

## Abstract for the CEU ADC 2015 paper

By Man Kong, Li

In this paper, I will explore the following question: to what extent those post-Soviet (or non-Soviet) socialist proposals in contemporary political theory and political philosophy literature can be qualified as socialist? I have in mind those socialist proposals as invoked by theorists such as G.A Cohen, Joseph Carens, John Roemer, David Miller, Joshua Cohen and Erik Wright, among others. In what way these proposals could and should be regarded as “socialist”, in particular not just a version of contemporary liberal egalitarianism, which is represented by liberal theories as developed by its leading figures such as John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin? This question, interestingly, was not really taken up by these socialist theorists and philosophers. But indeed this question is crucial, for unless it can be satisfactorily answered, it would remain unclear why their proposals can be vindicated as “socialist” ones.

I will argue that the crucial shortfall of these proposals is that they are not supported by a coherent account of human interests they aim to address, i.e. what human interests are to be manifested, and why they are so important, so that individuals have reasons to comply to them. Or, to put it differently, those theorists fail to support their institutional proposals and their background principles by a normative point of view that can be qualified as “socialist”. It is for this reason, I will argue, that many regard these contemporary socialist proposals as merely a version of liberal egalitarianism. In order to really distinguish itself from liberal egalitarianism, a plausible normative political theory of socialism, I will suggest in this paper, has to ground the background principles of the institutional proposals by a distinctive and plausible socialist ideal of the person.