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Critically Developing Real Capabilities

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Critically Developing Real Capabilities

by

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Abstract

Critical Realism, the Capabilities Approach, and Marxism, all have underdeveloped theoretical problems. For Critical Realism, the *ceteris paribus* clause, which is used to assess an ideological critique, does not properly specify what other things warrant the dismissal or acceptance of said critique. For the Capabilities Approach, a proper ontology or metaphysics is missing, and the claim that the Capabilities Approach can be metaphysically neutral is false. Finally, Marxism is good at describing the more onerous aspects of capitalism (e.g., alienation, exploitation, crisis), but it does not provide normative force for seeing these descriptions as bad. I argue that these three schools of thought, when connected through the ontology of Critical Realism, can be rendered mutually inclusive, and each theory can help address the lacuna in its respective counterpart. Critical Realism gives to Marxism and the Capabilities Approach ontological justification, and the Capabilities Approach gives to Critical Realism and Marxism normative force. And finally, Marxism gives to the Capabilities Approach a more radical, but consistent twist that furthers the goal of realizing our shared human powers.

Introduction

The aim of my thesis is to connect, through metaphysics, the ontological and scientific elements of Critical Realism, with the theory of justice known as the Capabilities Approach. I argue that this connection is not arbitrary. Instead, as I will attempt to demonstrate, the ontological theory that Critical Realism supports, i.e., that there are *real* generative mechanisms and powers in the world, can serve to embolden and fortify the Capabilities Approach. Critical Realism was first developed by Roy Bhaskar in his 1970s book *A Realist Theory of Science*, and his subsequent book *The Possibility of Naturalism*. The former text developed the ontological foundations for a realist theory of natural science and the latter text explored how this ontology would impact the social and human sciences. The merging of scientific realism with social sciences, gave the social sciences a critical, and thus normative component, that the natural sciences lack (this is where the term *Critical Realism* comes from). Since the publication of these two books, Critical Realism has branched off into economics, sociology, law, etc., but its philosophical goal has always been to act as an under laborer for all the sciences.

The Capabilities Approach deals with issues of justice. This approach is best exemplified by the works of Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen. And my work will focus primarily on Nussbaum's theory of justice. The reason I neglect the work of Amartya Sen is because, unlike Nussbaum, there is no ontological overlap with Critical Realism or any engagement with the *real* powers humans possess. Nussbaum has advanced justifications for seeing justice as relating to the development and flourishing of human capabilities (as opposed to traditional justice theories that focus primarily on wealth distribution and access to resources). While Nussbaum gives good

reasons to embrace the Capabilities Approach, her list of ten primary capabilities has suffered from heavy criticism, and has not changed in the face of this criticism. Sen does not have a list. And it is specifically because Nussbaum has a list that one can assume that she believes humans have *real* powers that ought to be exercised, and the justification of these real powers can be further motivated through a dialogue with Critical Realism. Sen and Nussbaum also believe the Capabilities Approach can be realized within a humane or welfare-style capitalist market. I want to critique Nussbaum's support of a welfare-style capitalist economy, while giving her normative theory ontological fortification.

Because Nussbaum's list of ten capabilities seems at times arbitrary and at others times untenable, an ontologically real method for finding and developing capabilities should be worked through. The finding and developing of capabilities can best be done under the Critical Realist ontological framework. This framework shifts the realist component of science away from patterns of events and empirical realism (e.g., the sun has always risen for as long as I can remember, so we can induce it will rise probably tomorrow), to powers and/or generative mechanisms within the world, that exist independently of observations. These powers and generative mechanisms are referred to as occupying the 'intransitive dimension' of science (the real), and theories and experiments that try to discover and bring these mechanisms to light occupy the transitive dimension. The condition for theories in the transitive dimension to *advance*, and *become more explanatory*, requires that they be mapping onto something *real* in the intransitive dimension. Thus, scientists that find intransitive powers within humans that lead to flourishing and well-being, are finding powers and capabilities that ought to be expressed. Moreover, social and human sciences that finds structures and tendencies within social

institutions, which mitigate or pervert these powers, or unleash unethical powers (like greed), ought to be removed.

Unfortunately the Critical Realist approach has only developed one tenable ethical tool¹: explanatory critique. This is the notion that if a social science can point to a claim that is a) untrue, and b) the reasons why a social-institution would require the spreading of this falsity (e.g., the myth that people earn a fair days wage for a fair days work – is necessary for maintaining wide gaps in pay inequality, and worker passivity), it puts an onus on people, *ceteris paribus* (henceforth CP), to remove that social institution and hold a negative stance towards any reproduction of said institution. But the explanatory critique is not a sufficient moral tool for making justice claims. Critical Realists often acknowledge that the explanatory critique can sometimes fail to meet the CP clause (e.g., one should not rob someone of a quarter, CP, unless that quarter is used to phone the president about an incoming nuclear attack), does not lay out what the other normative criteria are, and which ones are more/less important than the explanatory critique, and why they are more/less important. That is, even if it's true that we should steal quarters to call the president, even by nefarious means, Critical Realists have not given a reason as to why this is the case.

It is at this dual uncertainty that I think the Capabilities Approach and Critical Realism can be ontologically merged. The Capabilities Approach can give a broader normative foundation and justification for studying human capabilities and powers, and give better reasons as to why some powers over others should be expressed, and not remain dormant. And Critical Realism can provide a sturdier (ontological) foundation for these newly explored and

¹ It has developed more than one tool based upon Bhaskar's theory of dialectics, but as will be shown below, that theory is still wanting.

(un)developed capabilities, in the social, biological, psychological, and human sciences, than Nussbaum's list offers. The theory of powers and generative mechanisms is a fruit development both for theories of justice, and theories of science which want to dialogue with theories of justice.

I would like to tentatively offer two powers in the Critical Realist sense in humans that I think have been verified by the sciences. The first is a natural ability to labor creatively, for others, and derive mutual satisfaction from the process. This capability is what Marx had in mind in his theory of species-being, and it's a position that Nussbaum supports. A lot of scientific research has verified this human power. The next is the human's natural power to co-operate, which is denied, or at least suppressed, when material reward surmounts basic natural reward (i.e., an inner feeling of satisfaction at having done the right thing). This is a subset of species-being. There is a lot of psychological evidence that suggest wages, and material rewards do not actually leave the agent with a sense of gratification or reward, and often make the cooperative behavior less likely to occur in the future.

Moreover, the Critical Realist approach allows for criticisms of tendencies within social institutions that are more fruitful than the natural sciences. For instance, if it were to be the case that no matter what all humans are lustful, and that's just a biological fact, then we would have to accept that conclusion and work within it. But, because the Critical Realist approach recognizes tendencies and powers of societies within historically developed *social relations*, this means any tendencies that are denigrating to our capabilities can (and ought, CP) be removed. And it is here

that I will argue that the Critical Realists are right,² over and against Nussbaum (and Sen), to want to remove capitalism. Capitalism has several powers and tendencies embedded in its social relations that can demonstrably be shown to impact capabilities in a negative way. 1) It is necessarily crisis prone, and Marx's analysis of the "tendency" for the rate of profit to fall, fits ontologically, and scientifically in with the Critical Realist approach. When an economic crisis occurs, those that take the hit are almost always those least responsible, and many theorists try to argue that capitalism is not necessarily crisis prone, I will show why their arguments are faulty given the merging of Critical Realist ontology and Marx's theory of the rate of profit to fall. 2) Capitalism is necessarily alienating *for most people most of the time*. It is not always alienating all of the time, but at any given moment in a capitalist society people are alienated in large quantities, and are thus being denied the expression of certain capabilities. This is due to the nature of the work that must be performed, how it is performed, and the structural arrangements of available modes of expression at any given time. 3) Finally, although not exhaustively, it can be shown that capitalism directly mitigates our natural power to be cooperative, which would aid in the flourishing of capabilities, even under the best, most idealized left-progressive forms of capitalism.

Thus, my overall goal is to point to the primary tensions and flaws in Critical Realism and the Capabilities Approach, and merge them together to show how each theory can embolden the other through a powers based ontology. This merger happens to lead to radical and socialist conclusions, or at the very least anti-capitalist conclusions, given the nature of both theories.

² Not all critical realists are Marxists or Socialists, but many are for some of the reasons I will argue. Even those that aren't explicitly socialist recognize that certain revolutionary conclusions must be drawn from successful explanatory critiques.

Thus, the Capabilities Approach ought to move in an anti-capitalist direction, and Critical Realism will have a more flourishing ethical foundation, over and above the explanatory critique.

In order to justify my arguments I will arrange my thesis in the following general outline. First I will introduce and explain what Bhaskar's theory of scientific realism is, and then I will explain its relation to the social and human sciences and how a critical component (known as the explanatory critique) is necessarily added to the social sciences under this ontological framework. Then I will show how the explanatory critique, although acknowledging the existence of other normative claims, cannot account for them. The goal will be to summarize Bhaskar's theory in order to position it alongside Nussbaum's theory of justice. Although I will defend Bhaskar from some foreseeable criticisms, my goal is not to defend Critical Realism within the wider and robust context of a philosophy of science.

From here I will outline the Capabilities Approach, its upsides and its downsides.

With both problematics established I will begin to merge both theories and explain how each aids the other through a powers based ontology. Once this is done I will draw anti-capitalist conclusions for the capabilities approach.

Preliminary Personal Remarks on the Origin of this Thesis

I have always thought that Marx was basically correct in his core analysis of capitalism. First, despite all the contrary arguments I have read³ – and they are quite numerous – I have

³ The most frequent one has two variations. Marx's theory is old, it dealt with 19th century industrial environments, and capitalism has changed, therefore it's no longer applicable. This is a spurious refutation for two reasons. I) even if that was true, much of the third world and large parts of Asia (and even America and Europe) is factory intensive. And so the theory is still applicable. II) Marx's theory always emphasized that although the *means or production* would constantly undergo change, it was the social relations around them that were uniquely capitalistic. Just because a factory setting changes into a restaurant setting or a PC software setting, does not mean the social relations change, nor does it mean the theory is no longer applicable because of temporal differences. Much of Newtonian physics is old, and dealt with different means of production and raw materials too, and yet the

never found a satisfactory argument that disputes his claim regarding exploitation (i.e., that workers are paid for their labor power, not their labor time, and it is their excess labor time that provides the capitalist with their profits). If the majority of people have to work excess hours every week for someone else's reward, should not the discussion of freedom begin "only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases"?⁴ Second, I think Marx was correct that the internal contradictions of the logic of capitalism require constant crises, class struggle, and environmental degradation. We cannot regulate our way capitalism with a human face. Finally, Marx was right that capitalism is alienating for most people most of the time, and is a massive waste of talent, and a huge drain on one's psychological well-being.

My initial attraction to Critical Realism came in the form of my *dissatisfaction* with Marx's and Marxists arguments in favor of a real material world. Marx would frequently remark in *The German Ideology* that unlike idealists he began with "real" facts, on the ground, in day to day life. But he never provided any kind of ontological justification as to why these real facts really are "real," and not for instance, some form of transcendental idealism in the Kantian sense, or momentary regularities of events, in the Humean sense. I have often considered myself a scientific realist, but I now know – much to my surprise - just asserting a real material world, in a philosophical setting, is wholly inadequate. And so Marx's refutation of his fellow German Idealists was insufficient, and his material theory of history – while quite illuminating – was on shaky, but entirely rescuable, ontological ground. My dissatisfaction led me to read the works of Roy Bhaskar, who was first and foremost an arguer in favor of scientific realism, and happened

age of Newtonian physics does not render it obsolete when dealing with a 9mm bullet. And so Marx's *theory* is not obsolete in dealing with a waiter, or a software developer.

⁴ Marx, 1993, Chapter 48.

to become a socialist afterwards.⁵ I found that the arguments happened to resolve many of the ontological problems I felt Marx's work faced. And my work here is essentially providing normative force – another area arguably lacking from Marx's work – for the removal of capitalism, and the realization of the fullest expression of human flourishing.

Final Notes and Preemptive Criticisms

I want to address some preemptive concerns in the introduction before getting into the thick of my arguments. In the 90s, hitherto, Roy Bhaskar made his philosophy more dialectical, and also had a spiritual turn. This has led to a few divides within Critical Realism. Some, like myself, want to establish a firm wall between his early works and his dialectical and then spiritual works. Others want to cross this wall and start building a new one after his dialectics. And finally others want to accept the general direction Bhaskar has moved in. I feel I should give some reasons for holding onto the early Bhaskar, before setting out my thesis.

In regards to the spiritual turn, where Bhaskar in some pious Hegelian sense, sees the world religions as progressing towards the vision God has for us, I have to jump ship. There simply is no God, and it has long been clear since the *Euthyphro*, that reason and not divine intuition, is the *real* source of our moral improvement. All the arguments Bhaskar has given in favor of God are quite banal, and since I do not have the space to enter into an atheistic debate regarding several arguments in favor of God, I will just conclude that Epicurus was most assuredly correct when he stated: “Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil? Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God.” And Bhaskar should address this question directly, for if God needs historical time for us to morally develop,

⁵ Bhaskar, Hartwig. 2010 Chapters 2-3.

then he is either evil or not omnipotent. In either case, such a being should be of no concern for those of us who want to improve this world faster than God's willing to operate.

Next there is the issue of Bhaskar's dialectic. While I agree with most readers of this text that it is ingenious, highlights many unexplored issues, and is quite illuminating, it suffers from too many problems, some wholly devastating, and others wholly annoying. There seems to be a marked consensus that in terms of writing style, this is Bhaskar's worst book, and it is nearly impenetrable.⁶ Whereas one could readily read *A Realist Theory of Science*, this book requires constant rereading, and also secondary work substitution. But bad writing is not a cogent enough criticism to disregard the work. The real problem comes in Bhaskar's ontological additions. Bhaskar develops a new four stage ontology that he signifies as 1M (first moment), 2E (second edge), 3L (third level) and 4D (fourth dimension). 1M is concerned with "nonidentity, stratification, multiplicity, depth", 2E is concerned with "absence and negativity", 3L deals with "totality, reflexivity, internal relations", and 4D deals with "transformative agency and human emancipation".⁷ As cumbersome as this looks – and it is even more cumbersome to read – the criticism of this ontological stacking is easy to deploy. 1M primarily refers to Bhaskar's theory of Critical Realism as outlined before his dialectical turn. Nonidentity refers to the generative mechanism, or structure, which has not (yet) been properly identified in a scientific investigation. Stratification refers to the ontological stratification of the world, as shown by the fact that there is ontological stratification in the sciences (e.g., physics begets chemistry, begets biology, etc.) And depth is the location of the generative structure in the stratified world. All of this will be better explained below. But the addition of 2E, upon which 3L and 4D necessarily rest, is at best shaky. And if the rug can be pulled out from under 2E, then 3L and 4D necessarily fall too.

⁶ Callinicos, Alex. 2006. Part III.

⁷ Collier, Andrew. 1995, 36-39.

Bhaskar wants to add in the concept of absence to his ontology, but he uses the term in multiple fashions, to the point that there is no *clear and single* ontological notion upon which this concept can rest. There is absence in 1) the sense that there are gaps or emptiness in space (e.g., the absence between my face and my computer monitor), there is what Bhaskar calls the 2) ills as absences (e.g., my body is absent vitamin A and so my vision and immune system are compromised), and then there seems to be 3) absences in the human causal sense, in that if I go scramble some eggs right now, I am absenting the raw yolks and afterwards absenting my hunger. While all of this is quite illuminating, it's a bit too stratified to lay two further (3L and 4D) ontological foundations upon. One should not drive a car with three qualitatively different tires/wheels, and one should not stack ones philosophy upon a concept with three qualitatively different meanings. 1) is obviously axiologically neutral. As Andrew Collier notes in regards to 3), it has no axiological power. For instance, there is no *a priori* reason why we cannot refer to my egg example as *making present* cooked eggs, and *making present* nourishment, instead of *absenting* raw food and hunger. Both views are rationally available and Bhaskar has given the reader no reason to prefer one to the other. I do believe 2) is correct, but there's nothing unique about it that cannot already be found in ethical naturalism and/or Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach, which is what this thesis will deal with. And all of this can be dealt with without invoking a messy concept like absence. And since Bhaskar eventually hopes that 2E will lead to 4Ds ontology of emancipation, and 2E is axiologically neutral, we have no reason to move from 2E to 3L, to 4D. Thus 2E seems at worst cumbersome and tedious, and at best philosophically neutral. Nevertheless I hope to show that Bhaskar's original theories, when meshed with the Capabilities Approach, can lead to a richer conception of justice.

Chapter 1: Explaining Critical Realism: Natural and Social

The goal of my thesis is to make the Capabilities Approach and Critical Realism talk to one another. Once in dialogue we can see how each theory has its limitations, advantages, and possible overlap with the other theory. I want each theory to embolden the other. In order to do this it has to be taken for granted that Critical Realism is a viable theory of science, and a viable theory regarding the nature of reality. My thesis is not a justification of Critical Realism *against* other philosophies of science, and I am not setting out to position Critical Realism within the robust context of existing philosophies of science, but I am trying to begin a dialogue between Critical Realism and the Capabilities approach. The choice of Critical Realism is not an arbitrary choice, and its strength comes in the fact that it is able to avoid idealism, and naïve realism (positions any capabilities theorist would want to avoid too). Nevertheless, I know Critical Realism cannot be taken for granted without *some* justification and explanation, so I will defend it from only a few presumable criticisms. The goals of this chapter are to summarize Critical Realism and render it attractive for those engaging in theories of justice which focus on the latent possibilities and nature of humankind.

The goal of this section is to present and summarize Bhaskar's theory of scientific realism, both in the natural and social sciences, and then explain how the social sciences are necessarily critical and thus not normatively neutral. Bhaskar's argument fundamentally rests on his claim that "a constant conjunction of events [is] not a sufficient, [nor] even a necessary condition for" the establishment of "a scientific law".⁸ By a constant conjunction of events,

⁸ Bhaskar, Roy 2008, Page 12.

Bhaskar is referring to the Humean concept of law, e.g., I see the sun rise every morning, therefore there must be a law that the sun will continue to rise. The realist theory I will be presenting argues that a constant conjunction, which experimenters often bring about in the lab, are not necessary conditions for the establishment of a scientific law. And it is what is necessary that we can identify as *real*.

Bhaskar first developed his theory of scientific realism in *A Realist Theory of Science*. Before beginning the summary it is important to note what Bhaskar is doing in the work. His realist theory of science is an immanent critique. He takes the premises of those involved in the philosophy of science debate and shows why those premises should lead contra to their views and in favor of his view (realism). Since there are no indubitable premises in philosophy, his immanent critique only stands for those of us who engage in (a) a philosophy of science, and (b) think science is in fact occurring.⁹ If one disbelieves (b) there is no need to proceed forward. If one accepts (b), and knows anything about (a), then they will see the vantage point Bhaskar has set for us.

Bhaskar's primary question, given that (b) is taken for granted, is what must the world be like for science to be possible? One could immediately respond in typical Kantian fashion that the only intelligible question to ask is what our minds must be like for science to be possible, but that criticism needs to be deferred until later, because Bhaskar covertly answers this question, while performing an immanent critique that supersedes the Kantian objection. Nevertheless, the argument is transcendental. And the two positions it takes for granted, in its immanent critique are those of (I) "Kuhn, Popper, Lakatos, Feyerabend, Toulmin, Polyani, and Ravets" that

⁹ I mean this in the most general and banal sense. Science occurs, it does not yet matter how, why, when, etc, nor whether or not this branch of science (e.g., psychoanalysis) is in fact a science.

“emphasize the *social* character of science” and focus primarily on the scientific development and change; and the position of (II) “Scriven, Hanson, Hesse, and Harre” that focus on the *stratification* of the sciences.¹⁰

Given that (b) science is occurring, and no one who does (a) argues otherwise, it is a condition of the *intelligibility* of experimental activity (i.e., social scientific activity), that there must be an *ontological distinction* between the scientists as *causal agents* in an experiment, and the *law* that a constant conjunction of events allows them to identify. This practice of science, which occurs, heavily indicates that although the practitioner of science is a *causal agent* of a conjunction of events, there is a distinction between those conjunctive events, and what the scientist thinks (i.e., the law) allowed his *causal activity* to render a result.¹¹

Now in order for the scientists to engage in these practices they must have a theory of said law. It is the theory which acts as a link in allowing them to identify the uniqueness of the experiments conjunction of events, versus “purely accidental concomitance”. Now the skeptic or Humean can of course respond that although the assumption within a theory that a law/ generative mechanism¹² necessarily exist independent of the scientific practice, this is nevertheless a mere instrumental tool and not something that can be justified. But without this assumption science cannot remain intelligible, and if it is not intelligible, those who hold (b) are holding onto an absurdity. But there are other absurdities that arise from the Humean, empiricist, and skeptical view of science. In order to establish these absurdities two new concepts need to be brought into the discussion.

¹⁰ Ibid, 9, emphasis in the original.

¹¹ Ibid, 12.

¹² These two terms will be used interchangeably throughout the thesis, just as Bhaskar uses them interchangeably. “The real basis of causal laws are provided by the generative mechanisms of nature. Such generative mechanisms are...nothing other than the ways of acting of things. And causal laws must be analyzed as their tendencies.” Ibid, 14.

It is essentially a truism that in science we are dealing with *closed systems*. By this I mean that the experiment is such that all external factors and variables are mitigated as best as possible. And when the experiment is over, we return to an open system. An open system is a system where a panoply of variables and external influences are constantly at work. Closed systems seem to be very rare in nature, and are quite infrequent. Whereas open systems are the predominant ways laws are best identified – if Bhaskar is correct – in the cosmos. The distinction between closed and open systems is what further renders the Humean and non-realist points of view as absurd.

For instance, if the Humean scientist makes the assumption that in the case of the experiment, which is a closed system, a law must be posited, he must then explain what happens to that supposed law when the system is reopened. For instance, if we believe that the generative mechanisms of water allows it to boil, in a closed setting, at 212°, what happens to that structure within water that has been identified when that water is exposed to an open environment? It is an absurdity to posit that the structures comes into and goes out of being during the opening and closing of a system. The Humean must also explain, if these laws are generated only in closed system, why we can generate some results (water boiling) and not others (water turning into a racecar). Moreover, theories that are augmented in closed systems are often used to generate reliable predictions in open ones, but if we refuse to justify the assumption that there is a generative mechanism existing independently of our experience, we cannot render this aspect of theory intelligible. And yet, since we know (b), and we are doing (a), then we have to conclude that this must be the case, unless we want to embrace absurdity.

What is unique about the practice of science is that the constant conjunction of events a scientist actually produces in a closed system, from all the possible events she could produce, is

that “when her experiment is successful, it is an index of what she does *not* produce”, i.e., the law itself. The Humean has mistaken scientific laws, for occurring events. And since humans are *causal agents* within the closed experiment, and this is what is needed to produce a constant conjunction of events in said closed system¹³, if one identifies laws with human activity, then one is “logically committed to the absurdity that human beings, in their experimental activity, cause and even change the laws of nature”.¹⁴ There are too many absurdities that ensue if one conflates laws with a constant conjunction of events. And those who do so must be asked what governs the phenomena we experience in open systems where constant conjunctions are obtained? The non-realist must now answer that either nothing does, or that science has discovered no laws. If the former, then they must stop claiming (b), and expect to live in a universe wholly indeterminate and capricious (an absurdity). If they argue the latter, again, they must cease to hold onto (b) and stop practicing (a), and embrace the absurdity that there is no accounting for the fact that theories developed in closed systems can be utilized in open ones.

It is at this point that I want to introduce two new terms into the discussion. They are Bhaskar’s terms. First, since this is an immanent critique we are taking for granted that (I) and (II) above are correct – or at the very least plausible.¹⁵ No one disputes (I), that science has a necessarily social component. And no one really disputes (II), that there are stratifications within the sciences. And Bhaskar’s transcendental argument for the ontological distinctions within science can accommodate both these camps. Just because science is a social activity, it does not follow that the objects of which science studies are themselves entirely social either.¹⁶ So we have two sides of our scientific knowledge: first there is the social development of our

¹³ Since their occurrence in nature is rare.

¹⁴ Bhaskar, Roy. 1998, Page 9.

¹⁵ (I) and (II) refer to the two primary camps within the philosophy of science.

¹⁶ See Hacking, Ian. 2000

knowledge (i.e., the *transitive dimension*), and second there is the object of which we are developing knowledge of (i.e., the *intransitive dimension*). The transitive objects can be seen as “the raw materials of science – the artificial objects fashioned into items of knowledge by science of the day. They include the antecedently established facts and theories, paradigms and models, methods and techniques” of our theories and scientific tools.¹⁷ The intransitive objects – which we have established as actually existing given the arguments above – are “in general invariant to our knowledge of them; they are the real things and structures, mechanisms and processes, events and possibilities of the world”.¹⁸ Given that we have granted (b) we cannot imagine a world of science without *transitive* objects. Moreover, can we go further and imagine a world of science without intransitive objects? The answer would seem to be no, given what has been argued so far, and thus we can safely conclude what the world must be like for science to be possible. And now (I) and (II) can be secured. (I) refers to the transitive dimensions of science, which are always changing as theories attempt to form stronger links to the intransitive dimension. And (II), which will be further developed below, can now be rectified within the intransitive dimension, as the stratification of various generative mechanisms/laws within the *real* world, of which the transitive dimension again, tries to form a strong link to.

Now Kuhnians in camp (I) may reply that the transitive dimension develops by leaps, and when a paradigm change occurs, the former transitive object is incommensurable with the new transitive object, and thus their radical differences make it dubious to believe both are linked to the same intransitive objects. But one can be an *epistemic relativist* about the transitive dimension, and recognize that *judgment relativism* does not follow. If we have two theories that the Kuhnian claims are incommensurable, we must have a reason why we could or should or

¹⁷ Bhaskar, Roy. 2008, Page 21.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 22.

even have in the past preferred one to the other? And what is always the case in science is that both theories have a common referent and thus are referring to something *intransitive*. That theory which has more *explanatory power* is the one which we choose as superior, and it has more explanatory power because it has a stronger link to the *intransitive object*. Two theories which have no common referent cannot be in conflict with one another, but two that do are the ones Kuhnians argue are in fact incommensurable. “If incommensurability is a kind of clash, there must be something to clash about; two theories that are not about the same thing [e.g., astrology and Keynesian economics] can’t clash”.¹⁹

Now one could retort that the whole nature of the debate is erroneous. Bhaskar cannot ask the question what the world must be like for science to be possible, even if we grant (b) – that science in fact occurs. Kantians and even Humeans claim we only have *real* access to experience, and not the world in itself (Kant), or the world as it is when no one is looking (Hume, Berkeley). We will call both these positions empirical realism; because both essentially say what we see is the real for us, or is all we have *real* access to.²⁰ But to wager this argument is to commit a series of fallacies, which are primarily identified as *the epistemic fallacy*. The epistemic fallacy is when one says that statements about being are to always be transposed onto statements of our knowledge of being. Andrew Collier has identified four primary ways in which this fallacy is often deployed. First, we frequently reduce the question of something’s existence to whether or not we can know if it exists; second when we try to determine what sort of thing

¹⁹ Collier. Andrew. 1994, Page 93

As Hans-Herbert Koegler pointed out, just because we have changed our theories of aviation over the years, it doesn’t follow that our old instruments of flight start falling from the sky. Something within these *inferior* theories was right about something *external* to the theory itself.

²⁰ I realize that there is nuance to Kant’s position in that he does posit a real world (the noumenal), of which we have no access too, but he is still essentially an empirical realist, since it is what we see that gives us knowledge of the structure of our mind, and it is the structure of our mind that limits what we can know to be real (for us).

something is, we often reduce it to how we know about it;²¹ third, if we ask if A has ontological predominance over B, we reduce that question to whether “knowledge of A is presupposed by knowledge of B”; and finally, when ask if A is identical to B, we frequently slip up and question whether the way we know A is the same as the way we know B.²²

The questions of *the nature of being*, and *our knowledge of being* are two separate philosophical questions, and to reduce the former to the latter is not only fallacious, but also in itself a stance on the nature of being; it is to take whatever form of knowledge one sets as predominant (e.g., empiricism) as the ontological real, while simultaneously arguing we do not have access to what is ontologically real. This is the dual absurdity of the epistemic fallacy.

Before proceeding forward I want to clarify what I mean by generative mechanisms, structures, tendencies, and the concept of power. These terms of the utmost importance to Bhaskar’s ontology. Instead of reinventing the wheel I shall borrow a cogent example of the bicycle from the book *Critical Realism and Marxism*. When various structures such as wheels, handles, frames, etc., a bicycle is formed and this bicycle has the *power* of transportation. This power exists even if one keeps the bike locked away in a garage. One could hop on the bicycle and attempt to exercise the power of transportation, and fail to do so, due to inebriation or high counter winds. Nevertheless, the power still exists. Or one could *actualize* the power of the bicycle by successfully riding it from point A to point B. A generative mechanism is therefore “a power exercised...that has been triggered, [and] is generating effects”. If we posit that the bicycle now has a tendency this does not mean that the bicycle *will* or *has to* exercise this

²¹ For instance, Foucault rightfully points out that all of our knowledge development takes place within various power practices, but it does not follow that our judgment of things are themselves a power practice, nor that true/false judgments are precluded by them.

²² Collier, Andrew. 1994, Page 76-77

tendency. “The tendency for the bicycle to facilitate transportation...depends upon the existence or absence in the same space-time location of other tendencies” such as alcohol to inebriate, or winds to blow strongly. Thus the term tendency refers to the force of something.²³

I will now summarize what has been developed thus far, in order to allow for a smoother transition into Bhaskar’s theory of the social sciences. Scientists socially develop theories, models, experiments, etc. This is the *transitive* dimension of science, and the transitive dimension is an attempt to link onto an *intransitive* object. The intransitive object is a generative mechanism or structure that when activated produces certain tendencies. The world is an *open system* where experiments cannot be performed in such a way as to account for all variables and external factors. Scientists, as *causal agents*, therefore test their transitive objects in a *closed system*, and if the experiment goes well, producing the conjunction of events that was predicted by the transitive object, they have developed some link to an intransitive object. Thus there is necessarily an ontological distinction between the scientists as causal agents and the generative mechanism their experiment allowed them to identify via the production of a constant conjunction of events. This theory makes science intelligible, non-contradictory, and shows what the world must be like for science to be possible.²⁴ It also shows why the sciences are stratified: because there are different generative mechanisms at work; some on the chemical level, some on the biological level, and as I shall soon argue, some on the *social level*.²⁵

²³ Brown, Andrew, Steve Fleetwood, et al. 2001.

²⁴ But *nota bene*, the argument here is only what the world must be like for science to be possible, *not* that science is finished, consummated, or nearing completion. When we discuss philosophical issues it is prudent to incorporate the sciences because they are making some progress.

²⁵ While this will not be deeply explored in the thesis, it is interesting to note that Bhaskar’s theory helps solve many of the problems regarding free will, determinism, etc. Different generative mechanisms *emerge* out of others. Thus biological mechanisms have emerged out of chemical ones. And thus biological mechanisms *cannot be reduced to* chemical ones. Since the world is an open system, biological mechanisms can react back upon chemical ones, or to solve the problem of Marxian base-superstructure riddles: the superstructure is emergent

Section 1.1: Summary of Bhaskar's Social Philosophy

Bhaskar's ontological arguments for the realist ontologies of natural and social sciences, while necessarily interconnected, are nevertheless distinct. One can accept the former (natural science), without accepting the latter (social science), however, if the latter arguments are accepted, then critical normativity necessarily enters the sciences. Moreover, while the natural sciences are presumably getting at a static feature of the world, the social sciences are necessarily getting at contingent features of the world, capable of change, i.e., change preferably by normative critique.

There is an obvious and necessary distinction between the social and natural sciences. The latter are, if the argument has been accepted, clearly getting at intransitive objects of nature. These objects are immutable, and are not contingent upon our social practices. If we all died tomorrow, there would be no impact on the boiling point of water. But the intransitive dimension of the social sciences cannot be like this. That dimension is necessarily contingent upon social relations. So in this case if we all died tomorrow, Marx's law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall (LTRPF) would be inoperable. Or, if we qualitatively changed our social structure, by moving forward into socialism or backwards into feudalism, the LTRPF would also be inoperable.²⁶ The final necessary distinction is between the developments of transitive objects. The natural sciences have the luxury of producing closed systems, whereas the social sciences *necessarily* must develop their transitive objects in open ones.

Given that there is no trans-historically static intransitive dimension in the social sciences, the question instantly arises as to how Bhaskar believes there can be *real* science

from the base, but the superstructure can react back upon the base *in a different way* than the base *allows for the emergence of the super structure*.

²⁶ I will be arguing in a latter chapter that the LTRPF is a real aspect of capitalism.

conducted in the social sciences. What is real for Bhaskar is the structures and generative mechanisms that transitive objects help us identify. So what is real in a social science stills needs to be a structure or generative mechanism that is identifiable. Bhaskar states that “social forms are a necessary condition for any intentional act, and their *pre-existence* establishes their *autonomy* as possible objects of scientific investigation and that their *causal power* establishes their *reality*.”²⁷ In order to identify such things in society, prior forms of social philosophy have to be rejected: methodological individualism, and then the communal forms of analysis developed by Weber and Durkheim. Once this is done, Bhaskar develops a social ontology from the works of Marx, which make social science both possible, and necessarily critical.

The rejection of methodological individualism – the philosophy that explains social phenomena via facts about individual action – is wholly unsatisfactory. One criticism is that the language of individualism is necessarily social. For instance, all the predicates applicable to an individual’s behavior in society are themselves necessarily social and not reducible to purely individual terms (e.g., a tribesman implies a tribe, an employee implies an employer, and cashing a check implies a banking system). There are other criticisms worth considering,²⁸ but I trust the point does not need to be belabored.

Ultimately it seems as if sociology and the social sciences are focused on analysis of *social relations*, or *relations between individuals*. These relations, in order to be studied, must be temporally enduring, and socially generalized. There is a lot of work that attempts to explain social relations in terms of rational choice theory (Elster and Roemer for instance). But as Bhaskar notes, to develop a social science based on rational choice is inherently limiting. “To

²⁷ Bhaskar, Roy. 1998, Page 25

²⁸ See *ibid*, 28.

say that people are rational does not explain *what* they do, but only at best...*how* they do it. But rationality, setting out to explain everything, very easily...explains nothing. To explain a human action by reference to its rationality is like explaining some natural event by reference to its being caused.”²⁹

The rejection of individualism and rational choice theory leave open the Weberian theory of voluntarism, and the Durkheimian position known as reification, and finally the Peter Berger model of social science, which is a dialectical conception. Criticisms of these do not need to be deeply developed for the purposes of this thesis. What can be shown is that all of these competing theories recognize a distinction between social and natural facts. And in contradistinction to all three positions, it needs to be argued that *people* and *society* are two different kinds of things.

Since these are distinct things, both in a realist and scientific sense, we can say that society preexist any individual. This seems uncontested given the cogent criticism of individualism. People find themselves born into a society that is already made. But these people do not *create* society, since it preexist them, instead they (re)produce it and/or transform it.³⁰ In short, the ontology of society is to be viewed as a *transformational model of social activity* (henceforth TMSA). And society must therefore be regarded as an ensemble of structures, practices and conventions which individuals reproduce or transform”. Society therefore does not exist independently of human activity (the error of Durkheim), but it cannot be considered the

²⁹ I think this criticism can easily be carried over into rational choice economics, and/or the rational stance underlining supply and demand economics. Ibid, 29.

³⁰ In terms of capitalism, Marx made this point crystal clear: “Whatever the form of the process of production in a society, it must be a continuous process, must continue to go periodically through the same phases. A society can no more cease to produce than it can cease to consume. When viewed, therefore, as a connected whole, and as flowing on with incessant renewal, every social process of production is, at the same time, a process of reproduction.” For a full elaboration read see chapter 23 of *Capital*. Marx, Karl. 1990, Page 711.

product of human activity either (the error of Weber).³¹ So when people engage in social activity, they necessarily perform a dual function: they make social products, and they make the conditions of their making, i.e., reproduce the structures “governing their substantive activities of production”, in their social relations and social activity.

Bhaskar’s theory is necessarily an emergentist theory of science (or as he calls it, synchronic emergent powers materialism – henceforth SEPM). As stated above, we can say that the depth of reality, and stratification of the sciences, indicates that there is a *real* stratification in the world between/amongst generative mechanisms. Chemistry and biology are stratified. Chemistry is a necessary condition for biology to occur, but it is not a sufficient one. The generative mechanisms and structures that develop in biology are *sui generis*. Although these mechanisms develop out of other ones, they are capable of acting back upon one another. So given the nature of people, qua human beings, society and the ability to perform social science, develop out of our biology. But we cannot reduce our understanding of society back down to our biology, and our social practices can impact our biology. Now one could retort that knowledge of chemistry allows us to predict things in biology, or that knowledge of human biology will allow us to predict things regarding society, and thus room for free-will and causal agency is impossible. But this would be a category mistake because this position presupposes a *closed system*, and society and the world are not closed.

The next development that needs elaboration is Bhaskar’s claim that social sciences are necessarily critical, and thus have a normative component. Moreover, proper social sciences leads to a breakdown of the fact/value divide. This is done by conducting a *critical realist explanatory critique* (CREC). A CREC is a descriptive and normative (and therefore somewhat

³¹ Bhaskar, Roy. 1998, Page 36.

philosophical) move that the non-hard sciences inevitably make. The idea is that 1) if a claim such as all people are paid for their labor can be shown to be false, and 2) we can understand why its falsehood is constantly repeated, then, *ceteris paribus*, we can move to a negative evaluation of that claim (e.g., stop believing it), and this negative evaluation will change our practices if we are serious in our disbelief.³²

Marx offered a good example of a CREC in *Capital Vol I*. 1) The claim really is made – by mainstream economist - that workers are paid for their labor. 2) This statement is constantly made so no one feels exploited or taken advantage of (whether or not the proponent of this view believe it or not is not relevant). But if a worker was paid for their labor, then the capitalist could not derive a profit.³³ For instance if I do \$20 of labor by making \$20 worth of products, and the capitalist pays me \$20, he has not made a penny. Whereas if he paid me \$18, he would have to admit he was exploiting me. As Marx showed the capitalist pays for the workers *labor power*, and in return gets to employ the workers *labor time*. Thus part of the work goes into the reproduction of labor power, and the rest of the work day goes to the capitalist. Therefore claim 1) is false, and we can derive why 2) constantly occurs. Given that a CREC has now been conducted, those accept this social science can – CP - move on to a negative evaluation of 1) and 2) in particular, and capitalism in general.

Now one could respond that a CREC does not in fact transcend the fact/value divide, because one is valuing truth as *the good* when they move to a negative evaluation. And if one is deriving their negative evaluation from a claim that is not purely factual, than one is not transcending the fact/value divide. But this criticism is not legitimate. The idea that truth *is* a

³² Norrie, Alan. 2009, Page 129-131.

³³ This is why the math of Smith and Ricardo was constantly running into errors.

good, c.p., is not just a necessary condition for moral discourse, it is a necessary condition of any and all successful discourse. Truth is a necessary condition of fact discourse too,³⁴ and so cannot be taken as an implicit or secret “premise to rescue the autonomy of values from factual discourse, without destroying the distinction between the two.”³⁵

Now one could respond that they can be neutral on the question of truth preference, and thus even with the social scientific information in front of them, may think believing something against claim 1) or 2) is prudent. But as Andrew Collier points out: “the question what should I believe about X and what is true about X are not logically independent questions. In fact they are equivalent, in the sense that the answer to one is necessarily the answer to the other. It simply doesn’t make sense to say ‘that is true but I shouldn’t believe it’ or ‘I should believe that, though it is not true’”. Now this might seem to violate the *ceteris paribus* clause, because obviously it is better if I do not tell a murderer where my wife is. It really is better if he does not know her location/the truth. “But the absolute character of the inference from ‘it is true’ to ‘I should believe it’ applies *only in the first person case*. I cannot separate the question of something’s truth from the question of whether I should believe it”, but I can separate the questions in regards to someone else.³⁶ That is, I believe X, because I think it is true, and I think it is true, and therefore must believe it.

³⁴ In a dual sense. First in the sense that the reliability and success of fact discourse is contingent upon one accepting that truth (and not lies) is trying to be communicated; and Second in that *facts* are *truths*, so fact discourse is truth discourse. I would like to acknowledge my conversations with Ben Kenoyer as helping to clarify this dual point.

³⁵ Bhaskar, Roy. 2009, Page 63.

³⁶ Collier, Andrew. Explanation and Emancipation, in: Bhaskar, Roy, Margaret Archer, et al. Critical Realism: Essential Readings. New York: Routledge, 2007. 448.

Thus I think the critical role of the social sciences is fairly well established, and I also think there is a critical role implicit in the natural sciences, given a realist ontology.³⁷ But there is a problem with the ethics of CR in general. Every time one reads about the CREC, the *ceteris paribus* clause implicitly implies the method is not wholly sufficient for establishing emancipation, and a good life. For instance, the example above about it being better to believe the truth, unless lying to someone will stop some murder, implies that murder is wrong. And this *is a value judgment that does not transcend the is/ought-fact/value divide*. Even with a CREC, the CP clause implies the same thing. Thus under the Marxist example, if conditions 1) and 2) are met in the CREC, it's okay to move to a negative evaluation of capitalism CP. But what are these other things that would give the CP claim normative sway over truth claims? For instance, if capitalist drug companies were 24 hours away from developing the cure to cancer, should we hold out on a negative evaluation of capitalism for 48 more hours? Intuitively it seems like the answer is yes.³⁸ Even if the readers of this essay says no, the point is that all the critical realists accept that the CP clause can impact what we should and should not believe, and it is necessarily the case that the *should* here is a value judgment, and not a factual one. Now as I stated above, in the introduction, Bhaskar has moved in a spiritual and dialectical direction, which does offer solutions to this problem. But that direction, if my criticisms above are seen as cogent,³⁹ is untenable. It is at this juncture in the theory of CR that I want to end this chapter so I can develop Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach. Once Nussbaum's approach is established, I will return to

³⁷ To give a brief example: we have two competing moral arguments: P1 All human life, and only human life, is valuable. P2 X race is not human. C Therefore X race is not valuable. And P1' All human life, and only human life, is valuable. P2' Given our best scientific analysis at the time, there is zero indication that there is a qualitative difference between X race and our race. C' Therefore X race is valuable too. C' is superior to C. One does not have to be a moral realist – only a scientific realist - to acknowledge this point. Thus within moral discourse, the sciences have a critical role in the construction of arguments that employ facts/observations.

³⁸ Even if the readers answer no to this question, there is certainly a scenario (unless one is a devout Kantian) where they believe truth should be withheld. Perhaps not indefinitely, but for some amount of time.

³⁹ See above, pages 7-10.

this juncture and seek to develop CR in tandem with an edited Capabilities Approach, in order to solve the dilemma of the CP clause.

Chapter 2: Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach

I would like to open this chapter with two swift judgments: 1) as to why the work of Amartya Sen is being ignored in a thesis about the Capabilities Approach, and 2) regarding the works of Nussbaum that I find relevant. For Sen, Capabilities are sets of circumstances. For Nussbaum they are sets of circumstances and internal potentials we have. The latter view, as I shall later argue, has a metaphysical connection to Critical Realism, the former view does not. Thus my focus is on Nussbaum. And in regards to 1) I want to focus on Nussbaum's two more recent works developing the Capabilities Approach.⁴⁰ These works are systematic, well-articulated, and unlike much of her previous work. Thus I choose her recent works for several reasons, such as staying contemporary, finding metaphysical overlap, and a desire to show why even her most recent work fails to recognize its radical core. In order to justify all this, however, I must give a summary of her position.

Nussbaum's theory of justice is a blending of many previous theories of justice. She incorporates fresh and new ideas, but also combines old ones (from Rawls, all the way back to Aristotle), and considers her approach as engaging in a fruitful dialogue with justice theory in general. One could reasonably argue that she's engaged in an even more reflective form of Rawlsian reflective equilibrium than even Rawls was. She develops a non-Utilitarian, Universalist theory of justice, which she believes is applicable to all people, in all places, at all times. The most refreshing perspective of her theory – especially to someone of the far left – is that she cogently argues that theories of justice that give emphasis to GDP growth as indicative

⁴⁰ These works being *Creating Capabilities* and *Women and Human Development*.

of social wellbeing are asinine.⁴¹ Typically theories that correlated GDP to freedom, liberty, and wellbeing were Libertarian theories. But even Utilitarian theories and various charitable approaches, look to the disbursement of goods as the primary measure of a societies improvement. Peter Singer for instance in *Famine, Affluence, and Morality* narrowly focuses in on monetary and goods distribution as rich westerner's *sine qua non* duty to the poor. Nussbaum's approach is radically different. Whereas Singer's morality can be summarized in the slogan: "give a man a fish" if you won't cost you much, period. The famous Chinese proverb would command that we should "teach a man to fish" so he can eat for a lifetime, but Nussbaum's theory would rebuke both claims and say, find what makes an individual flourish, and give him the resources to do so.

Nussbaum argues that theories of justice need to be about the question: what are people able to do, and who are they able to be, such that their internal dignity is respected.⁴² And the *answer* to this question is a development of *capabilities*. Therefore the Capabilities Approach to justice is an approach that seeks the answer to her justice question, by the philosophical development of what capabilities allow people to do certain things, and be certain people, which entail the maintenance and flourishing of human dignity. A life where capabilities are expressed is a life of freedom. The capabilities that can be expressed are internal, in a dual sense, to the human-being, and are also developed in social-politico environments.

Nussbaum's use of the term *internal* in relation to capabilities is unnecessarily misleading. By internal capabilities she means "the characteristics of a person (personality traits,

⁴¹ One of the problems with her theory, as I'll later show, is that by remaining in the capitalist mode of production, it *must* consider GDP growth as a necessary, albeit not sufficient, condition for maintaining the development of capabilities. Any system that neglects to ensure the constant compound growth of capital and GDP will sooner or later undergo a crisis.

⁴² Nussbaum, Martha. 2011, Page 20.

intellectual and emotional capacities, states of bodily fitness and health, internalized learning, skills of perception and movement)”, these are “states of the person” that are not fixed, but fluid.⁴³ Oddly, these internal capabilities are not “innate equipment”. Instead she refers to our innate powers, such as our DNA, as *basic* capabilities.⁴⁴

The last capability Nussbaum develops is the *combined* capability. These are “internal capabilities plus the social/political/economic conditions in which functioning can actually be chosen, it is not possible conceptually to think of a society producing combined capabilities without producing internal capabilities”.⁴⁵ Nussbaum’s pertinent example to highlight this point is of a woman who is forbidden to marry. She has the internal capability for sexual expression, but not the combined capability. This means that the distinction between combined and internal capabilities “is not a sharp one, because developing an internal capability usually requires favorable external conditions”.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the distinction remains important, because environmental circumstances can thwart the realization of internal capabilities (as I will later argue, capitalism is necessarily one of those thwarting factors). Nussbaum develops a list, preferably utilizable for a constitution, which would allow citizens the freedom to realize their combined capabilities:

- “1. **Life.** Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.
2. **Bodily Health.** Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.
3. **Bodily Integrity.** Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.

⁴³ Ibid, 21.

⁴⁴ Ibid 22,

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Nussbaum, Martha. 2001, Page 85.

4. Senses, Imagination, and Thought. Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason—and to do these things in a "truly human" way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non-beneficial pain.

5. Emotions. Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development.)

6. Practical Reason. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience and religious observance.)

7. Affiliation. A. Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other humans, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech.)

B. Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of non-discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin and species.

8. Other Species. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.

9. Play. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

10. Control over one's Environment. A. Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association. **B. Material.** Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as a human, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Nussbaum, Martha. 2001, Page 80

I think Critical Realism, and a CREC can only embolden the theory, but first I need to stress the metaphysical entry point for CR and the Capabilities Approach.

Section 2.1: The Capabilities Approach and Metaphysics

The metaphysics of Critical Realism, as discussed in Chapter 1, can be listed as: “(i)[a] belief in the irreducible dispositional properties; (ii)...realism about causality; and (iii)...some...essentialism”.⁴⁸ In terms of (i), these properties for a Critical Realist are powers, generative mechanisms, or structures. This leads to claim (ii), in that causality is now introduced – contra Humean philosophy – as the power of a thing, or the expression of that things power. Or in short, what a thing can do, indicates what type of thing it is. This leads to metaphysical necessity and overrides the induction problem completely.⁴⁹ And if an object has some necessity in the causal power and impacts it has, then it is safe to conclude that it has an essence. The role of science is to establish what that essence is.

Now the question that needs to be asked is: is Nussbaum’s Capabilities Approach neutral in terms of metaphysics, or is it implicitly metaphysical, albeit not explicitly. I think the answer has to be that the theory is in its essence metaphysical. Before I press this claim I need to stress two points. First, Nussbaum does talk metaphysics in her *Women and Human Development*, but she does not talk about it in *Creating Capabilities*. She is known for developing her views and changing her mind overtime. So we cannot be certain that what she says in *WHD* still applies in *CC*. Nevertheless what she says in *WHD* regarding metaphysics is false. Nussbaum says “that people may sign on to this conception [i.e., the Capabilities Approach] as the freestanding moral core of a political conception, without accepting any particular metaphysical view of the

⁴⁸ Groff, Ruth. 2012, Page 7-8.

⁴⁹ For an elaboration on this claim, read Bhaskar’s final chapter in *A Realist Theory of Science*.

world”.⁵⁰ I will show that this claim is false, and there is a metaphysical view which is *consistent* with the Capabilities Approach, and even aids in its development. I will show this by first indicating a critique of how metaphysics and liberalism can lead to contradictions, by a careful reading of Hume.

As Ruth Groff cogently points out in *Ontology Revisited*, Humean morality and liberalism can never get off the ground. The Humean claims that one never sees a cause, or causality, one only sees a constant conjunction of events and inductively infers a pattern. This is odd though, because Hume explicitly asks in his *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, whether it is reason or emotion that “set[s] in motion the active powers of men?”⁵¹ He ultimately concludes that although rational deliberation is often fruitful in moral consideration, it is emotion which activities our powers to act. But this is an absurdity under his own metaphysical system, whereby there are no powers, no mechanisms of cause, and no free agency (as a human power) to act. All we can know under a Humean ontology is that at t1 person X was thinking, and at t2 person X got off the couch and did something. There is no *causal* connection between these two *events*, no proper account of agency in order for one to act, and no *powers* within humans that are *activated*.⁵² Thus if one is to be a Humean about morality, they cannot be a Humean about metaphysics, or if one is to be a Humean about metaphysics, they cannot be a Humean (or much of anything) about morality.

The point of this interlude, although somewhat divergent from Nussbaum, is to show that ontology and metaphysics ought to be necessary consideration when one develops a morality or political philosophy. In order to know what can and should be done, we need to know what

⁵⁰ Nussbaum, Martha. 2001, Page 76.

⁵¹ Hume, David. 1983, Page 15.

⁵² For an absolutely devastating critique of Humean morality, and politics, see Groff, Ruth. 2012, Chapter 2.

people and institutions are capable of in the first place. If the latter is ontologically ruled out, the former is impotent. Thus ontology is relevant to a discussion of what we can do, and who we can become (i.e., a Capabilities theory of justice).

If we were to change Nussbaum's normative theory, such that instead of asking what can people do, and what can they become, but instead we asked what event at t1 leads to so and so doing such and such at t2, we would have a completely different theory. Since basic capabilities are a starting point for ensuring the development of internal and combined capabilities, we cannot look at capabilities as *events*, or *conjunctions of events*, but must see the basic capabilities as *real powers* that reside within the individual. And in order to make these powers worthy of ethical consideration, we must – in positing them as real – have a *real* account of what can and cannot thwart their functioning.

Now I could be charged with a false confirmation here, in that just because I have rejected a Humean conception of metaphysics it does not follow that a Critical Realist ontology is most suited for Nussbaum's task. But the answer to this problem remains within the confines of a particular set of questions: "is the capabilities approach metaphysically neutral", and "whether or not the capabilities approach carries with it any ontological presupposition"?⁵³ By showing that at least in terms of Hume it *cannot* be neutral, this allows for the possibility that Critical Realism is worthy of consideration. And the approach necessarily has ontological presuppositions, in that Nussbaum has a stratified account of our capabilities initial origin (basic capabilities), their expression (internal capabilities), and the conditions for their fruitful development (combined capabilities).

⁵³ Groff, Ruth. 2012, Page 92-95

In order for Nussbaum to hold this position, she must think that there is *something* that can be expressed, and *something* that can be thwarted. And she certainly thinks that what can be expressed and/or thwarted, is in some senses universal, or put another way, independent of the social-historical-economic setting the individual finds herself born into. This position fits nicely with the ontology I laid out above: (i) a belief in the irreducible powers of a thing; (ii) realism about causality; and (iii) some form of essentialism. Nussbaum necessarily holds position (i) in that she accepts that there are basic capabilities in a human, which can be thwarted or expressed. Moreover, combined capabilities are not reducible in an eliminate sense, but are a sort of interplay between institutional and individual forces. She believes in (ii) in the powers sense, in that she has to reject Hume's critique of causality, and in that she believes social and political forces can have a direct impact on one's flourishing. And finally she must accept (iii) in that she believes these are capabilities all human-beings would want fulfilled given proper philosophical reflection.

It is at this juncture that I think Critical Realism and the Capabilities Approach can be fruitful for one another. I repeat, we must see the basic capabilities as *real powers* that reside within an individual. And in order to make these powers worthy of ethical consideration, we must – in positing them as real – have a *real* account of what can and cannot thwart their functioning. If these powers Nussbaum postulated were not *real*, it's not at clear how or why they could hold *any normative force*.⁵⁴ Once we know these capabilities have normative force, Nussbaum actually states – mirroring a Critical Realist ontology – that those “basic powers [are

⁵⁴ Nussbaum confirms this point in another essay when she says “a necessary and sufficient condition of being the object of normative ethical concern, in a politics based on the capabilities approach, is that one have some [biologically] innate equipment that makes it possible for one to attain the capabilities that figure on my list”. Nussbaum, Martha. 2000, Page 122.

to] be developed”.⁵⁵ It is in the expression and thwarting of real capabilities that allow claims of justice and morality to enter the picture. And Critical Realism can certainly highlight this point.

⁵⁵ Ibid 123.

Chapter 3: Putting the Theories Together

Section 3.1: Summary of where we are

If the arguments presented so far are to be accepted, we have come to some preliminary conclusions regarding Critical Realism and the Capabilities Approach. First, Critical Realism is a plausible and defensible theory regarding scientific realism. Second, its plausibility and defensibility comes from the fact that it shows that a constant conjunction of events are not a *necessary* nor *sufficient* condition for science to be real, but instead structures and generative mechanisms are what gives science ontological force. In the process of scientific development we have a divide between the transitive dimensions and the intransitive dimension. In natural sciences the intransitive dimension is transhistorical, but the transitive is not. In the social sciences both are historically conditioned, but the intransitive dimension – although epistemically relative – is not judgment relative. It is because the social sciences are not judgment relative that they have the ability to conduct *emancipatory critiques* (CREC). A CREC was the theory, capable of transcending the fact/value divide, that if a social science can show a claim to be false, and show why an institution or center of power requires that falsehood to be perpetuated, then we can move to a negative evaluation of that claim, *ceteris paribus* (CP). It was in the CP clause that Critical Realism loses strength,⁵⁶ because the incorporation of other values, that do not transcend the fact/value divide, plays a role.

In regards to the Capabilities Approach, we have established several points. First, Nussbaum's theory is that humans are born with basic capabilities, which are expressed in social

⁵⁶ if and only if, we reject its spiritual turn and dialectical turn. I gave reasons for these rejections above.

settings. These expressions are seen as our internal capabilities (e.g., psychological states). In order to best develop our internal capabilities we need a good constitution and a good set of institutions that allow for the flourishing of capabilities. These fruitful combinations, allowing us pathways to flourishing, are our combined capabilities. These capabilities are not metaphysically neutral. In fact they have near overlap with Critical Realist ontology. And because of this overlap, there are moral implications.

I think there are several implications. First, the scientific realist aspects of Critical Realism can give us a better assessment of basic and internal capabilities, and their flourishing. I will deal with that claim in this chapter. Second, I think the CREC can only embolden Nussbaum's ethical project, but its deployment will take the Capabilities Approach in a more radical direction than Nussbaum has done (and may be willing to do). This radical direction will require the removal of capitalism and the transition to socialism. I will deal with the CREC aspect of this claim in this chapter, the move to socialism will be dealt with later, and it will show that her GDP critiques hoist Nussbaum by her own petard. Third, I think Nussbaum's approach can give us a set of values which can factor into the CP clause, allowing for Critical Realism to have more wiggle room.

Section 3.2: Scientific Realism and Basic Capabilities

In regards to Scientific Realism and the basic capabilities, I want to make several claims. But first I want Nussbaum to speak for herself. In *Women and Human Development*, and *Creating Capabilities*, Nussbaum does not discuss the sciences, she merely states that our basic capabilities refer to our genetic and biological makeup, and the role they play is in understanding the possible limits of our capabilities expression. I think the sciences can do a lot more than that,

but first I want to spell out what Nussbaum does say regarding basic capabilities and the sciences in her earlier essay *Aristotle, Politics, and Human Capabilities*.

In this essay she establishes the point already discussed, and maintained throughout her career, i.e., basic capabilities only “enters the picture as a source of constraint on what politics may sensibly be aimed at”.⁵⁷ Ostensibly, basic capabilities would be studied by the biological sciences. Nussbaum says that biological science has two roles. First, “in the normative concept of the person itself”, we should value our entire animal makeup, including those aspects of our makeup that are not purely rational. Second, “a necessary and sufficient condition of being the object of normative ethical concern, in a politics based on the capabilities approach, is that one has some innate equipment that makes it possible for one to attain the capabilities that figure on my list”. She limits this view though by saying that in order for any basic capability to have normative weight, it must be such that it has something to do with her list of ten.⁵⁸

This *a priori* limiting seems foolhardy. The desire to rule out any *possible* future experiment as unworthy of ethical reconsideration teeters on close-minded. And the inability to not acknowledge that science could show that the realization of one aspect of her list is impossible is fairly dogmatic. There’s a dual obstinacy in regards to the sciences, even if she acknowledges that they can help us develop our concepts of basic capabilities. And I think the development of a science of species-being suggests that Nussbaum’s list will need to be reconsidered, but I will elaborate that point later. For now I want to point out that Nussbaum’s second claim allows for another connection with Critical Realism. Whereas we have already established the metaphysical and ontological similarities between both theories, we can now

⁵⁷ Nussbaum, Martha. 2000, Page 118.

⁵⁸ I will later contest this point by showing that the concept of *species-being* is improperly scattered across her list, but when pieced back together, has necessary normative implications.

establish that sciences can in fact play a role in the development of internal capabilities. Internal capabilities are the characteristics of a person (e.g., emotional capacities, personality, intellectual development, health, fitness, etc.). And these are developed by the “unfolding of powers” (e.g., basic capabilities).⁵⁹ If we desire the unfolding of basic capabilities in such a way that leads to the dignity of the individual, and the flourishing of one’s characteristics, then science – when seen as real – can play a role in addressing these concerns. For instance, if we know through research that spanking a child leads to aggressiveness, and teaching a child to read novels at an early age expands empathetic capacities, then we know what we should do in regards to spanking and novel reading. By recognizing these capacities as latent powers and recognizing that science’s job – according to Critical Realism – is to determine what intransitive powers can be unleashed in an experiment, we can safely recognize science as a tool for emboldening the Capabilities Approach. Ideally we could develop a science of morality, or a science of justice. This would be a science that goes to the root of the dialectic between basic, internal, and even combined capabilities and determines which are fruitful, and which are damaging, to our overall development. Marx’s method for studying social transformation could be on par with science. “In studying such transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science”.⁶⁰ I think we can expand upon that claim. Let us now say that we can study the social transformation of people, in a direction of justice, which can “be determined with the precision of natural science”. To give but two quick examples, when capitalist countries cut back on vacation holiday, and therefore prevent the development of play (9 on her list), or stunt our senses and imagination in the division of labor (number 4), we can determine the

⁵⁹ Nussbaum, Martha. 2011, Page 23.

⁶⁰ Marx, Karl. 1979, preface.

wrongness of this “with the precision of natural science”, and conduct a value judgment that such practices are *against* the grain of justice. There is an ontological benefit to this approach in that in society we are of course living in open systems. But we can still conduct closed system experiments, to a fairly reliable degree, regarding individual development. Once we establish in a closed system what is fruitful for an individual, we can then attempt to establish the conditions (combined capabilities) in an open social world, which would allow for this power to be operative. Thus the development of a Critical Realist science is a fruitful condition for the development of justice.

However, I do want to point out one ambiguity in Nussbaum’s position given the metaphysical role of science. These basic capabilities play a role in the unfolding and shaping of our internal capabilities. It is not at all clear why something like intellectual capacity or health should be listed within the confines of internal capabilities, when something like Huntington’s disease is both a basic capability, and a check on one’s health. The only sense I can make of her claim, is one that needs to be made of Marx too, (that past Marxist have missed).⁶¹ An internal capability seems to be the unfolding, expression, or development, of an basic capability. Nussbaum recognizes this point, but it means the line separating the two forms of capabilities are not *stark* when one starts to explore the science of human powers. We may reach disturbing conclusions that X individual is genetically pre-determined to be a sociopath,⁶² such that this individual’s basic capability and their internal capability, are hardly distinguishable. Would such a finding still allow for this individual to express their capabilities with dignity? Again, by

⁶¹ See Byron, Chris. 2013.

⁶² I have no idea if this case is true, I only want to postulate it as an example of where science may reach conclusions Nussbaum is not presently ready to handle.

closing herself off ethically from future science, Nussbaum could find herself in an ethical quagmire.

Section 3.3: The Role of CREC in the Capabilities Approach

We have established that the more natural and psychological sciences are capable of emboldening our quest for developing a science of justice. This deals with the intransitive aspects of human beings, in terms of basic and internal capabilities, and their application to the open world (e.g., combined capabilities). But there's more room for Critical Realism to develop itself within the framework of institutional justice, and combined capabilities.

A Critical Realist Emancipatory Critique deals with ideology, i.e., institutional falsehoods that perpetuate ignorant behavior. But I want to expand the CREC in a direction of justice. While some might claim that it's just to have negative evaluations of ideological practices (and I would agree with them), the overlap with the Capabilities Approach is too loose. For instance, if I point out that capitalism is necessarily exploitative, and a necessary condition of its functioning is that capitalists pretend workers are getting a fair exchange for their labor time, when in fact they are being paid for their labor power, it's not overly clear why someone within the confines of a Capabilities Approach theory of justice should care. And as stated earlier, the CP clause of the CREC leaves the Critical Realist at a normative loss, unable to justify how and why various CP variables should stop our negative evaluation of an ideological practice. It is probably clear by this point that the stunting of capabilities will be the variable worth considering in the CP clause. So there are two formulas I want to develop in the CREC, one negative, one positive. I will start with the negative one.

First formula: I) If claim X can be shown to be false, and II) institution P relies on the propagation of X in order for its continued existence, then, CP, we can move to a negative

evaluation of P, and stop engaging in the practice that perpetuates its existence. The CP here will be the consideration of capabilities. This is a negative evaluation because it tells us to stop believing, stop practicing, stop doing, stop perpetuating, etc. Thus to go back to the Marxist example: I) the claim that workers are paid an equal exchange for their labor time is false. They are paid for their labor power. And II) capitalist and/or capitalist in general, requires the perpetuation of this falsehood (either willfully or ignorantly) to justify the implicit exploitation of large sectors of the population. Therefore, unless the negative evaluation of capitalistic practice will set us back in terms of the development of our combined capabilities, or will prevent us from living with dignity, or will violate the ten conditions of living in a free society that Nussbaum highlights, we can move to a negative assessment of capitalism.

This negative form of the CREC is important because it ensures we do not make rash decisions before dismantling entire social practices and/or institutions. It will also mean that if we identify an ideological claim, and realize we will violate our sense of dignity or the development of our capabilities, we will need to seriously reflect, and develop, a *safe* process for the dismantling of the ideological apparatus.⁶³

The next formula is the positive formula. This is one I am developing on my own, and believe can tell us what to do, what to practice, what to believe, etc, because its establishment is not based upon the undermining of ideology, or the overturning of falsehoods. Instead its basis is in social sciences giving us truthful information, regardless of institutional claims. These truths may be negative in the sense that they upset us, or point to obstacles or direct assaults on our capabilities, but nevertheless, let us refer to this formulation as the positive CREC. In order to

⁶³ I hope this claim gives those who are scared of the radical implementation of socialism some relief. Thus, by these criteria, any forced transition into socialism (e.g., Stalinist, Maoist, etc.) can be ruled out.

develop this formula though I will need to make a short detour into the ontology of social sciences.

As we have already established, the social sciences are transitive, and the objects they deal with are only intransitive for a temporal duration. That is, so long as X social relations continue to go on, there will be a generative mechanism, or structure, with tendencies, capable of scientific analysis. To give an example: so long as we continue to hold capitalistic social relations between worker and employer, value will be determined by socially necessary labor time. Moreover, since capitalism is necessarily competitive, the force of the tendency to rate of profit to fall, will always be operative (realized or unrealized) too.⁶⁴ The problem with this form of science though is that it is developed in an open system, and not a closed one. Society will almost never grant social researchers a closed experiment. One could follow Marx's method in terms of economics, where all variables must be considered in abstraction, and a development from the smallest entity of analysis (the commodity) to the largest aspects (the circulation of capital on a large scale) is to be conducted, such that all the pieces hang together when the science is complete. Moreover, Marx's method requires that large arrays of social considerations be held at a constant, when introducing new variables.⁶⁵ I think this method is useful, and prudent, and shows that Marx was a Critical Realist to some degree. But we need an easier way of doing social science than first reading all three volumes of *Capital*, and then reflecting on Marx's method. It may be too hard to mentally create closed systems, as Marx did for pure capitalism, in other social sciences.

⁶⁴ I will establish this claim in a later chapter, for now I ask that the reader accept it. Even if the reader chooses not to though, these are only examples.

⁶⁵ For instance, through all of *Capital Vol I*, we presume that value and price are equalized, and that workers are *actually* paid the equivalent of their labor power. It's not until Vol III that some of these constants are removed. Or in Chapter 17 of *Vol I*, Marx undertakes the task of determining how the value of labor power will change if two out of three variables are held constant and one fluctuates. In short, abstraction from concrete reality is a necessary condition for good social science.

Tony Lawson, a Critical Realist and economist at Cambridge, has been developing such a methodological ontology for the social sciences. His central concern is “the question of how social science can manage without the possibility of experimental control”,⁶⁶ given a Critical Realist ontology. His answer to the question is the theory of *demi-reg* (short for demi-regularity), *contrastives*, and *relative explanatory power*. A *demi-reg* is “a partial event regularity which *prima facie* indicates the occasional, but less than universal, actualization of a mechanism or tendency, over a definite region of time-space”.⁶⁷ Contrastives are “descriptive statements taking the form ‘this rather than that’”.⁶⁸ These are questions that are concerned with why this event instead of that event, given these conditions. The idea here is that a causal or generative mechanism can be identified through pertinent contrastives.

Now Lawson’s terms should be of no surprise to anyone interested in social sciences. Despite living in an open-world/open-system, we observe demi-regs all the time, e.g., women are paid less than men, African-Americans are less likely to get a job when equally qualified with a white competitor, and capitalist systems can go about five to ten years before running into a crisis. But since these open-systems cannot be closed off, the method for determining what may be the structure or mechanism leading to the demi-reg is to conduct a contrastive science. Lawson gives the example of the science of crop yields, where two plots of lands which are ostensibly the same (e.g., similar weather patterns, soil makeup, seeds, tending etc.,) have one presumably powerful variable, like a new fertilizer. If we observe a qualitative difference in the crop yield, the new fertilizer has *relative explanatory power*. The next step would be to tinker with other variables, such as the soil, weather patterns, etc, but maintain the fertilizer dosage, and

⁶⁶ Lawson, Tony. Economic Science without Experimentation, in Archer et al. 1998, Page 147.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 149.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 12.

see if the same results obtain. So, if we are going to conduct a good social science, we must identify demi-regs, and then see what contrastives we can find in the system at play, and see if these contrastives offer relative explanatory power.

This detour has a direct tie in regarding the positive CREC. In a positive CREC we want to find contrastives with relative explanatory power that lead to demi-regs that either assist or harm the development of human capabilities. In finding such contrastives and demi-regs, we can then conduct a moral judgment on what ought and ought not to be the case. This form of CREC is different from the negative one, because no ideological component is necessary. Thus the fact women are paid less than men may not require an ideological component, in the sense that one can be openly patriarchal or sexist (albeit sexist ideas are presumably false in all cases), and/or one's sexism may have no bearing on the reproduction of the larger system that needs to be reproduced (condition II of a standard CREC).⁶⁹

The question now is: how could we formally put forth a positive CREC? I admit in advance that this theory of a positive CREC is not completely polished, however I think it's heading in the right direction regarding the overlap between Critical Realism and the Capabilities Approach. So I want to offer a very generic and simple starting formula. Premise 1: The development of basic, internal, and combined capabilities is just and/or good. Premise 2: The demi-reg X, in contrastive systems points to Y as the explanatory mechanism for X. Premise 3: X is conducive/harmful to the development of some capability. Conclusion: Therefore Y should be expanded/ removed.

⁶⁹ For instance, it may be the case that race wars over wages helps ensure capitalist's increased profits, but keep the value of labor power, and thus variable capital, low; but capitalism could still reproduce itself even if we lived in a non-racist society. So racism is not a necessary condition for the reproduction of capitalism, just an odious byproduct of the search for relative surplus value (or absolute surplus value in the case of overworking "illegal" immigrants).

Here is an example. Premise 1: The development of basic, internal, and combined capabilities is just and/or good. Premise 2: the demi-reg of constantly increased Rx drugs to retain focus, prevent worker exhaustion, and stave off depression, points to the lack of vacation time as the reason offering the most explanatory power. Premise 3: Exhaustion and reliance on Rx drugs prevents the fruitful development of capabilities 2, 3, 4, and 5. Conclusion: Therefore the lack of vacation needs to be removed/ stronger vacation policies need to be implemented.

Again, this theory may require some work, but I think it is a good starting point for the merging of a scientific realism (even one that isn't necessarily Bhaskar's theory), with *normative social scientific* research, whose goal is to develop and strengthen the Capabilities Approach. If the Capabilities theorist want to strengthen their knowledge of what conditions are best suited for the development of combined capabilities, and Critical Realist want to solve the dilemma of the CP clause, and the direction social science *ought* to head in, then two methods have been developed to aid in their respective tasks: the positive and the negative CREC.

Chapter 4: The Critique of GDP

Section 4.1: Nussbaum's Critique and its Possible Problems

The Capabilities Approach is frequently esteemed for its critique of GDP growth as an indicator of freedom, prosperity, and a sign of a just society. It is certainly good that this critique is now in the limelight, but within the framework of the Capabilities Approach, it could inadvertently harm the theory that justifies its very existence, i.e., Capabilities theorist will struggle to be both capitalist and against the GDP approach *in toto*. To argue that GDP is not indicative of the well-being of a society, when it in fact must be, could undermine the Capabilities Approach – at least that is what I intend to show. I will argue that Marx's theory of the rate of profit to fall, when combined with a Critical Realist ontology, makes sense of a *real tendency* within capitalism.⁷⁰ Once this has been established I will show how that theory undermines the Capabilities theorist's arguments against GDP, but first I will put forward Nussbaum's critique of the GDP approach.

Nussbaum points out that “the dominant theoretical approaches in development economics” is the GDP approach, which “equate[s] doing well (for a state or a nation) with an increase in GDP per capita”.⁷¹ Thus, if GDP is increasing in a materially impoverished country, that country is doing well.⁷² This view was definitely taken for granted by Milton Friedman and other libertarians who believed that when GDP was growing, freedom and liberty were growing

⁷⁰ N.B., While I am showing that like Nussbaum's theory, Critical Realism fits right in (so to speak), I do in fact think that in demonstrating that Critical Realism and Marx's theory of capitalism go together well, I – and other Critical Realist – are really showing that Marx was in fact the first Critical Realist. So the blending of the two theories is in a more nebulous way, permeating what was already latent within Marx.

⁷¹ Nussbaum, Martha. 2011, Page 13.

⁷² For a great history of the GDP approach was forcefully imposed on South East Asian, and Latin American countries, see David Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*.

too. And even left liberals look to GDP as a sign of improvement.⁷³ As Nussbaum rightfully points out though, just knowing GDP tells us nothing about wealth distribution across races, classes, and sexes.⁷⁴ Moreover, there are other “goods” in society, which are not recognized purely in terms of the total value produced in a society, e.g., life expectancy, educational opportunities, infant mortality, liberties, race relations, and employment opportunities. Both Nussbaum and David Harvey have tracked the relation between GDP and quality of life, in neo-liberal (e.g., unfettered capitalist societies), and show that the correlation between a good life and a good GDP can be in opposition.⁷⁵ This leads Nussbaum to conclude that what we need to know and measure is ultimately *not GDP*, but instead what people can do and who they can become.

If this is the sole measure we need to be concerned about, according to Nussbaum, then it follows that GDP growth and decline are not important, and she does not even suggest that they are worthy of continued moral consideration. But she also is not an anti-capitalist. She says that her reading of Marx inclines her to see only a problem with various “forms of capitalism”.⁷⁶ This is odd, because Marx wrote about capitalism in its most *essential* form, thus any *divergent* form of capitalism, still retains the essence Marx criticized. Nevertheless, it is safe to presume that like many left liberals, Nussbaum believes we can have capitalism with a human face. In many respects this seems problematic. The Capabilities Approach, in its own pure form, is a *radical* theory, being implemented by *conservative* measures. As a theory of justice it suffers from what Frederic Jameson, and Slavoj Zizek have referred to as capitalist realism.⁷⁷ By capitalist realism they mean the fact that it’s easier for theorist to imagine the end of the world than the end of

⁷³ Obama for instance has pointed to the economic growth and development of Afghanistan – backed by force – as indicative of progress. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/defense/afghanistan>

⁷⁴ Nussbaum, Martha. 2001, Page 60-61.

⁷⁵ Again, see Harvey’s *A Brief History of Neo-Liberalism*. There is no one chapter to cite, as the entire book is a history and critique of neo-liberal policy across the globe.

⁷⁶ Nussbaum, Martha. 2000, Page 122.

⁷⁷ See Fisher, Mark. 2009.

capitalism, or in this case, the inability to think about the possibility of another world, a world where Capabilities can actually flourish. I intend to show that being against the GDP approach, and for capitalism, are contradictory positions, by showing that awareness of GDP growth/decline is a necessary condition for analyzing the flourishing of human capabilities. I will show this by revealing that capitalism has a tendency to drive down profit rates (and then often lead to crisis), and this crisis tendency will hurt peoples' capabilities.⁷⁸

Section 4.2: Critical Realism and Marx's Capital.

It is important to note before proceeding that the choice of Marx, as to the go to economic theorist of capitalism is not arbitrary, irrational, nor *purely* motivated by radical concerns (although those do exist). The core theme of this essay has been to find *ontological overlap* between a theory of the sciences, and a theory of justice. This ontological overlap is continued in the scientific analysis of capitalism offered by Marx. Thus the choice is not arbitrary and irrational, and the radical implications flow from – and not because of – the ontological overlap. It is because we can say with a scientific insight what capitalism *must be*, that we can say with equal insight, *what it is not capable of being* (i.e., a society where capabilities flourish).

As discussed above in the first chapter, the objects of social analysis, that are real, and can be revealed by the sciences, are the structures, and generative mechanisms, found within *social relations*. These objects can change if and only if those social relations change. I have claimed in footnote 70 that Marx was really a Critical Realist, and now I intend to show the overlap. Marx's *Capital* is a study of the pure form of capitalism. Marx considers his theory to be a scientific theory, and he considers his objects of study to be historically contingent. One of his primary criticisms of Darwin, Smith, Ricardo, and many others, was that they read back into

⁷⁸ Historically the people most hurt African americans, the poor, and the working class.

history the present categories of 19th century political economy. Marx recognized that these categories were socially conditioned, but what makes him a critical realist is that he recognized that these economic categories were only operable *within particular social relations* (just as Bhaskar claims they should be).

Let us take the core element of his entire analysis of capitalism: his theory of value. Every economist knows things have value. There are use-values, and exchange-values. We will be focusing on the latter. So long as a thing has a use-value (i.e., someone has a use for it), it can have an exchange-value. But something cannot have an exchange-value without a use-value. We usually see the *appearance* of something's value in terms of its price. But what determines this price? An exchange-value would be \$5 for a sandwich. The '\$5' is the exchange value, but in order to have exchange value, this item must have *value*, which is capable of being represented in an exchange medium (dollars in this case). So value is the core of Marx's theory of capitalist exchange, and Marx explicitly states: "that value can only manifest itself in the social relation of commodity to commodity."⁷⁹ Now this is only a form of appearance, thus "we see that this expression itself indicates that some social relation lies at the bottom of it." And, to conclude definitively that Marx believed value was a product of social relations, he states later: "It thus becomes evident that since the existence of commodities as values is purely social, this social existence can be expressed by the totality of their social relations alone, and consequently that the form of their value must be a socially recognized form." Nevertheless, I will offer another quote to make my point clear, and show that I am not quoting Marx once out of context, in his

⁷⁹ Marx, Karl. 1993, Section III.

One may object that this is not a social relation between people, but as Marx later points out, the commodity to commodity relation is a reification of actual social relations between people, so the objection cannot stand. See his line in the chapter on commodity fetish: "There it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things."

three volumes of work. Commenting on currencies' ability to mystify the source of value, Marx says:

The fact that money can, in certain functions, be replaced by mere symbols of itself, gave rise to that other mistaken notion, that it is itself a mere symbol. Nevertheless under this error lurked a presentiment that the money-form of an object is not an inseparable part of that object, but is simply the form under which certain social relations manifest themselves. In this sense every commodity is a symbol, since, in so far as it is value, it is only the material envelope of the human labour spent upon it.⁸⁰

We can safely say then that Marx's theory of value has the same ontological consistency with the Critical Realist approach to social science. Value, which is immaterial, is still measureable (by currency) and operable through the medium of a particular historical social relation, namely that of capitalism. This is a problem for Nussbaum's GDP approach, if capitalism is unstable. Marx's theory of the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall (LTRPF), which is a corollary of his value theory, says that capitalism is unstable.

Much ink has been spilled since Marx wrote this theory, regarding how something could be a law and a tendency, and how Marx was speaking inconsistently. Karl Popper and others had a famous criticism that went something like this: If Marx believes that it's a law that the rate of profit will fall, then he's a fatalist, and proclaims that it's inevitable. This cannot be scientific because Marxist can always say 'keep waiting'. The other Popperian criticism is that when Marxists claim that the falling rate of profit is operating in the background, this too is not scientific because it is not empirically verifiable. But again, a Critical Realist reading of Marx, and a careful analysis of his texts, shows in terms of social science, the theory is good. Popper did not share the same ontology as Critical Realists, and Chapter 1 above indicates why Popper's

⁸⁰ Marx, Karl. 1990, Chapter 2.

theory of science is not quite adequate. Since there are a series of generative mechanisms at work in capitalism, an open system, Marx – or any scientist – *must* abstract from all of them operating at once, in order to figure out how individual ones operate. Once placed back into the open system, it's no surprise that there are variables to consider, which can mitigate the falling rate of profit.⁸¹ Moreover, as Collier has pointed out:

“to say that there is a generative mechanism in capitalism which necessarily generates a tendency of the rate of profit to fall, is not to say that the rate of profit will fall no matter what else happens, any more than a doctor who says a patient is out of danger is saying that that patient can safely step in front of a bus”⁸²

So let us safely press on with Marx's *prima facie* ambiguous wording. First, Marx did not think that a law in terms of economics was the same as a law in terms of natural science. The obvious point is that the former is contingent upon a social relation, and the latter is not. But Marx even says, when referring to the fact that profit rates across industries tend to equalize, that this equalization can be “viewed as a tendency like all other economic laws”.⁸³ So far so good. But the question could be raised, by a serious skeptic, what does Marx mean by a tendency? And in this sense, when connected to the theory of Critical Realism, we can make better sense of what's going on in his theory, given that he never defined tendency for the skeptic. As we said above, the term tendency refers to an operable force. So let us now say that Marx has a theory that under capitalism there is a force – given certain social relations – that leads the rate of profit to fall, and CP, it will fall. What are the social relations that give rise to this force? The answer to that question is the theory itself.

Marx defines this law in *Volume III*:

⁸¹ We will cover those variables below.

⁸² Archer, Margaret, Roy Bhaskar, et al. 1998, Page 277.

⁸³ Marx, Karl. 1993, Chapter 10.

The progressive tendency of the general rate of profit to fall is, therefore, just an expression peculiar to the capitalist mode of production of the progressive development of the social productivity of labour. This does not mean to say that the rate of profit may not fall temporarily for other reasons. But proceeding from the nature of the capitalist mode of production, it is thereby proved logical necessity that in its development the general average rate of surplus-value must express itself in a falling general rate of profit. Since the mass of the employed living labour is continually on the decline as compared to the mass of materialised labour set in motion by it, i.e., to the productively consumed means of production, it follows that the portion of living labour, unpaid and congealed in surplus-value, must also be continually on the decrease compared to the amount of value represented by the invested total capital.⁸⁴

What is ultimately going on is that the exploitation of workers is the source of surplus value.

Value is determined by socially necessary labor time. In capitalism, capitalists try to cut down on costs to ensure profits. To cut down on costs they like to increase productivity, and replace workers with machines. The first capitalist to do this is able to maintain a strong profit because his commodities are selling at the *socially necessary labor time* to produce them, and his *individual firm's labor time* is greatly reduced. But eventually his competitors will catch on to his methods, or go out of business. So if we analyzed surplus value S, over constant capital C (capital invested in the means of production), and variable capital V (capital expended on wages), we would have this formula: $S/C+V$. The greater S to C+V, the greater the profit. And when a particular capitalist cuts down V, he has higher profit. But when everyone else starts mimicking his methods, V decreases for everyone, which means *the source of surplus value* is being removed in the struggle for more profit. Or if no one copies his methods, but instead goes out of business, we still end up with less V, and again, run into a decrease in the source of value. And if the source of value is removed, profit must decrease. When the rate of profit falls too low, crisis will ensue. Now I think it is essentially a truism to every school of economic thought (be

⁸⁴ Ibid, Chapter 13.

they Marxist, Keynesians or Austrian Libertarians),⁸⁵ that capitalists will employ machines, to reduce labor costs. The capitalists usually proffer justify this move by saying that more automatization will lead to more free-time, but this is demonstrably false; it just leads to layoffs and a larger reserve army of unemployed laborers which hold down the value of labor power. If your job can be done by a robot/machine, sooner or later, it probably will be. Thus, even by non-Marxist terms, there is a tendency within capitalism, given its social relations, to replace labor with machines. And in Critical Realist Marxist terms, we now have an answer to our question, what are the social relations that give rise to the LTRPF. They are the very relations of capitalism, where capitalist compete with one another, and have to exercise disregard for the *well-being* of the worker, in order to ensure profitability. The structure of capitalism gives rise to the tendency for the rate of profit to fall. Worded this way, Marx's theory, and Bhaskar's theory, fit elegantly.

Now the immediate objection to this claim is still the Popperian one: we do not see the rate of profit falling all the time, so what's going on? Or in Critical Realist terms, what are the mechanisms or social relations which are offsetting this fall. Marx identifies six counter tendencies. Or in Critical Realist terms, six other tendencies, that are operable in capitalist economy (showing that Popper's first criticism above was false). The six counteracting tendencies are (1) more intense exploitation of labor, (2) reduction of wages below their value, (3) cheapening of the elements of constant capital, (4) the relative surplus population, (5) foreign trade, and (6) the increase in share capital.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Wolff, Resnick. 2012, Chapter 6.

⁸⁶ Marx, Karl. 1993, Chapter 14.

Although Marx does not list it, he does see credit and/or finance as another form of propping up industries for a period of time. Thus before one writes off Marxian economics regarding the current 2008 crisis, they need to see that his theory accounts for it. The rise of the finance industry and credit markets in 1970, was a response to *the*

I want to detail (1), (2), and (4), as they are the most relevant to our discussion of justice. In order to make (1) operate, the capitalist either has to expand the working day (e.g., a shift goes from 8 hours to 10), or intensify the amount of work you do, without material assistance. So if you were usually expected to make 5 widgets in an hour, you now need to make 7, without the aid of a new machine. When the pressures of a social system, outside the control of any one individual, imposes excess work intensity, and worker duration, capabilities 2, 3, 7A, 9, and 10A,⁸⁷ are all violated.

The next method, (2), is easy enough to understand, and commonplace in capitalism. This is when workers are paid less than their labor power is worth. One common practice of this is forcing workers to work off the clock. For instance, once a worker hits overtime, they are required to clock out, but keep working.⁸⁸ Although this is illegal there is no real outlet for fighting this crime. One cannot risk losing their job when it's their livelihood at stake, and the legal forces that are able to defend the large corporations against individual complaints, usually mire the employee in debt. Salaried workers can also be forced to work longer than usual without excess compensation.⁸⁹ Another form of paying workers less than their labor power is to hire illegal immigrants, amongst an otherwise legalized working staff, and pays the immigrants less.⁹⁰ These practices also violate 2, 3, 7A, 9, and 10A above.

Claim (4) is quite intriguing. Marx claims, and empirical data verifies, that with capitalism comes a boom in the population. Notice at the advent of the industrial capital

falling of profit since the post WWII boom. It is because the rate of profit was so low, and credit was operating as a house of cards, that the collapse of one major bank was able to take down the entire economy. For an analysis of how Marx's theory helps explain our present crisis, see Kliman, Andrew. 2011.

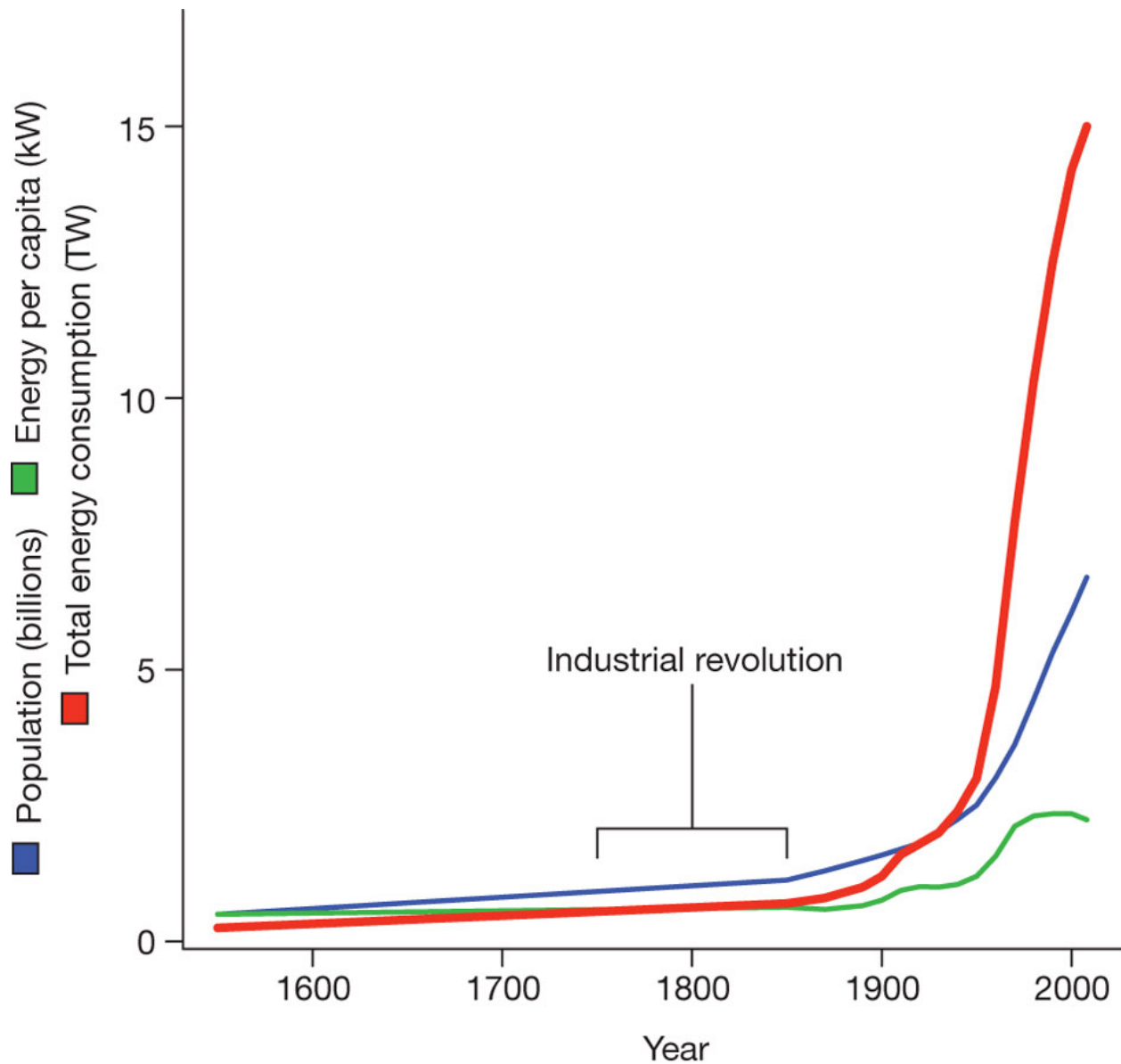
⁸⁷ I will justify these claims below.

⁸⁸ Kurtz, Annalyn. 2013.

⁸⁹ http://www.twc.state.tx.us/news/efte/flsa_most_common_pitfalls.html

⁹⁰ Dinan, Stephen. 2014.

revolution, there is a constant rise of population and energy expenditure, as documented in *Nature*:⁹¹



What Marx pointed out was that the population grew at such a rate that there would always be unemployment amongst some sector of the population. This point is no longer controversial and

⁹¹ Ehrlich, Kareiva, Daily. 2014.

recognized by even left-liberals.⁹² The problem though is that as the population grows, and more people are unemployed, the wage workers can demand often decreases. For instance, during the 2008 crisis, many career oriented professionals have now had to take jobs at fast food restaurants earning significantly less than before.⁹³ So capitalism can keep pace in generating surplus people/unemployed workers, wage demands can be mitigated, and thus the expenditure on variable capital continually held low, such that surplus value can continue to rise. This again violates many justice claims on Nussbaum's list. The very notion that an economic system *requires* reserves of unemployed people is abominable in *any* consideration of *combined capabilities*.

I have claimed that each of these three methods for ensuring the increase in the rate of profit, will harm capabilities 2, 3, 7A, 9, and 10A. I now want to justify part of this claim. Capability 2 requires that each citizen have access to good health. And claim 3 requires that each citizen have access to bodily integrity. But can one have *good* health, and bodily integrity, when they are being underpaid, working harder, and/or a member of the necessarily unemployed? Two very recent reports by the World Health Organization and Joseph Rowntree Foundation suggest this is not possible. They have concluded that “reported rates of workplace stress, depression, and anxiety also correlate to worsening personal debt and public health problems like obesity and alcohol dependency” and these reports “indicate clear links between poverty and clusters of mental and physical health problems.” And this is being caused by, or at least heavily correlated

⁹² Wolff, Resnick. 2012, Chapter 3.

⁹³ Kurtz, Annalyn. 2013.

with, low pay, and overall workloads.⁹⁴ Thus, the drive to maintain profits in the workplace – often through the three tendencies Marx talked about – is directly impacting capabilities 2 and 3.

Although it can be argued that these same tendencies prevent the realization of capabilities 7A, 9, and 10A, I want to save that argument for the next chapter. That chapter will show that even under *normal* (i.e., non-counter-tendency) conditions, 7A, 9, and 10A are violated. The counter-tendencies only exacerbate the problem.

Section 4.3: My Argument and Nussbaum's Possible Response

We have come to several conclusions. Marx's theory has metaphysical overlap with Critical Realism, and Critical Realism has metaphysical overlap with Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach. This metaphysical overlap means Marx's economic theory is to be taken seriously within this conjoined web of theorizing. Nussbaum claims that GDP growth is not a good indicator of the well-being of a society. This is *partially* true. For her, GDP should not be our measurement of the well-being of a society, and our only measurement should be the measuring of what are people able to do, and who are they able to become. But she is not an anti-capitalist; she's *only against forms of capitalism* that hinder capabilities. It is my contention that *all forms of capitalism* hinder capabilities. This is my contention because Marx's theory is about capitalism in its purest form; all sub-forms still retain the essence of the pure system. And this means that analyzing GDP is a necessary condition for understand how capitalism is operating, and subsequently how capabilities are being exercised.

There is a tendency in capitalism for the rate of profit to fall. There are also counter tendencies to prevent the rate of profit from falling. If GDP is on the decline we know one of two

⁹⁴ See [Taylor, JD. 2014](#), for a review of the studies, and see the actual studies here: [WHO, 2014](#). And, Salway, Lucinda, Platt, et al. 2014.

things will happen: First, counter tendencies (1), (2), and (4) will be exercised. These counter tendencies are not conducive to the combined capabilities on Nussbaum's list. Second: when counter tendencies (1), (2), and (4) have reached their limit, and a crisis will occur. We know for sure that if a crisis occurs the working class, and often government programs meant to aid in combined capabilities, will take a hit. This is just a fact of capitalism given the positions of power the capitalists occupy. Nussbaum's argument does not work. Her premise is that GDP is not an accurate measure of wellbeing, and therefore we need a different measure that disregards GDP. But we now see that in terms of GDP decline, this is a measure of either *the damage to well-being that is occurring* or *damage to well-being that is going to occur*, and if we want to ensure the well-being of people we cannot disregard this measure. So the capabilities theorist has to either accept a contradiction: GDP both is and is not a reliable measure for well-being, or they need to remove the social relations that make GDP measurable in the first place.⁹⁵

The same argument can be had regarding the growth of GDP. If GDP is growing we know counter tendencies (1), (2), and (4) are either in operation, or will need to be in operation, in order to ensure a longer duration of growth. This again means that GDP is a good measure of current well-being and *possible threats* to wellbeing. There is only a small window of opportunity where GDP is growing, and counter tendencies (1), (2), and (4), are not at risk of being utilized. But in order to know we are in this window of opportunity, we have to know the status of GDP, and the rate at which humans are being replaced by machines.

To summarize, GDP is an indicator of the health of a capitalist economy whose modus operandi is to produce more and more surplus value. This is a precarious process, where both the

⁹⁵ There is no contradiction between desiring a socialist society that maintains *development* but does not maintain growth. E.g., my apartment complex could develop cleaner tap water, without the economy as a whole, or even a communal sector, needing to grow. Development for well-being is great, growth is risky.

growth, and the decline of GDP, will infringe on compound capabilities. There is a necessary social connection between GDP and various outlets for the flourishing/denial of well-being in a capitalist society. And this means that GDP is not a measurement to be disregarded. Instead it is the social relations that allow for GDP that ought to be jettisoned.

There are two possible criticisms of my critique. First, I have presumed that we cannot tax away safe havens of money to ensure people do not take a hit in terms of their combined capabilities as exercised through various government programs. But taxing profits from companies is another form of causing the rate of profit to fall, since taxes eat away at corporate profits (i.e., their surplus value). And taxing people takes value out of capitalistic circulation. So the solution to the problem is more of the problem. Even if we could tax away X surplus value to rescue capability 2 for instance, I contest that it would not be possible to rescue all of the capabilities that are hindered by the LTRPF, without dramatically increasing the fall in the rate of profit. We can put some money in X, but we lose it in Y, or we can put some in Z, but we lose it in W.

So long as Capabilities theorists continue to operate within capitalism, a system that has a falling rate of profit, they will always be at pains to sketch out how citizens can realize their compound capabilities. The Capabilities Approach has radical implications, but unfortunately its present proponents offer conservative and thus contradictory measures for its implementation.

As Collier so astutely summarized regarding good intentioned progressives and their relationship to capitalism:

“Easy as it might seem for the more prosperous of the world’s nations to provide adequate health, housing, and education for all their citizens, or to bring together unemployed workers, unused resources and unsatisfied needs, the best-intentioned social democrat governments never manage to solve these problems. The

obstacles are not technical; they are laws of economics and politics in a capitalist society, which trap the would-be reformers inside circles of constraint narrower than those set by the limits of the technically possible. Marxian economic theory explains the mechanisms of this constraint, and socialist politics a means to their abolition: it is explained how an optimum use of resources could be made, and why this is not possible under capitalism. Yet the social democrats never tire of telling their socialist critics: 'You are doctrinaire; everything you can do, we can do better by a little state intervention without alerting the system', and telling the electors: 'We are sorry we can't fulfil our election pledges – the laws of the economy won't allow it...there could be no better practice of banging one's head against a brick wall and calling people 'doctrinaire' when they try to find a way around it.'⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Archer, Bhaskar, et al. 1998, Page 278-279.

Chapter 5: Alienation

Section 5.1: Summary of the Issue

I am not the first person to point out that the Capabilities Approach and capitalism are at loggerheads. As Hartley Dean wrote in *Critiquing Capabilities: The Distraction of a Beguiling Concept*: “The ‘elephant in the room’ metaphor (which alludes to a problem so large and obvious that everybody pretends not to notice it) is admittedly facile and overworked. But is quite apt when it comes to reminding ourselves of certain key issues that remain perennially neglected” by the Capabilities Approach. And one of those elephantine issues, he points out, is capitalism.⁹⁷ Now Dean’s reasons for pointing out this elephant do not include the falling rate of profit (as discussed in chapter 4), but he does point out that Nussbaum seems to be in trouble when she uses the ‘young Marx’ to criticize *forms of capitalism*, but fails to retain the insights of the old Marx. I agree. And I am going to spell out how the division of labor within capitalism is harmful to our species-being, which in terms of scientific research, is a real power of man, whose expression leads to a fulfilled sense of our internal capabilities. If my argument is right, Nussbaumian Capabilities theorists will again have to accept either a contradiction (e.g., we can fully develop our capabilities within capitalism, but capitalism is alienating our internal and compound capabilities), or become anti-capitalists.

I want to show that Marx’s concept of species-being is correct, and I will do this in two ways, after defining what the term means. First I will point to the scientific evidence that lends

⁹⁷ Dean, Hartley. 2009.

evidence to my claim that man⁹⁸ is a species-being. Second, I will offer an alternative form of evidence, on par with the demi-reg, contrastive model outlined above. That is, I will point to the predictions Marx made regarding the outcome of alienated species-beings, and see if it matches the facts. If these claims are shown to be true, then we can again reasonably conclude that capitalism is contrary to the expression of specific combined capabilities.

Section 5.2: Defining Alienation

My reading of Marx is that he has a static conception of human nature, which is constant throughout all human history, in any mode of production. This point is contested. Many theorists believe Marx has a historicist account of human nature, i.e., that our human nature changes and develops as we change and develop the external material world. I think there is some truth to the historicist view, but I also think Marx has a trans-historical account in his theory of species-being, and it is this element of species-being that is our human nature. If we define human nature as that which is *uniquely human* (so hunger, and sadness, while part of our nature are not part of our *human* nature), we can find in Marx claims about what humans powers humans have in all periods of history. And if we have these powers at all periods in human history and these powers are uniquely human, then they are part of our *trans-historical* human nature.⁹⁹ One example where Marx puts forth his theory of human nature is in his *Notes on Mill*:

“Let us suppose that we had produced as human beings. In that event each of us would have doubly affirmed himself and his neighbor in his production. (1) In my production I would have objectified the specific character of my individuality and for that reason I would both have enjoyed the expression of my own individual life during my activity and also, in contemplating the object, I would experience an individual pleasure, I would experience my personality as an objective

⁹⁸ I stick to masculine writing in this chapter, for consistency, because I'll be quoting Marx who does as well.

⁹⁹ This is a controversial claim, and for defenses of it see my articles:

Byron, Chris. 2014.

Byron, Chris. 2013

sensuously perceptible power beyond all shadow of doubt. (2) In your use or enjoyment of my product I would have the immediate satisfaction and knowledge in my labor I had gratified a human need, i.e. that I had objectified human nature and hence had procured an object corresponding to the needs of another human being. (3) I would have acted for you as the mediator between you and the species, thus I would be acknowledged by you as the complement of your own being, as an essential part of yourself...in my individual activity I would have directly confirmed and realized my authentic nature, my human communal nature. Our production would be as many mirrors from which our natures would shine forth. This relation would be mutual: what applies to me would also apply to you.”¹⁰⁰

It seems to me that Marx’s conception of species-being, is that what is *unique* to the human species is our ability to 1) imagine a unique object for someone else, 2) construct that object out of material reality, and 3) use that object to aid our fellow man. One of my favorite examples of this act is Ray Kurzweil’s blind reader. Kurzweil is a famous inventor and theorist of ‘the singularity’. He has blind friends. He used his ingenuity to fashion a device that could give his blind friends the ability to read texts.¹⁰¹ This was not a device that he needed. It is a device that in fulfilling the needs of his friends, expresses his species-being.

Under capitalism though our species-being capabilities are denied to us, or at least thwarted during the working day. In the *Economic and Philosophy Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx develops his theory of alienation, which is the antithesis of a flourishing human being under certain productive conditions. Alienation, the negation of our species-being, is derived from the consummation of four conditions. I) Man must be alienated from the product he makes. II) He must be alienated from the production process itself. III) He must be alienated from his fellow man in the labor process (his species-being in action), and thusly IV) he is alienated from himself. The result of alienation is unhappiness, and wallowing in unfulfilling activities. We

¹⁰⁰ Marx, Karl. 1992, Page 277-278. For other examples see Chapter 7 of *Capital Vol I*, the end of *Volume III*, and his 1844 manuscripts.

¹⁰¹ Ikenson, Ben. 2004. 139-140. Print.

waste our minds and bodies and we no longer feel at home in our work activity, but only at home when we escape our work activity. We no longer live to work, but work to live, and thus our essential function is now a mere means to satisfy an end (a wage for sustenance).

Marx makes two predictions about what will occur in a capitalist society where conditions I-IV) are fairly omnipresent. The first prediction is that man will be miserable, and abuse alcohol. The next prediction Marx makes is about the nature of unfulfilling work. “The less he is attracted by the nature of the work and the way in which it has to be accomplished, and the less, therefore, he enjoys it as the free play of his own physical and mental powers, the closer attention is forced to be”.¹⁰² The comment on free play already indicates the forthcoming dilemma about being of capitalism and capabilities (see combined capability 9 in the second chapter). And the forced attention comes in various forms. My initial goal is to show that both of these claims are true, then to show that some scientific evidence does mesh with Marx’s claim that mankind is a species-being.

Section 5.3: We are Species-Beings

The idea that there is something deeply wrong in the arrangement of production is certainly a radical claim. And radical claims require strong evidence. I am going to put forward two separate areas of study to justify the claim that alienation is occurring. The first area will deal with happiness and drug abuse in relation to countries and their economic arrangements. The second will deal with psychology and human development.

There is empirical evidence supporting the notion that when someone is alienated (see the four stages above), they will be unhappy, or unfulfilled. The evidence is correlative. In many European countries workers have more free time and general basic sustenance needs guaranteed

¹⁰² Marx, Karl. 1990, Page 284.

(or at least more guaranteed than people in the US and more neoliberal countries).¹⁰³ When one juxtaposes the data between countries where more free time is allowed, to countries where there is less free time (time to be a species-being without coercion), the levels of happiness match Marx's predictions: i.e., the less people are made to work under alienating conditions, the happier they are.¹⁰⁴

Another study that confirms Marx's theory is the abuse of Rx drugs; which I want to distinguish from recreational use of drugs. The former is to cope with a lack of fulfillment, the latter is merely for pleasure, but not necessarily anymore harmful than any other outlet of pleasure pursued in an already fulfilled life. As stated above, Marx said that when the worker is alienated their attention span will have to be forced. He also said that the worker would cope with alienation by abusing alcohol and engaging in reckless activities. It is not too presumptuous to extend Marx's prediction from coercion and alcohol to Rx drugs. After all, Rx drugs can make the mind focus longer, and help achieve artificial happiness when something fundamental is missing in life.

Several studies indicate that Marx's predictions were probably right. Since 1978, America has entered a neoliberal era, where all possible measures to increase the rate of profit are taken (usually involving deregulation, union busting, and the extraction of absolute and relative surplus value by any means necessary).¹⁰⁵ In tandem with the dominance of neoliberal

¹⁰³ For instance, in France and Scandinavia, paid vacations, and vacation duration, are greatly expanded when juxtaposed to American vacation policy (which ranks last). See: Thompson, Derek. 2012

¹⁰⁴ Levy, Francesca. 2012.

¹⁰⁵ See again, Harvey, David, Neoliberalism.

policies, Rx drug abuse has risen; especially drugs for attention span and depression.¹⁰⁶ To quote an article in *Al Jazeera* that came out March 12th, 2014:

“The number of Americans using prescription drugs to treat ADHD rose 36 percent between 2008 and 2012. And the numbers were even larger for some groups. For women between 26 and 34, ADHD-related prescriptions rose 85 percent. Prescriptions for adults in general went up 53 percent, to an estimated 2.6 million Americans.”¹⁰⁷

Further indication that Marx’s predictions were correct, is that studies reveal that those same countries that are happier and have more time off also abuse less Rx drugs. Thus, if one is not forced to work as much under conditions they find unfulfilling, they take less drugs to help them focus and artificially increase their happiness.

The merging of Marx’s theory of alienation with these particular studies may be criticized for not revealing a causal link between alienation and production, and a decline in happiness and an incline in drug abuse. Although these studies are only correlative, if they had shown the opposite of what Marx predicted, i.e., that happiness rises and drug abuse declines as free time is taken away and neoliberal policies are instituted, than this theory would be in serious trouble. Although I personally doubt it is possible for any one study to categorically prove what Marx said – primarily because societies are open and changing systems, and science tries to generate answers within closed and static systems – we can still be confident that empirically his theory is not heading in the wrong direction. In general alienation and unhappiness seem to have some relation to economic conditions. Or in Critical Realist terms, I have tried to show that the application of Marx’s theory gives the best *explanatory* account of the *demi-regs* we see when *contrasting* different open systems.

¹⁰⁶ Ridgeway, James. 2011.

¹⁰⁷ Moskowitz, Peter. 2014.

The next claim that needs to be analyzed is whether or not we really are species-beings. I've put forward my negative evaluation, that is, I've shown what is occurring to people in capitalist countries where work is prolonged, but now I need to put forward my positive claim, i.e., that experiments actually reveal that we express species-being characteristics.

The next study worth analyzing was conducted by Michael Tomasello and his colleagues. Tomasello is a co-director of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, and a developmental psychologist. In his book *Why We Cooperate*, he sets out to defend the theory that under proper conditions humans are not naturally Hobbesian creatures, albeit we are not angelic saints either. Tomasello tested cooperation amongst twenty-month-year-old children. Children were placed in a room with an adult that needed help doing something (e.g., opening a door when his hands were full). The adult was never vocal; it was up to the children to deduce what ought to be done. Almost all the children always helped the adult without any external emphasis.¹⁰⁸ After helping the adult, the adult would nonchalantly walk away without praise or blame. After assisting the adult half of the children were rewarded toys. The experimental surprise comes in the fact that the children that were rewarded toys were then less likely to help the adult during phase two of the experiment, whereas the children who received nothing for helping continued to help the adult in phase two. This study, among others, has led Tomasello and his colleagues to the conclusion that this species-being “behavior is intrinsically motivating” and that the activity of cooperation is “intrinsically motivating,” but the “external rewards undermine this intrinsic motivation” and “externalize it to the reward.” Thus “children’s early helping is not a behavior created by culture and/or parental socialization practices. Rather it is an outward expression of children’s natural inclination to sympathize with others in strife.”

Although this study is also correlative, it draws some interesting conclusions. When a child engages in productive behavior (e.g., opening a door), for someone else in need (part of Marx's theory of species-being), he is more than willing to do it again. But once the child begins to receive an external reward (the toy, or for a worker a wage) for something that was intrinsically rewarding, he loses interest in the activity. Thus, it is not too outlandish to presume that when people under capitalism produce and are rewarded with something external, for what ought to be internally fulfilling, they further lose the drive to be productive, and yet they must continue to be productive in order to survive.

In the book *Drive* by Daniel Pink, he documents many experiments (over a dozen) over the past three decades that confirm this point in an adult based work setting.¹⁰⁹ When workers, or people, are given a task that requires ingenuity and creative thought, and are given a *monetary* reward based on the speed at which they can do it, and another group is offered only the reward of setting the median time at which others should work at,¹¹⁰ the second group always outperforms the first. This has led Pink to conclude, along with the researchers, that incentivized rewards actually narrows our focus, and thwarts our creative powers, because the reward takes mental precedent over our creative faculties, narrowing our thought patterns. The only time money does work as a fast paced incentive, is when the work is perfunctory and requires no mental cunning.

Both for children and adults, incentivizing creative and cooperative outlets of expression is inherently counterproductive. The conditions on which capitalism thrives, are the conditions of

¹⁰⁹ Pink does believe that now that we know about these studies we can have an even more efficient free market, whereas I would contest that the structure of our market is precisely the problem. Nevertheless, for a similar set of studies see: Fray, Bruno. *Not Just for the Money: An Economic Theory of Personal Motivation*.

¹¹⁰ Or as Marx would call it, socially necessary labor time.

which people are most alienated. And it is my claim that alienation is disastrous for the flourishing of capabilities. In order to make this claim I need to repeat some of the capabilities.

“4. Senses, Imagination, and Thought. Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason—and to do these things in a "truly human" way... Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice... Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non-beneficial pain...

7. Affiliation. A. Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another... **B.** In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.”¹¹¹

So far as I can tell, capability 4, and parts of 7A and 7B, when combined, are in fact a definition of species-being. This is not surprising since Nussbaum frequently states her view of capabilities borrows from the young Marx. Although this conclusion does render her claims about each capability as somewhat suspect: “All [capabilities] are of central importance and *all are distinct in quality*”.¹¹² Each of these is not *distinct in quality*, since each of these is the expression of a singularly unique power of the human species, i.e., species-being. Nevertheless, 4, 7A, and 7B, have all the makings of Marx’s theory of species-being. The division of labor and its career oriented focus starkly perverts capability 4.¹¹³ And we know from Daniel Pink’s work, that the incentive based approach of capitalism (e.g., wage for work), narrows the mind, and dulls our imagination. We also know the wage or incentive based approach stunts 7A and 7B, since children, and presumably adults, lose the motivation to engage in socially cooperative behavior *because incentives* pervert the intrinsic reward. And as Sayer and Marx show, the capitalistic division of labor is antithetical to proper affiliation, and as a result leads to alienation. And since

¹¹¹ Nussbaum, Martha. 2001, Page 79-80.

¹¹² Ibid, 81. Emphasis mine.

¹¹³ For a fully fleshed out defense of this claim read Sayer, Andrew. 2012. Sayer is a socialist, Critical Realist, and a proponent of the Capabilities Approach.

we know alienation is the negation of species-being, and that this theory has strong explanatory power as a demi-reg in capitalism, we can safely conclude that capitalism by its nature is in contradiction with the fullest expression of our human capabilities. It is both a threat to the realization of combined capabilities, and a definite threat to the realization of our internal capabilities, and this is because our basic capability/internal power, of our species-being, are denied fruition.

We can conclude that then that capitalism in its pure form, both due to the LTRPF, and the fact that alienation is a condition of workplace structure, is not capable of reaching the fullest expression of a society with the fullest expression of free developed capabilities.

Chapter 6: Socialism?

When Engels was asked: “what is the aim of the Communists?”, he responded: “To organize society in such a way that every member of it can develop and use all his capabilities and powers in complete freedom and without thereby infringing the basic conditions of this society.”¹¹⁴ In this essay I have been using the term socialism, instead of communism, and for good reason. I believe that the term communism has become conflated with the USSR, Stalinism, Leninism, Maoism, and all the other disastrous regimes of the 20th century. But *socialism* can mean, and should mean, exactly what Engels’ response was to this question (a response that the 20th century communists’ regimes clearly overlooked). Given that my previous chapters argue a Capabilities theorist cannot be a capitalist, and it appears as if Engels was an up-and-coming Capabilities theorist in his own right, we need to take seriously the fact that socialism and Capabilities approaches to justice, can and should have much in common. But how could we possibly make a socialist society that respected Engels’ and Nussbaum’s wishes, without falling into totalitarianism? This chapter is an outline to that answer, and only an outline for a reason: Anyone can spin-off utopias from their armchair, the goal though is not to look to any *individual* for the solution to the world’s *social* problems, the goal should be to look to social

¹¹⁴ [Engels, 2014](#). Although Marx never makes any comments – so far as I know – as explicitly in line with the Capabilities Approach as Engels has done, I do in fact think he shared Engels sentiments to this question. But proving that would require thesis that’s entirely grounded in a fastidious exegetical reading. Nevertheless, there is this dialectical line from the *Grundrisse*: “In fact, however, if the narrow bourgeois form is peeled off, what is wealth if not the universality of the individual’s needs, capacities, enjoyments, productive forces, etc., produced in universal exchange; what is it if not the full development of human control over the forces of nature – over the forces of so-called Nature, as well as over his own nature? What is wealth if not the absolute unfolding of man’s creative abilities, without any precondition other than the preceding historical development, which makes the totality of this development – ie the development of all human powers as such, not measured by any *previously given* yardstick – an end-in-itself, through which he does not reproduce himself in any specific character, but produces his totality, and does not seek to remain something he has already become, but is in the absolute movement of becoming?” See Hudis, Peter. 2013, 120.

groups for answers to social problems. Thus even if I think I can detail a decent future society, I feel morally obligated to only sketch it out. This final chapter will be that sketch.

Nussbaum has argued that we need constitutional reform that guarantees capabilities as constitutional rights. Several countries in Latin America are moving in this direction. In Venezuela, the Bolivarian Constitution (passed in 2009) specifically states that the goal of society must be that “ensuring overall human development”, and “everyone has a right to the free development of his or her own personality”. Moreover, the state should play a role in “developing the creative potential of every human being and the full exercise of his or her personality in a democratic society”.¹¹⁵ This is definitely a step in the right direction, but making changes to a constitution does not guarantee structural change. I think the development of Workers’ Self Directed Enterprises (WSDEs), is the correct approach for changing capitalism, and developing socialism, while avoiding all the pitfalls of 20th century communist regimes.

Richard Wolff, an economist, offers a solution to the problems of capitalism outlined above. His solution is that we need to develop (WSDEs). Under capitalism workers produce a product that is sold for more than they are paid to produce it. If this was not the case, no capitalist would hire a worker. Moreover, when it becomes the case that commodities are being sold for less than the cost of materials used, and wages paid, a company will eventually go out of business. Marxists see this as exploitation, but even Keynesians and Neoclassicists - who do not believe exploitation occurs - recognize that the workers are paid less than the value/price of the commodity sold.¹¹⁶ Moreover, under capitalism, the producers of the commodity are not the same people that deal with the allocation of the commodity and its sale. Once a commodity is

¹¹⁵ Lebowtiz, Michael. 2012, Page 14.

¹¹⁶ Wolff, Resnick. 2012, Chapter 7.

made, someone else sells it, and other people deal with the reallocation and distribution of the profit acquired. Under capitalism this is usually a board of directors that is accountable to its shareholders. This operation is the exact opposite of a WSDE.

Under WSDEs, to put it into Marxian terms, the producers of the surplus (the profit over and above the cost of general production), are the same people who reallocate the surplus. There is no firewall between production and distribution. As Wolff states:

“In a Workers’ Self-Directed Enterprise, no separate group of persons—no individual who does not participate in the work of the enterprise—can be a member of the board of directors. Instead, all the workers who produce the surplus generated inside the enterprise function collectively to appropriate and distribute it. They alone comprise the board of directors. The workers collectively determine what the enterprise produces, the appropriate technology, the location of production, and related matters. They do this in conjunction with the surrounding communities at the local, regional, and national levels.”¹¹⁷

This arrangement, which is to always remain democratic at its core, has the potential to address alienation issues I-IV outlined in the previous chapter.¹¹⁸ Workers are able to make products that they are interested in making (I). Thus, through democratic control, they are also able to engage in activity they find appealing (II). It is of course the case that they cannot satisfy (II) all the time. Democracy will require that everyone has to scrub the toilets, and take out the trash, but it is better that everyone take a turn doing this, instead of someone in particular doing it all the time. This ensures a greater equilibrium in regards to (II), instead of extreme inequality regarding (II). In regards to (III), democratic management, helps ensure that workers actually work in tandem with each other. Moreover, democratic control allows for the flourishing of

¹¹⁷ Wolff, Richard. 2012, See the websites listed at the end.

¹¹⁸ To repeat: I) Man must be alienated from the product he makes. II) He must be alienated from the production process itself. III) He must be alienated from his fellow man in the labor process (his species-being in action), and thusly IV) he is alienated from himself.

capabilities 7A and 10A. Both of these impact III. Democratic control quells unidirectional communication, and lopsided bossiness, and helps people realize their cooperative potential.

Wolff points out that if WSDEs begin to increase in popularity and take up an increasing share of the market, more opportunities for happiness and fulfillment will follow. Under capitalism “[w]orkers do not necessarily know what kinds of work they do best or by which they are most personally satisfied. It certainly might not be their first job. Moreover, which jobs most engage people’s skills and enthusiasm can change across a lifetime.”¹¹⁹ Although Neoclassical and Keynesian economists tend to favor worker specialization, repeating the insights of Adam Smith’s pin factory, the truth is that over specialization is degrading to human fulfillment and thus immoral by the standards set above. As Wolff points out regarding specialization: “specialization of a function has been treated as identical to specialization of the functionary.” This does not have to be the case in WSDEs. While specialization may help productivity (in the short term), making an individual specialize in one task will have “dubious” results. “Beyond a certain degree and a certain period of time, keeping one person in one job may reduce productivity and profitability” because of the dullness and monotony of the work, leading to increased apathy; whereas WSDEs offer the chance for a “fully rounded personality and a diversely engaged body and mind [which] are connected to personal happiness, genuine democracy, and work productivity.” Therefore “a WSDE based economic system with rotation of jobs will be far more fulfilling,” and possibly more productive, “than work has been under...capitalism.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ Wolff, Richard. 2012. Page, 136.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 137.

The problems of Nussbaumanian justice outlined above are that workers are dissatisfied in their work, and unemployment and underemployment are harming internal and combined capabilities. Since WSDEs address issues of alienation, fulfillment, development of body and mind, etc., they will subsequently address issues of happiness and dissatisfaction. But WSDEs sound a lot like socialism, and for Americans socialism is a justifiably scary term. There is no doubt that the USSR and Mao's China were essentially "dungeons," having nothing to do with the initial intentions of socialism.¹²¹ But the distinction between socialism as it can exist, and as it did exist needs to be drawn to preempt any criticisms. The second criticism that must be considered is the efficiency and reliability of WSDEs to weather the storms of capitalism's inherent contradictions (like the fall in the rate of profit).

Section 6.1: Two Possible Criticisms

The first possible criticism of WSDEs is that they sound too much like socialism. Most socialist countries were essentially dungeons. Ergo, WSDEs will be akin to dungeons. While it is true that WSDEs are closer to what Marx meant by socialism,¹²² they are fundamentally different from the 20th century actually existing 'socialist' countries. Wolff and other scholars have started to refer to state socialist countries as basically state capitalist countries. The reason is that under capitalism a different group of people appropriate and manage the surplus that the workers produce (e.g., the board of directors). And under 20th century socialist regimes a different group of people also allocated and managed the surplus (the state). Under capitalism and state planned socialism, the people who produce the surplus and the people who manage it, are different people. This is not the case in a WSDE.¹²³ What is necessary to consider at all times is the organization of production. Although socialist regimes did away with private property, the core

¹²¹ Chomsky, Noam. 2013.

¹²² Wolff, Richard. 2012, Page 134.

¹²³ For a detailed discussion on this point see *Ibid*, 99-110

element of the organization of production was quite akin to capitalism. WSDEs are a form of socialism that is qualitatively different than the one most Americans justifiably fear. When the organization of production is managed by the same people that produce and allocate the surplus, via democratic channels of expression, the fears Americans have are no longer rational.

The next possible criticism is that although WSDEs sound nice in theory, how well can they really hold up in practice? Are they not a bit too utopian sounding? Mondragon is a WSDE located in Basque Spain. Mondragon has been growing for over fifty years, and has over eighty-five thousand employees/members.¹²⁴ Since the employees democratically control the company they often put surplus aside to ensure that when recessions hit, or various other externalities that would usually threaten employment occur, a reserve fund exists to secure their livelihood. During the 2008 crises, instead of laying off workers for good. Mondragon was able to reallocate their work force in such a way as to ensure continued employment. Despite the fact that other companies in the area have gone out of business, none of Mondragon's companies have.¹²⁵ Even when Mondragon runs at a loss, its democratic control always ensures that the workers are provided for, and are not expendable for any profit motive.

It may seem that Mondragon is a lone wolf and thus still not indicative of any practical solution to our current crises. Moreover, one might be skeptical that Mondragon can serve as a universal example for WSDE development. Basque Spain is culturally different than other countries, and has a long history of exercising a strong sense of community. But this criticism would be incorrect for two reasons. First, Wolff has taken the time to spotlight approximately over a hundred different WSDEs currently in operation. These other operations exist all across

¹²⁴ Ibid, 128.

¹²⁵ Burridge, Tom. 2012.

the United States and Latin American; both areas that are not culturally akin to Basque. Moreover, although Basque is culturally different, there are seeds for WSDE fermenting in the US. The majority of US citizens now distrust big business and the US government.¹²⁶ But Americans also love democracy. The growing trend of dissatisfaction with work, big business, the government, and Congress's ability to get anything done, suggests the 'cultural capital' exist to expand democracy into the workplace and to alleviate the suspicion and tensions Americans feel about existing institutions. Basque might be culturally nuanced, but there are no laws of nature, nor laws of economics that prevent us from following in their footsteps.

Section 6.2:

This is only a light sketch as to a possible alternative to a capitalist society where capabilities are thwarted. No call for revolution or government overthrow is being made. If we want to realize a just society, where everyone's capabilities can flourish, we need to escape 'capitalist realism', i.e., we need to start envisioning what an alternative society could and can look like. And while we stretch our imaginations, we need to ensure that our vision always includes the best expression of our latent powers and potentials, to avoid falling into the treacherous mistakes of past anti-capitalist societies.

¹²⁶ Newport, Frank. 2013.
Zeleny, Jeff, and Megan Thee-Brenan.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been threefold. First I wanted to address a lacuna in the philosophy of Critical Realism. That lacuna was the moral gap, and epistemological uncertainty, left by the *ceteris paribus* (CP) clause in any Critical Realist Emancipatory Critique (CREC). CP is defined in English as “other things being equal”, and I wanted to answer the question of what “other things” would warrant the dismissal or acceptance of a CREC. I believed the capabilities approach could address this task. But in order to verify that claim I had to address the second of my three aims: the ontological lacuna in Nussbaum’s theory. This gap is intentional in some of Nussbaum’s writings, and ambiguous in others. But I showed that one could not be ontologically neutral in terms of her theory, and then I have tried to show that a good ontological fit for her theory can be found in Critical Realism. Critical Realism allows for a richer analysis of basic and internal capabilities, by granting ontological justifications for scientific research regarding human development. Moreover, the Critical Realist approach to social science allows for a richer analysis of *social relations* that can hinder, and embolden, combined capabilities. Once this ontological connection was made, my final task to argue – something I’ve believed for a long time now – that Marx’s theory of capitalism can have *normative* and *ontological force*, and should not be dismissed. These three schools of thought – Marxism, Critical Realism, and the Capabilities Approach – have overlapping agendas, ontologies, and areas of focus. My goal was to draw out explicitly, the connections that already existed implicitly. I believe I have accomplished my goal.

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