

Exchange and Solidarity

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Abstract

There are two kinds of objections to markets: distributive and relational. Distributive concerns are consequentialistic; it is an empirical question to what extent they can be addressed by a suitable combination of predistribution and redistribution. Relational objections threaten the apparatus of market interaction itself. It is common for opponents to assume, often without much argument, that market exchange involves objectionable self-interestedness. Recent work refutes this assumption. It has been persuasively argued by Robert Sugden and Luigino Bruni, drawing on recent work on team reasoning, that market exchange might be a joint activity undertaken for mutual benefit. It is suggested, furthermore, that any plausible social ideal is undertaken for mutual benefit, and hence that market exchange is compatible with any plausible social ideal. I applaud this constructive proposal, but deny the inference, by contrasting this reciprocal ideal with an ideal of solidarity in production. This latter ideal involves the acceptance of an asymmetric ethical principle, according to which individuals are motivated to do what they can to help others, in a large collaboration in which others ideally do the same. The solidary alternative centres notions of vulnerability, dependency, care, and unity, rather than notions of usefulness, approximate material equality, and voluntary choice.

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Section One: Introduction

Ever since the dawn of time, philosophers have argued that market-based behaviour is incompatible with an ideal of sociality.

The best that defenders of markets have done until recently is to argue either that one can have mixed motives in exchange – self-directed motives alongside others – or to argue that we should accept the suboptimality of exchange for the epistemic and productive advantages of the market system as a whole. The second of these objections, the ‘overall best’ reply, leaves the charge in place, for it allows that markets might simply be the least bad feasible option. I’m more optimistic that there will be better feasible options, but never mind that for now. I’ve recently argued¹ that the first of these objections – the ‘mixed motive’ reply – fails, for the overall benefits of the

¹ Maguire 2022.

market lauded by the second reply are only available if participants accept exclusionary commitments that exclude a crucial range of desirable motives in exchange.

Never mind that for now either. Recently, a far more powerful defence of the sociality of market-based behaviour has been developed by Luigino Bruni and Robert Sugden (2009, 2009; Sugden 2018). Drawing on work on 'we-reasoning,' Sugden and Bruni argue that market-based exchange can be perceived as a joint activity aimed at mutual benefit. Participation in the market system as a whole can be perceived similarly. We might perceive our market-based productive activities as collaborations all the way down, as it were. They furthermore argue that any desirable ideal of sociality will itself involve individuals working together in joint activities aimed at mutual benefit. They conclude that there is no tension between market-based exchange and any desirable ideal of sociality.

This is an important development. I want to grant that exchange can be perceived as a joint activity for mutual benefit, and that exchange can consequently be a joint exchange for mutual benefit. This ideal has many attractive features.

But there are ideals and ideals. I want to sketch the central points of contrast between Sugdenian ideal of *mutual assistance* and an alternative ideal of *solidarity*. This is an alternative with a venerable history. Moreover, I think the ideal of solidarity is structurally incompatible with the ideal of mutual assistance. That's what I'll be arguing here.

Axel Honneth recently said that: "The original idea of socialism is rooted in the notion that in the future it will be possible to organise entire societies on the model of communities of solidarity" (2017, 24). I think that what is at stake in this debate is whether it is these communities of solidarity might still use market mechanisms to organise production. In short, at stake is the question, thought by many to have been already settled on distributive grounds, of whether market socialism is possible. I will provide argue, on relational grounds, that it is not.²

Section Two: Mutual Assistance and the Metaphysics of Exchange

Exchange is the 'voluntary transfer of private goods or services for consideration.'³

² I don't mean to imply that these relational considerations would be dispositive. They constitute pro tanto justification for fitting organisational structures. I do not address questions about alternative values that might conflict with solidarity. The purpose of this essay is not to argue for solidaristic economic organisation but to point out the limitations of economic organisation based on the ideal of mutual assistance.

³ This definition comes from a long tradition in legal theory whereby exchange is distinguished (among other things) from 'gratuitous promises' undertaken without contracted quid pro quo (see the seminal opinion in *Mills v. Wyman*,

Not all pairs of voluntary transfers of goods are themselves joint actions. I can scratch your back and you mine without these individual services being related in any other way.⁴ Neither is it the case that all mutual transfers that are joint actions are exchanges. To see this point, imagine a third party puts a gun to our heads, or offers to donate money to a worthwhile charity, if the two of us can work together to make one another better off in some specific respects. There is nothing conceptually impossible in our meeting this condition together. But our joint activity would not be an *exchange* of the goods that make us better off in these respects.

Exchange is distinguished by adherence to a social rule according to which the mutual transfer has a kind of reciprocal conditionality. This cannot merely be cashed out dispositionally. It may be that I am going to exchange A for B with you, but if you can't produce B, then I'm just going to give you A. I may even be more likely to just give you A than exchange A for B with you, but we end up exchanging. As A.J. Julius (2013) has shown, reciprocal conditionality cannot be understood in terms of conditional intentions on the part of both parties, either. Rather, exchange itself has to be understood as a joint activity that both parties participate in. Actually, an exchange is at least two joint activities, for it consists in two parties doing one thing together that is distinguished by its conformity to a social rule. The social rule itself presumably obtains in virtue of further social activity. This is analogous to the sense in which any social game is multiple shared activities: the specific game being played with specific players in a context, and a more general social activity of sustaining the general rules being followed.

Not all exchanges are mutually beneficial. You might agree to exchange just for my benefit, or to please a third party. An exchange might be mutually beneficial but not intentionally, even without both parties knowing that it is mutually beneficial. But a joint action might also be intentional under the description "an exchange for mutual benefit." In such cases, there is another joint action taking place. In addition to the exchange, there is the doing-of-the-exchange-for-mutual-benefit. That second thing is also something participants can do together.

Importantly, it is possible that participants can do this together – can engage in a joint activity for mutual benefit – while neither party is *individually* motivated by mutual benefit as such.⁵ Again it may be that two parties are incentivised to exchange-for-mutual-benefit. To make this more plausible, it might be that two employees of two companies were each ordered by their boss to spend an enjoyable afternoon together to further the broader corporate

20 Mass. 207, [Mass. 1825]). One might argue that there can be coerced exchange, e.g., when I sell you my watch under threat from a third party. Such cases won't be relevant so I set them aside to give the defender of the sociality of exchange their best case. Likewise, I'll shortly restrict our attention to exchanges that are mutually beneficial.

⁴ Cf. A.J. Julius 2013, 365.

⁵ Cf. Shapiro 2013 on 'alienated participants.'

relationship. Each employee secretly dislikes the other company. But they need the money and they might be watched, so they work together and make sure they enjoy themselves. Or perhaps we are both friends of a third party, and each of us spends time together, each trying to ensure that each of us have as much fun as possible, but just because each of us wants to please the third party.⁶ The third parties care about the complex activity – that the joint activity produces mutual benefit – and not merely about its consequences – the mutual benefit. And the Schapiro-alienated participants can themselves be motivated to participate in such a complex activity, so it seems to me, without either of them caring about the separate state of affairs produced by the activity, namely their mutual benefit.

So, there is a distinction between mutual benefit as the end of a joint activity (of exchange), and mutual benefit as the motivations of the individual parties to such an exchange. The sense in which we might perceive exchange as a joint action for mutual benefit, according to Sugden, is that joint benefit might be part of the intention of a joint action in this former sense. Then there is a further question about the motivations of the participants to enter into such an exchange. Sugden says that being motivated to promote mutual benefit is a virtue (2018, 280). So, for simplicity's sake, and to try to push as far as possible the idea of exchange as non-self-interested reciprocity, let's presume that both parties are motivated to enter into any given exchange precisely because it will realise mutual benefit, perhaps in addition to broader background considerations about participating on market terms being a way of realising mutual benefits across the economy more generally.

At this point we can point to a further argument for market-based conditionality, which is that adherence to market prices constitutes participation in a large-scale system that regulates supply and demand of privatisable resources. There are epistemic and motivational versions of this sort of argument. Let me simply assume, in order to continue giving the best possible case for markets, that these are good arguments, and that one might have the following layered attitude to exchange: one's willingness to pursue and adhere to the terms of mutually beneficial exchanges – including to withdraw service if one isn't going to get paid – is itself conditional upon one's conviction that general adherence to the market system itself, in the relevant domain, is mutually beneficial.

As I said, I think this way of thinking about exchange is important and promising. It has at least the following two important advantages. Firstly, it avoids the kind of strategic reasoning about the actions of others that is characteristic of Nash-style game theoretic reasoning and Act Consequentialistic reasoning, in favour of we-reasoning, in which one thinks in the first instance about what the group should do, and accepts responsibilities as a participant in the group. This involves a kind of *trust* in others (as distinguished from mere descriptive expectations). One acts on the

⁶ Cf. Bratman's distinction between shared intentional activity simpliciter and shared cooperative activity (2014, 37-39). Only the former is compatible with entirely self-interested external motives and background coercion.

basis of normative expectations rather than descriptive expectations about the behaviour of others. Secondly, it avoids the simple self/other motivational dichotomy that makes much of the discussion of economic motives unhelpfully superficial, in favour of social motivations, allowing that market participation might be social all the way down. This new proposal is consistent with Cohen's famous characterisation of the motivational profile characteristic of the socialist. Cohen explicitly contradistinguished these motives from motives in the market. He said that the socialist finds value "in both in both parts of the conjunction – I serve you and you serve me – and in that conjunction itself: [they do] not regard the first part – I serve you – as simply a means to my real end, which is that you serve me" (2009, 43) I think Sugden's model of mutual assistance is one plausible way to spell this idea out.⁷ Sugden's virtuous market participants value joint activities aimed at mutual benefit; in doing so, they plausibly value both conjuncts and the conjunction itself. They don't need to have any attitude at all to mere conditional, that I serve you only so that you serve me.

The discussion to follow is an intramural dispute between ideals that share the just-mentioned virtues of involving 'we-reasoning' and enabling participants to value serving one another.

Section Three: The Ideal of Solidarity

Solidarity is instantiated in collaborations⁸ realising mutual concern and respect.

By mutual respect, I have in mind that we take one another seriously, in Daniela Dover's (2022) sense. This requires a certain amount of openness to having our views corrected by others, and even our sense of our own identity shaped by others. It involves a willingness to listen charitably and creatively to others, without presuming to impose our own values in interpreting what they have to say. It does not involve slavish deference to the judgements of oneself or others.

But the key notion here is mutual concern. By mutual concern, I mean that each is willing to do what they can, to meet the needs of the other (respectfully). This formulation doesn't mention amounts of benefits or

⁷ As further evidence of how structurally similar Sugdenian mutual assistance is to the socialist ideal, notice that both (along with the Rawls's well-ordered society) would, at least along with an appropriate ethos, involve 'internal' and 'intertwined' ends in Brudney's sense (1997, 398): all are valuable as structures intentionally sustained for their own sake.

⁸ I understand collaborations to be both thinner and thicker than Sugdenian we-reasoning. Thinner, because solidary collaborations don't depend upon a strict common knowledge condition. And thicker, because collaborations require actual engagement (or attempted engagement) with others on the specific terms of engagement. For examples of solidarity that purport to go beyond collaborations, see Zhao (2019, 1). I'm inclined to agree with [redacted] that these are cases of *latent* solidarity.

burdens that each party give or take in order for the distribution to be just or otherwise acceptable. Rather, in solidary collaborations, distribution of benefits and burdens will be decided significantly by circumstance rather than by will.⁹ Nor is it presumed – and this will be important – that both help each other out. What matters is one’s willingness. This is compatible with, for instance, trusting that someone else, as part of some larger collaboration, will meet particular needs.

Let me now address a key issue. There is an important difference between joint activities with mutual concern, and joint activities for mutual benefit. To see this, we need to distinguish two different features of action, which we might call their ‘form’ or ‘meaning’, on the one hand, and their ‘content’ or ‘first-order end’ on the other.¹⁰

Concern and respect are properties of the *form* of an action rather than its end. This is not to deny that it is possible to do things simply in order to manifest concern, or simply in order to manifest respect. We do often engage in such purely expressive actions, especially if we wish to reassure someone, perhaps a stranger, that we mean well. But more often, we express concern and/or respect by doing other things in the context of a relationship, for instance, by helping someone out, or by listening to them attentively, or by stepping aside to let them decide what to do.

We distinguish the form of an action from the specific end of a particular action, whether or not this is called for in the context of a solidary relationship with this other person. The end might be for one to give the other a lift to the airport, or to simply have a few beers together.¹¹ I’ll elaborate this distinction with examples shortly.

The ideal of solidarity has been passed down more or less from New Testament Christians, through the utopian socialists Étienne Cabet and Louis Blanc, and then most famously by Karl Marx in the Critique of the Gotha Program.¹² This intellectual heritage is not exactly evidence of the objective attractiveness of the ideal. But this heritage is directly relevant to the dialectic with Sugden, insofar as his conclusion is that any plausible ideal of sociality is compatible with exchange. The Marxist ideal is a venerable, and I would say, plausible, ideal of sociality – even if it not one that Sugden would himself accept. It is therefore fit to block the inference to this conclusion. The question is then whether exchange is compatible with solidarity.

⁹ See also Zhao *op. cit.*

¹⁰ I will often shorten ‘first-order end’ to ‘end,’ here noting that ‘end’ is sometimes used colloquially to pick out what I am calling the ‘form’ of an action.

¹¹ Cf. Kandiyali (2020) on the end of self-realisation; see also Sukaina Hirji’s distinction between acting virtuously and virtuous action in Aristotle (2018), where the former has a first-order end, and the latter is its own end.

¹² For a rich history of this and related slogans, see Bovens and Lutz (2019).

This is clearly a social principle. Marx proclaimed that society would inscribe the slogan on its banners. It pertains to the distribution of productive activity and consumption across society. But – although this was not Marx’s view – we can also think of this as a moral principle, describing a disposition of the will of those aspiring to live in solidarity with others. And these can be designed to interact. The distribution of productive responsibilities across a society is responsive to peoples’ abilities, and peoples’ abilities are, in turn, responsive to one’s delegation of a larger social division of responsibilities that also conform to the solidary principle. This delegation will plausibly include a number of distinct social responsibilities, for instance to one’s children and one’s vocation.

This is all rather abstract. To make it more concrete, I want to consider two kinds of cases that show a tension between mutual assistance and solidarity.

Section Four: Abilities/Needs Beyond the Market

Let me start with a few obvious cases, namely those in which people have abilities without needs, or needs without abilities, or abilities employed on non-market needs. If I am rich, I won’t have any *reciprocity*-based obligation to work. But if I can help people, plausibly I still have a solidarity-based obligation to do so. If I am poor, I won’t be able to participate in any reciprocity-based exchanges, no matter my needs. Some non-reciprocity-based principle will be needed to justify my own needs being met. If I meet lots of needs outside the market, for instance in caring for children, the elderly, the infirm, where these people are unable to reciprocate, then some non-reciprocity-based principle will be needed to justify my own needs being met (Marx, MECW, 24, 87; also Kittay 2020, 83).

This might also happen once an exchange is underway. An exchange relationship initiated between approximate material equals might not end up that way, as one becomes unwell, or becomes committed to caring for dependents, or suffers some other material misfortune.

In an important reply, Julie A. Nelson (2009) develops a case of this kind. In his response, Sugden says this:

We can agree with Nelson that authentic caring is sometimes provided in relationships of dependency (as in her variant of our story of Arthur and Betty). When, at the very end of our paper, we offered the tentative thought that reciprocity might ‘go all the way down’, we did not mean to exclude that kind of caring. We intended only to suggest that the authenticity of relationships, even within families and between friends, should usually be understood in terms of reciprocity rather than sacrifice. Sadly, dependency is sometimes unavoidable, but the responses it requires need not be seen as the paradigm of authentic sociality.

Notice that reciprocity is *contrasted* with dependency in the penultimate sentence. That suggests reciprocity is specifically a prospect between those who can benefit one another on market terms. The ideal of mutual assistance is implicitly predicated upon an ideal of economic society consisting mostly in individuals with approximately equal abilities, needs, and luck. This suggests it involves an ideal of self-sufficiency. Perhaps Sugden would think it desirable, to go back to the first kind of case, that rich people can even avoid dependency on the market altogether.

Whatever one's attitude to these cases, it is clear that we would need a different moral principle, a version of benevolence, not reciprocity, to deal with them. Sugdenian Reciprocity is not going to get the job done. And so, at best, we will have a kind of *domain differentiation*, with one principle for market interactions, and another principle for dependency relations.¹³ This is a familiar idea. Joseph Carens relies on such a distinction – between differentially incurred needs and non-differentially incurred needs – in working out his own version of market socialism, for instance (1981, 187). It is equally familiar to worry that this leads to a difference in the recognition, with dependents and dependency work being respected less than market-remunerated work.¹⁴ However, I'm not going to rely on that point here.

I mostly want to point out the source of a deep disagreement between us. I think domain differentiation, on this basis, runs against the grain of togetherness, of sharing fates. We are supposedly self-sufficient in the market, and we help out those who fall below an abilities/needs threshold beyond the market. This may be benign, but it isn't the sharing of our fates. I think that vulnerability, dependency, commitment, trust, and service are at the heart of the most valuable social relationships, and, in particular, at the heart of an ideal for production.¹⁵ This idea is at the heart of the feminist tradition and the Marxist tradition that I'm drawing from in articulating an alternative ideal of sociality.

According to the Marxian principle, each gives what they can and gets what they need. Doesn't assume 'approximate material equality.' It may be that one isn't able to give much, or that one's needs are considerable. But these facts are not relevant to the assessment of one's acceptance of the principle itself. It

¹³ Insofar as Sugden's approach bears some similarity to Rawls (both contractarian approaches based on an ideal of society as a cooperative venture for mutual advantage), we would expect a domain differentiation concern to also apply to Rawls. But Sugden's approach actually helps Rawls to respond to a structurally similar objection, namely Cohen's version of the 'personal is political' objection (2008). For if markets participants can genuinely be said to be acting out of concern for mutual assistance, and this principle is continuous with the broadly reciprocal nature of political justice, there will be no deep principled difference between their stance in the market and in their politics. I think it follows that the debate between Rawls and Cohen depends in one respect on this debate between mutual assistance and solidarity. I address these issues in [redacted].

¹⁴ E.g., Anderson 1999.

¹⁵ Cf. Kittay (2020, 83).

is this acceptance that forms the basis of solidarity between individuals. On Marx's view, we couldn't realise our nature if we did not need to serve one another.¹⁶ Or as I would prefer to say, satisfying our need to serve one another is an important part of the good life.

Section Five: Abilities/Needs in the Market

The foregoing cases show that there is an extensional divergence between the ideal of solidarity and the ideal of mutual assistance. But I don't think these are the most interesting cases in thinking about Sugden's proposal.

Let's focus on production that does involve individuals with approximately equal abilities, needs, and luck. Sometimes, to be sure, I can scratch your back and you can scratch mine. But more often, only one of us will have an itch.

When you go to the dentist, *their* needs are not salient. But the object of the exercise is to fix *your* teeth. It is not to fix your teeth and to pad their holiday fund. Likewise at the baker, the butcher, and the candlestick maker. In a large productive system, when it comes to interactions between any two participants, only the needs of one of the parties will be at issue. This will usually be the needs of the one paying the money.

This point does not depend upon the presumption that individuals are solely responsible for benefit provision. In most cases, particular individuals will be playing some role in a productive organisation. In such cases, the benefits at stake are not those of the workers, but whatever needs the organisation is designed to serve. The relevant needs are those of a third party. Of course, you should interact with your colleagues on terms of mutual respect and concern. But the end of your joint activities is not your benefit or theirs, it is the third party – whoever it is that needs the widgets.

This is where the difference between content and form is crucial. Solidary interactions are collaborative, and each takes the other seriously, and each manifests a willingness to do what they can for the sake of the other. The dentist doesn't merely operate on you like they would on a machine. They invite you to lean your head back and open your mouth, and you do. But the end of this activity is that your needs are served, not also theirs. Your concern for them is dispositional, and may not amount to much. But perhaps you are loyal to them, and will stick with their practice even if some other dentist becomes a little cheaper or more convenient.

We are both justified in having these motives by the larger solidary context in which our activity is embedded. This has implications for both of us. So, while

¹⁶ Cf. Brudney (2015, 454): "...it is part of Marx's 1844 description of a communist's activities that she is producing *for* other human beings, and that in consuming she appreciates what others have produced *for* her. Her ends in producing would be short-circuited if her products were to rot or God were to rain manna."

I do go to the baker primarily because I need bread, I go to this baker, my local non-homophobic baker, in part because my doing so is part of a solidary division of responsibilities. I make an effort to support my local baker, and they make an effort to support me.

It is economic artifice that these productive services are modelled as reciprocal transfers – as mutually beneficial in some material sense. We simply assume that when one provides another with a service, the other pays the one money. We assume this because this is how markets work. This fits nicely with a morality based on mutual benefit. But if we abstract from the market system, the natural structure of these interactions is not mutual benefit. It is one person (perhaps in their role in some group) serving another (perhaps in their role in another group). And ideally, that other spends their productive time serving others as well.

Services to others are not restricted to marketisable services. They will include domestic labour, reproductive labour, caring labour, etc. So, one can live up to this principle without participating in the market. And those who cannot contribute much inside or outside of the market can still live up to the principle insofar as they are disposed to do what they can. And realistically, most people can contribute something.

Section Six: Five Structural Differences

The first difference concerns the specific activities that will be undertaken, and not undertaken, in solidary production. Joint activities aimed at mutual benefit will not predominate. In any large economy, they are likely to be the exception. *Most services will be asymmetric*, with one party, or rather one group, serving another party, or rather, another group. The team of chefs serves the town hungry. The team of civil engineers serves the local commuters, and so on. All these services will be themselves perceived as contributions to increasingly expansive collaborations instantiating solidarity.

There is a different model of reciprocity here, that barely deserves to be called reciprocity at all. The solidary ideal involves living aspirationally with others. What we want is that they accept the principle, 'from each to each', not that they are going to reciprocate to *me*, and certainly not that they do so in every transaction. This explains, among other things, why the unneeded rich still need to do their bit. Each individual should be disposed to participate at a given cost to themselves. But their needs should be met, in turn, by someone else. *The ideal is universal, rather than reciprocal*. The same normative expectations apply to the agent and to others. The agent normatively expects to be served in their turn. They perceive their service as participation in social production that meets their own needs too. In this sense, the structure of the responsibility is different from strictly other-directed charity. But an agent's willingness to make their contribution is at no point conditioned upon their actually being served. Of course, at some point they'll starve to death. But that's still not a fact about *normative* conditionality.

Of course, the Sugdenian proposal is based on we-reasoning, which also involves trust in others, and so a related asymmetry between one's attitude to one's own service and one's attitude to the service of the other in exchange.¹⁷ Furthermore, it is not the case that one's service in solidarity is entirely unconditional. My willingness to serve you is conditional on *some* other facts about supply and demand. If my serving you here and now would come at too great a cost to other projects of mine, that will often be a sufficient reason not to serve you. However, there remains the following differences. In the ideal of Solidarity, there is an important asymmetry between how one should view one's own responsibilities and those of others. I should require myself to do what would constitute living in solidarity. But I should act on faith that others will, or with the aspiration that they will – even if I have my doubts. At no point do I condition my own willingness to serve others on my beliefs about whether they will serve me. *My willingness to serve others, then, is unconditional*, and not based on any sort of reciprocity. That is the third point.

This point is compatible with allowing that my willingness to serve you in any particular situation is *morally* conditional. It is conditional not on the costs to myself, but on the costs to other morally significant projects. In such cases, the threshold for not serving you is given by the terms of the exchange, based on mutual benefit, in the one case. In the other, it is presumed that a more significant opportunity cost would be required to give me a sufficient reason to relinquish service. This higher threshold permits a more robust commitment to my particular vocation in a particular community.

Here is the fourth point. It is incongruous with the spirit of a loving relationship to focus too closely on accounting for the precise distribution of burdens and benefits in the relationship. But it is important not to push this point too far. Feminist philosophers have rightly pointed out that such reluctance can easily serve as a cloak for a gendered division of labour. But there is still a difference here between benefit accounting in a loving relationship and benefit accounting in a joint activity for mutual benefit. In the latter case, joint benefit is the end of the action. The parties are explicitly guided precisely by that end in action. But being so directly guided by mutual benefit would be incongruous in a loving relationship. It would involve a mistake analogous to the 'paradox of hedonism.' Intuitively, mutual benefit, if it plays any role at all in loving relationships, plays a different one. And here's my suggestion. *There is a crucial difference between benefit as part of the end of an action, and as evidence about the form of the interaction.* The feminist philosophers are right to permit us to attend to the distribution of burdens even in very intimate relationships, because that distribution might reveal that one party is not pulling their weight. But it doesn't follow that the end of their activity is their mutual benefit, exactly. Rather, mutual benefit, or really mutual care, is part of the *form* of their relationship. And in fact, the positive *disregard* for mutual benefit, which is what explains our squeamishness about accounting (even if it is sometimes epistemically necessary) is explained by the fact that we are committed to living in solidarity with one another.

¹⁷ "This is an attitude of bravery or trust, of casting one's bread on the waters..." Bruni & Sugden (2009, 198).

This point follows from the fact that solidarity is not a *distributive* ideal. It is a relational ideal. And form, rather than content, is what matters most for the recognitional significance of an activity. I can help you in the very same way because you are white, helpless, or my aging father. Out of love or pity or duty. These differences matter enormously to the moral status of the interaction.

The relational ideal has implications for distribution, but only indirectly. This difference can be highlighted by thinking about the very different role of brute luck. As noted, in solidary interactions, the distribution of benefits and burdens will be decided significantly by circumstance rather than by will.¹⁸ In relationships between individuals with roughly equivalent abilities, needs, and luck, the distribution of 'burdens' and 'benefits' in the relationship will be fairly equal. But this fact need not be of any ethical significance. It is an unintended consequence of an ideal mode of engagement between parties who happen to have similar abilities and needs and who happen to have similar outcome luck in life.

It will often happen in relationships that one party has greater abilities or greater needs than another, for reasons irrelevant to the friendship itself. For instance, having young children means that one's social opportunities are highly restricted. One's unencumbered friends tend to have to work around one's schedule. There are likely to be many such differences across production as a whole, taken to include domestic labour, reproductive labour, caring labour, productive labour, etc. In all such cases, fate, as it were, decides the distribution of burdens and benefits. This distribution isn't of any fundamental moral significance. This isn't just an ideal for parents and lovers. It is a vocational ideal, an ideal of citizenship, and ideal for human society.

Finally, the solidary principle involves *principled unity* as contrasted with the domain differentiation required by reciprocity-based approaches. This enables continuity across marketisable and non-marketisable services and across interactions between those with market-valued luck and others.

Conclusion

Let me summarise and bring a few strands together. Sugden argued that we can perceive exchange as a joint activity aimed at mutual benefit. He also suggests we can see the market system itself, and hence our responsiveness to market prices, as a large-scale joint activity aimed at mutual benefit. On this view, exchange need not be in any way motivated by self-interest. One might never do anything of any moral significance unless and because it is part of a joint activity that promotes mutual benefit. This constitutes an ideal of reciprocity, one that essentially involves seeing oneself as a partner of others in production. One can wholeheartedly value the conjunction, that I serve you

¹⁸ See also Zhao *op.cit.*

and that you serve me. This is all plausible enough. I'm not sure what it is to be an ideal, but certainly this sounds better than egoism.

However, I think this falls short of a venerable ideal of sociality, based on the principle from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs. A society organised in such a way as to honour this principle would meet the needs of those with limited abilities; and it would require the exercise of the abilities of those with limited needs. Furthermore, acceptance of this principle would itself explain why one would continue to serve someone who suffered some financial bad luck after you agreed to help them. For the ideal mutual assistance, either the same individual would need to rely on a distinct justification (perhaps some separate principle of charity) or else the needs would have to be left to be hopefully met by the state. Of course, on the other hand, in any plausible ethics, a producer's commitment to serving someone will not be entirely unconditional. Most people will have multiple commitments. But these are commitments that are themselves worked out in such a way as to accord with the social ideal of living in solidarity. If I don't give you bread, that's not because you can't pay, but because I promised to give it to someone else. No problem there. The main thing is that one doesn't need to pay much attention to one's own needs at all in serving others. One's own needs are rarely part of the point of the exercise.

Of course, even if there are significant structural differences between the ideal of mutual assistance and the ideal of solidarity, it might still be the case that we should embrace an economy built around the former rather than the latter. This would be true if the epistemic and motivational arguments for the superiority of market economics were dispositive. One problem is that these arguments are standardly used to contrast markets as a decentralised epistemic/motivational system with a command economy based on centralised decision-making. What we need are better models of decentralised epistemic and motivational systems based on solidarity rather than exchange. Plenty of epistemic and motivational work currently happens with satisfactory efficiency and responsiveness within large private firms and state-based welfare-oriented organisations, for instance. And we should include in the comparison class hybrid systems, with private goods markets but not labour markets – as in economies with a robust and dependency-sensitive UBI, for instance. It seems to me that we are rather epistemically impoverished in the matter of evaluating large-scale economic systems. It is hoped that the positive axiological project of investigating the relational values at stake in productive relationships might encourage more open-mindedness and imagination in reflecting on economic alternatives.¹⁹

¹⁹ Thanks to [many people].

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