**What is the Relationship of Marxism and Morality?**

It could be suggested that Marxism has a very problematical relationship to the role of morality. This is because the emphasis on the role of the class struggle seems to express a perspective that is indifferent to the importance of morality and is instead based on an instrumental approach that suggests that the aspect of ethics is not connected to the realisation of the aim of socialism and communism. Instead, ethical socialism would seem to be an approach that is connected to the rejection of a revolutionary standpoint and has historically been associated with the politics of reformism rather than radical Marxism. In order to discuss these problematical issues Steven Lukes has written a book: ‘Marxism and Morality’ (Oxford University Press, 1985) He is aware that there is complex relationship of Marxism to morality given the apparent connection of Marxism to the justification of what could be defined as the role of authoritarian regimes. The assumption is that the party which claims to know what is in the interests of the workers and society has the connected absolute right to be able to define the character of socialism and in this manner the result is the development of an authoritarian regime in which the party is able to dictate to the members of society how they should act and think. In this context morality becomes merely what is defined by the party as being in the interests of the people who they claim to have an exclusive right to represent. Hence is the problem with the interpretation of Marxism which results in the apparent expression of the absolute domination of the party because this organisation claims the exclusive right to rule on behalf of the people, or is this development because of the apparent failure to connect forms of political activity to the importance of ethical standards? In other words, is the issue of ethics important or not important in relation to the political character of the role of the revolutionary party. It has been suggested that the emphasis on the importance of the class struggle provides the party with the absolute justification of its political role because this aspect is defined by what is considered to be in the interests of the workers and the realisation of the aim of socialism. But how can a society that is based on the domination of the party, and which does not involve the participation of the people in its organisation and development, be considered to be a genuine expression of the character of socialism? Instead, it would seem that this type of authoritarian society that has only a flimsy relationship to the role and importance of ethics could not be defined as socialist. Or is it in actuality the expression of a distortion of socialism rather than being the genuine realisation of the principles of an authentic emancipatory society. Indeed, Lukes attempts to primarily address whether Marxism is responsible for what seems to be the moral failures of its attempt to realise in practice a post-capitalist society. However, we have to initially establish that there is nothing in the works of Marx and Engels that would express the justification of the forms of authoritarian domination associated with Stalinism. It has been suggested that the perspective of the dictatorship of the proletariat is the expression of the aim of the creation of an authoritarian society. But this concept is merely the perspective of the fact that the workers are dominant in a post-capitalist society that attempts to create the economic and political structures for the development of a classless social formation. There is no expression of the necessity of one-party rule and instead they assume that different points of view will be openly expressed in the post-capitalist society. This will be a society in which individual freedom is based on the development of the collective social power of the producers. Indeed, the limitations of capitalism with regards to the expression of individual views in terms of an elitist system dominated by the role of bourgeois ideology will be replaced by the role of the highest standards of democracy. Hence it is assumed that such a system will be the expression of the importance of ethics even if this aspect is not elaborated by them in any detail.

But Lukes suggests that there is a contradictory approach with regards to morality in the approach of Marx and Engels. On the one hand that morality is defined as being an expression of the interests of bourgeois ideology, and on the other hand the various writings of Marx and Engels effectively justify a moral approach: “On the other hand, no one can fail to notice that Marx’s and Marxist writings abound in moral judgements, implicit and explicit. From his earliest writings, where Marx expresses his hatred of servility, through his critique of alienation and the fragmentary visions of communism in the Paris Manuscripts and ‘The German Ideology’, to the excoriating attacks on factory conditions and the effects of exploitation in Capital, it is plain that Marx was fired by outrage and indignation and the burning desire for a better world that it is hard not to see as moral.”(p3) But there is not a contradiction in this apparent inconsistent view because the point being made by Marx is that the character of capitalism is not connected to issue of the role of morality. This means that the workers require a precise economic analysis of the economic system if they are to achieve their liberation. In this context the aspect of morality is not important in relation to the development of a perspective for the revolutionary transformation of capitalism. But this apparent understanding of morality as a secondary issue does not necessarily mean that it is irrelevant, instead it is effectively being considered not to be of primary importance in relation to the development of a strategy of change. Ultimately the lack of an explicit reference to morality in the works of Marx would seem to suggest that it is not considered to be important in relation to the aspects of a strategy of change. But this apparent indifference of Marx concerning morality does not mean that we have to dogmatically support this approach. Instead, we can suggest that a very necessary aspect for the development of Marxism is the indication of a connection to morality in more explicit terms.

In other words, the very character of the class struggle is connected to the development of solidarity between the workers and this possibility implies the generation of a morality of cooperative support of the producers in order to facilitate the possibility of collective action in order to oppose the domination of capital. Without this development of this type of morality the workers are effectively opposed to each other as individuals who lack the development of a cooperative relationship and instead consider that their particular interests are opposed to the importance of social aims. Thus, the aspect of morality is connected to the possible realisation of a collective form of class struggle based on the acknowledgement of the mutual aims of the workers as producers who engage in cooperative forms of economic activity. Hence any tendency for the aspect of individual egoism to be dominant in relation to the ideology of the producers means that the development of shared morality of trust and cooperative support between the workers is not likely to be realised. The establishment of the role of trade unions is an expression of this moral approach, but this aspect is also connected to the self-interest of the workers because the role of these organisations is to promote the possibility to achieve wage increases and other improvements in economic terms. However, this aspect is obscured by the apparent fact that as Lukes indicates Marx also considers that morality is an aspect of bourgeois ideology and so in that manner is an aspect of the manner in which capitalism is justified. But this aspect only indicates that morality is itself a contradictory conception. It can be defined in such a manner that seems to be part of the ideological support of the capitalism system, or that morality is connected to the individual self-interests expressed by the process of capital accumulation. But we can also suggest that there is an alternative conception of ideology which means that it is connected to the character of the role of the collective solidarity developed between the workers. Hence there is a contrast between different and indeed opposed forms of morality. The point is that it is in the interests of the workers to support the type of morality that is most consistent with the development and progress of collective forms of class struggle. This means the rejection of the form of morality that is based upon the conception of the individual interests of the capitalists. In other words, morality is a problematical term that can be defined in different terms and on the basis of contrasting class and social interests. This means that there is not an absolute and definitive understanding of morality that is opposed to the importance of contrasting class interests in an unbiased manner. Instead, the primary aspect of morality is connected to the expression of its aspects in terms of the dominant class relations of any given society. This is not to suggest that morality cannot be defined in impartial terms and outside the context of these antagonistic class relations, but in general terms morality is connected to the role of the social relations of any given society.

In this context it would not be possible to understand Marx’s criticism of capitalism without the aspect of the moral criticism of this type of economic system. Hence, he is challenging the justification of capitalism as a system based on the necessary relation of capital and labour by effectively suggesting that this relationship is an expression of a process of exploitation that is not necessary and so in that manner is therefore immoral. The supporters of capitalism would suggest that this system is the most economically efficient and so the workers benefit from this situation despite their subordination within the relations of production. Therefore, despite the aspect of economic inequality there is nothing morally questionable about the character of capitalism. But Marx would dispute this understanding and instead suggest that the capitalist system is able to thrive in the most prosperous manner when the lowest possible level of wages is given to the workers. In this context the only moral possibility is to establish a socialist system in which the aspect of the exploitation of labour by capital has been ended. The fact that Marx might formally deny that this analysis has moral aspects does not repudiate the importance of the role of moral argumentation because it is assumed that this situation is unacceptable because of the aspect of the exploitation of labour by capital. The very fact that it is assumed that labour can organise the process of production without the role of capital is an expression of the moral character of the perspective being outlined in favour of the alternative of socialism. In other words, the validity of this alternative is an indication that capitalism is a temporary system that has unacceptable exploitative aspects that implies the necessity to establish the morally superior system of socialism. Thus, the fact that Marx does not utilise moral reasons for socialism does not mean that his assumptions lack a moral aspect. However, this does not mean that the moral aspect is the primary aspect of his approach. The major reason for this justification of an alternative to capitalism is that the workers will ultimately reject their subordination to capital within the relations of production. Therefore, if this development does not occur it could be assumed that the possibility to overcome the domination of capital has become more difficult than envisaged by Marx. Indeed, this situation could be said to have occurred, and one of the reasons for this development is that the workers have often considered that capitalism has become morally supportable. Thus, the possibility to make material gains within the present system seems to have become an important reason why capitalism is not inherently immoral. Indeed, this aspect could be said to have been a significant reason why the development of support for socialism has often not occurred. However, the Marxist would also suggest that despite these aspects capitalism remains morally unacceptable because the aspect of the exploitation of labour by capital is an expression of the continued necessity for the superseding of this system by a socialist alternative. In other words, the possibility for workers to make material gains within capitalism does not undermine the moral argument for socialism because a system without the exploitation of labour by capital would still be morally superior and would also be more economically efficient. However, the apparent failure to realise this socialist development would seemed to have resolved the issue of the moral credentials of capitalism. In other words, the possible utopian character of socialism would seem to suggest that all that is feasible is to generate the influence of moral values within capitalism. Thus, it actually seems to be problematical to deny the possible importance of morality within a capitalist society. This view would suggest that what is necessary is to encourage the development of morality within capitalism and so reject the apparently pessimistic view that such a prospect is unrealistic. Therefore, it is essentially feasible and practical to reject grandiose schemes about the transformation of capitalism into socialism and to instead emphasise the development of the role of morality within the present system. In this context what is established that what would make capitalism more acceptable is to develop the influence of morality in relation to the practices of the social relations of the capitalist system. But Marxism reject this prospect, and this is because the argument being made is that capitalism cannot be morally improved because the aspect of exploitation means that the very relations of production are not capable of being modified in ethical terms. In other words, only the socialist alternative can be genuinely of an ethical character because it is a system based on the ethical aspect of solidarity in terms an end to the exploitation of labour by capital. But if there is a failure to achieve this objective then it could be suggested that what has resulted is the development of a new type of exploitative system based on the replacement of the private ownership of the means of production by the development of a state system of the economy which is dominated by an elite. However, Marx contends that this possibility will be overcome by the realisation of the potential of the producers to create an egalitarian type of economy. In this manner it could be suggested that socialism is ethically and morally superior to capitalism. But if there is a failure to realise this objective it could be suggested that there is no moral difference between capitalism and the type of exploitative system that has replaced it. Only the realisation of the possibility to establish a society based on the dominant influence of the producers will create a system that is a moral improvement on the capitalism that it has replaced.

Marx essentially described the society that would replace capitalism in terms of the realisation of the cooperative character of the role of the producers and assumed that this new type of society would be able to realise the objectives of the workers who have established control of the economy. The basis of this development is the assumption that the social relations of capital and labour which are based on the exploitation of the latter by the former are morally unjust, even if this approach is not established in explicit terms. It is simply assumed that the character of the capitalist system is unfair because the producers of the commodities and the wealth of society are not able to determine the character of the process of this process of economic development. Instead, the workers act in terms of the benefits of production being appropriated by the capitalist class who make only a secondary contribution to the economic system in terms of the role of investment. In other words, this analysis could not be justified without the assumption being made that the character of the capitalist system is because of the domination of labour by capital an unfair type of society, but this viewpoint is generally not being established in explicit ethical terms. Instead, this approach is an indirect assumption and so it can be concluded that: “In short, like Marx, Engels, Kautsky and Lenin, Trotsky was committed on the one hand to the moral condemnation of capitalist evils and the advocacy and pursuit of socialist ends, and indeed to the justification of these ends in terms of a ‘liberating morality’; and on the other to the dismissal of all moral talk as dangerous ideological illusion, rendered anachronistic by the discovery of scientific laws of economic development.”(p24-25) In other words in terms of the development of an understanding of the character of capitalism these Marxists made the assumption that it could be analysed in terms of the primary emphasis on the role of theory, and so the aspect of morality would represent a concession to the views of the opponents of this revolutionary perspective. But in indirect terms there were constant references to the importance of the aspect of a moral critique of capitalism. The problem that developed was that ultimately Stalin could justify an anti-ethical approach and suggest that this was consistent with the standpoint of Marxism. In other words, the most effective manner in which Stalinism could be opposed was to suggest that this authoritarian standpoint represented a pragmatic and cynical approach that was opposed to the implicit moral criteria by which a principled socialism could be expressed. It could be argued that the various critiques of Stalinism did express this type of theoretical character. Indeed, it could be considered that the most effective manner in which Stalinism could be theoretically opposed was to indicate that its cynical expression of the role of political power was an indication of the lack of ethical standards in its character. This would imply that anti-Stalinism was based on the emphasis of the connection of the role of a principled type of socialism with the importance of ethical aspects by which to evaluate the actions of a leadership that claimed to be revolutionary. Hence the lack of these moral standards was an indication that the Stalinist elite had rejected the importance of Marxist principles in order to define the character of their political activity. In other words what was genuinely moral could be understood as the development of a consistent and principled attempt to try and create an egalitarian and democratic type of socialist society. The rejection of this perspective by Stalinism was an indication of its anti-ethical character. The aim of the consolidation of the domination of an elite could not in any sense be defined as being an expression of the realisation of the standards of a socialist form of morality. Primarily the major ethical principle of the expression of the solidarity of the producers could not be realised in these circumstances. However, the very theoretical political problem of the critics of Stalinism was that they were generally unable to relate their opposition to the system in terms of the elaboration of a moral critique. This aspect undermined the ability to connect the political limitations of Stalinism to the rejection of the importance of moral standards. But Trotsky eventually established the basis of a moral criticism of Stalinism in his pamphlet: “Their Morals and Ours”. He had begun to recognise the theoretical role of connecting the anti-moral cynicism of the Stalinist system with the development of an understanding of its elitist and authoritarian character. In other words, the very reactionary character of Stalinism was connected to its rejection of any moral standards by which to define its political activity. The primary aim of the realisation of the interests of an elite means that this approach can only be justified in terms of the rejection of the importance of moral criteria by which to define its actions. Therefore, the development of an ethical form of socialism would be an integral aspect of the criticism of the role of the bureaucratic elite who claimed to be acting in the interests of socialism. This claim could be shown to be false because of its very anti-ethical character. In other words, the political necessity to develop a criticism of the role of the Stalinist bureaucracy was an indication that the Marxist reticence about the importance of an ethical approach had to be overcome. Instead, an important aspect of the critique of Stalinism was that it was not acting in an ethical manner. But the theoretical necessity of this approach indicated that it was necessary to develop an opposition to capitalism that emphasised the importance of ethics. The Marxist reservations about ethics had to be overcome and instead established as a necessary aspect of the socialist justification of an alternative to capitalism and Stalinism.

Indeed, it could be argued that this approach has become important in the context of the apparent supremacy of the capitalist system. It seems that the workers are either unable or unwilling to act to try and undermine and end the domination of capital. However, the argument can still be made that capitalism is an unjust system because it is based on the exploitation of labour which creates the wealth of society. Therefore, an ethical approach can be developed which would suggest that capitalism is an unjust system that should be replaced. The increasing influence of this ethical standpoint would become possibly the most important aspect in the generation of increasing support for a socialist alternative to capitalism. However, the Marxist emphasis on the role of the class struggle has meant that the necessity to develop this type of ethical standpoint has been neglected and so the defenders of the system have instead been able to provide economic reasons why the present system should not be replaced.

But the possibility to develop the importance of an ethical approach in relation to the aim of socialism is expressed by the fact that people often consider the system to be unjust, or that capital has an unequal share of the proceeds of production. Dogmatic Marxists would contend in opposition to this moral standpoint that there is nothing actually ethically unjust about the capital-labour relation: “Thus, since the exploitation of wage labour by capital is essential to the capitalist mode of production, there is nothing unjust about the transaction through which capital exploits labour; the worker is paid the full value of his labour power… and the capitalist, in subsequently appropriating surplus value, is not required to pay the worker an equivalent for it, since under capitalism the worker has no right to the full value created by his labour.”(p50) But surely it is assumed by Marx that the extraction of surplus value from the worker is an unjust aspect of the capitalist system or else there would be no credible reason to aspire to create an alternative. The point is that the domination of capital over labour enables the possibility of an extraction of a surplus value to be obtained. The fact that without the role of labour capital would not be able to take advantage of this situation and as a result is able to obtain the economic wealth in the form of commodities that is created by the act of production. A defender of the capitalist system would suggest that without the investment and guidance provided by the capitalists the workers would lack the necessary supervision that would enable the process of production to occur. But a Marxist would claim that this economic process is effectively unjust because the worker would be able to organise and develop production in an effective manner without the domination of capital. It is this emphasis on the potential capacity of the workers to be able to organise and develop production utilising their own initiative that is an indication that the present system is not necessary and is instead only the result of the ability of the supporters of capital to be able to impose this unjust system on the producers. In other words, there is nothing inherent within human nature that implies the capitalist system is a logical and necessary development in terms of the character of the process of productive activity. It is for this reason that capitalism should be considered to be a temporary system that will be replaced by the development of a situation in which labour is able to organise the character of the process of production. Only this prospect would ensure that the moral right of the forces of labour to the proceeds of their productive wealth would be realised. But Lukes contends that Marx sometimes considered that capitalism was morally justifiable in relation to the process of the extraction of surplus value by capital from labour. But the point is that this understanding is credible if we consider the situation from the standpoint of capital. The defenders of the system would claim that capital has an important role in providing the wages that ensure the possibility for the workers to be able to obtain the means of subsistence. But if we analyse this situation from the standpoint of the workers it could be suggested that this development is not a necessary or logical development but is instead the expression of the importance of unequal economic power. Therefore, from the standpoint of labour this domination of capital over the process of production is not ethical and instead should be replaced by the development of the ability of labour to organise the economy in accordance with its priorities. This is the implicit position of Marx even if does not utilise directly moral criteria to justify his position. As Lukes outlines, when evaluated from the standpoint of labour, the contribution that labour makes is unfairly expropriated by the forces of capital. Without the role of labour capital would not be able to make economic benefits from the situation and so is able to gain advantages from the effective subordination of the workers within the process of production. The fact that labour could be able to develop production without the role of capital is an indication that the prevailing situation is not an expression of a logical and necessary situation in terms of the character of production. In other words, the independent capacity of labour indicates that it could organise and develop the economy without the aspect of the role of capital. It is this very point which expresses the situation that capitalism is not a just and moral system, and instead it should be morally replaced by the superior alternative of socialism.

What is the Marxist view about human rights? Lukes suggests that the Marxist concept of human rights is problematical because it is implied that they are in some manner universal and so not connected to the character of the society that is dominant in any given historical era. But in fact, it is the very limitations of the capitalist forms of society that generate the aspiration for human rights. For example, an authoritarian society leads to the demand for forms of democracy and the accountability of the system as an expression of the role of human rights. Thus, authoritarianism is defined as being problematical because it is a denial of human rights which includes the aim of the development of democracy as the basis of the political system. This objective may not achieve the socialist transformation of society, but it could result in important developments in terms of the modification of capitalism in a manner that makes the system more accountable to the people. Any overcoming of repression by the realisation of human rights must be an aspect of progress that could result in the development of the possibility of revolutionary change. In other words, the character of human rights is that they establish the development of increasing democracy within a capitalist society. This aspect can enable the possible expression of the influence of the people within society and so create the conditions for the generation of social change. Whilst in a socialist society the role of human rights is also progressive because it ensures that the government does not begin to act in an authoritarian manner and instead there are rules that suggest what is acceptable and democratic forms of policy. In this context the rights of minority groups would be respected within the context of acceptance of the popular role of the majority view within society.

Would it be possible to vote in favour of the restoration of capitalism in terms of the development of majority support for parties that advocated this approach? It has to be suggested that it would be morally questionable and a denial of the principles of democracy to ban parties that supported the aim of the restoration of capitalism. Therefore, it would be conceivable that parties that advocated the restoration of capitalism would obtain majority support. However, if the development of a socialist society has proved to be successful it would seem to be irrational that people would vote in favour of the restoration of a capitalist system that would mean the reintroduction of the exploitation of labour by capital. However, the right to vote in favour of this development is important because it indicates that a socialist society should not be based on the denial of the expression of the role of popular democracy. But if people are organising the socialist system in a participatory manner it would seem to be irrational that they would vote in favour of the restoration of the capitalist system. An aspect of the durability of socialism would be its moral superiority. The point Is that people would consider the exploitation of labour by capital to be morally unacceptable and that instead the only ethically justifiable situation would be one in which the producers are able to organise the character of economic activity without the aspect of the subordination of the workers to the objectives of the process of capital accumulation. Thus, a major reason why the capitalist system becomes to be considered to be inferior to socialism is because only the latter type of economic activity results in the liberation of the producers from the aspect of the role of the process of exploitation. In this manner the superiority of socialism is defined by the apparent possibility that it will be morally better than capitalism which is a system that has to justify the exploitation of the producers as being an indispensable aspect of the functioning of this economic system. However, in ideological terms the supporters of socialism have often not considered it important to outline the moral arguments in favour of this alternative to capitalism. The result is that it seems a paradoxical result that the defenders of capitalism seem to be able to utilise a moral justification for capitalism in terms of the view that the apparent efficiency of this system is to the material benefit of the people of society. But this view is based on the denial of the actuality of the exploitation of labour by capital within the relations of production. Instead, it is considered to be the fact that the economic efficiency of the capitalist system enables the realisation of the material welfare of all the members of society. In this manner the very domination of capital over labour is to the benefit of the producers and so enables the realisation of the interests of the producers. But Marxists would claim that the situation of the domination of labour by capital means that the material welfare of the producers is not a certain aspect of the economic situation and instead this very situation is the result of the domination of capital within the relations of production. Only the establishment of the supremacy of the producers can generate a dominant ideology of egalitarianism which means the character of economic activity is based on the realisation of the interests of all the members of society. In this manner of the aspect of the development of a system that is based on the intention to achieve the economic aims of all of the people can it be said that socialism is superior to capitalism in terms of morality. However, the defender of capitalism would suggest that the aspect of economic inequality within the system is ultimately of benefit to all the members of society. This is because capitalism is considered to be the economic system that is the most efficient and so capable of the realisation of the material interests of all of the members of society. But socialists would dispute this viewpoint and instead suggest that the primary aim of capital accumulation within the capitalist system has to be based on the exploitation of labour, or wages paid at the lowest possible level. Therefore, the workers can only obtain material improvements by the development of organisation to achieve this aim. In other words, the inevitability of class struggle is an indication that any claim of the capitalists to uphold the aspect of moral justification of their system is doubtful. Instead, the consistent expression of morality requires the development of an alternative type of society in which the principles of solidarity represent the possibility to achieve moral aims in the most consistent and effective manner.

But Marxists tend to be critical of the credibility of the aspect of morality because they associate it with the conservative values associated with the defence of capitalism. But this aspect only indicates that morality can be interpreted in an ideological manner and so it is possible to establish the connection of morality with the perspective of self-interest which is connected to the imperatives of capital accumulation. The point is that Marxists should reject this interpretation of morality but not in terms of the rejection of the importance of morality. Instead, they should outline the aspects of a socialist conception of morality which would emphasise the importance of the principles of solidarity. Thus, morality can be defined in terms of the collective aspects of the development of class struggle and so the conception of self-interest would become reconciled with the collective aspects of the attempt of workers to organise to defend their interests against the objectives of capitalists to intensify the process of exploitation. In other words, the capitalist system would be defined as anti-ethical because it is based on the objective to intensify the exploitation of the workers in the process of production. The apparent aspect of economic efficiency that is associated with the capitalist system would not justify the process of exploitation within the relations of production. The point that is being made is that capitalism is an immoral system because there is a possible alternative in terms of the aim of socialism. In other words, the very capacity to envisage a socialist alternative to capitalism is an indication that the capitalist system is not inevitable and instead there is a morally superior possibility that could replace this type of economy. It is the very ability to define socialism which means that capitalism should be considered to be a transitory system because of its moral limitations. However, it could be argued that the moral aims of socialism are not practical or credible, and that it is essentially an unrealistic type of system that cannot be genuinely established. But the point is that it is the very moral limitations of capitalism which mean that people will aspire to realise a socialist alternative. The domination of labour by capital in the relations of production means that in continual terms there will be the development of forms of popular rejection of the credibility and lack of morality of capitalism. As a result of this aspect there will be the continual development of opposition to the system that will create the possibility for radical change.

However, it has often been suggested that the aspect of the ideological domination of capitalism continually undermines the development of the moral rejection of capitalism into becoming an effective form of opposition to the present economic system. This issue is obviously of importance and has been an essential aspect for the undermining of the development of influential expression of rejection of capitalism. But we cannot suggest that because of this issue that capitalism cannot be rejected in ethical and political terms. The point is that the very moral issues of capitalism based on the exploitation of labour will continue to generate forms of opposition. This means that the rejection of capitalism because of its moral problems could result in the development of effective opposition. But it is necessary that this prospect is connected to the realisation of a consistent programme of radical change. Thus, people have to go beyond limited rejection of capitalism because of its moral issues and instead become supporters of a convincing programme for the transformation of society. It has often been the failure to beyond the moral rejection of capitalism which has undermined the development of a more effective class consciousness that is able to promote an effective strategy of change. If moral issues are the primary aspect of the rejection of capitalism this aspect could undermine the development of support for a political programme for the transformation of the system. In other words, an emphasis on the importance of the problems of morality within the capitalist system could become the basis of the rejection of the necessity to develop a convincing strategy for the transformation of society. The complex issue is that morality does not seem to be connected to the development of a strategy that could enhance progress in the class struggle, and so as a result morality is neglected by Marxists. But this apparent indifference to morality enables the defenders of capitalism to suggest that Marxism is based on the rejection of the role of ethics and is instead a cynical attempt to establish the power of the party elite. It seems that anything is possible if the result is the end of the domination of capitalism. Thus, the only manner in which the role of morality can be sustained is to become the liberal conscience of the capitalist system. The assumption being made is that the criticism of capitalism is essentially motivated by the aspirations for power of a privileged party elite. The success of this strata is not to bring about the emancipation of society but is instead to develop the economic and political domination of the revolutionary organisation and this means that the workers remain subordinated within society. However, the very importance of ethics is to question this tendency for the justification of the domination of the party and to instead indicate that the most consistently moral situation is to connect the role of the party with the liberation of society. Hence the aim of communism is the basis to uphold the moral role of the party and to therefore establish that the aims of the revolutionary organisation have a principled connection to the aspiration to liberate society from the exploitative and oppressive aspects of capitalism. Thus, the objective of communism is the expression of the highest moral standards that the party and the workers can adopt. The realisation of this objective will bring about the liberation of society from the aspects of exploitation generated by the relations of production of capitalism. In other words, communism is not an abstract and distant ultimate objective, but it is instead the criteria by which the morality of the party and the workers is established. Thus, communism is also the means by which the end is realised. The distortion of moral objectives would mean that the end of communism is not being established in terms of the undermining of the solidarity that is required in order to generate the conditions necessary to achieve this objective. Instead, the non-ethical practices of a capitalist society would have been introduced into the activity of the post-revolutionary regime. The interests of individuals would become dominant in this situation and so the high ethical standards of the interests of a collective community will have been compromised. The result of this restoration of the objectives of the individual at the expense of the role of the community will mean that society is no longer making progress towards the realisation of communism and instead the increasing lack of the importance of ethical standards means that a bureaucratic elite is developing with interests opposed to the realisation of the connection of morality to the promotion of socialism. The result is the cynical justification of the lack of ethical standards of an emerging party elite that is concerned with its own interests at the expense of the genuine collective development of society. This is why there is a theory and practice contradiction because the formal aim of socialism actually becomes the pretext to uphold the narrow interests of the domination of the party elite. In this context any reference to socialist morality is actually the cynical justification of the development of new forms of exploitation within society. The point is that these problems will only be resolved, as Rosa Luxemburg was aware in her criticism of the Bolshevik regime, if there is genuine democratic accountability of the party to the influence and role of the working class. But how is this relationship to be established? It could be argued that Luxemburg did not have a satisfactory answer to this problem because she assumed that the revolutionary party could only act in accordance with its character if it was based on a genuinely democratic relationship to the working class. But what happens if the role of the party becomes distorted by the very exercise of political power. How will this problem be resolved? It could be suggested that Luxemburg did not have a satisfactory answer to this issue because she assumes that a genuinely revolutionary party will ultimately act in the interests of the working class. But the very exercise of power by the party means that its elite character comes to define its politics. How can the workers resolve these problems in a progressive manner? In other words, how can the workers ensure that the party remains accountable to their interests? It could be suggested that there has never been an effective answer to this question because most revolutionary adherents assume that the connection of party and class is an uncomplicated issue despite the distortions of Stalinism. What is ignored by the various views of Marxists on this question of party and class is the development of a convincing understanding of how the aspect of power and its tendency to distort the aims of the revolutionary party can be resolved in a progressive manner. Indeed, developing a convincing approach concerning this issue would mean greater elaboration of the necessity to connect moral standards to the role of a revolutionary party in power. It has to be understood in more systematic terms the tendency for the very exercise of power to result in the justification of the rejection of ethical standards in relation to the role of a governing revolutionary party. Only the development of an effective democratic system can provide the political basis to try and resolve these issues in a satisfactory manner. But this aspect has to be connected to the importance of the influence of morality in the activity of the major revolutionary party. It was the rejection of the significance of ethics that led the Bolsheviks to increasing justify their situation of political power in cynical terms, and so reject the importance of accountability to the workers and peasants. This aspect was connected to the increasing perspective that the party inherently acts on behalf of the workers, and so the necessity of democratic accountability of the party to the class became a perspective that was increasingly undermined by the assumption that the party inherently acts on behalf of the class. In this context the consistent application of ethical standards might have ensured that the actions of the party had a consistently progressive content. But instead, the very aspect of power became the justification of political policies that it could be said to lack a connection to the ethical standards that might have been established by more principled forms of policy. Instead, the aspect of power meant that the ethical aspects of the conception of socialism became increasingly undermined and replaced by a pragmatic approach that justified the role of the party because of its exercise of political power. The result was an empirical understanding that the party as a result of its domination was carrying out the interests of the workers regardless of the apparent increasing rejection of any acceptance of ethical criteria as the basis of what would constitute policy. Instead, the actual exercise of political power was the only justification of the increasing empirical character of the relation of theory and practice. In other words, it was actually the approach of ethics that could indicate the increasingly unprincipled character of the leadership of the Bolsheviks. This standpoint could indicate the differences between the opportunist justification of socialism in one country when contrasted to the interests of international revolution. The approach of the Bolsheviks under Stalin was based on a cynical defence of power at the expense of any moral justification of genuine revolutionary politics. The problem had become that the majority of the party was increasingly convinced of the cynical justification of power at the expense of any commitment to revolutionary morality. This influence took the form of the theory of socialism in one country. Therefore, the defence of an international revolutionary approach by Trotsky was the expression of the ethical aspects that had previously motivated the political practice of the Bolsheviks. But the very exercise of power meant that the ethical aspects of the approach of revolutionary Marxism had become undermined by the empirical commitment of the necessity for the party elite to remain in power. Trotsky was opposed because he proposed a return to the more principled politics of pervious years which had been based on a genuine commitment to the objectives of revolutionary internationalism. In this manner Trotsky effectively defended a more consistent ethical approach rather than an accommodation to the objectives of upholding political power.

However, Trotsky did not suggest the realisation of ethical objectives as the aim of the revolutionary process but rather that the practices of Stalinism was the denial of the aim of the achievement of a consistent socialist type morality. Thus, the development of bureaucratic domination of society could only be justified in the pragmatic terms of the connection of the role of the party elite with the construction of socialism. In other words, the very objective of socialism was actually opposed to the consistent expression of morals! But this inconsistency could only express the situation that there was the emergence of a bureaucratic elite that was primarily concerned with the maintenance of its economic and political power. In this context the very character of socialism was reduced to the pragmatic expedient expression of the aims of the bureaucratic elite and so the aspect of morality was completely reduced to being the justification of the aims of the party elite. It could be argued that it was necessary to emphasise the importance of morals in the struggle against Stalinism but instead Trotsky stressed its opportunist and sectarian limitations. The character of Stalinism was opposed to the genuine revolutionary development of the class struggle because the possibility of the creation of authentic socialism would be a challenge to the legitimacy of the domination of the Stalinist party elite. Therefore, pragmatism replaced any expression of the relation of principled class struggle politics to the importance of revolutionary morality. This rejection of morality was consistent with the cynical opportunism of the Stalinist elite which was prepared to undermine the development of the class struggle if it considered that the success of this aspect could result in a rival form of socialism that would challenge the legitimacy of the rule of the party bureaucracy. In other words, politics was reduced to the expression of a cynical pragmatism that was opposed to the possibility to express a genuine type of morality. Kautsky had outlined the non-ethical character of the political practice of the Bolsheviks in 1918, and it was Trotsky who defended the actions of the Bolsheviks because of the situation of the civil war. Trotsky contended that in the context of civil war the role of a coercive policy was required in order to defeat the forces of counter-revolution. Therefore, the character of the political situation justified a coercive policy because the ultimate outcome was the advance of the possibility to realise an emancipatory society. But what would occur if the very attempt to defend the revolutionary government resulted in the justification of the domination of society by a party elite? This development would indicate that the importance of a pragmatic approach had undermined the attempt to realise a consistent type of revolutionary morality and the result was the consolidation of the domination of the party elite. Hence the character of the means or methods of government do determine the resulting ends. A coercive policy if applied in a long-term manner can only generate the domination of the party elite. Instead, only the attempt to apply democracy in accordance with the standards of an ethical type of socialism can result in the development of a genuinely socialist society. Thus, it was necessary to try to promote the realisation of soviet democracy if the issue of the domination of the party elite was to be resolved in a progressive manner. This development would also be the political expression of a genuine form of revolutionary morality because the realisation of soviet democracy would correspond with the possibility to create an authentic and popular form of socialism.

In other words, there is a moral connection between means and ends. The application of state coercion is unlikely to achieve the aim of a democratic form of socialist society. But Lukes outlines how Trotsky in his pamphlet ‘Their Morals and Ours’ suggests that repressive means can be justified in order to realise emancipatory ends. (p117-124) It could be argued that in a situation of civil war between progressive and reactionary forces there is no alternative than to utilise repressive measures in order to maintain the supremacy of the revolutionary regime. However, this should not be the justification of such measures in general terms. Instead, the credibility of the workers state requires that it attempts to develop an approach that is based on the highest standards of the principles of democracy and only in that manner would its approach correspond to the application of morality. Thus, in general terms the Soviet regime would attempt to establish a process for the realisation of a democratic consensus in terms of establishing the democratic and moral credentials of the administration. If this aspect was not generally realised it could result in the criticism that the government was no longer the genuine expression of the role of a worker’s state. In other words, there is a connection between means and ends whilst Trotsky is primarily concerned with the ends of the policies of a revolutionary government. But it could be argued that the application of repressive means can generally only result in the consolidation of an authoritarian type of regime. Indeed, this is how the character of Stalinism is to be explained. However, Trotsky can suggest a different approach based on the contradictory character of means and ends, which results in the possibility for repressive type means to advance the realisation of progressive and democratic ends. What is important in relation to this contradictory approach is the character of the government that utilises methods of repression. The problem with this view is that it cannot be credible in general terms. Only the application of democratic practices in accordance with the highest standards of morality can promote the possibility of the formation of a genuine revolutionary government which is based on the principles of accountability to the people. Obviously, the situation of civil war undermines the possibility to realise a situation of popular democratic forms of government, but in general it should be suggested that the very credibility of a revolutionary regime to claim to be principled and genuine is based on the expression of the role of democracy in accordance with the highest standards of morality. Therefore, it cannot be credibly implied that Stalinist regimes are socialist because they are based on the rejection of these aspects which would constitute the basis of a genuine type of emancipatory society. Instead, it has to be suggested that Stalinism is based on the empirical criteria that anything is essentially justified if it contributes to the continuation of the domination of the party elite. It could be argued that Leninism had the same character, but in that situation the issue of civil war led to the introduction of policies that undermined the aim of the party of Lenin to try and genuinely realise a society based on socialist principles. In contrast Stalinism lacked the aspect of morality of Leninism and so instead was concerned merely with the continuation of the domination of the party elite. When the workers were discontented under the Leninist regime there was a recognition that this situation was not morally or politically acceptable and so attempts were made to try and resolve the situation in a satisfactory manner, such as by the liberalisation of soviet democracy and attempts to develop workers control of production in more effective terms. Therefore, even if in a problematical manner the aspect of morality was part of the politics of the Bolsheviks under Lenin’s leadership. But this reference to morality was not in the interests of the emerging Stalinist elite and so instead the aspect of pragmatism become the defining basis of policy. This development did not preclude the resort to the role of adventurism, as with the approach of the collectivisation of the peasants, because this approach was considered to be in the interests of the party elite. Hence there was a combination of bureaucratism and subjectivism which justified the rejection of any application of morality in the policy of Stalinism.

However, it has been argued that there was no essential difference between Leninism and Stalinism because both regimes were based on the rejection of morality in terms of the interests of the justification of the domination of the party over society. But it could be argued that there was a difference in objectives which suggested that the character of politics and the attitude in relation to morality was different. In other words, a serious argument can be made that under difficult circumstances the regime of Lenin was still trying to advance the realisation of the interests of the workers and peasants. In this manner in contradictory terms there was still some expression of the importance of the objectives of revolutionary morality. But the general cynicism and pragmatism of the Stalin regime meant that this aspect was no longer important. Instead, what was dominant was the aim of the consolidation of a type of bureaucratic rule. Thus, it was the development of a type of elitist society that led to the effective rejection of any sort of morality as the basis for the justification of political policy. Instead, the conception of socialism became identified with the role and character of the party elite. It could be argued that this development had occurred under Lenin’s regime, but this aspect was because unfavourable circumstances led to the creation of a regime based on the importance of practical policies replacing the aim of the development of socialism. This meant the perpetuation of the revolutionary government became an end in itself, and this objective became distorted under Stalin’s regime into the identification of the role of the party with the building of socialism. Thus, any policy became to be justified in terms of the fact that it was the expression of the approach of the ruling party and the issue of revolutionary morality became considered to be irrelevant because the only justification of the legitimacy of policy was the fact that it was based on the actions of the party elite who were considered to be the only principled agencies of the interests of the workers. The workers themselves could not act to express their interests because they had an inferior understanding of what this meant when compared to the revolutionary role of the party. In other words, the very character of revolutionary morality was reduced to what was acceptable to the leadership of the party. They defined both morality and the aspect of policy, and in this manner could claim to be an expression of the interests of the workers. Trotsky did not challenge this perspective, instead all that he suggested was that the Stalinist basis of the party was opportunist and that instead there should be a new and more principled leadership of the Bolsheviks. Hence what did not seem to be under dispute was the view that the spontaneous dynamism of the workers could not define the character of either morality or policy. This approach was connected to a rejection of the necessity of a democratic basis of the socialist regime.

The ultimate legacy of this approach was to effectively suggest that the party could decide on behalf of the workers what was principled politics and what would constitute the aspects of revolutionary morality. But increasingly this standpoint has become questioned. Instead, it has been argued that the solidarity generated by the development of collective struggles in opposition to the exploitative and oppressive limitations of capitalism and socialism is an indication of the possibility to develop a more progressive character in relation to both morality and politics. Therefore, the issue becomes how to generate various mass struggles in order to express these aspects that express the possibility to realise a type of society based on the aims of a new type of morality and progressive politics. However, the problematical issue remains that of leadership. Will the role of a leadership of these struggles facilitate the possibility that the popular and mass character of the actions against aspects of capitalism will mean that any potential for the establishment of progressive societies will be distorted by this aspect of the apparent influence of an elite? Generally, it could be suggested that this issue has not been tackled because the emphasis has been on the importance of the various mass struggles that develop in the context of contemporary capitalism. In other words what is assumed is that the collective morality of the various mass struggles will somehow spontaneously resolve any outstanding ethical issues that are generated as a result of these developments. But this approach is unsatisfactory because the various defenders of the present system will suggest that the advocates of the various forms of solidarity action lack the moral and political authority that is bestowed by the activity of the democratic political system. These forces will suggest that it is the procedures of democratic political systems that ultimately bestow aspects of moral and political authority on the actions of political actors. In this context the various forms of mass struggle lack this type of political credibility because they are the product of mass activism rather than being the expression of the application of democratic procedures. Hence it would seem that the various forms of mass activism are undermined by this apparent lack of democratic vindication of the institutions of the political system. This issue will have to be addressed when we try to establish the moral and political credibility of solidarity movements.

The issue of solidarity is addressed by Lawrence Wilde in his book: ‘Global Solidarity’ (Edinburgh University Press, 2013) He outlines how there has been a contradictory relationship between the influence of concepts of national solidarity that have upheld the interests of national capitalist systems and the rival standpoint of international solidarity which has been the expression of the perspective of the international unity of the working class in the struggle to realise socialism. It is established that in periods of political crisis there has a tendency for the aspect of internationalism to be undermined and the influence of the interests of rival capitalist nation states has become dominant. The development of the first world war led the various socialist parties to accept the importance of the interests of the national capitalist state and so the solidarity objectives of the approach of international socialism was undermined. Indeed, the second international became reduced to support for the competition of different national states. This development was an indication that the international character of the principles of solidarity could have a political appeal that was inferior to the influence of nationalism that seemed to express the alternative view of a united community that was opposed to the rival interests of competing nation states. In this context the issue of morality became reduced to what was considered to be an expression of the aims of the nation state in terms of the competitive economic and political rivalry of the world economy. The national chauvinism aims of the competing imperialist powers was opposed by the internationalism of Bolshevism, but this approach became undermined by the role of the Stalinist domination of the party elite in the USSR which reduced the principles of solidarity to support for the interests of the Soviet party elite. It became difficult to promote the importance of the aim of solidarity without this connection to the aims of the Soviet bureaucracy. Therefore, the aims of the bureaucratic state became the basis of the definition of socialism. This meant that the aspect of the solidarity generated by the struggles of the people of the world against capitalism and authoritarianism became compromised by this association with the role of the USSR. The alternative of social democracy increased emphasised the development of the role of the welfare state which meant the modification of the character of capitalism by the limited introduction of reforms which in a certain sense meant the development of the principles of solidarity within capitalist society. This meant that in important terms the character of capitalism was being modified by the influence of the role of an alternative type of morality that challenged the domination of the principles of the market economy. But this attempt to introduce ethical principles within the capitalist economic system was undermined by the advent of the increasing ascendency of free market economics since the 1970’s. The aspect of morality that had become integral to capitalism and the welfare state was undermined by the offensive of capital against labour which meant that the importance of economic aspects of the system were emphasised at the expense of the role of the moral modification of the character of capitalism. This development has been intensified since the 2008 financial crisis which has led to the imposition of austerity politics in order to ensure that the interests of capital are upheld at the expense of the workers. But this development has been opposed by the increasing importance of new social movements such as that of ecology, which have supported the aim of attempting to uphold moral aims as part of a process of changing the present social system in progressive terms. These developments are an indication that the reactionary economic objectives of the adherents of capital are not being unopposed, but instead the influence of a progressive type of morality is being expressed in the development of these new forms of mass movements of struggle.

In other words, the point being made by Wilde is that the aims of the expression of the interests of an increasingly global capital is being opposed by the aspect of solidarity that is characteristic of the various forms of opposition to the aims of the present economic system. The lack of an ethical basis to the objectives of the defenders of the interests of capital is an important reason why the various forms of opposition develop a genuine moral character based on the assertion of the principle of solidarity, or the unity of the subordinated people against the attempt to impose the interests of capital. Thus, the various opposition movements attempt to develop their forms of solidarity in terms of the contrast that is made between their ethical character when contrasted to the narrow economic requirements of the supporters of capital. However, because of the regressive influence of Stalinism this perspective of protest is generally not based on the explicit aim of a socialist alternative but is instead often expressed in the vague terms of anti-capitalism. In this context the aspect of the solidarity of the struggle and its claim to moral superiority is what defines the very objectives of these movements and in this manner the aspect of ultimate aims is not established in coherent and explicit terms. Thus, the aspect of the importance of morality is what defines these various movements of solidarity and the issue of how to replace capitalism with an alternative type of system is not established in coherent and explicit terms. Instead, the very aspect of the solidarity of the struggle and its implicit claim to express a superior morality in comparison to the defenders of capitalism is what becomes considered to be the very objectives and character of these forms of opposition to the present system. There is no longer the important aim of supporting socialism as the superior moral alternative to capitalism. Instead, the vague notion of anti-capitalism is what defines the ethical character and objectives of these movements of protest. But the problem is that the result of these developments is that the various movements know what they are against, but it is not apparent what they are in favour of. The ultimate result of this aspect of their character is that the various forms of dissent become defined in terms of organising for the next demonstration or protest and so they are defined merely in these activist terms. In contrast the various socialist organisations tend to adapt to the activism of these movements, and this means that there is no influence of a popular notion of socialism as the superior manner in which the aims of morality and solidarity can be realised. Instead, the opponents of capitalism become defined in the narrow terms of merely being critics of the present system and this is the basis of their ethical and political approach. In this context the influence of the aim of socialism as the only genuine basis of an ethical and political alternative to capitalism becomes undermined or almost unimportant. Therefore, the effective influence of a revolutionary approach is essentially ended and is instead replaced by the role of movements of protest against aspects of the capitalist system. This means that people are defined in terms of what they are against, and in this manner the notions of ethics and solidarity becomes defined in these negative terms. The role of ethics is reduced to organising for the next demonstration and as a result the very issue of alternatives to the present system become to be considered to be irrelevant. This presents a problem for the few remaining Marxists who consider that they have no alternative than to adapt to this situation. The result of this development is that the aspect of protest defines all aspects of political activity and so the issue of the necessity to struggle for a socialist objective becomes to be considered to be effectively irrelevant in this context. Hence it is not the role of bourgeois ideology that has the major responsibility for the undermining of the importance of the objective of socialism, instead it is the activist character of the role of the Marxist movement that expresses this undermining of the influence of the aim of socialism. Hence it is necessary to try and re-establish a more principled conception of the relationship of means and ends. This would mean that the aim of socialism could be re-developed in terms of its importance and so the role of demonstrations and protests would once again become the basis of the attempt to achieve a situation of progress towards the realisation of the socialist objective. In this manner the ethics of struggle would no longer be merely an end in themselves and would instead become an expression of what was required in order to advance the possibility to achieve socialism. Thus, the ethics of struggle would be reduced in importance and instead would again become connected to the understanding that this aspect is an expression of how it is possible to achieve the ultimate objective of socialism. Hence the emphasis on activism would become modified in these terms. The result is the development of a more principled conception of the relationship of means and ends.

One of the most important points made by Wilde is that the development of divisions caused by the Russian revolution led to an undermining of the possibility to establish a genuinely universal and international understanding of solidarity: “The split in the international working class movement following the Russian revolution had far-reaching consequences for class solidarity, and in particular for the universalist aspiration for solidarity, and in particular for the universalist aspiration for a solidaristic world free of class divisions. The…..communist dictatorships meant the death of the political ideal of a democracy that had been an essential element of the original conception of solidarity. In western Europe, the electoral advances of social democratic parties helped to secure the ‘peace formula’ of the welfare state, but against a background of full employment of and rapid economic growth, the gaol of a qualitatively different socialist society was dropped.” (p144) Thus the limitations of revolutionary sectarianism and reformism meant that a principled conception of solidarity could not be realised. The aspect of solidarity expressed by the class struggle of the workers did not achieve its logical realisation in the creation of genuine socialist societies because of the various political limitations of social democracy and Stalinism. Hence there was a contradiction between the solidarity of the collective actions of the workers and the elitist character of the political organisations that claimed to represent the interests of the workers. The aim of power was an important aspect that undermined the logical expression of the role of solidarity in the formation of a genuine socialist society. Instead, the Communist party aspired to dominant society, or social democracy established an accommodation with capitalism. In this context the aspect of ethics was subordinated to the interests of the establishment of the possibility of the powerful role of the socialist party within society. Morality and its connection to the role of solidarity was undermined by the privileged leaders of the socialist parties aspiring to develop their influence within society.

In the present period the development of a genuinely inter-connected world economy indicates the necessity of the importance of forms of global cooperation between the producers of different countries. But this development does not occur because the influence of nationalism is utilised in order to establish the political support of the people for the continuation of capitalism. Therefore, the realisation of a new concept of solidarity is needed if the possibility to connect the discontent of the workers with the aim of support for a different type of society is to be addressed and realised. Wilde considers that the global character of the world economy can generate the objective basis for a new type of cosmopolitan consciousness of the people of the different societies. But this economic determinist approach seems to underestimate the durable aspect of the role of a national form of consciousness for undermining the importance of the development of an international form of solidarity as the basis for the unity of different peoples. Instead, there is a distorted expression of solidarity which is compatible with support for the continuation of the global character of capitalism. The point is that in economic terms there is the functioning of a world economy, but this is upheld in ideological terms by the role of a national form of solidarity. Thus, the following conclusion of Wilde about the political results of this development would seem to be optimistic. He comments that: “It may well be that globalization is already promoting a greater cosmopolitan consciousness through global geographical mobility, the development of cultural hybridity and the gradual emergence of a global public sphere around issues such as economic governance, global warming and world poverty.”(p156) The influence of these issues may be expressed by a minority of activists but in majority terms most people have not begun to question the continued domination of global capitalism. In other words, the decline of the role of parties influenced by a socialist type ideology has not been replaced by genuinely popular forms of radical ideology based on the approach of solidarity. Instead, the level of support for the capitalist system has proved to be generally durable because of the continued popular character of the parties that defend this type of society. In other words, the aspect of the role of solidarity within capitalist society has generally assumed a non-political form.

Wilde suggests that the apparent decline in the importance and effectiveness of traditional left-wing parties and trade unions has been replaced by the development of a dynamic of solidarity in the organisation of what could be defined as the new social movements: “The rise of new social movements has mobilised people in causes that have been treated as marginal by political parties fixated on managing the economy. They have challenged the ordering of the political agenda by political and administrative elites with astonishing success, achieving immense social changes and helping to redefine the nature of politics itself.” (p249) This standpoint would seem to be an optimistic conclusion that seems to equate the limited and temporary success of various protest movements with the realisation of the principle of solidarity within society. Instead, these expressions of discontent have represented a temporary development of opposition to aspects of the process of government of society, but they have not represented a fundamental standpoint of the questioning of the necessity of capitalism. However, Wilde seems to gloss over these problematical issues and instead concludes that the continual development of movements of opposition to the system can result in the realisation of the principle of solidarity: “Politically the quest for solidarity originated in the nineteenth century struggles of working-class social movements for democratic rights and economic security. From the outset it was fired by an international vision, but that was eclipsed by the development of popular nationalism. Now, in the era of globalisation, a global political agenda has emerged at a time when many of the old social movements have suffered dispiriting setbacks. At the same time, new movements have developed to revive the hope that solidarity, a feeling of sympathy shared by subjects within and between groups, impelling supportive action and pursuing social inclusion, may yet be realised. These movements reflect a rich plurality of interests and causes. They sense that nothing less than the future of humanity is at stake unless we collectively agree on sustainable development……These movements, impelled by an ethical commitment to social justice, can succeed in consigning neoliberalism to the museum of grotesque ideas and proclaim a new direction, towards global solidarity.”(p258) This perspective is essentially the expression of an assumption of hope that the various movements of protest can become transformed into becoming the development of consistent opposition to capitalism that will result in the possibility of progressive change. There is the teleological assumption that these forms of opposition will become the expression of a development of an inherent transformation of the character of society in radical terms. But instead, it has been the very limited character of the protest movements which have rejected aspects of capitalism whilst also not calling into question its continued validity and feasibility. Hence there is still the necessity to connect the principles of solidarity with the objective of the development of a genuine alternative to the continuation of the capitalist system. Instead of this development it is assumed that the aspect of the solidarity of the various struggles is a sufficient expression of the very objectives that are most important to the various protestors. Therefore, the importance of the view that the ethical and collective character of the objectives of the various protests can only be realised with a different socialist society has not been indicated and developed in an effective and popular manner. It is assumed that capitalism is still the most credible system, and so the character of objectives is defined by an acceptance of these self-imposed limitations. Therefore, it is the task of Marxists to outline why the approach of consistent ethical values and the objective of solidarity still requires the realisation of a genuine socialist society. To achieve the influence of this approach will be a difficult task because the role of protest has become an end in itself. Furthermore, Marxist groups have often accepted this development and so have become organisations based on the acceptance of the primary role of protest and so they have not suggested that the aspect of the solidarity of the struggles has to be connected to the expression of the promotion of the aim of a different type of society in which these principles could be consistently realised. In other words, the aspect of activism has to become related to a more elaborated understanding of the importance of the aim of socialism. Thus, in order to outline the necessity of the realisation of the ethical principle of solidarity it is important to try and indicate the role of a strategy that will achieve these objectives. The point being made is that without this type of strategic clarification the approach being defended is merely the politics of opposition rather than being the genuine expression of the aim of the achievement of this morally superior type of society. Many people protest about the lack of an ethical basis of contemporary capitalism, but they do not connect this standpoint with the more constructive understanding of what would constitute a morally superior type of society. This lack of an elaboration of an alternative implies that the present type of society cannot be transcended and so all that is possible is to be a critic of the various moral limitations of the economic and political aspects of the contemporary social formation. But the most effective moral critics of the limitations of the social system indicate the necessity of a moral alternative. For example, Christianity was based on the development of a conception of an ethical alternative to the various limitations of the Roman empire. Whilst the contemporary supporters of socialism have outlined the various moral limitations of capitalism because of its justification of a system of economic exploitation of the producers. But sometimes this criticism is not connected to the effective justification of an alternative type of society that would express the character of a moral alternative type of economic and political activity. It is necessary to try and rectify these limitations. In order to try and realise this task it will be necessary to study the book by Matthew Flinders: “Defending Politics” (Oxford University Press, 2012) This work outlines a perspective of the democratic change of society so that it can become more progressive and realise social emancipation. The perspective that is integral to this book is that people can utilise the democratic aspects of the present political system so that it becomes possible to achieve a genuine system of social equality based on the consistent application of ethical principles. In other words, it is being suggested that the contemporary form of capitalism does not realise the democratic and ethical aspirations of the people in an adequate manner. This situation can generate the possibility of popular struggle to transform the situation and achieve a superior alternative. Hence it is assumed that people are becoming increasingly discontented with the utilisation of the role of politics in order to justify morally unacceptable economic and political regimes. This standpoint implies that the problem is not about something that is inherently wrong and unprincipled about politics, but instead forms of an opportunist form of political activity has become utilised in order to justify the domination of unethical elites. Thus, the conclusion can be made that: “Democratic politics is a form of social engagement. It is a moral activity and it provides a way of taking control of our lives by cultivating mutual understanding, engineering collective endeavours, and taking collective decisions about the allocation of scarce resources. Democratic politics can therefore be viewed as a counterweight to the vicissitudes of fate and to the individualizing and competitive forces of the market.” (p5) In other words it is being suggested that the important limitation of a capitalist economy is its failure to express ethical and democratic principles because of the emphasis on the importance of the objective of profit. This means that people have to develop political strategies that would modify this situation in terms of the realisation of objectives established by morality and a democratic type of politics. However, an important issue immediately arises: does this perspective imply the necessity to primarily modify capitalism or to attempt to establish an alternative socialist type of society? Is it sufficient to be primarily a critic of capitalism or do we need to strive for socialism as the only effective manner in which the principles of democracy and ethical values can be realised? The author suggests the necessity of political action in order to tackle the ethical limitations of the market, but this cautious formulation seems to imply that the present system has only to be modified rather than changed in a revolutionary manner. But the question immediately arises as to whether the ethical and political aims that we have for the achievement of social progress can be consistently realised in this manner. This issue will be an important aspect of the evaluation of the views of Flinders.

The problem with the approach of Flinders is that he attempts to suggest that it is possible by the progressive application of the role of democracy to provide a progressive regime that would somehow be able to reconcile ethical and political demands in order to modify the character of capitalism in a progressive and reformist manner. Thus, the interaction of the role of emancipatory type of government within capitalism can express the introduction of an ethical approach within capitalism that is able to establish a sustainable type of economy that is based on the combination of the principles of environmental standards which is connected to reforms that are able to improve the conditions of the members of society. Hence the aim of revolutionary change has become unimportant because this would not be able to realise a more progressive and egalitarian situation when compared to the approach of the realisation of improvements within the capitalist society. But the problem with this perspective is that it a left-wing government was elected within the present social system it would have to tackle the issue of the relationship of reforms to the question of the character of capitalism. The defenders of capitalism would suggest that the ethical approach of the left wing government does not make practical sense and is instead irrelevant in relation to tackling the problems of society. However, Flinders contends: “The moral limits of markets and the role of the public sector in protecting non-market norms were rediscovered as a reaction against purely privatised notions of the good life. A defence of politics against the market therefore stands upon an awareness of the pitfalls of individualism and rampant consumerism.” (p86) But this comment implies that the major problem of capitalism is not caused by the character of capital-labour relations but is instead the result of its moral limitations. Hence it is essentially necessary to introduce political and economic modifications that express the influence of a radical sense of morality and the result will be a progressive transformation of the character of capitalism. But it could be argued that this development is not compatible with the character of the present economic system. Instead, only an alternative could express the realisation of a consistent ethical approach. In other words, it is not possible to reconcile the opposed interests of capital and labour in moral terms. Flinders would suggest that the election of a progressive and reformist type government can tackle these moral and economic issues. Indeed, it could be accepted that some improvements could be realised in this manner, but such advances could be ended by the re-election of a conservative type government. Therefore, the only manner in which moral aims can be consistently realised is to create an administration that is dedicated to the task of the realisation of a different socialist type of society. This perspective does not mean that it is entirely futile to try to achieve progressive changes within capitalism that have moral dimensions, but the continued importance of parties that support the defence of the present system could undermine the consolidation of these ethical and political objectives. In other words, the possibility to achieve effective change in relation to these progressive objectives is by the process of revolutionary change.

However, it has been argued that revolution is unethical because it implies that change will occur in a coercive manner and on the basis of indifference concerning the importance of democratic political practice. But it could be argued that the popular organisations created by which to promote the realisation of the aims of democratic revolutionary change express a type of superior moral and political authority. The central issue will be whether these organisations are able to sustain this ethical legitimacy after the realisation of the process of revolutionary change. In other words, the problem is to avoid the development of the domination of a party elite that has become indifferent to the importance of moral and socialist objectives. Therefore, the necessity of the influence of ethical objectives is required in order to create a situation in which a genuinely progressive form of government is realised. It could be argued that the increasing lack of this connection of ethical and political aims in the practice of the Bolsheviks explained the process of degeneration and the development of the administration of the process of government by a party elite. In other words, historical experience has indicated the importance of the connection of the aspects of morality with the support of the aim of the creation of a genuinely democratic economic and political system. Without this connection it is entirely possible that the progressive potential of revolutionary change will not be realised.

It could be argued that the inherent moral limitations of humanity mean that socialism is a system that cannot be realised in practice. There is no definite answer to this question because it could be suggested that it has not yet been possible to establish a credible type of socialist society. But the very moral and economic limitations of capitalism will mean that the impetus to support the aim of socialism will continue to be of importance in political terms. This aspect does not mean that the realisation of socialism is a historical certainty, and instead the very importance of uncertainty means that the possibility to establish genuine socialist societies will remain only a contingent possibility. However, the continual aspect of the unethical and exploitative character of capitalism means that the prospect to create support for a socialism in ethical terms will continue to be of importance. But it could be suggested that the ethical aspects of the aim of socialism are not sufficient in order to justify the credibility of socialism. Instead, it is necessary to prove that it is a genuinely economic and social alternative to capitalism. This point is important, but we can only outline the principles of what would constitute the major aspects of a socialist society and in that manner try to justify the credibility of the socialist alternative. However, in the last analysis only the developments of the class struggle will establish whether socialism is a credible alternative to capitalism in moral and political terms.

Possibly the most important work on the issue of ethics by a prominent Marxist is that of Karl Kautsky with his book: ‘Ethics and the Materialist Conception of History’ (John Higgins, New York 1906) Kautsky outlines how the important of ethics is very ancient and was a subject of the traditional Greek philosophy of people like Aristotle. This development of the role of morality was connected to the importance of the role of God for defining the character of human activity and in that manner establishing what was consistent with the will of God in terms of the realisation of the principles of morality. But there also developed an alternative approach which connected morality to the role of the secular aspects of the character of human activity, which was based on the stoic rejection of the apparent immorality of the attempt to realise happiness. The ultimate outcome of these contrasting trends was the Christian emphasis on the role of the spirit which was contrasted to the moral limitations of the secular character of social reality. But increasingly the morality of Christianity was reduced to being the expression of an ideology to establish discipline over the believers, and so its ethical aspects were a justification of an approach that was based on the necessity to realise the conformity of the adherents with the given religious belief system: “Ethics and religion now appeared inseparably bound together. Certainly, the moral law was the logical creator of the new God; but in Christianity God appeared as the author of the moral law. Without a belief in God, without religion, no morality.” (p24) It could be suggested that the influence of this approach has been durable. It is still a popular view that the approach of the various religions is the expression of the perspectives of morality. Hence the influence of secularism is said to have undermined the influence of the approach of morality. But this apparent relation of secularism with the rejection of morality is connected to the development of capitalism which has an emphasis on the importance of economics at the expense of ethical type values. In this context the adherents of religion seemed to have undermined the credibility of the importance of the ethical aspects of their belief systems by adapting to the aims and interests of the capitalist system. But it could be argued that this development was not an inevitable aspect of the limitations of the ethical aspects of their religious beliefs but was instead because the adherents of the various religions began to support the domination of the capitalist system. This situation often meant that the importance of ethical beliefs became connected to the critics of capitalism as expressed by the role of socialist organisations who emphasised the ethical importance of the values of solidarity and collective action of the people in order to improve the social system. Defenders of capitalism like Adam Smith attempted to reconcile the aspect of morality with the character of capitalism but the problematical issue was that the domination of capital over labour seemed to imply that it was necessary to ensure a situation of the exploitation of the producers. Smith tried to resolve the moral issues that this aspect seemed to generate by suggesting that a system of private enterprise could be to the benefit of all of society. In this context the aspect of egoism was to the benefit of all the members of society. Thus, the conception of morality became reduced to being a secondary expression of what was defined as the character of human nature which was based on the development of a system of capitalism and the expression of the role of individual initiative. Hence, according to Kautsky, it is Kant who outlines that individuals have to undergo a process of moral improvement in order that in collective terms society can become more ethical. The importance of this view has meant that some socialists have rejected the standpoint of ethics because of its apparent connection to the interests of the capitalist system. But we could suggest that this interpretation is dogmatic because the very issue of ethics is open to different interpretations. Therefore, it is possible to contrast a socialist conception of ethics to that which is defended by supporters of capitalism. But most importantly the aspect of collective struggle of the producers against the exploitative limitations of capitalism which is the basis for the generation of a conception of ethics based on this aspect of the solidarity created by the process of opposition to capitalism. But Kautsky is also aware of possible problems with the socialist emphasis on ethics because it could become the basis to suggest accommodation to the pro-bourgeois Kantian ethics, or the reconciliation of the workers with the aims of capitalism in ethical terms. Thus, a consistent and intransigent socialist conception of ethics has to be connected to the understanding of the importance of class struggle in relation to political perspectives. In this context the realisation of a genuine understanding of the role of ethics means the attainment of the victory of the workers in the class struggle. But it could be suggested that the importance of this aspect means that some forms of possible political activity become defined as being unprincipled because they are unethical such as the justification of the creation of new regime based on the application of aspects of exploitation and coercive measures. Therefore, the very importance of ethical standards imposes limits on what is possible and principled in relation to the struggle against capitalism. In this context the aim will not be to replace one system based on repression and exploitation with a similar one but instead to establish a different progressive regime that attempts to express the highest form of moral standards. Only in this moral sense will it be possible to avoid the limitations of the temptation to utilise the role of power in an undemocratic and non-ethical manner. However, the failure to achieve this objective either because of a pragmatic reformism or the justification of the domination of a bureaucratic party elite is an expression of the morally corrupting character of the situation expressed by the role of political power. In this context only the continuation of the possibility of the democratic accountability of the party to the interests and aspirations of the people will ensure that the dominating role of the party is not a rejection of the ethical aspects of the attempt to realise socialism. However, this connection requires that the people have a high level of understanding of ethical principles. Thus, it could be suggested that the development of the domination of the Bolsheviks after 1918 was made possible by the demoralisation and disorganisation of the activity of the workers and peasants. There was the development of a type of society in which there was a generalised rejection of the importance of ethical standards, and as a result the Bolsheviks were able to assume the realisation of a situation of absolute power. Indeed, it could be suggested that the aspect of the necessity to defeat the forces of counter-revolution led to the justification of the creation of an increasingly authoritarian regime. In this manner the rejection of an ethical approach was connected to the problems associated with the complexity of the class struggle in the situation of the necessity to defeat the serious opposition of the possibility to achieve the victory of counterrevolution. It seemed that the aspect of ethics was an irrelevancy in this complex situation.

Kautsky has a determinist approach concerning the issue of the development of the importance of ethics in society. He indicates that the role of religions like Christianity was based on the expression of moral principles but that the character of society based on a low level of economic development was not able to realise these moral ambitions. Instead, Christianity had to adapt to the system of slavery or feudalism, and in this manner the moral aims that they expressed were not realised in the terms in which they had been envisaged. Hence the perspective of the role of a common humanity united by belief in God was undermined by the development of the importance of societies based on slavery or feudal relations. But this distortion of the principles of Christianity did not mean that they were false but instead that it required the development of material conditions of economic development in order to create the possibility for their realisation. Thus the creation of the modern economy of capitalism in which the equality promoted by Christianity would no longer be a vague expectation for humanity and instead could be realised as a result of the conscious activity of the people: “Thus there formed itself a foundation for the final realization of the moral conception already expressed by Christianity, though very prematurely, so that it could not be fulfilled, and thus has remained for the majority of Christians a simple phrase, the conception of the equality of men, a view that the social instincts, the moral virtues are to be exercised towards all men in equal fashion. This foundation of a general human morality is being formed not by a moral improvement of humanity, whatever we are to understand by that, but by the development of the productive forces of man, by the extension of the social division of human labour, the perfection of the means of intercourse. This new morality is, however, even today far from being the morality of all men even in the economically progressive countries. It is in essence even today the moral of the class conscious proletariat, that part of the proletariat which in its feeling and thinking has emancipated itself from the rest of the people and formed its own morality in opposition to the bourgeoisie.”(p159-160) But this understanding is incomplete because what is not indicated in a proper manner is that the workers by striving to realise the communist alternative to capitalism are acting in terms of the social and ethical interests of the majority of the people within capitalist society. The very progressive character of their social aims is an indication that the workers and their political parties are motivated by the aspiration to realise the moral interests of the majority of the members of society. They are trying to realise universal interests and this very aspect is what indicates the moral superiority of their cause when contrasted with the privileged and elitist aims of the defenders of capitalism. However, this moral aspect does not express a programme of change which has to be based on the aspect of a precise economic and political understanding of capitalist society. Instead, morality provides the justification of a struggle for socialism which if realised can realise the principles of the ethical expression of a united community which replaces the class divisions of capitalism. In this manner the very development of the class struggle of the workers expresses the unity of the values of ethics with the aim of the transformation of society in revolutionary terms: “The proletariat alone has no share in capitalist exploitation; they fight it and must fight it and they will on the foundation laid down by the capital of world intercourses and world commerce create a form of society, in which the equality of man becomes the moral law will become – instead of a mere pious wish – reality.”(p160-161) In other words only the success of the class struggle of the workers will achieve a type of society in which it becomes possible to realise morality in consistent practical terms. Therefore, it is being suggested that within capitalist society the aspect of morality is generally of a formal character or is essentially expressed by the collective activity of the workers. Consequently, in order to realise ethical aims in consistent and principled terms requires the transformation of society by the workers because they are in connection to their class character an expression of the role of morality within capitalism. However, this aspect is generally subordinated to the imperatives of the process of capital accumulation. Therefore, in order to achieve a situation of the moral liberation of society requires the successful realisation of the revolutionary activity of the workers in the transformation of the character of society.

The merit of this understanding of Kautsky is that he has connected the role of the class struggle with its inherent moral aspects. However, he has not established what type of strategy for the realisation of change is able to express the highest level of ethical qualities of the collective character of the class struggle. This ambiguity means that Kautsky ultimately suggests that a party acting on behalf of the class is the basis of the possibility for successful social change. The issue of the importance of morality in this context is not established and instead Kautsky implies that the moral aspect of the process of opposition to capitalism becomes replaced by a scientific approach that is basis to guide the actions of the workers who have overthrown the capitalist system and have begun to construct socialism: “And the moral ideal is revealed in its purely negative character as opposition to the existing moral order, and its importance is recognised as the motor power of the class struggle as a means to collect and inspire the forces of revolutionary classes. At the same time, however, the moral ideal will be deprived of its power to direct our policy. Not from the moral ideal, but from distinct material conditions does the policy depend which the social development takes.”(p200-201) Thus the conclusion is that the very increased importance of the role of Marxist theory displaces the importance of morality in the guidance of the actions and policies of the workers: “It was the materialist conception of history which has first completely deposed the moral ideal as the directing force of social evolution, and has taught us to deduce our social aims from the knowledge of the material foundations.”(p201) But this perspective is very problematical. Instead, it should be suggested that it is the very success of the class struggle because of increasingly favourable economic and political conditions for the realisation of socialism which actually does not deny the necessity of a moral approach but instead establishes its importance. Thus, the workers will know that they are acting in a principled manner in relation to the realisation of the aim of socialism if it can be shown that their actions are consistently with the ethical values established by the collective character of the possibility to replace capitalism with socialism. An indifference to the aspect of morality could mean that the very aim of socialism becomes compromised by the rejection of the importance of the role of ethics as an important guidance for the development of the class struggle. Hence the aspect of ethics is not superseded by the importance of economic and social development which can culminate in the realisation of socialism. Instead, the workers know that they acting in a consistent and principled manner in terms of trying to achieve socialism because it can be shown that their actions are compatible with the ethics that have been established as an expression of their class interests. In contrast a violation of these ethics would suggest that in some political sense the actions of the workers would have resulted in the undermining of the possibility to realise socialism. Kautsky tries to deny this problem by suggesting that: “Even though the conscious aim of the class struggle in scientific socialism has been transformed from a moral into an economic aim it loses none of its greatness.” (p204) But what does this ambiguous view mean? Surely it would be more consistent and explanatory to suggest that the very success of the process of the class struggle in the attainment of socialism means that it is possible to achieve moral aims in a more effective manner. The aspect of morality has not somehow been subsumed by the role of the successful achievement of socialism but instead in an effective manner the importance of ethics has become an aspect of the development of an egalitarian type of society that has replaced the immoral character of capitalism. In other words, ethics can only be consistently realised and achieved by the possibility to replace capitalism with the alternative of socialism. This society will be an expression of morality because it is the expression of the possibility of a type of common solidarity between the people which becomes an aspect of society that replaces the previous situation of the domination of labour by capital. The point is that it was the very ethical limitations of capitalism which motivated the development of class struggle. Therefore, the success of the class struggle will not mean the subordination of ethics to the collective character of socialism but instead will mean the ultimate realisation of morality in the content of the new type of society. Indeed, without this expression of morality it could be possible that a different form of exploitative society could become justified.

In other words, the development of the class struggle does not mean the transcendence of the role of moral aims with the establishment of important political objectives but instead the unity of these two aspects in terms of the development of a strategy that will promote the possibility of the transformation of society. The point is that without the aspect of moral aims it will not be possible to develop the motivation required in order to generate the development of support for the realisation of the objective of the transformation of society. But if these moral aims are not connected to a credible strategy of change it could be possible that the aspect of moral opposition to the present system is not connected to the development of a perspective that could be realised in an effective manner. Therefore, the importance of the aspect of ethical criticism of capitalism is not disconnected to the issue of the role of a strategy of change. However, this is the very assumption being made by Kautsky. He seems to imply that the aspect of an ethical criticism of capitalism has to become entirely secondary or even superfluous if the issue of the development of an effective strategy of change is to be elaborated. The point being made is that the aspect of an effective programme of change has to be based on the premises of the scientific character of the approach of historical materialism and so the aspect of ethics becomes superseded in those terms. But the point is that this perspective denies the importance of the fact that the workers come to reject the credibility of capitalism because they connect a moral rejection of the system with opposition to the aspect of the exploitation of labour by capital. Therefore, instead of upholding a dogmatic denial of the importance of ethics it would instead be more flexible to connect the ethical motivations of the workers, who develop a moral rejection of the aspect of the process of the exploitation of their labour by capital, to the elaboration of a programme of change that would express the possibility for the realisation of a socialist alternative. This type of theoretical development would not be a diversion in relation to the task of outlining a programme for the change of society, but instead would represent the basis to develop the class struggle in the most effective manner because the political objectives of the workers are connected to the powerful moral aspect of the rejection of the domination of capitalism because it justifies the exploitation of labour as a result of the repudiation of ethical values. However, this connection of ethics to a programme of revolutionary change has never been established in effective terms, and instead the moral aspect of the class struggle tends to have an aimless spontaneous character. But this means that the character of the actions of the workers becomes reduced to economic objectives which are not sufficient to motivate the conscious rejection of the domination of capital. Instead, the result is that the workers demand economic concessions within the limits of the capitalist system. This aspect becomes connected to voting for social democratic parties that aim to realise changes within capitalism rather than aim to transform the capital-labour relation in a revolutionary manner. However, if ethics was to be more important in the context of the activities of the workers it would be possible to suggest that this process of the compromise of labour with the domination of capitalism was not acceptable because the interests of the workers were ultimately undermined. Instead, the dominant influence of an ethical approach would establish that the situation of the exploitation of labour by capital was not acceptable because of this denial of the realisation of the genuine expression of the concept of what should represent the aspect of solidarity within society. Hence solidarity cannot be realised if capital exploits labour. Hence the only genuine manner in which the ethical approach of solidarity is to be established is by labour acting to end the domination of capital over the role of labour. Thus, ethical values are only essentially realised by the development of a socialist type of society in which the aspect of the exploitation of labour by capital is ended. This is essentially the position of Kautsky, but it is obscured by the assumption that the aspect of ethics becomes essentially subordinated by the political objectives of class struggle. But in actuality it is the role of morality that generates the very dynamism and the possibility of success of the very mass actions of the workers.

However, Kautsky rejects this understanding because he contends that only in economic terms can the objectives of socialism be realised. In other words, the aspect of moral aims becomes transformed into more precise economic objectives which establish the prospect for the realisation of socialism in more effective terms: “Even though the conscious aim of the class struggle in scientific socialism has been transformed from a moral into an economic aim it loses none of its greatness.”(p204) But this understanding of the apparent assimilation of the aspect of the moral into the role of the economic is a dogmatic and determinist approach. It would be both more flexible and principled to suggest that there has occurred the development of the unity of the aspects of the ethical with the programme of revolutionary socialism. Without the aspect of moral opposition to capitalism the motivation for people to become supporters of the aim of the realisation of the alternative society of socialism is not likely to be developed. However, if the aspect of discontent with capitalism was merely moral then the development of organised and effective opposition to the domination of the present system is not likely to occur. Instead, there has to be the unity of the aspects of the ethical and political in terms of the development of the possibility to transform the emotional rejection of the domination of capitalism with support for a credible programme for the transformation of society. However, if moral opposition to capitalism is not generated by the limitations of the economic system then the motivation to support a revolutionary approach is not likely to be established. In other words, it is not a digression from the objective of trying to establish success in the class struggle to attempt to elaborate the relation of moral criticisms of the capitalist system with the development of a programme of change. But instead of this approach Kautsky seems to imply that the aspect of morality is essentially rendered irrelevant by the importance of development a programme of change based on an economic and political analysis of the character of capitalist society. Indeed, moral aspects seem to be rendered irrelevant by a perspective of inevitable revolutionary change: “Socialism is inevitable because the class struggle and the victory of the proletariat is inevitable.” (p206) But this determinist view not only underestimates the importance of ideology and the ideological influence of the aims of the supporters of capitalism. But what is also not understood is that if the moral development of the role of the solidarity of the producers is not established then the result will be the continued consolidation of the domination of the capitalist system. In other words, the aspect of the importance of ethics has to become a crucial aspect of the struggles of workers because in this manner it is possible to establish the moral limitations of capitalism in relation to the aspect of the economic exploitation of labour. Indeed, it could be argued that it has been the failure to develop a convincing moral aspect of the struggles of the workers which has undermined the possibility to achieve success in relation to the various actions that have been developed in opposition to capitalism. Thus, we can conclude that far from being an irrelevancy, or of a secondary character, the development of a consistent moral approach is a vitally important aspect in the struggle for the successful realisation of a socialist society. Kautsky’s determinist conception that morality is superseded by the very development of the class struggle has been shown to be a dogmatic approach that does not understand the actual or potential motives of the actions of the workers which are connected to ethical objectives. It is the actual task of Marxists to try and connect these moral aspirations to the expression of a credible programme of revolutionary change and the achievement of socialism. This ethical aspect will then become important in relation to the character of the emerging socialist society and so will facilitate the possibility that the emergence of an opportunist party elite will not occur. Obviously there are no guarantees in this context, but at least moral aims will establish what is principled or unprincipled in political terms.