

Pannekoek's Third Letter to Comrade Chaulieu*

[August 10, 1954]

Dear Comrade Chaulieu,

I suppose that your review *Socialisme ou Barbarie* does extend its realm also to problems of Marxian theory.^{^Such a problem is treated in the accompanying article.^} That socialism is founded or should be founded on ethics is a ~~common~~ wide^{^spread^} belief among intellectual sympathizers, usually combined with a ~~xxx~~ critical mood toward ~~xxx~~ its scientific basis laid down by Marx. On the other hand several authors have tried to combine them and to make ethics an essential part or the basis of Marxism. This is not simply a theoretical question, because modern discussions of the future of socialism are connected with it. You know that comrade Maxime [*sic*] Rubel—well known by his bibliographic work on Marx—strongly defended this point of view in his “Pages choisies,”¹ and lately made it the subject of his Doctor Thesis at the Sorbonne.² It induced me to take up again the study of Marx’ earliest works, where we can see^{^find^} the genesis of his theory; and I think^{^that on that basis^} we can refute the opinion that ethics in any way played a part in it. † Since you kindly offered me your hospitality and since ~~xxx~~ Rubel’s work was published in ~~xxx~~ French, I prepared an article on this question which I hope you will find suitable for your review. I wrote it in German, because this is easiest for arguments of Marx’ theory; I trust you will find it possible to^{^no difficulty in^} having it translated.

*Editor: “[T]wo versions of an unpublished manuscript” are referenced in Dutch at: <http://aaap.be/Pages/Pannekoek-Letters.html>. Until recently, however, the [first scanned version alone](#) was posted, twice, in the [Antonie Pannekoek Archives](#). This version’s title, “Marx éthicien? [Marx an ethicist?],” is in French, but the body of this text is composed in German, with a few phrases appearing in French; seven handwritten pages in length, this draft references both [Maximilien Rubel](#)’s dissertation defense and *Le Monde*’s account thereof (see note 8 of “[Chaulieu’s \[Castoriadis’s\] Response to Pannekoek’s Second and Third Letters](#)”) while examining Marx’s pre-1848 writings. [A full German transcription of this version is now available online](#). The [second scanned version](#), now posted, *in fact contains, on the fourth scanned page, a draft of Pannekoek’s August 10, 1954 letter to Chaulieu*, which is now transcribed here for the first time, using the same conventions as the first-ever transcription of the “[Second Letter from Anton Pannekoek](#)” to Chaulieu. That second scan contains another, perhaps earlier version of “Marx éthicien?” that is also composed mostly in German, with additional material and quotations written directly in French. It, too, references both Rubel’s dissertation defense and *Le Monde*’s account thereof.

English-language readers may read Rubel’s 1982 summary essay, “The Ethical Work of Karl Marx,” which was written for the Socialist Party of Great Britain’s journal, *Socialist Standard*, but was never published there and is now transcribed and has been made available at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/rubel/1982/marx-ethics.htm>.

¹Editor: Maximilien Rubel, *Karl Marx. Pages choisies pour une éthique socialiste*, textes réunis, traduits et annotés, précédés d’une Introduction à l’éthique marxienne (Paris: M. Rivière, 1948). This book was reprinted in two volumes in 1970 by Payot and then in 2008 by Payot & Rivages as *Révolution et socialisme* and *Sociologie critique*, with each volume subtitled *Karl Marx. Pages choisies*.

²Editor: See note 8 of “[Chaulieu’s Response to Pannekoek’s Second and Third Letters.](#)”