

SOCIALISM: UTILITARIAN AND DEONTIC

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This article argues that those who advocate the capitalist market system on the basis of the ‘invisible hand’ or ‘spontaneous order’ belong to a tradition in political philosophy which attempts to find ways to get the most out of a flawed human nature, whereas socialists tend to belong to the opposing tradition which maintains faith in human improvement. The former tradition involves a kind of consequentialism in which goodness can be achieved irrespective of people’s intentions, whereas the latter tradition, with its emphasis on conscious decision making and the ‘good will’, includes Kantian deontology. Both utilitarian and deontological arguments for socialism are discussed, but it is argued that the emphases on human dignity and on deliberate planned action make socialist arguments sit more comfortably with deontology. This is most clearly the case when socialist thinkers transform Kantian monological universality into dialogical and communicative mutuality.

Keywords: deontology; dialogism; socialism; utilitarianism.

Argumenta-se neste artigo que aqueles que defendem um sistema de mercado capitalista tendo por base a “mão invisível” ou a “ordem espontânea” pertencem a uma tradição da filosofia política que procura resgatar o máximo possível de uma natureza humana defeituosa, ao passo que os socialistas tendem a pertencer a uma tradição oposta que assenta numa fé no progresso humano. A primeira das tradições pressupõe uma espécie de consequencialismo no qual a bondade pode ser obtida independentemente das intenções das pessoas, ao passo que a segunda, dada a sua ênfase na tomada consciente de decisões e na “vontade boa” esteia-se numa deontologia Kantiana. Discutem-se aqui tanto argumentos de tipo utilitário como deontológico a favor do socialismo, mas sugere-se que a ênfase na dignidade humana e em acções deliberadas e planeadas tornam os argumentos socialistas mais consentâneos com uma abordagem deontológica. Isto é sobretudo evidente quando os pensadores socialistas transformam a universalidade monológica Kantiana numa mutualidade dialógica e comunicativa.

Palavras-chave: deontologia; dialogismo; socialismo; utilitarismo.

Introduction

Socialism can and has been furnished with moral justification from a variety of normative perspectives. A utilitarian may claim that a socialist socio-economic system is best positioned to promote the greatest well-being of the greatest number of people, whereas a deontologist may claim that only a socialist system would embody the obligation to treat human beings with dignity and forbid their exploitation. The purveyor of virtue ethics could call on socialism to enable the flourishing of human capacities that are stifled by capitalism.

A common criticism of socialism is that in deliberately attempting to improve society it overlooks the deficiencies of human knowledge and human nature, thereby embroiling itself in the unhappy unintended consequences of the proverbial “road to hell.” This Hayekian view has it that in order to elude the danger of good intentions leading to bad results a system or mechanism, such as the market, is required which would further the common good without anyone having to intend goodness. The view thus harbours an implicit utilitarian consequentialism in that it judges the goodness of a political system by its consequences and not the intentions behind it. A consequentialism of this sort would seem to be the normative perspective most suited to a deficient humanity.

Must it then be accepted that deontological duty and dignity are too rigorous and demanding for the disappointing beings that humans are, at least at the socio-political level? The opposing view would be that a humanity aspiring to enlightenment and modernity should ultimately aspire to a socio-political system in which each person participates with recognized autonomy and intrinsic worth at the economic level as well as at the narrowly political level. The deficiencies in human knowledge and behaviour that the market mechanism is meant to ameliorate can and ought to be overcome, lest humanity be condemned to remain at a certain level of moral darkness.

It will be argued here that pessimistic and optimistic assumptions about human capabilities lie at the bases of two opposing traditions of normative political philosophy, and that the pessimistic one involves a kind of utilitarianism whereas the optimistic one involves a kind of deontology. Despite there being historical attempts at justifying socialism from a utilitarian perspective, deontological attempts appear to be more convincing due to an emphasis on the

connection between conscious decision making and human dignity. This is particularly the case when Kantian universality is transformed into theories of dialogical and communicative mutuality. Putting into place an institutional framework which would enable and maintain a system of open communicative acculturation and deliberation would constitute a necessary condition for the eventual emergence of the manifest morality of socialism.

1. Ethics: Fallen and Edenic

Normative justifications for political systems can be divided into two types, those that assume or take into account a corrupted human nature and those that rely on a human capacity for virtue. For example, in ancient China, the Legalists and Confucians disagreed over how to achieve social harmony, disagreements which were founded on opposing views of human nature. Legalists, such as Shang Yang (2017), thought that only a strict system of external punishments and rewards could tame a wicked and unruly human nature, whereas Confucius (2014) stressed the need to cultivate in people an inner sense of responsibility and respect.

Analogous disagreements can be seen in the “social contract” theories of early modern England and France. According to Thomas Hobbes (1651/1981), humans in their pre-social “natural” state only pursue their own individual self-interest and consequently live in a state of “war of all against all”. The social contract that gets them out of this situation involves an agreement amongst the people of a society to allow themselves to be ruled by a sovereign with absolute power. The point of the sovereign having absolute power and not being a party to the contract that bestows such power is that this will create a situation in which the sovereign will protect the people, not because of any legal requirement, but simply by acting out of self-interest. The sovereign is not expected to be good or to abide by any law. The situation created by ceding absolute power to the sovereign is meant to be a realistic way of aligning the self-interest of the sovereign with the interests of society as a whole. Hobbes’s position is commonly contrasted with the views on human nature and the social contract to be found in the political philosophies of John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In different ways, both Locke (1689/1980) and Rousseau (1762/1993) hold the view that humans left to their own pre-social devices will tend to follow a natural morality, or “natural law,” and that political legitimacy should be based on a

social contract which in a sense recreates such morality or natural law at the socio-political level. Unlike Hobbes's absolute monarch, the Lockean or Rousseauan sovereign is a party to the contract and is legally bound by it to serve the interests of the people. Confucius, Locke, and Rousseau assume that human nature tends towards virtue and they advocate moral education and legal guidance to promote social harmony, whereas Hobbes and the Legalists assume that human nature is intrinsically rotten and they devise mechanisms for dealing with this reality.

Economic liberals, such as Friedrich Hayek, regard the free market as one such mechanism for dealing beneficently with the reality of human fallibility. Drawing on Adam Smith's concept of the "invisible hand" which ensures that the good of society as a whole results from individuals acting merely out of self-interest, Hayek claims that a "spontaneous order" emerges from the competitive clashes of self-interested economic behaviour (1967, p. 163). The common good is realised despite people's selfish intentions, despite people acting with what Smith goes so far as to term "selfishness and rapacity" (1759/1790, p. 182). As the free market is a system that is, in Hayek's words, "the result of human action but not of human design" (1967, p. 96), it has the practical advantage of not relying on people having any good intentions. At the socio-economic level, good consequences are realised without good intentions. Market forces are self-regulatory and provide the basis for a social system best suited to an untrustworthy "fallen" humanity, a social system which, in the words of Hayek, "does not depend for its functioning on our finding good men for running it" (1948, pp. 11–12).

It may seem ironic that the market as a mechanism for mitigating the fallibility of human intentions has to be put in place intentionally. A certain political and legal framework needs to be deliberately established for a "free" market to function. Indeed, Quinn Slobodian (2018, p. 7) claims that the "overwhelming focus" of Hayek's work was not so much on the "minimal state" that allows an unfettered free market to operate naturally, but rather on the institutional framework that makes such a market possible and protects its functioning from external disturbances. For Slobodian, Hayek belongs to a tendency in liberal thought that advocates the "idea that markets are not natural but are products of the political construction of institutions to encase them." Nevertheless, while the establishment of such a framework may be the result of rational intent, the framework's purpose and design are such that the human actors within it are meant to behave with blind self-interest in order for the common good to be achieved, the latter

being an unintentional achievement from the point of view of these actors. The free market framework or mechanism remains a means to achieving the common good that assumes the insurmountability of human fallenness and fallibility.

Hayek contrasts the “spontaneous order” that emerges out of a market economy with the consciously “constructed” order of socialism. In doing so he assumes that socialism necessarily involves deliberate economic planning at the governmental level. Indeed, many socialists claim that market forces do not meet human needs, on the grounds that such forces are not under human control. For example, Karl Marx argues that humans under capitalism are subjected to the “blind power” (1894/1981, p. 959) of its system of production and that the “veil is not removed from... the process of material production, until it becomes production by freely associated men, and stands under their conscious and planned control” (1867/1976, p. 173). For Hayek (1944/2001), however well-intentioned socialist planning may be, it invariably leads to adverse unforeseen consequences. Economically ineffectual decisions would be made due to an inevitable lack of sufficient information. Planning would lead to a coercive imposition of ideas about what people need, one that is unresponsive to people’s individual preferences. There is no guarantee that planning will be well-intentioned; dependency on the good will of the planners is a weakness of a planned system. Even in the lucky event of intentions being good, socialist planning would provide the obverse of the beneficent invisible hand, a destructive invisible fist. Instead of bad intentions having good results, good intentions would have bad results.

While market forces may provide the social system best suited to a human nature characterised by “selfishness and rapacity,” those with a more charitable judgement of human capability would have higher expectations of what a socio-political system should be. Consequences can be elevated and intentions evaded if deficiencies in human knowledge and moral integrity are to be assumed. But if consciousness and conscience can develop beyond mere ignorance and selfishness then it could be suggested that a socio-political system that embodied such a development would be better suited to a humanity characterised by reflective awareness and concern for what is right. This appears to be the view of Immanuel Kant, for whom human dignity is founded on people’s ability to reason. In his *Lectures on Anthropology*, he relates the political realm, the “civil constitution,” to the possibility of human improvement or “perfectibility,” understood in terms of the cultivation of “conscience” (2012, p. 227). He

describes this as leading to a situation “where every individual, in accordance with the moral law, passes judgement about his moral conduct through his conscience, and also acts likewise,” a situation which he goes on to describe as “the kingdom of God on earth.” As human nature contains conscience as a perfectible capacity, Kant argues that this situation should be aimed at, “even if it still takes centuries.”

A normative theory based on good intentions would appear to be suited to an idealistic view of human nature and a socio-political system requiring conscious planning, whereas a normative theory based on good consequences would appear to be suited to a realistic view of human nature and a socio-political system dependent on the spontaneous emergence of order.

2. Utilitarian Socialism

While Hayek (1982) himself criticises utilitarianism for being a form of “constructivism” which stifles the emergence of spontaneous order, from the perspective of normative theory his position can itself be said to be utilitarian and consequentialist because it involves justifying a socio-economic system on the basis of consequences rather than intentions. What he is criticising is utilitarianism as a guide to individual action rather than as a way of justifying a socio-economic system. The idea that the greatest happiness of the greatest number would be more likely to come about spontaneously, provided that people do not intentionally strive to make it come about, is still a position that is justified on a utilitarian basis. Of course, a well-intentioned socialism could also be justified on utilitarian grounds. The question of whether well-intentioned socialist planning or badly-intentioned activity in the market results in the greater happiness of the greater number would presumably have to be settled by empirical evidence.

Although Jeremy Bentham (1843), the founder of utilitarianism as an explicit doctrine, thought that relatively unfettered market forces would further the greater happiness, his disciple and close associate, William Thompson, thought that it was socialism that would do this. In his book *An Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth Most Conducive to Human Happiness* (1824/1850), Thompson argues that wealth must be distributed in a way that would bring about the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people. The way to do this is to

ensure that the producer of wealth, the worker, both receives the equivalent in wealth to the product she produces and is able to freely and voluntarily exchange it. This situation would supposedly stimulate the greatest production and spread of wealth, the consumption of which would bring about the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

Thompson also opposes, on utilitarian grounds, the idea that a system in which individuals act in competitive self-interest leads to greater wealth, well-being, or happiness. He claims that “individual competition” (Thompson, 1824/1850, p. 257) has numerous deleterious effects on the general level of happiness, such as its encouragement of a selfish disregard for others and its inhibition of the development of shared knowledge. He puts forward a system of “mutual co-operation” (p. 255) as the alternative, one which involves united labour and common ownership, in the form of co-operative communities. This is claimed to be the most effective means of putting into practice the “natural laws of distribution, ‘free labour, entire use of its products, and voluntary exchanges,’” “laws” which have to be respected if the “greatest aggregate of happiness” (p. 2) is to be produced.

Even the otherwise capitalist utilitarian John Stuart Mill concedes at one point in his writings that a market system involving workers’ co-operatives would be the most effective generator of general utility. In his *Principles of Political Economy*, he writes: “The form of association... which if mankind continue to improve, must be expected in the end to predominate, is... the association of the labourers themselves on terms of equality, collectively owning the capital with which they carry on their operations” (Mill, 1848/2004, p. 199). Mill believes that humans can be improved one day through education and moral cultivation, but in the meantime, while they remain still unworthy of socialism, it is better if a capitalist system is in place, otherwise they will lack any incentive to overcome their “indolence.” Like Kant’s faith in the “perfectibility” of human conscience, Mill’s view here implies that the Smitho-Hayekian invisible hand that conjures up the common good out of the actions of people flailing around in the moral darkness of self-interest could be one day supplanted by the more effective visible hand of enlightened and well-informed workers.

3. Deontological Socialism

The implication of Mill's argument, if his utilitarianism is to be maintained, is that being educated and enlightened is better for people in that they would be more satisfied and "happier" in such a condition. In contrast, the Kantian deontological position is that conscious rationality and autonomy are good things in principle. Autonomy as the ability to think and act independently of heteronomous desire, inclination, or coercion, whether stemming from natural causality or external authority, is of intrinsic value because it is, to say the least, what makes genuine moral evaluation and judgement possible. Moral judgement, as an object of moral judgement, is to be judged to be of absolute worth. What is to be judged to be of absolute worth is the "good will," goodness residing in intentions and not in consequences. Goodness involves consciously acting with genuinely autonomous intent, out of duty and commitment to principle. Acting out of desire or self-interest is heteronomous as it does not transcend natural causality. As goodness resides in conscious, rational, dutiful intentions, it cannot ever be a by-product of self-interested actions. If deontology were to provide a normative basis for the institution of a socio-politico-economic system, rather than mere individual action, then such a system would be likely to be one that enables and depends on conscious, deliberate, autonomous, planned action, rather than an undesigned spontaneous order emerging as an equilibrium from the battlefield of blind self-interest.

For Kant, the absolute worth of the "good will" of moral judgement, of the self-given commitment to act on principles that one can will to be universally applicable, is itself the absolute worth of the person as that being which has the capacity for rational autonomy. Kant writes: "[T]he legislation itself which assigns the worth of everything must for that very reason possess dignity, that is, an unconditioned incomparable worth... Autonomy then is the basis of the dignity of human nature and of every rational nature" (Kant, 1785/2005, p. 94). The absolute value of what Kant calls "dignity" is contrasted with the relative value of what he calls "price" (p. 93). This "dignity of human nature" is enshrined in the second formulation of Kant's "categorical imperative," i.e. "So act as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of any other, in every case at the same time as an end, never as a means only" (p. 88).

Seeing the worker as exploited "as a means only" under the capitalist mode of production and seeing such exploitation as wrong in principle because it violates human dignity can provide

a deontological normative basis for the critique of capitalism. In his book, *Ethics of Pure Will*, the Neo-Kantian socialist Hermann Cohen raises the question of whether the idea of a market price of labour is compatible with human dignity (1904). What Marx calls the appropriation of surplus value, value created by labour beyond what is paid back in wages, is for Cohen an immoral reduction of humans to being mere means or instruments for creating profits for the capitalists.

For Cohen, a socio-political system in which people are treated as ends-in-themselves would be a form of socialism. He develops his vision of socialism out of Kant's notion of a "kingdom of ends." Kant puts forward this idea as a further formulation of the "categorical imperative," i.e., "Act according to the maxims of a member of a merely possible kingdom of ends legislating in it universally" (1785/2005, p. 96). A moral action is one in which the agent acts as if its principles of action were those of a participant in an ideal society in which all participants autonomously treat each other with the dignity of being ends-in-themselves. Cohen holds that the harmony of autonomous rational wills of a community or realm of ends could only be realised through an institutional arrangement in which all such rational beings actively participate. A society of autonomous rational beings who treat each other as ends-in-themselves cannot be ruled over by a state in which they do not all fully participate and which does not embody the common will which emerges out of the harmony of rational wills. Curiously, Cohen thinks that a state that is oriented towards fulfilling these conditions would be one in which there is universal suffrage. However, what makes Cohen's position specifically socialist is that institutional arrangements in which autonomous beings actively participate are not confined to the level of the state, but also apply to the level of production, to the economic organisation of society. Like Thompson, he advocates workers' co-operatives. Unlike Thompson, this is not because co-operatives promote utility or have beneficent consequences, but because they constitute a microcosm of a "kingdom of ends" in which all autonomous beings have an equal say and an equal level of ownership, the common will of the co-operative emerging out of the harmony of the rational wills of its members.

This common will of the co-operative comes about as a result of a conscious and deliberate "decision" or commitment on the part of the autonomous and rational workers who actively participate in it. The normative basis of such an institutional structure lies in the will, the

intention, and the conscious dutiful autonomous commitment to the rational autonomy of all. The need for such commitment in Cohen's co-operative suggests that socialist solidarity is deontological rather than utilitarian. Conceived on utilitarian grounds, solidarity as a dutiful commitment would not be a necessary component or basis of Thompson's co-operative, even though fraternal communality may be considered to be one of its beneficent consequences.

4. Socialism: Aretaic and Dialogic

Mill's claim that workers would need to become more cultivated and educated before they could be let loose in a self-managed co-operative (1848/2004, p. 199) stands in stark contrast to Cohen's claim that it is only through active participation in co-operative institutions, including the state, that people can become morally educated, "mature and independent," in the first place (1928, p. 333). Indeed, active participation in the co-operative would, according to Cohen, lead to the cultivation of a range of human capacities that are stifled by capitalist relations of production. Under capitalism the worker is not a free and autonomous being in the workplace, but is divided from her essential capacity for self-determination. Cohen writes that capitalism "tears apart the whole person, the unity of the person itself" (1904, p. 572).¹ Within the co-operative, in contrast, the worker can develop her skills and abilities freely, and a community of "scientific" producers emerges. This would involve not only overcoming the division between the worker and her own autonomy, but also overcoming the division of labour, the fixed determination in each worker of one repetitive line of activity.

Cohen's critique of the division of the person under capitalist working conditions resembles Marx's critique of the "alienation" of the worker under such conditions, most clearly expressed in his *1844 Manuscripts* (1977). The alienation of the worker from her own product and her own working activity leads to her alienation from her own generic capabilities. A stringent division of labour has the effect of separating the worker from her own "generic-being [*Gattungswesen*]," her universal self-determinability.

Marx's theory of alienation has sometimes been read as implicitly involving a kind of neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics (e.g. by Martha Nussbaum (1992)). In this interpretation,

¹ My translation.

capitalism suppresses the cultivation of so-called “virtues,” excellences of character that amount to features and capabilities specific to the essential nature of humans. However, everything that Marx writes about the “generic-being” of persons indicates that its provenance lies in the German Idealist concern with freedom and autonomy rather than with the Aristotelian concern with the flourishing of a determinate human essence. Marx writes: “Man is a generic-being... because he treats himself as the actual, living genus; because he treats himself as a universal and therefore a free being” (1977, p. 67).² It should be noted that for Cohen too the worker is separated from her freedom and autonomy, not from a determinate content or essence.

The autonomous universality inherent to the freedom of personhood is given an intersubjective dialogical dimension in Cohen’s *Ethics of Pure Will*. The universality of moral practical reason involves interpersonal relations, rather than an individual in an armchair making theoretical judgements. Cohen writes: “Totality [*Allheit*] can be expressed through I alone. On the other hand, in universality [*Allgemeinheit*] thou and he are unfolded, and he again and again becomes thou” (1904, p. 260).³

The Marxian notion of “generic-being” also has its basis in intersubjectivity. Marx writes: “My *general* consciousness is only the *theoretical* shape of that of which the *living* shape is the *real* community” (1977, p. 92). The concept of “generic-being” has its immediate derivation from Ludwig Feuerbach, who himself formulates it in dialogical terms. He writes: “Man is himself at once I and thou; he can put himself in the place of another, for this reason, that to him his genus, ... and not merely his individuality, is an object of thought” (Feuerbach, 1841/1855, p. 20). The alienated person is divided from her self-determinable universality, which emerges out of an inherent interpersonality and sociality.

This understanding of “generic-being,” not as an abstract universality thought by a contemplative individual but as inherently interpersonal and communal, provides the “decisive impetus” for Martin Buber’s avowedly socialistic philosophy of dialogism (1947/2002, p. 176). Buber’s notion of the fundamentality of the I-thou relation is inspired by Feuerbach’s claim that this very relation is inherent to the communal life that makes possible the autonomous universal free-determinability that transcends the chains of particularity. Feuerbach writes: “The essence of

² Translation modified.

³ My translation.

man is contained only in the community and unity of man with man; it is a unity, however, which rests on the reality of the distinction between I and thou. ... Solitude means being finite and limited, community means being free and infinite" (1843/1986, p. 71). Buber argues that the only genuinely socialist socialism would be one which involved dialogical communities founded on I-thou interpersonal relations. He writes: "True socialism [is] real community between people, direct life relations between I and thou, genuine society, genuine fellowship" (Buber, 1963, p. 381). For Buber, such socialism would require a decentralised federation of workers' co-operative communities, each one being small and tight-knit enough to have its basis in direct I-thou relations.

Similarly, Jürgen Habermas puts forward a vision of socialism based on communicative relations. He differs from Buber in that he is concerned with the institutional arrangements that would be necessary to facilitate a public sphere of inclusive intersubjective communication in modern mass society, rather than in small organic communities. Habermas concedes that in mass society the idea of socialism as "mutually supportive coexistence" only occurs as a collective demand for equality and inclusivity of access, which is "a legitimate, intersubjectively shared expectation" (1990). As with Cohen, Habermasian communicative reason takes the categorical imperative out of the armchair of individual contemplation into the public square of dialogical coordination. This public square can be upheld when everyday mutual interpersonal recognition, as Buberian as it is Hegelian, is "transferred to the sphere of legally and administratively mediated social relations."

To avoid what he sees as the tendency in much traditional socialist thought to conceive of socialism as an historically specific particular culture and way of life inextricably bound up with industrialization, Habermas suggests placing socialism on a transcendental and genuinely universalist footing by defining it as "the set of necessary conditions for emancipated forms of life about which the participants themselves must first reach an understanding" (1996, p. xli). The light of understanding and conscious deliberation is again portrayed as being essential to socialism. This conscious light of dialogical coordination contrasts starkly with the non-conscious blind forces of market equilibrium.

In redefining socialism to avoid it being restricted to the socio-historical particularity of industrial production, Habermas is dehistoricizing it. Such an abstraction of socialism from its

historically circumscribed origins is perhaps inevitable in any attempt at discussing or establishing its philosophical normative basis. Karl Polanyi (1944/2001) describes socialism as having historical origins as a response to industrial production, but concedes that it is a manifestation of a transhistorical tendency in socio-ethical thought. He writes: “[Socialism] is the solution natural to industrial workers who see no reason why production should not be regulated directly... From the point of view of the community as a whole, socialism is merely the continuation of that endeavor to make society a distinctively human relationship of persons” (p. 242). While, for Polanyi, socialism is a tendency in industrial modernity to resist the abstraction or “disembedding” of the market from cultural practices, the subordination of substantive human relations to the insubstantive formality of the self-regulating market, this resistance takes the form of a demand for what he describes as “consciously subordinating” the market to democratic control, an emphasis on benign conscious intention which is broadly deontological.

Habermas’s proposed redefinition of socialism as the institutional framework that would facilitate mutual understanding as the basis for a non-coercive and non-discriminatory form of life amounts to a transcendental distillation of the emphasis on conscious and deliberate socio-economic action to be found in most socialist theories, a distillation that nevertheless abstracts from any traditional concern with questions of property. Whatever there may be to say about the relationship between common ownership and mutual understanding, Habermas’s proposal lays bare what appears to be socialism’s dependency on co-operation as conscious and deliberate as opposed to unconsciously “spontaneous” (in the Hayekian sense) socio-economic coordination.

5. The Cunning Hand

The notion of a conscious rationality of mutual co-operation may be an essential feature of theories of what socialism is, but it is not necessarily a feature of theories of how socialism might be brought about. The distinction made by Marx and Engels between the “utopian” socialism of the likes of Robert Owen and their own “scientific” socialism resides in their different approaches to how socialism can be achieved (Engels, 1892). “Utopian socialism” appeals to

moral cultivation and education whereas “scientific socialism” appeals to historical change coming about through the socio-economic conflict of class interests.

For Marx and Engels, the capitalist system reduces social relations to “egotistical calculation” and “naked self-interest” (2012, p. 37), but there is no Smithian “invisible hand” giving beneficial results to society as a whole from people acting merely in their own self-interest. On the contrary, the result is misery and poverty for the majority of people. However, these unhappy consequences apply only within the confines of the synchronous system of capitalism. It is another matter from the perspective of historical change, in which, as Marx remarks, “capitalist production... begets its own negation” (1867/1976, p. 929). Capitalism creates and depends upon a class of people whose interests involve the destruction of the system and its replacement by a more beneficial socialist system.

The idea that the conflict of class interests will eventually lead to a more beneficial society involves an implicit utilitarian ethic of consequences and an implicit historicization of the invisible hand. While for “utopian” socialists both the means of achieving socialism and the achieved socialist system involve forms of rational planning, for “scientific” socialists there is a contrast between the utilitarian means (the overcoming of capitalism through the conflict of class interests) and the achieved socialist system (based on rational planning).

This historical version of the invisible hand in which capitalist production has the unintended consequence of its own destruction is itself a version of G. W. F. Hegel’s notion of “the cunning of reason” (1837/1956, p. 33). Hegel claims that the rational logic of history is enacted through world-historical individuals “passionately” pursuing their own “private interests” and “self-seeking designs” (p. 23). The unintended consequence of their “passionate” actions is the “rational” development of the “world spirit” to a higher stage, the “necessary next stage of the world,” a stage that resolves the principal contradiction in the previous stage. The rational progress of history is the unintended consequence of the self-interested actions of world-historical individuals, and in this way reason “sets the passions to work for itself” (p. 33).

The difference between the “invisible hand” and the “cunning of reason” is that the former is part of the functioning of a synchronous system whereas the latter is the generator of systemic change and transformation. Such change eventually leads to the abolition of reason’s

cunningness and the emergence of the conscious and deliberate use of reason, reason in the visible hands of human beings. Just as, for the “scientific socialists,” class society and its conflict of class interests eventually engenders its own destruction and replacement by a classless socialist society deliberately designed to fulfil human needs, for Hegel, the unconscious rationality of the historical process eventually results in a modernity in which reason is awakened in the “self-comprehending totality” (Hegel, 1837/1956, p. 78) of social consciousness, the self-consciousness of human freedom at the societal level.

6. The Manifest

While the “scientific socialists” trust in the invisible cunning hand of history to ensure that class struggle eventually brings about the beneficial consequences of a socialist system, they nevertheless share with their “utopian” brethren a vision of such a system as a manifestation of rational human command and design, devoid of any underhand cunning. The hand [Latin “*manus*”] that *manages*, *manipulates*, and *commands* the socio-economic system to serve the common good is resolutely visible and *manifest*. The consequentialism of the beneficial results of the blind forces of the historical process appears to be supplanted by the deontology of the resulting system, a system that by design, intentionally and deliberately, out of principle and obligation, strives to serve the common good.

Socialism would then be the instantiation at the socio-political level of the coordination, mutuality, and reciprocity of the universalizable will. This Kantian conception of the will means that mutuality and reciprocity subsist in the daylight of conscious deliberate intention, which contrasts with the “reciprocity” that Hayek sees in the murky non-conscious “spontaneous” forces of the market. Hayek writes: “The spontaneous order of the market... [is] based on reciprocity or mutual benefits” (1967, p. 164). This bold claim rests on the assumption that exchanges within the market are made without any form of coercion and on a level playing field, that such exchanges are generally fair. This view of the market may be put forward as an ideal type or model, but it would be difficult to make a case for its empirical reality.

The institutional arrangements that would need to be set up to facilitate such a socio-economic level playing field in which there is no coercion, including coercion stemming

from economic necessity and inequality, would require a radical change in the ownership structures, and therefore the economic system, of society. Avoiding discriminatory inequality and the coercion that comes with it would at least involve the formation of a Habermasian institutional framework that guarantees unfettered access to a public sphere of uncoerced and undistorted communicative relations, which in so doing enables the reciprocal recognition of all participants as ends-in-themselves and the “mutually supportive coexistence” that Habermas at one point tentatively calls “socialism.” If the workers are to rule, not only in the governmental but also the economic sphere, then this inclusive communicative institutional framework would be a necessity. Something like this is hinted at by Rosa Luxemburg when she writes: “[Without] a free and untrammelled press, without the unlimited right of association and assemblage, the rule of the broad mass of the people is entirely unthinkable” (1961, p. 67). Although the ignoring of questions of property and ownership in Habermas’s reformulation of socialism makes it appear to be little more than a dialogical form of communitarian liberalism, for a genuine undistorted socio-political communicative inclusivity and equality to come about there would need to be a parallel inclusivity and equality at the level of property ownership and economic interaction. A genuine socialism, one that lives up to its idea, would be one that is designed to embody at the socio-economic level a conscious and manifest “mutually supportive coexistence,” one which rests on the ideal of mutual obligation and recognition.

7. Conclusion

While socialism can be given ethical justification from any normative perspective, the deontological perspective appears to be the most apposite due to its reliance on conscious rational autonomy. This relates not only to socialism’s emphasis on rational planning and decision making as opposed to submitting to the blind forces of the market, but also to its emphasis on a notion of human dignity that forbids the economic exploitation of humans as mere means to an end. Socialism has a natural affinity with a tradition of political thought which regards humans as “perfectible,” or as ultimately able to overcome their “fallen” nature, a tradition which includes Kantian deontological ethical theory. An opposing tradition regards humans as intrinsically and hopelessly rotten and attempts to mitigate this politically, a tradition that includes the theory that the “invisible hand” of the capitalist market ensures that selfish

behaviour ultimately contributes to the common good. The only normative theory that this latter tradition is compatible with is the utilitarian consequentialist one. While socialism itself has been advocated on utilitarian grounds as the system that would promote the most happiness, the emphasis on economic equality and fairness, on the worker enjoying the fruits of her labour, has more to do with justice than with happiness. Advocating socialism on deontological grounds requires Kantian universality to be transported from the will and judgement of the individual moral agent to the social realm and to be understood in terms of dialogical and communicative mutuality. Whether socialism can be achieved through a conscious striving for justice or through the blind vicissitudes of the “materialistic” historical process, the resultant socialist system, if it were genuine and lived up to its idea, would involve a manifest social will and consciousness in the institutional form of an open and inclusive communicative public sphere, made possible by an open and inclusive realm of economic relations.

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