

1 **Rescuing Socialism from Equality**
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6 Instead of the *conservative* motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work"
7 they ought to inscribe on the banner the *revolutionary* watchword,
8 "Abolition of the wages system."
9 Marx, *Value, Price, and Profit*

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 The ideal in the primeval socialist slogan
constitutes a complete rejection of the logic of the market.
 G.A. Cohen, *Back to Socialist Basics*

17 **Abstract**

18

19 Karl Marx rejected the ideal of equality as bourgeois. And yet, the most significant attempt in
20 recent years to distinguish socialist theory from liberal egalitarian theory, G.A. Cohen's
21 critique of John Rawls, relies almost entirely on an egalitarian principle. Although Cohen's
22 critique often seems to have a great deal of intuitive force, a number of Rawls' defenders have
23 argued, quite convincingly, that Cohen's critique is unsuccessful. For those of us attracted to
24 broadly socialist ideals, there does seem to be something importantly right about Cohen's
25 criticisms of Rawls, and more substantively, something deeply problematic in the kinds of
26 market-based leveraging of productive abilities that would be permitted in a fully just
27 Rawlsian society. My diagnosis is that Cohen has the right target, but the wrong fundamental
28 value. I develop an alternative to these liberal egalitarian approaches in contemporary
29 socialist ethics, building on the famous slogan: 'from each according to their abilities, to each
30 according to their needs.' This alternative ideal of Caring Solidarity draws on rich socialist,
31 Christian, and feminist traditions, and emphasizes the importance of care, recognition, and
32 solidarity in political and economic organisation. This alternative approach leaves a certain
33 amount of inequality legitimately in place, whilst providing a moral framework for a radical
34 reorganisation of production.

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37 **Section One: The Egalitarian Ethos**

38

39 **1.1 Cohen's Challenge to the Difference Principle**

40

41 The central target of G.A. Cohen's critique of Rawlsian liberalism is the difference principle,
42 understood as a standard regulating the 'basic structure of society' – the central large-scale

43 political and economic institutions that have the most profound effect on people's prospects
44 in life. The difference principle permits inequalities that are to the greatest benefit of the least
45 advantaged (and that are permitted by the other parts of the principles of justice). Cohen
46 distinguishes strict and lax versions of the difference principle. The strict version permits only
47 inequalities that are necessary irrespective of people's actual motives. The lax version permits
48 inequalities that are necessary given people's actual unwillingness to work harder without an
49 unequalising incentive. It may not be that people want *relatively* more than others.¹ Rather,
50 they are unwilling to provide socially productive labour unless they are given more than the
51 average remuneration in return.

52

53 Cohen's objection is developed in a number of different ways. But the basic idea seems quite
54 simple. He starts with the claim that socialists would accept a suitable *ethos*. An ethos is a set
55 of social norms, governing motives, behaviours, and reactive attitudes, that publicly sustains
56 social standards or ideals. Cohen proposes an egalitarian ethos, which would sustain
57 egalitarian motives, behaviours, and reactive attitudes in productive contexts. Individuals so
58 motivated would not – Cohen argues – leverage their productive abilities for unequalising
59 remuneration. To leverage an employment of one's productive abilities is to manifest
60 unwillingness to provide a service unless one receives an extrinsic incentive – typically,
61 money. Someone who accepted Cohen's egalitarian ethos would be unwilling to leverage for
62 unequalising remuneration.

63

64 Cohen illustrated this point as follows.² Take some case in which individuals in some equal
65 distribution D1 of scarce material resources have the option to leverage additional productive
66 contributions. Doing so would lead to some unequal D2 in which the worst off were better
67 off than in D1. Cohen argued that in any such scenario, there would also be some possible
68 distribution D3, in which everyone makes their D2 contribution but without the unequalising
69 leveraging. Cohen argues that someone who had internalised an egalitarian ethos would not
70 leverage in the D2 way, but would rather contribute in the D3 way. Cohen concludes that
71 egalitarians would not accept inequalities that result merely from unwillingness to work for
72 an egalitarian wage as just.

73

74 Cohen's ethos enjoins egalitarian motives in productive contexts. But what does this amount
75 to in practice? As a first pass, Cohen says (2008, 370):

76

77 My egalitarian rule says that no one should seek such compensation as makes him all
78 things considered (far) better off than anyone else.

¹ Compare the 'ultralax' principle in J. Cohen 2002, 370.

² 2008, 97 and following.

79

80 This egalitarian ethos acts as a kind of side constraint on one's otherwise discretionary choice
81 of productive activity. This rule has the following implications for someone with abilities that
82 would fetch a higher-than-average price in a labour market. Such a person (2008, 208):

83

84 ...is simply asked to forgo sailing above the norm as much as the bargaining power
85 associated with her (relatively) rare talent would enable her to do [in a market-based
86 economic system].

87

88 However, as an alternative basis from which to criticise Rawls' liberal egalitarianism, this
89 appeal to an *egalitarian* ethos runs into a number of challenges.

90

91 1.2 First Challenge: Prerogatives and Distributive Inequality

92

93 This egalitarian ethos, as it bears on individual motivation, would seem to conflict with the
94 reasonable view that it is often morally permissible to give extra weight to our own projects
95 and relationships. Consequently, the demand to conform to this egalitarian pattern seems
96 susceptible to the kinds of alienation worries that afflict a range of impartial moral principles.³
97 Sensitive to this worry, Cohen insists that his egalitarian ethos could be constrained by a
98 'personal prerogative': a moral permission, under certain circumstances, to pursue one's own
99 interests rather than to adhere to any strict impartial standard.⁴

100

101 But this leads to an objection, because such permissions threaten to undermine his critique of
102 Rawlsian leveraging. The trouble is that individual behaviour in accordance with a personal
103 prerogative will usually upset any egalitarian pattern. David Estlund argues (1998) that such
104 a prerogative would licence behaviour that leads to an unequal distribution. He offers the
105 following case, which we'll discuss in detail later:

106

107 *Paul and his brother Peter...have continued as adults to live in their family home....*

108 Paul's abilities are more marketable than Peter's, and so while Paul earns about \$30,000
109 a year running a small restaurant (work he enjoys), Peter runs the household (work he
110 finds tolerable but burdensome). Paul, already reasonably satisfied, has always
111 dreamed of being a doctor in a poor area. He does not care to make more money,
112 except for the fact it would take quite a bit more money to allow him to become a
113 doctor and to allow Peter to better fulfil his aspirations to be a musician while
114 continuing to manage the household. With this in mind he is not willing to become a

³ Cf. Baker and Maguire 2020.

⁴ Cf. Scheffler 1982; Cohen (2008, 389).

115 doctor for less than \$100,000 per year. This amount is much more than is required to
116 maintain the present quality of life of him and his brother when he is a doctor (which
117 would have its burdens), but nothing less would allow Peter to pursue his project too.
118 Given Paul's motives, the least well off will not benefit from his talents unless he is
119 paid \$100,000, and this would lead to economic inequality.

120

121 Estlund adds to Cohen's distinction between the strict and lax interpretations of the difference
122 principle, a third category: the *moderate* interpretation, which requires motives to be consistent
123 with an ethos of justice, on the assumption that the ethos will permit the relevant range of
124 prerogatives. Estlund argues that if we allow these prerogatives, we are left without a
125 principled objection to the Rawlsian version of the difference principle. The difference
126 between the unequal D2 and the equal D3 could be explained by the legitimate exercise of
127 such prerogatives, for instance in cases like Peter and Paul's. This would leave Cohen's
128 challenge standing against behaviour permitted by the lax principle but not against the
129 moderate one.

130

131 1.3 Second Challenge: Two Concepts of Rules

132

133 Cohen is explicit that his egalitarian ethos would not enjoin individuals to *promote* equality in
134 every action. Cohen is explicitly not imagining "moral heroes" forswearing additional
135 benefits in isolation.⁵ Rather:

136

137 In estimating what it would be like for a person to accept a salary that is much lower
138 than what full exercise of market power would provide, the strain to think about is the
139 one he would feel when, *ex hypothesi*, people like him are accepting similarly modest
140 salaries.

141

142 Like Rawls, Cohen is theorising about behaviour in the context of social structures, in a society
143 with high levels of compliance with these structures reinforced by an associated egalitarian
144 ethos. Such an ethos, Cohen claims, would discourage behaviour that is clearly incompatible
145 with an approximately equal distribution of labour burdens and benefits across most people.⁶

146

147 Cohen relatedly resists the injunction to promote the circumstances of the worst off directly,
148 allowing that (1991, 316; also 2008, 73):

149

⁵ Cohen (2008, 53 and 141); cf. Rawls (1971, 64).

⁶ Concerning epistemic difficulties, Cohen's inclination is to be permissive, enjoining merely a good faith attempt to live up to the egalitarian standard (2008, 371).

150 ...one function of the egalitarian ethos is to make conscious focus on the worst off
151 unnecessary. What rather happens is that people internalise, and – in the normal case
152 – unreflectively live by, principles that restrict the pursuit of self-interest and whose
153 point is that the less fortunate gain when conduct is directed by them.

154

155 Cohen does not say more about the standards bearing on these principles. But this leads him
156 directly to a Rawlsian reply, based on the idea of a practice-based rule (Rawls 1955;
157 Melenovsky 2016). It may be that the set of principles across a large society that does the best
158 job of inducing a broadly egalitarian pattern across the whole is precisely some kind of mixed
159 economy in which individuals are encouraged to maximise their income within the context
160 of a graduated income tax and robust social services. These principles would license certain
161 distinctive patterns of motivations within marketplace contexts, by analogy with the respect
162 in which playing different competitive games licenses distinctive patterns of motivations in
163 those contexts. The upshot would be a *conventional* legitimation of inequalitarian leveraging by
164 individuals. Given the background institutions, individuals in this scenario would believe
165 that their market behaviour would, on the whole, support their egalitarianism. It would, in
166 turn, be permitted, indeed encouraged, by an egalitarian ethos.

167

168 **1.4 The Third Challenge: Complex Equality**

169

170 The third challenge to Cohen's focus on the difference principle and wage incentives comes
171 from the fact that Cohen overlooks the broad array of theoretical resources Rawls has at his
172 disposal with which to constrain leveraging behaviour.

173

174 A range of economic inequalities would threaten the satisfaction of the first principle,
175 concerning equal basic liberties, for instance (cf. Titelbaum 2008, O'Neill 2008). Substantive
176 economic inequalities would threaten the equal distribution of social bases of self-respect (cf.
177 Rawls 1999, 468; Daniels 2003, 248), the fair value of political liberties (Edmundson 2020), and
178 equal access to offices and positions (cf. Arnold 2012). A Rawlsian society would aim to
179 "substantially reduce income dispersion by investing lots in education and training, and by
180 keeping the ownership of other forms of capital widely dispersed" (Joshua Cohen, 2002, 384).
181 Rawls is clearly also optimistic about the egalitarian potential of a well-designed and properly
182 competitive labour market (cf. 1999, 269).

183

184 Concerning the Rawlsian ethos, individuals are presumed to have a 'sense of justice' that will
185 motivate them to support institutions that preserve the two principles of justice, and hence
186 that will be responsive to this formidable range of challenges to economic inequalities. All
187 this threatens to reduce the gap between the lax and moderate forms of the difference

188 principle – and even between the lax and the strict one, when the strict principle is interpreted
189 in the light of the second and third challenges.

190

191 There may yet be some extensional daylight between Cohen’s egalitarianism and Rawls’.⁷ But
192 it is hard to see much of significant principle at stake once we situate the two views in ideal
193 theory, in the context of some reasonable productive rules that might regulate opaquely, and
194 once we pull back from an exaggerated emphasis on the difference principle and distributive
195 equality to consider the array of resources available to Rawls to defend robustly egalitarian
196 norms and institutions.⁸ The effect of this third challenge, in particular, has been to convince
197 wide swathes of otherwise sympathetic political philosophers that there is little theoretical
198 space to the left of a well-rounded Rawlsianism.

199

200 I think this is a mistake. I suggest that Cohen has the right target, but the wrong fundamental
201 value. In Sections Two and Three, I will sketch an alternative ideal, and introduce some
202 dialectically helpful distinctions. Section Four deploys two arguments – the Categoricity
203 argument and the Arrogation argument – against leveraging, whether fraternal, egalitarian,
204 or otherwise. Section Five addresses some questions about equality, moralism, and coercion.
205 The conclusion sketches an agenda for further research.

206

207

208 **Section Two: Socialism as Living in Caring Solidarity**

209

210 Start with the famous slogan: ‘from each according to their abilities to each according to their
211 needs.’⁹ Many contemporary theorists factorise this into distributive principles respectively
212 specifying responsibilities and entitlements, making room for a market system to
213 intermediate between them.¹⁰ But on an alternative interpretation, this slogan articulates an
214 intentional relationship between agents: one in which agents together do what they can to
215 meet relevant needs as participants in larger shared activities of meeting one another’s needs.
216 I propose to render this relationship as a combination of care and solidarity.

217

218 The key claim about *care* is this: in caring about someone, one is disposed to do what one can
219 to meet their relevant needs in a suitably responsive and robust way.¹¹ We can understand

⁷ Cf. Cohen 2008, 389.

⁸ Compare the concession in Cohen 2008, 394.

⁹ Marx 1875; for historical analysis see Bovens and Lutz 2019.

¹⁰ See especially Carens 1986 and Kain 2023.

¹¹ The relationship between care and doing what one can to meet needs is widely assumed within the care ethics literature. This is a deep and underappreciated point of connection between care ethics and socialist ethics. See Noddings 1984, 16; Tronto 1994, 105; Bubeck 1995, 129; Kittay 1999; 129; Held 2006, 10; Barnes 2012, 5.

220 needs to extend beyond our basic needs, to include whatever is necessary for flourishing.¹²
221 The conditions of responsiveness and robustness are emphasized in the care ethics literature:
222 care involves a committed attentiveness and emotional sensitivity to the other's needs and a
223 respectful engagement with their perspective. Caring people don't simply take it upon
224 themselves to rearrange peoples' lives in 'benefit-promoting' ways; they listen to and
225 collaborative with one another, and do so reliably.¹³

226

227 However, care usually involves a clear self-other distinction.¹⁴ One person caring about
228 another is an asymmetric relationship. This asymmetry is consistent with the fact that care
229 involves agent respect. For A might care about B, respectfully, even though B doesn't care
230 about A. The cared-for may willingly volunteer authentic information about their needs, and
231 they may accept assistance. But they may not otherwise facilitate their being cared-for. Caring
232 does not, in fact, require sharing.

233

234 This is where solidarity comes in. There is *solidarity* within a group when its members
235 recognise one another as sharing responsibility for responding to an issue of common
236 concern.¹⁵ Solidarity as such might be short-lived, as when villagers work together to clear
237 their only road after a heavy snow fall, or more enduring, as in sustaining a moral way of life
238 together. This approach to solidarity starts with mutual *recognition* of our common
239 vulnerability in the face of a social obstacle. Recognition involves both manifest
240 representation and expressed evaluation.¹⁶ Solidarity essentially involves '*we-reasoning*': one
241 sees one's responsibilities as a way to participate in a larger shared activity in which one trusts
242 others to play their parts as well.¹⁷ Solidarity also entails a manifest and robust commitment
243 to *sharing our fates* in the face of this obstacle, and to working together to overcome this
244 obstacle, even at some cost to oneself — this is what 'being in it together' means. Finally,
245 solidarity also involves an associated notion of *trusting* one another, both in the relevant
246 specific goals and in our plan for accomplishing them and in carrying out our parts in that
247 plan.

248

249 Solidarity is common identification with shared responsibility for an issue of common
250 concern. One issue of common concern is to do what we can to meet one another's needs in
251 some suitably responsive and robust way. Thus, there can be solidarity in participating
252 together in the activity of meeting one another's needs in some suitably responsive and robust

¹² For this modal analysis of needs, see Fletcher 2011. For the connection between needs and flourishing see Kittay 2019 and Anscombe (1958: 6). For care restricted to basic needs see Engster 2007, 28.

¹³ On respect in care, see Dillon 1992, Kittay 2019.

¹⁴ Cf. Noddings 1984; Fisher & Tronto 1990.

¹⁵ Cf. Sangiovanni 2024, Zhao 2019.

¹⁶ Cf. Honneth 2020 on 'British recognition'; see also Brudney 1997.

¹⁷ For an especially congenial conception of we-reasoning, see Schmid 2023.

253 way. Call such solidarity, *Caring Solidarity*, and let socialism henceforth refer to the ideal in
254 which all social relations realise Caring Solidarity.¹⁸¹⁹

255

256 Caring Solidarity is a simple but rich idea. It draws especially on the ideas of unalienated
257 labour, completion, and higher phase communism in Marx²⁰, on themes of care and solidarity
258 in Christianity,²¹ and the idea of togetherness in a common struggle from the socialist and
259 municipalist traditions,²² and key themes in feminist ethics²³ and in recent ethical theory.²⁴ In
260 recent scholarship, some closely related ideas have been developed by, among others, Daniel
261 Brudney, Paul Gomberg, Jan Kandiyali, Barry Maguire, and Pascal Brixel.²⁵ There are also
262 various strands of support for this ideal in Cohen's own work, most notably the principle of
263 community: that "we care about one another ...and care that we care about one another."²⁶

264

265 In living together in Caring Solidarity, we make one important assumption about one
266 another's needs, namely that we have a common need to participate in just such a community:
267 to do what we can to meet needs as participants in larger collaborations doing the same.²⁷
268 Take three participants, A, B, and C. They share the same abstract concern to live in Caring
269 Solidarity with one another; they have different concrete responsibilities as distinct
270 participants. In relating to one someone in Caring Solidarity, one of the things we care about
271 is their participating in that society, and hence, their fulfilling their own participatory caring
272 responsibilities. This is not the same as caring about the *things* they care about. A's caring
273 about B's caring about C will manifest not as A's caring about C (though they might) but as
274 A's *empowering* B to care about C. This will involve A's doing what they can to provide B with
275 relevant means to care about C.²⁸ Take a simple case. B cares about teaching C. A cares about

¹⁸ Or perhaps when these relations are *dominant* (and not merely dominant in the basic structure but across social life) cf. Devine (2022, 126).

¹⁹ Might one ground something isomorphic to Caring Solidarity in care and some other characterisation of mutuality or shared agency? Perhaps. But I don't see what is gained by this strategy, and we lose conceptual continuities with a key value of social struggles and socialist thought.

²⁰ Especially 1844a, 1844b, 1875.

²¹ See Sangiovanni (2024, 50 and following), also Cohen especially (2000, 6). See also Bovens 2019. Cabet (1846, 153) draws Mark 12:40 and Wisdom of Solomon 6:8–9. See also Acts 2:44–5: "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need."

²² Blanc: "who can do the most, must do the most" (1849a, 8). Stjerno's gloss on Leroux: "Socialism...is the organisation of greater and greater solidarity in society" (2004, 29). See also Kropotkin, 2020 [1902], Bookchin 1991, Cole 1920, and more recently O'Neill & Guinan 2020.

²³ Especially Bubeck 1995; Baier 2010; Kittay (1999, 113)

²⁴ Especially Sangiovanni 2024 and Hurka 2000.

²⁵ Brudney 1997, 2013; Gomberg 2007; Kandiyali 2020; Maguire 2020; Brixel 2024.

²⁶ Cohen (2009, 34). Regrettably, Cohen does not develop or deploy this principle elsewhere. See Vrousalis (2015, especially chapter 5) for discussion. Cohen earlier says (2000, 6) his critique of Rawls was inspired by St. Matthew's Gospel.

²⁷ Notice that the claim that we have this need not quite an empirical or descriptive conjecture, but rather an internal *aspiration* for a way of living together. Cf. Gomberg 2008, Kandiyali 2020, and Marx 1875.

²⁸ Cf. Kittay 2019, 152. One implication of this approach is that it explains why the collective control of the means of production has been central in socialist thought.

276 B. So, A, in caring about B, cares about B's teaching C. A is thereby motivated to provide B
277 with the means to teach: access to books, seminar space, a leather satchel. In teaching, say,
278 about engineering, or agricultural science, B is, in turn, providing others with what they need
279 to meet other needs.

280

281 This ideal of Caring Solidarity is *general* but also *permissive*.

282

283 This socialist ideal is general in applying at every scale of human organisation: familial,
284 municipal, national, international, etc. This is not merely, or most fundamentally, an ideal for
285 the basic structure of society, nor for small-scale personal interactions. Different concrete
286 responsibilities will naturally be collaboratively assigned to agents or groups at different
287 scales: for instance, early years child rearing would be the responsibility of small groups of
288 adults; highway management the responsibility of a larger group; various environmental
289 protections the responsibility of still larger groups. But at every scale, agents or groups see
290 themselves as upholding suitable caring responsibilities together as part of larger
291 collaborations.²⁹

292

293 Caring Solidarity is also permissive.³⁰ The specifications of care and solidarity are abstract,
294 compatible with social relations that otherwise vary considerably. According to the ideal, *all*
295 relationships will be ones of Caring Solidarity.³¹ But that leaves open the questions of who
296 cares about what, and how, and with whom. These questions are not settled *a priori*. Rather,
297 divisions of responsibilities are worked out in actual collaborations, large and small, guided
298 by the socialist ideal itself.³² Many prominent relationships, e.g. citizen or neighbour, can
299 realise or fail to realise Caring Solidarity. For instance, plausibly, all genuine friendships are
300 relationships of Caring Solidarity, though 'fair-weather' friendships are not. Many vocational
301 relationships realise Caring Solidarity,³³ though bullshit jobs (i.e. ones known not to meet any
302 needs) do not.³⁴

303

304 Bear in mind that we have a variety of needs. In addition to our need to participate in Caring
305 Solidarity, plausibly many of us also have needs to engage in complex labour, to have a certain
306 amount of control over our own work, and to receive recognition for our work.³⁵ But also,
307 particular individuals have more specific needs: to care for their families, to live in a certain

²⁹ This is an 'institutional division of labour' rather than a 'division of moral labour' in Scheffler's terms (2010). Compare Sangiovanni (2024, 116).

³⁰ Hence Caring Solidarity, although general, is not "comprehensive" (cf. Rawls 1993, 13).

³¹ Compare Scanlon on friendship 1998, 162.

³² On reasoning in the light of ideals see Anderson 1993. On this scalar democratic ideal, see Dewey 1951 and more recently Dover 2022.

³³ For one detailed workforce model based on this ideal, see Forsyth et al 2022.

³⁴ Graeber 2018.

³⁵ For discussion, see especially Gomberg 2008, Kandiyali 2020, Kittay 2019.

308 place, to work with their hands, or outdoors, or at sea. Some needs concern coherence across
309 one's various responsibilities, or with one's other values, for instance broadly cultural or
310 aesthetic values. Certainly, there is no presumption that our *only* need is to live in Caring
311 Solidarity with others.³⁶

312

313 We have lots of models of sharing caring responsibilities: just think about parents dividing
314 up child care, or a philosophy department dividing administrative tasks, or a group of
315 campers arranging who will catch the fish, who will set up camp, and so on. The division of
316 labour can be undertaken collaboratively in the light of the ideal of Caring Solidarity in a way
317 that is responsive to everyone's need to engage on precisely these terms, and to everyone's
318 other needs. Socialism is when we organise everything this way.³⁷

319

320

321 **Section Three: Distinguishing Empowerment, Remuneration, and Recognition**

322

323 To see the implications of this conception of socialism for the debate about leveraging, we
324 need a few more distinctions. Cohen's egalitarianism is not opposed to leveraging as such. It
325 would permit a leveraging up to the relevant standard of distributive equality. By contrast,
326 the ideal of Caring Solidarity opposes leveraging for socially productive contributions,
327 whether unequalising or equalising.³⁸ The associated ethos would positively recognise
328 socialist contributions.

329

330 Start by distinguishing between empowering and remunerating service.

331

332 In Caring Solidarity, individuals are *empowered* to fulfil suitable collaborative responsibilities.
333 This requires provisioning the material, psychological, social, and institutional resources
334 needed to provide the service.³⁹ One does not gain 'all-purpose' discretionary authority over
335 these resources, as one would with primary goods or standard property entitlements.⁴⁰ One
336 is entrusted with these resources to serve specific delegated responsibilities. One is rather a
337 trustee than an owner. An implication is that there is no assumption that a socialist will prefer
338 more resources to fewer; they will prefer empowerment fitting to the responsibility in
339 question.⁴¹

³⁶ Indeed, that presumption leads to paradox; see Gauthier 1987, 332.

³⁷ Or mostly everything (see the qualification in fn. 18). For a reply to concerns about scalability, see Maguire 2025.

³⁸ Marx explicitly rejects egalitarian remuneration in 1865 (CW 20:129).

³⁹ cf. Gomberg 2007; Gourevitch 2022; Chatzidakis 2020, Cohen (1991, 288). It is an administrative question whether one is given these in advance or one applies for reimbursement.

⁴⁰ On primary goods, see Rawls 1993, 180-190; on the discretionary ideal, see Pallikkathayil, 2010, 133.

⁴¹ Contrast Rawls 1999, 4.

340

341 By contrast, to leverage one's productive abilities is to manifest willingness to employ them
342 only in exchange for some *extrinsic* incentive. In this context, the incentive is individual
343 discretionary control over scarce social resources, such as money. Leveragers are motivated
344 by their own ends, but these ends may not concern their own *welfare* – ends will vary widely
345 and many will concern other people. The central point is that in leveraging one is exchanging
346 a productive contribution for the power to pursue one's own ends whatever they happen to
347 be.

348

349 The social complement to leveraging is remuneration: the institutionalised distribution of
350 extrinsic incentives for the employment of productive abilities. Remuneration needn't
351 compensate for unusually burdensome work; many really terrific jobs are remunerated (e.g.
352 orchestra conductor). My own remuneration for teaching is a good example, since I would be
353 much worse off if I were doing anything else. In a labour market, it often happens that
354 fulfilling jobs are paid well and burdensome jobs poorly.

355

356 The suggestion will be that, in Caring Solidarity, workers are empowered but not
357 remunerated. However, it is still important that they can be *recognised* for their service.

358

359 An ethos consists in norms based on standards for the recognition of suitable behaviour.
360 Recognition is the means by which we identify as sharing this abstract ideal, and also as
361 sharing the concrete overlapping concerns that distinguish our particular responsibilities.
362 Recognition is not an instance of or a substitute for remuneration. The pursuit of status or
363 esteem for its own sake would be a kind of fetish.⁴² But proper recognition is an important
364 part of the socialist ideal; recognition "*completes*" activities in Caring Solidarity.⁴³

365

366 Some burdensome work is inextricable from particular services, just as childrearing involves
367 changing nappies, or mountain rescue involves risk, or surgery involves long shifts. The
368 proper socialist response to inextricable labour burdens associated with particular services is
369 still not compensation or remuneration, nor to permit or encourage leveraging. Rather, the
370 goal is to restructure responsibilities – across a workforce across time – to meet needs as well
371 as possible, including needs for safe, predictable, and enjoyable working conditions. Those
372 who undertake especially burdensome work are to be recognised by themselves and others
373 for doing so. (Again recall the contrast with capitalism, in which those who do the most
374 burdensome work are often remunerated and recognised the least.)

375

⁴² For extensive discussion, see Gomberg 2008, 160 and following. See also §5.2 below.

⁴³ Cf. Brudney 1997; also Kittay 2019, ch. 8.

376

377

378

379 **Section Four: Socialist Objections to Leveraging: Categoricity and Arrogation**

380

381 Let us now return to Estlund's objection to Cohen's objection to Rawls, involving Paul and
382 Peter. Estlund argues that this case involves permissible inegalitarian leveraging and that
383 Cohen lacks a clear principled resistance to this case, especially given his openness to personal
384 prerogatives. I will argue that the Caring Solidarity approach yields that principled resistance.

385

386 Recall that Paul is willing to improve his own professional prospects only if he can also
387 improve Peter's prospects. This does sound like an instance of fraternity. But still, I want to
388 develop two specific lines of concern even with fraternal leveraging. According to the
389 *Categoricity* argument, in socialism, Paul would not condition his willingness to serve on some
390 extrinsic advantage that will accrue to him. According to the *Arrogation* argument, in
391 socialism, Paul would not arrogate to himself the authority to decide how to manage the
392 relevant socially significant resources, in this case his abilities to serve as a doctor. These two
393 arguments are closely related: they correspond to two directions of responsibility in Caring
394 Solidarity: one's specific delegated responsibilities, and one's responsibility to see oneself as
395 a participant in larger socialist collaborations.

396

397 **4.1 The Categoricity Argument**

398

399 The argument here is simple: if Paul accepted Caring Solidarity, and if he had a delegated
400 responsibility to serve as a doctor, then he would not condition his willingness to do so on
401 the power to also benefit his brother.

402

403 Let me start with the second premise. In the socialist ideal, individuals have responsibilities
404 to make productive contributions as participants in larger collaborative managements of
405 abilities and needs. It is not *a priori* that some specific person A has a responsibility to
406 contribute some specific contribution R, where that is some finely grained action such as
407 fixing these teeth or building this wall or cutting this hair or staying in that cubicle past five
408 o'clock, or doctoring in this rural area. Rather, specific responsibilities are worked out in
409 actual collaborations, large and small, by appeal to extant abilities and needs, with
410 collaborative reasoning guided by the socialist ideal. On this approach, there is a conceptual
411 limit to how much we can theorise about concrete responsibilities *a priori*.

412

413 If Paul really hated being a doctor, then, assuming that doctors were not unusually scarce, it
414 would be natural in shared reasoning to support Paul with some other kind of social
415 contribution, such as running a small restaurant. There is this permissiveness in the ideal to
416 assign responsibilities in response to a range of productive needs. But it is stipulated in the
417 example that being a doctor would fit well with Paul's productive needs. By hypothesis, his
418 reluctance is based just on his desire to help his brother and his unwillingness to improve his
419 own prospects without improving his brother's. The case doesn't take a stand on which option
420 would be best supported by collaborative reasoning guided by the socialist ethos, so let us
421 imagine, plausibly enough, that Paul would be encouraged to take the position of rural
422 doctor. In that case, Paul's conditional willingness not to fulfil this delegated responsibility
423 would conflict with the socialist ethos.⁴⁴

424

425 This argument doesn't quite depend on Paul's doctoring abilities being part of the social
426 product (i.e. resulting from training). For even if – *per impossibile* – his abilities were natural
427 talents, the same ethos would apply. The socialist would be delighted that they have abilities
428 that can meet relevant needs. They are disposed to do what they can with these abilities to
429 meet relevant needs, irrespective of either fact about their genesis. They see no need to render
430 their relationship to these abilities in terms of ownership. The main difference is that when
431 one refuses to employ abilities that one has been empowered with, one is *additionally* failing
432 to complete *previous* caring activity.⁴⁵ It is natural to say that Paul has responsibilities to those
433 who participated in this activity, too: to honour these empowerments by employing them in
434 accordance with the socialist ethos. This is a bit like a virtuoso being given a piano and
435 insisting that they will play it only if their brother is given a bicycle. This kind of leveraging
436 would not be supported by a socialist ethos – just as cutting back on days working for public
437 health to earn more money in private practice would not be supported by a socialist ethos.⁴⁶

438

439 It may help to motivate this further to reply to an objection from *supererogation*. It is natural
440 to think that one's productive responsibility to meet the needs of others only goes so far. This
441 thought is part of the insight behind the prerogative approach. It is natural to think that
442 providing service beyond that point is supererogatory. Hence, even without knowing where
443 that point is, can't we say of possible acts of service beyond that point that it would be
444 permissible to leverage them for remuneration? I think not. Even if it is supererogatory for

⁴⁴ Why would Paul be allowed to work more or less to meet his own needs but not his brother's? The difference is that the relevant needs of Paul's are not extrinsic to the service, and he is not leveraging work to meet them. It was asserted that doing less work one hates would be authorised in shared reasoning rather than individually.

⁴⁵ Ideally, there is an intentional thread connecting empowerment and production and product and use and recognition of all this, in completed production. This normative thread is multiply severed in capitalism. Cf. Brudney 1997.

⁴⁶ This norm is common, e.g., in parts of the west of Scotland and Northern England.

445 you to provide some service, it doesn't follow that it is permissible for you to leverage that
446 service rather than provide it without conditions. For example, suppose you are the only
447 doctor in in a rural area. There might be some reasonable amount of burden beyond which
448 more doctoring (that week) would be supererogatory. Archie's gouty toe could wait until
449 Monday. But still, it would not be acceptable to make Archie the following offer: that
450 you'll help him today if and only if he cuts your grass.⁴⁷ The more general thought is this: in
451 the case of many responsibilities, proper fulfilment involves being motivated by the
452 associated needs in the relevant contexts - by health in doctoring, by efficiency and safety in
453 fixing roads, by education in teaching. And this is true even if one isn't required to perform
454 this particular action at all.

455

456 Finally, there is no presumption that *individual* productive responsibilities are unconditional.
457 Of course, particular responsibilities are conditional on their place within actual socialist
458 collaborations – in which groups small and large reason together, in ways that aspire to the
459 socialist ideal, to distribute responsibilities in ways that are responsive to abilities and needs.
460 But an individual's responsibilities also require to be squared with their other responsibilities;
461 you are a teacher but also a parent, or an engineer and organiser in your local consumer
462 counsel.⁴⁸ But having to prioritise one responsibility over another is not the same as leveraging
463 the fulfilment of this one. It is no part of the socialist ideal that one must prioritise professional
464 responsibilities over citizenly or domestic or reproductive responsibilities. It is a question for
465 shared reasoning in the light of the socialist ideal what *bundles* of responsibilities individuals
466 will have – bearing in mind these will likely include some responsibilities to undertake their
467 share of burdensome work, too.

468

469 **4.2 The Arrogation Argument**

470

471 The categoricity argument emphasizes the leverager's problematically conditional attitude
472 towards their responsibilities. A further problem concerns the arrogation of social power.
473 Here the most fundamental problem is with the structures that legitimate this kind of
474 leveraging, and, derivatively, with individual enactment of this problematic system.⁴⁹ To
475 render the point more positively, in *Caring Solidarity* we view our productive responsibilities
476 as authorised collaboratively, in light of this shared ideal.

477

⁴⁷ What about more personal contexts such as 'I'll pick up the kids from school only if you give me a back rub later'? This sounds unproblematic. But I think there are back rub deals and back rub deals. Sometimes, one genuinely isn't willing to do the supererogatory thing without the incentive, and there is an exchange. But more often, I think the back rub can be more like appreciation (hence recognition) than compensation or remuneration. This latter seems feasible and more ideal.

⁴⁸ See also Baier (2010, 151) for a model of care-based reasoning given moral conflict.

⁴⁹ Cohen discusses *enactment* in the context of gender- and family-based coercion (2008, 135).

478 In leveraging, Paul assumes the unilateral authority to conditionally relate two things: (1) his
479 doing what he can to meet relevant needs, and (2) his having a certain amount of discretionary
480 power for him over scarce resources (in this case, money). This discretionary power would
481 give Paul the authority to choose for himself what to do with these resources, if anything. As
482 it happens, he is going to spend the money to improve Peter's prospects, but that fact is
483 extrinsic to the exchange itself. It is compatible with this exchange – doctoring for \$100,000 –
484 that Paul changes his mind and spends his money some other way. The normative
485 infrastructure of a labour market system renders it legitimate for Paul to insist upon this
486 conditional connection between otherwise unrelated production (1) and capital (2).

487

488 But the collaborative management of the means of production is incompatible with individual
489 leveraging. If individuals have *full* authority to decide whether to employ their productive
490 abilities and resources, then that authority is not fundamentally *shared*. In collaborative
491 management a minimum of two people, and ideally everyone, has some actual input in the
492 process of assigning productive responsibilities, at different levels across society.⁵⁰ By
493 contrast, leveraging presumes that an individual has authority themselves to assign
494 productive responsibilities at their own discretion.

495

496 According to the ideal of Caring Solidarity, individuals would not take themselves to have
497 the authority to decide unilaterally how and whether their productive resources are to be
498 employed. This is a way to fail to *share* in the management of these productive resources. It is
499 also a way to fail to see how these productive resources are already being shared.
500 Empowerments are largely not like manna; they are provided by and enabled by larger
501 patterns of productive organisation. The language of *arrogation* seems well-suited to
502 characterise the presumption of authority by an individual to control the allocation of social
503 resources in ways that should – by the lights of the ideal of Caring Solidarity – be managed
504 collaboratively.

505

506 The socialist ideal requires that individuals be empowered to serve one another, which
507 requires the robust and dynamic provision of suitable material and social resources.⁵¹ But in
508 the abstract, it seems hardly plausible that assignment of productive resources should be
509 organised (a) by random individuals, (b) at their discretion, (c) on the basis of the resources
510 they command through leveraging their marketisable abilities. This is a dreadful way to

⁵⁰ Again, see Forsyth et al 2022, or more abstractly, Albert and Hahnel 1991.

⁵¹ cf. Gomberg 2008, Chatzidakis 2020.

511 distribute responsibilities. At best, market remuneration is an extremely lumpy and opaque
512 distribution of these opportunities.⁵²

513

514 In a division of labour organised in the light of the ideal of Caring Solidarity, certain
515 productive responsibilities will naturally be managed by a larger group, or rather, in the
516 context of increasingly larger groups. The ideal of Caring Solidarity is neutral on scale. The
517 ideal doesn't entail that the empowerment of productive labour should be handled by the
518 *state*, specifically, for it doesn't say anything about the state as such. But it does say that *all*
519 needs should be managed collaboratively. In the context of an open-ended collaboration
520 among any relevant parties, one key question will be who is best suited, all things considered,
521 to managing the distribution of which kinds of productive empowerments. And at this point,
522 given considerations such as (a) to (c) above, it is plausible that larger agential entities will
523 have responsibility for considerable swathes of productive resource management.⁵³

524

525 To try to illustrate the problem here, consider Paulo, who is just like Peter, except that he
526 doesn't have a rich brother. Paulo is also stuck in his job with his unfulfilled dreams. Suppose
527 that the contribution Paul is leveraging to help Peter concerns meeting the needs of Paulo.
528 Perhaps Paulo is the next patient on the list, and Peter is insisting he will only come to work
529 if he gets an unequalising pay rise. Imagine Paul saying to the already less fortunate Paulo
530 that he is unwilling to meet his needs unless he, Paul, is empowered to give his brother, Peter,
531 precisely the opportunities that Paulo craves. Where's the solidarity in that?

532

533 We can reinforce this with a Cohen-style point about 'justificatory community.' According to
534 the ideal of Caring Solidarity, between any two people there is a recognisable commitment to
535 living in Caring Solidarity together. That is not realised here between Paul and Paulo. It
536 wouldn't be realised between Peter and Paulo either, if Peter knew that his own prospects
537 were conditioned upon Paulo's needs not being appropriately met by Paul. And, in fact, even
538 Paul should be unhappy about this situation, for he is forced to threaten to withhold
539 productive service in order to provide opportunities for his brother. He shouldn't be put in
540 that unfortunate situation. This makes it impossible for Paul to be fully committed to
541 upholding his own vocational responsibilities. He is thereby alienated from his own values
542 and the community he would serve.

543

544

⁵² For a congruent objection to market opacity, see Albert & Hahnel (1991, 13) and the transparency condition in Hussain 2023. I set aside the larger economic questions of how to operationalise local knowledge and efficiency in decentralised alternatives to markets.

⁵³ Plausibly, the scalable socialist ideal will involve extensive decentralisation and subsidiarity. Cf. Albert & Hahnel *op.cit.*, Hardt & Negri 2017; Devine 2022.

545 **4.3 What should Paul do?**

546

547 We can now return to the question of what Paul should do assuming he *doesn't* leverage.

548 Should he stay or should he go?

549

550 The answer will depend on further concrete details. It is familiar that sometimes solidarity
551 warrants 'reverse pareto' choices: worsening one person's situation without benefitting
552 anyone – apart from the value of solidarity itself. Proverbially, if there is only enough shelter
553 from the storm for one of the two of us, it would manifest solidarity for us to choose to both
554 get wet. That might be a rationale for Paul staying at the restaurant. Both would be worse off
555 without anyone (apart from the restaurant regulars) obviously better off, but there would be
556 more solidarity between the two brothers.

557

558 But Paul might also take the job without benefitting Peter. In Caring Solidarity, both parties
559 know that circumstances, not will, significantly determine the distribution of burdens and
560 benefits – at least, so long as there are enough others who accept the socialist ethos. It is quite
561 consistent with this ideal to embrace an unequal distribution of advantages. In fact, it would
562 honour the ideal to do so. So, it could go either way, depending on the more finely grained
563 details of Paul's circumstances and what Paul works out with all the relevant people.

564

565 But now consider a more extreme case, where life or death is at stake. Suppose that some NHS
566 surgeon had a brother in need of emergency medical assistance, and the surgeon was
567 withholding additional labour because the extra money they could thereby become entitled
568 to would pay for *better* private medical treatment. That might seem reasonable. Anyone else
569 might do the same for a loved one. We are not imagining a community of moral heroes. But
570 also, clearly, this is a non-ideal situation. Ideally, the dependent's needs would be taken care
571 of by some fully satisfactory health care system, and ideally the surgeon would contribute
572 their labour to that same system. But – depending on how bad the prevailing health care is –
573 there might still be a shortcoming in solidarity here, insofar as those not in a position to
574 command enough additional money to pay for such private operations would be less inclined
575 to sympathise with the leverager.⁵⁴

576

577

578

579

580

⁵⁴ Here recall Cohen's example (2009, 36) of the driver whose fancy car is in the garage complaining about taking the bus to someone who can't afford a car.

581 **Section Five: Equality, Moralism, and Coercion**

582

583 **5.1 Marxist Objection to Distributive Equality**

584

585 In relationships between individuals with roughly equivalent abilities, needs, and luck, the
586 distribution of ‘burdens’ and ‘benefits’ in the relationship will be fairly equal. But this fact
587 need not be of any fundamental moral significance. It is an unintended consequence of an
588 ideal mode of engagement between parties who happen to have similar abilities and needs
589 and who happen to have similar outcome luck in life.

590

591 It will more often happen in relationships that one party has greater abilities or greater needs
592 than another, for reasons irrelevant to the friendship itself. For instance, having young
593 children means that one’s social opportunities are highly restricted. One’s unencumbered
594 friends tend to have to work around one’s schedule. There are likely to be many such
595 differences across production as a whole (which as noted includes domestic labour,
596 reproductive labour, etc). In all such cases, circumstance, rather than will, or morality,
597 determines the most ideal division of services. At least within limits – resulting inequalities
598 in serving and being served are not themselves of distinctive significance to the ideal of
599 Caring Solidarity.⁵⁵

600

601 The alternative to distributive equality is, of course, to empower people in accordance with
602 their productive responsibilities.⁵⁶ This alternative fully explains why some will need more
603 resources than others – or more empowerment than others – in a way that familiar
604 conceptions of equality do not. Suppose that you have a rare ability to meet an urgent need,
605 but that doing so would be costlier than average. Perhaps the work requires you to travel
606 without your family (as an international representative) or to work long hours (as a surgeon
607 on call who specialises in lengthy operations) or maintain a high level of fitness (as a mountain
608 rescuer). It seems plausible that you might have a responsibility to do this work, without
609 remuneration (as opposed to empowerment and recognition) for doing so. It is also plausible
610 that the virtuous socialist will want to do this work, it will be a “vital want” of theirs. They
611 should also receive additional recognition for doing so.

612

613 Turning to the ‘consumption’ side: in solidarity, an individual may *prefer* to have fewer
614 material goods, if another distribution would more effectively empower the collaboration to
615 manage relevant values. ‘Expensive tastes,’ assuming they are the residuum of a
616 conscientious process, may well be needs to be taken into account in shared deliberation. But

⁵⁵ Cf. Zhao (2019, 8).

⁵⁶ Cf. Gomberg 2007, chapter 13.

617 if they cannot be met because of the opportunity cost, this will be understood, by their
618 possessor, as perfectly acceptable. If everyone accepts a socialist ethos, everyone will
619 recognise that expensive tastes may not be met under conditions of scarcity.⁵⁷ The possessors
620 of such tastes will receive extra recognition, just like those with unusual talents who need to
621 work harder. Hence, it is also not the case that everyone is to be *equally* empowered to meet
622 needs (whatever exactly that would mean).

623

624 If this sounds demanding, also bear in mind the permissiveness of the socialist ethos:
625 individual responsibilities reflect a wide range of needs, including for personal relationships,
626 productive preferences, and so on. And bear in mind that there is also plenty of variation in
627 the demandingness of jobs in a market system. Lots of people will travel, work long hours,
628 etc. Many of these people are not remunerated in proportion to the personal costs involved
629 (as before, often better jobs are better paid). Many of those who are well remunerated still do
630 not see themselves as doing something worthwhile in their demanding job. But in Caring
631 Solidarity, some people will undertake additional burdens to meet specific needs. In addition
632 to thereby contributing to their own flourishing, these efforts will be recognised and
633 supported by the socialist ethos. This is precisely not true in any invisible hand context.⁵⁸

634

635 Let me end this discussion of equality by reiterating that this socialist approach is not exactly
636 opposed to *an* ideal of relational equality. There is a deep sense in which the recognition of
637 someone as able to suffer, and flourish, as vulnerable and having needs, including the need
638 to belong and to participate, is a kind of *equal* recognition of one another as having needs and
639 abilities, including the need to do what we can to meet one another's needs. But the italicised
640 'equal' in that last sentence isn't doing much substantive work. The substantive terms are
641 more perspicuously given by the ideal of Caring Solidarity, and its associated values of shared
642 responsibility and humility.

643

644 5.2 The Spectre of Moralism

645

646 Let me close this section by discussing two objections. Start with this worry from a referee:

647

⁵⁷ It is, perhaps, a "scholastic question" whether these tastes are not needs, or needs with less weight in socialist deliberation.

⁵⁸ See references on opacity in fn. 52. One further point about the permissiveness of the socialist ideal. Plausibly, we have needs to be in control of our own individual lives to a significant extent. This need partly underwrites the importance of agent-respect as part of the ideal of Caring Solidarity – participation in which is also presumed to be among our needs. Our empirically common need for individual control over our responsibilities would, in socialist reasoning, naturally support a range of robust social institutions. We might even derivatively authorise various liberal institutions, contingently, on this basis. This is another respect in which liberal institutions might prove to be "applied rules of regulation" rather than part of a fundamental moral ideal (cf. Cohen 2008, chapter 7).

648 The spectre of moralism really seems to hang over this. Would we really say that the
649 person who repairs the road for pay or for professional pride, and not explicitly so as
650 to provide the good of convenience to their fellow humans, or the person who teaches
651 our kids brilliantly for sheer enjoyment, or for pay, rather than to promote the good of
652 education, is failing to exercise their moral duties? This is in danger of sounding harsh
653 and moralising (and implausible). And aren't many motivations obscure, or
654 complicated, or mixed?

655 This line of objection raises a number of important issues. The first is that the person who
656 repairs the road for pay or *just* for professional pride – in a well-ordered socialist community
657 – is missing out on an important good. Take professional pride. There is nothing wrong with
658 being proud of one's achievements. But if one is motivated to repair the road just in order to
659 manifest one's own excellence, and not to improve the roads for drivers, then one's end is
660 fetishistic.⁵⁹ Repairing the road *just* for pay is one way to fail to care about the needs at stake
661 in the activity. This might not be worthy of disapprobation, exactly. That will depend on the
662 specifics of the prevailing ethos. It is surely not appropriate to manifest disapproval for every
663 departure from any ideal, not least because the would-be disapprover might lack the relevant
664 standing. Generally, there will be some variation in the norms constituting a socialist ethos
665 concerning the thresholds, stringency, epistemic standards, standing, and significance of
666 suboptimal activity that warrants manifest approval or disapproval. Ultimately, determining
667 these specifics is something to be worked out in socialist collaborations. But still: being
668 motivated just by pay or pride has a significant opportunity cost; even if not egregious, such
669 motivation would clearly fail to live up fully to the socialist ideal.

670
671 Another issue concerns mixed motives. Perhaps being motivated just by pride is problematic,
672 but what's wrong with being a little motivated by pride, and a little by the proper first-order
673 end? This is still a little fetishistic, strictly speaking, but relatively harmless.⁶⁰ The most
674 important issue here is that the primary object of socialist production is social empowerment
675 rather than the promotion of particular action-and-motive combinations. The object is
676 structural: to put people in a position to do what we can to meet our needs together. This is
677 perhaps best considered in light of the alternative, which is a competitive market system that
678 'pits people against one another.'⁶¹ The socialist aspiration is that the people in roles designed
679 to enable them to care about others will indeed care about others, and that they will be

⁵⁹ Cf. Maguire (2022, 9). Similarly, in socialism, workers are not *exchanging* work for recognition; they would not withhold service for recognition any more than for material benefits.

⁶⁰ For congruent discussion in moral theory, see King 2019.

⁶¹ This phrase is from Hussain 2020. Maguire 2020 argues that the exclusionary nature of efficient markets is incompatible with mixed motives. In this sense, socialist production is more motivationally permissive.

680 empowered to do so without having to themselves keep track of their own recognition – as
681 they would in being motivated directly by pride.

682

683 5.3 Coercion?

684

685 Will people be *coerced* to care about others in socialism so understood? Certainly they will be
686 empowered to do so. But it doesn't follow that they will be punished for failing to do so. There
687 are some complex issues about the proper concern of political philosophy in the background
688 here. I will just make five points briefly.⁶²

689

690 Firstly, a conceptual point: the foundational socialist relationship lacks any direct implications
691 concerning coercion. Certainly, this approach rejects the moral division of labour according
692 to which there is a fundamentally distinctive moral standard that authorises coercion.
693 However, it is an open question whether collaborative reasoning in light of the socialist ideal
694 will authorise coercive rules, for instance, to reduce violations of basic human rights.⁶³

695

696 Secondly, concerning recognition. Norms governing approval and disapproval are coercive
697 in their way.⁶⁴ There will be a collaborative basis for working out the terms of specific
698 recognitional norms. These might be more or less strict, depending on the histories and
699 prospects in different communities and contexts; certainly not every instance of falling short
700 of an ideal will warrant disesteem.

701

702 Thirdly, compatible with the socialist ideal, individual control over productive resources can
703 be de-authorised if those resourced are sufficiently underutilised and scarce. Fertile
704 agricultural land, complex scientific equipment, or individual workspace can be reassigned if
705 the current user isn't using it productively. This is a natural implication of collaborative
706 management of productive resources. Bear in mind, most productive resources are currently
707 managed privately, so this will still constitute an overall increase in individual control over
708 productive resources. Furthermore, reassignment would be neither capricious, nor opaque,
709 nor disrespectful. Rather, our empirically common need for stability in our material lives and
710 commitments would, in socialist reasoning, naturally support a range of suitable social
711 institutions. We might derivatively authorise various familiar liberal institutions,
712 contingently and perhaps transitionally, on this basis. In this respect, liberal institutions might

⁶² See also Gomberg 2008, 157.

⁶³ It would be natural here to explain the authority of rights in terms of a collaborative response to basic needs, but I save the details for another time.

⁶⁴ Cohen rejected this, but see Casal 2017.

713 indeed prove to be “applied rules of regulation” rather than part of a fundamental moral
714 ideal.⁶⁵

715

716 Fourthly, there will surely need to be more familiar kinds of coercion, including legal
717 sanctions, in any feasible large-scale politico-economic system, to protect our most important
718 needs and institutions. The specifics of what sorts of coercion are required in which
719 circumstances are also to be worked out collaboratively – as they are currently in high
720 functioning democracies.

721

722 A final point worth making here is that here is that one goal of socialism is to meet the needs
723 of all. So, those who do not wish to care about others, or to collaborate with others, or identify
724 with a shared struggle – their other needs will still be met. There can be plenty of ‘free riders’
725 who are not coerced into working for others. But I conjecture that they will be missing out on
726 a great good in life. It is natural to assume that many people generally do wish to serve others,
727 and would flourish in a system in which all are empowered to do so.

728

729

730 **Conclusion**

731

732 In his history of socialist thought, G.D.H. Cole says this (1953 / 1965, 4):

733

734 Socialism, as the word was first used, meant collective regulation of men’s [sic] affairs
735 on a co-operative basis, with the happiness and welfare of all as the end in view, and
736 with the emphasis not on ‘politics’ but on the production and distribution of wealth
737 and on the strengthening of ‘socialising’ influences in the lifelong education of the
738 citizens in cooperative, as against competitive, patterns of behaviour and social
739 attitudes and beliefs.

740

741 In their different ways, John Rawls and G.A. Cohen reflect a profound shift in left-leaning
742 thought, away from this emphasis on collectivist models of production and associated ideals
743 of solidarity, towards egalitarianism and an emphasis on politics.

744

745 This turn cleared theoretical space for market socialism, a model of political economy in
746 which robust ideals of equality are realised alongside the alleged efficiency and epistemic
747 advantages of markets. It is less commonly observed that this egalitarian turn also deprived

⁶⁵ As Cohen famously argued in 2008, chapter 7.

748 socialist thought of key theoretical resources precisely to criticise market-based management
749 of production.

750

751 When Cohen's egalitarian ethos is interpreted in the light of the challenges based on
752 prerogatives, indirect rules, and complex equality, it would seem to permit a range of
753 unequalising leveraging in cases like the ones that Estlund has described. Even at best,
754 Cohen's view would still allow for egalitarian leveraging. It would exonerate those whose
755 valuable productive efforts would be unusually costly in welfare terms; it would fail to
756 diagnose what is problematic about under-employing those whose abilities are overly
757 abundant; it might even seem to licence an egalitarian policy of earning-to-give. But earn-to-
758 give is an arch-capitalist perspective in political economy.

759

760 I suggest that we start instead with an ideal of Caring Solidarity, in which all are disposed to
761 do what we can to meet relevant needs together with others; the criterion of relevancy is
762 worked out in actual collaborations with like-minded others. The ideal socialist community
763 is one in which we all recognise one another as working together to sustain exactly that
764 community. The socialist ethos supports behaviours that enact this community.

765

766 This ethos would discourage the stance of the rich who would contribute less if taxed more,
767 or the doctors who wanted to work in private practice rather than the national health service,
768 or highly trained people so wealthy that they will not contribute anything unless they receive
769 payment significantly higher than average. These participants not only fail to respond
770 appropriately to their particular responsibilities, to the ways in which they can contribute
771 something to meet relevant needs – they also enact a problematic economic system, one in
772 which individuals arrogate social authority for themselves. To borrow again from Cohen, I
773 think this is analogous to a form of kidnapping, except that what is being leveraged is not the
774 release of the victim but the deployment of one's productive capabilities and the power to
775 enact a better form of community.

776

777 Many have inferred from the failure of Cohen's sophisticated and extensive attack that there
778 isn't much room to the left of a well-rounded version of Rawls. But there are the seeds in
779 Cohen of a more radical critique – whether or not this is one that Cohen could be brought to
780 endorse. This venerable alternative provides a principled objection to leveraging, and more
781 compellingly situates a number of familiar socialist and feminist themes.

782

783 We are left with many questions for further research. This approach offers to rehabilitate the
784 once core socialist ideal of collaborative control and ownership of the means of production.
785 This dovetails with emerging work in participatory economics (Albert & Hahnel 1991), and

786 Community Wealth Building (O'Neill & Guinan 2020); in turn, this work needs new models
787 of ownership and trusteeship of productive resources. Some other questions concern the
788 broadly Deweyan view of democracy as a way of life (Dewey 1951; Muldoon 2018), a related
789 social conception of freedom (cf. see Honneth 2016; though see Marx, MECW 5:78), and
790 generally the prospects for a historicised socialist ideal that centres actual shared struggles
791 (cf. Sangiovanni 2024, 65). Some questions concern the extent and nature of needs, and the
792 role of coercion in socialist society: which of our needs are to be met unconditionally; how
793 extensive is productive empowerment; how stringent will the norms governing esteem be,
794 and how permissive of mixed motives or non-compliance? There are questions about the
795 weak perfectionism in the socialist view, including how tenable, on both sociological and
796 axiological grounds, is the central aspiration that we need to meet the needs of others. There
797 are also questions about the implications of Caring Solidarity as a general moral conception:
798 concerning its suitability as a moral doctrine for individuals and its connection with theories
799 of social justice. Such questions could perhaps reinvigorate an unduly neglected research
800 programme in political philosophy.⁶⁶
801

⁶⁶ Thanks to [many people]

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