On the Principles of Socialism

An Ideological Approach

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Abstract

Socialism is historically interpreted as the nationalization of industry, conjoined with a planned economy. In this thesis, I argue against this interpretation of socialism, because the orthodox socialist institutionalization runs into detrimental problems concerning efficiency and liberty. I argue in favor of an ideological approach to socialism, meaning that socialism should be interpreted by its principles. These principles are based on an egalitarian normative framework, focusing on equality of opportunity for self-realization and welfare, as well as political influence. The thesis is concluded with a thorough explication of the contents of the principles and their possible application in contemporary society.

Key words: socialism, egalitarianism, Marxism, inequality, John Roemer

Introduction

The discussion on social and economic inequality has been prevalently conducted in political discourse ever since the recording of such discourse. This phenomenon is not without its reasons; a significantly unequal society turns out to be an unstable one, being correlated with poor health,[1] social discord,[2] political polarization and radicalization and,[3] in extreme cases, the collapse of states and empires.[4] Not only the practical implications are considered important, however, since large (arbitrary) inequality often intuitively brings a feeling of injustice and exploitation to the moral subject. As hopefully all readers have been taught, proper discussion requires extensive empirical information in order to ensure quality of argument. In past times, concluding the extent to which inequality and its consequences existed was not an easy task: where ancient philosophers had to either speak of economic inequality by abstract principles or empirical statements verifiable with the naked eye, pre-modern scholars ran into the problem of the limits of the human mind in combination with pen and paper: determining core statistics surrounding distribution of income and wealth required an amount of mathematical work which could not possibly be executed by a few people.

Fortunately, as with many fields of research, the arrival of the computer and internet has changed everything. Modern-day data accumulation in combination with statistical software has paved the way for extremely large-scale and well-executed research on economic inequality and its effects. One remarkable example of such research is the work of Thomas Piketty, in which he concludes that our 'Western' capitalist system has a tendency to have a higher average return to capital than the economic growth rate (formulated as $R > G$, where R is the return on capital and G is the growth of GDP).[5] This conclusion implies that the holders of capital will, in the long run, always see their wealth increase more than the relative rise of wealth of those who do not hold capital. Piketty describes that the only contradictory movements in this tendency was caused by societal disruptions, such as World War I, World War II and the Great Depression. In short, Piketty states that the natural tendency of capitalism is increasing inequality of wealth, with rare economic shocks as the exception to the rule. Although similar conclusions predate Piketty's work by a considerable amount of time (Karl Marx proposed

[1] Kate E. Pickett & Richard G. Wilkinson, "Income Inequality and Health: A Causal Review." *Social Science & Medicine* 128 (2015): P. 316-326.
[2] Christian A. Larsen, *The Rise and Fall of Social Cohesion: The Construction and De-construction of Social Trust in the US, UK, Sweden and Denmark* (Oxford University Press, 2013).
[3] Jonas Pontusson & David Rueda, "Inequality as a Source of Political Polarization: A Comparative Analysis of Twelve OECD Countries," in *Democracy, Inequality, and Representation in Comparative Perspective*. (Russel Sage Foundation, 2008), P. 313-350.
[4] Safa Motesharrei, Jorge Rivas & Eugenia Kalnay. "Human and Nature Dynamics (HANDY): Modeling Inequality and Use of Resources in the Collapse or Sustainability of Societies." *Ecological Economics* 101 (2014): P. 90-102.
[5] Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (London: Belknap Press, 2017).

similar theories on the necessary progression of capitalism),[6] it has never before been posited so diligently, extensively and robustly.

After an empirical economic discussion on inequality comes the political and moral one. Questions regarding the validity of these economic inequalities, the consequential social and economic hierarchies, the extent to which a state may interfere with markets and the discussion of possible fair distributions are just a few of the essential topics. One package of answers that responds to all the questions raised here, with which almost all are familiar, is the system and ideology of socialism. From the 1860s onward, socialism has taken many theoretical forms. Although controversial because of its many different strains of thought, many seem to agree on the statement that, essentially, 'classical' socialism is the appropriation of the means of production, distribution and exchange by the state.[7] This appropriation of the means of production is conjoined with a planned economy: the state determines the quantity of demand for goods and proceeds to plan the production and distribution of these goods accordingly. The classical socialist system, as described above, is most strongly associated with its inclusion in a communist society. A communist society is one which embraces socialism, while also being stateless, moneyless and, most importantly, classless. Although this distinction seems simple, both socialism and communism are tormented by a myriad of different interpretations and movements. Combining this with the image of real-life implementations of socialism people have with regards to countries like the U.S.S.R., Venezuela and North-Korea can make one feel overwhelmed. Sometimes, one can even lose sight of the fact that socialism is not an exemplification of pure evil,[8] but a proposed solution to a problem that is, as aforementioned, generally acknowledged.

Unfortunately, for reasons that will be discussed in Chapter 1, socialism runs into a myriad of theoretical and practical problems. Consequently, after years of intellectual and political discourse on the feasibility of socialism, many scholars and voters alike have abandoned the orthodox socialist project. This exodus from the static idea of socialism was followed by a heightened left-wing appreciation of – in the order of ideological proximity to socialism - Democratic Socialism, Social Democracy and the so-called Third Way, all three focusing on a more just distribution of goods through democratic, mostly non-revolutionary, means.[9] Although historically based in socialist thought, these three political positions have moved away from the stringent requirements of classical socialism and

[6] For a comprehensive account of Marx' analysis of capitalism, see: Michio Morishima, *Marx's Economics: A Dual Theory of Value and Growth*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1978).
[7] "Socialism," The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed May 20th, 2022, https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/socialism/
[8] An amusing example of this is the obviously biased definition in a book on entrepreneurship in socialism: "We shall define "socialism" as any system of institutional aggression on the free exercise of entrepreneurship. By "aggression" or "coercion" we mean all physical violence or threats of physical violence which another person or group of people initiates and employs against the actor." From: Jesus Huerta De Soto, *Socialism, economic calculation and entrepreneurship*, (Institute of Economic Affairs Monographs, 2013), P.49.
[9] For a more expansive explanation of these ideologies, see: Anthony Wright, "Social Democracy and Democratic Socialism," in *Contemporary Political Ideologies*, (London: Pinter Publishers, 1993), P.78-100.

instead opted for a more politically constructive approach: proponents of these branches of socialism ask themselves not how they can overthrow the capitalist society, but how they can modify current ills of the economic system and work towards one that is more in accordance with socialist thought. So, since one may conclude that these contemporary positions have roots in the socialist ideology, it may lead one to ask question what, exactly, this ideology is.

This work will be dedicated to answering this very question and defending the importance of asking it. Where some interpret socialism as a material goal regarding property relations in society, in Chapter 1, I will defend the idea that socialism is better seen as a set of principles, because principles are more fundamental and robust than static ideas of a societal structure. This will be done by roughly dividing different approaches of socialism into the end-state approach and the herein investigated ideological approach. In Chapter 2, I will concern myself with answering the following question: 'What are the principles that the socialist system attempts to accord with?'. Such a question, while possibly appearing futile at first, is of essential importance to answer in order to test contemporary societal problems, and the policy solutions that come with it, against the socialist ideology. Socialism will therefore be interpreted as a theory of justice based in egalitarianism: the normative framework that essentially proposes that people are equal and therefore deserve equal rights and opportunities. The point of departure for these principles developed in Chapter 2 will be appropriated from the philosophy of John E. Roemer. The conclusion will include brief reflections on contemporary policy proposals, a concise summary of the work at hand and possible suggestions for future inquiry into the theory of socialism.

Chapter 1: Defense of the ideological approach

This chapter will concern itself with a defense of the ideological approach to socialism instead of the classical end-state approach. The statement that socialism should be interpreted by its principles, or through ideology, instead of its system, although not unique,[10] is unconventional: interpreting socialism as the state owning the means of production, distribution and exchange combined with a planned economy has been one of the many characterizations of Marx' everlasting influence on socialism.[11] It therefore requires a defense. As mentioned above, the classical approach to socialism will in this work be named the end-state approach, meaning that one may determine whether a society is socialist by analyzing the current state of distribution of capital and goods, or the end-state, in society.[12]

Before commencing, it should be noted that characterizing the socialist end-state in a specific way, as is done here, is necessarily liable to critique. It must be admitted that it is simply impossible to perfectly capture the essence of a proposed system with a history of nearly 200 years, but it is necessary for the sake of argumentation. The attempt here, although not infallible, will therefore be executed as carefully and diligently as possible.

Before criticizing the end-state approach, we must first look into what this demanded end-state entails. Later on, there will be a discussion of what criticism ended up making such an approach theoretically and practically unattractive or even unattainable. As stated above, the classical conception of a socialist economic system essentially contained two characteristics. Firstly, the means of production, distribution and exchange in society are appropriated by the state (or: nationalization of industry), so that the surplus (or: profit) of the production process can be distributed amongst the laborers. Secondly, the state determines, by accumulating the necessary data on preferential consumption from the people, exactly what needs to be produced, how it will be produced and how much will be produced. This arrangement is known as a centrally planned economy. The socialist mode of production can be contrasted with capitalist planning (also known as competition), in which a great number of actors, or firms, decide on how they will produce individually and competitively.

Continuing, the analysis of a supplemental, but optional, characteristic of classical socialism exposes a bifurcation in theoretical and practical socialism. In theory, socialism is inherently democratic: the centralized importance of workers' input is not only aimed at economic equality, but also at equality in the political sense. However, in practice, no country that has fully implemented socialist property

[10] For another philosophical plea in favor of the departure from the classical approach to socialism, see: Gerald A. Cohen, "Marxism and contemporary political philosophy, or: Why Nozick exercises some Marxists more than he does any egalitarian liberals," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy 20,* no. sup1 P. 363-387.

[11] Although not as obvious today, early 20th century political thought saw the practical synonymity of the words 'Marxist' and 'Socialist' as a given. For this reason, Marx has influenced any and every conceptualization of socialism from his life and on.

[12] Although identical in terminology, this approach may not be conflated with the terms *end-state* and *patterned* distributions used in Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia* from 1974, since this work is concerned with the arrangement of property-relations and not the specific distribution as such: Nozick's principles of holdings are of a consequentialist nature, while the present work concerns itself with the economic structure of society.

relations has had truly democratic government.[13] Although political inquiry around the possibility of democracy in classical socialism will mostly be deferred to further inquiry, this will be briefly discussed in Chapter 1.3.

1.1 Classical socialist critique

The first step in the plea for an ideological approach is not a necessary one, but does provide proper context in which the argument may be understood. This is that, historically, socialism may be seen as a direct reaction to the (unjust) workings of capitalist relations. Therefore, the juxtaposition of capitalist relations and the socialist assertions against these relations may provide a clarifying starting point for the defense of the ideological approach and the extraction of socialist principles. We will therefore first focus ourselves on some of the classical socialist critiques of capitalism.

The origin of one of the socialist arguments lays in a metaphysical proposition supported by most of the early political economists considered pioneers of the science: the Labor Theory of Value (LTV). [14,15] In short, this theory proposed that the inherent value of a good is constituted by the amount of necessary labor that is required to produce it. Other inputs that are, by some, considered as sources of value, were argued to be either a product of labor, like natural recourses, or a constantly depreciating factor, like capital. This would entail that all the value that was created through the production process, named surplus, would be derived from the labor of the workers who produced it. In capitalist property relations, socialists argue, this supposed inherent truth is disregarded when distributing the surplus value of a production process. It is not the workers who receive what is rightfully theirs, but the capitalist who holds the rights to all the surplus, while only supplying the worker with a wage which is not derived from the value of what they produced, but by the value of their 'willingness to work'.[16] One of the reasons for this plea for radically different surplus allocation, is that Marxists do not consider investment of capital and the risk it entails as a source of surplus value. In the (proto-)Marxist conception of the LTV, the capitalist distribution of surplus is considered to be one of the great contradictions of capitalist

[13] See: "List of socialist states," Wikipedia, last modified June 5, 2022, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_socialist_states. As a defense for using such a source: note that this page has been thoroughly substantiated with official and academic sources for every claim. A review of editor's history also shows contributions by credible authors.

[14] Early influential economists who supported this theory include Adam Smith and David Ricardo. It is important to note that their accounts of the LTV did differ in some ways, but were in essence similar to what is explained in this text. For a thorough explanation of their respective theories, see: Albert C. Whitaker, *History and Criticism of the Labor Theory of Value in English Political Economy*, (Columbia University Press,1904).

[15] This theory of value is here described as metaphysical, because it speaks of an *inherent value* of a certain good, making it a necessary and analytic trait of the good itself, a metaphysical assertion derived from the Lockean, and later Hegelian, theory of self-ownership.

[16] The Marxian LTV distinguishes between 'Labor Power', the possibility of a worker to deliver labor on which a wage is based (the thing the laborer sells as 'willingness to work'), and 'Labor Commanded', the value of labor when actually performed to produce a commodity. The first being a factor in calculating the 'use-value' and the second being the factor in calculating the 'exchange-value' of the good. The discrepancy between the two acts as the surplus value of which the worker contributing labor sees none. For an important part of Marx' discussion of these concepts, see: Karl Marx, "Chapter 19: The Transformation of the Value (and Respectively the Price) of Labour-Power into Wages," in *Capital*, (London: Penguin Books, 1996), P. 675-683.

conditions and therefore a great injustice.[17] Therefore, classical socialists and Marxists argue that capitalist property relations contain an inherent process of *exploitation*: the phenomenon that those who contribute labor do not get rewarded with the economic surplus they are responsible for producing.

An important note to make is that this theory of value, along with its metaphysical character, has lost its relevance since the marginalist revolution of the 19th century. Value, instead of it being an inherent quality of a good, has since been treated to be the result of subjective (consumer) preferences. This subjective-relativist approach to value does not necessitate any metaphysical propositions in the determination of value and is now generally accepted amongst most economists, including many contemporary socialist philosophers.[18]

Although the metaphysical character of the socialist theory of capitalist exploitation has vanished, it does not mean that the proposed injustice has also lost its relevancy. An updated consideration of exploitation may be found in a more intuitive postulate that one should be rewarded in (some) proportion to the effort and merit put into the production of a good. In short, an ethical postulate that one is entitled to at least some of his contribution to the creation of value. This is contrasted with the capitalist distribution of revenue in which labor is only treated as a cost of production. This may also find resonance when formulated as the inverse: one may intuitively reject the proposition that one individual should be entitled to the complete production surplus if the only factor of production said individual attributed to the process has been capital and the conjoined financial risk. Furthermore, one could ask himself whether choosing to dedicate labor to a specific firm does not entail a sort of investment of its own: an investment of both time and the risk of losing said laboring function if the firm goes bankrupt. This postulate will be used as a basis for further analysis in this work. The contemporary account of exploitation will be discussed further in Chapter 2.

Another dynamic of capitalism dubbed an inherent flaw by Marxists is the phenomenon of capitalist alienation. The concept of alienation is an expansive one with multiple expressions and without a clear consensus on what constitutes alienation and what does not. However, for its essentiality in both Marxist and socialist theory, a short definition will be proposed here. A first brief introduction to the term requires understanding that the Marxist and classical socialist perception of human nature is a specific one. Human nature is preconditioned on the material conditions one is surrounded by. In this way, Marxists state, the conditions of capitalism greatly influence the way humans think and act and makes them misunderstand what they really feel is important. An important characteristic of this misunderstanding of human nature is the imposed preference for consumption instead of what Marxists

[17] Note that it is still a topic of discussion whether Marx proposed any sort of normative claims, like claims about justice, in his work. That it was implied, however, is argued for by many Marxist scholars. Furthermore, leading philosophers building onto his work have often provided a normative framework in which one can understand Marx' metaethical position ex-post.

[18] The change in approach to value by socialist intellectuals was most importantly caused by the 'Socialist Calculation Debate', taking place between most notably Ludwig. Von Mises, Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, Oskar Lange and Abba Lerner. For a concise summary, see: Paul Jael, "Socialist Calculation and Market Socialism." 2015.

call self-realization. Self-realization comprises of two processes. Firstly, self-actualization, which is the turning of a certain potential, say, being able to learn a foreign language, into actuality, say, having learned to speak fluent French. It is followed by self-externalization, using this newly learned actuality in the public sphere, thereby receiving recognition from the other, say, asking for directions in fluent French. These two processes combine into self-realization, which is, according to Marx, one of the highest sources of meaning for humans. Leading analytical Marxist scholar Jon Elster states that: "Alienation can be described, very broadly, as the lack of a sense of meaning".[19] This lack of sense of meaning can therefore here be interpreted as the absence of self-realization. Hence, alienation can also be understood as a lack of self-realization, which, according to Marxists, is ubiquitous in capitalist society and may be (partly) overcome in socialism.

Further arguments ubiquitous in socialist critiques of capitalism must also briefly be discussed as a method of comprehension of socialist values. These most prominently include discrepancy of socio-economic status based on arbitrary characteristics over which one has no control (e.g. birth lottery or any kind of predetermined luck), the necessary accumulation of capital (as an extension of unjust appropriation of surplus value over time) and the incentive for capitalists to disregard the negative externalities of their production. These supposed inherent ills of capitalism will be elaborated upon in Chapter 2.

1.2 The socialist position

Now that an overview of the relevant socialist critiques of capitalist property relations has been made, we may ensue the argument for the ideological approach with the next step of reasoning. Namely, that if socialists critique capitalism on the grounds of it being unjust, proposal for a change in property relations is a call to a more just arrangement of society. Besides the historical narrative expanded upon above, the socialist proposition may also be considered a call to justice based on the fact that the main characteristic of the socialist proposal is a focus on (economic) equality between people. The consideration of equality as important may reasonably be seen as a normative position. If either is the case, the situation may be formalized as follows:

(1) The capitalist arrangement of society is unjust for multiple reasons, such as:
    a. Inherent exploitation
        ➔ Uninhibited capital accumulation
        ➔ Arbitrary inequality
    b. Alienation
    c. Disregard of externalities
(2) There are certain normative principles which, when adhered to, would create a (more) just society

[19] Jon Elster, *An Introduction to Karl Marx* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), P. 43.

(3) The classical socialist system adheres to these principles and must therefore replace capitalist property relations with:
    a. Appropriation of means of production, distribution and exchange by the state
    b. A centrally planned economy
    c. (Any further characteristics that may be considered orthodox, e.g. democracy)

The case for a classical socialist system can thus be interpreted as (1) → (2) → (3).[20] Note that accepting proposition (3) requires also accepting proposition (2): there cannot be a claim to a more just arrangement of society if the conception of justice is not present and in accordance with the proposed arrangement. However, the implicative relation between (2) and (3) does not necessarily hold conversely: it does not logically follow that, if there are certain principles of justice that accord with the classical socialist system, that these are only satisfied by the arrangement mentioned in (3a), (3b) and (3c). If one were to conceive of another arrangement of society in accordance with the principles in (2), this would not be excluded by the relation between (2) and (3). Does this conclusively lead us to a preference for the ideological approach? Not necessarily: the general classical socialist response to this reasoning would entail that socialist property relations, minimally (3a) and (3b), are the only way in which the socialist principles can be realized. What the argument does do, I propose, is shift the burden of proof to the proponent of (3), who now has to prove that (3) would be the best arrangement of society: can one justify the introduction of this specific arrangement as the best possible satisfaction of socialist principles?

1.3 Critique of the socialist position

One cannot. As mentioned in the introduction, classical socialism is generally considered to be a philosophically and economically obsolete project. However, in order to formulate a coherent and comprehensive argument, this proposition may not only be deferred to other work. For this reason, a brief exposition of the most detrimental problems with the two conjoined socialist propositions will be executed here.

1.3.1 The price mechanism in a centrally planned economy

The first critique pertains itself to the problems with centralized planning of the economy. It was proposed by F.A. Hayek in his seminal article *The Use of Knowledge in Society*.[21] Hayek noted a separation between two kinds of knowledge relevant to economic analysis. Firstly, abstract scientific and statistical truths used to explain and plan economic processes. Secondly, "The knowledge of particular circumstances of time and space",[22] meaning specific pieces of relevant information that arise

[20] Note that, as mentioned above, the acceptance of proposition (1) is not a theoretical necessity, but a historical approximation of the socialist argument.
[21] Friedrich A. Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society," *The American economic review* 35, no. 4 (1945): P. 519-530.
[22] Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society," P. 521.

circumstantially. He argues that the relevance of the second type of information is greatly overlooked in the argument for centralized planning. Were production processes based on only the first kind of knowledge, officials conducting centralized planning would excel at their jobs: all that would be required would be the mathematical solution of a static logical problem.[23] However, Hayek argues, economic problems of production arise *only* out of accidental, dynamic and disruptive forces, like the relative change in supply or demand of a good used in a production process. In a competitive market economy (as in contemporary capitalism), these accidental shocks are the main concern of a manager overseeing efficient production: the smallest changes in marginal rates of substitution can have a disruptive effect on the entire matrix of equations to be solved for efficiency, which requires thorough reconsideration and recalculation. This may sometimes even lead to an event causing the project to be considered unprofitable and therefore be discontinued.

Hayek explains this phenomenon with an example about tin.[24] Say, there is an ongoing production process for which tin has been chosen as one of the materials used in the process. However, tin may also be substituted by another good, say, copper.[25] Now imagine that some accidental event causes a shock in the supply of tin.[26] The cause of this event is unknown. This is important, because the causes of such shocks are also almost never known in practicality. As a consequence, tin may become either relatively affordable or costly. In a competitive market, this shock in supply or demand would incentivize a profit-seeking agent to either economize tin, or to discontinue its production, driving the price of tin, relatively to all other substitutes, down or up. The source of this relative shock does not have to be known by the manager overseeing the production of a good. All that has to be known is the relative appreciation or depreciation of the material.

But how is this change in relative value communicated to the manager? This, Hayek argues, is only possible by the price mechanism present in a competitive market: the price of a good perfectly defines the relation between the cost of two materials and converts it to an abstract indicator of relation, like the Euro. Were this piece of dispersed information not transferred to the manager of production through anonymous profit-seeking agents, the project may have become unprofitable without any alteration in the initially profitable plan of production.

This is where the crux of Hayek's detrimental attack on centralized planning lies: it is impossible for a centralized planner to recognize such a change in relative cost of such a product, since there is no

[23] This would require equating the marginal rates of substitution between all relevant factors in the production process.
[24] Paraphrased and slightly altered from: Hayek, "The Use of Knowledge in Society," P. 526.
[25] Note that this is already a significant simplification of reality: in real-life production processes, such a material may be substituted in a myriad of different ways.
[26] Such events may also be unknown because they are part of a chain of supply shocks. For example: say that there is a drought taking place in Indonesia, a country which produces a considerable amount of tin. This could lead to the expectation of food shortages. The decrease in expected supply of grains makes the price of grains go up. It may therefore be more profitable for a laborer, who at first mines tin, to switch his efforts to producing grain. This could drive the relative price of tin up for a reason not easily predictable to a producer living on another continent.

market competitor who chooses to either economize tin or discontinue its production in search of profitability (or in order to prevent unprofitability). As a result, the mechanism of supply-and-demand-based price formation will not take place, often making the centrally planned production process inefficient and, with many of these shocks inadvertently happening during production, unprofitable.

Although the argumentation and conclusion of such an argument is abstract, historical instances of famine potentially caused at least in part by centralization are abundant. The most well-known example of this is probably the Great Chines Famine of 1959-1961. However, although inefficient use of means of production has been pointed at as one of the causes of this famine,[27] the complexity of the situation makes it impossible to argue for this causation conclusively; extensive scientific inquiry into the causes of the famine has not brought complete scientific consensus. For that reason, one may choose to only consider the theoretical flaw which arises out of socialist planning.

1.3.2 The slippery slope towards totalitarianism and serfdom

A further argument against both the full nationalization of industry and the conjoined centralized planning may also be explained on a theoretical level and illustrated empirically. As stated in the beginning of Chapter 1, no country has successfully adopted socialist property relations while also being a lasting, well-functioning democracy. This is where the paradoxical nature of socialism as a theory and practice lies: inherently, socialism is based on equality of not only material goods, but also of equal political participation. Why then is this not reflected in known instances of socialism being implemented? One could wonder whether this is either a circumstantial coincidence, perhaps caused by other characteristics of the countries that appropriated socialism, or because of some necessary processes inherent in socialism. Although not defendable with absolute certainty, the chance of this absence of democracy being the consequence of socialist institutionalization of society seems likely.

This position was most notably defended by Friedrich Hayek and other intellectuals in his co-founded Mont Pelerin Society, who focused on advocating for liberal freedom and voicing stark opposition to socialist societies. Hayek deemed it a necessity that socialism must always fall into totalitarianism, and eventually fascism, after some extent of time. For the scope of this work, however, we will look at the tendencies of socialism to evolve from a democracy into an authoritarian society. Why did Hayek argue this was the case?

Firstly, Hayek argued that centralization of power also implies the enlargement of absolute power; decentralization of power by the existence of private corporations is the only way we can ensure that one does not fall under necessary submission of one entity. He states: “Who can seriously doubt that the power which a millionaire, who may be my employer, has over me is very much less than that which the smallest bureaucrat possesses who wields the coercive power of the state and on whose

[27] For an example of such a conclusion, see: Wei Li and Dennis Tao Yang, “The Great Leap Forward: Anatomy of a Central Planning Disaster,” *Journal of Political Economy* 113, no. 4 (2005): P. 840-877.

discretion it depends how I am allowed to live and work?".[28] One may also think of it like this: the power of firms in a competitive market only reaches to the extent to which one acts in its sphere of influence. However, competitive firms always offer the opportunity of an alternative, while complete nationalization of industry ensures that no alternative sphere of power will be present. This absence of an alternative may also be seen as a source of power.

This centralization of power would not be problematic if it were exercised with benevolence, as is presupposed by strains of socialist thoughts.[29] However, Hayek states, although initial intention of planning actors may be good, the resulting powers will eventually be the opposite. The reasoning behind this begins with stating that the goal of socialist planning, often seen as 'absolute equality' or 'collective welfare', without a unified plan on how to attain it, is the only point of agreement ensured in deliberation on how to approach centralized planning, even though attaining such a utopian standard is the entire striving of the socialist system. It may be compared to a group of leaders deciding they want to achieve world peace, without agreeing on how to reach their goal: it could be accomplished through legislative coercion, a supranational partnership, one last world war to end all wars, or just asking every head of state to stop hating their enemies. These are all radically different approaches with different extents of coercion. Moreover, this process of planning does not allow for a pluralist approach. A long term plan must have a unified direction. This, conjoined with the fact that the more complex the plan on which to agree upon becomes, the more differentiated the opinions on such a plan become, means that a specific plan cannot count on widespread political and public support. This phenomenon of politicians arguing over intricacies does not agree with the general perception of the public; they in turn become more sensitive to simplified assertions about how to attain said collective welfare and rhetorical appeals to emotions. Now, the only thing left that has to happen is the appearance of a 'strong leader' who appropriates such rhetoric and proposes a system of values that is easy to get behind. Often, this system of values will at least include the superiority of the collective over the individual, which is also a claim of superiority of 'the ends' over 'the means' and of 'the plan' over 'the rule of law'. This is conjoined with the structural blaming of a specific 'human weakness', creating an us/them-narrative, opening the door for structural silencing of political and social opposition to the ruling party.[30] And so, Hayek concludes, the Road to Serfdom has truly started.

Although elaborated upon quite broadly here, I am not arguing that this described process is necessarily and completely true. However, two assertions from it may be extracted as valuable and possibly detrimental when compared with the arrangement proposed in classical socialism. Firstly, that complete centralization of economic power opens the door to abuse of power and the breakdown of the rule of law and, secondly, that economic freedom is inherently connected to other types of freedom: the

[28] Friedrich A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (London: The Institute of Economic Affairs, 2009), P.41.
[29] Here referring to authoritarian socialists, who prefer nationalization of industry and a centrally planned economy to democracy and assume such authoritative rule would be executed with benevolence.
[30] Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, P. 52-55.

possibility of extensive coercion that leads from unifying the power over the means of production also implies extensive coercion elsewhere. This seems to make the ideal of a well-functioning classical socialist democracy an unstable one.

1.4 The case for the ideological approach

If the above mentioned critique of classical socialism, combined with a myriad of other issues discussed at length in other scientific literature,[31] is accepted as detrimental to the feasibility of classical socialism, what may be concluded? Three options seem to remain:

(A) There is a specific arrangement of society in perfect accordance with the socialist principles, but it has not been formulated yet
(B) Perfect accordance with the socialist principles is not a feasible goal, therefore the principles should be strived after
(C) Perfect accordance with the socialist principles is not a feasible goal, therefore we must not attempt to accord with them

First, I will propose disregarding option (C) outright for, admittedly, somewhat dogmatic reasons. Although merit may certainly be found in the proposition that either achieving a just state of society is impossible, or, that the state has no mandate to interfere with societal processes as to create a more just society, the entire discussion of an arrangement of society, outside of the civil-rights enforcing mandate of the state, is predicated on the proposition that more just arrangements are possible and that the state is mandated to try and achieve a more just arrangement.[32] Therefore, this work may not find resonance with either anarchists, libertarians or other minimal-state or non-state proponents, which is a concession that has to be made for the sake of the argument.

Let us then consider the validity of (A) by recalling the statement proposed in Chapter 1.2 that, since there is no necessary logical relation between the socialist principles and a possible perfect execution of those principles, the burden of proof is on the proponent of a potentially perfect system to defend it. In line with this, if one were to deny this burden of proof, I propose he would engage in fallacious reasoning, since it would necessitate proving a negative: it is (practically) impossible to prove that there is not a system in perfect accordance with socialist principles if not all possible arrangements of society are known. Therefore, we may reasonably deny the possibility of option (A) for the time being, until a both theoretically coherent and practically feasible system is proposed. This leads us to

[31] For a comprehensive source summarizing some of these further arguments, see: Henry Kyambelesa, "A Critique of Socialism and Marxism," 2019.
[32] Admittedly, this brief description may generalize the intricacies of anarchist and libertarian philosophies too much. In general, both philosophies often have some moral content, but such content is more focused on individual responsibility, minimal state coercion and informal collaboration than large scale redistribution with the aim of societal justice.

conclude that (B): perfect accordance with the socialist principles is not a feasible goal, therefore the principles should be strived after.

In this chapter, the case for an ideological approach to socialism has been made. This has been done through a mixed analysis of socialism containing both historical and theoretical elements. Historically, socialism may be defined as normative critique of capitalist property relations. The most significant of these critiques are with regards to exploitation, alienation, accumulation of capital, excessive luck-based inequality and a disregard for negative externalities. The solution is a proposal for an alternative, more just, system, which is a plea for a specific end-state of society: classical socialists want industry to be nationalized and production processes to be centrally planned. However, analysis of the chain of socialist arguments has lead us to conclude that it is not the system proposal, but saturation of the socialist principles that is the strict requirement for justice proposed by socialists. Furthermore, the original plea for a socialist system is inherently flawed on multiple fronts, including, but not limited to, the absence of the price system and the tendency to evolve into totalitarian coercion. Now that the case has been made for the ideological approach, we may look at how exactly one would go about formulating the socialist principles.

Chapter 2: The principles of socialism

Before indulging in an explication of the socialist principles, an indication of a normative framework is required. The most important aspect of this moral framework being the question what the central element of proposed justice and injustice is. However, although one particular normative theory will be attained to here, it is not a specific necessity to appropriate this exact framework in order to make the argument function: it is more concerned with interpreting the specific moral consequences of the principles.

2.1 The egalitarian framework

A first general statement to be made about the normative framework the principles must be considered in, is that the principles generally seem to accord with (luck) egalitarianism:[33] the conviction that people are equal and deserve some form of equal treatment. This equality of people must be interpreted in an abstract sense, meaning that people may have different backgrounds, skills predisposed at birth, characteristics and many other things, but they are all equally subjected to morality and therefore deserve to be treated equally.[34] Unfortunately, this is the only real assertion on which all egalitarians agree. The question most prominently in need of an answer among egalitarians is: 'what is the thing is that should be equalized, or, the *equalisandum*, between people?' Even the way to reach an answer to this question is generally agreed upon: the formulation of this *equalisandum* is in the separation of things that people have control over and things that people do not have control over. The things that people are responsible for and for which they are not responsible. A general way to understand this is the difference between circumstances and choices: where do circumstances end and where do choices subject to responsibility start?[35] Thus, we may split the quest for the *equalisandum* up into two further questions: 'What circumstances do people have no control over?' And: 'What thing needs to be equalized in order to correct for the things people have no control over?'

As one may conclude from the previous paragraph, answering such questions is not a simple matter. Such a discussion would easily lend itself, as it already has, to huge interdisciplinary works discussing all the intricacies of and possible answers to these questions. This elaborate discussion transcends the scope of this thesis. I will therefore appropriate the interpretation of egalitarian philosopher John Roemer, whom has also proposed the socialist principles that will be discussed in the next section. Roemer argues for opportunity as the *equalisandum*, with the condition that: 'equality of opportunity for X holds when the values of X for all those who exercised a comparable degree of

[33] It must be duly noted that most philosopher have rejected the specific term *Luck Egalitarianism* and have preferred the more general term, namely egalitarianism, because of misinterpretation issues and lack of nuance present in the inclusion of the word luck. It is therefore placed between parentheses here.
[34] Of course, the definition of this moral subject is also a topic of debate. Some choose to include or exclude children, significantly mentally impaired people or even animals as having an intrinsic moral value. This question will not be further elaborated upon here.
[35] Note that this is not completely sufficiently worded, because certain circumstances may even be argued to be a consequence of responsibility. Opinions on this issue differ, however, and for simplicity's sake it is not discussed here.

responsibility are equal, regardless of their circumstances.'[36] So, if two subjects have a similar degree of responsibility, they must have an equal degree of opportunity of some specific thing, like wealth. The comparability of responsibility in this interpretation is based on two circumstances: that of the individual's socioeconomic status in society and their genetics. Further elaborate explanation of how this process of comparison would take place, including a mathematical justification of such a model, exceeds the scope of this work and will therefore be deferred to Roemer's article.[37] The same will be done for critique and defense of alternative interpretations of egalitarianism.[38] Note that the used model of egalitarianism is definitely not the only interpretation that is usable to apply to socialist principles. The principles are potentially applicable to multiple interpretations of egalitarianism and will therefore yield nuanced differences in the way they must be considered. It is nevertheless encouraged for future inquirers to look beyond the specific framework used in this work and to apply different interpretations of egalitarianism to the principles below, or, if successfully conceptualized, different theories of justice. Now that the normative framework has been explicated, we may ensue with discussing the proposed principles of socialism.

2.2 The principles of socialism

In his 1994 book, *A future for Socialism*, philosopher John Roemer explicates his intuitive definition of the socialist principles which will be used as a starting point here. He believes the thing socialists want are the following:

(I.) Equality of opportunity for Self-realization and Welfare;

(II.) Equality of opportunity for Political Influence;

(III.) Equality of Social Status;[39]

2.2.1 Definitions

First, the inclusion of the word 'opportunity' requires elucidation: principles (I) and (II) are with reference to equality of *opportunity* and not strict equality. This follows from the proposed socialist position of Roemer's egalitarianism mentioned above; namely that, when opportunities for two individuals are the same, differences in what these people achieve may be justified. The inclusion of the

[36] John E. Roemer, "A Pragmatic Theory of Responsibility for the Egalitarian Planner," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* (1993): P. 149.
[37] Roemer, "A Pragmatic Theory of Responsibility for the Egalitarian Planner," P. 149-166.
[38] For some notable egalitarians, see: Ronald Dworkin, "What Is Equality? Part I: Equality of Welfare," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 10, no. 3 (1981): P. 185-246. And: Richard J. Arneson, "Equality of Opportunity for Welfare," *Philosophical Studies 56* (1989): P. 77-93. And: G. A. Cohen, "On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice," *Ethics* 99 (1989): P. 906-944. And finally, for a deep dive into more distinct conceptions of egalitarianism, see: John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971). And: Amartya Sen, "Well-being, Agency, and Freedom: The Dewey Lectures 1984," *Journal of Philosophy* 82 (1985): P. 169-221.
[39] John E. Roemer, *A Future for Socialism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), P. 11.

word opportunity will therefore be discussed alongside the definitions of the terms to see how they influence the workings and feasibility of the principles.

Then, the used terms require definitions. With self-realization, Roemer refers to 'the development and application of one's talents in a direction that gives meaning to one's life.'[40] It hinges on the process of attaining goals in life that give meaning through any type of struggle, the primary goal of this process being the creation of meaning, not the pleasure derived from the success of this activity. It is essentially the human desire and appreciation for development and flourishing, which must be equally allowed and encouraged for all. Note that Roemer's emphasis on the concept of self-realization may be interpreted as a reaction to the socialist critique of capitalist alienation, which was defined as an absence of self-realization in Chapter 1.1. However, one must not see the abolishment of alienation as an absolute phenomenon, since, as is also implied with the keyword opportunity, complete abolishment of alienation is not considered a feasible goal by many contemporary socialists and Marxists.[41] This is caused by the existence of alienating work that necessarily must be executed and the limited nature of resources which do not allow for all to actualize themselves in any manner they wish.[42] From this definition of self-realization, combined with the normative position and the inclusion of opportunity in the principle, one may also conclude that special thought must be applied to enabling people to pursue self-realization who, through no fault of their own, are deprived of this opportunity. An example of this would be people born with disabilities. Furthermore, continuing on the notion of opportunity, striving towards complete equality of self-realization does not take into account what the intentions and ambitions of an individual in society are. Not specifying opportunity would thus mandate us to support an individual who, although being 90 years old, comes to believe that he or she must climb Mount Everest for life to be purposeful. Enabling such an excessive aspiration seems both implausible and disproportionately costly. Accounting for opportunity implies that a subject its demands must be within some boundary of reason; it must be something that people can realistically wish for and it must not interfere with another person's right to aspire something which is within these bounds of reason.

Self-realization is brought forward alongside another concept, namely welfare. This pertains to both monetary welfare and welfare in the broader sense, like watching an entertaining movie, eating a fine meal or enjoying one's surroundings. This distinguishes itself from the opportunity of self-realization in that the pleasures enjoyed are much simpler and in general not executed out of a will for value, but for enjoyment. It should then be considered how opportunity relates to welfare. There are two reasons for the inclusion of opportunity here. Firstly, as with self-realization, the egalitarian framework in which these principles are discussed only requires equalization of things we do not have any control over; there must still be room for certain merits and traits like hard work and calculated risk-taking to

[40] Roemer, *A Future for Socialism*, P. 11.
[41] For an example, see: Jon Elster, "Self-realization in work and politics: The Marxist conception of the good life," *Social Philosophy and Policy* 3(2), (1986): P. 101.
[42] For an elaboration on the limits of self-realization, see: Jon Elster, *An Introduction to Karl Marx* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), P. 43-49.

justify certain people having a higher standard of welfare than others. The second reason is a practical one with regards to feasibility: assuring absolute equality of welfare abolishes any economic incentive for attaining more wealth by working harder.[43] In this sense, allowing for some inequality of wealth may also be in the benefit of the lesser-endowed, aggregate wealth will be greatly benefited by allowing some inequality. Not allowing any form of wealth inequality, conversely, theoretically and historically leads to far-reaching efficiency problems. Endangering the feasibility of any socialist system if not accounted for.

Continuing, principle (II) implies that socialism is inherently democratic. Although, as mentioned before, this is generally in accordance with the theoretical conception of any socialist system, it is something that should be emphasized for clarity.[44, 45] The opportunity for political influence will here be interpreted as having three essential elements: equality of opportunity to be represented (with regards to voting power), to represent (accessibility of the political process) and a significant level of transparency in the political process in order to ensure sufficient and proper information to base a political decision on. Admittedly, this definition runs into the problem of being too vague. However, the domain and scope of this thesis do not allow elaborate inquiry into an exact explication of the necessary principles to uphold equality of opportunity for political influence.

2.2.2 Departure from the third principle

Furthermore, after acceptance of the first and second principle, a necessary deviation from Roemer's thought will be made. It will be in favor of dropping principle (III) from the set of socialist principles. This will be justified by the use of two arguments. Firstly, when considering socialist principles in a societal context, the scope of application of the principles must be acknowledged: application of these principles can only be executed through the institutionalization of society. The principles are applied through law and the structural consequences and execution of the law as in, for example, the economic system and the civil service system. Extending the scope would require a measure of coercion outside of the institutions present in society, a clear characteristic of authoritarianism, which would violate principle (II). As social status is a social phenomenon that, although in part influenced by the arrangement of society, also has its place in the private domain, this would require extending the scope. Therefore, if one were to propose radically equalizing social status, it would, if even practically possible, require either an extensive amount of (authoritarian) coercion, or an absurd amount of wishful thinking that the discrepancy between people their social status would disappear only by changing certain arrangements of society. The first option of extensive coercion would require violation of principle (II)

[43] The existence of a mostly negative tradeoff between equality and efficiency is generally agreed upon in the economic science. For an explanation and exploration of this tradeoff, see: Arthur M. Okun, *Equality and Efficiency: The Big Tradeoff* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings institute, 1975).
[44] The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, "Socialism."
[45] Note that, in theory, socialism has always been conceived as a radically democratic system, although historical materializations of socialism have often been far from democratic.

and the second one seems to require an unrealistic presupposition about human relational behavior.[46] Secondly, we may safely propose that social status is, in part, constituted by income and occupation.[47] As is concluded above, the inclusion of the clause of opportunity in principle (I) and (II) allows for discrepancy in things like income, political influence (correlated with occupational prestige) and level of self-externalization. If social status is at least in part influenced by these things, it is thereby logically impossible to attain principle (III). Although Roemer recognizes the tension, especially between attaining (I) and (II) and still maintaining (III), he does not resolve this tension by departing from his third principle.[48] For reasons mentioned above, this departure will take place here.

2.2.3 Trade-off between the principles

We must also take note of an interesting dynamic when attempting to uphold the two principles as principle (I) and (II) are sometimes in tension with each other. For example, radically equalizing opportunity of self-realization and welfare would most likely require an extensive amount of political coercion as it would entail prohibiting any form of attempts to significantly increase one's wealth through means like entrepreneurship or voluntary interpersonal transactions. Since freedom of enterprise and entrepreneurship are considered valuable goods of liberty, this limitation of freedom would be so excessive that it may reasonably count on strong political opposition, requiring coercion in order to be implemented and therefore violating principle (II). Conversely, prioritizing the maximization of opportunity for political influence makes it improbable to achieve the desired level of opportunity for self-realization and welfare. Completely equalizing opportunity for political influence would create a relatively large amount of power for the political majority in society, because it would likely contain stronger elements of direct democracy and a decreased emphasis on constitutional rights defending the political minority. This could lead to the formation of a majority bloc, enabling a far-reaching materialization of the *tyranny of the majority*. This would provide the majority bloc with an incentive to utilize their absolute power in order to better their own position; because they could have a preference of optimizing their own utility over others, it could drastically decrease the equality of opportunity for welfare and self-realization.

From this, it may be concluded that, since both principles (I) and (II) depend on each other in some manner, it is therefore logically impossible to maximize both at once. Although it would be desirable to formulate an exact order of preference between the two principles, this is not possible in a

[46] Admittedly, this argument presupposes humans as hierarchical beings, or at least denies humans as completely non-hierarchical beings. Although hierarchies are clearly present in contemporary Western society, it remains a presupposition that cannot be fully defended on the basis of philosophical or economic argumentation; the question lends itself more to the anthropological and psychological sciences. The call for a conclusive answer to this question will therefore be deferred to these respective domains.
[47] "Socioeconomic Status, Definition," Wiley Online Library, last modified February 21, 2014, https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1002/9781118410868.wbehibs395.
[48] Roemer, *A Future for Socialism*, P. 14.

theoretical and abstract manner.[49] This situation therefore requires a contextualist approach led by societal deliberation on the question whether, in a specific set of circumstances, a society prefers to uphold the highest opportunity for self-realization and welfare, or for opportunity for political influence.[50]

2.2.4 The alternative formulation

Based on the discussion above, another illuminating formulation of the socialist principles will be presented here. When the first two principles are not in tension, they could more thoroughly be defined as such. Socialist want:

(I.) An organization of Society that equalizes the opportunity for Self-Realization and Welfare at a level no lower than that any other organization of society could achieve for anyone;[51]

(II.) An organization of Society that equalizes the opportunity for Political Influence at a level no lower than that any other organization of society could achieve for anyone;

There are multiple significant advantages to formulating the socialist principles in such a manner. Firstly, they lend themselves to application in a 'negative' manner. This means being able to analyze whether a certain proposed (policy) change in society is in accordance with the principles by asking whether improvements could be made with regards to one of the principles, without having a (disproportionally) negative effect on the other. The method of negative application and gradual improvement is also a feasible way to create a society increasingly in accordance with said socialist principles.

Such formulation of the socialist principles may also be used to derive certain tendencies that are implied by the principles. Tendencies that will likely materialize once the principles are applied. The most notable being that, when applying these principles to different possible states of the economy, the socialist principles seem to have a tendency of diminishing capitalist exploitation. This can be derived from the fact that a tremendous source of opportunity towards wealth may be caused by the enjoyment of capital and the consequential full rights to production surplus. Holding substantial capital is often the consequence of some sort of arbitrary circumstance like inheritance, luck or specific predisposed talent that lends itself to quick accumulation of capital (like, say, having a predisposition which lends itself

[49] The exception to this of course being *Pareto Improvement*: making one better off without making the other worse off.

[50] Although one could interpret this as one of the weaknesses of this specific interpretation of socialist principles, it is helpful to note that this tension between political and economic equality is also prevalent in current Western political systems. For example: modern-day discussion around policy to combat climate change in order to ensure the possibility for self-realization and welfare of those disproportionately affected, as is projected to be especially those living in Sub-Saharan Afrika and future generations, require a significant extent of political coercion. An example of this coercion can be seen in the expropriation of farmland from certain excessively polluting farmers. The acknowledgement of and discussion on this tension seems to be essential in conceptualizing a theory of justice.

[51] In part derived from the reasoning in: Roemer, *A Future for Socialism*, P. 13.

perfectly to becoming a football star). If one were to attempt to create a society that minimizes the discrepancy in opportunity for self-realization and welfare, it would most likely seek to do so through diminishing the extent of exploitation.

This reasoning may also be applied to the concept of negative externalities: the broad definition of welfare proposed in Chapter 1 entails that phenomena that lower one's quality of life, like pollution, have a negative effect on said welfare.[52] This means that, if a policy proposal were to diminish air quality for an already poorly-endowed part of a country, it would disproportionately affect their general welfare to an extent that violates principle (I).

We may also conclude that these socialist principles do not, like is common in classical socialism, strictly prefer a revolutionary method of attaining justice. They may be applied in a constructive manner conforming with contemporary political standards; any implementation of policy that, for example, organizes society in such a manner as to enlarge the opportunity for political influence for the intellectually less-endowed (e.g. a binding referendum) would accord with this negative formulation of the socialist principles. In this sense the principles could find resonance with many 'social' political positions currently present in democratic parliaments across the globe like, but not limited to, orthodox socialist parties and the aforementioned Democratic Socialists, Social Democrats and contemporary Third-Way supporters. Further research could indicate to what extent current-day proposals on the political agenda, like a Universal Basic Income (UBI), Labor Managed Firms (LMF), or the introduction of mandatory profit sharing in large-size corporations, would accord to these principles. Furthermore, the socialist principles may also exceed the scope of general conceptions of classical socialism, as they will also be applicable to policies in transnational instances like, at the moment most prominently, the European Union.

[52] 'Broad' Welfare thus being the sum of all that provides utility, subtracted by all that provides disutility to subjects present in the utility function.

Conclusion

Socialism, as it is best known, was conceived as a reaction to the horrendous labor conditions present in the post-industrial Western world. Intellectuals and laborers alike attempted to pin down what exactly it was about capitalist conditions that was so dehumanizing and unjust and how these injustices could ever be vindicated. Exploitation, alienation and an overall seemingly arbitrary distribution of wealth and power were the factors that they concluded were most unjust about the society they lived in. Their proposed solution: seizing the means of production, distribution and exchange through revolutionary means. Then, having the state which was governed by their own, often democratically elected, laborers arrange and plan the economy. Such became the utopia with permanent residence in the mind of many impoverished laborers.

Unfortunately, over a century of theorizing and practical experimentation has led many to conclude the idea of the classical socialist utopia to be obsolete. As discussed in Chapter 1, there are shortcomings with regards to efficiency of production, because of the absence of a natural price mechanism accurately depicting the relative value of production resources and factors, and liberty, caused by the tendency of socialist democracy to evolve into authoritarianism that cannot be overcome when applying classical socialist property relations. In this work, it has been attempted to breathe new life into the socialist ideal by not looking at the original arrangements of society proposed so long ago, but by viewing it through a lens of ideology. The main reason for taking this approach was found in the progressive character of socialist reasoning: if principles of justice are required to make a claim towards justice, are the principles not more fundamental? And, as was argued in Chapter 1, if the original conception of socialism turns out to be unfeasible, is it not better to try and extract what was so important about socialism in the first place and to use that in order to create a more contemporarily applicable version of the socialist ideal?

After having provided a reason for the ideological, instead of the end-state, approach, it was argued that socialism, in essence, is best understood as having its fundament in an egalitarian ethic. In Chapter 2, I concerned myself with answering the research question posed in the introduction, which was: ‘What are the principles that the socialist system attempts to accord with?’. I believe an answer to that question has been posited here. From the perspective of an ideological socialist, society should seek to give people in similar circumstances and with similar dispositions, similar opportunities with regards to self-realization, welfare and political influence. The formulated principles do not remain necessarily revolutionary in character, however, nor does it require appropriators of the principles to plead for an exact state of property relations in society. What can mostly be concluded from the principles is a point of measure to evaluate whether a certain (policy) proposition makes the concerning society more or less in accordance with the principles. They provide a starting point and a direction to look in.

This end point may also be interpreted as a starting point for other proponents of said socialist principles. As stated in Chapter 1, the proposition that there is a specific arrangement of society in

perfect accordance with the socialist principles has not been falsified. Although the search for such an arrangement may turn out to be tedious and fruitless, excessive current-day accumulation of capital across the Western world at least ensures a reason to think about such questions. It seems needless to say that we at least have to try. And, maybe eventually, if we are lucky and diligent, we may manage to fulfil the hopes and needs of those so severely disadvantaged after all.

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