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Marx and Justice

An apparent paradox runs through Marx's thought about justice. On the one hand, his major works, such as *Capital* appear to be written from the standpoint of high moral outrage. Marx uses justice-based concepts - - 'exploitation', 'theft', 'robbery' and 'unpaid labour' - - to condemn capitalism. But on the other hand, Marx is often read as asserting that moral judgements are 'mere ideology'; 'obsolete verbal nonsense'. And Marx never says that capitalism is unjust. In fact, he says that it is by no means unjust. What should we make of this tension?

Topic 1: The Marxian Critique of Justice.

Topic 2: Distribution under Communism

Primary Sources

The pamphlet *Critique of the Gotha Programme* is the most useful of Marx's texts in this context. It is here he sets out the position 'from each according to their ability, to each according to their need'. It is reprinted in the Penguin collection of Marx: *The First International and After: Political Writings Volume 3*. It is also available as a cheap pamphlet, and in many other collections, although the version printed in McLennan is edited in an unhelpful way.

Other relevant passages from Marx are widely scattered among his works. But much of the material is cited in the secondary literature.

When reading the Wood/Husami debate, please read Wood 1972 first, then Husami, then Wood 1979. It is better to read these papers before reading the Geras and Lukes papers.

Secondary Sources

Cohen, G.A., 'Self-Ownership, communism, and equality; against the Marxist technological fix.' in his *Self-Ownership, Freedom and Equality*.

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Geras, N., 'The Controversy about Marx and Justice', in *Marxist Theory* ed. A Callinicos.

Husami, Z., 'Marx on Distributive Justice', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1978 and in **MJH**.

Lukes, S., 'Marxism, Morality and Justice', in *Marx and Marxisms* ed. G.H.R. Parkinson.

Lukes, S., *Marx and Marxism*.

Miller, R., 'Marx and Aristotle: A Kind of Consequentialism' in *Marxist Theory* ed. A. Callinicos.

Rosen, M., 'Marx' in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

Wood, A., 'The Marxian Critique of Justice', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* , 1972 and in **MJH** and in *Philosophy Through Its Past* ed. Honderich.

Wood, A., 'Marx on Right and Justice', *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1979, and in **MJH**.