienated is a deep and basic part of human life, only if that kind of labor is essential to a good human life.

Finally, in the “Comments on James Mill,” as we have seen, Marx describes what it would be like if we produced “as human beings.”[[24]](#endnote-24) He sketches communist production, and depicts how, through such production, agents would realize their nature. The labor described in the “Comments on James Mill” essay is clearly necessary labor, and the intended contrast is clearly to the same labor under capitalism.[[25]](#endnote-25)

3. I have just devoted a small bit of time to Marx scholarship. But we need also to consider the issue purely philosophically. Now, philosophically, it is very hard to make a useful distinction between necessary and non-necessary labor. Clearly, the core enterprise that the 1844 Marx has in mind when he talks of labor is the physical transformation of the material world: cutting down trees, planting grain, casting steel, working in a factory that makes cloth or shoes. But limiting labor to these kinds of activities would rule out mental activities, and that would be absurd. The engineer’s activity is as vital to making a bridge as the steel maker’s activity or the riveter’s activity.

Is “labor” then mental *or* physical activity that contributes to the transformation of the material world? Does it include both drafting blueprints *and* using a jackhammer? Actually, the scope of “labor” has to be even wider than this. In the *Economic and Philosophic* Manuscripts, Marx refers to being "*scientifically* active," where the context indicates that he thinks both that scientific activity need not be directed toward immediate practical results *and* that such activity is a form of labor.[[26]](#endnote-26) Certainly it would be odd to think of the engineer’s but not the theoretical chemist’s activity as labor.

Is labor, then, mental or physical activity that contributes immediately *or* over the long run to the physical transformation of the material world? Here we find ourselves on a very slippery slope. On Monday, mathematician *M*’s new theorem had no application. On Tuesday, an application is found. Should *M*’s activity on Monday now be re-classified as labor? On Monday, I amused myself by carving bits of wood into odd shapes. On Tuesday, one piece turns out to be the perfect thing with which to plug the hole in the local dike. Was I laboring on Monday? When pressed, the category “labor” seems to have no boundaries at all. Yet it needs to have boundaries if Marx's claim is not to become trivial.

I think that we are better off simply not putting the focus on “labor.” I think that the 1844 Marx made a mistake by trying to identify a single central activity that counts as labor. Instead, I think that we should put the focus on the many, many ways in which human beings contribute to one another’s basic needs and beyond that, to one another’s general well-being. Some of the activities we engage in might look like what the 1844 Marx meant by “labor.” Much of it will not. This is due partly to the fact that many occupations now involve the provision of services rather than the production of material goods. It is also due partly to the fact that many occupations now involve mental work of all kinds rather than manual work. However, it is also due to the fact that the things that we do for one another are not limited to what we do in our jobs. In his texts of 1844, Marx’s communists are said to manifest their concern for one another’s well-being by producing objects for one another to use. But in a modern society human beings manifest their concern for one another’s well-being in many different ways. We produce objects for one another to use. We provide services for one another. However, we also obey the law, we vote, we discuss the politics of the moment. In general, we do many, many things that are part of maintaining a society.

I am proposing that we distinguish between the deep meaning of the relationships that Marx describes in his work of 1844 and the specific activity – that of transforming the material world – on which he focuses. I think that the deep meaning of the relationships is that Marx is imagining people who care about one another’s well-being and who act in a wide variety of ways in order to promote one another’s well-being. It is that kind of relationship that I want to take from Marx’s work of 1844.

IV. Similarities Between Rawls and a Constrained Young Marx

1. I have just urged the following:

(1) An 1844 Marx who accepts the inevitable constraints of material scarcity will have to find distributive principles to regulate a constrained communist society. I have also urged:

(2) Such a Marx is likely to accept distributive principles that are similar to although probably not identical with Rawls’s two principles of justice. I have also suggested, although more tentatively:

(3) That Marx would agree with Rawls in normally according priority to liberty, at least in societies that have attained a decent level of economic development.

Finally, I have urged:

(4) That we should focus on the relationships among communists that Marx describes in his work of 1844 and that we should reject the specific claim in the work of 1844 that the essential human activity consists in the transformation of the material world.

2. So we can now think about the similarities and the differences between Rawls and a constrained Marx. First, to the similarities. I have just noted three. Here are two further similarities:

(i) The first similarity has to do with the way in which, for both Rawls and the 1844 Marx, agents in their ideal societies have shared ends. In my initial lecture I noted the distinction between *internally-oriented* and *externally-oriented* shared ends. With the first kind of shared end the content of agents’ shared end is simply to live in a society structured in a certain way. By contrast, an externally-oriented shared end involves attaining some goal held by the collectivity as a whole, for instance, attaining God's kingdom on earth or pursuing empire and conquest. Here, agents wish to promote something beyond the maintenance of a certain structure of living together.

Marx’s communists have the shared end of creating and maintaining a society in which each agent can realize her nature as a being who simultaneously expresses her individuality and produces for others as part of the human species’ continual joint transformation of itself and the world. Marx’s communists have no shared end beyond this. Similarly, Rawls’s citizens, at least merely as citizens, wish simply to live in a society whose basic structure is regulated by the two principles of justice. To repeat what I said in my first lecture, in *A Theory of Justice* Rawls believes that the maintenance of a just society is “the preeminent form of human flourishing” and he says that “persons best express their nature” by maintaining just institutions.[[27]](#endnote-27) Similarly, by maintaining a communist society, Marx’s citizens would best express their nature and would engage in what he, Marx, would consider to be the preeminent form of human flourishing.

The second distinction that I mentioned in my first lecture was between *overlapping* and *intertwined* shared ends. Ends overlap when agents have the same end but they need not attain that end with and through others. Now, it is part of Marx’s description of a communist’s activities that she is producing *for* other human beings, and that in consuming she appreciates what others have produced *for* her. Her ends in producing would be short-circuited if her products were to rot or God were to rain manna. Persons for whom it is crucial that they help to satisfy one another's ends have intertwined ends.

Rawls’s citizens need one another to realize the good of living in a just society. This good involves giving one another justice, that is, giving justice *to* one another. The structure is the same with Marx’s communists except that what Marx’s communists give to one another is not justice so much as the various forms of goods that citizens use to pursue their own lives. With both Marx and Rawls, citizens give and receive from one another; they *intend* to give and to receive such things; and all this is understood and appreciated by citizens generally. And for both writers, it is through the giving/receiving process that people individually – and so, granted the structure of the activities, also jointly – realize (at least some of) their final ends.[[28]](#endnote-28)

(ii) A final similarity has to do with Rawls’s concept of congruence. Because Rawls’s citizens in his well-ordered society see themselves as having a highest order final end in exercising their capacity for a sense of justice, what Rawls calls “congruence” obtains. I mentioned this topic in my previous lecture. I will say a bit more now. In *A Theory of Justice* Rawls insists that to act justly in a just well-ordered society is not merely a burden that is at odds with and that undermines one’s pursuit of one’s good. On the contrary, in a just society one’s own good and being a just person fit together. They are mutually supporting – this is what Rawls calls the congruence of the right and the good. If congruence obtains in a society, then being the sort of person who complies with social rules *because* those rule are just will be at least partly constitutive of one’s own good. It will be part of one’s good to comply with these rules because they rest on values that fit the kind of person that one takes oneself to be. One will find a form of self-realization in such compliance.[[29]](#endnote-29)

One could see Rawls’s thought here as Aristotelian. We have various key capacities and what it is to lead a flourishing life is to exercise those capacities in the right way. Now, Rawls sees us as moral beings where the phrase “moral beings” is interpreted in terms of what in the “Kantian Constructivism in Moral Philosophy” lectures he calls “two moral powers.” One of these powers is the capacity for a sense of justice. To exercise that power is said to be a highest-order interest. That means that an important part of human flourishing consists in exercising that power. In *A Theory of Justice* Rawls says this quite explicitly. To repeat these phrases yet again, he calls the maintenance of a just society “the preeminent form of human flourishing” and says that “persons best express their nature” by maintaining just institutions.[[30]](#endnote-30) In *A Theory of Justice* Rawls also writes that “The desire to act justly and the desire to express our nature as free moral persons turn out to specify what is practically speaking the same desire.”[[31]](#endnote-31) And he writes: “[T]he desire to express our nature as a free and equal rational being can be fulfilled only by acting on the principles of right and justice as having first priority.”[[32]](#endnote-32) Finally, he writes that in the well-ordered society, what he calls “moral personality” -- that is, the possession of what in the “Kantian Constructivism” lectures is referred to as the two moral powers -- is to be regarded “as the fundamental aspect of the self.”[[33]](#endnote-33) Rawls believes that his well-ordered society counts as the optimal condition for the realization of this fundamental aspect of the self.

There is a structural parallel here with the 1844 Marx. As I have stressed, Marx believes that for me to engage in activities that provide others with various things that enable those others to pursue *their* good is a crucial part of *my* good. For Marx, what is crucial to the person is not Rawls’s pair, “capacity to pursue one’s own good/capacity for a sense of justice” but, rather, something different: the pair, “capacity to pursue one’s own good/capacity to act so as to benefit others.” To be able to exercise this second capacity is, for Marx, part of realizing one’s nature. That second capacity – the capacity to benefit others – is what Marx substitutes in place of a sense of justice in thinking about the fundamental aspect of the self. For Marx, that second capacity can be properly exercised only in a true communist society. In such a society, one will produce things *for* others – that is, one will produce in part with the intention to benefit others. And doing so will be part of one’s own good.

V. Different Political Attitudes

1. So there is more in the way of similarities between Karl Marx and John Rawls than has usually been seen. Nevertheless, there are also differences. Indeed, there are, I think, two fundamental and tightly connected differences between the two writers. To get at the first difference, I want to introduce the category of *political attitude*. This is the basic stance that citizens have toward one another simply *as* citizens. It is an attitude that can, ideally, inform institutions and the way that institutions deal with citizens. Moreover, it is the attitude that citizens, ideally, have toward each other in their various dealings with one another.

Now, modern political attitudes are distinctive because the primary objects of modern political attitudes are unknown distant strangers. In a modern society we can have direct citizen-citizen interactions of various kinds in our daily lives, and these can be important. Nevertheless, so far as I have fellow citizens and an attitude toward them, for the most part these citizens are unknown to me. Indeed, as I mentioned at the beginning of the first lecture, modern political philosophy is in large part about the proper relations among modern citizens, that is, among people who can know little or nothing of one another individually and yet are reciprocally dependent for the provision of what Mill calls “the very groundwork of our existence” as well as for all those many things that make possible a good human life.[[34]](#endnote-34) As I am using the concept, to have a particular political attitude is to have certain beliefs and expectations about one’s fellow citizens as well to have a disposition to respond to one’s fellow citizens in certain ways. It is also to be vulnerable to them in certain ways, for instance, to be capable of being disappointed or hurt by their conduct.

No doubt, each of us has more than one attitude of this kind. Still, institutional arrangements will tend to foster some political attitudes and inhibit others. As I use it, a political attitude is part of the background within which I live as a citizen. The central political attitude that I hold will tend to pervade my way of seeing and treating my fellow citizens. It will tend to pervade my orientation toward our shared social life. And my beliefs about my fellow citizens’ political attitudes will affect how I see myself as being treated both by those citizens and by our society’s political institutions.

My claim is that for Rawls’s view, justice as fairness, there is a primary and most favored political attitude of citizens in his well-ordered society. That is, there is a political attitude that is expressed by and is a kind of moral basis for his two principles of justice. It is an attitude that Rawlsian institutions would instill in citizens, and that, ideally, would be part of the warp and woof of daily life in Rawls’s well-ordered society. This Rawlsian political attitude is *equal respect for one another as persons*. The importance of equal respect for persons is one important way in which Rawls’s view is a descendant of the work of Immanuel Kant.

There has been an enormous amount written about the concept of respect in political philosophy. To go through these debates would require another set of lectures. What I want to claim here is that the political attitude of respect for one’s fellow citizens involves several things. It involves, first, a belief in one’s fellow citizens’ fundamental value as human beings, independent of their wealth, their talents or accomplishments, and so forth. It is a bit mysterious what the basis is of such fundamental value. Fortunately, here I do not have to speculate about that question. (For Rawls, it seems to be the possession of the two moral powers.) The point is that in a society in which the dominant political attitude is that of respect for persons, citizens do regard each other in this way, that is, they regard one another as having fundamental value. The second thing that such an attitude involves is a disposition to treat one’s fellow citizens in ways that are consistent with the belief in their fundamental value. This will involve certain forms of civility and reasonableness in public discourse. It will also involve a particular content for our central social rules. Most obviously, treating others with respect in the political realm seems to involve accepting that others ought to have the liberty to do various things, such as to express themselves, to engage in discourse with others, and so on.

Several philosophers have written about what *an equal respect society* – as I will call it – would be like. They have discussed what would be its basic features. What is often emphasized by such philosophers is that in an equal respect society great weight is put on equality before the law and on the equal status of all as citizens. As I have noted, this is something that Rawls stresses. The following would, I think, be characteristic of an equal respect society:

(i) There is no subjection of individuals to one another. All are merely subject to the law.

(ii) Those who hold positions of institutional power and authority are merely representatives of the law and are themselves subject to the law. Moreover, they are responsible to the citizenry. No citizen is subject to *them*, that is, no citizen is subject to the officials.

(iii) All citizens are *equally* dependent on the law. The law applies equally, in Locke’s words, to “the rich and poor . . . the favorite at court and the country man at plough.”[[35]](#endnote-35)

(iv) Citizens *make* the law, jointly and equally, through democratic political processes. Our individual wills are equally embodied in the collective will.

A further claim is sometimes made. It is said that if citizens are all equal before the law, this must be because all citizens possess *dignity-entitling properties*. This means:

(a) Citizens see one another as beings with the (valuable) capacities needed to participate in political decision-making, as well as with the (valuable) capacities needed to be able to recognize what the (democratically made) law requires, and to comply with that law at least in part because it is (democratically made) law.

(b) More generally, there is a widespread social understanding that each citizen is entitled to full political participation and equal treatment *because* each has fundamental value qua citizen or, more generally, qua human being.

The reference to a “social understanding” is important. It points to the *expressive role* of institutional arrangements. The law is often said to be expressive. For instance, Joel Feinberg points out that the criminal law expresses the community’s moral condemnation of the criminal, our collective opprobrium.[[36]](#endnote-36) I want to urge that, in a more positive vein, the public understanding that all citizens are equal before the law can been thought to express an affirmation of citizens’ equal (and fundamental) value. In the society that we are imagining – an equal respect society -- citizens would believe that their equality before the law expresses certain beliefs that are widespread among the citizens. I think that such equality before the law would express the following:

(1) That citizens believe in their own and in other citizens’ fundamental value, and they respect other citizens as beings with fundamental value.

(2) That citizens believe that other citizens believe (1) and respect *them* as beings with fundamental value.

(3) That (a) citizens believe that other citizens can make certain claims on them, for instance, claims to the exercise of certain liberties or to certain background economic conditions; and, moreover, that (b) citizens are (sufficiently) motivated to meet those claims.

(4) That citizens believe that other citizens believe (3-a) about *them*, and that other citizens are (sufficiently) motivated to meet *their* claims.

I believe that the combination of (1) – (4) is likely to support citizens’ sense of their own value, what Rawls calls their self-respect or their self-esteem. By hypothesis, in such a society, each citizen believes that others believe that she has fundamental value. For must of us, this would be an important prop to our sense of our own worth.[[37]](#endnote-37) In addition, in such a society each citizen is motivated to satisfy certain basic claims from others, and each believes that others are similarly motivated. Here, citizens depend on others not only in the sense of being vulnerable to others but also in the sense of being able to rely on others in a basic way.[[38]](#endnote-38)

2. Let’s turn now to Marx. Marx does not talk of respect. Indeed, I think that the political attitude that Marx highlights is not respect but a different attitude, what I will call *concern* and specifically what I will call *concern for other individuals’ well-being*. Of course, Marx, himself does not use this terminology. I will try to show that it is indeed implicit in his views. In any event, I think that this concept – concern – can help us to construct the most philosophically compelling version of a view that is like the young Marx’s view or that could be thought of as descended from the young Marx’s view.

Let’s begin to discuss this political attitude by looking at a passage that shows a stark *absence* of concern for other people’s well-being, an utter *indifference* to other people’s well-being. The passage is from Friedrich Engels’ 1844 book, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*. Here is Engels:

Ultimately it is self-interest, and especially money gain, which alone determines [these English bourgeois]. I once went into Manchester with such a bourgeois, and spoke to him of the bad, unwholesome method of building, the frightful condition of the working-people’s quarters, and asserted that I had never seen so ill-built a city. The man listened quietly to the end, and said at the corner where we parted: “And yet there is a great deal of money made here; good morning, sir.” It is utterly indifferent to the English bourgeois whether his working-men starve or not, if only he makes money.[[39]](#endnote-39)

It is important to see that in this passage Engels’ bourgeois shows no contempt for the working-people. The bourgeois takes no satisfaction in their misery. (In this way, his attitude differs from the attitude that Rousseau thinks the rich have toward the poor.) What is going on in the passage is different. The condition of the working-people of Manchester simply does not register on the bourgeois. Their plight does not *matter* to him. He does not *care* that they lead miserable lives. He is simply and completely indifferent to them and their well-being.

When philosophers discuss the attitude of respect, they often contrast it to a different attitude, the attitude of contempt. Now, I think that the contrasting counterpart to concern is indifference.[[40]](#endnote-40) For the 1844 Marx, the worker’s alienation involves, among other things, a (justified) belief that he is not the object of others’ concern, that others are indifferent to his well-being. I am claiming that, for Marx, proper – that is, unalienated – social relationships involve reciprocal concern for one another’s well-being. He believes that such relationships would obtain in a true communist society. In such a society citizens’ well-being would matter to one another.

As I say, Marx does not use any German word that is properly translated into English as “concern.” However, in his work of 1844 he does at times use the German word “Liebe” or, in English, “love.” Yet as I mentioned in the last lecture, Marx cannot mean by this that workers under communism would have the kind of affection for fellow workers, including for those millions of workers whom they have never met, that one individual has for another individual. In the last lecture I said that communists would have what I called a *structural friendship* with one another. I think that the political attitude that best captures the idea of a structural friendship is what I mean by “concern.”

If concern is the parallel to Rawlsian respect, how would the structure of a Marxian equal concern society parallel the structure I have just noted of a Rawlsian equal respect society? I believe that for what I have called a *constrained Marx*, a communist society regulated by Marxian two distributive principles – by a liberty principle and some form of prioritarian principle – and tied to the political attitude of equal concern would involve the following:

(1) Agents would provide one another with the goods and services that each needs to attain her individual ends.

(2) Such provision for others would be an important part of each agent’s ends.

A consequence of (1) and (2) would be:

(3) The consumer’s use of the good or service would contribute to the provider’s attaining *his* end. There would be a complementarity between the provider’s ends and the consumer’s ends. And as the consumer would also provide a good or a service – that is, would also provide something for someone else, qua consumer -- such complementarity would be reciprocal.

Note the following about these relationships.

(a) They are impersonal in the sense that there is no specific individual for whom I provide a good or service.

(b) As with what I called an equal respect society, there is an important *expressive* role here for social arrangements. Citizens see themselves as providing things *for* others and see others as providing things *for* them. In effect, citizens see a certain intention embodied in the objects and services of daily life.

(c) Citizens in a true communist society have a specific pair of attitudes toward one another. First, there is *concern for* one another’s well-being. Agents are not indifferent to one another’s well-being. Agents matter to one another. Second, and tied to the fact of reciprocal concern for one another’s well-being, each citizen *appreciates* what others have done for her.

3. Let’s explore these categories, the category of concern but also its connected category of appreciation. I think that these categories are important for political philosophy and that they are part of what we can take from the young Marx.

Now, although the young Marx uses the term “love,” I think that concern is *not* merely a weak form of love. To conceive of concern as a form of love would almost surely mean that concern for unknown distant others is impossible. For it is generally thought that love involves frequent and intense feelings, and these cannot obtain in relation to unknown distant others. In fact, however, I believe that concern is quite different from love, that it is a quite distinct attitude. For instance, concern, as I understand it, need not involve much in the way of occurrent feelings for its object. In this way it is like the attitude of trust. I can trust someone and act on that trust without having much in the way of feelings. Something similar can be the case with concern. To be sure, recent philosophical discussions of love downplay the role of occurrent feelings in love, and concern does involve *some* feelings, say, reactive emotions with regard to the object of one’s concern. Nevertheless, feelings are likely to be much less frequent and intense with concern than with love.

However, the key difference between love and concern has less to do with feelings than with the degree of specification of the objects of these different attitudes. As I have been stressing, at issue in political philosophy are our relations to people of whom, individually, we will never hear. I think that the object of love cannot be someone utterly unspecified in the sense of being seen solely under a very general identity.[[41]](#endnote-41) Yet it does seem possible to have concern for the well-being of someone who is seen only under a very general identity – one can have concern, say, for those people who are, and take this as the full available description, the victims of an earthquake in San Francisco or a tsunami in Japan.

If the concept of concern, where the object of the attitude of concern is other individuals and their well-being, is to do work for political philosophy, it must be a possibility of our nature to have a motivationally efficacious attitude – concern, not love -- toward individuals about whom we know very little. *How far* we are likely to have this attitude is obviously of first importance. I will touch briefly on that question in the final lecture under the heading of the *feasibility* of Marx’s view. Here, I want merely to press for the *possibility* of such an attitude toward unknown others.

An example from the philosopher Cora Diamond is useful. Diamond imagines a news report announcing that a Boeing 747 has crashed and that everyone aboard has been killed. Diamond then imagines two different news flashes that correct the earlier report. On one corrective flash, it turns out that a Boeing 747 crashed but not everyone was killed -- there were survivors. The alternative news flash says that the crashed plane turned about to be a Boeing 727, a smaller plane – in this second scenario everyone died but there were fewer deaths.[[42]](#endnote-42) In both corrected scenarios the number of fewer dead is the same. If we respond differently to the two corrections – feel a kind of relief with the first but less so with the second -- the difference cannot be due to aggregative considerations.

It is important to see that in neither corrected scenario is a face put on those who do not die. In the first corrected scenario it is easier to imagine real people with real lives, but this is an exercise in imagination. All that one knows is that some people “escaped death,” as Diamond puts it.[[43]](#endnote-43) In the second corrected scenario no one escaped death. Here, nothing at all can be said about those who did not die. It is, in effect, the rest of humanity. Even in the first corrected scenario although one’s concern is for individuals, one knows nothing about them. What I take from Diamond’s example is that concern can be focused on the well-being of individual human beings rather than on numbers even when one knows nothing about those individual human beings. What I take from Diamond’s example is that such concern is in fact a possibility of our nature.

4. Let’s look now at a different attitude, the attitude of appreciation. I think that it involves three elements. There is, first, a positive assessment of what the agent has done, for instance, that she has made something that is good of its kind. There is, second, an affirmation of the value of the kind of thing in question. For instance, I might see the ways in which a particular painting is a good work of art, and I might also see it as a thing of value because I believe that art is valuable. Finally, and crucially, there is an attitude of thankfulness, of gratitude, to the agent for having done something with the goal of benefiting me (or, perhaps merely of benefiting someone).

The English phrase, “I appreciate what you have done,” could involve all these elements. I could be acknowledging that you have done something of value, but I could also be thanking you for doing something *for* me (or for others) -- I could be acknowledging your intention in acting. In the concern/appreciation ideal, agents reciprocally appreciate what others have done *for* them.

Here, remember, that we have amended the young Marx a bit. Our appreciation of one another need not be limited to appreciation of the physical objects that we make. What we do for one another certainly includes such objects but it includes many other activities as well. As I noted, in a modern society each of us does many things for unknown others. We provide products and services, we comply with the laws, we debate the issues of the day, and so forth. These activities, and many more, are part of good citizenship. In engaging in these activities we are usually self-interested. Yet we might also understand and affirm these activities’ roles in sustaining our joint social life, that is, in sustaining the conditions of one another’s good – or in the words from *The* *Communist Manifesto*, in maintaining the conditions for the free development of each. If it is widely understood that sustaining these conditions tends to be among citizens’ aims – if that is a non-trivial part of what citizens’ intend in their actions -- there could be broad reciprocal appreciation of what we do for one another.

In what I will call an *equal* *reciprocal* *concern and appreciation society* citizens would have the following beliefs:

(i) That other citizens are concerned for their well-being (that they matter to others).

(ii) That other citizens recognize that *they* are concerned for others’ well-being (that others matter to them), and that other citizens appreciate them for being concerned.

(iii) That other citizens have contributed and are continuing to contribute to *their* well-being.

(iv) That they have contributed and are continuing to contribute to other citizens’ well-being, and that other citizens appreciate them for doing so.

(v) That other citizens take satisfaction in *their* satisfactions.

Remember that in an equal respect society, the belief that one is respected and valued by others helps to sustain one’s self-respect. I will assume that, in an equal concern and appreciation society, it will similarly help to sustain one’s self-respect if one sees oneself in a web of positive relationships within which one believes that one’s well-being matters to others.

5. We have, then, two different political attitudes, respect and concern. As I have noted, the first attitude, the attitude of respect, derives from Kant’s thought. In whatever way the concept of respect is specified and developed, it will almost certainly be focused on the idea that human beings are agents, that we are the kind of beings who make choices, and that this feature of human beings must be treated as something that has great value.

I have attributed the attitude of concern to Marx, but within the philosophical tradition, Marx is not alone in focusing on this attitude. Something along these lines can be found in British sentimentalism, among writers such as Francis Hutcheson, David Hume and Adam Smith, as well as in later British writers such as Mill. To take one example, Hume stresses that we can be affected by “images of human happiness or misery.” And he insists that we do care about the usefulness of actions and institutions, but of course that means, he notes, that we care about the well-being of those who are benefited by useful actions and institutions. The characteristic of human beings that Hume praises in *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* is “beneficence,” which I take to be a tendency to care about others’ well-being and to be motivated to promote that well-being and to be pleased by its presence. But that is precisely the characteristic that Marx thinks would be widespread among people in a true communist society. It seems to be what Marx has in mind when he says that in a communist society “the senses [*Sinne*] and enjoyment [*Genuß*] of other human beings have become my own appropriation [*Aneignung*]”; and when he says that "Insofar as the human being, and hence also his feeling [*Empfindung*], etc., is *human*, the affirmation [*Bejahung*] of the object by another is likewise his own enjoyment [*Genuß*]”; and when he says that under communism “Need or enjoyment” would have “lost their *egoistic* nature.”[[44]](#endnote-44)

In addition to finding resonances to Hume, we can also find places in the work of Hume’s mentor, Francis Hutcheson, that clearly fit with what we find in the young Marx. For instance, in Hutcheson’s book, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725), he asserts that “while we are only intending the Good of others, we undesignedly promote our own greatest good.”[[45]](#endnote-45) This is equally true for Marx’s communists who realize their own nature by engaging in activities with the intent to benefit others. I think that the young Marx would also accept Hutcheson’s claim that the pleasure that one gets in engaging in activities that benefit others is connected to “being conscious of disinterested Love to others as the Spring of our Actions.”[[46]](#endnote-46) And the young Marx would agree that we have a positive response to those who, as Hutcheson puts it, “Delight in our Happiness, and Love toward us.”[[47]](#endnote-47) These remarks of Hutcheson’s sound very much in line with Marx’s claim from the “Comments on James Mill” that in a true communist society, I would “know myself to be confirmed both in your thought and your love.”[[48]](#endnote-48)

Moreover, when I interpret Marx as emphasizing the ways in which communists would appreciate what they have done for one another, here, again, I am situating him within a long tradition. This is perhaps more obvious because what I call “appreciation” is related to what others have termed “recognition,” and the recognition tradition is quite well known. I use the term “appreciation” because it connotes not merely affirming a fact about someone but also valuing what that person has done and being grateful to her for doing it.

The thought that it is important to engage in activities that benefit others and that are recognized as such can be found, for instance, in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*. There, Hegel says that agents in civil society want to be seen as engaged in activities that have more than a “selfish aspect.” They want to be seen as engaged in activities that have objective social value.[[49]](#endnote-49) From the sentimentalist tradition, Hume, too, puts emphasis on this theme. He notes that we all desire to see our work as socially useful. Hume writes, “Can anything stronger be said in praise of a profession, such as merchandize or manufacture, than to observe the advantages which it procures to society; and is not a monk and inquisitor enraged when we treat his order as useless or pernicious to mankind?”[[50]](#endnote-50)

There is nothing odd about the desire that Hegel and Hume highlight. I think that most people want to believe that their life’s work makes at least some positive social contribution. The concern/appreciation view assumes that, consistent with individual liberty, people can be brought up to take satisfaction in the belief that their work is socially valuable.

6. Okay, then, my claims about political attitudes are that the political attitude of respect is characteristic of Rawls’s theory of justice as fairness and that the political attitudes of concern and appreciation are characteristic of the young Marx’s view. This is one deep difference between Rawls and Marx.

A second – and clearly closely related -- difference is in their conceptions of the person. Rawls’s conception of the person puts great weight on complying with principles of justice *because* they are principles of justice. The good Rawlsian citizen is motivated by her commitment to justice. By contrast, Marx’s conception of the person, including the conception of the person that would be held by what I have called a constrained Marx, puts weight on the thought that we are capable of caring about one another’s well-being. The good Marxian citizen is motivated by her concern for others’ well-being.

Each of Rawls and Marx is committed to bringing about the conditions under which citizens can freely develop and exercise their capacities. They differ in the basic political attitudes characteristic of their different well-ordered societies. And, with their conceptions of the person, they differ with regard to the content of the capacity that enables citizens willingly to obey proper distributive rules.

Now, I have argued that both the Rawlsian and the Marxian conceptions of the person fit well with Rawls’s two principles of justice or in any event they fit with something that looks quite similar. And without argument, I will make the further claim that, in each case, their political attitudes fit well with Rawls’s two principles or with something similar.

This means that the basis for choosing between Rawls and my constrained Marx cannot be that we prefer the distributive principles that one rather than the other writer would affirm. If we must choose between the two writers, it must be on the basis of finding more compelling the Marxian political attitude and conception of the person or the Rawlsian. So which political attitude and conception of the person would this be – and why?

My final lecture will be devoted to this question. I think that it is best to approach the issue by looking at what Rawls and Marx each has to say about justifying his conception of the person. Of course, only Rawls puts matters in anything like this formulation. Only Rawls discusses at length what would justify holding a particular conception of the person. Still, I will argue next time that Marx does indeed have a view about what would count as justifying the conception of the person that I have attributed to him. I will argue further that his own view of this issue – his own view of justification -- creates troubles for him.

The details of Rawls’s and Marx’s views on justification will occupy us in the final lecture. In the little time that remains today, I want to get some clarity on the issues that are at stake.

There are two issues at stake: *feasibility* and *desirability*. Feasibility has to do with whether a society could really exist in which people are the way that Rawls or Marx assumes them to be. Marx takes it for granted that such a society is possible. Rawls is more cautious. He considers this issue at length and in many places under the heading of what he calls “stability.”

The other issue at stake is desirability. Is Rawls’s conception of the person the best available conception of the person? Or is Marx’s conception of the person the best conception?

Now, as I have been using this idea, a conception of the person amounts to a conception of the good life for human beings, or at least it amounts to the sketch of such a life. How to prove the “objectivity” of these sorts of claims has always been central to philosophy. We are, therefore, confronting the latest form of a very old question. At the beginning of Book Two of Plato’s *Republic*, the brothers Glaucon and Adeimantus tell Socrates that most people believe that a good life consists only in doing those things are advantageous for that individual, and that this involves having wealth and power and indulging one’s appetites. The brothers ask Socrates to convince them that a different kind of life, a just life, is really the best life for a human being to lead. Neither Rawls nor Marx would agree with Socrates about the content of the best life for a human being. However, each would agree with Socrates that it involves exercising capacities that are not focused solely on one’s own benefit. Socrates takes nine more books of the *Republic* to try to respond to the challenge from Glaucon and Adeimantus. Few people have thought that Socrates’ response is an adequate response. Next time we will see how Rawls and Marx respond.

1. There is another (implausible) premise at work here, namely, that under communism the unfettered and unincentivized individual choice of activities will generate not just the quantity but the variety of goods and services that individuals need in order to pursue their various forms of self-realization. This second premise shows the influence of Fourier. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Marx, “Kritik des Gothaer Programms,” MEW, vol. 19/”Critique of the Gotha Programme,” MECW, vol. 24 REF [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. See Marx and Engels, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, MEW, vol. 3, p. 35/*The German Ideology*, MECW vol. 5, p. 49. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. According to many Marxists, any theory of distributive justice begins in the wrong place. It asks about distribution in independence from production but in fact the former is dependent on the latter. If there is to be serious distributive change, we must transform production, i.e., we must transform the relations of production.

   As applied to Rawls, this criticism may seem off the mark, for his view is not allocative. It does not begin with a fixed pile of goods and ask how to distribute them. His two principles of justice are supposed to regulate the central social institutions of a society (“the basic structure”), and these include the institutions that, for Marx, constitute the level of production. Rawlsian principles of justice regulate productive as well as distributive arrangements. That said, it is still useful to look more closely at the Marxian criticism.

   This criticism rests on a causal thesis, one with a strong and a weak form. The strong thesis says that no serious social change is possible without first transforming the relations of production. The weak thesis says that fundamental distributive change requires transforming the relations of production but, even absent such transformation, useful change – change that affects human lives in significant ways – is possible. The weak thesis seems the more sensible. Liberal reforms have had impact. That is why they evoke conservative resistance.

   The strong thesis seems too strong. Nevertheless, suppose it is true. There could still be a role for a theory that specifies the best form of distribution. Suppose (1) the strong thesis is true, (2) Distribution D is the best feasible distribution, and (3) Distribution D can be instantiated only if we transform the relations of production. We then have good reason to transform the relations of production. We also have good reason to explore D and to defend the claim that it is in fact the best feasible distribution.

   The Marxian tradition has pressed two reasons not to explore D. First, it has claimed that social revolution will produce the best distribution without the need to sketch its content in advance; second, conceptions of the best distribution are said to be determined by existing relations of production, so the exploration of any D will tend to justify existing relations of production.

   The first objection seems merely a counsel of faith, one quite unsupported by the history of modern revolutions. The second objection is most plausibly seen as a thesis in social psychology. It says that the social institutions that form beliefs and values – e.g., schools, media -- tend to play a stabilizing role, inculcating beliefs and values that justify existing arrangements, including existing relations of production. However, such a thesis can say at most that it is likely that the exploration of any D will justify existing relations of production. Yet for some D (say, that of the 1844 Marx), this might not be true, and for any D, whatever its content, we can ask whether the proposed justification works. Suppose D supports capitalism but seems to have a cogent justification. That might be a reason for a Marxist to look for further arguments against D. It is hardly a reason to dismiss D. Marxists ought to have the courage of their justifications.

   The above issues stem from a causal claim, but one could also make a normative claim: we should not waste time thinking about distribution because what is most important – most central for a good human life – obtains at the level of production. This is the 1844 Marx’s point when he condemns capitalism for its deep and multi-form alienation of labor.

   This criticism misses the fact that a theory of distribution asks, among other things, *what* ought to be distributed. Alienated labor could be seen as a consequence of a failure to make available or properly to distribute certain things – among them, opportunities to have a say in the work-place, for solidaristic relations, for joint control over the products of labor. In assessing a distributive view we can take many variables into account, e.g., the relations among citizens that instantiating the view is likely to generate. An adherent of the 1844 Marx could say that the best D would take proper cognizance of the fact that human beings are, in their essence, cooperative producers. To stress the normative priority of production is merely to assert a criterion for the best D.

   There is, then, no good reason not to compare the 1844 Marx and the Rawls of *A Theory of Justice* as writers who present views of what a society with a proper distribution would be like. Incidentally, I use the phrase “proper distribution” to dodge the question of whether Marx has a “theory of justice.” The 1844 Marx does seem to think that, along some dimension or dimensions, some patterns of distribution are better than others. For our purposes, that is all we need. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Mill, *On Liberty*, in Mill, *Collected Works*, vol. 18, p. 269. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Marx and Engels, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, MEW, vol. 3, p. 33/*The German Ideology*, MECW, vol. 5, p. 47. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei* (1848), *MEW*, vol. 4, p. /*The Communist Manifesto*, *MECW*, vol. 6, p. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Karl Marx, *Der Bürgerkrieg in Frankreich*, *MEW*, vol. 17, p. /*The Civil War in France*, *MECW*, vol. 22, p. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Marx and Engels, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, MEW, vol. 3, p. 273/*The German Ideology*, MECW, vol. 5, p. 292. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte aus dem Jahre 1844, MEW,* Ergänzungsband I, p. 534/*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, *MECW,* vol. 3, p. 294. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Marx, “Kritik des Gothaer Programms,” *MEW*, vol. 19, p. 20/“The Critique of the Gotha Programme,” *MECW*, vol. 24, p. 86. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Marx, “Kritik des Gothaer Programms,” *MEW*, vol. 19, p. 21/“The Critique of the Gotha Programme,” *MECW*, vol. 24, p. 86. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Marx, “Kritik des Gothaer Programms,” *MEW*, vol. 19, pp. 20-21/“The Critique of the Gotha Programme,” *MECW*, vol. 24, p. 87. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Marx, “Kritik des Gothaer Programms,” *MEW*, vol. 19, p. 21/“The Critique of the Gotha Programme,” *MECW*, vol. 24, p. 87. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. See Thomas Nagel, “Equality,” in Nagel, *Mortal Questions*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 123–4. As Nagel notes, there are complications when the intuition is applied beyond a family to overall social distribution. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. In cases of sufficiently extreme individual need – say, where bringing Joe to a decent level comes close to impoverishing all the other siblings -- this raises difficult questions for families, as it does for societies. It is not clear that an adequate solution to such tragic trade-off cases is yet on the table. Here, I am accepting the common view that we need clarity on “favorable” situations before we can deal, in a principled way, with deeply unfavorable ones. In any event, the point in the text is about focus. In the normal case, there is likely to be special focus on the worst-off child, on trying to bring that child’s opportunities up as far as possible. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. See Roderick Firth, “Ethical Absolutism and the Ideal Observer,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1952. [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. Might a constrained 1844 Marx be a sufficientarian? It depends on what counts as sufficient. Marx is a progressive. He thinks that there will be further improvements in the human lot, and if the level of sufficiency would not rise with these improvements he would not be a sufficientarian. On the other hand, the idea that under communism one will take what one needs suggests that Marx’s underlying standard is whatever is sufficient for every agent to have a real chance to pursue her own vision of self-realization. Unfortunately, that standard might require the transcendence of scarcity. It is not clear what standard of sufficiency a constrained 1844 Marx would accept. [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte, MEW,* Ergänzungsband I, p. 542/ *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, *MECW*, vol. 3, p. 302 [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte, MEW,* Ergänzungsband I, p. 543/ *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, *MECW*, vol. 3, p. 303. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte, MEW,* Ergänzungsband I, p. 517/ *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, *MECW*, vol. 3, p. 276. [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Karl Marx, *Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* (1867, 1885, 1894), (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1982), vol. 3, p. 828/*Capital* (New York: International Publishers, 1967), vol. 3, p. 820. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. See Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte, MEW,* Ergänzungsband I, pp. 510-522/*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, *MECW*, vol. 3, pp. 270-282. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Marx, “Auszüge,” *MEW*, Ergänzungsband I, p. 462/”Comments,” *MECW*, vol. 3, p. 227. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. For the view that Marx is not primarily concerned with necessary labor, see George C. Brenkert, *Marx’s Ethics of Freedom* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983), pp. 90-92. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte, MEW,* Ergänzungsband I, p. 538/ *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, *MECW*, vol. 3, p. 298. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* p. 529/463. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Another difference is this. For the Rawls of *A Theory of Justice*, the circumstances that make distributive principles necessary involve not only material scarcity and limited benevolence but the fact that under conditions of liberty there will always be diversity in fundamental beliefs, such as religious beliefs and conceptions of the good (see Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 127-128/110-111). Even a constrained Marx would reject this last claim except in the modest form of differences in agents’ views about which of their many capacities to develop and exercise (e.g., hunting versus fishing (See Marx and Engels, *Die deutsche Ideologie*, *MEW*, vol. 3, p. 33/*The German Ideology*, *MECW*, vol. 5, p. 47.) He would certainly reject the claim that a proper society will contain diverse religious beliefs. Marx’s one-time mentor and then target of his polemics, Bruno Bauer, argued that in a proper society religious beliefs and religious institutions would wither away. (Religion would become “a mere private affair of the individual and [be] left to the private judgment of the individual”; as such, it would soon disappear; Bruno Bauer, *Die Judenfrage* (Braunschweig: Friedrich Otto, 1843), pp. 72 and 67.) Marx never doubts that this would be the case under communism. The 1844 Marx would cease to be Marx if he accepted that religion would flourish in a society that increasingly instantiates communism. Even a constrained Marx and the Rawls of *A Theory of Justice* would thus remain importantly different about the circumstances that make distributive principles necessary. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, pp. 398-399/349-350. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* p. 529/463. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* p. 572/501. [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* p. 574/503. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice,* p. 563/493. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, in Mill, *Collected Works*, vol. 10, p. 251. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, §142, p. 363. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Joel Feinberg, “The Expressive Function of Punishment,” in Joel Feinberg, *Doing and Deserving: Essays in the Theory of Responsibility* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 95-118. For a general account of law as expression, see Elizabeth S. Anderson and Richard H. Pildes, “Expressive Theories of Law: A General Restatement,” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review*, vol. 148, no. 5, 2000, pp. 1503-1575. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p. 179/156. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. There is more to say about a reciprocal respect society. For instance, it rests on the value of respect for X, and so there will be variations depending on the content of X (rationality? humanity?). Particular variants will have to defend the significant value of the particular X. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Friedrich Engels, *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England,* *MEW*, vol. 2, p. 487/*The Condition of the Working-Class in England, MECW*, vol. 4, p. 563. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. Lack of respect can lead to lack of concern, but the latter is an independent attitude. Indeed, lack of concern can lead to lack of respect, e.g., my indifference to your misery may eventually lead me to see you as contemptible. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. See Harry Frankfurt, *Necessity, Volition and Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 166. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. Cora Diamond, “How Many Legs?” in Raymond Gaita ed., *Value and Understanding: Essays for Peter Winch* (New York: Routledge, 1990), p. 162. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. Diamond, “How Many Legs?” p. 162. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. See Marx, *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte, MEW,* Ergänzungsband I, pp. 540 and 563/*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, *MECW*, vol. 3, pp. 300 and 322. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Fund, Inc., 2004), treatise II, section 1, sub-section viii. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, treatise II, section 3, sub-section xv. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Francis Hutcheson*, An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue*, treatise II, section 1, sub-section i. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Marx, “Auszüge,” *MEW*, Ergänzungsband i, pp. 462-463/“Comments,” *MECW*, vol. 3, pp. 227-228. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. G.W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Translated by H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), §253, p. 272. [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 80. [↑](#endnote-ref-50)