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Rights, Practices and Marxism: Reply to Six Critics*

Abstract: The first part of the paper expands and strengthens the criticism of appeals to human or natural rights in *After Virtue*. It is argued that Gewirth's responses to various objections are inadequate and that Flathman's historical analysis is incompatible with the evidence. Baier's charge that the treatment of Hume in *After Virtue* is inadequate is acknowledged to be true. A comparison of an Aristotelian account of rational co-operation with a Humean account is made the basis for a rejection both of Baier's assimilation of the two standpoints and of the treatment of the concept of a practice by both Miller and Doppelt. Doppelt's rival account of the moral structures of modernity is held to be undermined both by facts which he himself recognizes and by the Marxist critique of liberal individualism. Marxism's positive moral stance, as defended by Nielsen, is too impoverished to achieve what Nielsen claims for it.

After Virtue is certainly in some respects a polemical book. But its fundamental purpose was constructive. For I wanted to identify the failure of modern moral philosophy, whether Kantian or utilitarian or contractarian, to achieve the statement and justification of principles inescapable for any rational person - and so to provide a basis for rational moral agreement - only as a first step. My further aim was to provide an explanation of that failure, an explanation which by giving a precise characterisation of the project on which Enlightenment and post Enlightenment moral philosophers have been engaged would enable us to understand what the rational alternatives to it, if any, were. The alternatives which I was in consequence led to frame defined a dilemma. For I concluded that either a revised version of Aristotelianism must be shown to be rationally defensible or else Nietzsche's emerged as the only position from which the history of moral philosophy could be understood.

My numerous critics - there have by now been about eighty reviews of, articles about and discussions or symposia on *After Virtue* - have adopted, so it sometimes seems, every possible position on the book's central

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contentions, except one. Nobody, at least as far as I know, has argued that it is Nietzsche's position which emerges victorious, although more than one critic has suggested that I remain vulnerable to a Nietzschean critique. Instead most critics have argued either that my evaluation of modern moral philosophy and consequently my evaluation of contemporary moral culture is seriously flawed or that my defence of an Aristotelian account of the virtues fails in some crucial way - or both. Of the contributors to the present discussion Gewirth, Flathman and Baier concentrate their attention on the former alternative, while not ignoring the latter, while Miller focusses upon the latter. Doppelt and Nielsen, while criticising various aspects of *After Virtue* trenchantly, present alternative projects of their own. It is therefore in that order that I shall deal with their criticisms. And it is indeed important that I should begin with Gewirth's essay.

Gewirth both in his book (Gewirth 1978) and in his rejoinders to a variety of criticisms has constructed what is not only the most ambitious contemporary version of the Enlightenment project in moral philosophy, but also that which exhibits most awareness of the difficulties that that project has to overcome. In *After Virtue* I gave what still appear to me sufficient reasons for asserting that Gewirth has, in spite of the impressiveness of his presentation, failed to overcome them. Gewirth in response now charges that I have in fact either ignored or failed to appreciate the way in which he had already dealt with the objections that I raised. I remain unconvinced. Let me explain why.

According to Gewirth no agent can refuse to assert "I must have freedom and well-being", at least once that agent has come to recognize that freedom and well-being are necessary conditions for "action and successful action in general" (Gewirth 1984a, 31). The initial problem is to know what this assertion could mean. It has become increasingly clear, with Gewirth's successive expositions, what, on Gewirth's view, it does not mean. Consider one interpretation that he has ruled out. It does indeed seem to be the case that no agent could refuse to acknowledge that he or she needs some measure of freedom and well-being as a necessary condition for successful action and that this need might be one of the grounds for arguing that he or she ought to be accorded a right to such a measure. Gewirth however insists that the "must" of the agent's assertion does not express either a need or a want; for the recognizes that if it did the agent could not then be implicitly claiming rights.

Moreover the "must" cannot be expressing a claim to freedom and well-being on some ground other than that of a right. For someone who expressed such a claim could assert without inconsistency: "I must have freedom and well-being, although I have no right to them." Such a plea made, for example, by someone justly deprived of his or her freedom and well-being

by reason of his or her wrongdoing could be an appeal to someone's benevolence and mercy. But the "must" of such an appeal is once again not Gewirth's "must", for if the "must" of that plea were Gewirth's "must" the plea would be self-contradictory.

What then does Gewirth's "must" mean? His calling it "practical-prescriptive" does not help. And the difficulty is intensified when it is discovered that the right which is implicitly claimed in using that "must" is one that by its nature cannot be outweighed by considerations of utility. For while in ordinary English it makes sense to assert that "I as an agent need freedom and well-being, but on occasion that need can be outweighed by what the public good or the greatest happiness of the greatest number requires", the necessity conveyed by Gewirth's "must" is such that if in this statement we replace the first use of "need" as a verb by "must have" (used in Gewirth's sense) and the second use of "need" as a noun by "necessity" (in a corresponding sense) once again the statement supposedly becomes self-contradictory. So that Gewirth's "must" is not the "must" of ordinary English.

Gewirth believes that each of us, if adequately rational, could not but have some expression of the claim that Gewirth formulates as "I must have freedom and well-being" elicited from him or her dialectically, if he or she were denied the freedom and well-being necessary for successful action. But this thesis encounters two distinct types of difficulty. The first arises from the fact that Gewirth's "must" is not identifiable as a "must" that appears in ordinary English, or indeed in any natural language. So that I, for example, could never have its utterance elicited from me dialectically, since I should not know what I was saying in uttering it. This difficulty is reinforced by another.

If it were indeed the case that the kind of dialectically elicited claim which Gewirth aspires to characterise played such a central foundational role in underpinning the conceptual and argumentative structures of morality, and did so in virtue of the nature of human activity as such, so that it was invariant in all cultures and all social orders, then we should expect sentences expressing it to be uttered in many, if not all natural languages. Far from the "must" of Gewirth's claim being obscure and opaque in the way that it is, it would have distinctive and cognate representatives in many different types of natural language. It does not and not only because in many natural languages no expression is to be found for any conception of rights at all, a fact that Gewirth of course acknowledges. Even in languages in which claims to rights are naturally and easily expressed, such claims are rarely, if ever, deployed in the way that Gewirth's account might lead one to expect.

Gewirth of course finds irrelevant the appeal to actual linguistic or social forms and usage. The underlying conception of moral philosophy which informs his work is one according to which the moral philosopher's central task is the investigation of conceptual structures which are timeless and ahistorical. Indeed it is precisely because this is so that the moral philosopher's findings with respect to rights can be taken to provide a standard independent of and prior to all particular social and political institutions and practices, to which the individual may appeal against any infringement of them. Yet this triadic conception of morality - the time-bound contingencies of social and political orders, the timeless rights of individual human beings and the individual qua individual appealing to the former against the inadequacies of the latter - is of course itself the ideological expression of one particular type of social and political order.

Consider Gewirth's rejoinder to a 'Callicles, Thrasymachus or Nietzsche' who from his own premises rejects all normative claims about rights. Gewirth claims that, if sufficiently clear-headed, such a person must nonetheless acknowledge the inescapable character of Gewirth's type of claim to rights, since such a prudential claim is rational for any "conatively normal person", that is for any person who "has the self-interested motivations common to most person and is willing to expend the effort needed to fulfil them" (Gewirth 1978, 88-9). Were such a person not to accept Gewirth's type of claim to rights, he would be failing to recognize the requirements and constraints imposed by reason (Gewirth 1984b, 213). What Gewirth shares with the amorlists to whom he is replying is a conception of social life as an arena in which self-interested individuals contend for advantage and aggrandisement unless and until they are constrained to acknowledge the rights of others. It is the individual qua individual who is taken to be the unit of moral discourse. And Gewirth's conception of conative normality is in fact not a conception of normal human behavior, but of the behavior taken to be normal in the individualist social order of modernity. Gewirth's appeal to rights is an appeal to a philosophical fiction which masks the claim to sovereignty of that particular order.

Gewirth's claims, although I remain unconvinced by them, are expressed with both clarity and elegance. By contrast Richard E. Flathman's rhetorical stance is expressed in an idiom at once general and cloudy. There are almost no arguments, but a number of large assertions. Flathman says for example that the moral issues which I take to be unsetttable within the framework of contemporary modernity and therefore to provide a subject-matter for interminable debate "concern issues that have been matters of deep and continuing disagreement in every society (known to me) that has had occasion to consider them" (Flathman 1984, 20). So that the contrast which I draw between traditional societies and modernity cannot be sustained. Let me offer Flathman in reply just two of the many counter-examples available. In most political communities in the ancient

world and in some traditional societies in Asia neither infanticide nor abortion were regarded as impermissible. Jews and Christians by contrast for most of their history have regarded both as instances of the taking of innocent life and as such prohibited; and political communities which have shared this Judaic-Christian view have agreed in this prohibition. So that here we have large-scale disagreement between, but not within communities. By contrast within peculiarly modern societies disagreement about abortion and with it inability to agree upon what constitutes the taking of innocent life and what kind of offence and offences may be committed in taking such life is widespread, a disagreement which finds further expression in controversies over the death penalty of a kind which are also peculiarly modern. A second subject of characteristically modern contentiousness is suicide. Many premodern societies agree in their condemnation of suicide. Some agree in not condemning it or even in prescribing it for individuals in certain types of situations. But it is in modern societies that extended disagreement about suicide is endemic. Of course there are some areas of debate and disagreement in all or almost all premodern societies and there occur in both the ancient and the late medieval world social conditions which are precursors of modernity, but Flathman needs much more than the evidence that these would supply to sustain his thesis that there is no fundamental difference between modern societies and many of their predecessors in respect of both the extent and the nature of moral disagreement.

More interesting than Flathman's misreading of the historical evidence is his account of the extent and nature of agreement in modern society. In developing that account in such a way as to provide grounds for rejecting some of my central conclusions in After Virtue, Flathman fails to distinguish adequately two distinct and independent contentions. One is that in both its agreements and its disagreements the dominant stances and modes of contemporary society are emotivist, that moral assertion and counter-assertion are in the end no more than expressions of attitude and will. The other is that rational consensus upon central moral questions and a fortiori on central political questions has proved impossible within the framework provided by the dominant conception of rationality in modern cultures and that therefore in the arena of rational discussion there is radical dissensus. The importance of distinguishing these two claims is that, even if Flathman were correct in asserting that there is deep and widespread agreement in our society on what rights should be accorded to whom (Flathman 1984, 18-20), this would go no way at all to show that this is a rational, rather than a nonrational, ideologically imposed consensus.

Flathman uses two kinds of questionable idiom in characterising what he takes to be the modern consensus on rights. He first describes the process as one of "evolution" and of "a great many people ... understand-

ing, influencing and convincing one another". And he then goes on to speak of decisions "made deliberately by agents invested with communally established authority ... in circumstances that ... required the giving of reasons for the decisions" (19-20). Both idioms leave indeterminate the nature of the rights under discussion. Sometimes Flathman appears to be talking about the history of the American legal system and perhaps more particularly of the development of constitutional law and, so far as he does so, the rights in question are the quite unproblematic rights conferred by positive law. But at other times he is clearly speaking of claims to rights as part of everyday moral discourse. It is perhaps this ambiguity that allows him to appear to claim for the history of ordinary moral discourse what is true to at least some degree of the history of formal legal systems. But even if I interpret Flathman's position by disambiguating it in this way, I still find his claims both about ordinary moral discourse and about discourse within the political and legal systems unwarranted. Our disagreements concern several related issues.

One is a matter of how such consensus as there is in modern societies was in fact arrived at. Flathman first ascribes to me the view that such consensus was produced "by a coincidental concatenation of the purely subjective impulses and inclinations of millions of fragmented, anomic, individuals" (20) and then goes on to suggest by posing rhetorical questions that neither manipulation nor coercion and compulsion could have seen the agencies producing such consensus. He is of course right to assert that in After Virtue I do no more than gesture towards the problem of describing how the shifting consensuses of modern society were and are arrived at. And what is required to write that history is far more than I can achieve here. Nonetheless it is worth remarking that as individuals emancipated themselves from the hierarchically ordered community of the premodern world, their expressions of subjective will and inclination had at their service systematically unequal resources of power, status and wealth. Subjective will and inclination operated as they always operate in and through social roles and institutions; and the differing resources of power, status and wealth produced outcomes which it would be odd to describe as "coincidental concatenations". But since in modern society the accommodation of one set of wills to the purpose of another continually requires the frustration of one group's purposes by those of another, it is unsurprising that the concept of rights, understood as claims against the inroads of marauding others in situations where shared allegiances to goods that are goods of the whole community have been attenuated or abandoned, should become a socially central concept. Consensus to some degree in deploying this concept, far from being incompatible with the widespread exercise of manipulation, coercion and compulsion is their natural ideological counterpart.

A second closely related disagreement is on the degree to which such consensus as there is is informed by rationally justifiable beliefs rather than by beliefs in ideologically useful fictions. And here once again my difficulty in replying to Flathman arises from the fact that he offers no arguments. I take that Flathman must be relying on some set of arguments in justifying the ascription of human or natural rights which he takes to be sound; but since he never tells us what they are, I do not know how to respond. One part of his case is clear. Flathman believes that if the dominant mode of moral judgment in our culture were emotivist, "the beliefs, utterances, and actions of any one person would be ... unintelligible" to all the others because "'private' in the sense shown by Wittgenstein to be untenable" and "particularised" (10-11). But all that is required to show that Flathman is wrong about this is to show that there would be nothing in the least unintelligible, either to the members of such a society themselves or to external observers, in the beliefs, utterances and actions of the inhabitants of a culture of shared and reciprocal sentiments, passions and attitudes; and this is something demonstrated once and for all by Hume.

Annette Baier in her essay (Baier 1984) chides me for not giving Hume his due in After Virtue. And although my final evaluation of Hume's contribution to moral philosophy is very different from hers, I take it that she is substantially in the right. It is indeed my neglect of what Hume did establish, my much too purely negative treatment of Hume that makes some positions taken in After Virtue seem vulnerable, not only to criticisms of the kind levelled by Flathman and by Baier, but also to those expressed by David Miller. Let me therefore try to say - still inadequately, because too briefly - what I take to be Hume's central contribution to our contemporary discussions.

There are at least two very different possible structures for rational co-operation between human beings. One arises within and only within those forms of systematic activity, full participation in which requires the acknowledgement of goods internal to that form of activity, characterisable prior to and independently of the desires and needs which the individual participants have when they first enter into such forms of activity. Those who are initiated into such forms of activity have to learn to act for the sake of such goods rather than from the motives which may have led to their initial participation. There is thus a psychological discontinuity between what is valued and why it is valued within such forms of activity and what is valued and why it is valued prior to and apart from participation in them. So within such a form of systematic activity the rules governing cooperation prescribe the subordination of the individual's desires and needs to the achievement of the goods specific to the form of activity; and they do so by prescribing what each person in each role within the activity must achieve if the overall good or goods internal to that form of

activity are to be achieved. Thus one cardinal virtue of participants in such forms of activity is a disposition to give what is due to each in respect first of his or her role and secondly of his or her achievement within that role; that is what justice is. A second virtue required is temperateness, for that is the disposition which both issues from and itself produces the disciplining and transformation of one's desires for the sake of the good. It is a central feature of such forms of activity that the virtues which are necessary to achieve their goods have to be acquired before the good for the sake of which they are acquired can be appreciated. Hence the rational justification of the virtues is in an important way retrospective. We have to become through training and education into and in the form of activity the kind of person who can understand why it was rational to become that sort of person.

By contrast there is a quite different form of rational cooperation in which individuals, each pursuing the satisfaction of their own wants and needs, agree in accepting a rule governed framework for their activities, each with his or her individual aim of thereby protecting his or her security in the pursuit of his or her satisfaction from the depredations of others, even at the cost of having limitations thereby imposed upon that pursuit. Participation in such a scheme of cooperation is rational if and only if there is adequate warrant for predicting that the satisfactions obtained by participating will outweigh the deprivations of satisfaction resulting from participating. The goods to be obtained are the goods of satisfaction and none other. Initially these will be the goods of satisfaction of the desires and needs which the individual possesses prior to participation. The experience of cooperation will however tend to produce changes in wants and needs. The individual will come to take satisfaction in the reciprocity of the relationships created by participation and in the approval of others for his or her compliance with the rules.

Notice some differences between these two schemes of rational cooperation. One is that whereas in the latter type of scheme those qualities which are either pleasing or useful in securing the ends of each agent within the constraints set by the rules will be accounted virtues, whereas in the former type of scheme, it is only those whose character has first been disciplined by the virtues who will be regarded as able to discriminate adequately in respect of either pleasure or utility. A second difference is that the understanding of particular virtues will be very different within the two schemes. Justice, for example, in the latter type of scheme will presuppose a set of property rules, rules that is, which specify what legitimately is available to whom for the satisfaction of their particular wants and needs, and a set of exchange rules, rules, that is, which specify what, if I give up such and such for the sake of your needs and wants, you must provide for the sake of mine. Justice in the former type of scheme, as I have already noted, consists in the recognition of

standards of achievement and desert in contributing to the goods which define the telos of the enterprise, goods which, unlike the goods of the latter type of scheme, can be understood only in terms of the specific character of the particular form of activity and which cannot be identified with, constructed out of, or derived from the wants and needs of the participants.

I take it that enough has been said to make it clear that these two kinds of scheme are irreducibly different; I also take it to be relatively uncontroversial to claim that instances of both are found in our social life. The first type of cooperation is that which provides those types of activity which I called practices in After Virtue with their specific structure: they include a variety of arts, sciences, games and also such productive activities as those of farming and fishing. The second type of cooperation is that which provides all forms of activity which it is reasonable to enter into only on a cost-benefit basis with their specific type of structure. Some actual institutionalized enterprises may of course embody both types of rational cooperation. So on a particular farm some of those cooperating in the farm work may be acting primarily or only for the sake of the specific goods internal to farming, that is, so as to be excellent qua farmers in respect of such goods as the renewal of the earth, the living out of the cycles imposed by nature with respect for nature, while others may be acting primarily or only in a way that is controlled by their rational calculation of what they are receiving in wages or dividends in return for what they have contributed, that is they act so as to be excellent not qua farmers under the specific disciplines of farming, but qua rational calculators who happen incidentally to be engaged in farming. But the coexistence of the distinct kinds of rational cooperation in this way does nothing to diminish the difference between them.

Would it be possible for either or both of these types of scheme of rational cooperation to be exemplified in the life of a political community so as to provide its overall moral and social structure? It is, I suggest, in essence Aristotle's view that any well-ordered political community is structured in accordance with the requirements of the former type of scheme; and it is in essence Hume's view that any well-ordered political community is structured in the very different way required by the latter type. It is for this reason that, although I do not deny the importance of recognizing that on which Aristotle and Hume agree, as Baier urges me to do, I think it even more important to recognize the ways in which their positions are irreconcilable. Hume is most important when he is furthest from Aristotle.

It is perhaps a failure to recognize this and so to appreciate the nature of a distinctively Aristotelian and quite nonHumean understanding of the virtues which underlies David Miller's very interesting criticism of my account of the relationship of virtues to practices. Miller argues that

human dispositional qualities are accounted virtues not, as I argued in After Virtue because of their place within practices which possess goods internal to them, but only because and insofar as the practices in which they have a place serve what he calls "social purposes" or "basic social functions" (Miller 1984, 53). Miller does not provide any clear account of what he uses these phrases to mean. But he seems to be committed to two theses. One provides grounds for distinguishing activities which fulfill basic human needs - "material production, the maintenance of social order" and those which are luxuries over and above these (53). Games or acts played or pursued, for their own sake, seem to be examples of such luxuries, on his views. A second thesis of Miller's is historical. Earlier societies and cultures, if I understand his view correctly, pursue or tend to pursue only what is instrumental to the satisfaction of "basic human needs"; it is later, and more especially in modern times, that it is possible to have the luxury of indulging in activities which are taken to be worthwhile in themselves and serve no further purpose.

Any adequate response to Miller would involve showing in detail both that the history of the virtues is in general quite other than he supposes it to be and how in particular his conception of the virtues as serving useful purposes is in fact, when spelled out, a projection on to past history of a peculiarly modern conception of social life. Here all I can do is to refer to my account of the development and transformation of conceptions of the virtues in ancient Athens in chapters 10-13 of After Virtue, chapters which provide sufficient evidence to make Miller's historical thesis highly implausible.

His own basically, although not explicitly Humean standpoint also obscures from Miller another crucial point. Miller seems to suppose that if the virtues are initially defined in terms of their place within practices, their scope can be no greater than that of the particular practice in which they are at home (this is the implication of his distinction between justice in society at large and the merely "justice-like quality" which is at home in games on p. 54); and this would indeed be an objection to my account if the place of the virtues in social life were to be that which Hume assigns to them. But from the type of Aristotelian standpoint defended in After Virtue not only does this ignore the central place of such virtues as justice, courage and truthfulness in the whole range of human practices, it also ignores the place of the practice of politics in any Aristotelian understanding of social life.

Miller writes as if what he calls social purposes or functions are such that to exhibit qualities of character which serve them will be to exhibit qualities of character which are to be accounted virtues. He leaves no place in his account for discriminating between good and bad ways of contriving, for example, "the maintenance of social order". But from an

Aristotelian standpoint the task of political enquiry is primarily to make such discriminations and political activity in a well-ordered polity is a paradigmatic example of what I have called a practice and what Miller calls "a self-contained practice" (51-54). Politics is not on an Aristotelian view, as it is on a Humean, a merely instrumental form of activity.

Baier argues (Baier 1984, 64-67) that in *After Virtue* I do not pay sufficient attention to the inequalities of power in the type of Aristotelian polity that I defend, and she further charges me with putting a distorting emphasis upon Hume's own political allegiance. I could of course in reply point to the importance for the argument of *After Virtue* of the distinction between practices (where distributions of authority are justified only insofar as they serve the ends of the practice) and institutions (through which the distribution of goods such as power, money and status are always liable to corrupt practices) drawn in chapter 14. But this distinction is quite inadequately developed here and this inadequacy does justify at least part of Baier's accusation - but only part of it. For she is mistaken in supposing that my hostility to Hume's moral philosophy is grounded only in what she takes to be the purely contingent connections between Hume's moral philosophy and his actual politics. My fundamental objections are in fact to the moral philosophy itself.

Hume's essentially psychological account of morality can afford no recognition to goods which do not consist in and are not reducible to the satisfaction of desires. This does not preclude him from characterising the standpoint of morality as impersonal relative to the desires of particular persons, and he does indeed understand moral judgment as correcting the partiality and one-sidedness of our particular individual attitudes. Nonetheless there is no standard of good independent of the whole system of reciprocal satisfaction of wants and needs. And thus there is no standard of good by which to judge the rules which define reciprocity, the rules of possession and exchange. For in that social arena in which each person pursues his or her own satisfaction what counts as legitimate reciprocity depends upon the initial allocation of goods and the established standards of exchange. It is no accident that Hume's account of justice gives a place to the established rules of property such as few other accounts do.

It is of course due to contingent historical circumstance that the rules of possession and exchange which Hume defends are the rules of a market economy in which the initial distribution of property derived from a variety of previous conquests and expropriations. But the rules of a market economy do in fact provide just the kind of rules of possession and exchange which a Humean moral framework requires. That is to say, they provide rules of reciprocity actions in accordance with which can be judged just in Humean terms. But the rules themselves are simply absurd, given social fact. Other alternative sets of rules of possession and exchange

could function equally well for this purpose. Yet the rules of a market economy do have one great advantage from a Humean standpoint: they detach the rewards of economic activity from any conception of merit or desert. When prices and wages are determined within a market framework, such expressions as "just price" and "just wage" are deprived of application. There is no relationship of desert or merit connecting work and its products on the one hand and endeavour and skill on the other. Of course in a market economy endeavour and skill will receive their rewards insofar as they have been embodied in successful attempts to give what they want to those who have money in their pockets. But even so the reward is not for success in whatever form of activity of doing or making is in question, but for having done or made that for which there is economic demand.

There is thus the sharpest of contrasts between the way in which human activity is understood and carried on in a modern market economy and the way in which it is understood and carried on in the context of practices, at least as these are defined and characterised in After Virtue. I argued earlier against David Miller that what Miller calls the self-contained character of practices thus defined and characterised is not a barrier to understanding the virtues in the first instance in terms of their place within practices. But now I need to add to this that it is only insofar as practices are self-contained that genuine virtues have such a place. For the virtues are partially constitutive of types of activity in which the achievement of excellence in the activity itself is the good that rewards the virtuous; the reward of this activity is not and cannot be something connected to the activity only by the contingencies of social arrangements. But in modern economic activity the rewards are indeed connected to the variety of economically rewarded activities only in this way.

Secondly the possession of things or of money as a resource whereby to acquire things is warranted only insofar as it contributes to activity which has goods internal to itself of the appropriate kind. Hence accumulation for its own sake or for the sake of possession or of spending is the antithesis of the type of activity in which the virtues are engendered and flourish. Unsurprisingly the disposition to accumulate, pleonexia, is in fact a vice and wanting more money than is necessary to provide a moderate self-sufficiency is from the standpoint of the virtues a sign of psychological and social disorder.

It will perhaps now be clear why I find Gerald Doppelt's claim that modern economic activity is itself a form of practice in the sense defined in After Virtue so implausible. In order even to formulate it he has to use certain key expressions - notably "internal good" and "external good" - in a way crucially different from that in which I used them and he has to ignore what I wrote about Benjamin Franklin on the virtues in chapter 14.

For Doppelt's view of the virtues is in important ways a twentieth-century translation of Franklin's view. And, like Franklin, what Doppelt presents is not economic reality, but one of its ideological disguises. Yet, unlike Franklin, Doppelt himself in some large measure recognizes this.

On Doppelt's view distinctively modern culture is a culture of individual achievement in which the recognition of achievement, expressed in the rewards of money, status, power and privileges, rests upon an understanding of these goods as characteristically earned, rather than being "the outcome of mere luck, good fortune, dishonesty, a happy inheritance, criminal activity or moral corruption" (Doppelt 1985, 227). But Doppelt also recognizes that for many people the possibility of achievement and of the appropriate recognition for achievement are precluded, because they are "the prerogative of capitalists, managerial and technical personnel in the upper echelons of corporate or bureaucratic organizations" (229). This restriction has made the possibility of a virtuous life too scarce; and what is consequently required is a theoretical and practical critique of modern liberal capitalist individualism with the aim of democratising the possibility of virtue.

Doppelt's case encounters two conclusive objections over and above those that arise from the nature of a practice. The first is that the connection between the exercise of the virtues and achievement is as arbitrary among capitalists, managers and senior technical personnel as it is among the unemployed, the underpaid and the otherwise exploited. Moreover it is one and the same form of economic activity - capitalism - which finds its expression both in the ideological ideal to which Doppelt gives his allegiance and in the facts which prevent that ideal being realized in actual social life. Might it be possible to reform capitalism so that the ideal would become realizable? Doppelt provides us with no reasons at all for believing that the answer to this question is "Yes" and we already have sufficient good reasons for answering "No". For the task of constructing an immanent critique of liberal individualism to which Doppelt summons us has already been carried through. This was the task successfully accomplished by Marxism. And on this at least Kai Nielsen and I are in agreement; but not in very much else.

There are two crucial areas in which Marxism has failed, in addition to those discussed by Nielsen. The first is the relationship of Marxism to the future and when I speak of failure here I do not mean only or even mainly Marxism's failure to provide correct predictions either in such a way as to underpin the claim that Marxism is scientific or in such a way as to provide guidance for political action. I mean rather that those who use Marxism as a guide have proved quite incapable of creating or even apparently of envisaging worthwhile human community. The concept of

emancipation has had a purely negative content and the actual politics of Marxists have never in fact been emancipating.

The second but unrelated failure has been in identifying those social groups capable of constructing a genuinely human future. Precisely because Marx saw the hope of the future in the exploited and the deprived, he envisaged the proletariat that would create socialism as a class that has been deprived of the moral and religious traditions of the past. Marx understood this as a liberation and never had the opportunity to recognize that such a proletariat may be driven by exploitation to defend itself, but will never as a class have the resources to construct or be moved by any general moral vision of the future. It was because Lenin did recognize this that he revised Marxism so that the proletariat is provided with leadership by members of the Marxist intelligentsia. What resulted scarcely needs comment.

Nielsen believes that Marxist socialism would embody itself in a quite different way if it were victorious "in the capitalist centre with its productive wealth and long standing traditions of parliamentary democracy" (Nielsen 1985, 96). But it is just at the capitalist centre that moral impoverishment is at its most intense. Nielsen, like the liberal critics of *After Virtue*, thinks that I underrate the moral resources of liberalism. And this raises the interesting question of how from a consistently Marxist standpoint Nielsen is able to evaluate moral achievement and failure. He speaks of "human flourishing" and "human needs"; but these are by themselves concepts too large and general to provide what he requires. Nielsen congratulates me on being a historicist, without having succumbed to either relativism or nihilism. I would like to be able to congratulate him in similar terms; but on the basis of this paper I see no reason for doing so. What he presents appears as an arbitrarily chosen moral stance, its arbitrariness lying in its lack of connection to his understanding of contemporary society. I say "appears" for nothing stronger is warranted by his paper. But that paper does engender the suspicion that Nielsen is in the end as much a liberal as Doppelt.

I cannot end without expressing my gratitude to all six critics and I am sorry that I have had to put on one side for further reflection and response so many points that they have made. If I remain convinced of the truth of the central theses of *After Virtue*, as I do, it is not for want of serious attention to the objections that they and a number of other critics have urged upon me. I can perhaps without boastfulness make at least one additional claim on behalf of *After Virtue*: it has elicited from others just that kind of excellent writing on moral and political philosophy which our discipline in its present state most needs.

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