If on the one hand man has strictly adhered to the traditional moral values, on the other, he has not hesitated to question the same from time to time. There is an insatiable urge in him for a search for values which leads him on to endless explorations of reality in a bid to get the ultimate explanations of human existence. For, it is only in the light of the understanding of his total social and empirical reality that sound ethical principles can be formulated.

In historical perspective, ethics, in the wake of monolithic religion, is a late arrival in history, coming as it does prominently in the west with the Christian religion. It would be true to say that a greater part of human civilization has passed through a reign of transcendental values. In any case, all morality of the earlier times was, by and large, tribal, ritualistic, and theological in character.

But if philosophical ethics is a critical reflection on the essence of moral good, Aristotle was right in calling Socrates as the founder of philosophical ethics in having made a distinction between the traditional morality and reflective morality. His identification
of moral goodness with knowledge and reason is a significant contribution to the formulation of philosophical basis of moral theory.

In the system of Aristotle, ethics derived from the word ethos meaning character, was given a secular meaning. For him the problem was not only to investigate theoretically as to what constitutes human good, but also to achieve it practically through a socio-political framework of society. It is in this context that his ethics has great relevance to the contemporary society. Marx, like Aristotle, also wanted to lay bare the socio-political and economic structure of society as it has been, as it is and as it should be or is going to be for the good life of man. We assume that in our discussion of Marxian ethics, we are dealing with a philosophy of man, a philosophy which concerns itself with the moral good and evil and by action overthrows all those conditions in which man is an abased, dehumanized and despised being. Marx's ethical philosophy also therefore, implies moral action.

Medieval ethics, on the other hand, was characterized by belief in God who was considered as the sole source of all morality. All moral consciousness and all moral action was meaningful within a theistic framework only, and the whole explanation of man and society
this reason that many of them are not prepared to accept Marxian ethics as ethics proper. But with the ascen-
dance of scientific knowledge and secularism, a climate has been created which makes it possible to consider ethics entirely within the framework of man and society and leave the affairs of religion to personal faith.

This tendency in ethics to liberate itself from religion and to establish itself as an autonomous system calls for a fresh formulation and evaluation of moral principles. The more the ethics is weaned away from religion and riveted to the problems of man and society, the more does it stand in need of practical application and evaluation to justify its stand. In so doing, it no longer remains purely contemplative but forges an intimate relationship between the contemplative and the practical. As such, ethics no longer remains *a priori*. It is based on the practical needs and welfare of society as a whole within the framework of moral values.

A significant feature of this new ethics is a change in the connotation of moral responsibility. Man becomes morally conscious of his responsibility to change the conditions which are an impediment in the way of his moral advancement and that of society. The idea of divine salvation is substituted by the idea of freedom in social nexus here and now. The concept of moral
The new concept of moral responsibility is not confined to individual's moral excellence alone but also aims at the progress of society. Whereas in Christian ethics the freedom for moral action is dependent on the grace of God, in the new conception of ethics it is dependent solely on man himself and his society. It is in this sense that Marx speaks of the significance of the economic factors for the freedom of man in society. Freedom which is staple to ethics has been given a new dimension by Marx, for it has been conceived entirely within the framework of human history and society.

We find that the recent philosophical discussions have moved away from the positivistic notion that only factual statements are ethically significant. Increasing attention is being devoted in ethical discussions to the practical problems and their solutions in morality. As

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1 Cf. Duncan MacRae, "Utilitarian Ethics and Social Change", *Ethics*, 78, 3 (April 1968), p. 188.
such the new meta-ethical and subjectivistic trends in ethical literature would not be adequate accounts of moral reasoning about the problems which are social and humanistic in character.

Marx sought firm intellectual foundations for morality in the nature of man and in the principles of social life and its institutions. In so far as he derives his moral absolutes from the concept of equality, freedom and dignity of man, we can call his ethics as humanistic in character. For humanism as Adam Schaff and other philosophers hold, is a system of reflections about man recognizing him as the highest good and concerned to create a better world for the welfare of the whole humanity. The essence of ethical humanism is the idea that all humanity is in each one of us. It is based on the basic reverence for life.

The first premise in Marx's thesis is the idea of man as a being in the world. To make such an obvious and simple statement is to assert this truth against any reduction of man to a mere epistemological ego i.e. just a subject which stands outside the world and contemplates it from without.¹ Marx does not mean that man simply

¹Cf. Frederick Copleston, "Man, Transcendence, and God", Thought, XLIII, 168 (Spring.1968), p. 27.
happens to be in space and time, but rather that being in the world is a basic condition which follows from human reality. He becomes what he does through actualization of his potentialities. In fact his very concept of philosophy springs from this very image of man. Philosophy for Marx, as we know, is thinking about man and his position in the world, and since man is an historical being and his situation is constantly changing, the only kind of thinking that can interpret his reality is socio-historical thinking. But this thinking itself is subject to change and cannot in the nature of things transcend a particular epoch.

In Marx's conception ethical values do not spring from the heart of cosmos just as they do not issue from a transcendental being. Man in his view can experience the eternal life as it were, not in a future heaven or a paradise but in his transitory existence on earth through the affirmation of his self as a social being, seeking ultimate freedom within the framework of the empirical realities of space and time not only for himself but for the whole humanity. There is a boundless concern in his ethical philosophy for the suffering humanity and an endless urge for the unity of mankind and for an egalitarian order of society.

Marx has thus brought about a renaissance of
human values. This he has done by rejecting the traditional concept of human existence and formulating it afresh in naturalistic and socialistic frame of reference instead of a theistic one. Like ethical categories of moral consciousness, moral responsibility and moral action, human existence itself was conceived in the medieval period as a creation of God. For Marx, on the other hand the point of departure for an ethical theory which concerns itself with the life, destiny and value system of man could inevitably be the existence of man himself without any regard to the possibility of God's existence. And the purpose of man's individual and social existence is the moral elevation of all men and eventually the moral perfection of the whole mankind.

However, the question as to how this perfection comes about leads us to the consideration of social change from the ethical point of view. It is very significant to note that Marxian ethics is in the ultimate analysis the ethics of social change. In fact philosophy for Marx, means a philosophy of action and change itself. He says in this context, "Philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it."¹

He praises Feuerbach for his deduction with regard to man's relation to man and for establishing the consciousness of the fact that men in reality do need and have always needed each other. But he criticizes him for being like the other theorists in producing merely the correct consciousness about an existing fact "whereas for the real communists, it is a question of overthrowing the existing state of affairs."

Marx's reaction had begun as a recognition of material conditions or as a "correct consciousness about an existing fact" as he calls it. His concept of correct consciousness based upon an examination of the real facts which he found in socio-economic reality "with a glance that pierced through the random irregularities of the surface down to the grandiose logic of things historical" made him elbow aside the legends of religious and metaphysical character. But he also realized the necessity to bring philosophy to its completion in action over and above theory. This completion meant the abolition of all speculative philosophy as abstracted from reality and thus full of illusory notions and fetishism "abounding

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1 Ibid., p. 54.

in meta-physical subtleties and theological niceties",\(^1\) predominantly prevalent in commodity societies. Marx in this sense attempts to change moral ideas by first changing the very conditions on which these ideas are based.\(^2\) He calls for concerted moral action and struggle to achieve the moral ends — for the realization of a morally better society.

It would be appreciated that the concept of social change is meaningless without reference to a framework of values. It is for the realization of certain values that social change is ethically sought to be manipulated. It is only a sound value structure both in terms of means and ends that can be an insurance against a run-away social change, so to say.

It may be reiterated that the concept of social change was not as predominant and developed in earlier ethics as we find in Marxian ethics, except for Hegel who conceived it within the idealistic framework. Marxian concept of social change and ethics on the other hand is embedded within the framework of concrete history. Most of the earlier ethics was for status quo while Marx was out to shake the same. We find in Marx an attempt at a


Marxian new socio-moral methodology to achieve his ends. Marxian ethics is thus socio-historical in nature and character.

Marxian philosophy of social change presupposes the promethean conception of man and rests on the glorification of material achievement. The materialist faith that the world is real is an essential part of the promethean image of man — a man who recognizes obstacles, removes them and creates the possibility for a better, fuller and richer human existence. It is an image of a man who seeks to assert himself through a kind of affirmation of his self and seeks to locate the moral authority in socio-historical and naturalistic framework rather than in a trans-natural or a trans-social one. As such, Marxian ethics is a promethean ethics of human liberation and of the supremacy of man.

This proclamation of the moral supremacy of man, viewed as a morality of its own kind, judged in terms of its ethical content, obviously constitutes an integral and significant part of the modern moral tradition. It is an extreme, thorough going and radical expression of that moral revolution which, beginning with Luther, aimed at the elevation of man, thereby constituting a basis for the progressive, social-democratic and ethical humanist tradition which seeks its culmination in our times.
Marx had looked for ethical principles which are naturalistic rather than super-naturalistic. He, like Rousseau, had sought a basis for the moral right of each individual to equality and freedom in the belief that no individual is inherently superior to another. As such in Marx's ethics, such categories as freedom and equality played the major roles. He seems to have taken the ideals of 1789 seriously. He had also seen how shamelessly a concept like 'freedom' could be twisted for the benefit of a particular class in the name of universal morality. He, therefore, preached freedom for all mankind and not a particular section of humanity, in action and not in words. This is what gives a practical and universal character to Marxian ethics.

Marx's insights and reasonings about human situation led him to the formulation of social and humanistic principles for amelioration of man. His passion for the removal of man's misery turns out to be a universal and absolute value for him. He makes a major break from the traditional thought and traditional values and posits a new concept of human happiness which he explains and seeks to manipulate through economic categories.

Social and humanistic morality as an intelligible discipline and activity can only be authentic if it is
identified with a social purpose of universal human happiness and well being instead of being explained in non-natural terms. It is related with the satisfaction of human wants and pursuits of human good rather than with the demands of a law which is not conceived within humanistic framework at all.

Marxian ethics makes the same claim to be realistic as utilitarian ethics does. But there is an attempt in the former to avoid the psychological and sociological simplicities which constitute a basis upon which the various versions of the latter are erected. Marxian humanism shares the man-centeredness of utilitarian ethics, but claims to be much more effective and action-centered than utilitarianism. This is so, because utilitarianism takes the desires and expectations of man at any point of history as ultimate in themselves. Marx's morality, on the other hand, seeks to transform and enrich his wants and aspirations. It seeks to increase his expectations and teaches him not to be content with the false happiness. Utilitarianism works within a given social and political system and criticizes it only when it fails to satisfy the demands expressed within the system. Marxian humanistic ethics criticizes and transcends all specific systems and speaks from the universal ethical standpoint.
Profound in ethical insights, Marx also sought to bridge the gulf between fact and value, between "is" and "ought" as had been worked out by Kant. Marx rejected the purely conceptual and abstract character of ethics for being too far removed from the human reality. If ethics is the theory of good life -- then in Marxian ethics, it is for the first time that ethics has been conceived within the framework of concrete history as also bearing ultimately on the supremacy of man as the highest moral ideal.

Marx, to be sure, never wrote a complete treatise in itself on ethics. His writings were extensive, ranging over different aspects of human situation and written over a long period of prolific career. But all through the works his moral fervour and moral concern are easily discernible. It is in this sense that in recent years a number of scholars have hailed his Capital as an ethical treatise in economic disguise.\(^1\) He spoke as a moralist in economic categories. His economic analysis is in fact an ethical analysis of immorality in society according to his lights. It is for this reason that one has to cull out the ethical principles from his writings and to present them in a more systematic way.

This becomes all the more necessary in the absence of any such attempt from the standpoint of ethics as a philosophical discipline. Marx's overzeal to bitingly criticize and negate the morality of class societies was, however, both misunderstood and resented by many scholars in the earlier years of this century. They criticized Marxian thought for being devoid of any moral content and ethical concern. But simply because Marx criticized the class morality, he does not ipso facto forfeit the claim to being a moral thinker. It is another matter that Marx had a moral point of view, quite his own, which can be explained in terms of a single moral precept, 'The freedom and equality of man'. In this context one is reminded of what Rousseau says in his preface to A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality: "The single inscription on the temple of Delphi contained a precept more difficult and more important than is to be found in all the huge volumes that moralists have ever written".

Reflecting on the bourgeois morality, Engels says, "We are merely saying that this economic fact is in contradiction to our sense of morality." The ultimate and explicit aim of Marx's philosophical works was

1Preface to the first German edition by Frederick Engels in Marx, The Poverty of Philosophy (Moscow: Foreign Languages Pub., n.d.), p. 11.
unquestionably ethical. It was to discover in what human perfection and human freedom consist, to explain the difficulties which prevent men from realizing them and to show the way which they must follow if they sought to attain freedom. As such one cannot do justice to Marx without recognizing the sincerity of his purpose, his love of facts and his burning desire to help the oppressed which made him fully conscious of proving himself in deeds and not only in words. The incomparable stature of Marx is due to the fact that in him the man of ideas was indissolubly bound up with the man of action and the two mutually complemented and supported each other.

The scholars in the recent years are increasingly getting interested in the problems of morality that challenged Marx. The modern day literature in the combined areas of philosophy and social sciences is giving more and more evidence that morality in any concrete sense can neither be fully understood nor defined without taking proper cognizance of the economic and socio-political forces. For it is within the framework of these forces that man struggles for his moral rejuvenation.

To be able to understand the full significance of Marxian ethics, it is essential to understand Marxian
thought in itself as well as within the total set of history of ideas. As such a few basic questions that have been raised in this connection are: what is man himself, what is the nature of his existence, what is the nature of ethical validity and meaningfulness of freedom for which he strives? To what extent the epistemological factors such as consciousness etc., contribute to his moral endeavour and action? And how does social change through moral action operate in the face of history? An attempt has been made to seek answers to these questions in the following chapters of this work. In the light of the general nature and character of Marxian ethics discussed briefly in the foregoing account, we have tried to formulate the principles of Marxian ethics and then analysed them critically. If Marx has been criticized philosophically, it is on sufficiently reasonable grounds and not for any disregard for Marx's moral fervour.