

1 **Rescuing Socialism from Equality**

2 Barry Maguire (barrymaguire@gmail.com)

3 Rough Draft. Comments most welcome. Kindly do not quote without permission.

4

5

6

7

Instead of the *conservative* motto, "A fair day's wage for a fair day's work"
they ought to inscribe on the banner the *revolutionary* watchword,
"Abolition of the wages system."
Marx, *Value, Price, and Profit*

8

9

10

11

12

13

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

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

Abstract

22

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

39

40

41

42

43 Section One: The Egalitarian Ethos

44

45 1.1 Cohen's Challenge to the Difference Principle

46

47 The central target of G.A. Cohen's critique of Rawlsian liberalism is the difference principle,
48 understood as a standard regulating the 'basic structure of society' – the central large-scale
49 political and economic institutions that have the most profound effect on peoples' prospects
50 in life. The difference principle permits inequalities that benefit the worst off (that are
51 permitted by the other parts of the principles of justice). Cohen distinguishes strict and lax
52 versions of the difference principle. The strict version permits only inequalities that are
53 necessary irrespective of people's actual motives. The lax version permits inequalities that are
54 necessary given people's actual unwillingness to work harder without an unequalising
55 incentive. It may not be that people want *comparatively* more than others, exactly. The issue is
56 just that they are unwilling to provide socially productive labour unless they are given more
57 than the average remuneration in return.

58

59 Cohen's objection is developed in a number of different ways. But the basic idea seems quite
60 simple. He starts with the claim that egalitarians would accept an egalitarian *ethos*. An ethos
61 is a set of social norms, governing behaviours and reactive attitudes, that have the functional
62 role of holding individual members of some group to certain standards or ideals and to
63 sustain a distinctive form of justificatory community, in which we recognise one another as
64 being held accountable to this standard. An egalitarian ethos would support egalitarian
65 motives in productive contexts. Individuals so motivated would not – Cohen argues –
66 leverage their productive abilities for unequalising remuneration. That is to say they are
67 manifestly willing to make productive contributions if, but only if, they receive unequalising
68 remuneration.

69

70 Cohen illustrated this point as follows. Take some case in which individuals (or
71 representatives of classes) in some distribution D1 of equality-relevant resources have the
72 institutional option to leverage additional productive contributions. Doing so would lead to
73 some unequal D2 in which the worst off were better off than in D1. Cohen argued that in any
74 such scenario, there would also be some possible distribution D3, in which everyone makes
75 their D2 contribution but without leveraging, and hence without the associated inequality.
76 Examples include the rich who would contribute less under 60% tax regime than a 40% tax
77 regime, or a doctor who works in private practice rather than the NHS, or a highly trained
78 person so rich that they will not contribute anything unless they receive payment significantly
79 higher than average. Cohen argues that someone who had internalised a robust egalitarian

80 ethos would not have this motivational profile. Cohen concludes that egalitarians would not
81 accept inequalities that result merely from unwillingness to work for an egalitarian wage as
82 just.

83

84 One of Cohen's premises is that an egalitarian ethos would support egalitarian motives in
85 productive contexts. But what would this amount to in practice? As a first pass, Cohen says
86 (2008, 370):

87

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

90

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

94

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

98

99 As a basis for distinguishing Cohen's version of egalitarianism from Rawls', this
100 characterisation of the egalitarian ethos runs into a number of challenges.

101

102

103 **1.2 First Challenge: Prerogatives and Distributive Inequality**

104

105 This egalitarian ethos, as it bears on individual motivation, would seem to conflict with the
106 reasonable view that it is morally permissible to give extra weight to our own projects and
107 relationships, other things being equal. Consequently, the demand to conform to this
108 egalitarian pattern seems susceptible to the kinds of alienation worries that afflict a range of
109 impartial moral principles.¹ Sensitive to this worry, Cohen insists that his egalitarian ethos
110 could be constrained by a 'personal prerogative': a moral permission, under certain
111 circumstances, to pursue one's own interests rather than to adhere to any strict impartial
112 standard.²

113

114 But this leads to an objection, because such permissions threaten to undermine his critique of
115 Rawlsian leveraging. The trouble is that individual behaviour in accordance with a personal

¹ Cf. Baker and Maguire 2020.

² Cf. Scheffler 1982.

116 prerogative will usually upset any egalitarian pattern. As David Estlund argues (1998), this
117 prerogative (or rather, this package of prerogatives) would licence behaviour that leads to the
118 unequal D2 distribution rather than the equal D3 distribution. (I'll discuss one example in
119 detail later.) But this would seem to undermine Cohen's critique of Rawls.

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.

128

129 This would leave Cohen's challenge standing against behaviour permitted by the lax principle
130 but not the moderate one. It is also important that Cohen allows but does not insist upon
131 prerogatives.³ His main point is that "the prerogative justification of inequality is *different*
132 from the Rawlsian" (2008, 389). These points may stand. But many theorists have inferred that
133 there is nothing much at stake between the two positions at this point – and as we'll see in the
134 third challenge, Rawlsians have a rich array of predistributive resources also at their disposal.

135

136

137 **1.3 Second Challenge: Two Concepts of Rules**

138

139 Cohen is explicit that his egalitarian ethos would not enforce the simple version of equality
140 act consequentialism. Cohen is explicitly not imagining "moral heroes" forswearing
141 additional benefits in isolation.⁴ Rather:

142

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

147

148 Like Rawls, Cohen is doing ideal theory, theorising about a society with high levels of
149 compliance with the relevant principles and an associated egalitarian ethos. Such an ethos
150 would discourage behaviour that is clearly incompatible with an approximately equal

³ Compare Cohen's discussion of Otsuka at 2008, 389.

⁴ Cohen (2008, 53 and 141); cf. Rawls (1971, 64).

151 distribution of labour burdens and benefits across most people.⁵ This is a far more moderate
152 position than equality act consequentialism.

153

154 In a related departure from act consequentialism, Cohen resists the injunction to promote the
155 circumstances of the worst off directly, allowing that (1991, 316; reproduced in 2008, 73):

156

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

161

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

174

175 Cohen's egalitarian ethos lacks the resources to assign responsibilities to individuals in a
176 principled way. This is a major lacuna, and one that is instructive. As we will see, the solidary
177 alternative starts with the ideal of a division of labour, understood as a way of sharing
178 responsibilities.

179

180 **1.4 The Third Challenge: Complex Equality**

181

182 Cohen tends to overemphasize a distributive form of egalitarianism, and to gloss the
183 difference principle as applied to a restricted set of economic goods.

184

185 But Rawls has a more complex position than this. He has a range of theoretical resources with
186 which to constrain leveraging behaviour. A range of economic inequalities would threaten

⁵ 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).

187 the satisfaction of the first principle, the equal basic liberties, for instance (cf. Titelbaum 2008).
188 Substantive economic inequalities would threaten the equal distribution of social bases of self-
189 respect (cf. Rawls 1999, 468; Daniels 2003, 248), the fair value of political liberties (Edmundson
190 2020), and equal access to offices and positions (cf. Arnold 2012). A Rawlsian society would
191 aim to “substantially reduce income dispersion by investing lots in education and training,
192 and by keeping the ownership of other forms of capital widely dispersed” (Joshua Cohen,
193 2002, 384). Rawls is clearly also optimistic about the egalitarian potential of a well-designed
194 and properly competitive labour market (cf. 1999, 269).

195

196 Concerning the Rawlsian ethos, individuals are presumed to have a ‘sense of justice’ that will
197 motivate them to support institutions that preserve the two principles of justice, and hence
198 that will be responsive to this formidable range of challenges to economic inequalities. All
199 this threatens to reduce the gap between the lax and moderate forms of the difference
200 principle – and even between the lax and the strict one, when the strict principle is interpreted
201 in the light of the second and third challenges.

202

203 There may yet be some extensional daylight between Cohen’s egalitarianism and Rawls’. But
204 it is hard to see much of significant principle at stake once we situate the two views in ideal
205 theory, in the context of some reasonable productive rules that might regulate opaquely, and
206 once we pull back from an exaggerated emphasis on the difference principle and distributive
207 equality to consider the complex range of argumentative resources available to Rawls to
208 defend robustly egalitarian norms and institutions.⁶ The effect of this third challenge, in
209 particular, has been to convince wide swathes of otherwise sympathetic political philosophers
210 that there is little significance space to the left of a well-rounded Rawlsianism.

211

212 But Cohen’s writings also contain the seeds of a far more radical alternative. My principle
213 task for the rest of the essay is to present this alternative and argue that it offers a more
214 principled objection to leveraging.

215

216

217 **Section Two: The Ideal of Solidarity**

218

219 Consider the solidary ideal:

220

221 **THE SOLIDARY IDEAL:** We care about one another and care that we care about one
222 another.

⁶ Compare the concession in Cohen (2008, 394).

223

224 This is a simple but extremely rich idea. My development of this idea draws on the ideal of
225 unalienated labour in Karl Marx⁷, on themes in Christianity,⁸ in the larger socialist and
226 municipalist traditions,⁹ in feminist ethics,¹⁰ and in recent ethical theory.¹¹ In recent
227 scholarship, some closely related ideas have been developed by, among others, Daniel
228 Brudney, Paul Gomberg, Jan Kandiyali, Barry Maguire, and Pascal Brixel.¹² There are also
229 strands of support for this ideal in Cohen's own work.¹³

230

231 This approach offers a gloss on the famous slogan – 'from each according to their abilities to
232 each according to their needs' – reading the 'to' in 'from each according to their abilities to
233 each according to their needs' as articulating an *intentional* relationship between agents: one
234 in which an agent is *intrinsically motivated* to do what they can to meet some particular need.
235 (I use 'care' and 'concern' interchangeably to pick out this robust form of intrinsic
236 motivation.¹⁴) In caring about someone, one is disposed to do what one can to meet their
237 needs. This emphasis on intrinsic motives to meet needs is also a central feature of prominent
238 contemporary accounts of Marxian alienation.¹⁵ This *intentional* relationship implicates the
239 notion of recognition, construed as manifest approval by the lights of some salient standard.¹⁶
240 According to this ideal, one recognises oneself as meeting a particular need, and one is
241 recognised by the needy as having met their need, and one recognises the needy person's
242 recognition of one's meeting of their need, and they yours, and so on. Marx refers to this
243 complex intentional engagement as a *completed* relationship.¹⁷

244

⁷ From across the corpus, but I draw especially from 1844a, 1844b, 1875.

⁸ See Sangiovanni (2024, 50 and following), also Cohen especially (2000, 6). See also Bovens 2019. Cabet draws Mark 12:40 and Wisdom of Solomon 6:8–9.

⁹ E.g. Cabet: "Thus, for Jesus, duties are proportional to capacity; each must do, and the more one can do or give, the more one should give or do" (1846, 153). 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). The fractal character of solidarity draws inspiration from work on anarchism (Kropotkin, 2020 [1902]), libertarian municipalism (Bookchin 1991), guild socialism (Cole 1920), and more recently community wealth building (O'Neill & Guinan 2020).

¹⁰ Especially Bubeck 1995; Baier 2010; Kittay (1999, 113)

¹¹ Especially Sangiovanni 2024 and Hurka 2000.

¹² Brudney 1997, 2013; Gomberg 2008; Kandiyali 2020, 2022; Maguire 2020; Brixel 2024.

¹³ Most obviously, the care-based principle of community in Cohen (2009, 34). Regrettably, Cohen does not develop or deploy this principle elsewhere. For terrific discussion of the different notions of community in Cohen's work, see Vrousalis (2015, especially chapter 5). Cohen earlier says (2000, 6) his critique of Rawls was inspired by St. Matthew's Gospel.

¹⁴ It is important to distinguish care/concern from love. Plausible, all (real) love involves care. But we often care about people that we don't love, for instance at work, or in politics. Cf. Brudney 2013.

¹⁵ Especially Brixel *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Recognition involves both 'acknowledgement and affirmation' to use Brudney's terms. This is 'British recognition' by Honneth's taxonomy 2020.

¹⁷ Esp. Marx 1844b; for discussion, see Brudney 1997.

245 One of our most important needs is our need to care about others. This is a central socialist
246 commitment.¹⁸ This is presumed to be true not only of ‘agents’ but ‘patients,’ therefore, in
247 caring about someone, one of the things we care about is their caring about others. This is not
248 the same as caring about the things they care about. A’s caring about B’s caring about C will
249 often manifest as A’s *empowering* B to care about C: improving their access to the means of
250 production they need to care about C. Take a simple case. B cares about teaching C. A cares
251 about B. So, A, in caring about B, cares about B’s teaching C. A is thereby motivated to provide
252 B with the means to teach: free time, access to books, a leather satchel. In teaching, B is, in
253 turn, providing others, C, D, etc., with what they need to meet other needs.

254

255 These would not be goods *imposed* by A upon B. Caring people don’t simply take it upon
256 themselves to rearrange peoples’ lives in ‘benefit-promoting’ ways. Rather – as every
257 schoolchild knows – caring is about sharing, and in particular, about *sharing* concerns.

258

259 This is compatible with differentiation of responsibilities. A’s caring for B doesn’t make it
260 appropriate for A to teach B’s students. This differentiation of responsibilities is worked out
261 in shared reasoning guided by the solidary ideal itself. For the solidary ideal enjoins us to care
262 about one another, but leaves the question of who cares about what and how entirely open.
263 This question is not answered by the abstract ideal but worked out in actual collaborations,
264 at every level of social organisation.

265

266 There is room for disagreement concerning *which* kinds of considerations, in addition to
267 prospective abilities and needs, collaborative management of responsibilities might be
268 properly responsive to.¹⁹ I can be ecumenical about this for current purposes. I will say that
269 caring responsibilities reflect collaborative responsiveness to individuals’ *interests* – in
270 addition to their abilities and needs. These may include preferences for certain relationships
271 and projects, facts about which of their abilities are most satisfying to exercise, facts about
272 which projects have cultural importance to them, which projects cohere with other projects of
273 theirs, or in their community, other sufficiently caring institutions, and so on. These may well

¹⁸ It sounds like an empirical conjecture, but this is not quite right, since ultimately the ambition is to defend a moral theory. It rather has the status of an aspiration for a way of living together – but also one that plausibly fits with what we know about ‘human nature’ (cf. Gomberg 2008). This raises some interesting questions about the metaethical status of solidary socialism. A range of positions are compatible with much of the argument in the main text. My preferred position is that solidary socialism is offered as a constructive invitation to a way of living together, rather than presumed to be true.

¹⁹ Here we can choose from a range of interpretations of unalienated labour. There are monistic (Brixel 2024) and pluralistic (Kandiyali 2020) versions; and more Kantian versions that lay greater emphasis on autonomy (Brixel 2024), or more feminist-inspired versions that lay greater emphasis on vulnerability and dependency (Kittay 2019). There are more substantive versions that lay down quite determinate standards (Kandiyali again), or more formal versions that leave more room for discretionary choice (Brixel again). And there are various different metaethical grounds for these different proposals, from more essentialist claims about humanity, to more Humean claims about robust characteristics, to more Kantian or Hegelian views about reason and moral construction.

274 be other needs of the individual; there is no presumption that our *only* need is to meet the
275 needs of others. The main thing is that these are interests in *ways of caring*.²⁰ All the
276 institutionalisation of care, including both the delegation and the specific nature of individual
277 responsibilities, is worked out by us – in collaborations, in ways that are respectful of our
278 interests, in this sense. There is consequently a great deal of freedom built into this ideal.

279

280 Taken collectively, the activity of caring about one another is the activity of collaborative
281 mutual empowerment to care about one another. The needs we meet are or include our needs
282 to be *able* to meet the needs of others. But that is just to say that our end in this activity is the
283 collective management of our mutual empowerment to care about one another. But the
284 resources, including abilities, that we are managing here are, in other words, the means of
285 production. That is to say that our end in production is the *dynamic* management of our
286 mutual care.²¹ The idea of sharing responsibility as an end in itself transforms our sense of
287 what it is that we should be doing *with* production. Parties who care that they care about one
288 another share a concern to sustain the state of affairs in which they care about one another. In
289 this sense, their concern is partly *reflexive*.

290

291 This ideal applies in every aspect of human organisation – personal, political, economic – and
292 at every scale: familial, municipal, national, international. The solidary ideal is not *most*
293 *fundamentally* an ideal for the basic structure of society, nor for small-scale personal
294 interactions. The solidary ideal is *fractal*: it applies at every scale of human organisation.
295 Rather, different sorts of responsibilities will naturally be collaboratively delegated to
296 different kinds of agencies – e.g. early years child rearing the responsibility of small groups
297 of adults; highway management the responsibility of a larger group. But at every scale,
298 agencies see themselves as upholding suitable caring responsibilities as part of larger
299 collaborations.²²

300

301 This social ideal, in turn, yields a standard of socialist virtue: namely, to live up to the ideal
302 of solidarity. This isn't satisfied by doing a lot to help the poor. It is rather an ideal in which I
303 see myself as a team player with specific delegated caring responsibilities, worked out partly
304 by me in collaborations that reflect our interests, abilities, and needs, as part of an increasingly
305 large set of caring communities.

306

307

²⁰ Compare the different take on 'interests' in Rawls (1999, 248), and discussion in Gomberg (2008, 156).

²¹ One implication is that on this way of theorising about socialism, socialism essentially involves collective management of the means of production, since that is, in way, what socialist production is about.

²² Compare Sangiovanni (2023, 116).

308

309 **Section Three: The Solidary Objection to Leveraging**

310

311 I define leveraging as: being disposed to exchange a productive service only at a rate that
312 gives one discretionary control over additional scarce social resources. These resources are
313 presumed to be fungible, hence might as well be thought of as money. It is *not* presumed that
314 these resources will be employed in the service of one's own material well-being; I'm certainly
315 not assuming egoism. There is a range of different ends that one might hope to serve with
316 these resources, lots of them other-regarding. The central point is that in leveraging one is
317 exchanging a productive contribution for power rather than resources or welfare.

318

319 Cohen objected to leveraging for inegalitarian remuneration. But I think this is just a special
320 case of a far more general concern. I think leveraging for *any* remuneration is problematic. To
321 clarify this, we need a couple more distinctions.

322

323 **3.1 Distinguish Difficulty, Empowerment-Cost, Compensation-Cost**

324

325 Cohen helpfully distinguishes the *cost* of service, which he claims warrants remuneration, and
326 which he distinguishes from the *difficulty* of service, which does not. Writing a large cheque
327 is costly but not difficult; holding your breath for five minutes is difficult but not costly
328 (hopefully). Cohen allows that the difficulty of service doesn't need to be compensated, any
329 more than a mountain climber needs to be accommodated for the steepness of a slope. I agree.
330 He maintains that the costs of service do require compensation. But here I want to add an
331 important further distinction between the costs associated with *provisioning* service and
332 further costs associated with the welfare of the provisioner.

333

334 According to the solidary ideal, individuals should be fully empowered to serve one another.
335 This requires provisioning the material, psychological, and social resources required to
336 provide the service.²³ This is not remuneration, but precisely an empowerment to fulfil some
337 relevant specific responsibility.²⁴ The agent does not have *discretionary* control over these
338 resources, as they would with an ordinary property entitlement. Rather they are entrusted
339 with these resources to serve specific delegated responsibilities.

340

²³ cf. Gomberg 2007; Gourevitch 2022; Chatzidakis 2020. It is an administrative question whether one is given these in advance or one applies for reimbursement.

²⁴ This also provides the basis for associated theory of autonomy, on which more later. And this also provides the basis for an alternative model of property rights (broadly construed): one has entitlements to use resources in the prosecution of one's solidary responsibilities.

341 I think it is important to distinguish between covering the costs associated with honouring
342 one's delegated responsibility and distributing benefits to compensate for negative welfare
343 impacts of service. In the former case but not the latter the resources are to be employed for a
344 specific purpose – the determinate end that is one's responsibility. I will refer to the former as
345 *empowering*. I am restricting the term *compensation* for the latter.²⁵

346

347 With this terminology, we can restate a doctrinal difference between the solidarity approach
348 and the distributive egalitarian approach: I am opposed to any kind of structured
349 compensation for social contributions, whether unequalising or equalising.²⁶

350

351 The very idea of the cost of labour is problematic, given the prospect of work being our “prime
352 want”²⁷ – and ideally part of our flourishing. And this is also what we should be working
353 towards; we should be working towards an arrangement in which everyone's job is among
354 their prime wants – and part of our collective flourishing.

355

356 **3.2 Unalienated Labour versus Drudgery**

357

358 Given that one aim of solidary production is precisely solidary production, we are constantly
359 working to enable people to care and recognise care and collaborate together in their
360 production.

361

362 One implication of this concerns work that doesn't involve care or recognition or
363 collaboration. Consider drudgery: work that doesn't respond to anyone's interests. Work that
364 is simple, boring, tedious, or invisible. This is not the same as bullshit work – work that
365 doesn't meet any needs at all. We will aim to eliminate that completely in the well-ordered
366 solidarity society. But there will still be unpleasant work to be done. Nappies will need to be
367 changed. Minerals will need to be mined. Dishes will need to be washed.

368

369 Some drudgery is part of unalienated labour. Doing scales is boring, but essential to
370 competent musicianship. Changing nappies is unpleasant but intimate and important. But
371 mining, at least some of it, doesn't seem essential to anyone's unalienated labour in the longer
372 term. Given the aim of solidary production, we will work together to try to eliminate

²⁵ In (1993, 180-190), Rawls offers the primary goods as a gloss on relevant needs (see also Daniels, 2003, 242). This shares with the proposal to come an emphasis on empowerments as opposed to welfare-promotions; however primary goods are *all-purpose* means, whereas solidary empowerments are *responsibility-specific*. For instance, it is not true that the virtuous socialist prefers greater empowerment to less; the ideal is empowerment fitting to the responsibility in question. This relates to a distinction between two conceptions of autonomy, cf. Brixel *op.cit.*

²⁶ Remuneration isn't compensation, since there might be remuneration without negative impacts on welfare. But both involve the exchange of consideration that is unrelated to the end of the act of service.

²⁷ Cf. Marx, 1875.

373 drudgery that isn't a constitutive part of fulfilling activity. Part of this, taking a more dynamic
374 perspective, is a push to develop technologies that can do more of our dirty work for us.²⁸

375

376 **3.3 Remuneration versus Recognition**

377

378 The socialist ethos would not distribute recognition – self-esteem and social esteem – equally,
379 but rather in response to social contributions. There are lots of norms of this kind already. To
380 take one example, a friend of my Dad's cut his hours working for the NHS to do private
381 surgery one day a week for more money to buy an extension for his house. His friends found
382 out and he had to buy everyone in the bar drinks all night.²⁹

383

384 Recognition is not a substitute for remuneration. The *pursuit* of esteem (or avoidance of
385 disesteem) would be a kind of fetish. Inasmuch as the socialist ethos involves the right kind
386 of motivation, the virtuous socialist will lack a strong regard for esteem – they will happily
387 emphasize the role of others, downplay their own work. Certainly, they won't give weight to
388 a less worthwhile activity that will give the more esteem.

389

390 But we can also legitimately take pleasure in being productive, in helping one another, in
391 sustaining a community together. Recognition is the means by which we identify ourselves
392 and one another as sharing responsibilities, and sharing our lives. The pursuit of individual
393 status in capitalism is a distortion of this perfectly reasonable part of our psychology.

394

395 To summarise: the ideal of solidarity would support empowerment and recognition but not
396 compensation or remuneration; solidary production would pursue unalienated labour and
397 the elimination of inessential drudgery. Let me now use this characterisation of the ideal to
398 provide an alternative diagnosis of the problem with leveraging in one of the most
399 challenging cases for Cohen's liberal egalitarianism.

400

401

402 **Section Four: Arguments from Categoricity and Arrogation**

403

404 Consider this case from Dave Estlund:

405

406 *Paul and his brother Peter.* They have continued as adults to live in their family home,
407 in order to keep the cherished place in the family. Paul's abilities are more marketable
408 than Peter's, and so while Paul earns about \$30,000 a year running a small restaurant

²⁸ Cf. Kandiyali 2020

²⁹ For extensive discussion of such norms, see Gomberg 2008.

409 (work he enjoys), Peter runs the household (work he finds tolerable but burdensome).
410 Paul, already reasonably satisfied, has always dreamed of being a doctor in a poor
411 area. He does not care to make more money, except for the fact it would take quite a
412 bit more money to allow him to become a doctor and to allow Peter to better fulfil his
413 aspirations to be a musician while continuing to manage the household. With this in
414 mind he is not willing to become a doctor for less than \$100,000 per year. This amount
415 is much more than is required to maintain the present quality of life of him and his
416 brother when he is a doctor (which would have its burdens), but nothing less would
417 allow Peter to pursue his project too. Given Paul's motives, the least well off will not
418 benefit from his talents unless he is paid \$100,000, and this would lead to economic
419 inequality.

420

421 Now, it is awfully nice of Paul to be willing to improve his professional prospects only if Peter
422 does. I'm all for local fraternity. But it cannot involve neglect of collaboratively assigned
423 duties, or arrogation of collaborative assignment authority. For these are not cases of finding
424 manna and having to decide whether to feed it to the poorest or one's own hungry children.
425 An impartial requirement in such cases might indeed be problematic. But here the manna did
426 not fall from heaven: Paul secured the relevant entitlements by leveraging his marketisable
427 abilities. This is what I find problematic. I do not think that Paul can permissibly leverage his
428 marketisable abilities to help Peter. He can't threaten to fail to fulfil his own productive
429 responsibilities in order to even things out a bit with Peter. He shouldn't take this way of
430 realising fraternity to be among his moral options.

431

432 I want to develop two more specific lines of concern.

433

434 (1) The **Categoricity** argument: Paul has a problematic attitude towards his delegated
435 responsibilities. Put simply, Paul should serve out of concern; serving should be a
436 prime want of his. He should not condition his willingness to serve on some
437 independent advantage that will accrue to him. This additional advantage will be
438 social power rather than a welfare boost necessarily, but the structure of the point is
439 the same.

440

441 (2) The **Arrogation** argument. Paul fails to respect collaborative authority to manage the
442 relevant socially significant resources, in this case Paul's abilities to be a doctor. I
443 don't think the collaboration should have complete authority over Paul's abilities.
444 But I don't think Paul should have complete authority over them, in such a way as
445 to be able to leverage his social contribution. I don't think Peter should want this
446 either.

447

448 **4.1 The Categoricity Argument**

449

450 The objection to leveraging is not based on an egalitarian standard. It is not that some people
451 have more leverage than others, or that some people use their leverage to get more than
452 others.³⁰ No-one should be leveraging their productive responsibilities. Consider the positive
453 alternative.

454

455 In the solidary ideal, individuals have delegated responsibilities to make productive
456 contributions. It doesn't quite follow that some specific person A has a responsibility to
457 contribute some specific contribution R, where that is some finely grained action such as
458 fixing these teeth or building this wall or cutting this hair or staying in that cubicle past five
459 o'clock.

460

461 There is a general question here about the conditions under which agencies have particular
462 responsibilities, and about the conditions under which collaborations assign responsibilities
463 when they have the responsibility to do so. The answer is simple, though the details are
464 complex: this is worked out in *actual collaborations*, large and small, by appeal to differential
465 abilities, needs, and interests, and the socialist ethos. In Scheffler's terms (2010, 107), although
466 there is no division of moral labour, since the same standard applies at every context and
467 scale, there is an extensive institutional division of labour, with different kinds of agency
468 responsible for different kinds of abilities and needs. The solidary ideal is a *practical ideal*,
469 something to which we can and should aspire in practical reasoning together. An attractive
470 implication noted earlier is that there is a limit to how much we can stipulate in the abstract.

471

472 For the sake of argument, we can focus on an easy case, namely rich, fulfilled people like Paul.
473 Paul's work, either way, would be far more satisfying than the work of many of those with
474 fewer options in the labour market. At least some of the work for which Paul would be paid
475 an above average wage is plausibly part of a reasonable delegation of responsibilities as part
476 of the ideal of collaborative care.

477

478 Of course, if Paul really hated being a doctor, then, assuming that doctors were not unusually
479 scarce, it would be perfectly compatible with the solidary ethos for him to commit to some
480 other kind of social contribution. There is this freedom in the solidary ideal to assume
481 responsibilities (in collaborations) in ways that are responsive to interests. But it is stipulated
482 in the example that being a doctor would fit extremely well with Paul's interests. By

³⁰ Neither is the issue that some people's ability to leverage is not responsive to *genuinely voluntary* choices (cf. Seanna Shiffrin's variation on Cohen's objection 2010).

483 hypothesis, his reluctance is based just on his desire to leverage his abilities to help his brother.
484 This conditional willingness not to fulfil his reasonable delegated responsibility conflicts with
485 the solidary ideal. To put the point in more familiar language, if Paul really cared about
486 doctoring, and about playing his part in a caring division of labour, he would be committed
487 to doctoring. His willingness to not doctor to help his brother is alienating him from this
488 vocational commitment.

489

490 To what extent does this line of argument depend on Paul's doctoring skills being part of the
491 social product (i.e. resulting from training)? What if someone's abilities were like manna from
492 heaven? The same ethos would still apply. The virtuous socialist will be delighted that they
493 have abilities that can make a significant contribution. They should be disposed to do what
494 they can with these abilities to meet relevant needs, irrespective of this fact about their genesis.
495 The main difference is that when one refuses to employ abilities that one has been empowered
496 with, one is *additionally* failing to complete *previous* caring activity. It is natural to say that Paul
497 has responsibilities to those who participated in this activity, too: to honour these
498 empowerments by employing them in accordance with the solidary ethos. This is a bit like a
499 virtuoso being given a piano and burning it for fun. Or rather, being given a piano and
500 insisting that they will play it only if their brother is given a bicycle.

501

502 I'm not saying this is terrible behaviour, exactly. But I do think there is something deeply
503 suboptimal here. This kind of leveraging would be problematic in a context of general
504 compliance with such a solidary ethos – just as cutting back on days working for the public
505 health to earn more money in private practice could be suitably chastised by a solidary ethos.
506 It is part of the point of such an ethos to play exactly this sort of role of intermediating between
507 individual motivations and ideal social activity.

508

509 It may help to motivate this further to reply to an objection from *supererogation*. It is natural
510 to think that one's productive responsibility to meet the needs of others only goes so far. This
511 thought is part of the insight behind the prerogative approach. It is natural to think that
512 providing service beyond that point is supererogatory. Hence, even without knowing where
513 that point is, can't we say of possible acts of service beyond that point that it would be
514 permissible to leverage them for remuneration? I think not. Even if it is supererogatory for
515 you to provide some service, it doesn't follow that it is permissible for you to leverage that
516 service rather than provide it without conditions. For example, suppose you are the only
517 doctor in in a rural area. There might be some reasonable amount of burden beyond which
518 more doctoring (that week) would be supererogatory. Archie's gouty toe could wait until
519 Monday. But still, it would not be virtuous to make Archie the following offer: that you'll stop
520 by today if and only if he cuts your grass. The more general thought is this: there are some

521 care-based responsibilities the fulfilment of which requires one to be motivated by the right
522 kinds of reasons for the relevant activities in the relevant contexts - by health in doctoring, by
523 convenience in fixing roads, by education in teaching. Motivation by the wrong kinds of
524 reasons relative to that context - reasons that are irrelevant to the purpose of the role in such
525 a context - would be unvirtuous. And this is true even if one isn't required to perform this
526 particular action at all.

527

528 There is a larger issue here about the deontic versus aretaic structure of the moral theories of
529 liberalism and socialism. Supererogation is a central tenet of a broadly liberal moral theory,
530 structured around requirements, permissions, and prohibitions. This is designed to leave
531 room for reasonable disagreement about conceptions of the good. The solidary approach is a
532 morality of ideals rather than limits. There is always more solidarity to aspire to, but that's
533 not something to be regretted.

534

535 This is not to say that particular solidary responsibilities are unconditional. Of course,
536 particular responsibilities are conditional on their place within actual solidary collaborations
537 – in which groups small and large reason together, in ways that aspire to honour the solidary
538 ideal, to distribute responsibilities in ways that are responsive to our abilities, needs, and
539 interests. But an individual's responsibilities are also conditional upon their co-satisfaction
540 with one's other responsibilities; you are a teacher but also a parent, or an engineer and
541 organiser in your local consumer counsel.³¹ It is no part of the solidary ideal that one must
542 prioritise professional responsibilities over citizenly or domestic or reproductive
543 responsibilities. These are institutional rather than moral distinctions. It is a question for
544 collaborative management what *bundles* of responsibilities individuals will have – bearing in
545 mind these will likely include some responsibilities to undertake their fair share of drudgery,
546 too.³²

547

548 **4.2 The Arrogation Argument**

549

550 The categoricity argument emphasizes the leverager's problematically conditional attitude
551 towards their responsibilities. A further problem concerns the arrogation of social power.
552 Here the problem is not, in the first instance, with the moral status of any individual's
553 behaviour. The deeper problem is with the structures that legitimate this kind of leveraging,
554 and, derivatively, with individual *enactment* of this problematic system.³³ Paul should not

³¹ Cf. Albert (2003, 93-4).

³² It is natural to assume that our productive responsibilities, taken broadly to include reproductive labour, domestic labour, and drudgery, have greater weight than the satisfaction of other interests, e.g. purely recreational or aesthetic interests. There is no space here to consider this relationship in more detail.

³³ Cohen discusses *enactment* in the context of gender- and family-based coercion (2008, 135).

555 consider the options made available by this problematic structure to be among his *moral*
556 *options*. This is analogous to how, in the normal run of things, one shouldn't be willing to burn
557 one's piano for heat.

558

559 In leveraging, Paul is insisting upon a conditional relationship between two activities: (1) his
560 doing what he can to meet relevant needs, and (2) a certain amount of discretionary power
561 over scarce resources (in the form of money). This discretionary power would give Paul the
562 authority to choose for himself what to do with these resources, if anything. As it happens, he
563 is going to spend the money to improve Peter's prospects, but that fact isn't grounded in the
564 exchange itself. It is compatible with this exchange – doctoring for £100,000 – that Paul
565 changes his mind and spends his money some other way. The normative infrastructure of a
566 labour market system renders it legitimate for Paul to insist upon this conditional connection
567 between otherwise unrelated production (1) and capital (2).

568

569 I submit that the collaborative management of means of production is incompatible with
570 individual leveraging. In *collaborative* management a minimum of *two* people, and ideally
571 everyone, has some shared involvement in the process of assigning productive
572 responsibilities. By contrast, leveraging presumes that an *individual* has authority themselves
573 to assign productive responsibilities at their own discretion. I don't think individuals should
574 take themselves to have the right to decide entirely by themselves how their productive
575 resources are to be employed. This is a way to fail to *share* in the management of these
576 productive resources. It is also a way to fail to see how these productive resources are already
577 being shared; for people's abilities are not like manna; they are provided by and enabled by
578 larger patterns of productive organisation. The language of *arrogation* seems well-suited to
579 characterise the presumption of authority by an individual to control the allocation of social
580 resources in ways that should – by the lights of the solidary ideal – be managed collectively.

581

582 The ideal of solidarity requires that individuals be empowered to serve one another. This is
583 also the goal given to individuals, precisely to empower service. This empowerment requires
584 the provision of suitable material and social resources.³⁴ I submit that it is not plausible that
585 the assignment of social resources should be managed (a) by random individuals, (b) at their
586 discretion, (c) on the basis of the resources they command through leveraging their
587 marketisable abilities. This is a dreadful way to distribute responsibilities. At best, market
588 remuneration is an extremely lumpy and opaque distribution of these opportunities.³⁵

³⁴ cf. Gomberg 2009, Chatzidakis 2020.

³⁵ 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 question of whether we might be stuck with markets, or whether decentralised non-market alternatives might approximate the epistemic and efficiency functions of markets.

589

590 It is natural to think that the distribution of productive responsibilities should be managed by
591 a larger group, or rather, in the context of increasingly larger groups. And this is
592 recommended by the injunction to collaborate. This may seem unobvious, since the ideal of
593 solidarity is neutral on scale. The ideal doesn't entail that the empowerment of unalienated
594 labour should be handled by the state, for instance, for it doesn't say anything about the state
595 as such. But it does say that *all* needs should be managed collaboratively. In the context of an
596 open-ended collaboration among any relevant parties, one question will be which agency is
597 most well suited, all things considered, to managing the distribution of opportunities for
598 unalienated labour. And at this point, given considerations such as (a) to (c) above, it is very
599 plausible that some larger agential entity should have this responsibility. This is pretty
600 familiar from other fundamental expectations, such as basic rights, that we require to be
601 universally in place.³⁶

602

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

610

611 Consider now a point about 'justificatory community.' According to the ideal of solidarity
612 between any two people there is manifest commitment to living in solidarity together. That is
613 not realised here between Paul and Paulo. It wouldn't be realised between Peter and Paulo
614 either, if Peter knew this his own prospects were conditioned upon Paulo's needs not being
615 appropriately met by Paul. And, in fact, even Paul should be unhappy about this situation,
616 for he is forced to threaten to withhold productive service in order to provide opportunities
617 for his brother. He shouldn't be put in that unfortunate situation. This makes it impossible for
618 Paul to be fully committed to upholding his vocational responsibilities. He is thereby
619 alienated from his own values and the community he would serve.

620

621 Paul's leveraging is analogous in one respect to a form of kidnapping. What is being
622 inappropriately leveraged is not the release of the victim but Paul's productive capabilities.

³⁶ Surely some such decisions, on behalf of this larger authority, are made by individuals *qua* office holders in this larger collaboration. But this is different from those same individuals making decisions in an entirely private capacity – as they do in choosing to contribute only for special remuneration. This point is familiar in group reasoning literature. There is an important source of support here for the key socialist ideal of collective management of the means of production.

623 We can imagine a kidnapper intending to use the proceeds to help their own brother. This
624 would not exonerate the kidnapper; neither does Paul's anticipated local fraternity exonerate
625 his leveraging.

626

627 **4.3 What should Paul do?**

628

629 We can now return to the question of what Paul should do assuming he *doesn't* leverage.
630 Should he stay or should he go? It would better fit Paul's interests to work as a rural doctor
631 even if not for unequalising remuneration. Society may have invested resources in training
632 him. But it would better fit his relationship with his brother to stay in his own job in the small
633 restaurant. Perhaps he also has commitments to the diners in his area.

634

635 I think the answer will depend on the specifics of the situation. It is familiar that sometimes
636 solidarity warrants 'reverse pareto' choices: worsening one person's situation without
637 benefitting anyone – apart from the value of solidarity itself. Proverbially, if there is only
638 enough shelter from the storm for one of the two of us, it would manifest solidarity for us to
639 choose to both get wet. That might be a rationale for Paul staying at the restaurant. Both would
640 be worse off without anyone (apart from the restaurant regulars) obviously better off, but
641 there would be more solidarity between the two brothers.

642

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

649

650 But now consider a more extreme case, where we weaken the condition that there isn't
651 anything life or death at stake. Suppose that some NHS surgeon had a brother in need of
652 emergency medical assistance, and the surgeon was withholding additional labour because
653 the extra money they could thereby become entitled to would pay for their brother's medical
654 treatment. That might seem reasonable. Anyone else would do what they could for a
655 dependent in similar circumstances. But notice that this is a non-ideal situation, in two
656 respects. Firstly, ideally, the dependent's needs would be taken care of by some larger
657 division of labour, and hence wouldn't be dependent on the surgeon. The dependent's needs
658 should be covered by a community health system of some kind (and the surgeon should be
659 contributing their labour to that same system).

660

661 Also ideally, even if one is working in a non-ideal situation, one still acts as though one is in
662 an ideal situation, thereby enacting the ideal structure. There are limits to this posture, of
663 course. These limits can be given by solidary-preserving social norms. But there would still
664 be a shortcoming in solidarity here, insofar as those not in a position to command enough
665 additional money to pay for such operations would not be able to sympathise. Just as in the
666 case of Paul and Paulo, this case would violate a sensible solidary ethos between those who
667 *are* living up to the solidary ethos.

668

669

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

671

672 **5.1 Marx's Objection to Distributive Equality**

673

674 The relational ideal of solidarity has indirect implications for distribution. The difference with
675 distributive egalitarianism can be highlighted by thinking about the role of brute luck. In
676 solidary interactions, the distribution of benefits and burdens will be decided significantly by
677 circumstance rather than by will.³⁷ In relationships between individuals with roughly
678 equivalent abilities, needs, and luck, the distribution of 'burdens' and 'benefits' in the
679 relationship will be fairly equal. But this fact need not be of any ethical significance. It is an
680 unintended consequence of an ideal mode of engagement between parties who happen to
681 have similar abilities and needs and who happen to have similar outcome luck in life.

682

683 It will often happen in relationships that one party has greater abilities or greater needs than
684 another, for reasons irrelevant to the friendship itself.³⁸ For instance, having young children
685 means that one's social opportunities are highly restricted. One's unencumbered friends tend
686 to have to work around one's schedule. There are likely to be many such differences across
687 production as a whole, taken to include domestic labour, reproductive labour, caring labour,
688 productive labour, etc. In all such cases, circumstance, rather than will, or morality,
689 determines the distribution of services. At least within limits – resulting inequalities in serving
690 and being served are not themselves of distinctive significance to the ideal of solidarity.³⁹

691

692 The alternative is to empower people in accordance with their *productive* responsibilities.⁴⁰
693 This alternative fully explains why some will need more resources than others, in a way that
694 familiar conceptions of equality do not. Suppose that you have a rare ability to meet an urgent
695 need, but that your doing so would be costlier than average. Perhaps the work requires you

³⁷ See also Zhao *op.cit.*

³⁸ Compare Marx's arguments for the higher phase of communism in his 1875.

³⁹ Cf. Zhao (2019, 8).

⁴⁰ Cf. Gomberg 2007, chapter 13.

696 to travel without your family (as an international representative) or to work long hours (as a
697 surgeon on call who specialises in lengthy operations) or maintain a high level of fitness (as a
698 mountain rescuer). It seems plausible that you might have a responsibility to do this work,
699 without special remuneration (as opposed to empowerment) for doing so.⁴¹ It is also plausible
700 that the virtuous socialist will want to do this work, it will be a “prime want” of theirs. They
701 should also receive additional recognition for doing so – self-esteem and social esteem.

702

703 Turning to the ‘consumption’ side: in solidarity, an individual may *prefer* to have fewer
704 material goods, if another distribution would more effectively empower the collective to
705 manage relevant values. Expensive tastes, assuming they are the residuum of a conscientious
706 process, are needs like any other. But if they cannot be met because of the opportunity cost,
707 this will be understood, by their possessor, as perfectly acceptable. If everyone accepts a
708 solidary ethos, everyone will recognise that expensive needs may not be met under conditions
709 of scarcity. The possessors of such unmet needs will receive extra recognition, just like those
710 with unusual talents who need (and want) to work harder.⁴²

711

712 One should not want a faster operation on a national health service just in virtue of one’s sex
713 or skin colour, for instance. Likewise, I don’t think the virtuous socialist would want some
714 kind of special exemption or special consideration from the collaborative management of
715 productive resources on the grounds of their ‘marketisable activities’ or anything else. On the
716 contrary, they would want additional responsibilities if they had additional contributory
717 abilities.

718

719 If this sounds demanding, bear in mind that solidary labour reflects individual interests, and
720 meets basic needs. Plus there is plenty of variation in the demandingness of jobs now. Lots of
721 people travel, work long hours, etc. Many of these people are not properly remunerated.
722 Many of those who are well remunerated still do not see themselves as doing something
723 worthwhile in their demanding job. In forgoing satisfactions or undertaking additional
724 burdens in solidary production, oneself and others will recognise that they are doing so to
725 meet needs. This is precisely not true in any invisible hand context.⁴³

726

727 Let me end this discussion of equality by reiterating that the solidary approach is not exactly
728 opposed to relational equality. There is a deep sense in which the recognition of someone as
729 able to suffer, and flourish, as vulnerable and having needs, including the need to belong and
730 to participate, is a kind of *equal* recognition of our humanity: as having needs and abilities,

⁴¹ We might alternatively attempt to divide the relevant tasks between ourselves in different ways. Set this aside for now.

⁴² Hence it is not the case that everyone ought to be *equally* empowered to meet needs.

⁴³ See references on opacity in fn. 35.

731 including the need to do what we can to meet one another's needs.⁴⁴ But the italicised 'equal'
732 in that last sentence isn't doing much substantive work. The substantive terms are more
733 perspicuously given by the ideal of solidarity.

734

735 5.2 Moralism and Coercion

736

737 Disesteeming people who fail to be ideally motivated might seem objectionably moralistic.
738 Consider this objection from a referee:

739

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

747 This line of objection raises a number of important issues. The first is that the person who
748 repairs the road for pay or *just* for professional pride is alienated, in my sense. Take
749 professional pride. There is nothing wrong with being proud of one's achievements. But if
750 one is motivated just to repair the road in order to manifest one's own excellence, and not to
751 improve the roads for drivers, then one's end is fetishistic.⁴⁵ More straightforwardly, repairing
752 the road just for pay is a way to fail to care about the needs at stake in the activity. This might
753 not be worthy of disapprobation, exactly. That will depend on the specifics of the prevailing
754 ethos. It is a commonplace that it is not appropriate to manifest disapproval for every
755 departure from any ideal, not least because the would-be disapprover might lack the standing
756 to do so themselves. Generally, there will be some variation in the norms constituting a
757 socialist ethos concerning the thresholds, stringency, epistemic standards, standing, and
758 significance of suboptimal activity that warrants manifest approval or disapproval.
759 Ultimately, determining these specifics is something to be worked out in solidary
760 collaborations. But still: being motivated just by pay or pride is a way of being alienated; even
761 if not egregious, such motivation would clearly fail to live up fully to the socialist ideal.

762

763 Another issue concerns mixed motives. Perhaps being motivated just by pride is problematic,
764 but what's wrong with being a little motivated by pride, and a little by the proper first-order
765 end? This is still a little fetishistic, strictly speaking, but relatively harmless. The most

⁴⁴ Cf. Wiggins on the kind of recognition at the heart of solidarity 2009.

⁴⁵ Cf. Maguire (2022, 9).

766 important issue here is that the primary object of solidary production is social empowerment
767 rather than the promotion of particular action-and-motive combinations. The object is
768 structural: to put people in a position to flourish together. This is perhaps best considered in
769 light of the alternative, which is a competitive market system that ‘pits people against one
770 another.’⁴⁶ The solidary aspiration is that the people in roles designed to enable them to care
771 about others will indeed care about others, and that they will be empowered to do so without
772 having to themselves keep track of their own recognition – as they would in being motivated
773 directly by pride.

774

775 This also raises questions about legitimate coercion in a solidary community. Will people be
776 *forced* to care about others in solidary society? Certainly they will be empowered to do so. The
777 ethos will support their doing so. But it doesn’t follow that they will be punished for failing
778 to do so. These questions raise complex issues too large to be satisfactorily addressed here. I
779 will make three suggestive points.⁴⁷ Firstly, as mentioned, norms governing approval and
780 disapproval are coercive in their way. There will be a collaborative basis for specific
781 recognitional norms. These might be more or less strict, depending on the interests of different
782 communities and contexts; certainly not every instance of falling short of an ideal will warrant
783 disesteem. Secondly, there will surely need to be more familiar kinds of coercion – legal
784 sanctions – in any feasible large-scale politico-economic system, to protect our most important
785 needs and institutions. The specifics of what sorts of coercion are required in which
786 circumstances are also to be worked out collaboratively. Thirdly, a pragmatic approach to
787 legitimate coercion is to be expected in a morality that is fundamentally aretaic rather than
788 deontic. The fundamental ideals provide the basis for a complex range of specific institutions
789 that will often have deontic rules. The authority of these rules ultimately derives from their
790 place within relationships of solidarity. The solidary approach rejects any fundamental moral
791 division of labour. There is no distinctive moral standard whose authority overlaps with a
792 distinctively justified form of coercion. This is another respect in which on the solidary
793 approach the personal is political: the same moral ideal applies at every scale.

794

795

796 **Conclusion**

797

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

799

⁴⁶ See Hussain 2020. Maguire 2020 argues that the exclusionary nature of efficient markets is incompatible with mixed motives. In this sense, solidary production is more motivationally permissive.

⁴⁷ See also Cohen 1983.

800 Socialism, as the word was first used, meant collective regulation of men's (sic) affairs
801 on a co-operative basis, with the happiness and welfare of all as the end in view, and
802 with the emphasis not on 'politics' but on the production and distribution of wealth
803 and on the strengthening of 'socialising' influences in the lifelong education of the
804 citizens in cooperative, as against competitive, patterns of behaviour and social
805 attitudes and beliefs.

806

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

810

811 This turn cleared theoretical space for market socialism, a model of political economy in
812 which robust ideals of equality are realised alongside the alleged efficiency and epistemic
813 advantages of markets. It is less commonly observed that this egalitarian turn also deprived
814 socialist thought of key theoretical resources precisely to criticise market-based management
815 of production.

816

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

825

826 I have suggested that we start instead with an ideal of solidarity, building up from the famous
827 slogan: from each according to their abilities to each according to their needs. This specifies
828 an ideal for collectives, but it also specifies a condition of the will of the virtuous socialist
829 agent. They are disposed to do what they can to meet relevant needs together with others; the
830 criterion of relevancy is something worked out in actual collaborations with like-minded
831 others. The ideal socialist community is one in which we all recognise one another as working
832 together to sustain exactly this form of community. The socialist ethos is one that supports
833 behaviours that enact this community.

834

835 This ethos would discourage the stance of the rich who would contribute less if taxed more,
836 or the doctors who wanted to work in private practice rather than the national health service,
837 or a highly trained people so wealthy that they will not contribute anything unless they

838 receive payment significantly higher than average. These participants not only fail to respond
839 appropriately to their particular responsibilities, to the ways in which they can contribute
840 something to meet relevant needs – they also enact a problematic economic system, one in
841 which individuals arrogate social authority for themselves. To borrow again from Cohen, I
842 think this is analogous to a form of kidnapping, except that what is being leveraged is not the
843 release of the victim but the deployment of one’s productive capabilities and the power to
844 enact a better form of community.

845

846 Many have inferred from the failure of Cohen’s grand and comprehensive attack that there
847 isn’t much room to the left of a well-rounded version of Rawls. But there are the seeds in
848 Cohen of a more radical critique – whether or not this is one that Cohen could be brought to
849 endorse. This is an alternative with a venerable heritage that provides a principled objection
850 to leveraging, and more compelling situates a number of familiar socialist and feminist
851 themes, starting with the importance of a collective ideal of unalienated production. This
852 alternative raises many questions for further research. Some concern the extent and nature of
853 coercion in solidary society: which our needs are to be met unconditionally; how extensive is
854 productive empowerment; how should we theorise about interests; how stringent will the
855 norms governing esteem be, and how permissive of mixed motives or non-compliance. Some
856 questions concern the notion of autonomy as collaborative empowerment; there is clearly a
857 doctrinal conflict here with Cohen’s more permissive conception of freedom. There are
858 questions about the perfectionism in the solidary view, including how tenable, on both
859 sociological and axiological grounds, is the central aspiration that we need to meet the needs
860 of others. There are also questions about the implications of the fractal nature of solidarity,
861 concerning its suitability as a moral theory for individuals, and its support for forms of
862 decentralisation and subsidiarity in political economy. Such questions could perhaps
863 reinvigorate an unduly neglected research programme in political philosophy.⁴⁸

864

⁴⁸ Thanks to [many people]

865 **Works Cited**

- 866
867 Albert, M. 1993. *Parecon*, Verso Books.
868
869 Albert, M. & Hahnel R. 1991. *The Political Economy of Participatory Economics*. Princeton UP.
870
871 Baker, C. & Maguire, B. 2020 'The Alienation Objection to Consequentialism.' In *Oxford*
872 *Handbook of Consequentialism*.
873
874 Baier, A. 2010. *Reflections on How We Live*. OUP.
875
876 Blanc, L. 1849a. *Le Catéchisme des Socialistes*. Paris: Au bureau du Nouveau Monde.
877
878 Bookchin, M. 1991. 'Libertarian Municipalism:An Overview.' *Social Ecology Publicaions*
879
880 Bovens, L. & Lutz, A. 2019. 'From Each According to Ability, To Each According to Needs.'
881 *History of Political Economy*.
882
883 Brixel, P. 2024. 'The Unity of Marx's Concept of Alienated Labor.' *The Philosophical Review*.
884
885 Brudney, D. 2013. 'The Young Marx and the Middle Aged Rawls.' In *A Companion to Rawls*.
886 *Wiley-Blackwell*.
887
888 Brudney, D. 1997. 'Community and Completion.' In *Essays for John Rawls*, CUP.
889
890 Bubeck, D. 1995. *Care, Gender, and Justice*. OUP.
891
892 Cabet, E. 1846. *Le vrai Christianisme suivant Jésus-Christ*. Paris: Au bureau du Populaire.
893
894 Chatzidakis et al. 2020. *The Care Manifesto*. Verso Books.
895
896 Cohen, G.A. 1983. 'On the structure of proletarian unfreedom.' *Philosophy & Public Affairs*.
897
898 Cohen, G.A. 1991. *Incentives, Inequality, and Community*. Tanner Lectures.
899
900 Cohen, G.A. 2008. *Rescuing Justice and Equality*. Harvard University Press.
901
902 Cohen, G.A. 2009. *Why Not Socialism*. Princeton University Press.
903
904 Cohen, J. 2002. 'Taking People As They Are.' *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 30, no. 4.
905
906 Cole, GHD. 1920. *Guild Socialism*. Frederick A. Stokes.
907
908 Daniels, N. 2003. 'Democratic Equality.' In *Cambridge Companion to Rawls*.
909
910 Estlund, D. 1998. 'Liberalism, Equality, and Fraternity in Cohen's Critique of Rawls.' *The*
911 *Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 6, no. 1.
912
913 Gomberg, P. 2008. *How to make opportunity equal*. Blackwell Books.
914
915 Gourevitch, A. 2022. 'Post-Work Socialism?' *Catalyst*, vol. 6, no. 2.
916
917 Honneth, A. 2020. *Recognition*. CUP.
918
919 Hurka, T. 2000. *Virtue, Vice, & Value*. OUP.
920
921 Hussain, W. 2020. 'Pitting People Against One Another.' *Philosophy & Public Affairs*.

922
923 Hussain, W. 2023. *Living with the Invisible Hand*. OUP.
924
925 Kandiyali, J. 2020. 'The Importance of Others.' *Ethics*.
926
927 Kandiyali, J. 2022. 'Sharing Burdensome Work.' *Philosophical Quarterly*
928
929 Kittay, E. 1999. *Love's Labor*. Routledge.
930
931 Kropotkin, P. 2020 [1902]. *Mutual Aid*. Outlook.
932
933 Maguire, B. 2022. 'Efficient Markets and Alienation.' *Philosophers' Imprint*.
934
935 Marx, K. 1844a. *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, in MECW, vol. 3, Lawrence and
936 Wishart.
937
938 Marx, K. 1844b. *Comments on James Mill*. In MECW, vol. 3, Lawrence and Wishart.
939
940 Marx, K. 1865. 'Value, Price, and Profit.' MECW, vol 20. Lawrence and Wishart.
941
942 Marx, K. 1875. *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, in MECW, vol. 24. Lawrence and Wishart.
943
944 Melenovsky, C. 2016. 'Incentives, Conventionalism, and Constructivism.' *Ethics*, 126. 549-574.
945
946 O'Neill, M & Guinan, J. 2020. *The Case for Community Wealth Building*. Polity.
947
948 Rawls, J. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. HUP.
949
950 Rawls, J. 1993. *Political Liberalism*. Columbia.
951
952 Rawls, J. 1999. *A Theory of Justice: Revised Edition*. HUP.
953
954 Sangiovanni, A. (2024). *Solidarity: Nature, Grounds and Value*. Manchester University Press
955
956 Scheffler, S. 1982. 'The Rejection of Consequentialism'
957
958 Scheffler, S. 2010. *Equality and Tradition*, OUP.
959
960 Shiffrin, S. 2010. 'Incentives, Motives, and Talents.' *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 38, no. 2.
961
962 Stjerno, S. 2004. *Solidarity in Europe*. CUP.
963
964 Vrousalis, N. 2015. *The Political Philosophy of G.A.Cohen*. Bloomsbury Academic.
965
966 Wiggins, D. 2009. 'Solidarity and the Root of the Ethical.' Kansas University Press.
967
968 Zhao, M. 2019. 'Solidarity, Fate-Sharing, and Community.' *Philosophers' Imprint*, volume 19,
969 no. 46.