INTERROGATING SOCIALISM:

A STUDY OF THE NORMATIVE FOUNDATION OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIALIST PROGRAMS

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By

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the normative foundation of socialism. It attempts to find out whether there is a coherent and compelling normative foundation for socialism, and, if there is one, what are its limits to the justification of socialist institutions. I argue that socialism should have its political principles grounded in the ideal of self-realization in productive work. This socialist ideal argues that an important source of people's well-being is freely opting for work for realizing their ability. The socialist ideal thus demands that the production process be structured in a way that workers can properly regard themselves as participating freely in a cooperative enterprise to produce valuable things or services. One major point this study wishes to establish is that self-realization in productive work is central to people's well-being, and it is the insight to human life that the socialist intellectual tradition captures.

This study also attempts to show that this normative political theory of socialism is superior to many contemporary socialist theories and proposals. A crucial shortfall of these socialist proposals is that, I argue, they lack a distinctive and coherent socialist ideal as the normative foundations of their proposals. These proposals explicitly or implicitly appeal to a wide range of normative political principles or values, but they fail to clearly explain why these principles or values are qualified to be called socialist. It is because these proposals, and the principles that justify them, are not supported by a systematic account of human interests they aim to address. This is what I mean to be not having an adequate account of the normative foundation of socialism. This study contributes to improve this shortfall in socialist theories and proposals by exploring what can be a proper normative foundation of socialism. This is a strategy of normative justification very different from those adopted by most contemporary socialist proposals and theories.

One crucial problem for their lack of an adequate account of normative foundation is that, these socialist proposals fail to distinguish themselves from contemporary liberalism. I argue
that there is a problematic aspect that lies at the normative core of liberalism. This is the liberal idea of individual responsibility. It allows people's differential level of advantages to be determined solely by the consequences of individuals' choices, given a fair condition to everyone. I argue that this makes liberalism fails to keep track of, or obscures the reasons for, providing citizens with the satisfaction of justified genuine needs. The socialist ideal of self-realization in productive work, I argue, fares better in this regard. Therefore, I contend, contemporary socialist proposals and theories are misguided in their failure to distinguish their own normative foundation from that of liberalism.

Yet, I also argue that the socialist ideal is defective, because it commits to principles that can at times conflict with each other but contains no theoretical resources to resolve the conflict. I then explore the institutional implications of the socialist ideal, and argue that its defects can be mitigated, but not resolved, by institutional design.
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This does not mean that socialism is a dead option. I do not think so. But I do think that this option was emptied not only by the experience of socialist states; it was emptied by the silly self-complacency and self-confidence of its adherents, by their inability to face both the limits of our efforts to change society and the incompatibility of demands and values which made up their creed; briefly, that the meaning of this option has to be revised entirely, from the very roots.

Leszek Kolakowski, 'My Correct View on Everything',

*Socialist Register*, (11), 1974, 19-20
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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

I. Outline of the Project

This study explores the normative foundation of socialism. It attempts to find out whether there is a coherent and compelling normative foundation for socialism, and, if there is one, what are its limits to the justification of socialist institutions. I argue that socialism should have its political principles grounded in the ideal of self-realization in productive work. It is because this ideal presents a compelling vision of society that people have good reasons to consider as valuable, and it also yields a set of more or less coherent political principles. This socialist ideal argues that an important source of people's well-being is freely opting for work for realizing their ability. The socialist ideal thus demands that the production process be structured in a way that workers can properly regard themselves as participating freely in a cooperative enterprise to produce valuable things or services. Yet, I also argue that this ideal is defective, because it commits to principles that can at times conflict with each other but contains no theoretical resources to resolve the conflict. I then explore the institutional implications of this socialist ideal, and argue that its defects can be mitigated, but not resolved, by institutional design.

In this study, I attempt to show that this normative political theory of socialism is superior to many contemporary socialist theories that contain (or come close to contain) proposals of institutional designs. I have in mind socialist proposals as invoked by theorists such as G.A Cohen, Joseph Carens, John Roemer, David Miller, Joshua Cohen and Erik Wright.¹ A crucial

shortfall of their socialist proposals, as I will argue in more details in this introductory chapter, is that they lack a distinctive and coherent socialist ideal as the normative foundations of their proposals. These proposals explicitly or implicitly appeal to a wide range of normative political principles or values, but they fail to clearly explain why these principles or values are qualified to be called socialist. It is because these proposals, and the principles that justify them, are not supported by a systematic 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 with them. This is what I mean to be not having an adequate account of the normative foundation of socialism.

This study contributes to improve this shortfall in socialist theories and proposals by exploring what can be a proper normative foundation of socialism. The ideal of self-realization in productive work, which I am going to give more shape in the course of this study, is an ideal that appeals to people's consideration of well-being. I wish to show that for socialism to be a compelling and coherent normative political theory, people should be motivated to support the socialist institutions because of their concern for leading a good life. One major point this study wishes to establish is that self-realization in productive work is central to people's well-being, and it is the insight to human life that the socialist intellectual tradition captures. This is a strategy of normative justification very different from those adopted by most contemporary socialist proposals and theories.²

One crucial problem for their lack of an adequate account of normative foundation is that, these socialist proposals fail to distinguish themselves from contemporary egalitarian liberalism,

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² For some studies that allude to the notion of well-being or good life for the justification of socialism, see Allen Wood, ‘Marx of Rights and Justice: A Reply to Husami’, Philosophy and Public Affairs, 8 (1979), pp. 267-295; Jon Elster, ‘Self-Realization in Work and Politics: The Marxist Conception of Good Life’, Social Philosophy and Policy 6 (1986): 97-126; David Leopold, The Young Karl Marx, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 159-161. For Wood and Leopold, the discussions of Marx's view on well-being are at best sketchy remarks. For Elster, he came short of drawing political principles from the discussion of good life and self-realization in work, despite his illuminating analysis of the connection between the latter two. Wood's and Elster's line of thought is kind of a lost cause in the literature, with few students of socialism and Marxism to follow up.
represented by liberal theories as developed by its leading figures such as John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin. These socialist proposals are considered by many accounts as merely a version of liberalism. I argue that it is precisely because the socialist proposals fail to provide an account of their socialist normative foundations, and this failure leads them to implicitly (or even explicitly) endorse a common normative foundation with liberalism. This may not be a serious problem if the liberal normative foundation is a compelling one. But I argue that there is a problematic aspect that lies at the normative core of liberalism. This is the liberal idea of individual responsibility. The problem with this liberal idea of individual responsibility is that it allows people's differential level of advantages to be determined solely by the consequences of individuals' choices, given a fair condition to everyone. I argue that this makes liberalism fails to keep track of, or obscures the reasons for, providing citizens with the satisfaction of justified genuine needs. The socialist ideal of self-realization in productive work, I argue, fares better in this regard. Therefore, I contend, contemporary socialist proposals and theories are misguided in their failure to distinguish their own normative foundation from that of liberalism.

This introductory chapter aims to set out the backgrounds of this study on the normative foundation of socialism in more details. In what follows, I will first review those contemporary socialist proposals that I have mentioned above (Section II). I will show that those proposals appeal to a wide range of principles; yet they fail to provide a satisfactory account of the reasons why those principles can be qualified as socialist, nor do those theorists conceive their differences as differences in interpretations of a socialist ideal. Then, I will show how the

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3 For the sake of simplicity and to avoid repetition, hereafter in this study I will simply use 'liberalism' as shorthand to contemporary egalitarian liberalism and, correspondingly, 'liberal' (theory or theories, for instance) for 'contemporary egalitarian liberal' (I would keep using the phrase liberal egalitarianism should the contexts require). Not merely for stylistic consideration, though: I also believe that contemporary egalitarian liberalism is the best, if not true, interpretation of the tradition of liberal thought; and in any case, as we shall see, my subsequent critique of contemporary egalitarian liberalism also applies to other, non-egalitarian interpretations of liberalism.

4 For example, Kymlicka points out in his influential political philosophy textbook that, for those contemporary socialists, such as G. A. Cohen and John Roemer, 'their reconstructions of Marxism have taken them in the direction of liberal egalitarianism'. See Will Kymlicka, Contemporary Political Philosophy, 2nd edition. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). p. 201.
development of liberal egalitarianism provides a normative framework for liberalism to incorporate principles of egalitarian distributive justice into the family of liberal principles, thus justifying progressive and egalitarians redistributive policies (Section III). I argue that this makes the differences between the practical policy and institutional claims of contemporary socialist proposals and liberalism hard to be distinguished. The upshot is that, I argue, it is reasonable for one to wonder on what grounds these socialist proposals can be really qualified to be called 'socialist', and indeed what socialism should mean as a normative political theory.

While Section II and III demonstrate in more details the problem many contemporary socialist proposals and theories are facing, in Section IV I discuss the idea of a normative foundation and discuss what are the criteria we may employ to see if an account of the normative foundation of socialism is successful. I argue that a successful account of the normative foundation of socialism should be a social ideal that is coherent and desirable, as well as to be consistent with what Marx and major Marxists had said in their writings. In Section V, I set out what I take to be a plausible interpretation of the political structure of socialism. I assume throughout the later chapters of this study that the state and the law will not 'wither away' in socialism. Rather, state and the rule of law are integral to socialism. I defend this assumption in Section V. Section VI concludes this introductory chapter and set out the plan of the following chapters.

Before I proceed, a further clarification may be useful. This study, as I have outlined above, commits to the exploration of a distinctively socialist ideal, and sees it as the necessary normative foundation to vindicate socialist principles and institutions. Some socialists may contend that socialism does not need to commit to any principles or normative foundations that are different from that of liberalism. Rather, in their view, socialism takes seriously those liberal principles and turns them against liberal institutions, so that to expose the ideological fallacy of liberal theories. A typical form of such arguments is that liberalism takes certain social and
economic structures of capitalism as given, and thus leaves them unchallenged; but it is exactly those structures, so the arguments go, that inhibit the realization of those liberal principles. These socialists may then further argue that a set of distinctively socialist institutions can do much better than liberal institutions to realize those principles that liberals proclaim to endorse. It is in this sense they regard themselves as socialists, i.e. socialist in the sense that they commit to certain socialist institutions, but share, indeed take it more seriously than liberals, the same set of normative political principles with liberalism.

This is certainly a very important line of thought of the socialist tradition. But in this study, I set aside this polemical conception of socialist political theory. For I believe it is inadequate, and its plausibility ultimately depends on the focus of this study, namely the socialist ideal and the normative principles it supports, for two reasons. First, principled contemporary liberals, especially those liberal egalitarians, may well be prepared to accept egalitarian policies and institutional proposals that many of these socialists do not have good reasons to object. As we shall see in section III, these liberals all consciously distance themselves from embracing capitalism, at least its laissez-faire version. Second, these socialists still owe us the explanation for why those policy and institutional proposals can properly be called socialist, if their normative basis, i.e. the principles that justifying them and the ideal that support those principles, are merely the liberal ones. Thus to view socialist political theory as merely polemical with respect to liberalism is, however useful as a form of political discourse, inadequate in the level of normative theoretical construction. We still need to answer the question: Does socialism merely dispute with liberalism in institutional designs, but share the

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5 This line of thought, or this form of construal of socialist thinking, can indeed be traced back to some polemical writings of Marx. In ‘On the Jewish Question’, for example, he argued that the ‘rights of citizens’, i.e. the equal rights of political participation as granted by liberalism, are obscured by the ‘rights of man’, i.e. the private property rights that founded modern capitalism and took for granted by liberals. In the 18th Brumaire, Marx argued that bourgeois republic, though there existed a system of universal male suffrage, the class structure of France at 1848 also vested the real political power to the bourgeoisie, with alliance for the petty bourgeoisie and the peasants, and eventually lead to the rise of empire of Louis Bonaparte. There are many other instances in Marx’s various economic and political writings. The two writings as cited in this footnote can be found in Tucker, Robert C. ed. The Marx-Engels Reader, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1978).
same normative foundation? If that is the case, then the dispute is by nature only empirical and practical, rather than philosophical, i.e. it is merely about what social arrangements better achieve those shared goals. Then the long-lasting dichotomy of socialism and liberalism in political theory is uninteresting as a matter of principle. But if that is not the case, then what are the alternative normative foundations of socialism, so that with reference to which certain social and political institutions and policies can be qualified as socialist? This is precisely the question this study aims to answer.

II. The Problem with Contemporary Socialist Proposals

This section argues that many important contemporary contributions to the development of a socialist institutional design in the political theory literature fail to support their theories with a socialist ideal. I support my argument by laying out the theoretical structure of these socialist proposals. I show that they attempt to support their institutional proposals with various principles, without providing a plausible account of why these principles can properly be called socialist. I will argue, in the next section, that this is a serious problem in the context of the contemporary development of liberalism.

I shall start with the theory that comes closest to consider and articulate the normative foundation of socialism. G. A. Cohen expounded two socialist principles in his last work, Why Not Socialism?, i.e., the principle of socialist equality of opportunity and the principle of community, by his famous camping trip story. He urged readers to think about what constitute the good of having a camping trip with friends, and argued that socialism is a set of principles that aim to produce a good camping trip as well as a good society.⁶ We typically hate people exploiting their social or natural advantages for extracting material gains from our fellow campers; indeed, the camping trip would be a joyful one if most of the material resources are

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shared, i.e. equally accessible to all fellow campers.\textsuperscript{7} Thus, Cohen argues, we can see why the two socialist principles are desirable. According to Cohen, socialist equality of opportunity, or what he called the egalitarian principle in short, 'seeks to correct for all unchosen disadvantages for which the agent cannot herself reasonably be held responsible whether they be disadvantages that reflect social misfortune or disadvantages that reflect natural misfortune.' \textsuperscript{8} Cohen's principle of community, on the other hand, consists of two parts.\textsuperscript{9} First, it demands an equality of circumstances. Cohen argued that people who have large income difference to each other 'cannot enjoy full community'.\textsuperscript{10} For our income difference would lead to our differences in material circumstance and thus our life experience. People whose life experiences are largely different from one another would hardly identify each other as living in the same community.\textsuperscript{11} The second part demands a communal form of reciprocity, i.e., one serves others not because of what one can get in return but because of others’ need and sees this reciprocal relationship desirable. One would also expect others to serve her need for the same motive. It demands a form of social relation that sharply opposes to the market behavior, i.e. the motivation of 'some mixture of greed and fear'.\textsuperscript{12}

Cohen argues that the egalitarian principle may conflict with the principle of community, for the latter may involve equality of living condition that violate what principle of equality endorse.\textsuperscript{13} Furthermore, he admits that we have not yet developed the social technology that would satisfy the principle of community, i.e. the way to organize social production efficiently in a way that does not involve the market ethos of greed and fear.\textsuperscript{14} But Cohen did suggest two institutional proposals he thought to be closest to the socialist ideal he sketched, namely the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{7} Ibid., pp. 7-9. \\
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid., pp. 17-18. \\
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid., pp.34-35. \\
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., p.35. \\
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., pp.36-38. \\
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., pp.38-39, 41. \\
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., pp. 35-37. \\
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., pp. 42-43, 58.}
socialist proposals as invoked by Joseph Carens and John Roemer.\textsuperscript{15} Revealingly, if we look closer to both proposals, they indeed appeal to principles and values that are quite different from those expounded by Cohen. This fact is revealing because neither Cohen nor those two theorists deal with their differences in principles seriously, and in any case, they do not seriously consider these differences as disputes on the level of socialist ideal.\textsuperscript{16}

Take Joseph Carens’ proposal first. Carens proposes that a moral incentive to gain satisfactions through serving others is essential to maintain both a decentralized efficient market economy and equality of income.\textsuperscript{17} Thus rather than committing to equality of opportunity to advantage as Cohen proposes, an equality of income is regarded by Carens as the hallmark of socialism.\textsuperscript{18} He argues that through an intensive socialization scheme to make that kind of moral incentive learned by individuals, his proposal would then be feasible.\textsuperscript{19} Thus for Carens, community and equality are compatible, indeed mutually enforcing, while he is appealing to conceptions of community and equality that are clearly different from those invoke by Cohen.

And while Cohen and Carens share the emphasis on community (for Carens in the name of equality and moral incentive), it is not shared by Roemer’s proposal. Roemer argues that socialism is a system \textit{in which there are institutional guarantees that aggregate profits are distributed more or less equally in the population}.\textsuperscript{20} He designed a system which, in brief, is the same as market economy we have now, except that citizens own equal shares of stocks, which they can freely invest to different company in a stock market but cannot convert to

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., pp. 63-65, 70-75.
\textsuperscript{16} For Cohen’s case, see ibid., pp. 65, 74-76. Cohen consider both proposals as problematic in their realization of the principle of equality and community. But he was ambiguous on whether (a) he considered them unable to fully realize the principle of equality and community, or (b) as appealing to different conceptions of equality and community that he found problematic. The case for Carens and Roemer will be clear from the discussion that follows.
\textsuperscript{17} Carens, \textit{Equality, Moral Incentives and the Market}, p. 8, pp. 94-95.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., pp. ix- xi.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., pp. 118-119.
Roemer argues that this system can greatly reduce the incentives and tendencies to inequality, if compared to pure capitalism, while the competitive market mechanism remains to induce efficiency and innovation.\textsuperscript{22}

Roemer sees both market and equality as important to socialism and is explicitly skeptical to the possibility and the coherence of the socialist claims of community. It is because he believes that to maintain a strong egalitarian ethos, which reduces the need of market incentive and substitute it with a kind of civic solidarity, requires very special social conditions. The success of the Nordic social democratic regime in reducing market competition, for instance, to Roemer, is due to a homogeneous population and a history of strong union movement.\textsuperscript{23}

Taking into account the psychological truth of people nurtured in the institution of capitalistic labor market, and that there are no better ways than inter-firm competition to drive economic innovations, Roemer argues that it is not desirable to oppose market.\textsuperscript{24} Rather, what we should do is to make use of it. In Roemer’s own words, '[g]reed is a necessary evil that can be tamed by the right institutions - those of the market, contract law, and private property - to bring about the material conditions enabling human dignity and fulfilment for all.'\textsuperscript{25}

Thus we can see that Cohen, Carens and Roemer endorse different conceptions of equality and community, while all of them just take for granted what they endorse are socialist normative values and/ or principles. But neither Carens nor Roemer have vindicated the principles they consider to be qualified as socialist on the ground of a clearly articulated socialist ideal. And although Cohen attempted to vindicate his two socialist principles by his camping-trip thought experiment, his remarks are scant; much philosophical and empirical supports are needed to pin down more firmly what exactly is attractive about the ideal, and how it is connected to his two

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., pp. 96-97; For more details of his program, see Roemer, \textit{Economic Perspectives}, pp. 313-322.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., pp. 105 -106.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Economic Perspectives}, pp. 330-331.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., pp. 330-331.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p. 332.
socialist principles. He certainly overlooked how different his two principles are with those endorsed by Roemer and Carens, when he tried to recommend their proposals on the ground of his two principles. Roemer, on the other hand, does not seem to find Cohen's camping-trip ideal appealing as a socialist ideal either.

If we extend our survey to other contemporary socialist proposals, we can see much more diverse principles and values are claimed to be socialist but fail to be seriously established on the basis of a socialist ideal. David Miller’s market socialist proposal conditionally endorses market, provided economic success spreads among citizen equally by redistribution via different means, including shared ownership of enterprises by its members (i.e. all the enterprises are co-operatives). But at the same time, he has a rather surprise take to the emphasis of community: He argues that socialism should embrace nationality as a substitute of what he saw as Marx’s incoherently formulated conception of community, so that to provide motivation support for the socialist egalitarian scheme. He even argues that this form of community constitute a conception of human motivation structure that is fit to embrace both socialist equality and market.

Joshua Cohen endorsed a similar socialist proposal. But rather than citing the national sense of community as supporting ground, he grounded his socialist proposal in his ideal of deliberative democracy. Cohen’s socialist proposal consists of four main parts: (1) a framework of legal rights to basic liberties such as freedom of association, freedom of thought and freedom of speech; (2) competing public funded political parties; (3) public control of investment, realized through a scheme in which publicly owned means of production are operated by worker-managed firms; (4) making ‘important use’ of market. He argued that this institutional

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28 Ibid., pp. 10, 95-96, 171 Note, however, Roemer at the same time disparage the idea of worker’s co-operative as utopian and may impede technological innovation. See his Economic Perspectives, pp. 331-332.
29 Ibid., pp. 232-233.
arrangement best approximate the normative ideal of deliberative democracy, or what he called 'ideal deliberative procedure'. In this ideal deliberative procedure, citizens should be guaranteed equal standing in the deliberative process, and are free in the sense that they are only bounded by the rules and results of deliberation. In the deliberative process, only public reasons are advanced to support diverse proposals submitted by citizens, and any conclusions that reached should only be settled by public reason.

Joshua Cohen argues that since this ideal deliberative procedure provides constraints that require citizens advance only public reasons in decision makings for public affairs, it could transform people’s reasons for holding certain preferences, or even their priority of preference itself. Since those constraints of public deliberation ensure citizens’ free and equal standing, this transformation of preference and reasons is thus consistent with citizens’ individual autonomy. Cohen argues that this would bring together the ideal of individual autonomy of citizens and the ideal of attainment of common good for a polity. In short, for Cohen, it is the free use of public reason that motivates the cooperation among citizens in a political community. Economic equality is the precondition to secure the equal standing of citizens, and thus is also motivated by the ideal of free use of public reason.

Erik Wright, on the other hand, considers that socialism should take the idea of the social seriously, and thus a socialist regime should mean that both the state, i.e. the political sphere, and the economy, or the economic sphere, are controlled by the society. That means that the means of productions of the society are owned and directed by the social power, i.e. the mobilization power of cooperative, voluntary collective action, mainly driven by civil society. By civil society, Wright refers to any organizations formed voluntarily for various purposes, in

32 Ibid., p. 30.
33 Ibid., pp. 31-33.
34 Ibid., pp. 34-36.
35 Wright, Envisioning Real Utopias, p. 110.
36 Ibid., pp. 120-121.
the sense that the participants are not coerced to join. For example, certain religious sects (like church) are qualified as civil society organizations, if the participants have formal (i.e. legally protected) freedom to quit. The associations can also be not that formally defined, for example a group of individuals that conceives themselves as some sort of community, even though the membership is never authoritatively defined.\(^{37}\)

This framework, which Wright coins as Social Empowerment, can imply different forms of institutional designs, which the main principle is that the civil society could be empowered to direct economic activities, via state power or by directly controlling some of the means of production, or by a combination of both.\(^{38}\) Wright argues that this social empowerment framework is to realize the normative 'radical democratic egalitarian' ideal, which is to achieve both equality in political access and influence, and equality in material and social means to live flourishing life.\(^{39}\) It also rejects the view that a polity should be ruled 'by the atomized aggregation of the separate individuals of the society taken as isolated persons', but by 'people collectively organized into associations in various ways: parties, communities, unions, etc.'\(^{40}\) Wright does not state clearly what exactly the conceptions of equality and community he would endorse, but it is clear his proposal consciously contains elements of both. On the other hand, it should also be noted that market, as such, though not subjected to extended discussion in his work, seems is implicitly endorsed, though variously restricted and regulated.

Therefore, to travel through G. A. Cohen to all those exemplary contemporary socialist proposals, we can see that these proposals appeal to various conceptions of equality and community. But they all take for granted that their own conceptions of the two concepts rightly represent what socialism should require, without giving much arguments, nor do they appeal to an explicit articulation of the socialist ideal. It is also unlikely that they implicitly share the

\(^{37}\) Ibid., pp. 119-120.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., pp. 129-130.


\(^{40}\) Wright, Envisioning Real Utopias, p.121.
same socialist ideal. For they have widely different positions on what is to be equalized in a socialist regime, as well as to what extent a socialist economic regime should embrace market. Their positions are even more diverse and conflicting on what is to be counted as realization of community, and whether community matters at all. All these differences and disagreements can be traced back to different answers to what are regarded as the fundamental interest of people and what ideal social relation are to be realized in an ideal socialist society. Yet we also do not have any justified standards to consider to what extent these proposals can be qualified as socialist. It is because a clear conception of socialist ideal has yet to be developed; and, as we have seen, contemporary socialists are not conscious to or taking seriously this problem.

Therefore, we can see that in order to examine to what extent these contemporary socialist proposals are socialist, we need first to be clear about what is the normative foundation of socialism, i.e. what is the socialist ideal. Indeed, the establishment of a socialist ideal is a prerequisite for us to tell what principles and social and political institutions can be qualified to be called socialist. The proposals surveyed in this section are not taking seriously this lack of normative foundation. Most of them have explicit policy and institutional proposals, supported by principles of different degree of articulations, but all of them lack the normative foundation to qualify their principles as socialist. As we shall see in the next section, in the face of the development of contemporary liberalism, this inadequacy in theory building may be more consequent than those contemporary socialist theorists think.

41 A very good summary of different types of those contemporary socialist programs can be found in Kai Nielsen, *Globalization and Justice*, (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books: 2003), pp. 55-57. Also a prominent Marxist philosopher, I left Kai Nielsen out in the main body of this review, because he shows a much more ambiguous attitude towards market, and have nearly nothing to say about community. See, for example, ibid., pp. 53-54. Thus his theory, though not less extensive, for the purpose of this study falls in between the lines I drew above.
III. The Challenge of Liberalism

In this section, I argue that contemporary liberalism poses a serious theoretical challenge to contemporary socialist theories and proposals. It is because contemporary liberalism has incorporated the concern of egalitarian distributive justice into their own normative framework. While it may seem, as we can see in section II, that the common political core of the contemporary socialist proposals is the call for certain level of economic equality, now contemporary liberal theories also call for economic equality among citizens. But liberals justify their calls by principles that are explained by self-conscious liberal ideals. Indeed, it may even be the case that those contemporary socialist proposals are also implicitly adopting the same or similar liberal normative foundation. Many actually consider contemporary socialist proposals as merely variants of the idea of liberal egalitarianism that define the contemporary version of liberalism. This, I argue, further shows that contemporary socialist theorists cannot simply take for granted the principles and institutional proposals they embrace are socialist.

Contemporary liberalism, as manifested by the leading liberal egalitarians such as John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin, has developed a highly sophisticated justification of social and economic distributive equality. In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls argued that a just liberal society should protect both citizens’ equal basic liberties, as well as fair opportunity in access to economic and social positions. Social and economic inequalities are permitted only if they are to the greatest benefits to the least advantaged.42 He suggested that a fundamental normative point of view of liberalism should be the idea that, any principles that regulate the basic structure of a society have to be shown as being agreed by free and rational individual persons furthering their own interests in an initial position of equality.43 He further developed this fundamental normative point of view by providing an account of the fundamental interests of...

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43 Ibid., pp. 10-11, 24.
person, which guided people's choice of principles in the original position, and eventually arrived at his two principles of justice.\textsuperscript{44}

Dworkin, another important contemporary liberal theorist, argued that the liberal conception of equality is the standpoint which liberals should adopt to respond to pressing problems of political morality, thus forming what he called the 'distinct liberal settlement.'\textsuperscript{45} He argued that for contemporary modern state, a liberal political morality should embrace 'the fundamental requirement that only an equal share of social resources be devoted to the lives of each of its members, as measured by the opportunity cost of such resources to others.'\textsuperscript{46} He considered this as a manifestation of what he called 'ethical individualism', that is, first, 'it is important, from an objective point of view, that human lives be successful rather than wasted, this is equally important, for that objective point of view, for each human life', and, second, 'one person has a special and final responsibility for that success—the person whose life it is.'\textsuperscript{47} Such normative requirement, for Dworkin, defines what justice for liberalism means. Dworkin then further argued that, crucially, people's good life indeed 'depends on justice', as the conditions set by justice provide the parameters for one to figure out the shape of one's conception of good life.\textsuperscript{48} Upon this conception, he justified a liberal scheme of free market restricted by strong progressive taxation.\textsuperscript{49} Echoing this broad framework of liberal egalitarianism, a series of important works on liberal egalitarianism, i.e., justifying a liberal state that promote both liberal rights and economic equalities, has emerged, and provides a strong defense of modern welfare state polices, or even more radical egalitarian redistributive proposals.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p.5.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., pp. 242-243, 253.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., p.102.
\textsuperscript{50} See, for example, Samuel Freeman’s detailed characterization of ‘High liberalism’ in his ‘Illiberal Libertarians: Why Libertarianism Is Not a Liberal View’, \textit{Philosophy and Public Affairs} 30(2) (2011), pp. 105-151, in pp. 108-
This poses a serious theoretical challenge to socialists. Like the liberals, contemporary socialists would not deny the fundamental importance of basic liberal rights such as freedom of conscience, speech and associations. Both liberals and socialists also demand certain form of distributive equality in social and economic spheres, as well as certain restrictions on private ownership and market. Then in what sense those contemporary socialist proposals can be called socialist, rather than a version of liberal egalitarianism? It is true that, as we can see in section II, most contemporary socialist proposals embrace to different degrees some forms of public or social ownership. But we can also see that some proposals, such as that of Roemer’s, consider them to be grounded merely in their instrumental value to secure economic equality. Others, such as that of Wright’s, consider them to be grounded in some other instrumental or intrinsic considerations. And it is still unclear why they are grounded in normative values or principles that can be distinctively qualified as socialist. On the other hand, many liberals may indeed well be prepared to accept some level of public or social ownership of means of production on the ground of their instrumental value to realize social justice, too. It then seems reasonable for one to wonder if the label socialism that socialist theorists attribute to their proposals carries any real meaning at all. They fail to provide an explanation of why those principles are qualified


51 For example, Kai Nielsen argues that his socialist proposal, and so as his characterization of socialism in general, commits to 'equality, liberty and solidarity'. Socialism, so he argues, has to be egalitarianism that is 'more thorough' than that of Rawls and Cohen, and also commit to bring 'public ownership and control of at least major means of production'. But the meaning of 'more thorough' is ambiguous here: is that mean socialism commits to a form of equality that aims to equal some more things that liberals refuse to equalize, or that socialist institution better equalize what both liberals and socialists would commit to equalize? Nielsen, as well as other socialist theorists I have mentioned, seem ambiguous here. See Nielsen, Globalization and Justice, pp. 16-17, 19-20.

52 For example, Rawls considers that depends on the political history of a given society, his liberal principles of justice may also support some form of 'liberal socialism', i.e. the firms are owned by the state and managed by the workers in a democratic way. See John Rawls, Justice as Fairness: A Restatement, ed. Erin Kelly. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 138-139, 178-179.
to be socialist, but not simply a variant of liberal principles, which can be explained, and may even be better explained, by some liberal normative foundations.

On the face of it, this may not be a serious problem: it may cause an identity crisis for self-proclaimed socialists, yet what is in a name? Principles that are plausible and desirable are justified, and should thereby be applied, no matter the name tag they carry. Indeed, many contemporary socialist theories are fond to acknowledge their debt to liberal egalitarianism. However, in the next chapter, I will argue that there is an important defect in the normative foundation of liberalism. Such defect can be identified in almost all the major representative theories of liberalism, Dworkin's and Rawls's included. Implicit in the normative foundation of liberalism, or the liberal account of people's fundamental interest, I will argue, is an idea of individual responsibility that gives untenable priority to people's choice over people's justified needs and development of human capability. Because of this idea of individual responsibility, liberalism recommends a distribution of resources and opportunities that is more sensitive to people's choices rather than to the urgency of need. I will argue that this idea of individual responsibility is implausible and unappealing. Socialist political theories would fare worse if they simply take the liberal normative foundation, and thus the idea of individual responsibility, on board as its own. Therefore, socialist political theories must keep distance from this liberal normative foundation, and to find out their own, if socialist political theories can be shown to be compelling at all. But before we can explore what can the normative foundation of socialism be, we must first have a more comprehensive framework of how we can test whether an account of the socialist normative foundation is successful. To this we shall now turn to.

IV. The Concept of a Socialist Normative Foundation

In the previous sections I alluded a lot to the notion of a normative foundation and used it rather interchangeably with the notion of an ideal. I also argued that the major problem of many contemporary socialist proposals is that they do not provide an account of human interest, and thereby fail to have a plausible answer as to why they should be considered as socialist. I argued in the last section that liberalism fares better in this regard: its major contemporary theorists sought to ground liberalism in a compelling account of what people's fundamental interest are. This section attempts to set out more clearly the connections between the notions of normative foundation, ideal and human interest. I then proceed to discuss how we can test whether an account of the socialist normative foundation is successful.

The notion of a normative foundation that I am alluding to here explains what motivates us to accept certain political principles as normative, that is, we accept the obligation or duty to follow the social rules that realize those principles. An account of the normative foundation of a set of political principles, then, is an account of the reasons for people to follow those principles. I argue that a plausible account of normative foundation should, ultimately, be based on human ideals. The notion of ideal I am using here is, I think, a minimal one, to be distinguished from the notion utopian: it means a condition of human life that people have reasons to find it valuable, and thus aspire people to attain or maintain it. Therefore, an account of a normative foundation of a set of political principles must also be an account of human interests, usually fundamental ones. That is, it accounts for what people should care about, or what people should find important to them. A set of political principles finds its secure normative foundation if it can be shown as realizing the ideals as indicated by a successful account of normative foundation. A successful account of normative foundation, in turn, is an account of the ideals that embody the realization of important human interests. The test for a successful account of normative foundation, then, is whether people would be convinced that
the ideals the normative foundation describes are *compelling*, that people would find the shape of life as described by the ideals valuable to live.

This formulation of the *concept* of a normative foundation of political principles is not uncontroversial. Notably, it would probably be rejected by political liberals, or those who subscribe to Rawls's project of political liberalism. Among other things, a central tenet of political liberalism is that the grounds of accepting political principles should be independent of, or at least to be presented as independent of, any comprehensive doctrine. That is, justification of political principles should be done ‘without appealing to claims about human flourishing, or about what makes human life worth living’.\(^{54}\) On the other hand, those who are more convinced that political principles are ultimately applied moral principles, and that moral principles are to be grounded in people's metaphysical moral equality and autonomy, justified by deontological arguments, would reject my formulation here too. They think that either the motivation to accept moral-political principles are irrelevant, or that the motivation would be a distinctively *moral* one, not connected to people's actual personal identity and conceptions of good life.\(^{55}\)

For the purpose of this study, I do not wish to engage in the controversy as to whether the concept of a normative foundation I am going to use here is superior to the above two accounts, or to any other meta-ethical theories that I cannot cover here. What I wish to claim is that the concept as I use here is *plausible enough*, without denying whatever plausibility other accounts of the concept may have. I do not think my formulation of the concept is a peculiar one: it draws heavily on what Martha Nussbaum understands as a broadly modernized Aristotelian account of human nature that is not metaphysical; that is, the foundation of ethics, or the source of

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normativity, is based on whether people would accept, upon deliberative evaluation on what kinds of life are objectively good or valuable, certain forms of life as living well.\textsuperscript{56} Joseph Chan, in his defense of a moderate version of perfectionism, also suggests that 'that the state should promote valuable conceptions of the good life' is 'the standard view' in the long history of Western political thought; notably, goods and values that contribute to people's good life seems to be something that can reach wide evaluative consensus, at least as wide as principles of justice that claim to be neutral to human goods and values.\textsuperscript{57} Joseph Raz also argues that it makes sense to regard people's concern of their capacities to forge a good life as central to our normative thinking, for people do care about achieving valuable things actively for themselves, which are necessary for their well-being.\textsuperscript{58}

In any case, those contemporary socialist proposals that I surveyed here do not even contain an account of the normative foundation of their principles that is based on those alternative concepts of normative foundation. If my formulation of the concept of a normative foundation is plausible, and if a compelling socialist normative foundation can be established by making use this formulation of the concept, then, I contend, it is already an important contribution to the exploration of this missing aspect of socialist theories. Indeed, as will become clear in chapter 3, this concept of a normative foundation does have some affinity to the normative core of socialism, or the socialist ideal, that I find most interesting and insightful in the socialist intellectual tradition. Better accounts of a compelling normative foundation of socialism might be developed by making use some alternative concepts of a normative foundation. But in lieu of such discovery, I contend, a good enough one is good enough.


What, then, is a *compelling* account of the normative foundation of a set of political principles, understood as a social ideal that people would find a shape of life that realizes that ideal as valuable to live? I argue that to be compelling a normative foundation should satisfy some formal requirements. A requirement of a compelling normative foundation is that it should be *coherent*. It should not yield inconsistent normative claims. For example, if it assigns certain importance to certain characterization of human interests or normative principles, it should not at the same time deny that those interests or principles have the proclaimed importance. If the best interpretation of a socialist normative foundation is self-contradicting in such sense, then the attempt to construct a socialist foundation fails.

But to say that a successful construction of a normative foundation should be coherent does not entail that it must not generate *conflicting* demands, or that it must have priority rules to resolve such conflicts. For example, if the best interpretation of a socialist ideal would treat two human interests as equally important, but they yield normative principles that assign normative demands to opposite directions, then the socialist ideal yields two conflicting normative demands, but the ideal can still be coherent, as long as neither of the interests directly negate the other. To be kind to your friend and to be honest to your friend are both valuable moral demands, but their demands may conflict to each other: in some occasions to tell your friend the truth may not be kind to her.⁵⁹ Here to be kind and to be honest conflict with each other, but they are *not inconsistent*: there are nothing inherent in the idea of being kind and the idea of being honest undermine the normative weight of each other. To be kind does not entail that honesty is unimportant or of no values. Consider also the two socialist principles as expounded by G.A. Cohen, which we had gone through in section II: the principle of community may require equality in condition that the principle of equality deems as unjust. Thus they can conflict with each other. But nothing inherent in the principle of equality entails that the

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principle of community is undesirable or unimportant. They are thus *not inconsistent* to each other, though there can have occasions that they *conflict* with each other. A normative foundation that yields conflicting demands need not be incoherent.

If a conception of the socialist ideal yield conflicting yet not inconsistent principles, it needs not be incoherent, but its *attractiveness* is nevertheless undermined. For the purpose of this study, there are two desiderata for an attractive conception of the socialist ideal: its *desirability* and its *feasibility*.\(^{60}\) If a socialist ideal yields two conflicting (yet not inconsistent) political principles, in the sense that they point to two opposite directions in social and political arrangements, i.e. there exists no arrangements that can satisfy both principles at the same time, then it is *infeasible*.\(^{61}\) Yet it can nevertheless still be *desirable*, if it is true that the human interests it accounts for are of normative importance, and that the conflicting principles really correspond to these interests.\(^{62}\)

Both the desirability and the feasibility are *desiderata* for the attractiveness of a socialist ideal of in the sense that a desirable yet infeasible ideal of the person does not necessarily to be *unattractive* at all, though it may be *more attractive* if it can also be feasible. But it should be noted that though both of them are desiderata, they do not have equal status: it is absurd to say the other way round, i.e., a socialist ideal of the person is *not unattractive* if it is undesirable,

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\(^{60}\) Indeed G.A. Cohen has already employed these two desiderata to assess socialism, and defend the desirability of socialism (i.e. his two socialist principles) while concede that under the constraint of existing social technology socialism may not be feasible. See his *Why Not Socialism?*, pp. 50-54. My use of desirability and feasibility is slightly different from that of G.A. Cohen.

\(^{61}\) Here we can further draw a distinction between *conceptually* infeasible and *conceivably* infeasible. If each of the two conflicting principles requires both tax-cut and to tax-raise, then it is conceptually infeasible, in the sense that conceptually it is impossible to have both tax-cut and tax-raise at the same time. But an arrangement can be just conceivably infeasible because we are yet to have the suitable technologies, whether scientific or social ones. In the pre-internet time one may not be able to conceive how can there be institutions that satisfy direct democracy and efficiency for a large population, thus to satisfy both is conceivably infeasible. But now, having internet technology people can directly discuss and vote for certain issues via internet with a relatively low cost, then such institutions that satisfy both requirements may no longer conceivably infeasible, or in short conceivable. Certainly, as we cannot anticipate the development of technologies, for some cases this distinction can be moot. But at this stage of the research this shall not detain us: it suffices for us to note this distinction.

\(^{62}\) I use conflicting normative demands as an example to illustrate what can infeasible mean. But it does not exhaust the category of infeasibility. Certainly, a socialist ideal can be infeasible in other ways, even if it does not yield conflicting normative demands.
as it is feasible. Thus, to be desirable is a necessary condition for a socialist ideal to be attractive, but to be feasible is not, though to be feasible certainly render a socialist ideal more normatively attractive. To yield inconsistent demands will disqualify a socialist ideal as such. But a socialist ideal will not be disqualified for yielding conflicting yet not inconsistent demands. Rather, it will only undermine its attractiveness, in the sense that the conflicting normative demands can render it less feasible. To be more feasible certainly will increase the attractiveness of an ideal, but an infeasible ideal does not entail that it is unattractive at all, even though its attractiveness is undermined. Indeed, I will argue that this is precisely the case for the socialist ideal. The issues of conflicting demands in, and feasibility of, socialism will be further explored in chapters 4 and 5.

These are still formal criteria of a normative foundation for political principles in the sense that they do not specify in what sense a socialist ideal can be qualified as socialist. They only set the boundaries of a compelling social ideal as normative foundation. But it should also be noted that they are not merely some general conceptual requirements of any normative concepts: their very relations to each other are specific to the role of a social ideal to a normative political theory. It also implies that all those formal criteria in general cannot, in itself, be a sufficient condition to vindicate a socialist ideal. It is absurd if one could declare to successfully construct an attractive socialist ideal of person if it means for socialism to embrace whatever social ideal that is compelling.

Thus, further substantive criteria are needed for qualifying a successfully constructed and attractive socialist ideal, or a socialist normative foundation. I argue that an important substantive criterion should be that the content of a socialist ideal has to fit with Marx’s

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63 One may wonder if this is true then what should our choice between a more desirable but less feasible ideal and a less desirable but more feasible ideal be. Now all the three concepts- attractiveness, desirability and feasibility are certainly not dichotomous concepts: they can all be conceived to be a matter of degree, whereas we can say that when below certain threshold we can identify what is unattractive, undesirable and infeasible. But it seems that they are more likely to be merely ordinal concepts rather than interval concepts, in the sense that they need to be assessed by concrete reasons that hard to be quantified. Thus, it seems superficial to imagine an explicit across-the-broad priority rule in the tradeoff between desirability and feasibility.
canonical writings and other canonical Marxist writings on the normative appeal of socialism. It is because I take the Marxist tradition of socialism as the exemplary representative of the idea of socialism. There are certainly other traditions of socialism. But in this study, I will simply set them aside. For I believe it is self-evident that the Marxist tradition of socialism is dominant enough, both theoretically and politically speaking, as so many discussions on socialism simply treat Marxism and socialism as synonyms.\textsuperscript{64} And in any case, all those contemporary socialist proposals we studied take the idea of socialism for granted as referring to the Marxist version, and thereby construct their own institutional interpretation of it.

But even though it seems legitimate to simply focus on Marx’s own writings and Marxist writings, there can still be problems of interpretations. Marx’s work on the normative appeal of socialism is often sketchy. In the long history of Marxist political and social movements, Marxists have also interpreted Marx’s writings in various ways, to the extent that one may even wonder if they really share a set of common core propositions.\textsuperscript{65} Thus it may still be a superficial criterion to say that the content of a socialist ideal has to fit with Marx’s writings and Marxist writings. But since the construction of a socialist ideal aims to find an interpretation that is most compelling, rather than an interpretation that is textually speaking most 'correct', this difficulty should not detain us, at least at this stage. As long as the content is confined to the boundaries of what Marx had said in his writings, and as long as the other Marxist writings that we select can be plausibly shown as saying what Marx would have been agreed, I contend that this substantive criterion of a socialist normative foundation can be regarded as satisfied.

\textsuperscript{64} See, for example, Peter Self’s entry on ‘socialism’ in A Companion to Cotemporary Political Philosophy, 2\textsuperscript{nd} eds., ed. Robert E. Goodin, Philip Pettit & Thomas Pogge, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007).

\textsuperscript{65} For example, Gyorgy Bence and Janos Kis had expressed doubt on if it is possible and fruitful at all to give a definition of Marxism or to find out some 'essence' of Marxism, for so many qualified Marxists interpret Marx’s writings differently for different reasons, for example in meeting changing situations for political struggles. See Gyorgy Bence and Janos Kis, ‘On Being a Marxist: A Hungarian View’, Socialist Register, Vol. 17, (1980), pp. 263-297. In pp. 267-271.
V. In Defense of the Socialist State and Rule of Law

I assume throughout the later chapters of this study that state and law will not 'wither away' in socialism. Rather, state and the rule of law are integral to socialism. This section defends this assumption. Specifically, I argue that socialism has good reason to maintain a legal system that realizes the virtue of the rule of law. In virtue of maintaining it, I argue, a state is at least instrumental, if not necessary, for socialism.

This is not an easy position to defend within the tradition of socialist thought. Perhaps the most famous statement about socialism's position to the state is that of Engels's. He argued that when socialism is fully realized,

'[s]tate interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies out of itself; the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The state is not 'abolished'. It withers away.'

In *State and Revolution*, Lenin also famously argued that, when socialism or communism is fully realized, 'people will gradually become accustomed to observing the elementary rules of social intercourse that have been known for centuries and repeated for thousands of years in all copy-book maxims', without any law enforcement and coercion of the state. State and the rule of law are then ceased to be necessary, for the establishment of social order 'will be done by the armed people themselves, as simply and as readily as any crowd of civilized people, even in modern society, interferes to put a stop to a scuffle or to prevent a woman from being assaulted'. The case for having a state and the rule of law when the socialist ideal is realized seems to be weak.

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I think both Engels’s and Lenin's paradigmatic arguments against having a state and the rule of law in socialism are misguided. Even well-intended people may have different interpretations of social rules and different judgements in particular cases. Some structure of adjudications and discretions have to be there to settle disagreements about at least some social rules authoritatively among people, even if it is merely for effective coordination for, as Engels had it, 'the administration of things' or 'processes of production'.

It is hard to imagine a group of engineers can build a bridge according to a plan without someone in authority to settle disagreements, however egalitarian the relationship among them otherwise is. It is therefore implausible to posit that in an ideal socialist society such epistemic limits of individuals can be transcended.

Furthermore, it is also undesirable to wish for a society with people always reach consensus by holding homogeneous views. As Christine Sypnowich aptly puts it, 'democratic debate does not occur in a homogeneous, univocal community; a citizenry which values agreement above all else would make poor participants in a democracy'.

Therefore, if socialism values democracy, it should also at least acknowledge the possibility of disagreements among citizens. It follows that it should endorse social structures that provide effective procedures for adjudications and discretions in an ideal socialist society. Following H. L. A. Hart's widely accepted account on the essence of legal system, such structures can already be considered as containing at least the basic shape of a legal system.

I do not believe any plausible formulation of the socialist ideal would deny the importance of democracy. In any case, as will be clear in chapter 3, socialism does have good reasons to take democracy as its constitutive value. It follows that socialism has good reasons to find an ideal society that is lawless to be undesirable.

69 Ibid., p.123.
Once it is recognized that a system of adjudication and discretion is needed, it is natural to also hope that their procedures should be fair, in order to confer any authoritative settlements legitimacy. Indeed, as Engels and Lenin would agree that coercion in the ideal socialist society to be minimal, it is especially important for socialism to have most of the citizens recognize the authoritative settlements to be legitimate. For only then people will obey the law out of their sense of obligation and requires no close coercive sanction.\textsuperscript{71} The system of adjudication and discretion with minimal coercion can be effective only if most people do find good reasons to obey the settlements voluntarily, independent of the fear of sanction. The virtue of the rule of law embodies exactly those requirements for a system of rules that contribute to its fairness: that the procedural rules have to clearly worded, stable over time, prospective, and general.\textsuperscript{72} To the extent that it ensures the system of adjudication and discretion is fair, and therefore effectively motivates people to recognize its legitimacy, socialism should have good reason to also recommend the rule of law to be realized in its system of adjudication and discretion. If the socialist rules for the procedure of adjudication and discretion should realize the rule of law, it seems natural for socialism to also welcome the rule of law to be realized to all social rules that may require authoritative settlements. In other words, a legal system embodying the virtue of the rule of law should be welcome by any plausible formulation of socialism.\textsuperscript{73}

Thus, by challenging Engels's and Lenin's paradigmatic arguments against having a state in an ideal socialist society, we come quite close to a socialist case for having a state, without even disagreeing their premises on what an ideal socialist society would look like. For there must be officials to administer the legal system and maintain the rule of law. We may add that even law enforcement, though should be achieved with minimal coercion, is also necessary for an ideal socialist society, for at least two reasons. First, even if people are well-intended, they

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., pp. 82-8390-91.
\textsuperscript{72} Sypnowich, \textit{The Concept of Socialist Law}, pp. 72-73.
\textsuperscript{73} Hart, \textit{The Concept of Law}, p. 99.
may not have enough confidence that all the others are so. Institutions of settlement enforcement are then required to provide assurance to people that no one is permitted to exploit the well-intention of the others. Second, even if it can be ensured that all people are well-intended, and they recognize the social need of adjudication, it does not follow that they will easily give in to accept the substantive results of particular adjudications. They may simply not give lexical priority to the authoritative settlement or find those particular settlements too morally outrageous to accept. Importantly, people just cannot assure whether those losers in adjudication will accept their defeat. But a system of adjudication is unstable if the settlements cannot be guaranteed to be carried through. For if non-compliance is always an option without much negative consequences to those who do not comply, people would eventually find compliance as unreasonable, if not irrational. They will then lose confidence to such a system. Again, it seems establishing institutions of settlement enforcement is also a solution to this, different, assurance problem.

Finally, to the extent that the agencies of enforcement typically wield great powers, it is just natural for people to hope for establishing social institutions to hold them accountable. The possibilities for those who are entrusted with power to abuse it should be minimized. Institutions have to be developed so that people can keep the agencies of enforcement in tight control, so that their power will only be applied for maintaining mutual assurance among people; the uses of coercion and sanction should be proportional to this goal. With all these institutions and their officials in place, we already have a basic shape of a state.

I hope these discussions at least establish the case that it is implausible to assume that, following Engels and Lenin, socialism is fundamentally against having a state. I have shown

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that, without disagreeing with their rather utopian visions of socialism for the sake of argument, socialist theories still have good reasons to accept having a state in an ideal socialist society. In this sense, I think Sypnowich is correct in saying that a legal system that realizes the virtue of the rule of law is a human artefact that corresponds to some very fundamental needs of living a human life.\(^78\) It is true that socialists and Marxists have many things to say about how laws are abused by the ruling capitalist class to manipulate and exploit the mass majority of the people.\(^79\) But that a legal system and a state are vulnerable to be captured by the ruling class for oppressive use does not imply that socialism should not have state and law at all. What follows, I believe, is rather that they should be rescued from the control and distortion of the ruling class, and function properly to serve the socialist ideal.\(^80\) I explore further the proper role of the state in a socialist ideal in chapter 3.

**VI. The Organization of this Study**

Let me take stock. This introductory chapter aims to set out in more details the problem with contemporary socialist proposals in their lack of accounts of the socialist normative foundation. It then attempts to provide some preliminary discussions on how a study to attack this problem can be developed. In section II I surveyed some of the most important contemporary socialist proposals and pointed out that they lack an account of their normative foundation. They do not have convincing answers as to why those principles they invoked to support their institutional proposals are socialist, and what motivate people to accept those principles. In section III I argued that contemporary liberal egalitarianism fares better, for they are conscious to the question of the normative foundation of liberal principles and tried to furnish their theories with an account of a liberal normative foundation. Yet I also registered

\(^{78}\) Sypnowich, *The Concept of Socialist Law*, pp. 41-43.

\(^{79}\) See an excellent survey in ibid., pp. 8-18.

\(^{80}\) Ibid., p.44.
doubts to the liberal normative foundation itself. I suggested that it is unwise for socialist theories to simply take it on broad, as they seem to be comfortable to.

Section IV discusses the concept of normative foundation I am going to employ in this study. I take that the kind of normative foundation that contemporary socialist proposals lack is a social ideal, that people would have good reasons to find living in such an ideal society valuable. To vindicate their socialist credentials, normative political principles should be shown to be supported by a socialist social ideal. A compelling socialist ideal, I argued, should be desirable and coherent. Yet, if a socialist ideal consists of conflicting normative demand, and therefore infeasible, I argued, its attractiveness may be undermined, but not refuted. I also argued that the content of the ideal should be confined to the boundaries of what Marx and major Marxists had said in their writings or can be plausibly shown as saying what Marx would have been agreed. Section V defended the assumption that in an ideal socialist society a state and the rule of law is needed. I argued that the paradigmatic arguments against the case of having the state and law in ideal socialist society made by Engels and Lenin are misguided. Even without denying their characterization of the ideal socialist society for the sake of argument, I shown that some social structure of adjudication and discretion with accountable institutions of enforcement are needed; and socialism have good reasons to realize the virtue of the rule of law in those structures and institutions. It follows that a state and a legal system that realizes the rule of law should be welcomed by any plausible normative political theory of socialism.

All these discussions serve the purpose to clear the ground for the exploration of the normative foundation in the ensuing chapters. Chapter 2 picks up what was left behind in the discussion of section III, namely why the normative foundation of liberalism is problematic. I complete this task by a two-staged argument. First, I construct an ideal-typical account of what
I take to be the normative core elements of liberalism. Then I argue that liberalism has, at its theoretical core, an idea of individual responsibility that is deeply problematic. The crucial problem, I argue, is that this idea of individual responsibility allows people's differential level of advantages to be determined solely by the consequences of individuals' choices, given a fair condition to everyone. This idea of individual responsibility that liberalism commits is not only ambiguous and implausible; in a closer analysis, I argue, it indeed obscures the reasons for many policies in modern welfare state and social democracy that deeply make sense to us. If my arguments in this chapter succeed, it will pave the way for my defense of socialism, by establishing the conceptual space for the justification of a plausible non-liberal normative political theory.

Chapter 3 expounds what I take to be the most defensible interpretation of socialism, if it is understood as a normative political theory. I argue for a set of socialist political principles that is grounded in the core and most interesting normative insight of the socialist intellectual tradition, namely the recognition of the value of productive work as an essential arena of people’s self-realization and well-being. The interpretation of socialism defended here will be built on a reading of three important Marxists’ works, namely György Lukács, György Márkus and Karl Korsch. The interpretation will consist of three components: (a) an ethical critique of capitalism that is built on a reading of Lukács’s idea of reification, to be grounded on (b) an understanding of human essential power that is built on Márkus’s reconstruction of Marx’s idea of human nature, and (c) socialist political principles that are supported by them, mainly built on Korsch’s program of ‘practical socialism’. I argue that socialism considers a capitalist market economy ethically objectionable because workers are structurally pressured to put their labor-power under the hierarchical control of the capitalists to secure their subsistence, rather than freely opting for work to realize their ability, which is a source of well-being. I argue that such considerations lead to a positive ideal of community of equals in social production. This
socialist ideal requires the production process be structured in a way that workers can properly understand themselves as participating freely in a cooperative enterprise to produce valuable things or services. The chapter, however, will only focus on the explication of the socialist ideal in its most defensible form; my critical comments to it, as well as considerations of feasibility constraints, will be left to the next two chapters respectively.

Chapter 4 closely scrutinizes the normative political theory of socialism I expounded in the last chapter. This chapter has two connected aims. First, I wish to identify an important defect of the normative political theory of socialism, and consider possible remedies to this defect. Here, I present what I take to be the most serious challenge to these socialist political principles, which I shall call the socialist dilemma. The idea is that socialism cannot uphold both that people's self-realization in productive work, and that satisfaction of people's justified needs should always be jointly fulfilled, at the same time. Yet socialism cannot give priority to any one of them without undermining its normative foundation. The upshot is that, I argue, the attractiveness of the normative political theory of socialism I developed is seriously undermined. Second, I wish to explore what guiding institutional principles are at the disposal of the state if it wishes to implement socialism, in light of the defect I would identify here. This discussion will then bring a brief institutional shape of the socialist political principles I argued in the last chapter. This is to pave the way for the discussion of institutions that will be justified by socialist political principles, above all the role of market in socialism, which I will consider in the next chapter.

In chapter 5, I describe and attempt to defend a set of economic institutions that I take to be essential for any social order that can be considered as socialist. I argue that those economic institutions form a coherent system, and as a system it is consistent with the socialist political principles I expounded in previous chapters. I also argue that this set of economic institutions is feasible. Yet I also recognize the inadequacy of this socialist regime: the socialist dilemma
I revealed in the last chapter still lurks behind socialism even in the institutional level, and may render socialism, at the end of the day, unable to guarantee that all important needs of people can find ways to be satisfied. Although it is not true that in a liberal capitalist regime all important need of people can be satisfied, it shows the limits of even a most compelling construction of the normative foundation of socialism.

Chapter 6, as concluding chapter, ties together different threads of arguments in previous chapters. It underscores the theoretical implications and contributions of my explorations of the normative foundation of socialism in this study. There, after summarizing my arguments in previous chapters, I highlight the affinities and differences of some of them to several prevailing theoretical positions in the contemporary literature of political philosophy and political theory. I argue that the normative political theory of socialism I defended in previous chapters might be best described as a version of ‘relational-egalitarian-perfectionism’, if it is to be positioned in the map of academic literature. Yet, I also register my skepticism to such a label, as well as the point of labelling the theory with reference to those prevailing positions. The major reason of my skepticism is that, I argue, those meta-theoretical positions are not helpful to clarify the reasons for the theory. In addition, in this concluding chapter I also underscore the distinctiveness of my approach for the justification of socialism by comparing it to two recent alternative approaches, namely, the Rawlsian and the social-theoretical approaches. Finally, I explore the policy implications of the investigation of the normative foundation of socialism in this study. I argue that the discussion in this study may contribute to the re-focusing of socialist politics to a policy area that was long lost sight in theoretical discussion, yet is increasing relevant to our time, namely the improvement of the quality of work.
CHAPTER 2
LIBERALISM AND THE LIMITS OF INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

I. Introduction

This chapter aims to clarify the kind of liberalism that my account of socialism wishes to be distinguished from, and to identify the problematic aspect of liberalism that socialism has good reasons to disagree with. I complete this task by a two-staged argument. First, I construct an ideal-typical account of what I take to be the normative core elements of liberalism. Then I argue that liberalism has, at its theoretical core, an idea of individual responsibility that is deeply problematic. I argue that the idea of individual responsibility liberalism commits is not only ambiguous and implausible; in a closer analysis, it obscures the reasons for many policies in modern social democracy that make so much sense to us. It may be true that these policies can be justified by a qualified version of the liberal idea of individual responsibility, yet I argue that at the end what matters is those qualifications, but not the idea of individual responsibility itself. That is, if we take seriously the liberal idea of individual responsibility, it could render polices that are reasonable enough as unjustifiable. If my arguments in this chapter succeed, it will pave the way for my defense of socialism in the next chapter, by establishing the conceptual space for justifying a plausible non-liberal normative political theory.

The chapter is organized as follows. Section II argues that liberal theories, despite many differences in their content, share three theoretical cores, namely the priority of basic rights, liberal legitimacy and individual responsibility. I argue that, for liberals, the priority of basic rights is justified by both the ideas of liberal legitimacy and individual responsibility. Since the latter two seem to have the shared root of treating people as free and equal, many liberal theories treat them as natural corollary of each other. I argue that the idea of individual responsibility
also grounds the constitutive role of market in liberalism. However, I simply lay out their problematic connection in this chapter; the problems of market, as distinguished from the problems of the idea of individual responsibility, will be dealt with in chapter 5. In section III, I argue that the idea of individual responsibility, if unpacked, is deeply problematic. The crucial problem is that it allows people's differential level of advantages to be determined solely by the consequences of individuals' choices, given a fair condition to everyone. I argue that this allowance fails to keep track of, or obscures the reasons for, many practices and policies concerns the public goods that we find reasonable and legitimate. I argue that any plausible formulation of the idea of individual responsibility must be checked by some other values to avoid implausible conclusions entailed by this allowance. To the extent liberalism embraces the idea of individual responsibility, then, it is implausible. In Section IV, I try to further clarify the connection of my subsequent arguments to a special case: the Rawlsian liberalism. It is because Rawlsian liberalism, by not taking the idea of individual responsibility as central to liberalism, appear to be a liberal formulation that can escape my criticism in this chapter. It will thus be helpful to make it more explicit how my construction and critique of the ideal-type liberalism implicates on this important contemporary formulation of liberal political morality. Section V takes stock and concludes the chapter.

II. Three Cores of Liberalism

Are there any distinctive features that one could identify from a normative political theory, so that one could tell whether it is liberal or not? There were few attempts to identify these 'common' features or foundations,¹ but here I proceed with a different strategy. Instead of

inferring some common denominators of these liberal theories from a specific tradition of political thoughts, what I attempt to set up here is, rather, an ideal-typical normative structure of liberalism. This means that it is not true that all liberal theories necessarily endorse the cores in the shape that I describe them here or assign them similar weight. My claim is rather that something like these must be in place for a theory to be qualified as liberal normative political theory. The three elements that I consider as the cores of liberalism in this ideal-typical sense are the priority of basic rights, liberal legitimacy and individual responsibility. This section articulates what they mean and how they are connected to form a normative political framework.

For the priority of basic rights, I refer to the priority of a standard set of civil and political rights and liberties equally granted to all citizens, such as freedoms of conscience, association and speech, as well as the rights of political participation such as equal votes and (fair) equal opportunity to political offices. In everyday politics, a principled endorsement of the priority of this set of rights seems to define what broadly speaking to be a 'liberal' stance. However, a principled endorsement of the priority of basic rights is just a necessary but insufficient condition for a normative political theory to be identified as liberal, in a more philosophically robust sense. For it may be the case that, because of different normative presuppositions, conjoined with certain assumptions of human nature, different theories can have different principled reasons for endorsing the priority of these basic rights. One can imagine that, given certain assumption of human welfare, a utilitarian theory may consider granting priority to basic rights to be the best political arrangement to maximize aggregate utilities; or a conservative theory may consider these rights are of great importance in the preservation of certain traditions.

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3 Certain textual supports and corresponding explanatory comments are still provided in the next few footnotes attached to the text, mainly to provide sources of where my formulations of the ideas in the text come from. However, I also include some additional sources where one can find similar formulations. My survey here is by no means exhaustive, but I hope they at least covered the most important ones in the literature, and convey the sense that the construction of the ideal type of liberalism here is by no means unrepresentative.
and conventions. For a theory to be considered as liberal, the priority of these basic rights must be supported by liberal grounds.

I suggest a further necessary condition of a liberal normative political theory is that it adopts a normative point of view of treating citizens as free and equal. This is still a necessary condition, because different theories may have widely different normative conclusions even if they take as foundation the idea that citizens should be respected equally as free citizens. For there are various forms of political arrangement that can plausibly be regarded as treating citizens as free and equal. It depends on the conception of free and equal citizens that a political theory adopts. Liberal theories are but one kind of theories of treating citizens as free and equal. They are by no means the only theories of taking this normative point of view. Therefore, committing to the idea of treating citizens as free and equal is just a further necessary condition for a political theory to be regarded as liberal. I suggest that what can be considered as being a sufficient condition for a political theory to be identified as liberal, is that it has two specific conceptions of treating citizens as free and equal, namely liberal legitimacy and individual responsibility.

One way that liberalism justifies the priority of basic rights is that they are necessary for a political regime to satisfy the requirement of liberal legitimacy. The basic idea is this. We live and relate to each other under a scheme of basic structure of a political community, and our lives are importantly shaped by the way this scheme of basic structure is arranged, as we do not normally enter and leave it voluntarily. This scheme of basic structure is also crucially shaped, if not determined, by the directives and laws of the state backed by its monopolized coercive power, and these directives are supposed to be the exercise of 'public power', i.e. the power of citizens as a collective body.\textsuperscript{4} The idea of liberal legitimacy claims that, it is necessary for this

authority to be justified to us by reasons that both 1) are publicly accessible to all citizens and 2) citizens cannot reasonably reject, in order to be legitimate. If the state authority is justified by reasons that are public in this sense, the requirement of liberal legitimacy as I dubbed here is met.⁵ Those basic rights are political institutions necessary to secure the state authority to meet with the requirement of liberal legitimacy; or, as Rawls would have it, the requirement would usually be violated if basic rights are absent.⁶

On the other hand, treating citizens as free and equal is also taken by philosophical liberalism to imply that individual citizens should be equally entitled to the right to pursue their own, probably diverse, incommensurable and conflicting conceptions of good life.⁷ I believe this idea is best captured by Ronald Dworkin's formulation of 'ethical individualism', that, first, 'it is important, from an objective point of view, that human lives be successful rather than wasted, and this is equally important, for that objective point of view, for each human life', and, second, 'one person has a special and final responsibility for that success—the person whose life it is'.⁸ That is, within the parameters that each human being treated as equal, it is the individual’s responsibility to decide 'what gives value to life' and act on her conception of good life; the state should not have any decisions that are made dependent on any particular

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⁶ Rawls, Political Liberalism, p. li.


⁸ Ronald Dworkin, Sovereign Virtue, p.5.
conception of good life, i.e. the state should be in this sense 'neutral'. Thus the third core of liberalism: individual responsibility.

This idea of individual responsibility seems to plausibly support the idea that every individual is entitled equally and adequately to freedoms of conscience, speech, association, choice in occupation (including political occupations), to enjoy personal security and body integrity, i.e. the standard core set of rights that liberalism will identify, as we set out in the list of basic rights. The idea is that all these are necessary for individuals to have equal opportunity and as few obstacles as possible to take full and final responsibility for their own conceptions of good life, as now they can manage their lives on their own as much as possible.

Furthermore, this idea of ethical individualism also provides strong reasons to support the notion of distributive egalitarianism that most liberals would endorse: that the material resources and social and economic opportunities among citizens should be fairly distributed in a way that is consistent with the idea that each citizen be treated as equally important. That is, all individuals should be symmetrically and impartially situated, in the relevant economic and social senses, so that they are not advantaged or disadvantaged than others in the condition for which they can lead their own life.

The idea of individual responsibility claims that only against such a condition of equality can individuals take responsibility of leading their own life. Once the resources and opportunities are fairly distributed in such a way, individuals should then be free to use their

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10 For the discussion of this chapter I set aside other meanings of the term responsibility might convey, for instance, the idea of role-responsibility, that specify someone is responsible for certain duty in virtue of his or her holding of certain position, or that when 'responsible' as being used to describe a personal character (e.g. 'she is a responsible person'). For relevant discussion of these notions of the term ‘responsibility’, see H.L.A. Hart, *Punishment and Responsibility: Essays in the Philosophy of Law*, 2nd eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 211-214.

just share of resources and opportunities; no further state actions that concern the ways those resources and opportunities are used by the individuals, i.e., restriction of some uses that are in addition to those specified by the basic rights, can be justified. Thus the idea of individual responsibility, that individuals should take responsibility in leading their own life, that the use of one’s just share of resources and opportunities should be as sensitive as possible to one’s choice free from further state intervention, being an interpretation of treating citizens as free and equal, is also a core of liberalism.

A corollary of the affirmation of the idea of individual responsibility is that an ideal market is justified. As Dworkin put it, 'the true measure of the social resources devoted to the life of one person is fixed by asking how important, in fact, that resource is for others.' A market against the background of a proper equality of condition is 'an institutionalized form of the process of discovery and adaptation that is at the center of the ethics of that ideal.' The fundamental requirement of justice is to treat people as equally responsible individuals, and that can only be achieved by an ideal market together with a background equality of resources and

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12 There may be different interpretations, and thus conceptions, of in what circumstances can an individual to be qualified as responsible to his or her own life, i.e., what is the proper understanding of this condition of equality. Thus the famous debate of luck egalitarianism around 'equality of what' between Amartya Sen, G.A. Cohen and Dworkin, as well as others.

13 Many other contemporary liberals agree with Dworkin on this point. For instance, Jonathan Quong argues that the commitment to 'personal responsibility' is the core value of contemporary liberal egalitarian justice. See Jonathan Quong, Liberalism without Perfection (OUP, 2011), pp. 123-124. Also cf. Jonathan Wolff’s understanding of the shared basis of liberal egalitarianism since Dworkin, as to give ‘a central place to the idea of individual responsibility within equality’, in his ‘Fairness, Respect and the Egalitarian Ethos Revisited’, Journal of Ethics, (2010) 14, pp. 335-250, in pp. 335-336. Rawls has a similar formulation when he says that one of the fundamental features of his political conception of person, which is the building block of his theory of justice, is that people are capable for a conception of the good. In his discussion of the problem of expensive taste, he is basically in agreement with Dworkin to the extent that, once everyone gets their fair shares of resources, each individual should be left free to pursue his or her own good, and any claims for further resources are ‘unreasonable demands’ for others. See John Rawls, ‘Social Unity and Primary Good’, in Utilitarianism and Beyond, eds. Amartya Sen and Bernard Williams, (Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp.159-185; in pp. 168-169, 170-171.

14 One could also note that although liberals from the perfectionist tradition never invoke the notion of responsibility, the all recognize the value of personal autonomy, of which the share the central notion of choice, that one’s life should be sensitive to one’s choice, with the idea of individual responsibility as I presented here. See Joseph Raz, The Morality of Freedom, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp. 369-370, 372, 382-383; Steven Wall, Liberalism, Perfectionism and Restraint, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 5-6; Enoch, ‘Against Public Reason’, p. 138.

15 Dworkin, Sovereign Virtue, p. 70.
opportunity, so that 'equal share of social resources be devoted to the lives of each of its members, as measured by the opportunity cost of such resources to others.'

It is because the cost of leading one's own life is measured and determined by the demand of others to the supply of scarce resources, given equality of relevant conditions of all. The result of such an ideal egalitarian market is the cumulative result of free and responsible choices made by citizens in a background equality of condition. This idea, again, is best illustrated by Dworkin's idea of a hypothetical auction. Given each individual has equal 'biding power' (e.g. equal number of clamshells), each price for a given unit of resources in the society will be offered to all and open for bidding, and no one could get anything until market-clear price is reached for all resources that are there for bidding. Thus, the price of a given unit of resources is sensitive only to how much biding power an individual wish to use for that unit against that of other individuals. In that sense, one shapes what sort of resources one could get for the pursuit of one's own life, with the cost determined by how others, who also have equal biding power, would like to bid from a same pool of scarce resources.

Thus, if the idea of individual responsibility is a core of liberal political morality, then market is an institution that is morally constitutive to liberalism, provided it functions against a background of proper equality of condition. For liberalism, market is an institution that allows one’s choice about the use of his or her share of resources being taken into equal consideration and being equally constrained by the free uses of resources of others. Given equality of resources, the idea of treating citizens as free and equal is thus in this sense being taken seriously.

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An important point to be noted here is how the ideas of individual responsibility and liberal legitimacy seem to converge yet are still crucially different. They both start from the idea of treating citizens as free and equal, and come to provide moral grounds to support the priority of the same (or at least very similar) set of basic rights. Since they appear to be derived from the same normative foundation, and since they seem to support the same set of political arrangements, they appear to be the natural corollary of each other. But they are importantly different, in the sense that they take different aspects of an individual as relevant to being treated as free and equal.

For liberal legitimacy, the essential elements are reason-giving and justification to each other. Citizens are treated as free and equal as they are treated equally as beings capable of reason-giving and are equally entitled to be the addresses of justification if they are subject to coercion. Both the elements of reason-giving and justification are missing in individual responsibility. What is taken to be essential for individual responsibility is that an individual's life should be sensitive to one's choice, against a background that the cost of her choices are sensitive to the choices of others under fair condition. The fair condition is in turn specified by placing individuals as symmetrically and impartially as possible, so that no one is advantaged or disadvantaged in relevant circumstances. Citizens are conceived in this sense to be equals by the idea of individual responsibility. An individual's choice does not need to be justified to anyone, given such choices are made within the bound of basic rights and her fair share of resource. For the liberal idea of individual responsibility, an individual is regarded as free citizen in virtue of the right to choose and to have consequences sensitive to his or her choices again a background of fair distribution of resources.
For some liberal theories, to take individual responsibility seriously seems to be taken as sufficient to meet the requirement of liberal legitimacy,\(^\text{18}\) or to take neutrality and equal respect to people's conceptions of good life are regarded as necessary to satisfy liberal legitimacy.\(^\text{19}\) Some even consider the idea of individual responsibility as the distinctive contribution of liberalism.\(^\text{20}\) In any case, it seems that in most liberal theories, considerations of these two ideas, or something like them, are largely overlapped. For both the grounds for them and their implications are pretty much the same. No liberal theories which accept one of them would deny the other in a principled way. It thus seems plausible to see both, together with basic rights, as the three normative cores of liberalism. However, as we shall see in the next section, the idea of individual responsibility is indeed problematic.

**III. The Problem with Individual Responsibility**

In this section, I argue that the idea of individual responsibility is, in closer analysis, problematic, for possible formulations of it are either implausible or in need to be checked by other values to preserve the plausible policy implications. Therefore, I argue, the idea of individual responsibility is untenable. It follows that liberalism, at least those variants of which that take the idea of individual responsibility as central, is also untenable. I therefore conclude that to the extent socialism should learn anything from liberalism, the idea of individual responsibility should be something to be avoided.

My strategy to proceed in this section is this. I first examine to what extent it is plausible to take consequential sensitivity to one's choices as treating an individual as free. To this I

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explore reasons to see the value of choice as an important element of freely leading one's conception of good life, and to what extent it could support the liberal idea of individual responsibility. I argue that to the extent that choices are valuable if it tracks the idea of treating individuals as free citizens, then it indeed lends little support to the liberal idea of individual responsibility. Next, I examine what could the idea of treating citizens as equal imply to the construction of conditions that are fair to citizens. Some argue that to take seriously the idea of equal citizens, it is not necessary to require an individual's life prospects as sensitive to his or her choices as possible, given the choice-insensitive conditions are equally provided to all. And this can be a possible and plausible formulation of the idea of individual responsibility. I argue that it is not true, because this move undermines the liberal commitment to freedom. I take my cue for the analysis in this section mainly from an illuminating article by Zofia Stemplowska, but I argue against her conclusion.

A. The Value of Choice

As I set out in section II, the liberal idea of individual responsibility requires that individuals should be free to use their own fair shares of resources and opportunities and to bear the consequential responsibility of the choices they make. No further state actions that concern the ways those resources and opportunities are used, i.e., restriction of some uses in addition to those specified by the basic rights, can be justified. Therefore, the idea of choice-sensibility is central to this idea.

However, this formulation is by no means clear, for it is not clear whether that means individuals should have the consequences as sensitive as possible to their choices given the

relevant conditions are fair. Taking this formulation as it is, it seems to allow what Stemplowska called 'Equality of Opportunity for maximum advantage'. That is, it allows that those whose choices are somewhat 'better' to be 'able to maximize the advantage they achieve over those whose choices are (in the relevant sense) worse'. The state has the duty not to interfere to change the pattern of distribution by, say, granting additional compensations to those that are the worst-off, or to those that fall below certain social minimum, if they fall into such positions because of their choices, except when such duty to distributive justice are trumped by humanitarian concerns.\textsuperscript{22} To put it differently: if choice-sensitive is of fundamental importance to individual responsibility, on what grounds could the state to impose restraints on the maximization of the gap between those who choose 'better' in the relevant sense to those who choose 'worse', as a matter of justice?

To find out the explicit liberal answer to this question, we need to inquire in what sense choices matter to us in leading our own life. The connection between freely leading our own life, i.e. to bring my life under my control, and to have those consequences that are relevant to my life sensitive to our own choices seems intuitive. And it seems that is the reason why liberal theories would consider the latter constitutive to liberalism. For instance, Kymlicka argued that for liberalism, 'inequalities that are the result of people's own choices about how to lead their lives…… are legitimate' for the reason that individuals 'should be free to make different choices about how to lead their lives'.\textsuperscript{23} But in a closer analysis, this connection cannot be pushed too far. There are many constitutive aspects of leading our own conceptions of good life that cannot appropriately be considered as our 'choices'. For instance, our more important judgements, convictions and life goals are surely constitutive parts of our conceptions of good life. They

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p. 125. See also my further discussion in subsection III B.

\textsuperscript{23} Kymlicka ‘Left-Liberalism Revisited’, p. 18; cf. also his \textit{Contemporary Political Philosophy, 2\textsuperscript{nd} edition.} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002). pp.75-76.
take the shape as they are because the ways and environments we are brought up and because our life experiences. These factors are, however, largely not subject to our choices.

It is true that, at the end of the day, when we say something as my judgements or convictions or goals, it means I nevertheless identify with them, however they are shaped by contingent factors. But to identify something is not to 'choose' something. We identify something because we believe it is the right thing to identify, with good reasons to support my allegiance to it. We are not choosing from a catalogue of objects that we are indifferent. In such cases, we are not, as Dworkin aptly put it, to 'choose a shirt from a drawer or dishes from a menu'.24 We do not change our beliefs on these cases simply because we feel like it, like the changes of our preference to dishes for lunch. Rather, we change our beliefs usually because we consider our old beliefs as defeated by weighty reasons, or that we discover those old beliefs no longer defensible. The structures of normative thinking behind a mere choice and identification to certain judgements and life goals are thus crucially different.

Nevertheless, it seems that such considerations notwithstanding, many liberals, Dworkin himself included, still take consequential responsibility to one's choices, that 'people can make their own decisions about what lives are best for them', as of fundamental importance for liberal justice.25 At least as matters of policies and public institutional arrangements, what matters is to allow people to choose freely and thus take consequential responsibility to their own choices. As Dworkin put it, he considers the relevant cut to be that consequences should be sensitive to choices flow from people's personalities, whether or not those personalities are appropriately considered as chosen or not.26 Granted this, choices are still of central importance for the liberal idea of individual responsibility: Dworkin's cut here does not oppose to Stemplowska's formulation of 'Equality of Opportunity for maximum advantage'; only that there are no

24 Here I draw on and elaborate the arguments from Dworkin, Sovereign Virtue, pp. 290, 294.
25 See Ibid., pp. 6, 319.
26 Ibid., pp. 290, 293.
injustice involved in having my beliefs on judgements, convictions and life goals not being chosen by me, if we identify with them. That is, there is no injustice involved in having the consequences in the differential levels of advantages caused by these unchosen factors. Setting aside these inequalities, the liberal idea of individual responsibility still allows those whose choices are 'better' to be 'able to maximize the advantage they achieve over those whose choices are (in the relevant sense) worse'.

The considerations so far seem to suggest that many liberals’ support of consequential-sensitivity of choice is merely derivative or instrumental. Not intervening people’s consequences of their own choices, given fair share of resources within the bounds of basic rights, is a good proxy of protecting people’s individual freedom in policy making and institutional arrangement. Are there, then, any positive arguments that connect the value of choices with people’s individual freedom? Here, Scanlon’s discussion of the value of choice is useful. Scanlon suggests that choices matter to individual freedom in three ways. First, in some situation we may be in a position that our choices are good predictors of our future satisfaction that we might legitimately expect. Thus, choices are of instrumental value to our interests. It is true, for instance, when we are choosing what dishes to have for lunch. That may because I am the only one that process the relevant personal information, e.g. my own preference and taste. But if this 'position' of mine cease to exist, e.g. that I am drunk and thus not capable to make rational choices based on my tastes and preferences, then my choice ceases to matter.27

Secondly, in some situations, choices may matter because of its 'representative' value, that in such situation it is relevant that the choices are made by us, that they represent who we are. For example, when we are choosing gifts for our friends, we would hope that the gifts reflect our own thoughts and judgements. In such situations, our choices matter because of choices

represent me the person, that being my voluntary choices flow from my personality, the choice represents me. The third class of situations are those that choices are symbolic manifestations of my capability of making choices as an independent and rational being, capable of making judgements that are important to my life. It is true that our personalities, for instances our life goals, are not flow from our choices all the way down. But still we want to be publicly granted to rights that allow us, as individual agents, to decide what we want to pursue. This allowance of the space for us to make our own choices is a recognition of us as equal and independent being, capable of making reasoned judgements.28

I believe Scanlon's arguments concerning the value of choice are correct. But then, it seems that none of these require or entail the 'maximum advantage' interpretation. For they only require that there have meaningful alternatives for choices open to an individual, so that his or her choices are significant but not irrelevant. Importantly, these considerations do not require those who choose 'better' in the relevant senses to be able to maximize their advantages with respect to those who choose 'worse'. Thus, Scanlon's considerations do not support the 'maximum advantage' interpretation, and so cannot provide the explanations for the value of choices required for that interpretation.

But it is also here we can see the problem of the ‘maximum advantage' interpretation. It is that it fails to account for many state actions that we consider reasonable, in the senses that such actions provide those meaningful alternatives that make our choices matter and valuable. Consider the provision of public goods. Other than those public goods that are essential to the protection of everyone's rights and shares of resources and opportunities, such as the collective defense of the state and the administration of justice, the state typically provide some other public goods that are not easily traceable to the enforcement of consequential-sensitivity to choices. As Joseph Raz put it, a tolerant, educated and humane society is a public good, and

28 Ibid., pp. 252-253.
indeed a collective good, that people’s claim or demand for it cannot be traceable to the interest and rightful entitlement to any single individuals. So as the existence of meaningful and pluralist options of professions and associative relationship. Their existence depends on the institutions that establish and sustain them. These institutions are not likely to be established by merely the undisturbed and state-guaranteed operation of consequential-sensitivity to choices given fair conditions. But we do have independent reasons to see their values. More importantly, whether those are the choices of mine, we can see them as valuable in virtue of them being within a set of choices that is available to members of a society, that they could enrich people's life.

In a famous essay, Dworkin seems to agree with these considerations on the independent values of certain options for our choices, but suggests that these considerations can be incorporated within the framework of the liberal idea of individual responsibility. There, he argues that liberals have good reasons to endorse state support of art, provided that such funding can preserve and enrich 'the structural aspects of our general culture'. State can subsidize art provided it can 'look to the diversity and innovative quality of the culture as a whole rather than to (what public officials take to be) excellence in particular occasions of that culture', possible strategies of which included indiscriminate subsidies like tax exemptions for donations to cultural institutions. Dworkin contends that this will not violate the principle that the state should be neutral to conceptions of the good, and will not affirm a particular preference of what is valuable, as it only calls for indiscriminate subsidies, and as it increases rather than reduces the life opportunities and options that people can choose from. We indeed should view

30 Ibid., pp. 205-207.
31 See Ibid., pp. 215-216.
33 Ibid., p. 233.
34 Ibid., p. 230.
ourselves, as Dworkin put it, 'trustee of the structure of linguistic opportunity.' In this way, it appears Dworkin can contain the provision of public good, such as art, within the liberal idea of individual responsibility.

But as Harry Brighouse rightly observes, the very point of art vests on its creativity and innovation, and this implies that what kinds of value an artwork can produce are always uncertain. These values cannot demonstratively be proved to be of interest of all rather than just some. What can be counted as art, as well as to what extent it can contribute to the structure of culture, is already a value judgement based on some specific conceptions of the good. Brighouse's point here, I believe, can be generalized to most, if not all, sorts of public goods. There are few uncontroversial goods that is of interest to a similar extent to everyone, or merely contribute to the execution of individual responsibility as formulated as the 'maximum advantage' interpretation. To demonstrate their values requires substantial normative arguments on what is good and what is a good life. But these provision or support of public goods require resources that must be drawn from the just share of resources that individuals fairly entitled.

Therefore, liberalism cannot have both: it either embraces individual responsibility, which allows the 'maximum advantage' formulation; or to admit that there are legitimate reasons to support state provisions of public or collective goods, probably with reference to some substantial normative arguments on what constitute human goods. Only the latter option, however, is consistent with reasons that plausibly explain why choices are valuable for an individual to lead their life in accordance with their own conception good life, i.e. as free citizens. The upshot is that, if consequential-sensitivity to choices is valuable to the extent it tracks the idea of treating individuals as free citizens, then the idea of individual responsibility

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35 Ibid., p. 231.
37 Ibid., p. 56.
as I set out here is a wrong way to take the valuable part of this sensitivity seriously. For the idea of individual responsibility cannot provide good reasons to support state provision of collective and public goods, and state provision of such goods sounds deeply reasonable to most of us; or, in any case, they are deeply entrenched in any decent advanced modern democracies.

**B. EQUALITY OF CHOICE-INSensitivity as Fairness**

An alternative formulation of the idea of individual responsibility is to argue that it is indeed 'relational', i.e. it defines the way what a fair condition for everyone is, by providing citizens with a relevantly equal set of opportunities, resources and/or advantages. Individuals should then take responsibility to fit their conceptions of good life to the given parameters, either they have to bear the costs of leading their conceptions of good life as set by the parameters, or if they judge the costs to be unbearable they should adjust their conceptions.\(^{38}\)

In this formulation, consequential-sensitivity of choices are not what matter; rather, the capacity to choose, or the capacity to control one's conduct in general, is taken to be a necessary capacity of the citizens to adjust their life to conform with what fairness requires.\(^{39}\)

Under this formulation, Stemplowska's following suggestion is therefore consistent with the idea of individual responsibility: compensations to those who fall below the social minimum via a public insurance scheme available to all citizens, whether such fall is genuinely chosen or not.\(^{40}\) She further generalizes this point by suggesting that a better formulation of the idea of individual responsibility as giving equal respect to citizens is that

… people should be provided with insurance against a given type of avoidable disadvantage just as long as the interests that are served by not needing to avoid a given conduct (lest it leads to a disadvantage), or not needing to purchase private insurance against the disadvantage, outweigh the interests that would be served if such compensation did not have to be provided.\(^{41}\)

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41 Ibid., pp. 129, 130.
But Stemplowska's appealing suggestion indeed shows what is problematic in this 'relational' formulation of individual responsibility in general. It is that it would allow too much ethical assumptions to be smuggled into the idea of treating people as equal citizens. For the foundational intuition that supports the idea of individual responsibility as such, as we have seen in section II, is that it is neutral to people's conceptions of good life, within the bound of basic rights and fair shares of resources and opportunity to all. As Dworkin put it, to appropriately treat people with equal concerns and respects 'does not endorse any choice of ethical value… so long as that life has not been forced upon someone by the judgement of others that it is the right life for him to lead'.

But as Stemplowska's suggestion makes clear, this 'relational' formulation of individual responsibility allow ranking of people's interest, i.e., to see if the interests protected by the insurance scheme outweights the interest that individuals could have if there are no such scheme. Indeed, lest this ranking, the point of 'relational' formulation seems empty; for what else reasons are there, then, could one employ to construct the content of a fair set of resources and opportunity to everyone, that the ranking of the ethical values in such a set can be insensitive to one's choices?

Thus, in contrast to Stemplowska's intention to suggest a responsibility-sensitive egalitarian model that would compensate chosen severe disadvantage, her suggestion indeed shows that the conclusion I have been shown in last subsection IIIA is correct: the idea of individual responsibility in itself cannot provide grounds to prohibit the implausible 'maximum advantage' interpretation; rather, the state has good reasons to provide goods that are independently justified by reasons beyond those being allowed by equal condition to everyone, with reference to certain objectively justified human goods. In other words, the idea of individual responsibility can be plausible only if it is checked by the provision of objectively

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42 Dworkin, Sovereign Virtue, p. 6.
justified human goods against its tendency towards the 'maximum advantage' interpretation. The idea of individual responsibility is thus implausible, as no stand-alone formulations of it is plausible. Furthermore, Stemplowska's suggestion also implies that, even an ideal and egalitarian market with private insurance available to citizens cannot be plausible if stand alone; a mandatory compensation to all regardless of people's choices must be operated to check against the single-minded execution of the idea of individual responsibility.

At one point, Dworkin seems to be providing a possible way out that such a comprehensive and mandatory state-run compensation scheme can be consistent with the idea of individual responsibility. In arguing for a mandatory coverage of health-care insurance scheme, he argued that such a scheme would be consistent with people's free choices if what is insured by the scheme is constructed 'on the basis of assumptions about what all but a small number of people would think appropriate', and allows those who would like to spend more for special care to purchase optional, supplemental insurance packages. It seems to imply that sometimes we can assume something to be agreed as good to all rational individuals, and on the basis of such assumption, to provide the kind of state-run compensation scheme as suggested by Stemplowska will then be consistent with being neutral to people's conceptions of good life as required by liberal justice.

There can be two replies to this possible way out. First, as I have argued in subsection IIIA, following Brighouse, there may not be such goods. The may indeed be no such goods the specification of it and the moral weight assigned can be so neutral to different conceptions of good life. Secondly, and more importantly, even if there are such goods, that all different conceptions of good life will likewise rationally agree and endorse, then what matters here is that the state provision of such goods are indeed justified by good reasons. For only if it is the case, can we then plausibly assume that such goods would be chosen by all people given they

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43 Ibid., pp. 315, 316.
are rational. The fact that they are supported by good reasons, probably because they are some objectively justified human goods, thus is the real normative ground for their provision by the state. That all people would have chosen them given they are rational does not contribute much to the normative grounds of such provision. This way out to make provision of public goods be grounded in the liberal idea of individual responsibility, in order to justify comprehensive insurance scheme as Stemplowska or Dworkin suggest, thus fails in the final analysis.

Some may argue that even if what I have argued are true, what about those who repeatedly waste the goods and opportunities in the set of valuable alternatives that is provided equally to everyone? If it makes sense to help those who fall below social minimum by 'bad' choices, it does not seem to be the case for other goods that are provided above the minimum. If the provided equality of shares is choice-insensitive even for those who did not fall below social minimum, as it seems to follow from my arguments, then isn't it implausible to compensate those suckers and surfers? Isn't it unfair to others who choose more responsibly, if those suckers and surfers can have their shares always be reimbursed, as it in effect means providing more goods and opportunities to them? It follows that even if what I have argued make sense, choice-sensitive responsibility should still have an important place in any just distributive scheme.

But I think it is too quick to consider those somehow repeatedly consume more goods and resources than others as they 'waste' those things, and that they are suckers and surfers. Suckers and surfers, in the sense that they waste what they have in bad faith and/or for no good reasons, are of course not entitled to be given more. But it is because they have no good reasons to justify to others they can appropriate and consume more goods than others in virtue of wasting what they have. If there are good reasons for some to argue that, unless they are given more, they

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44 cf. Rawls's comment that 'surfers must somehow support themselves' with the metrics of primary goods they are given, without demanding more. See Rawls, *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, p. 179.
cannot maintain themselves as equals to others, then they of course entitle more. The crucial ground to determine whether they are entitled to differential advantages is still the reasons, but not simply people's choices.

To hold that one should in these cases to bear full responsibility of the consequences of their choices, and argue that otherwise one is a sucker or surfer, and thus unfairly appropriate more than others, is to assume that the state could and should determine people's differential advantages solely on the ground of whether the results are properly regarded as 'chosen', and ignore the variety of reasons, many of them inevitably context-bounded, that people can claim as legitimate grounds for having more goods and opportunities than others in order to be treated as equals. This, I would suggest, precisely and sharply illustrates the contrasting natures of, on the one hand, reason-giving practices, and, on the other, the market that ultimately decides people's differential advantages simply on the ground of people's choices.

C. The Principle of Stakes

To further illustrate this point, it is also worthy to consider Serena Olsaretti's analysis of the connection of responsibility and the consequence of choices here. Olsaretti argues that one should distinguish the idea of holding individuals responsible to their choices, and the account of the stake of a choice, i.e. what could reasonably be counted as the outcome of a particular choice that the responsible choosing individual has to internalize. She argues that even if we accept that one should hold individuals responsible to their choices in distributive issues, so that choices can justify inequality in the level of advantages, this idea of individual responsibility is still indeterminate unless it is complemented with a proper 'principle of stakes'. For we do not know what outcomes are to be counted as the consequences of a choice.

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46 Ibid., pp. 167-168172-173.
47 Ibid., p. 186.
if we do not have such a principle. She considers several candidates of such a principle, and argues that, despite their shortcomings, it is nevertheless true that the idea of holding individuals responsible to their choices are compatible with different principles of stakes. To hold individuals responsible to their choices, therefore, so Olsaretti argues, is consistent with exempting them from certain costly outcomes, if we have good reasons not to regard those outcomes as stakes of those choices.

Of our interest here is her discussion of what she dubbed as the 'Equal Shares' view of stakes. She argues that some egalitarian theories are, in effect, suggesting that one can 'extract' a principle of stakes from the egalitarian commitment itself, so that further independent account of the stakes is not needed; or, at any rate, the idea of holding individuals responsible to their choices plus a particular interpretation of an egalitarian commitment can provide us a sufficiently determinate principle of individual responsibility. The idea, according to Olsaretti, is this. In such a view, in addition to stipulating individuals should be held responsible to the outcome of their choices, the regime of stakes has also to be fair, i.e., individuals should bear equal outcome for equally risky choices, no matter the content of the choices. It is in this sense not biased toward some specific preferences, and thus is neutral to different conceptions of the good. In other words, as Olsaretti puts it, it is a situation that no one needs to bear higher costs than other for their choices. For if someone can bear less costs for equally risky choices, 'to require others to internalize some of these costs would be to give them less than their equal share'.

She argues that such a view is not sufficiently determinate, and therefore misguided, because sometimes we consider individuals to have certain rights that are not comparative and

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48 Ibid., p. 173.
49 Ibid., pp. 183-186.
50 Ibid., pp. 177-182.
51 Ibid., pp. 177, 182.
52 Ibid., p. 177-178.
53 Ibid., p. 178.
distributive in nature. People have those rights because of independently legitimate reasons, not that because people's access to advantages should be equal. In her imaginary example, a reckless motorcyclist hurt himself in a road accident, which he is to be held fully responsible to. This, however, does not imply that his motorcycle is therefore up for grabs by passers-by. It is not because letting his motorcycle up for grabs will be putting higher costs to his choices than that of other people; rather, it is because it is his motorcycle. A regime of stakes that requires equal amount of the actors' property should be up for grabs by passer-by for doing equally risky acts, for instance, would strike us as absurd, rather than taking seriously the idea of treating everyone equally.\(^5^4\)

But as Olsaretti has also considered in her article, there is a further way one could 'extract' elements from the ideal of individual responsibility to make an account of the stake of responsibility sufficiently determinate. It is that the regime of stakes should be constructed in a way that 'individuals should enjoy as large as possible an area of freedom', provided equality of condition is met. She does not seem to consider it naturally follows from the idea of holding individuals responsible for their choices, given everyone is equally situated.\(^5^5\) But as we have discussed in section II, this is actually a sensible construction of the idea of individual responsibility; or, at any rate, it should be a construction that liberalism has no good reasons to reject. If the value of choice lies in the manifestation of the value of freedom for individuals, then it naturally follows that in addition to holding equally risky choices to be followed by equally costly outcomes, the regime of stake for the liberal idea of individual responsibility should also be constructed in such a way that individuals could be left alone in an area of freedom as large as possible.

\(^5^4\) Ibid., pp. 178-180.
\(^5^5\) Ibid., pp. 179-180.
This 'extraction' can rule out such regime of stakes that everyone's property should be up for grabs, for that would make people less free to use their fair share of resources. It will also rule out a regime of stakes holding that other citizens have a duty to help the injured reckless motorcyclist; or that hospitals have an obligation to devote resources that are fairly belong to others to restore the motorcyclist's normal health. Indeed, it will rule out a regime of stake that individuals are coerced to invest into a compulsory insurance scheme to protect them from recklessly caused disadvantages, that is, the kind of regimes of stake that will be endorsed by Stemplowska's 'relational' formulation of the idea of individual responsibility we discussed above. What grounds could the liberal idea of individual responsibility provide to impose individuals such duties of rescue, so that to limit their freedom in using their fair share of resources, given they are used in ways that are consistent with basic rights?

The upshot is that, for liberal theories to maintain their liberal outlook, they are constrained in what sorts of 'principle of stake' they can coherently embrace; indeed, a principle of stakes that equally maximize all individuals' area of freedom from interference is naturally, or at least sensibly, followed from the liberal commitment to holding individuals responsible to the consequences of their choices. That is, the idea of individual responsibility that allows individuals' differential level of advantages to be determined solely by the consequences of individuals' choices in a fair condition to everyone, is a distinctive position to the question of responsibility to choices that liberal theories have no good reasons to reject.

Before ending this rather long-winded section, I would like to add one final note on the scope of its argument. This section attacks the idea of individual responsibility, which I identified as one of the normative cores of liberalism in the last section. Now, I also invoked in this section arguments from Raz and Scanlon to support my criticism to the idea of individual responsibility. Is it not true that Raz’s and Scanlon’s theories are also widely considered as, in important philosophical sense, liberal theories? If their theories have good reason not to endorse
the idea of individual responsibility, does it not also imply that my attributing the idea of individual responsibility as distinctively liberal is misguided? It is indeed absurd to claim Raz’s and Scanlon’s theories are not liberal, or to claim that it is misguided to consider their theories as liberal. Nor do I wish to argue that any theories that have reservations to the idea of individual responsibility thereby just cannot be coherently called as liberal. What I would like to conclude for the arguments in this section is rather this: given the idea of individual responsibility is an important tendency within the family of liberal families, and that it can be plausibly shown as having its root in fundamental ideas of liberalism, we have good reasons to regard theories that reject the implausible idea of individual responsibility as non-liberal, and for good. In any case, as my extensive citations in this section shown, at least one important and dominant form of liberalism does embrace the idea of individual responsibility. And, importantly for my purpose in this study, many socialist theories and proposals did embrace this liberal idea of individual responsibility (See my survey in chapter 1 and in section IV of chapter 3). I contend that my arguments in this section plausibly show that they are misguided, whether or not my arguments have plausibly constructed and rejected all forms of liberalism.

IV. The Problem with Rawlsian Liberalism

This section considers whether Rawlsian liberalism can distance itself from the idea of individual responsibility. I argue that it can only eschew the idea of individual responsibility by undermining its liberal credential. Of course, Rawlsian liberals can still claim their theories


57 By characterizing the Rawlsian liberalism, I mainly take my cue from writings of Thomas Nagel, especially his Equality and Partiality (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), and Samuel Scheffler, especially his ‘Choice, Circumstance and the Value of Equality’, Politics, Philosophy & Economics, Vol.4 No. 1 (2005), pp. 5-28. But I will also cite other theorists I take to be sharing similar ideas. To formulate it as ‘Rawlsian’ rather than directly referring to Rawls’s view, I also set aside here the exegesis question of what the correct understanding of Rawls’s view is. What I am going to discuss here is a view that conceives the idea of liberalism using conceptual apparatus largely developed by Rawls.
are in some important sense liberal; again, I am not claiming here that they are misguided. I only wish to show that their grounds to eschew individual responsibility are based on something that cannot be derived from some uncontroversial, widely-accepted basic liberal premises. Thus, my arguments and conclusion in the last section of this chapter still hold: it is those grounds that qualify the operation of the idea of individual responsibility that matter, and those grounds are not corollary of the normative cores of liberalism.

Rawlsian liberalism claims that rules governing the system of cooperation should be decided in the original position, that, according to one interpretation, 'without knowing who we are, we must put ourselves fully into the position of each representative person in the society'.\textsuperscript{58} So, in the original position, the imagined representative persons do not know their specific natural endowments and beliefs. In such a position, those who choose the rules of social cooperation will agree that those rules should not favor any citizens who hold certain natural attributes and belief. In other words, inequalities that might be caused by social institutions due to these factors are being regarded as unjustifiable to them. The idea is that what is morally significant for liberalism is those inequalities among people that are socially caused. Such inequalities, as they are created or at least mediated by social institutions, are not acceptable. Social institutions of a Rawlsian liberal political society must treat people equally, such that no inequalities of advantages are due to the operation of these social institutions.\textsuperscript{59} Considerations in the original position, Rawlsian liberals argue, can justify Rawls's famous Difference Principle, i.e. social institutions should work in a way that to be of the greatest benefits of the least advantaged.\textsuperscript{60} It is because, since it is probably impossible to eliminate all socially caused inequalities if the family exists, and that natural lottery of talents may operate with social

\textsuperscript{58} Nagel, Equality and Partiality, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{60} Rawls, A Theory of Justice, p.87.
institutions to generate inequalities, these inequalities can be justified if they are 'harnessed for the essentially egalitarian ends'. That is, to benefit as much as possible to those least advantages who suffer such inequalities most.61

An alternative explanation of the decision made in the original position is that, given the representative persons do not know who they are in the original position, they would give priority to those who have more urgent needs, as they want to make sure that they can get as much as possible if they happen to be those who have such urgent needs. This leads us to some form of prioritarianism in distribution of resources or advantages, which Difference Principle is one version of it.62 Either way, Rawlsian liberals claim that this provides a plausible liberal theory of justice that recommend people's differential level of advantages be at least partly insensitive to people’s choice, as the least advantaged should be accorded with maximum possible benefits. For these rules of social institutions as chosen in original position is claimed to manifest the 'basic liberal principles', as the political society with its institutions governed by such rules 'provides a fair framework of cooperation within which people can pursue their diverse schemes of value and conceptions of the good'.63

However, Rawlsian liberalism appears to be sufficiently liberal without committing to the idea of individual responsibility, only because the setting of original position appears to derive a conclusion different from that of the idea of individual responsibility, on the basis of something looks very much alike the idea of individual responsibility: individuals should be situated fairly and impartially. But the setting of original position in effect requires individuals to treat others' more urgent needs as of equal claim to an individual as the individual's own equally urgent needs. Only with this assumption can the original position justify social rules like Difference Principle or giving priority to those with more urgent needs, without taking

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much into account what individuals choose in their lives to lead them into such a position. This conception of impartiality in social cooperation differs significantly to that of the idea of individual responsibility. The latter only requires individuals to be given equal conditions for making choices that concern their own conception of good life. It is in this sense impartial to every individual citizen. It is not to engage in a cooperative relationship that, in effect, everyone should treat impartially the interest of herself and the interest of others, given they are of equal urgency. Only some form of communitarian idea of cooperation can possibly justify this. For this point, Rawls himself indeed has some very apt comments:

The difference principle represents, in effect, an agreement to regard the distribution of natural talents as in some aspects a common asset and to share in the greater social and economic benefits made possible by complementarities of this distribution. Those who have been favoured by nature, whoever they are, may gain from their good fortune only on terms that improve the situation of those who have lost out.64

A further merit of the difference principle is that it provides an interpretation of the principle of fraternity….We have yet to find a principle of justice that matches the underlying idea. The difference principle, however, does seem to correspond to a natural meaning of fraternity: namely, to the idea of not wanting to have greater advantages unless this is to the benefit of others who are less well off.65

That is, what Difference Principle manifests is a principle of fraternity, so that people see each other’s natural talents and benefits as complementarities. This is not something naturally follows from the idea of providing people equal conditions to freely lead their own lives. Indeed, it is something in addition to treating people as free and equals that way. With this understanding of what the Difference Principle aims to achieve, the discrepancy of the conflated senses of liberal and communitarian cooperation in Rawls’s setting in original position becomes clearer: how can that be the case that providing individuals equal conditions to freely lead their own lives, could entail these individuals are engaged in a fraternal relationship with

64 Rawls, A Theory of Justice rev. ed., p. 87, my emphasis.
65 Ibid., p. 90, my emphasis.
each other? This can only be the case if we stretch too much from the natural meaning of providing equal condition.

Even if we employ Rawls's own terms on what constitute a free person, this fraternal relationship among citizens does not seem to follow. Rawls argued that we have the highest-order interest to realize and exercise the two moral powers of moral personality, namely the capacity for a sense of justice and the capacity to rationally pursue a conception of the good; at the same time, they have the higher-order interest to have their own determinate conceptions of the good being successfully achieved.\textsuperscript{66} Citizens are free if they can understand and manifest themselves as having these powers and interest, and are ‘view as capable of taking responsibility for their ends’.\textsuperscript{67} They are equal as they are viewed and respected equally as having these powers and interests.\textsuperscript{68} But none of these entail that we have any moral duties to ‘regard… the more fortunate are to benefit only in ways that help those who have lost out’. Taking people as free and equal, on the one hand, and the principle of fraternity as Rawls understood it, on the other, are thus clearly distinct and independent ideals within his theory.

What Rawls describes instead, I believe, are those common attitudes for us to treat our close friends or family members, to whom we establish intimate attachments, i.e. some form of communitarian cooperation, as I have dubbed it here.\textsuperscript{69} It also makes sense for those who identify with and are attached to such form of fraternal or communitarian relationship to each other to agree that they should 'temper their insistence that individuals must fully internalize the costs of all their choices'.\textsuperscript{70} What seems to be implausible is to take all these as something

\textsuperscript{66} Rawls, ‘Social Unity and Primary goods’, pp. 164-165; Political Liberalism, pp. 19, 74; Freeman, ‘Rawls and Luck Egalitarianism’, 139.
\textsuperscript{67} Rawls, Political Liberalism, pp.30-31, 33-34.
\textsuperscript{68} Rawls, Justice as Fairness, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{69} Consider this passage from Rawls: ‘The family, in its ideal conception and often in practice, is one place where the principle of maximizing the sum of advantages is rejected. Members of a family commonly do not wish to gain unless they can do so in ways that further the interests of the rest. Now wanting to act on the difference principle has precisely this consequence.’, in Rawls, A Theory of Justice rev. ed., p. 90.
\textsuperscript{70} Scheffler, ‘Choice, Circumstance and the Value of Equality’, p. 22.
naturally follows merely from the idea of situating individuals fairly and impartially, which the Rawlsian liberals claim to be the case. The upshot is that, if Rawlsian liberalism appears to be able to eschew the idea of individual responsibility, it is because it presupposes an unacknowledged and underspecified communitarian cooperative relationship among free and equal individuals. This is the 'Rawlsian way', so to speak, to qualify the problematic aspects of the idea of individual responsibility. This communitarian relationship, however, as we have seen, cannot be plausibly considered as a natural corollary of liberal premises.

V. Taking Stock

Let me summarize this protracted discussion of individual responsibility before we move on. In this chapter, I have argued that the notion of consequential-sensitivity to choices, which is the core element of the liberal idea of individual responsibility, is problematic. This renders the liberal idea of individual responsibility implausible. I have shown that any plausible formulation of the idea needs heavy qualifications of the idea of consequential-sensitivity to choices by other values; in the final analysis, it is these other values, which supported by good reasons, that matter.

To argue for these, in section II I set up an ideal-typical construction of the theoretical cores of liberalism. They are, namely, priority of basic rights, liberal legitimacy and individual responsibility. I argued they are connected in the sense that the latter two seem to be rooted in the same idea of treating citizens as free and equal and will be led into similar conclusions in their support of basic rights. The idea of individual responsibility, however, would also consider that an ideal and egalitarian market to be constitutive to liberal political morality, that, to take Dworkin's words, 'equal share of social resources be devoted to the lives of each of its members, as measured by the opportunity cost of such resources to others.'
Then, in section III, I set out to show that the idea of individual responsibility is problematic. For, first, to the extent that choice is valuable as it treats individuals as free citizens, what matters is that individual choosing agents should be provided with enough meaningful alternatives to choose from. The idea of individual responsibility allows the interpretation that people's life prospects should be as sensitive to one's choices as possible given the conditions for their choices are fair, and thus allows that those who choose 'better' in the relevant sense to incur maximized advantage to those who choose 'worse' (i.e., the 'maximum advantage' interpretation). This interpretation holds that the state has duty not to interfere into whatever the distributive patterns resulted. I argued that this 'maximum advantage' interpretation is false, for it cannot account for the reasonable state provision of public goods, which is one way to provide meaningful alternatives for individuals. To the extent that individual responsibility allows itself to be interpreted as the 'maximum advantage' interpretation, it is thus in deep tension to, if not inconsistent with, treating people as free citizens. Because of the constraint set by the idea of individual responsibility, the liberal state will have no legitimate ground to prohibit those who choose 'better' in the relevant sense to incur maximized advantage to those who choose 'worse'.

An alternative formulation of the idea of individual responsibility is that it is 'relational', that is, granting individuals fair condition and assume that they process normal human capacity, people must bear the responsibility to whatever that results, whether those individuals choosing agents regard the consequences as the result of their genuine free choices or not. This formulation appears to be able to contain the challenges I pressed to the 'maximum advantage' interpretation. I argued that this formulation, since it welcomes the provision of state-run mandatory insurance for those fall below social minimum and the state provision of public goods in general, allows too much ethical assumptions of what constitute human goods to be smuggled into the idea of treating people as equal citizens. This, I have shown, is in tension
with the foundational intuition of individual responsibility of being neutral to people's conceptions of good life within the bound of liberal justice. Furthermore, even if there exist such 'neutral' public goods, then what justify the state provision of them is that they are supported by objective reasons, with reference to what constitute human goods. The idea of responsibility and choices are redundant in the justification. Yet, as I have further shown, to hold individuals responsible to their choices, in a way that the consequences of choices are as sensitive to their choices as possible, given equality of condition, is all the conceptual space the liberal idea of individual responsibility has.

Finally, in section IV, I further argued that the Rawlsian variant of liberalism can appear to eschew the idea of individual responsibility, only because it conflates the liberal and communitarian sense of cooperation in the construction of the original position, so that the independent principle of fraternity is smuggled into the idea of providing people with equal condition to freely lead their lives. Such a conflation of the idea of cooperation, I argued, cannot even be sustained if we take Rawls’s own conception of the free person as a premise for the sake of argument. The ideal of fraternal relationship does not follow from providing equal condition to persons for exercising their freedom.

The implication of these arguments is this. I have shown in this chapter that to the extent that choices matter to treating people equally as free citizens, it does not justify the idea of individual responsibility in any plausible formulations, for there exists no stand-alone plausible formulation at all. As we have seen in section II, an ideal and egalitarian market is constitutive to the idea of individual responsibility, and, indeed, as some liberals would have it, lies at the center of liberal political morality. As the liberal idea of individual responsibility is an ideal-typical construction, it may be true that no liberals explicitly formulate the idea that way, or that they tend to add qualifications to it, thus to make the liberal theories plausible and desirable. My arguments in this chapter, however, show that what matter at the end are indeed those
qualifications, and thus those state regulations and policies, but not the operation of the idea of individual responsibility. It follows that, given the idea of individual responsibility is an important tendency within the family of liberal families, and that it can be plausibly shown as having its root in fundamental ideas of liberalism, we have good reasons to regard theories that reject the implausible idea of individual responsibility as non-liberal, and for good. In any case, as many socialist theories and proposals did embrace this liberal idea of individual responsibility, I hope that my arguments in this chapter plausibly show that they are misguided in doing so.
CHAPTER 3: THE SOCIALIST IDEAL

I. Introduction

In this chapter, I expound what I take to be the most defensible interpretation of socialism, if it is understood as a normative political theory. I argue for a set of socialist political principles that is grounded in the core and most interesting normative insight of the socialist intellectual tradition, namely the recognition of the value of productive work as an essential arena of people’s self-realization and well-being. I draw these insights mainly from Marx’s and Marxists’ writings, since they are arguably the most philosophically sophisticated ones in the socialist intellectual tradition. I believe my reconstruction of these insights fits with the core concerns of many socialists, and it is one of the plausible systematic understandings or interpretations of the political ideas of this intellectual tradition.

The interpretation of socialism defended here is built on a reading of three important Marxists’ works, namely György Lukács, György Márkus and Karl Korsch. The interpretation consists of three components: (a) an ethical critique of capitalism that is built on a reading of Lukács’s idea of reification, to be grounded in (b) an understanding of human essential power that is built on Márkus’s reconstruction of Marx’s idea of human nature, and (c) socialist political principles that are supported by them, mainly built on Korsch’s program of ‘practical socialism’. This chapter, however, only focuses on the explication of the socialist ideal in its most defensible form; my critical comments to it, as well as considerations of feasibility constraints, will be left to the next two chapters respectively.

The chapter is organized as follows. Section II provides a socialist account of civil and political rights, or rather, an account of why socialism need not disagree with a standard liberal set of civil and political rights. Section III teases out what I take to be the normative foundation of socialism. Drawing on Lukács and Márkus, I argue that the fundamental insight of socialism
is the idea that one's well-being hinges on whether one can self-realize in productive work. Socialism considers a capitalist market economy ethically objectionable because workers are structurally coerced to put their labor-power under the hierarchical control of the capitalists to secure their subsistence, rather than freely opting for productive work to realize their ability, which is a source of well-being. I argue that such considerations lead to a positive ideal of community of equals in social production. This socialist ideal requires the production process to be structured in a way that workers can reasonably see themselves as participating freely in a cooperative enterprise to produce valuable things or services.

Section IV argues that, upon this normative foundation, socialism should be understood as consisting of four normative political principles: (1) freedom of occupation, (2) worker's democratic enterprises, (3) satisfaction of genuine needs that pass the public deliberative assessment, (4) democratic coordination of social production. Section V argues that these principles are in tension with a central tenet of liberalism I identified in the last chapter, namely the idea of individual responsibility. In the last chapter, I argued that for liberalism, in matters of distributive justice, an individual citizen is regarded as responsible to decide what, for her, gives value to life and to strive to lead a valuable life. Liberalism thus contends that citizens should therefore be free to choose how to lead their lives, within the bounds of basic civil and political rights, given material resources and social and economic opportunities among them are distributed fairly. In section V of this chapter, I argue that this liberal idea of individual responsibility challenges the socialist demands of workplace democracy and resource distribution in accordance with genuine needs. I argue that socialism can plausibly rebut these challenges. Section VI takes stock for the discussions in this chapter.
II. Socialism on Civil and Political Rights

To understand socialism as a normative political theory means to restate the social and political ideas invoked in the socialist intellectual tradition as a set of structured normative political principles. These political principles prescribe how the major institutions of a society should be ordered. These principles also specify the natures and contents of its citizens’ obligations toward these institutions. Typically, such a set of political principles covers issues in two broad categories: (1) civil and political rights of the citizens and (2) distribution of resources and opportunities for social and economic positions. In the second category, I also include the setting of economic structure, such as the way that the property rights regime is organized. This is because economic structure significantly affects what goods are to be distributed, as well as how they are to be distributed. My interpretation of socialism focuses on the second category. But before I move on to this discussion, I shall say a few words on the socialist account of the issues in the first category.

For civil and political rights, I contend that socialism should have a principled commitment to the priority of a standard liberal set of civil and political rights and liberties, such as freedoms of conscience, association and speech, as well as the rights of political participation such as equal votes and (fair) equal opportunity to political offices. That is, socialism should accord such rights and liberties to everyone equally, and should consider the protection of these rights and liberties for citizens as having priority over other conflicting policy goals. The reasons for this principled commitment are explicitly, though a bit too briefly, spelled out in the socialist intellectual tradition. In his 'On the Jewish Question', Marx famously distinguished between 'the rights of citizen' and 'the rights of man' in a liberal democratic state. For the 'rights of citizens', he referred to those political rights and freedoms that 'are only exercised in community with other men… by participation in the common essence', while 'the rights of man', he concluded, are nothing but rights and freedoms that are 'not based on the union of man with
man, but on the separation of man from man'. He attributed the 'practical essence' of the 'rights of man' as 'the right of man to private property', and then went on to indict 'the rights of man' as obstacles to realize 'the true man… in the form of the abstract citizen' as manifested in 'the rights of citizen'.\(^1\) Notice that Marx took for granted those freedoms and rights that are essential to enable citizens’ free participation in democratic politics, i.e. the 'right of citizen'. That is, he was by no means hostile to the freedom of association and speech, as well as the rights of political participation such as equal votes and (fair) equal opportunity to political offices, and many other civil political rights and liberties. Indeed, for Marx, the 'rights of citizen' manifest what he considers to be the 'abstract citizen', which is what the individuals must take 'back into himself' to 'become a species-being', so that everyone can 'recognize his own forces as social forces' and achieve the real and complete 'human emancipation'.\(^2\)

For socialism, then, rights and liberties that enable people's participation in democratic self-government are considered necessary institutions for an ideal society. In a socialist society, the real essence or spirit of those institutions will be more fully realized, and this will be achieved by re-constituting the economic structure of capitalism, which Marx considered as the ‘social revolution’ properly called.\(^3\) Socialism thus has good principled reasons to endorse the priority of the standard set of civil and political rights that most liberals agree.\(^4\) Marx did not provide clear arguments to connect the normative foundation of socialism to civil and political rights in his works. Nor did he clearly articulated what the real essence or spirit of the ‘rights of citizens’

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\(^2\) Ibid. p. 64.


\(^4\) The main ideas of the discussion above are mainly drawn from Jeremy Waldron, “Karl Marx's 'On the Jewish Question'”, in Jeremy Waldron eds, *Nonsense upon Stilts*: Bentham, Burke and Marx on the Rights of Man, (London and New York: Methuen, 1987),129-132. See also David Leopold, *The Young Karl Marx*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 159-161. A distinguished Marxist political theorist, Ralph Miliband, also argues that “the point of socialist critique of ‘bourgeois freedoms' is not (or should not be) that they are of no consequence, but that they are profoundly inadequate, and need to be extended by the radical transformation of the context, economic, social and political, which condemns them to inadequacy and erosion.” See his *The State in Capitalist Society*, (New York: Basic Books, 1969), pp. 266-267.
as he understood it is. But it suffices for our purpose here to conclude that any plausible understanding of socialism as a normative political theory should at least be consistent with a principled commitment to the priority of these civil and political rights. Indeed, a plausible normative foundation of socialism should be able to supply a plausible account of a principled commitment to the priority of the liberal standard set of civil and political rights.

III. Socialism: Its Normative Foundation

Socialism's normative foundation can be reconstructed from its ethical critique of capitalist market economy. A capitalist market economy is an economic system where the distribution of goods and services are mainly determined by market exchange and private ownership of means of production. The Marxist philosopher György Lukács's charge of reification of people in capitalist market economy provides an interesting perspective in capturing why a life structured by the capitalist market economy is considered undesirable. But his critical analysis needs to be furnished by an account of human nature that supports such an account. I argue that another Marxist philosopher György Márkus best articulates the Marxian socialist ideal of human agency that supports Lukács's critique. I discuss Lukács’s analysis in part A of this section. Part B expounds Márkus’s account, though filling up some of the gaps in his narrative by more recent contributions in philosophy and social science.

A. György Lukács’s Critique of Capitalism

In his influential essay 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat',

commodification of labor-power of the working class or the proletariat. Working class in a capitalist market economy are those who need to earn their living by contracting out their use of labor-power to those who effectively control the means of production or productive resources. They (and their capitalist employers) thus view their own physical and psychological attributes predominantly as a kind of resource that can be bought and sold, i.e. as commodity. The key issue of reification, for Lukács, is the loss of people's agency, i.e. the loss of people’s status of creators of social reality. It is because the social process is largely controlled by the apparently unalterable economic laws of capitalist market economy – those of market demand and supply. It is the logic of market demand and supply that predominantly determines the price of a commodity, including that of the worker’s labor-power. The workers' wages, in turn, constitute the major, and sometimes the only source of income for their subsistence. Wage-workers' lives are thus largely subject to, or tailored by, the economic laws and the logic of capitalist market economy. Most people's life activities are structured around their role as wage-workers and are largely driven by the fear that one may lose out in market competition.

If we unpack why it is objectionable that workers are reified in Lukács's sense under capitalist market economy, it seems that the best interpretation to is that workers are objectionably coerced to work. What drives workers to work in the labor market is the economic necessity of subsistence, in a way comparable to coercion in a standard sense: comply, or you will be physically harmed or even killed. Since capitalists own and control the means of production, workers can typically only sell their labor-power to the capitalists to earn a living. Otherwise, without access to means of production, the mere labor-power of the workers cannot generate them any material products for subsistence (It is a standard Marxist factual stipulation, 

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6 Ibid. 88-89.
7 Ibid. 186-187, 203-204.
8 Ibid. 129-130, 155-156, 158-159.
9 Ibid. 172.
10 Ibid. 165-166.
and I think its truth is uncontroversial). Typically, this also means that the capitalists have the final say on the shape of the productive process, in virtue of their control of the means of production. Therefore, workers are coerced to sell their labor-power as a commodity. They thus lose the control of their labor-power, as their control of it is sold to the capitalists who own the means of production.11

Yet, contrary to typical cases of coercion, there are no agents that coerce people by physical threat in the case of coercion by economic necessity. The threat, instead, comes from the commodity market of labor-power, and cannot be considered as controlled by any agent. In capitalist market economy, less efficient producers or sellers would be the 'losers'. They would typically be driven out of market, because they could not survive with the lowest possible selling price of goods. Only the 'winners' could survive with the lowest possible selling price of goods. Therefore, market is inherently a competitive venue.12 In this sense, G. A. Cohen was right to describe the capitalist market as driven by the 'greed and fear' of people.13 It is this competitive structure of the capitalist market accompanied by economic necessity of subsistence that coerces most workers into selling the control over their labor-powers to capitalists.14 This threat is experienced by the workers as something appears to be like unalterable laws of the world of nature.15 You must earn your living by selling labor-power to the capitalist (otherwise you will stave to die), just like you must act in accordance of gravity of the earth (you cannot jump off a cliff or you will die). But the law of market demand and supply that govern the use of labor-power is in fact social construction, which should be in principle alterable by people. For Lukács, people are therefore deprived of their exercise of

11 Ibid. p. 166.
15 Ibid. 97-98, 129-130, 158-159.
proper human agency.\textsuperscript{16} I believe Lukács means to argue that it is in this sense that people in capitalism are reified. As I take it, this is what Lukács considered the evil of reification of people's labor-power.

However, for Lukács, reification is a special form of human exploitation and oppression that only occurs in capitalism. What is specific for capitalism is that the proletariats are regarded as humans, entitled to be treated in ways consistent with human dignity, but at the same time also as commodities, governed by the economic law of capitalist market. In some ancient pre-capitalist regimes, slaves were considered beneath human beings, or were at most deemed by a certain mystical natural order a lower class of human being.\textsuperscript{17} The rise of capitalism, hand in hand with rationalization and secularization, destroys the validity of such a social order. For the first time, labor-power can be 'freely' sold in the market, rather than arranged and allocated by traditional conventions. Only then, says Lukács, could we see the reification of the proletariats.\textsuperscript{18} For only then are most working people both seen as human beings, and yet their human labor-power is considered a commodity. They are unlike slaves, who are viewed as sub-human and can be used as mere means and commodities all the way down.

\textsuperscript{16} In the capitalist market economy, middle class workers typically enjoy a broader range of occupational choices and are less compelled by economic necessity of subsistence than unskilled grassroots workers. But it is rare that a worker – who has no effective control over means of production – can be free from substantial compulsion of the economic necessity of subsistence at all in a capitalist market economy.

\textsuperscript{17} Lukács, “Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat,” 90, 167-168, esp. 168.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. 91, 92. In an important study of Lukács's idea of reification, Axel Honneth argues that Lukács's formulation is problematic, for Lukács failed to consider that in a capitalist market economy, people already recognized each other as partners capable of exchange and entering contracts, so they are not reified in a strict sense. For Honneth, the paradigm case of reification should rather be slavery, for slaves are viewed as 'things' – as non-human objects. Honneth's criticism lacks textual support. As the preceding discussion (as well as the accompanied citations) of this study shows, Lukács recognized that there are more serious human oppressions in pre-capitalist eras, yet he still reserved the idea of reification for commodification in the capitalist market economy. As an internal critique, then, Honneth's criticism is misguided. Whether Honneth's own concept of reification is independently plausible is beyond the scope of this study. For Honneth's criticism of Lukács, see his Reification: A New Look at an Old Idea (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 76-18, 157-158.
B. György Márkus’s Marxian Account of Human Nature

But what precisely the term *agency* means for Lukács and why and how this deprivation of agency is problematic in a normative sense is still unclear. A positive and more detailed explication is needed. This can be found in György Márkus’s reconstruction of a Marxian ideal of human agency. Marx’s writing on human nature and agency is scattered at best, especially among his mature writings. Whether Marx had a distinctive account of human nature, and the role this account plays in his whole theory, is still a disputed issue among different brands of Marxists. Márkus’s reconstruction of Marx’s account of human nature of agency is a distinctive contribution into that debate. It is because, as I argue below, in Márkus’s reconstruction the normative or ideal dimension of the Marxian account of human agency is most clearly fleshed out, yet without being founded on controversial metaphysical or teleological ground.

This account of human agency is constructed around a property that is distinctively human, namely *work*, or *production*. According to Marx, as highlighted by Márkus, ‘the practical creation of an objective world, the working upon inorganic nature, is vindication that man is a conscious generic being… the animals produce under domination of immediate physical need while man produces free of physical need and only genuinely so in freedom from such need.’ Therefore, work is the way for human beings to exercise their distinctively human power, as opposed to drives that are predicated by the laws of nature.

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22 Cited in ibid. p. 5, my emphasis.
To exercise this power, then, is in this sense an exercise of human freedom, and an exercise of human agency. Furthermore, Marx had famously argued that:

‘In my production I would have objectified my individuality, its specific character, and therefore enjoyed not only an individual manifestation of my life during the activity, but also looking at the object I would have the individual pleasure of knowing my personality to be objective… In your enjoyment or use of my product I would have the direct enjoyment both of being conscious of having satisfied a human need by my work, that is, of having objectified man’s essential nature, and of having thus created an object corresponding to the need of another man’s essential nature… I would have directly confirmed and realized my true nature, my human nature, my communal nature.’

Therefore, from a Marxian perspective, production is an essential power of human beings. In addition, participation in production is the main way of manifesting one's individuality if those powers used in production are exercised freely. Furthermore, one’s individuality as manifested in production can be recognized and respected if the products serve genuine human needs. As Márkus puts it, one’s ‘structure of personality’ always demands some form of ‘socio-personal recognition’, due to human beings’ ineluctable sociality. One's free exercise of distinctive human power and agency can only be properly recognized if ones’ production serves others’ genuine, objective needs. Productive work is thus an important source of self-realization for human beings. From a Marxist perspective, it is therefore of fundamental interest to an individual to achieve self-realization through gaining proper recognition conveyed to one's work, through serving others’ genuine needs. I shall call this ‘self-realization in productive work’ thesis.

Is this a plausible understanding of human nature? In an instructive article, Jon Elster considered empirical studies on industrial psychology to examine the connections between

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25 This phrase is coined by Leopold, The Young Karl Marx, p. 229.
work and self-realization. Of our interest here is his observation that, asides from income, a person has many motivations to work, and it is usually true that one is 'worse off by never working than by holding a regular job'. Among the important reasons for work is that to participate in work, as long as it is not forced, one can exercise and develop one's ability, given that the challenge of the work is within the range of the worker's abilities. It is also true that via the recognition of one's products by others one can gain self-esteem. One may thus say that human beings, or at least those living in modern society, have a natural inclination to work and produce, and they derive important fulfillment from such actions, provided the work and production are not forced upon them.

But production has three basic conditions. Among these are, first, cooperation among individuals, and second, standards of what is valuable in human lives and thus worth the effort of producing. Therefore, Márkus argues, a society with 'a network of norms, of social rules of use' is presupposed. A product cannot be valuable if it is not responding to some human needs; yet human needs are crucially shaped by social norms and rules. Even basic subsistence needs such as food must be mediated by social norms to take a social form to be considered appropriate for fulfilling human needs. Food must be cooked or made in a socially recognized way for it to be suitable for human consumption, for instance. We cannot consume food in raw as when a lion consumes a rabbit. What is worthy of the deployment of one's labor-power is therefore crucially determined by social norms and rules. Moreover, social forms as structured by social norms also determine the mode, the rate and the limits of production, e.g.

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27 Ibid. p. 111.
31 Márkus, Marxism and Anthropology, pp. 3, 7-8.
the direction and speed of accumulation and development. Thirdly, production requires skills and knowledge. Individuals need training and education to realize and develop their power of production. Skills and knowledge are social products. For the process of learning and knowledge accumulation for the use of future generations are social processes. In this sense, we are all 'social beings'.

Márkus suggests that it is crucial to highlight these basic conditions of production. For these are sites that should be regulated by the socialist vision of ideal social relation, so that productive work can contribute and would not obstruct people’s well-being. Let’s first consider his take on the standards of what are valuable and worth the effort of producing. Márkus argues that when social norms and rules 'appear to the concerned individuals as external and accidental barriers, alien powers impeding and deforming the manifestation of their personality' as manifested in their production, the problem of alienation occurs. The capitalist market economy is therefore an alienated one. It is a source of alienation for most if not all people. As we can see, and Márkus himself also explicitly acknowledged, this understanding of the Marxian notion of alienation is in many ways importantly similar with Lukács’s idea of reification. In any case, Márkus’s point is that alienation or reification occurs because the structure of social cooperation and the value standards for production in a capitalist market economy do not 'result from… [people’s] conscious and voluntary association subject to their own control'. Márkus thus argues that we can regain our freedom (i.e. unalienated/reified

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32 Ibid. p. 13.
33 Ibid. pp. 16-17, 18-19.
34 Ibid. p. 22.
form of life) only if social development is subjected to 'the conscious decisions of the collectively organized individuals'.

To regain this freedom, as I take it, we need a community of equals. People must be treated as equals, and they must be able to reasonably consider and understand themselves as equals in the community. If not, some of the members become subordinates to others. This fundamental equality in membership must be manifested in the way collective decisions for social production and distribution of resources are made. If some citizens are institutionally recognized to have a say that is less weighty than that of others, then they are alienated from their community. For they are merely subordinates of those who have more weighty voices. Consider the case that your interest and voice are always taken to be less important among a group of friends when you are all making common decisions: you would then cease to consider yourself a true or proper friend of others. Individuals of the community must therefore have good reason to identify with the collective decisions, i.e., they will regard themselves, with other equal members of the community, as joint authors of decisions even if those decisions are different from their own preferences on the issues. In this sense, I argue, the interests of individuals in society can be regarded as unified, and that they can properly take up the social point of view as identical to their individual point of view, i.e., social development can be properly evaluated by the level of flourishing of any single individual.

In what way this community of equals is consistent with everyone's authentic selves? I think this can be possible if such a community, aside from granting everyone equal standing, can also realize what Charles Taylor called the 'fusion of horizons'. The idea is that the members

37 Ibid. 59, my emphasis; cf. also Elster, “Self-Realization in Work and Politics”, 120-121, that a proper understanding of the 'joint self-realization' in work is like 'players in an orchestra' – 'the better A does his job, the better B can do his'.
39 Ibid. pp. 46-47.
of a community will engage in motivated, sincere and continuous dialogue. They willingly 'learn to move in a broader horizon, within which what we have formerly taken for granted as the background to valuation can be situated as one possibility alongside the different background'.\textsuperscript{41} Therefore, the standard of values and the rules, norms and forms of cooperation in social production can be supported by reasons that are the results of such a 'fusion of horizons' in a community of equals. Sincere disagreements on those issues among the members are accommodated within a shared framework of reasons or valuation, and practical resolutions are decided in accordance with this shared framework.

People are motivated to make efforts to reach such a fusion of horizons because it is the only way these standards can be considered as not imposed by others but authentically endorsed by the producers. Only then can they consider producing for these standards as a goal that is worthy of pursuit, and by fulfillment of such standards can their productive work become properly recognized. For socialism, the motivation for convergence of what different individuals see as reasons to act is rooted in people's aspiration of self-realization in productive work. I believe the idea of fusion of horizons within a community of equals captures the core motivation for the emphasis of \textit{solidarity} in the socialist tradition.\textsuperscript{42} But the fusion of horizons does not entail that people reach consensus on all stages of all issues, all the way down. It can be the case that even if people adopt such a shared framework of valuation, there is more than one eligible option. In such cases, depending on the context, different strategies of collective decision making are compatible with people sharing an integrated horizon: random selection,

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid. p. 23.


\textsuperscript{42} The idea of a fusion of horizon is similar to the core features of solidarity as described by Avery Kolers, “The Priority of Solidarity to Justice”, \textit{Journal of Applied Philosophy} 31 (2014): 425-427.
choosing a middle ground between the options, apportion of resources to different groups for their pursuit of their own adhered options, and, of course, majority vote.43

A summary of what I have argued so far in this rather complex discussion. In Márkus’s reconstruction of Marx’s account of human agency, what constitutes the essential human power is human beings' ability to work and produce in a value-purposive way. This is not only an essential feature of human power, but as Márkus argues, also a source of recognition of one’s personality. For production of things that are valuable to others is a source of recognition of one’s human power. But the exercising and developing of this power presuppose the existence of a certain form of society, namely a community of equals of which its members achieve a fusion of horizons. What is valuable and thus worth producing is defined by social forms, rules and norms. Producers would consider producing for these standards of value a goal that is worthy of pursuit only if these standards of value are not imposed but can be authentically identified by them. It is also only by then productive works that work toward the fulfillment of such standards of value becomes a recognition of their efforts, in a way that is consistent with their free production. Therefore, self-realization in productive work is an important aspect of people’s objective well-being, and our quest to self-realization through productive work leads us to consider a community of equals of which its members achieve a fusion of horizons desirable.

Now consider Márkus’s take that production is essentially a social activity, that few things can be produced without cooperation. One can identify with the products of such a cooperative venture only if participants authentically endorse the terms of cooperation.44 As Marx puts it,

44 This is also supported by empirical findings. Nichaelson et al. “Meaningful Work”, 80, 83, describe various results of industrial psychology researches, and show that if workers have collective control of the workplace and
'Freedom…can only consist in socialized man, the associated producers, rationally regulating their interchange with Nature, bringing it under their common control'.\textsuperscript{45} Therefore, for both Marx and Márkus, to say that a social development is determined by conscious collectively organized individuals must also mean that the various production processes are organized along the idea of a community of equals. This is the second dimension of exercising and developing people's essential human power of production, which requires a community of equals with fusion of horizons among its members.

Finally, according to Márkus, Marxian socialism also considers flourishing of human agency as the fundamental evaluative standard of social development. In Márkus’s reconstruction, Marx would understand human flourishing as that the expanding complexity of both genuine human needs and human productive capabilities of all are promoted as much as possible as allowed by the technological progress in a given historical epoch; for otherwise, alienation occurs.\textsuperscript{46} Genuine human needs and human capacities are expanding because it is distinctively human that skills and knowledge can be passed generationally, via education and training; indeed it is what makes human productive work possible in the first place.\textsuperscript{47} According to Márkus, it is the Marxian view of the historical development of human being that, the socialist ideal can be achieved only if everyone can have sufficient access to the means of human flourishing as allowed by social development. The core evil of capitalism, therefore, is that although it allows astonishing material growth from a social point of view, much of the people, i.e. the proletariats, are foreclosed from the access to such fruits.\textsuperscript{48} Therefore, as Márkus would have it, a Marxian ideal society would be a community of equals established on

\textsuperscript{46} Márkus, \textit{Marxism and Anthropology}, pp. 12-13, 22.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid. 39-40; see also Jaffe, “The Critical Value of György Márkus’s philosophical Anthropology”, 40.
\textsuperscript{48}Márkus, \textit{Marxism and Anthropology}, 46-47; Jaffe, “The Critical Value of György Márkus’s philosophical Anthropology”, 47.
the technological and material foundation of a well-developed capitalism, in which members regard the promotion of each other’s capabilities and expanding genuine human needs as among people’s fundamental interests; they thus look to, as Sibyl Schwarzenbach puts it, bring the ‘distinctively human capacities to fruition and [their] goals into harmony with those of others’.\textsuperscript{49}

I think Schwarzenbach is correct to formulate the motivating ideal at work in a socialist ideal society as a sense of friendship: it is because we value the civic friendship among us that we are concerned about each other’s' flourishing, which is enhanced by our collective actions. Civic friendship is a political form of friendship, that we concern the well-being of our fellow citizens, because they are citizens of the political community that we belong too, though we may not have personal knowledge to them. We therefore would concern and promote the objective conditions that are conducive to their well-being, rather than promoting their well-being based on my personal knowledge of them by private means. Yet, like personal form of friendship, we can still enjoy the great good of maintaining the friendship, the goodness of which lies in the existence of the relationship itself.\textsuperscript{50} We are delighted by seeing our friends flourishing.\textsuperscript{51} For socialism, not only should the motivation to work productively be driven by one's interest in self-realization; it should also be driven by our interest in serving others' genuine human needs in general, for the sake of facilitating the flourishing of people's essential human power of productive work.

A final note on the nature of Márkus’s reconstruction of Marx’s account of people’s interest in self-realization in productive work. Marx may or may not have metaphysical assumptions of what constitutes people’s good life when he was writing about the ethical importance of self-realization in productive work to human being in various places in his work. Yet, as my

\textsuperscript{51} Schwarzenbach, "On Civic Friendship", 100-101.
exposition above has shown, Márkus’s reconstruction of his line of thought can be supported by non-metaphysical, indeed empirical grounds. Or at least its plausibility does not depend on particularly controversial metaphysical assumptions about human nature. This is not a widely shared view in the literature on the philosophy of Marx. But I believe Márkus’s view is one that the plausibility of which is easier to establish, for the purpose of a political theory that aspires to appeal to people in modern society, which, as liberals (as I describe in the last chapter) rightly assume, who probably hold widely different and incommensurable conceptions of the good. The merit of grounding the account of human interest in a political theory in (probably controversial) metaphysics is out of the scope of this study. It suffices if my exposition of Márkus’ reconstruction of Marx’s account here, which is non-metaphysical in nature, looks compelling enough.

Let me take stock this rather long section by putting together threads from Lukács and Márkus I have thus far discussed. Márkus’s reconstruction of Marx’s account of people's fundamental interest in self-realization in productive work provides the normative foundation of socialism, for it also provides the features of an ideal society that facilitates this self-realization. The socialist ideal society manifests a form of social relationship among citizens that is the very opposite of that of capitalist market economy. As we have seen in Lukács's analysis, people's allocation of their labor-power in a capitalist market society is regarded as governed by an unalterable law of market supply and demand. For capitalism is so structured that typically workers would have to sell their labor-power as a commodity to the owners of the means of production, driven by the economic necessity of subsistence. People thus lose their agency in their use of essential human power in a capitalist market economy. They therefore

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52 For an attempt to cover similar grounds of Marx on productive work with explicit metaphysical and teleological arguments about human nature, see Shlomo Avineri, The Social and Political Though of Karl Marx (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), esp. pp. 65-85.
fail to realize their essential human power in work and production so structured, and indeed fail to see work and production as constitutive to self-realization. This is not the case in the social relationship envisioned by the socialist ideal: in socialism, people only cooperate in productive work to produce something the society finds valuable, in accordance with a shared framework of valuation they identify with, grounded in people’s genuine needs. The core of this social ideal is a community of equals with fusion of horizons. It regulates both the establishment of the standards of value and the organization of productive work in socialism.

IV. Socialism: Its Political Principles

If the above articulation of the socialist visions of well-being and the corresponding ideal of society makes sense, what can we make of the normative political principles that can be grounded in these visions? Here I find that Marx’s famous formulation: ‘From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!’ is indeed, as he said, an appropriate slogan to be inscribed on the banners to spell out the point.53 But a slogan, however informative it is, is not a principle in itself. As I take it, this slogan is useful to summarize the point of socialist political principles because it nicely emphasizes, first, the ground for people's claims, and second, the fundamental motivation on the part of individuals to serve these claims. Or so I shall argue below.

As we have seen, the fundamental insight of socialism is that one's well-being hinges on whether one can self-realize in productive work. This is the core reason for socialism to consider a capitalist market economy problematic: workers work largely for wages to secure their subsistence, rather than freely opting for work to realize their ability. From this, socialism as a normative political theory should prescribe the following principles in social organization.

First, people’s freedom of occupation should be considered a basic liberty or a basic right. It means that social and economic positions should be open to everyone, and those with the same level of talents and the same willingness to pursue an occupation should have the same opportunity to attain it. Therefore, people’s formal right to choose their productive line of work is secured. Liberal capitalist market economy also secures this right for citizens. But mere legal protection from not being coerced into a job does not imply that people will have the substantial right to participate in productive work that one authentically prefers. They can still be coerced into work because of economic necessity of subsistence, as we have seen in the last section. But the protection of this formal right is important: although it is not adequate in itself to secure people’s right to participate in productive work one authentically wishes, it is nevertheless a necessary condition.

Secondly, in order not to make this freedom of occupation merely formal with respect to one’s interest in self-realization in productive work, the worker should have control over the production process. To the extent that the lines of production for goods and services in modern society are mostly cooperative enterprises, each of the relatively independent units of production, usually a firm, should be subject to the democratic control of all the participating workers. That is, the final decision-making power of the organization of the production process, i.e. the effective control of the means of production, should be vested into workers’ hands, where each worker should have an equal say. ‘One worker one vote’ is a necessary organizing principle, but it should not be a sufficient one: such worker-democratic production units should also be organized in a way that facilitates decision-making to be based on deliberation among the workers. For socialism, these arrangements should not be merely optional, because they are of prime normative importance.\(^{54}\) Therefore, these arrangements should be protected alongside

\(^{54}\) It should be noted that my proposed socialist political principles here do not need to presuppose a gender-biased structure of work and workplace, i.e. that workers have wives at home to take up the care work of the family, and only workers’ work is recognized as proper work that earns wages. It is fully consistent with a shortening of the working day, as well as other restructuring of the physical workplace, to facilitate, as Susan Okin puts it, the ‘equal
citizens’ basic civil and political rights, i.e. typically, they should be entrenched in the constitution.55

The next question that concerns a socialist society is: What, then, is to be produced for whom, and how to determine what to produce? Socialism mounts its ethical charge to a capitalist market economy that people's labor-powers are deemed as commodities. For most workers are wage earners, and their lives are predominately structured by and thus subordinated to the market demand and supply of the labor-power, rather than led freely. For socialism, then, people's choice of work should not be governed or restrained by the law of market demand and supply of the labor market. But workplace democracy is not enough to achieve this goal. Market demand of certain kinds of labor is largely dependent on the market demand of the production of certain goods and services. Therefore, if these goods and services are determined by the law of market demand and supply of a capitalist economy, it is inevitable that job opportunities for workers will be subject to market demand and supply, even if the enterprises are already organized as workers’ democratic ones. If these enterprises are motivated by profit in a capitalist economy, they would still wish to attract talented individuals to produce what is of great market demand and to kick out those who are inefficient in responding to those demands. Such market pressures will eventually bring back a labor market, or at least something close enough to it that shares those features that socialists disapprove of.

sharing by men and women of paid and unpaid work, productive and reproductive labor’. It is also consistent with the arrangement that, if a division of familial labor is unavoidable, earning should be equally shared between a worker and his or her partner who is taking up the care work. See Susan Okin, “The Family: Gender and Justice” in Clayton, M., and A. Williams, (eds.) Social Justice (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 203-217. The idea is to recognize that care work and reproductive labor are also proper productive work. Socialists have good reasons to object the structure of work and the workplace that marginalizes care work and reproductive labor, for it is also a form of subjecting one's labor-power to hierarchical control and depriving the care-takers of their self-realization. It is indeed a form of alienation.

Note that what is at issue is not producing in accordance with people's demands within the constraints of supply of resources and labor-power, as such. Any system of social production must take demand and supply into account in this sense. The problem, rather, lies in the fact that in a capitalist economy, people's demand is set to match with the supply of goods and services by a competitive market. The suppliers of commodities are disciplined to produce in the most effective way to meet people's corresponding market demand, through the fear that their products will not be bought, and that they will thus be out-performed by others. The demands that a market tries to meet, in turn, are only those preferred by individuals who have large enough buying power, so that the suppliers of commodities can reap profits by selling them the goods and services, no matter whether this is out of greed or out of fear of becoming the losers on the market. There are, in principle, no restrictions on what sorts of demands should be met: the final determinant is the size of buying power backing such demands. In other words, it is not necessarily the case that what creates the strongest market demands are people's genuine needs supported by good reasons. It is this way of connecting people's demand and supply for goods and services that socialism deems as oppressive, in that it makes people's labor-power subject to the control of alienating forces.

Therefore, a different way to link up people's demand and supply of goods and services is needed in a socialist society. Here the socialist vision of community of equals in which members realize a fusion of horizons kicks in. In an ideal socialist society, what is to be produced should be determined by democratic deliberation structured to fit with the ideal of a community of equals that fusion of horizons is realized. Only demands supported by good reasons from the perspective of people's genuine and objective needs should be considered as justified production goals. As the German Marxist philosopher Karl Korsch put it in his celebrated essay, an ideal socialist society should have 'a public assessment of demand… which replaces the production for the market in an exchange economy with pure production according to [market]
The state, then, as the most representative and pervasive public institution, should be responsible to coordinate by democratic means workers' democratic enterprises to meet these publicly assessed production goals.57

What are the needs that could be supported by good reasons and pass the test of democratic deliberation? I think what Axelsen and Nielsen coin as the 'central areas of human life' is a useful approximation.58 They include 'capabilities related to basic needs such as basic health, decent housing, adequate education', as well as 'fundamental interest of all human beings in social setting such as rational development of critical thought, respectful social relation and political freedoms'; what people make of these provisions regarding their own personal values, relations and attachments is, however, left open to individual citizens.59

It also follows that the state should also take up those tasks, funded by citizens' contributions to the productive surplus, that involve public goods, as Marx would have it, such as 'replacement of the means of production used up', 'expansion of production', 'reserve or insurance funds to provide against accidents, dislocations caused by natural calamities', 'common satisfaction of needs, such as school, health services', 'funds for those unable to work', etc.60 We can also include social legislations concerning workplace safety, standards and regulations for the production process, and reasonable terms and protection clauses for workers in labor contracts. Relevant legal regulations of this sort will not cease to be necessary even in an ideal socialist society. They will still be needed at least for the sake of effective coordination,

mutual assurances and tackling epistemic limits of human beings. All these are of important instrumental values to secure the conditions for people’s self-realization in productive work.

The slogan ‘From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs’ nicely sums up the normative insights of this set of socialist political principles: (1) freedom of occupation, (2) workers' democratic enterprises, (3) satisfaction of genuine needs that pass public deliberative assessment, (4) democratic coordination of social production. In a society governed by such a scheme of principles, citizens are motivated to work by the interest of self-realization through participating in valuable work, and what products are worth the effort of producing is determined by what can be deliberatively justified as genuine human needs. It is, therefore, from the free exercise of one's ability that the justified genuine needs of others are satisfied. Furthermore, under such a scheme of social cooperation, citizens of all walks can be assured that their justified genuine needs will be satisfied by the goods and services produced by others. It is thus a manifestation of what G. A. Cohen called ‘communal reciprocity’ that ‘I serve you not because of what I can get in return by doing so but because you need or want my service, and you, for the same reason, serve me… I desire to serve them while being served by them, and I get satisfaction from both sides of the equation’. Marx’s slogan highlights both the motivations behind socialist political principles and their effects. The socialist political principles are jointly necessary conditions to realize the slogan.

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63 In “Critique of Gotha Program”, Marx distinguished between two phases of a communist or socialist society, and the slogan was considered by him to be only applicable in the ‘higher phase of communist society’. In the preceding, ‘lower’ phase of socialist society, Marx argued that the distribution of resources should be roughly proportional to individuals’ social labor time. My formulation of socialist political principles here is consistent with both phases of socialist society. From its perspective, the proportionality-to-labor-time principle is drawn from the case that it is to be endorsed by public deliberative assessment of demand, taking into account the fact that the society is in every respect ‘still stamped with the birth marks of the old society’. For Marx’s discussion, see “Critique of Gotha Program”, 614-615.
V. How Socialism is ‘Illiberal’

In this section, I put into sharper focus some distinctive features of this view of socialism as a normative political theory, by contrasting it with what I take to be a distinctive feature of a standard version of liberalism. The difference between socialism and liberalism that I identify appears to be at the institutional level, or at any rate at the level of political principle, but I argue that it reflects a deeper difference in structure of their normative political theories. The difference is that while liberalism takes responsibility-sensitive distributive justice as the fundamental normative concept, socialism does not. Some take this as in itself a fundamental problem of socialism. Yet, by defending the account of socialism I have expounded in the last three sections, I argue that what is problematic is this core feature of liberalism, rather than socialism.

In the last chapter, I argued that liberalism has three normative cores, namely the priority of basic rights, liberal legitimacy and individual responsibility. I also argued that liberal legitimacy and individual responsibility, though always taken to be very similar by liberals, are fundamentally different in their content. Now, socialism as I expounded above in section II through IV is consistent with a principled commitment to the priority of basic rights. I also think it is correct to interpret the socialist normative foundation as embodying the idea of treating individuals as free and equal citizens, or to treat them with equal concern and respect. For, as we have seen, socialism consider most people living in a capitalist market economy as being deprived an important freedom of self-realization in productive work, because the wage-workers must sell their labor-power, and to structure a large part of their lives around their role as wage-workers, under the pressure of the economic necessity of subsistence. The socialist ideal society, on the other hand, is structured around the idea of a community of equals: everyone is entitled to participate in the deliberation, as equals, to reach decisions in common social production that all of them can identify with. Yet as I have argued in the last chapter, to
have a principled commitment to the priority of basic rights and to treat people as free and equal citizens are only necessary conditions for a normative political theory to be qualified as liberal. For any theory to be sufficiently classified as liberal, it typically would also endorse two specific interpretations of treating people as free and equal citizens, i.e. liberal legitimacy and individual responsibility. For liberal legitimacy, socialism should have no quarrels: it shares many features with the idea of a community of equals, albeit its scope is more limited than its socialist counterpart (as liberal legitimacy only focus on the coercive actions of the state, while socialism requires even the economic production to be subject to justification). I argue that it is in rejecting the idea of individual responsibility that the normative political theory of socialism, properly understood, is in an important sense ‘illiberal’.

So, to recapitulate what I have argued in last chapter. I argued that central to the normative core of liberalism is that individual citizens should be equally entitled to the right to pursue their own, probably diverse, incommensurable and conflicting conceptions of good life. It follows that it is an individual’s responsibility to decide what, for her, gives value to life. Thus, for liberalism, in addition to protecting everyone’s civil and political rights, the material resources and social and economic opportunities among citizens should also be distributed fairly. It is to ensure that all individuals are symmetrically and impartially situated, in the relevant economic and social senses, so that they are not advantaged or disadvantaged compared to others in the condition in which they can lead their own life. Since everyone is given an equal condition to freely lead their own life, they are treated and respected as equals. The mere fact that a citizen is in need can partly ground her claim to access to some share of resources. But it is not, under liberalism, sufficient to establish the case that such need should be satisfied. Rather, such need is entitled to be satisfied only if that valuable good belongs to that person’s fair share of resources. It follows that any free use of citizens’ fair shares of resources, to the extent that it is consistent with other civil and political rights, should be allowed. The liberal idea of
individual responsibility allows people’s differential level of advantages to be determined solely by the consequences of individuals’ choices. A liberal state, under this view, has no grounds to interfere with this. A corollary of the affirmation of the idea of individual responsibility, I have also argued, is that an ideal and egalitarian market is morally constitutive to liberalism.64

This liberal idea of individual responsibility challenges the socialist political principles on both ends. On the production end, the socialist proposal of making workers' democratic enterprises constitutional is deemed as unjust. It is because liberalism, within the limits of taking individual responsibility seriously, cannot have any grounds for regulating the form of labor contracts and the control of means of production against background equality of resources. Liberalism, in principle, cannot prohibit people to sell their labor-power for whatever returns if all people have their fair shares of resources. People can also use their fair shares of resources as capital to employ workers, retaining all the subsequent profit from the production save the wages paid to the workers. It is up to people's deals protected by the freedom of contract. This freedom is in turn protected because it is an implication of allowing people to freely use their fair shares given it is consistent with those basic civil and political rights. It thus cannot be appropriate to make democratic workplace structures as constitutionally entrenched, or even grant them subsidies or legal dispensations.65 For it is a limit to people's free use of their fair shares of resources, as well as a limit to their free use of labor-power. Of course, many labor rights in the workplace, for liberalism, can be protected and promoted because they are instrumental for protecting people's basic rights. Furthermore, a fully democratic workplace is certainly allowed if it is formed by free contracts. But a liberal state must stop short of any principled commitments to full mandatory democratic control of the enterprises by workers.

64 For a similar analysis of the connection of market and liberalism, see Debra Satz, Why Some Things Should Not Be For Sale: The Moral Limits of Markets, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), chapter 3.
On the distribution end, from the liberal perspective, the mere fact that people are in need is insufficient in providing moral guides for who should get what. That one is in need does not specify who is responsible for satisfying this need, as well as to what extent this need should be satisfied. It is especially true if we take into consideration that, for socialism, needs are not only those basic needs for survival that fall into the purview of humanitarian concerns. For socialism, genuine human needs also include other human capacities that people may wish to develop to lead a flourishing life. People have diverse ways of leading a flourishing life, and the resources needed will then be different. Should we therefore say that people are entitled to attain an equal level of flourishing (whatever that might mean), and thus have unequal shares of resources? Or that people should be entitled to equal shares of resources, and thus lead unequally flourishing lives? Why should some people have more merely because their conception of a flourishing life is expensive? Why, alternatively, should one lead a less fulfilling life than others merely because it is more expensive? Either way seems to be problematic in treating people's needs equally. Yet socialism, as I expounded it, cannot afford to admit being a view that treats people as un-equals regarding their needs. Socialism's emphasis on satisfaction of genuine human needs thus cannot say which one is the proper or fair arrangement. It is precisely because, so liberals would argue, socialism lacks a proper account of people's responsibility in distributive justice.

Many believe that the charge of not taking individual responsibility seriously is the fundamental flaw of socialism. They believe either that it decisively undermines the plausibility of socialism against liberalism, or that one needs to reconstruct the normative political theory of socialism based on the idea of individual responsibility. G. A. Cohen, for example, famously commented that the contemporary liberal egalitarian thinkers’ awareness to the importance of responsibility-sensitive distributive justice 'performed for egalitarianism the considerable

66 Kymlicka, Contemporary Political Philosophy. 187-188.
service of incorporating within it the most powerful idea in the arsenal of the anti-egalitarian right: the idea of choice and responsibility'. ⁶⁷ He subsequently tried to incorporate such an idea in his conception of the socialist ideal. ⁶⁸ Kymlicka commented that taking the idea of choice and responsibility seriously 'helped rescue' social democracy from a 'lack of moral compass, or even moral perversity'. ⁶⁹ Arneson also argued that grounding democratic control of enterprises in the value of self-realization of work 'arbitrarily privileges' those who happen to favor it 'over other equally desirable goods and equally wise fans of those other goods' and is thus unjust. ⁷⁰

But the charge against socialism that it lacks a plausible account of people's responsibility in distributive justice is, in closer analysis, implausible. Socialists could retort that individual responsibility should not be taken so seriously in the first place. The value of choice tracks the value of freedom only if the alternative options that are up to one's choosing are valuable. Freedom of choice implies freedom only when one is given meaningful alternatives to choose from, so that people's choices are significant but not irrelevant. If we do not allow one to choose to be a murderer or to contract herself to slavery with their fair shares of resources, why then should we allow people to choose to be capitalists or sell their labor-powers for a living? What human interest is protected by putting one's labor-power under the hierarchical and authoritarian control of others (that is, the capitalists), and therefore deny oneself the self-realization in productive work? One should not conflate this with a restriction of freedom of occupation, just as banning voluntary slavery is not. What is banned in socialism is not people's options of occupation, but only a distinctive (and bad) way of organizing work, namely the

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wage-labor, within which workers must become subordinate to the hierarchical and authoritarian command of the capitalists.

On the side of distribution, it should be noted that the socialist principle of need is not a blanket principle that endorses whatever interest individuals prefer. Only those needs that can be justified in public deliberation to be contributory to people’s objective well-being are entitled to be satisfied. It is because only the needs that can pass such public deliberation can be plausibly regarded as genuine human needs that serve people’s well-being. Human interests are not so radically diverse. It is also not true that some of them simply cannot be made sense by anyone other than the individuals' subjective understanding. One can always explain to others, with objective reasons that are accessible to them, what is needed for one's life to go better. This seems to be uncontroversial, at least for the cases that concern us, namely those aspects of life that can be improved with the help of others.

In addition, these needs are satiable. Take education and the training of skills. It is of course true that one can always further develop one's skills in some professions or activities; strive for excellence is always said to be an unending journey. Yet it is also true that at some point it is agreed that one has been provided with enough resources and opportunity to develop a skill: one does not need to ask for more from others. I believe a similar structure is true for, say, one to have a decent shelter, good health, be well-fed, and so on. Socialism can plausibly claim that those who have unsatisfied needs are entitled to ask for resources from those who have more than enough to satisfy their needs, and that those who have more urgent needs have priority in satisfying their needs over those whose needs are less urgent.

I think this interpretation of the structure of the normative claims of socialism can indeed illuminate why Marx and most Marxists always seem to be ambivalent in considering whether

capitalism is unjust. For, to the extent that justice is understood broadly as normative claims that specify people's obligation and entitlement, one can of course say that Marx and Marxists condemn capitalism as unjust for not giving everyone their dues. But given the above understanding of the structure of genuine human needs, one can also say that, in the standard version of capitalism, capitalism is wasteful (to the extent that the rich capitalists accumulate more than their needs require) and alienating (most of the wage laborers are driven by economic necessity of subsistence, under hierarchical control in the workplace and deprived of human needs). They are referring essentially to the same thing. It seems to be nothing more than a verbal question to figure out which one the best term is. On the other hand, if justice is understood narrowly as ensuring people's free use of their fair (equal) shares of resources, i.e. as the liberal idea of individual responsibility, then for socialism it simply misses the point. What is important is not to provide everyone with an 'equal' share in some sense and let one freely use or trade whatever one is entitled to; rather, some options (e.g. wage labor and slavery) are simply not worth choosing; and it is the urgency and satisfaction of genuine needs, properly understood, not equal shares, that should determine what and how much one is entitled to have.

VI. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have expounded what I take to be the most defensible interpretation of socialism understood as a normative political theory. I have argued that the fundamental insight of socialism is that one's well-being hinges on whether one can self-realize in productive work. Socialism considers a capitalist market economy to be ethically objectionable, because workers work largely for wages, placing their labor-power under the hierarchical and authoritarian control of the capitalists to secure their subsistence, rather than freely opting for productive

See, for instance, Steven Lukes’s survey on the various positions, in chapter 2 and 3 or his Marxism and Morality (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985).
work that realizes their ability. For socialism, not only should productive work be driven by one's interest in self-realization. We can self-realize through productive work only if our production also contributes to others' flourishing. From this normative foundation, I argued that socialism as a normative political theory should be understood as consisting of a set of four political principles: (1) freedom of occupation, (2) worker's democratic enterprises, (3) satisfaction of genuine needs that pass the public deliberative assessment, (4) democratic coordination of social production. These principles jointly realize the motivation and the effect of the famous socialist slogan: 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!'

I then argued that the fundamental difference between liberalism and socialist as normative political theories is that while liberalism takes responsibility-sensitive distributive justice as normatively fundamental, socialism does not. Liberals argue that socialist political principles do not take seriously the idea of individual responsibility. For socialism bans wage labor even if it is contracted freely with people's fair shares of resources. Without an account of a fair share of resources, liberals also argue that socialism cannot determine what needs are to be satisfied. I argue that socialism has good grounds to reject this very idea of individual responsibility. The core of the liberal idea of individual responsibility, i.e. the free use of one's fair share of resources, is implausible because (i) the value of choices as such do not track the value of freedom unless the options are themselves meaningful, and there are no good reasons to think that being forced by the economic necessity of subsistence to put one's labor-power under others' control is meaningful; and (ii) what matters for people's well-being, and therefore determines one's entitlement to resources, is whether those satiable genuine needs that are essential to well-being are satisfied, but not whether people have equal or fair shares of resources at such. It shows how the two major features of socialism combined, namely the emphasis on the self-realization in productive work and the satisfaction of the genuine objective
needs, mark the crucial difference that distinguishes the ethical outlook of socialism from liberalism.
I. Introduction

This chapter closely scrutinizes the normative political theory of socialism I expounded in the last chapter. It has two connected aims. First, I identify an important defect of the normative political theory of socialism, and then consider possible remedies to this defect. By delving into this defect, I also reveal further normative considerations that concern the boundaries and structure of the idea of self-realization in productive work. Second, I explore what guiding institutional principles are at the disposal of the state if it wishes to implement socialism, considering the defect I would identify here. This discussion will bring a brief institutional shape of the socialist political principles I argued in the last chapter. This is to pave the way for the discussion of institutions that could be justified by socialist political principles, above all the role of market in socialism, which I will consider in the next chapter.

In the last chapter, I focused on vindicating the socialist credential of these political principles. I also considered how they are distinguished from their liberal counterparts. I reached the conclusion that some standard liberal challenges to socialism can plausibly be met. Here, I present what I take to be the most serious challenge to these socialist political principles, which I shall call the socialist dilemma. The idea is that socialism cannot uphold that both people's self-realization in productive work and satisfaction of people's genuine objective needs should always be fulfilled at the same time. Socialism cannot give priority to any one of them without undermining its normative foundation either. I then present various arguments to resolve this dilemma, then argue that these resolutions are instructive but unsatisfactory in different ways. The upshot is that, I argue, the attractiveness of the normative political theory of socialism I developed is seriously undermined. But I also argue that both commitments are
still plausible, if they are considered independently. I then consider various ways the conflict of fundamental principles can be attenuated.

The chapter is organized as follows. Section II presents the socialist dilemma. The dilemma is illustrated by an imagined case to make the problems it raises more vivid. I argue that if socialism commits to the value of freedom of occupation, then it would allow publicly justified, genuine objective needs of people to be let down. But if socialism commits to the idea that everyone’s publicly justified needs should be satisfied, then socialism must force some people to work for those needs, thus denies their freedom of occupation. The two commitments can conflict with each other. In section III, I propose two resolutions to the socialist dilemma. I argue that these resolutions are problematic, for they unacceptably deviate, in one way or another, from the normative foundation of socialism. But I argue that although as a matter of principle they cannot resolve the dilemma, they point to some institutional possibilities to attenuate it. I argue that both freedom of occupation and workplace democracy contribute to people’s exercise of agency in work. Therefore, it may not be implausible to claim that even in the absence of freedom of occupation, workplace democracy can guarantee a tolerable level of self-realization in productive work. Section IV takes this cue and argue that even if the socialist dilemma cannot be solved, implementation of socialist political principles does not create intolerable consequences. In this section, I also defend what I shall call the institutional principle of compensation as a good enough principle to attenuate the problems rooted in the conflicts of fundamental principles of socialist political theory. Section V concludes.

II. The Socialist Dilemma

To make sense of what the challenge of the socialist dilemma is about, I first recapitulate the socialist political principles and their normative structure as I expounded in the last chapter. Socialism considers a capitalist market economy to be ethically objectionable, because typically
workers can only secure the material resources for their subsistence by selling their labor-power to capitalists for wages. They thus place their labor-power under the hierarchical control of the capitalists, rather than freely opting for work for realizing their human power and ability. For socialism, productive work should be driven by one's interest in self-realization and be motivated by our interest to serve others' genuine human needs. We can self-realize through productive work only if our production contributes to others' flourishing.

From this normative foundation, I argued that socialism should consist of a set of four political principles: (1) freedom of occupation, (2) worker's democratic enterprises, (3) satisfaction of needs that pass public deliberative assessment, (4) democratic coordination of social production. In a society governed by such a scheme of principles, citizens are motivated to work by the interest of self-realization through participating in valuable, i.e. productive work. What products are worth the effort of producing is determined by what can be publicly justified as human’s genuine needs through people's deliberation. Therefore, it is from the free exercise of one's ability that justified needs of others are satisfied. These principles are jointly necessary to realize the motivation and the effect of the famous socialist slogan: 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!'

I then further articulated the structure of the conception of need as understood in principle (3). Only those needs that can be justified in public deliberation to be contributory to people's objective well-being are entitled to be satisfied. These justified needs include those aspects of life that can be improved with the help of others. They include, first, capabilities related to basic needs such as basic health, decent housing, adequate education; and second, fundamental interest of all human beings in social setting such as development of rational and critical thought and respectful social relations. What people make of these provisions for their own personal values, relations and attachments is left open to individual citizens. These needs
are thus ‘non-volitional needs’.¹ These justified needs are also satiable. At certain point, one does not need to ask for more from others. Socialism claims that those who have unsatisfied justified needs are entitled to ask for resources from those who have more than enough to satisfy their needs, and that those who have more urgent needs have priority in satisfying their needs over those whose needs are less urgent.

However, this normative political theory of socialism has a serious defect. The defect can be represented by what I shall call the socialist dilemma. A community is in circumstance of scarcity if everyone cannot have as much as one wants without costing others; that is, the burdens of production must be somehow distributed among the members of a society, so that people’s genuine human need can be met.² I take it as an uncontroversial truth that most political communities today are in circumstances of scarcity. The socialist political principles are normative political principles to be implemented in circumstances of scarcity. The socialist dilemma is that in a circumstance of scarcity, principle (1) freedom of occupation, and principle (3) satisfaction of genuine objective human needs that pass public deliberative assessment, cannot be simultaneously realized. It is because, if socialism commits to freedom of occupation, then it must allow some publicly justified needs of people to be let down. For although people’s self-realization in productive work can be achieved by freely choosing to work for serving other people’s justified needs, there is no guarantee that all people’s justified needs can be served. Nor is it true that people’s productive work must always serve the most urgent needs of other people. Instead, if socialism commits to the idea that everyone’s justified needs should be satisfied, or that the more urgent needs are served before less urgent ones, then some must be forced to work for those needs. Their freedom of occupation is then denied. To put it in more

colorful terms, it is that the first clause of the socialist slogan, 'from each according to his abilities', can at times fail to coexist with the second clause, 'to each according to his needs'.

This dilemma can be illustrated by the following case. Jane is a talented engineer who can greatly facilitate many public construction projects that people are in dire need of. Without her inputs, many projects must be delayed from completion, or even be abandoned. Yet she aspires to be a scholar of ancient Egyptian history, thus wants to join a team of archaeological researchers to recover some ancient texts. No doubt her archaeological findings will be valuable to historical scholarship. Yet let's assume that, by some publicly justified standards, the need for public construction are of interest to much more people and are more urgent than her academic discovery. If she can choose freely, she will choose to join the team of archaeological researchers. What, then, should socialism make of this case? Socialism has two options. Either Jane is coerced to be an engineer, or she is not coerced to do so. If Jane is not coerced and left free to do what she wishes to do, then some urgent needs of the people are let down. It is not because the productive capacities of a society cannot satisfy those needs, but only that someone are not willing to do so. It seems to be the very opposite of the idea 'to each according to his needs'. But if a socialist society choose to coerce Jane, then her freedom of occupation is denied. Neither seems to be acceptable from the socialist perspective.

One rather commonplace Marxist response will be mentioned and then set aside here, before we move on to discuss more substantive proposals to resolve the dilemma. This response argues that in a socialist society, it is a necessary fact, and thus not only a happy coincidence, that whatever the productive work one freely chooses is, all genuine human needs of all can always be satisfied. This is because, proponents of this response would argue, circumstance of scarcity is transcended in socialism; or, to put it differently, socialism can only be fully realized if circumstance of scarcity is transcended. The productivity of a socialist society is so highly developed by then, that even if people choose whatever they like to work on, there are always
sufficient supply of products and services that satisfy all of people’s genuine human needs.\(^3\)

Since the productivity is so highly developed, either Jane (or anyone of special skills or talents that are in scare supply) is no longer required to facilitate the construction work, or such work would not be in dire need in the first place. According to this response, socialism does not need to choose to coerce Jane or not, for Jane’s situation is impossible to happen under socialism.

This factual stipulation of *abundance* seems implausible. Given the limits of natural resources of the earth, as well as the present level of material consumption, it is very unlikely that such abundance can be reached by any forms of social organization.\(^4\) But I wish to set aside this response here, whether we have good reasons to believe abundance can be reached in socialism or not. For such abundance is a world that is radically different from what we have now. What this study aims to investigate, however, is whether socialism can be formulated in a desirable and coherent way under circumstance of scarcity; that is, whether we have good reasons to endorse socialism so formulated in our situation, here and now. If it turns out that socialism cannot be shown desirable and coherent unless it is implemented under abundance, then we may be justified to doubt whether socialism is worth endorsing at all. Setting aside this response, I now move on to discuss other more substantive proposals to resolve the socialist dilemma.

### III. Proposals to Resolve the Dilemma

One way to solve the dilemma is to argue that freedom of occupation is not necessary for socialism. The idea is that it is permissible to exclude the occupation one prefers most and otherwise available to her from her set of occupation options, if it is for satisfying people’s more urgent justified needs. In extreme cases, even conscription is permitted. This position can

\(^3\) G. A. Cohen has famously coined this idea as Marx’s ‘technological fix’ of the problem of justice. See G. A. Cohen *Self-ownership, Freedom and Equality.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 126.

\(^4\) See a similar rejection of the idea of abundance in ibid. 9, 127-128.
be supported by two different trains of arguments. I therefore treat them as two separate proposals to resolves the socialist dilemma. The first argues that freedom of occupation is not necessary for self-realization in productive work, even if the latter is an important political goal worth to achieve. The second argues that workplace democracy is enough for people’s self-realization in productive work even in the absence of freedom of occupation. I expound them in turn in this section and argue that both are unsuccessful in resolving the dilemma.

The argument for the first proposal is this. It argues that although it is true that self-realization in productive work is important, freedom of occupation is not necessary for it. Therefore, satisfaction of people’s justified needs will not conflict with freedom of occupation. For self-realization in productive work crucially depends on the piece of work being meaningfully productive, and the connection between the meaningfulness of work and freedom of occupation is thin. One may freely choose to count blades of grass for all day, and it is hardly true that one thereby realizes one’s ability or power. On the other hand, self-realization in productive work has strong connection with satisfaction of people’s publicly justified needs. One can self-realize in a certain piece of work only if she endorses doing that piece of work as meaningful. Such endorsement is sensitive to reason. One can endorse the meaning of an act only if one has good reasons to believe that that act is meaningful. Satisfaction of people’s justified, genuine human needs can be a good reason for one to endorse a piece of productive work as meaningful, and thus as something worth the effort of doing. Here is an example. A talented mathematician may wish to stick to her profession if she can choose freely, yet still endorses her conscripted work as a cryptographer of the military force to defend her people from foreign invasion. It is because people’s lives and liberties are threatened, and her talent enables her to contribute to protect them. This serves as the reason for her to consider her work meaningful, and therefore consider herself self-realizing. Freedom of occupation is absented in this case, yet self-realization in productive work seems to remain.
I think this proposal is flawed. The problem is that serving justified needs is only a necessary rather than a sufficient condition for people’s endorsement. That a piece of work is conducive to the satisfaction of people’s justified needs serves as a good reason for us to endorse that piece of work as meaningful. Yet, a person is also an agent, in the sense that she has a sense that it is her own life to lead, and it is her but not any other who has to respond to reasons with respect to her personal history and ethical situations.\(^5\) She therefore has a special position to decide what fits her life. That is, she should be able to decide what reasons, among a plurality of good reasons, she should respond to, so that she can lead a flourishing life. A fitting job should enable people to develop ‘what is best in them’, and thus ‘facilitates their individuality’.\(^6\)

A piece of productive work is meaningful to a person only if it is considered fit with her life in this sense. For, as Paula Casal puts it, it is a choice ‘that is intimately connected to the development of our potential, our personality and identity, our friends and social network and our conception of the good’.\(^7\)

An analogy may help to illustrate the point here. It is true that we befriend someone because he or she has certain good characters (say, he or she is honest and nice) that serve as good reasons for us to make friend with him or her. But it is absurd to think that, anyone who has the same set of characters should be our friend. It is equally absurd to say that if one contains certain other objectively good characters then we must make him or her our friend. Endorsing a piece of productive work is like making a friend in the following sense: A person, as an agent, 


should be the one to decide what among the options supported by good reasons fits her own life. As Russell Murihead nicely puts it, ‘[t]o fit something is to have the possibility of not fitting something else: the idea of fit admits that we have boundaries, that there are some things, however desirable, we do not fit’. If self-realization in productive work needs one to endorse the piece of work she is doing, then it follows that one must exercise one’s agency in deciding what piece of productive work fits her life.

I think socialism should not reject this rather plausible understanding of people as agents. But if socialism is consistent with this understanding, then it follows that self-realization in productive work requires an institutional framework that enable people to exercise their agency in work. Freedom of occupation is the political principle that grounds such an institutional framework. Only if people can freely decide their occupations can they identify and take up productive work they see fit with their own lives. Occupations that serve people’s genuine and thus publicly justified needs are good options for people to choose from. But not all of them can be considered by any person to be fit with her life. What is at stake here is people’s exercise of their agency. In normal conditions, this is a constitutive component of people’s self-realization in productive work.

Of course, some people may endorse and self-realize in a conscripted job. But it cannot be a reason to prove that freedom of occupation is not necessary, just as the fact that some slaves may happen to enjoy their lives as slaves cannot be a reason to prove that slavery is not wrong. Furthermore, the case of the war-time mathematician-cryptographer, though plausible, cannot be generalized. There are special conditions where work can be meaningful even if not freely chosen, but for our purpose here they are special, not normal, conditions. One of such conditions is when the agent has good reasons to endorse being mandated to occupy a certain job, which seems to be case of the experience of the war-time mathematician-cryptographer. At

any rate, this seems to be a plausible interpretation that explains the reason why in some situations restriction of freedom of occupation is both compatible with self-realization in productive work, and consistent with the emphasis of people’s exercise of their agency. It is simply because they are special situations that people have good reason to endorse the forfeiture of their freedom of occupation. People’s identification of their piece of productive works matters, and in normal condition, freedom of occupation is a necessary condition to guarantee such identification, given we regard people as agents.

I now turn to the second proposal to resolve the socialist dilemma. The argument is this. It is true that people’s exercise of their agency is constitutive to their self-realization in productive work. Yet freedom of occupation may not be necessary for people’s exercise of agency. Rather, so the proposal suggests, workplace democracy is a sufficient condition for that. To exercise one’s agency in work, one must participate in the process of work in a way that fit with one’s life. If workplace democracy is successfully implemented, workers have collective democratic control of the means of production and production process. It therefore allows workers to shape the way they participate in the process of productive work. Of course, it is not true that each worker can decide the way she participates in work in a workplace democracy. In principle, a proper workplace democracy should be institutionalized in a way that all workers have equal voice and equal authority in decision-making. Therefore, no single worker can shape the organization of work as she pleases. But this second proposal argues that workers sufficiently exercise their agency in a proper workplace democracy in two other senses.

Firstly, the shape of a worker’s work is not determined by the rulings or others in an unjustifiable way. A well-functioning democratic structure of workplace governance implies that there is no unequal power relationship, like that of between master and slaves, in the

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A worker’s preference may be overruled by the democratic decision, but he nevertheless has good reasons to recognize the authority and legitimacy of that decision, because the democratic procedure is regarded to him as justifiable. One’s exercise of agency is sensitive to good, and thus justifiable reasons. So, it seems not implausible to say that in sharing his authorship of the shape of the production process equally with his colleagues, a worker is exercising his agency in work, in that he is responding to the outcome of a justifiable procedure, which provides him good reason to respond to that outcome.

Secondly, unlike normal mass democracy in contemporary states, firms are typically smaller in size in terms of its ‘citizens’: most firms have less than few hundred workers and many have less than hundred. It is true that modern multinational corporations typically control many subordinate firms, and these firms are in some way just like a department of the big corporation; the multinational corporation can thus have a size more or less like a small country. Yet still no corporation has a total number of employees comparable to, say, the United Kingdom. Furthermore, workplace democracy can be implemented in multiple levels; it makes sense to reserve most productive decisions to be made by the workers collectively in a relatively independent producing unit, whether it is a subordinate firm to a larger corporation or not. This implies not only that a worker’s vote is more likely to be decisive, but also that direct participation and deliberation are more feasible and fruitful. It is therefore meaningful to talk about collective self-determination in democratic workplace.

But this proposal has a similar problem to the first one. Consider this case. Upon serious reflection, Jack considers a position in a firm of industry P fits his life better than a position in a firm of industry Q which his talent can serve more justified needs of people. Both firms are

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12 See Ibid. 197; note that this is already a weaker position on what workplace democracy can achieve. I defended a stronger version of workplace democracy, that the workplace is organized along the ideal of community of equals with fusion of horizon, in the last chapter.

organized as democratic workers’ collectives. In this case, the second proposal cannot explain why it is not a compromise of Jack’s exercise of agency if he is forced to work in the firm of industry Q. It is true that Jack exercises greater agency while working at a democratically organized firm in industry Q than if he is working at another firm in the same industry that is not organized democratically. But it is also true that his exercise of agency will be further enhanced if he could work in the democratic firm in industry P, which he finds more fitting with his life aspiration. This second proposal thus fails to explain why this compromise is supported with good reasons that are consistent with the socialist normative foundations.

Therefore, both the two proposals fail to resolve the socialist dilemma. But the discussion of them brings two important insights that, I think, should be underscored. The first one is that self-realization in productive work is closely connected to reasons, and thereby agency. The justification of freedom of occupation by self-realization in productive work is therefore not straightforward. What is important for self-realization in productive work is not that one should work on those one merely chooses to. For what one chooses may not be the one that is sensitive to good reasons with respect to one’s agency. If one chooses to count grass blades, one has no reasons to consider the mere fact that it being a person’s choice implies that it contributes to that person’s self-realization. In other words, the way freedom of occupation contributes to one’s self-realization in productive work has a complex structure: both the choices and the reasons matter. For freedom of occupation to contribute to self-realization in productive work, people should not be merely provided with formal freedom of choices, but also that they should be enabled to construct proper justification for their choices. In turn, this implies that it may not be implausible or indefensible to consider people as also accountable or answerable to justify their occupational choice.

The second, and related, insight is that workplace democracy contributes to people’s agency in work, and thus also contributes to their self-realization in productive work,
independent of whether freedom of occupation is protected. It is true that mere workplace democracy cannot secure people’s exercise of full agency in work. Yet it is also true that it contributes people’s agency in work by enabling people’s increased control of their process of work. The democratic structure also makes decision-making in workplace less arbitrary, and thus more justifiable from the perspective of the workers. These are considerations independent of the connection between freedom of occupation and self-realization in productive work. The socialist case for workplace democracy is therefore strengthened, not only in spite of but also because of the fact that the socialist dilemma remains unresolved.

IV. Living with the Socialist Dilemma

This section considers what can attenuate the problem of socialist dilemma. In the last section, I considered two major proposals that aspire to resolve the dilemma. I argued that they all fail in one way or the other, though they bring instructive insights that the normative political theory of socialism should take seriously. So, the socialist dilemma is still with us. If socialists have no good resolutions to it, then there can still be two other ways out. The first is to live with it: conflicts of values in principles does not imply that there will be disastrous consequences when these principles are implemented. It may be that there are inherent problems in practice if those principles are implemented, yet the cost is tolerable. Socialism might then still be a better alternative to its rivals. The second, interrelated, way is to introduce institutional principles that cannot be derived from the fundamental socialist principles but can attenuate the possible contradictions caused by the conflict among them. Accordingly, this section first assesses the damage done by the socialist dilemma to socialist principles (Part A). I also provide an account of the nature of the damage. I argue that socialism must recognize the compromise between the two principles in the socialism as moral loss within a value-pluralist framework (Part B). Then it considers what principles can attenuate the damage (Part C).
A. Assessing the Damages

While the socialist dilemma undermines the feasibility of the socialist political principles, as it reveals an occasion of the conflict among fundamental principles of socialism, the cases for each principle seems to remain intact. The case that everyone should have the right to work for something that one truly identifies with and to develops one's ability is not challenged. It is also true for the argument that self-realization in productive work serves better people's interest than working as a wage laborer for the economic necessity of subsistence. The arguments for freedom of occupation and workplace democracy therefore still stand. If the implementation of these two socialist principles is obstructed, it is still regrettable from a (socialist) normative point of view. It is also true for the case that genuine and objective human needs that pass public deliberative assessments constitute grounds for people's entitlement to resources. The socialist dilemma does not refute the claim that publicly justified needs ground people's entitlement. It follows that socialism's disparagement of the liberal idea of individual responsibility still stands.

What the socialist dilemma reveals is that the principle of freedom of occupation would, in some occasions, conflicts with the principle of satisfaction of justified needs. In those occasions, the two principles command opposite policies: one requires the talented to be coerced to serve the more urgent needs, while the other says that she should not be coerced to be so. The two commands are therefore contradictory. Yet the two principles are not inconsistent: neither contributes to undermine the plausibility and desirability of each other. In other happier occasions, those two principles can be jointly realized: Jane may indeed wish to be an engineer, which utilizes her talent most to maximize the satisfaction of people’s publicly justified needs. There is nothing to be regretted from the normative point of view in such happy situations.

It follows that what the socialist dilemma suggests is that, if those unhappy occasions occur, socialists are disoriented in what is the right thing to do. But maybe those unhappy occasions can be avoided or minimized in practice, if institutions can be arranged in some
specific ways. Or maybe some compromises in practice between the commands of the two principles are tolerable. It may worth it, on balance, to scarify the full realization of one good thing for partial realization for both. I first draw on the two insights from the discussion of the last section to probe these possibilities.

As we have seen, the institution of workplace democracy, if properly established, enhances workers’ control of the work process. This contributes to enhance people’s exercise of their agency in work, and thus contributes to their self-realization in productive work, in a way that is independent of whether freedom of occupation is in place. Therefore, if a citizen’s freedom of occupation is limited for the sake of satisfaction of some more urgent needs, she can still partially self-realize in productive work if workplace democracy is in place. It follows that a mandatory institutionalization of workplace democracy in all relatively independent production units protects certain level of self-realization in productive work for people. This is true even if freedom of occupation is limited or even absented. Therefore, workplace democracy indeed contributes to attenuate the conflict between self-realization in productive work and the principle of satisfaction of justified needs.

In addition, satisfaction of people’s justified needs is a candidate of good reason that individuals may choose to identify with. It is not uncommon, and perfectly legitimate, that people aspire to serve others’ needs to the greatest extent and shape their life accordingly. It does not mean that people should be totally altruistic. It only means that, as David Archard puts it, people are ‘interested in the interest of others’. 14 Recall my argument in the last chapter that the social relation among citizens of a socialist society should be a form of civic friendship. It has nothing mysterious or extraordinarily altruistic if one’s life goal is shaped by the hope of improving an important friend’s well-being. For one also has an interest in contributing the

well-being of her friends, to see the friendship between them flourishing, and to enjoy the great
good of friendship.

Moreover, people shape their life with reference to social norms. They wish to do things
that are right and good.\textsuperscript{15} People are socialized by the norms of social responsibility and
solidarity that prevail in the society they live.\textsuperscript{16} It follows that a properly shaped social ethos
or norm of serving others, by civic education or other measures, can improve the alignment
people’s goal of self-realization in productive work and the satisfaction of justified needs of
people. One should not, as Joseph Carens nicely puts it, ‘exaggerate the naturalness of the
acquisitive urge and the drive for consumption that characterize modern capitalist societies.’\textsuperscript{17}
Given a well-developed system of civic education and a prevailing socialist ethos, people can
be more easily motivated by the interest to serve the common good than they are in capitalist
market economy.

If the preceding considerations make sense, and some measures in line of them are
implemented, then the resultant situation may be \textit{sufficiently decent}, though not ideal. First,
only the freedom of occupation of some people is limited, because serving the dire needs of
some core sectors (say, the public works or utilities) requires their talents. This is not as
extravagant as it first sounds. Many states of today’s capitalist economies impose the condition
of post-training compulsory service to state-subsidized professional training programs.
Professionals who do not comply with the condition will be fined or punished in various ways,
for example withholding the proof of educational qualifications.\textsuperscript{18} One can consider socialism
extends the scope of such type of measures: say, graduates of state-funded tertiary education
are obliged to serve in those core sectors if they are selected, for a certain period of time. But

\textsuperscript{15} Dworkin \textit{Justice for Hedgehog}, 108-110.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid. 151-152.
\textsuperscript{18} For a brief survey of such measures in the medical profession, and an excellent defence of them, see Lucas Standczyk, “Productive Justice,” \textit{Philosophy and Public Affairs}, 40 (2012), 158-164.
with a prevailing socialist ethos or norms, many of the needed talented candidates may aspire to serve in those core sectors anyway. In such cases, there will be no conflict between self-realization in work and satisfaction of justified needs of the wider community. For those who are nevertheless conscripted to work for those more urgent needs, a well-functioning workplace democracy can guarantee a sufficiently decent level of self-realization in productive work, even if freedom of occupation is absent.

To guarantee a sufficiently high level of self-realization in productive work among people, limitation of freedom of occupation should be strictly limited to those core sectors that serve people’s dire needs. It follows that people’s other justified but less dire needs can be left insufficiently satisfied, if, as it happens, there are insufficient people work on the production of those goods and services. But this, again, is not as bad as it first sounds. It is false that in capitalism all people’s justified needs are satisfied. Even in an ideal liberal egalitarian society, many people’s needs, no matter how genuine, would still be left regrettably unsatisfied. It is because, liberals contend, if satisfying those needs surpasses the limits of others’ fair share of burden, it will be unfair to require people to serve those needs. In comparison, then, a socialist society where the justified needs of people are partially satisfied is not obviously worse than a liberal egalitarian capitalist society in this respect. At least it is not worse in its organizing principle. Furthermore, no reasons indicate that socialism will generate a lower level of material production than a liberal egalitarian capitalist society for serving people’s genuine objective human needs. Whether this is true in practice is an empirical question.

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B. ACCOUNTING THE MORAL LOSS

One objection to this socialist ‘settlement’ is that it is unfair to those who happened to have the talents that serve people’s more urgent needs yet wishes to do other things. They attain a lower level of self-realization in productive work than those who do not have those talents and not subject to conscription to serve more urgent needs. It is simply in virtue of having these talents that these unwilling talented, as I coin them, are entitled to flourish less. Those unwilling talented are thus not being treated as equals, for they systematically attain lower level of self-realization in productive work than their fellow citizens, although there are no faults on their part. Since they cannot attain as high a level of self-realizing in work as other people merely because of their attributes, i.e., their talents, they are treated unfairly. It is therefore tantamount to what Dworkin called ‘the slavery of the talented’.20 That is, even in the best scenario of the socialist settlement I described here, Jane, when coerced to be a civic engineer, is still unfairly treated. It is true even if she can exercise some agency in work given workplace democracy is in place. She is therefore subjected to the slavery of the talented, so the objection argues.

I think this is a powerful objection, which socialism does not have a good answer. It may seem intuitive to claim that, if some people have dire and justified needs, those who can satisfy those needs have a duty to do so. This is indeed what Dworkin dubbed (and rejected) as ‘rescue policy’ approach.21 But the intuitive appeal breaks down when it is added to the claim that people who can satisfy those needs have a duty to do so even if doing so incur them a great cost. It may be plausible to say that if all one needs to do is to work five minutes extra per day to serve others’ dire needs, then one has the duty to serve those needs. But if the case is that

20 Dworkin, Sovereign Virtue, 89-90. In Dworkin’s sense, those unwilling talented are ‘enslaved’ because they enjoy less freedom than those less talented simply because they have those talents that are of great demand. In Dworkin’s case, he rejected auction market of people’s labor-power to distribute labor burden on this ground. Here, the demand for the labor of the unwilling talented is not a market one, for these demands are grounded on people’s justified needs. But they as well put burden on those who are talented simply in virtue of their talents are of dire needs. In this sense, the unwilling talented have a similar ground of complaint as those talented in Dworkin’s case. See also Miriam Cohen Christofidis, “Talent, slavery and envy in Dworkin's equality of resources”, Utilitas 16 (2004): 270-272 for an incisive discussion of Dworkin’s view.
21 Dworkin, Sovereign Virtue, 344; Williams, “Equality, Ambition and Insurance, I”, 144-146.
serving those needs requires one to be tied in a job that one hates for a substantial period of lifetime, then the plausibility of such duty vanishes. This latter case is precisely the problem that the socialist settlement must encounter. The socialist state seems to have no good reasons to impose such great burdens only to the unwilling talented, even if they are indeed constitutive to serve those more urgent needs.

What is at stake here is not merely that, in some occasions, the burden put to some unwilling talented is too much, nor that their burdens are unfairly large as compare to others’. Rather, the crucial problem is that socialism does not contain any principles to delimit what constitute the reasonable amount of burden to be imposed to people. And indeed, the structure of the normative political theory of socialism prevents it to have one. For such principles would have to provide reasons that could limit both those demands grounded in people’s self-realization in productive work and in people’s publicly justified needs. But what further reasons, within the socialist normative framework, can be provided to set up such a limit?

Socialism cannot take the notion of fairness on board either. It is because if the notion of fairness is introduced, then it would be the reason to determine what constitute reasonable amount of burden in a way independent of considerations of self-realization in productive work and satisfaction of justified needs. Either the limits to be imposed by fairness on self-realization in productive work and/or on satisfaction of genuine objective human needs (i.e. let some of the needs not be satisfied, as they are beyond the reasonable share of burden to be imposed to others) are considered as moral losses, or that they form the parameters that any self-realization in work or satisfaction of needs beyond the limits are worthless. If it is the former case, then the question of why such a value can compromise the other two supposedly fundamental socialist commitments is still with us. If it is the latter case, then socialism collapses into a version of liberalism. For then only those needs that can be satisfied with one’s fair share of resource is worthy to be satisfied, and only self-realization in productive work achievable within
one’s share of resource matters. One needs not contribute more than maintaining the conditions of giving people their fair share of resources. In practice, then, introducing fairness as a parameter of self-realization in work and satisfaction of needs means embracing the liberal idea of individual responsibility.\textsuperscript{22}

I think socialism needs to bite the bullet here if it wants to maintain its socialist character. That is, the normative political theory of socialism must admit that there is moral loss when, for the sake of satisfying people’s more urgent needs, the unwilling talented must bear larger share of burden than other people. At issue here, however, is the nature of such moral loss. Socialism cannot follow Dworkin to consider that the socialist settlement is unfair, and for that reason induces a moral loss. It is not that because people’s limit of self-realization in productive work is in one way or another unequal that is problematic here. For no equality of self-realization in productive work is asked for by socialism. Socialism must regard the moral loss here is due to the loss of self-realization in productive work, as such. Likewise, if some genuine human needs of people are let down because there are not enough willing talented to serve those needs, then the problem is not that people’s share of suffering is unequal; rather, the structure of socialism requires it to consider the moral loss here as letting down those publicly justified needs, as such.

Therefore, for the normative political theory of socialism, the conflict of demands of self-realization in productive work and satisfaction of genuine human needs should be

\textsuperscript{22} Here lies the difference between my interpretation of socialism and the one offered by Pablo Gilabert. Gilabert argues that fundamental to the socialist principle is the idea of fairness, that we should not take unfair advantage of others. Self-realization is to be constrained by fairness, or people’s fair share of resources and burdens. For Gilabert, self-realization is also not necessarily achieved in productive work: we should leave to the individuals to choose whether their self-realization is to be achieved in work or in leisure time. People's needs are satisfied in the sense that they can lead their lives with a fair share of resources and burdens. It also follows that a democratic workplace is not required. I think Gilabert’s interpretation indeed reads too much liberalism into Marx. See Pablo Gilabert, “The Socialist Principle From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs”, \textit{Journal of Social Philosophy} 46 (2015), 199-200, 219-212, 214-215.
understood with a value-pluralist framework. Both socialist commitments are important and cannot be ranked among themselves, and for both commitments the more they are fulfilled is considered morally better. This implies that, first, the conflicts between the two socialist commitments cannot be completely or perfectly solved by socialist theory itself. That is, there is no theoretical guarantee that in all occasions, or even in most normal occasions, the two commitments would not provide conflicting demands. But, secondly, it also implies that such a conflict is not as such fatal for socialism. It really depends on what is at stake in different occasions of such conflicts, and whether the compromise or balancing between the conflicting commitments are defensible and acceptable. In what follows, I argue that what I call the institutional principle of compensation can provide an acceptable solution to deal with the conflict of socialist commitments as manifested in the case of unwilling talented.

C. The Institutional Principle of Compensation

One way to attenuate the conflict of demand between self-realization in productive work and satisfaction of genuine human needs as manifested in the case of unwilling talented, I suggest, is to compensate those unwilling talented. The idea is that for those who are conscripted to serve the more urgent needs, they should be provided additional access to advantages, such as resources, services, opportunities or other non-material privileges. Such provision should be funded by taxing people’s income in an equal proportion, so that everyone bears and shares the burdens equally. That is, everyone is required to work a bit harder and more productively, hopefully without much strain. I argue that this principle of compensation is an institutional principle that is consistent with but not derivable from fundamental socialist principles. It has many problems, but it is a tolerable attenuation of the problem of the slavery

of the talented (and, as we shall see, also of those less talented). The rest of this section discuss and defend this principle.

I begin by discussing its problems, for this throws more lights on its details. One obvious problem of such compensation is that it does not really compensate much of what is lost. Material or non-material compensations are not commensurable to the freedom and self-realization in productive work that those unwilling talented lose. They are simply different kinds of valuable goods. The gain from compensation cannot compensate the loss, for they just cannot be put into a same balance sheet. This is different from the case of compensating loss in freedom of occupation by workplace democracy. For both freedom of occupation and workplace democracy contribute to the same interest, namely workers’ exercise of agency in work. But additional access to resources, services, opportunities or other non-material privileges does not contribute to people’s exercise of agency in work.

Furthermore, granting such additional access only to those talented that serve more urgent needs is to treat people unequally. Those talented enjoy such additional access only in virtue of their attributes, i.e. their talents. It seems to be a very blunt form of technocracy: a class of more talented enjoys more access to privilege than normal people. It may seem less objectionable if additional access to advantages are only granted to the strictly unwilling talented, rather than to the talented in general. But it is simply impractical, if not impossible, to distinguish who are really unwilling. It will be a disrespect to people and a serious infringement of personal freedom if the conscripted talented are required to be screened by soul-searching to see if they are willing to do the job or not. This also creates moral hazard: additional access to advantages offer a great systematic incentive to the willing talented to pretend that they are unwilling to take up the job. To avoid moral hazard, compensation must not be limited to those who are really unwilling to perform the jobs that serve dire and justified needs. Rather, granting of additional access to advantages must tie to the positions but not the intention of those who
occupy the positions. It follows that the principle of compensation must allow those willing talented to have additional access to advantages, even if they indeed have nothing to be compensated in the first place.

But despite these problems, I think the principle of compensation still sufficiently alleviates the problem of slavery of talented, and thus the socialist dilemma. For it also has virtues that, I contend, sufficiently counter-balance these problems. I therefore consider it as a tolerable alleviation of the socialist dilemma. Firstly, it is true that additional access to advantages cannot contribute to people’s exercise of agency in work, and therefore cannot compensate the loss of self-realization in productive work for those unwilling talented. But it is nevertheless granting them something they would find valuable. Additional access to advantages contributes people’s well-being, though not by contributing their exercise of agency in work. In this sense, the effectiveness of compensation may not be as bad as it sounds.

Secondly, the principle of compensation does not require what specific advantage is granted to the talented. It allows the talented be provided with different packages of advantages, subject to the concerned individuals’ choices. For example, the unwilling talented can be granted additional access either to income, or to subsidies of some specific medical treatments, or merely to receive a public certificate that declares her a proud serving member of the community. In such case, it is true that the unwilling talented is still forced to perform the job and to receive additional access to advantages. But she can choose among packages of additional access that fit her well-being most. Such tailoring of additional access to advantage can also improve the effectiveness of compensation.

Thirdly, since provision of additional access of advantage is to be funded by a tax that people share equal burdens for funding it, both the conscripted talented and other people are treated less unequally. It is because other members of the society also contribute to serve those more urgent needs, by funding the talented who are capable to serve them. Arguably their
burdens are still less severe when compared to the conscripted unwilling talented. But those unwilling talented, in turn, have additional access to advantages that others do not have. In other words, instead of achieving treating people as equals by not tying any unequal burden and benefits to people’s differential levels of talent, the principle of compensation imposes different burdens and advantages to people who have different talents.

I think it is fair enough to say that the balance is less unequal and thus less objectionable than that of conscription without compensation, from the perspective of treating people as equals. And compare to the situation that both conscription and compensation are absent, more needs of people are served now. Furthermore, the principle of compensation only requires most people to work more to pay more tax. It does not limit those people’s freedom of occupation, for they can try to make more money by simply work longer at the job of their choice. Therefore, even if it imposes additional burden to most people, it does not violate any socialist political principles, above all freedom of occupation.

Indeed, the principle of compensation can also be used in combination with conscription for cases that people’s dire needs are unsatisfied not because there is a shortage of the talented, i.e. not that there are insufficient people that are capable to serve those needs, but simply because there is a shortage of people that are willing to serve them. Some jobs and tasks are boring or unpleasant that one can hardly say it contributes to people’s self-realization, yet they are necessary. Some janitors or sewage cleaners may find their job satisfying and developing their ability, or that they identify with their jobs because they serve the needs of the society.

Yet it also seems to be a safe assumption that most people do not find being a janitor or sewage cleaner promote one’s self-realization in work. But these are exactly productive works that are

26 As Muirhead puts it, one can transform ‘the mundane into something more game-like, revealing (for oneself) opportunities for action where others see only routine’. That is, as he quoted Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s study about the psychology of work, it can be true that ““even the most mundane job can enhance the quality of life, rather than distract from it”’, if one finds good reasons to identify with it. See Muirhead, Just Work, 44.
necessary for the proper functioning of any society, thus they serve people’s dire needs. In a socialist society, it seems that the best way to get such jobs or tasks done is to make members to share the burden equally if shortage of services occurs. With the principle of compensation, people can be forced to do their bit, yet compensated by additional access of advantage once they do so. This seems to be a more equitable way than merely forcing people to do their bit without compensation.

Finally, for those willing talented and those who find performing drudgery self-realizing, it is true that they are also granted the additional access to advantages under the principle of compensation. But they should be allowed to forgo it. Granting access to them is consistent with them choosing not to take the offered advantages. I suggest that in a socialist society the willing talented and those who find performing drudgery self-realizing have a duty not to take the offered advantages, though such a duty is not enforceable by state coercion. One might expect that a prevailing socialist ethos and well-developed system of civic education may contribute to make most people oblige and identify with such duty.

These considerations do not make the principle of compensation unproblematic, though they do suggest some good aspects of the principle, as well as the accompanied arrangements, that can counteract some of its bad effects. The principle of compensation therefore also fails to fully solve the problem of slavery of the talented. It also follows that, because it cannot fully eliminate the bad consequences of the problem of slavery of the talented, problems as revealed by the socialist dilemma cannot be fully solved, too. Therefore, even if the principle of

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28 See also Lawrence Becker, “The Obligation to Work”, *Ethics*, 91(1980): 39-40, 47-49, for considerations that justify imposing obligation to work on those who receive special benefits, above all on the principle of reciprocity. Becker argues that it is wrong to impose a general obligation to work on citizens, for it is hard to define what work exactly is. Thus, it is illegitimate for the state to criminalize those who do not work. But he argues that specific work obligations tied to special benefits can be justified, because it is easier to identify and specify what work can properly reciprocate for the special benefit one receives. My argument in the text reverses the logical sequences: special benefits are tied to special services for a more equitable share of burdens. I think the spirit of our arguments are the same, and his considerations are consistent with mine.

compensation is added as an institutional principle of a socialist state, practical problems rooted in the socialist dilemma still exist. But I wish I have successfully shown in this section that with (a) widespread institution of workplace democracy, (b) prevailing socialist ethos supported by civic education, and (c) the institutional principle of compensation, the practical dilemmas and contradictions of implementing socialist political principles can be marginalized and minimized.

V. Taking Stock

My ambition in this chapter is twofold. First, I set forth to pinpoint a serious defect of the normative political theory of socialism I defended in the last chapter. It is that the commitments to self-realization in productive work and satisfaction of people’s publicly justified needs can conflict with each other, and socialism does not have good reasons to adjudicate the conflict. When the two commitments crash, socialists will be left disoriented. This problem is revealed by what I called the socialist dilemma. I described the dilemma, and illustrated it with an imagined case, in section II. I further argued, in section III, that this theoretical defect cannot be cured with the normative resources available to socialism.

In section III, I surveyed two proposals that argue satisfaction of justified needs can rightly constrain freedom of occupation, in ways that are compatible with people’s self-realization in productive work. I argued that they fail, but they also contain two instructive insights that socialism should consider. It is that freedom of occupation is not a sufficient condition to self-realization in productive work, for self-realization in productive work is sensitive not only to people’s choices but also to objective reasons. Furthermore, workplace democracy contributes to people’s self-realization in productive work independently of the existence of freedom of occupation. These two insights share a common root: they are supported by the fact that people’s exercise of agency in work is constitutive to self-realization in productive work. And people’s exercise of agency in work is sensitive to reasons and
enhanced by democratic cooperation, in addition to having freedom of occupation as a necessary condition. This richer description of the normative structure of people’s self-realization in productive work is revealed by the critical engagement of the two proposals that aspire to resolve the socialist dilemma.

My second task in this chapter is to explore what guiding institutional principles are at the disposal of the state if it wishes to implement socialism. Given the socialist normative foundation and its political principles, what is allowed and what is prohibited for the state? What principles should inform its considerations? The discussion of the socialist dilemma and the proposals that aspire to resolve it serve as a springboard for this investigation. For the socialist dilemma reveals that socialist political principles can at times conflict with each other. A pressing question then follows: what can the socialist state do to address the problems rooted in this possibility of conflict? What institutional principles are available to its hand, in crafting institutions and relevant policies?

In section IV, I argued that a way out for the socialist dilemma is to minimize the instances that the unwilling talented (and, indeed, also the not-so-talented) are forced to serve people’s more urgent needs. The two insights that I discussed in section III help: widespread institution of proper democratic workplace guarantee people a minimally decent level of self-realization in productive work. A prevailing socialist ethos, supported by civic education, can also contribute to induce more people to consider shaping their aspirations to serve others’ most dire needs. Finally, I defended the institutional principle of compensation. For those who are conscripted to serve justified needs, they should be provided with additional access to advantages, such as resources, services, opportunities or other non-material privileges. Such provision should be funded by taxing people’s income in an equal proportion, so that everyone bears and shares the burdens equally. I argued that this principle has many problems, yet it sufficiently attenuates the tension between the policy requirements of freedom of occupation.
and the satisfaction of people’s justified needs. It is also consistent with other socialist principles.

With these considerations in hand, accompanied with the socialist political principles I developed in the last chapter, we are now much well-equipped with normative guidance on what institutions and policy measures are compatible with socialism. The next chapter will consider these institutional and policy possibilities. Specifically, it will discuss whether there are any feasible and sufficiently efficient institutions and policies that are compatible with the socialist political principles and the institutional principles of compensation. The problem that looms large in the next chapter is the extent which market is allowed in socialism. It will also answer the question: what are the differences between socialism as defended in this study and other existing socialist proposals in normative political theory literature, as well as the standard liberal egalitarian proposals?
I. Introduction

In this chapter, I describe and defend a set of economic institutions that I take to be essential for any social order that can be considered as socialist. I argue that those economic institutions form a coherent system, and as a system it is consistent with the socialist political principles I expounded in previous chapters. I also argue that this set of economic institutions is feasible. To say that it is feasible, I mean that for it to function well, it needs not deny or disregard any normal organizational and natural constraints that are inherent in all forms of human societies. My exposition of the political economy of socialism here by no means covers every institutional detail. Many additional or secondary institutions may be compatible with or even complementary to it. But I argue that the set of institutions I describe should form the institutional core of a socialist economic structure.

This chapter is organized as follows. In section II, I describe and defend a form of market that is consistent with the socialist political principles. I argue that socialism's critique of the reification and alienation of the capitalist market does not reject market as such. Indeed, I argue, market is necessary for realizing the socialist principles. This section shows that, for socialism, market should be embedded in a proper background economic structure that fulfills three conditions: i) a relatively equal level of income among citizens; ii) state intervention to promote valuable goods and services; iii) the presence of extensive vocational training programs.

In section III, I describe and defend the industrial organization regime and the structure of finance in socialism. I argue that workplace democracy will be the predominant form of industrial organization in socialism. I also argue that the financial institutions in socialism should be decentralized yet publicly regulated, so that funding can be channeled to support democratically organized firms, as well as to other valuable social goals. The core idea is to
diminish the role of profit-driven firms in financing, which leave the funding of firms largely out of the democratic control of the public.

In section IV, I compare the socialist institutional outline I sketched with three other egalitarian proposals, to highlight its important and distinctive normative features. First, I argue socialist principles would not endorse a regime of Universal Basic Income (UBI), for its insufficient guarantee of self-realization in productive work by workplace democracy. Next, I compare the set of institutions I describe here with two similar socialist proposals as defended by Joseph Carens and David Miller. Carens argues that the equality of condition that socialism requires must be support by a strong egalitarian ethos called the ‘socialist duty to contribute’. Miller argues that a form of market socialism must be supported by sufficiently strong nationalist motivation. I argue rather that socialism should only need the support of a certain understanding of the structure of well-being, with self-realization in productive work lies in its center. Yet I also recognize the inadequacy of this socialist understanding of well-being for a socialist regime, if compares to Carens’s and Miller’s proposals: the socialist dilemma I revealed in the last chapter still lurks behind socialism even in the institutional level. Section V concludes.

II. A Socialist Market Economy

A. Why Socialism Needs Market

In this section, I try to answer the question: to what extent market is allowed, or even justified, in a socialist political economy? In previous chapters, I have argued that people have an interest in self-realization in productive work, that is, they have an interest in freely exercising and developing their capabilities to serve others' human needs. Capitalist market, I have argued, fails to provide the conditions for self-realization in productive work to people. It is because typically workers cannot freely choose what capabilities to exercise and develop in
a capitalist market. To secure their resources for subsistence, they are compelled to sell their labor-power in a form that respond only to those who have buying powers. As employees, in addition, they typically can only exercise and develop their capabilities upon the orders of the boss. In a capitalist market, furthermore, the volume of one’s buying-powers is not determined by the genuine human needs one has.

But these considerations do not reject market, as such, understood as free exchange of goods and services among individuals. One should have the right to freely exchange what one legitimately has, whether those are goods or different forms of labor-power with each other.¹ Indeed, without this right protected, people can hardly able to self-realize in productive work. For self-realization in productive work involve one freely recognizes and satisfies with the goods and services freely produced by others. To the workers, recognition of their free labor only matters if such recognition is freely given. The question, then, is how socialism can preserve this freedom of exchange, presumably preserved in some form of market, yet mitigating the conditions that obstruct people’s realization of their interest in the self-realization of productive work.

One solution is to align people's genuine human needs with their buying power. If people's level of buying power reflects the urgency of their needs, the market demand then would reflect people's genuine needs and their urgency. Furthermore, if everyone has the level of buying power that correspond to one's urgency of needs, then it also follows that no one will be compelled to work for securing the resources for subsistence: they can always mobilize their buying power to satisfy their needs, given there are sufficient market supply of goods and services that could satisfy those needs. People's income will no longer depend on selling their labor-power.

If the market is structured in this way, socialism should consider market acceptable. As Vrousalis puts it, socialism only reject a generalized commodity market, but not market as such; a distinctive feature of a generalized commodity market, in turn, is that people's labor-power becomes commodity. As I take it, and argued in previous chapters, people's labor-power only becomes commodity (and thus being reified) when they are forced to sell the labor-power as commodity, and in capitalism people are typically forced to do so for securing the material resources for subsistence. When people's level of buying power corresponds to the urgency of their needs, but not the amount of labor time they sell, their labor-power are therefore no longer a commodity. Such a market is then no longer a generalized commodity market that socialism finds objectionable.

If it is plausible for socialism to allow market, on the condition that people's level of buying power aligns with the urgency of their need, then the next question is: how can the political economy of a society bring forth such an alignment? First, it seems that for many fundamental needs, like basic level of nutrient, shelters, education and medical treatment, people's access to them need not be mediated by a market at all: the provision of such access can (and should) be organized by the state, as public goods. I have discussed how to identify these needs and their priority, via democratic deliberation, in the chapter 3 (especially in sections III and IV). There is no question of feasibility here, too: state provision of such and other public goods are normal, and well-practiced, in modern welfare states and social democracies. There are no reasons why this aspect of welfare state capitalism should not be endorsed by socialism. I therefore take the case for the desirability and feasibility of state provision of these fundamental needs as public goods as established and would go no further on this point here.

What about those human needs, other than those basic ones covered by the state provision of social security, that people have good reasons to have them satisfied? How can the urgency

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of these needs can be made aligned with people's buying power? In previous chapters I have argued that for socialism, it is not that whatever human desires considered as needs subjectively should be satisfied; rather, only those needs that can be justified by good reasons and democratic deliberation as contributory to people's flourishing life are entitled to claims for resource provision. This might appear to mean that people's justified needs are static and readily discernible by (discursive) reasoning. It follows, then, that I might appear to think that for socialism resources should be allocated directly (by the state, in a planned manner) for satisfying these needs, without much use of the market.

While I believe that some needs that are public justifiable, whether they are the basic ones or not, are relatively stable and similar for everyone, and thus can be readily discovered, I do not think all those needs must be like that. If some justified needs can be identified prior to people's choices, then I think socialism should recommend a public provision for the satisfaction of those needs, if that is the most effective way to do so. But for other justified needs, I suggest that market is essential for a proper distribution of resources to satisfy them. It is because many justified needs are closely connected with personal choice. That is, personal choice is a necessary, if not constitutive, step for us to identify those needs. They are, so to speak, 'volitional needs', following Leopold's formulation.  

3 It may be because there are needs that arise only in a particular context that a person experiences, or that are only developed for a person because of her personal history. Furthermore, sometimes people can only identify what they need when they are provided with enough alternatives to choose from, and with many trials and errors. John Stuart Mill famously argued that it is good for people to live in a pluralist society, with many forms of lives allowed and can be learned by the public, because this provides people with both the opportunities and resources for 'experiments in living'.  

4 People's justified needs are closely connected to what they consider to be a flourishing life. Those who

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would like to lead a life of devoted artists typically need different types of social support from those aspire to be great accountants. If people can only find their only conceptions of flourishing life after trial and errors in multiple times of choosing, then so as their justified needs (and their urgency).

It is therefore by no means true that the genuine, publicly justifiable needs of all people are the same. In addition, people probably have deep disagreements about the complete list of what needs are fundamental to a flourishing life. It follows that it may not be possible to reach any democratic consensus for these needs. In a dynamic market people are free to provide different sorts of goods and services. Market also provide incentives for people to innovate, so that new justified needs can be satisfied, or even created. Given a market that people's buying power align with the urgency of their needs, a financially sustainable good or service mean that there are enough needs in the society for that good or service. This is a source of self-realization for producers of that good or service: the market demand proves that the good or service they provide serve other people's genuine human needs. In a market, finally, people can simply mobilize their buying power to select the combination of resources that best fits their conception of flourishing life. People who disagree with each other need not be forced to reach consensus about values here: they can simply pursue different values in the market, given there are enough supply for what they wish for. Therefore, given that a dynamic market can provide people with sufficient alternatives to choose from, it should be considered as necessary for socialism that aims at satisfying as much justified needs of people as possible.

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5 My position here is in a way an intermediate one, with reference to a debate between Ernest Mandel and Alec Nove over a plausible account of the human need. See Ernest Mandel, ‘In Defence of Socialist Planning’, *New Left Review* 159 (Sept 1986), pp. 10-16, and Nove's reply ‘Market and Socialism’, *New Left Review*, 161 (1987) pp. 99-100. I agree to a large extent to Mandel's argument that many important needs are objectively fundamental to any human being, and that they are organized in a stable hierarchy and discoverable empirically. What I disagree is his account that, since at the end of the day our needs and wants are limited, many of the 'choices' made possible by (capitalist) market are not necessary. To this I side with Alec Nove's rebuke to Mandel on this point: people take pleasure in having diversity of choices, and different people may be happy with different sets of choices. My discussion here improves Nove's brief comment, I hope, by providing it with a more solid philosophical footing.

B. THE MARKET THAT SOCIALISM NEEDS

But for market to serve the function of satisfying people's justified needs, it should be qualified in several ways. First, people should have *relatively equal income stream and thus equal buying power*. Oskar Lange, in his famous two-part essay on the economic theory of socialism, argued that given freedom of consumption and occupation, and given that the marginal utility curves of income for all individuals in an economy to be the same, then providing equal income to all consumers would align the urgency of people's need to the given prices of goods and services. This is a theoretical deduction in line with the neoclassical or the marginalist school of political economy, which means this is not a finding of empirical truth, nor did Lange claimed to be so. Indeed, it is not true that people's marginal utility curves of income would be the same. People have different justified needs, which importantly depend on their different conceptions of flourishing lives and differences in natural and social endowments. Lange takes the assumption of people having same marginal utility curves of income only as a useful *approximation* for making a case for equal income. Following Lange, it seems that to align urgency of their justified needs and their buying power, we should also provide people with *approximately* or relatively equal stream of income.

It is important to note here that the ground for equal income in a socialist market is crucially different from that of the liberal case of providing people with equal social and economic conditions or advantages in egalitarian market. As I argued in chapter 2, the core of the liberal idea of individual responsibility is that people should be symmetrically and impartially situated, in the relevant economic and social senses, so that they are not advantaged or disadvantaged.

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than others in the condition for which they can lead their own life. At the end, as I have argued, liberalism requires individuals be allowed to have maximum freedom to make use of their equal resources and advantages. Therefore, for liberalism, both the equal economic condition (i.e. relatively equal income) and market exchange are constitutive to liberal political morality. The socialist ground for a market with relatively equal income for people is different. Equality of income is only instrumental to a socialist political economy. As we have seen, once there is better way to find out the genuine needs of people other than making use of the market, then equality of income loses its value from a socialist perspective. For instance, state provision of basic needs is free to access by everyone with the relevant needs, and there is no income, or whatever resources or advantages, to be equally distributed here.

The second qualification of market in a socialist political economy is that, the democratic state should be allowed to intervene into the market, to provide valuable goods and services that are under-supplied by the market, and to clear various market externalities. This can be satisfied by different measures, typical of them are price control or even direct control of production. One example for such intervention would be the provision of public infrastructures by state-controlled enterprises, of which we will discuss in more details in next section. Another example would be to allow production to be carried by private or community-controlled enterprises, but the state would take prompt measures to control the price fluctuation, or even setting what Diane Elson called price norms for the commodities, so that incentives could be provided to investors (more on investment in the next section too) for channeling investment to desirable industries.9

The reason for this qualification is this. Market failure can leave some valuable goods and services in shortage. Market competition, even the one with people having relatively equal income, typically favors 'fluidity', that the more divisible and more mobile the good or service

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is, the more such good or service is likely to 'win' in the market.\textsuperscript{10} Therefore, profit motives, which is inevitable in any market economy, can generate negative externality: those goods and services that many prefer but hard to isolate and quantify for selling would be under-supplied. They also impose excessive disadvantages to people who work for these needs, and consequently discourage people to develop the relevant capabilities and interest. People driven by profit-motive also tend to externalize the cost of efficient operation of their business: e.g. the social cost of unemployment is not bear by the business that fire the employees.\textsuperscript{11} Here also marks the difference between a socialist market and the liberal egalitarian market. Unlike liberalism, socialism licenses the state to do more to intervene the market, than just providing people their fair shares of resources, if such interventions are endorsed by people's democratic deliberation.

The third qualification to market to make it socialist is that there should be \textit{extensive provision of vocational training institutions}, to be regulated and/or sponsored by the democratic state. This is to provide free or cheap training for people to develop their abilities, as well as facilitating people to \textit{change careers, matching people's ability and self-realization to social needs}, by disseminating to people credible job information. There may still be 'losers' even in the relatively egalitarian socialist market. They are those whose products or services cannot really serve what people need, or that their skills are over-supplied. In such cases, however, they should be provided ample opportunities and help to change their skill sets and do something else. Such institutions are also necessary for people to respond to changing economic environment. Or, more directly, it also facilitates people to respond to the incentive of compensation offered by the state for enlisting more people to serve more urgent needs, as I argued in the last chapter. In this regard, it is fruitful if such institutions can be more


decentralized and regional-based, with workers and managers of different industries in the region invited to participate in their operations. For they may be more 'on the ground', and thus can respond more promptly to the changing economic needs of the community.\footnote{12}

I have argued, in this section, that socialism should endorse a form of \textit{qualified egalitarian market}, for the provision of those goods and services that serve people's genuine and justified needs. This is because it can be expected that some justified needs cannot be discerned or discovered prior to people's choices, given the diversity of people's conception of flourishing life and their corresponding needs. A market is necessary for satisfying these needs. Therefore, I argue, market is also necessary for socialism. But a market can only satisfy these needs, I have argued, if it is qualified by three conditions: a) people should have relatively equal income stream and thus equal buying power; b) the democratic state should be allowed to intervene into the market, to provide valuable goods and services that are under-supplied by the market, and to clear various market externalities; c) extensive provision of vocational training institutions, to be regulated and/or sponsored by the democratic state.

Before ending this section, I want to make it explicit the nature of the socialist justification of a qualified egalitarian market I offer here. Socialism has long been considered as implying an anti-market planned economy.\footnote{13} A socialism that embraces market, or what historically be called 'market socialism', is always considered as a compromised form of socialism: market is considered as fundamentally incompatible with core socialist principles, and it is nevertheless incorporated in a socialist political economy only for the sake of the efficiency that a market may bring.\footnote{14} The socialist justification of a qualified market I discuss here, however, involves no such compromise in principle. A socialist qualified egalitarian market, which takes the shape

as I argued here, is constitutive to respond to the dynamic and diverse nature of both people's justified needs and the content of work people think would lead to their own self-realization.

It follows that profit motive, or material incentives in general, should be permitted in a socialist political economy. Freedom of occupation is a precondition for people's self-realization in productive work, yet it also permits people to choose any combination of work and income they think fit. Therefore, it is within people's freedom to opt for more income rather than choosing to work for what one can self-realize most. Profit motive, or material incentive in general, is then consistent with the socialist principle of freedom of occupation, provided that the provision of which facilitate rather than frustrate the prospect of satisfying other people's justified needs. Thus the profit motive that accompany the market institution is, at most, a possible source of distortion of the socialist goals, given unfavorable conditions. Its existence in a socialist political economy should not be considered as a compromise in principle.

III. Socialist Market Economy: Industrial Organization and Financial Structure

But a socialist qualified egalitarian market alone does not suffice to constitute a socialist political economy. My defense of a socialist qualified egalitarian market in the last section only outlines the institutional shape for the realization of the socialist principles of freedom of occupation and the satisfaction of justified needs. Another important aspect for people's self-realization in productive work is manifested in the principle of workplace democracy. That is, it is not only that people should have many jobs to choose from, but also that as workers or producers they should together have a substantive control of the production process. As I argued in the previous chapters, the principle requires that each of the relatively independent units of

15 See G. A. Cohen, *Rescuing Justice and Equality*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 206-208, for making a similar analysis, though he tries to object providing incentive to talented people, even if doing so can bring Pareto improvement.

production should be subject to the democratic control of all the participating workers. Both the ideas of 'relatively independent units of production' and 'democratic control' are vague, when we try to apply them to many real-world cases. To lay out the institutional implication of the principle, both ideas should be further clarified. In this section, I argue that to clarify both ideas in the globalized economy we have today requires an account of the financial structure of a socialist economy. Before entering this discussion, however, I first discuss the industrial organization regime that satisfy the socialist principle of workplace democracy.

In previous chapters, I argued that for firms or cooperatives in socialist economy, 'one worker one vote' is a necessary organizing principle. They should also be organized in a way that facilitates decision-making to be based on deliberation among the workers. Furthermore, such a principle of industrial organization should be constitutionally entrenched. In the real world, firms typically would have different organizational and decision-making structure, depending on the nature of the business of the firms. I suggest the socialist principle of workplace democracy would endorse the following workplace democratic industrial regime, which is modified from Alec Nove's proposal of 'feasible socialism':

a) State corporations: centrally controlled with sufficient provision of worker's participation.
   b) Socialized enterprises: state- or socially-owned enterprises with full workplace democracy.
   c) Cooperatives: enterprises owned and administered democratically by the workforce.
   d) Private enterprise (subject to limits on number of employees and value of capital assets).
   e) Individuals (e.g. freelance journalists, plumbers, artists)\(^\text{17}\)

Some explanation is in order. State corporations are those enterprises that are controlled and administered by the state, if state control proves to be more efficient, or even necessary, to provide goods or services that serve important justified needs. Core cases should include public utilities like electricity networks and rail networks, and industries that have great strategic value like those that control key natural resources.\(^\text{18}\) These would also be key sources of public wealth controlled by the state. One characteristic of these public utilities or strategic industries


\(^{18}\) Ibid. pp. 192-193.
is that they are impossible or prohibitively ineffective to be scaled down.\footnote{Ibid. pp. 194-195.} Furthermore, the needs they serve are too important to the self-determination of a political community that they should be controlled by the democratic state. It is therefore inappropriate to delegate the control of the production outcomes and processes to the portion of workers that happen to work in them. However, this does not mean that they can operate in the standard capitalist firm model, that the employees have no say but to obey. In areas that concern workers' well-being, like wage level, workplace security and protection, and the terms of contract, etc., the decision-making should be transparent and accountable to the democratic scrutiny of the employees.

At the other extreme, socialism needs not assume, and should not require, all vocations to be collectively performed. People are of course allowed to be individual freelancers for various sorts of production, as protected by the principle of the freedom of occupation. People should be free to take individual initiative to respond to publicly justified needs in a society, as well as market and/or state-provided (cf. the principle of compensation) incentives to perform certain types of production individually.

The remaining three components of the socialist industrial organization regime must be explained with reference to a financial structure that can be endorsed by socialist principles. I argue that socialism should endorse a financial structure that may be called Democratic Finance, borrowing the phrase from an illuminating essay by Fred Block.\footnote{Fred Block, ‘Redefining Socialism: Karl Polanyi and the Democratization of Finance’ 2015, freely accessed in https://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/Democratizing-Finance/Fred%20Block%20-%20Democratizing%20Finance%20-%202015%20draft.pdf at 30th June, 2018. See also Tom Malleson, After Occupy: Economic democracy for the 21st century, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 178.} For democratic finance, the means of production of a society are not necessarily owned by the state; rather, they should be allowed to be owned in various ways, if their usage can be publicly and democratically regulated and controlled. I argue that this financial structure is consistent with socialist principles of democratic deliberative assessment of needs and the state coordination of

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production, and indeed conform better to the principles than merely state-ownership of means of production. Therefore, I contend, socialism requires institutionalization of democratic finance, rather than nationalization or total state-control of means of production. The remaining three components of the socialist industrial organization regime are the realization of the principle of workplace democracy against this background financial structure.

In a socialist political economy, where democratic finance is in place, people are not necessarily employed by the state, and they can retain their post-tax (i.e. approximately equal) income they earn from work. They can dispose these income as saving in bank, or as investment. Their savings and investments would then be an important source of finance for various production initiatives. The question for a socialist economy, then, is how these savings and investments are to be gathered and allocated.

A capitalist economy allocates these funds by banks and investment companies that are privately-owned and for-profit. They decide their fund-gathering and lending schemes predominately in response to the profit incentive. That is, these for-profit lending institutions only focus on whether a lending would maximize profits. This creates a bias towards big and already successful corporations, due to their better loan record in the past, and the higher possibility to generate larger profit.\(^{21}\) Stock-market financing, furthermore, would also tend to focus on short-term profits.\(^{22}\) For liberalism, all these are fine, if the post-tax income distribution of among citizens ensure that they enjoy equal conditions or advantage to choose for themselves.

I argue that under democratic finance, the socialist state should not directly control people's post-tax income; people should retain the ownership of these incomes and have substantial freedom to decide whether these incomes should be used for consumption, savings or investments. Up to this point, socialism would agree with liberalism. But in contrast to the for-

\(^{21}\) Block, ‘Redefining Socialism’, pp. 42-43.
\(^{22}\) Ibid. pp. 22-28, 44.
profit financial market that liberalism supports (or at least allowed), socialism calls for a *decentralized, regulated, non-profit* financial sector. Typical non-profit financial institutions that exist even in the capitalist economy nowadays are credit unions, (public) community banks and non-profit loan funds. For socialism, they should be promoted and variously supported by state or state-sponsored public funds, which are in turn drawn from taxes, pension funds, and different kinds of public wealth generated and controlled by the state or local governments on behalf of the local community.23

The non-profit nature of the socialist financial sector is important. It creates the condition for the lending or investment officers to adopt an assessment scheme of creditworthiness that does not solely consider the profitability of a lending. Since they do not make profit maximization as their dominant goals, they can introduce qualitative and historical analysis in their assessment of a firm's creditworthiness, e.g. to take into account the obstacles the firms had overcome, that the firms serve good social or democratic causes (for instance, whether the firm is sufficiently environmental friendly, or if it helps developing the community), and/or that the firms promote workplace-democratic innovation in corporate governance (more on this later), etc.24

But the socialist state should not just support these non-profit financial institutions. The socialist state should also set the regulatory standards to provide a framework for these non-profit institutions to devise this kind of more socially-oriented assessment schemes. It is just like financial regulatory agencies in capitalist states to set the framework to guide and regulate the creditworthiness assessment schemes of financial institutions. State agencies should also

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24 Ibid. pp. 40-42.
monitor their financial soundness in lending.\textsuperscript{25} Therefore, the decentralized, regulated, non-profit financial sector is both supported and regulated by the democratic socialist state.\textsuperscript{26}

It is against this background financial structure that a socialist economy would allow the three further forms of firms in the list: socialized enterprise, cooperatives, and private enterprise. The financial source of a socialized enterprise may be from the state or state-sponsored fund, or from funds of social or community organizations, as well as non-profit financial institutions. But the social enterprises should be managed by full-workplace democracy. Cooperative is formed when people choose to pool their saving to set up a common enterprise. Unlike socialized enterprises, cooperatives are both managed and owned by the workers themselves. Socialism should also require the cooperatives to practice full workplace democracy.

Private enterprises, finally, are still allowed, to leave room for those industries that are difficult or prohibitively ineffective to implement workplace democracy. But the capital and organizational scales of such enterprises should be severely limited: private enterprises that practice wage-labor should not be allowed to occupy substantive market share. They, in short, must be just small business. In addition, the socialist state should provide financial incentives for innovative organizational experiments to implement workplace democracy in these private enterprises. As mentioned, this may well be in the form of easier or additional access to credits.

I argue that this industrial organization regime and financial structure better approximate the socialist ideal than nationalization of means of production and putting the allocation of investment under a state-directed central plan, even if the state that controls all these are

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid. p. 44. For a real-world example to approximate how finance may be directed to desirable communal goals via democratic control, see Mathew Brown and Martin O’Neill, ‘The Road to Socialism is the A59: The Preston Model’, \textit{Renewal}, 24 (2016), 69-78.

\textsuperscript{26} Whether socialism should totally ban for-profit financial institutions is a question that I would like to set aside. I think different reasons pull to opposite directions. One the one hand, it may well be the case that some might find for-profit financial work to be the kind of productive work they find self-realizing; on the other hand, it may also well be argued that for-profit financial institutions cannot serve any justified needs, and indeed may have harmful effect on society, and therefore it should be the kind of unjustifiable jobs socialism should ban. However, it may well be the case that the competitive dynamics creates by the state-supported non-profit financial institutions would suffice to push for-profit institutions to adopt a more socially oriented business strategy: see Block, ‘Redefining Socialism’, pp. 43-44.
impeccably democratic. It is because a necessary organizational consequence of centralization of the control of means of production is the bureaucratization of the organization of social production.27 Either it is the individuals that can own and control what they have, subject to certain legal regulations; or that their resources must be pooled and administered by a (representative) central agency, following a (democratic) central plan. Economically, the bureaucratic central planning model has already been proved to be very ineffective.28

But even if we set aside the record of economic performance of central planning as disputable, central planning as in the state directly control all the means of production in accordance with a central plan is still deeply undemocratic. Here, I believe Hayek's highlight of 'the knowledge problem' in such a central planning system should be taken seriously by socialists. In a dynamic economy, many factors that could affect economic planning would keep changing, and it is impossible for a central plan to track all these changes in details, however democratic it is.29 In practice, any workable plan must grant large area of discretion to the bureaucrats or administrators, and this would render whatever the democratic control that is supposed to be there merely formal.30

Indeed, even a leading socialist defender of democratic central planning argues for it by redefining planning as merely indicating 'general instructions and would not lay out specification for each branch or producing unit or region'; it is up to the lower units to 'divide up the work-load... work out the technological average... [and] the product mix.'31 I cannot see what major principled differences are there between such a 'planning' scheme and the democratic finance I expound here. It is true that in democratic finance not all resources are

28 See Janos Kornai, The Socialist System.
collectively owned. But their productive uses, via finance and investments, are regulated via various policy and legal tools to promote workplace democracy and social goals supported by public and democratic deliberation. For organizing the economy by socialist principles, the democratic finance model can achieve whatever a workable central planning model is supposed to achieve.

The democratic finance model presupposes the state can effectively control the flow of financial investment. This seems to be a far cry in the age of globalization, where production and consumption are intensively and extensively integrated across the national boundaries. In our globalized world market today, the barriers for capitals are much lowered, so that now firms process a globally and geographically dispersed transnational production or value chain. Those multinational firms’ major physical productive activities are mostly outsourced. The controlling or lead firms of these global value chain, as legal entities, only process the so-called 'core competent areas' of the supply chain, usually intangible assets such as copyrights, brand names and design. This has become the normal business model today.

With such global value chains lie firmly at the center of the global economy today, it seems prohibitively costly to switch back to the Bretton Woods international economic regime, where international capital investments were heavily restricted by the states. But even if we set aside the problem of feasibility, such a globalization of production is not necessarily undesirable: many developing countries indeed benefit from it in virtue of their lower labor and land costs.

32 Malleson, After Occupy pp. 140-145.
Therefore, it may not be entirely desirable for socialism, or some similar socialist/egalitarian regime, to stick to Bretton Wood-type capital control regime, as many would argue. But the merit of different magnitudes of capital control is clearly an empirical question that I cannot deal with here. In the remaining space of this section, I would only try to outline what a socialist international regime that takes economic globalization as given might look like. I do not claim that it is a superior model; I contend that it could be an interesting alternative to Bretton Wood-type financial regime for socialism.

Since the capital and production scale of private firms would be severely limited in socialism, a socialist globalization of production means that the socialized enterprises and collectives are going to organize their production chain in a global, international scale. One important regulation that must be in place is that their subsidiaries must be organized along the principle of workplace democracy. To the extent that the lead enterprises or collectives exercise substantive control over the subsidiaries, the lead enterprises or collectives must be democratically accountable to the workers in the subsidiaries, too. As stated in a recent decision of the National Labor Relation Board in the U.S., if certain entities exercise substantial workplace control like 'wages and hours' of the workers, they should be considered as employers and thus subjected to labor regulations. Socialist economic entities, to the extent that they can expand globally and comprise of several relatively independent production entities, should follow this principle. To make such regulations effective, an international regime of labor law is needed.

38 For example, Malleson, *After Occupy* pp. 170-175.
40 Enterprises organized by socialized capitals or as collectives are not incapable to develop a global production chain: the Mondragon Cooperative Corporation (MCC), for instance, was a famous example, though not without ambiguities in how 'social' (or 'socialist') it is. See Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*, pp. 240-246, Tom Malleson, ‘What does Mondragon Teach Us about Workplace Democracy?’, in Douglas Kruse ed., *Sharing Ownership, Profits, and Decision-Making in the 21st Century*, (Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing, 2013), pp. 141-143.
A socialist international economic regime should also institutionalize what Peter Dietsch and Thomas Rixen called the *membership principle*: collectives and enterprises should be subject to the taxation of a country if their production are benefit from or heavily relied on the public good provided by that country, e.g. the infrastructure and human talents.\(^{42}\) The now common practice of 'transfer pricing'- allowing companies to shift paper profit to other countries that have more favorable taxation rate- should be abolished. Instead, an international tax regime should be developed. Institutions and structures should be developed, so that representatives of socialist states can deliberate and decide the portion of tax they should reasonably have, in case the production facilities and activities of certain enterprises and collectives extend to several jurisdictions (this is the so-called UT+FA system: unitary taxation with formula apportionment).\(^{43}\) Such international institutions and structures should also be the place for resolving disputes such as tax competition among the states, and be vested with substantial power of enforcement.\(^{44}\)

The point of these considerations is to empower the socialist states to control the globalized production organization, by introducing a law regime that has cosmopolitan character, i.e. a normative framework that guide and regulate how states interact.\(^ {45}\) By strengthening the socialist states' autonomy vis-à-vis capitals or global production enterprises or collectives, such a cosmopolitan regime also enable the globalized production to be accountable to the democratic peoples. In this sense, I contend that my sketch of international economic regime is a natural extension of the idea of democratic finance. It thus is also an institutionalization of the socialist principles of democratic deliberative assessment of people’s genuine human needs and...
the state coordination of production, in the context of allowing globally organized production chains.

IV. Comparisons: UBI, Carens and Miller

In this section, I discuss some of the distinctive socialist features of the socialist political economy I expounded, by comparing it with three alternative egalitarian proposals. The three proposals are (A) Universal Basic Income (UBI); (B) Joseph Carens's socialist proposal of equality of condition supported by strong egalitarian ethos; and (C) David Miller’s market socialist proposal that requires the support of nationalism. I argue that the socialist political economy I expound here differ from these proposals in a way that better fit with the socialist principles.

Before engaging with these three proposals, let me first take stock what I have argued for the socialist political economy. In the previous two sections I argued for the three major pillars of a political economy that can be grounded in the socialist principles. First, I argued that socialism should embrace a qualified egalitarian market. I argued that market can be justified by socialist principles, provided it is embedded in a background economic structure that fulfill three conditions: i) a relatively equal level of income among citizens; ii) state intervention to promote valuable goods and services; iii) the presence of extensive vocational training programs. Then, I argued that socialism has good reasons to support a financial regime that might be called democratic finance. That is the means of production of a society should be allowed to be owned in various ways, if their usage can be democratically regulated. It means that socialism should support a regulated and decentralized non-profit financial sector. It is because their non-profit nature allows them to lend and invest by considering the obstacles the firms had overcome, that whether the firms serve good social or democratic causes and promote workplace-democratic innovation in corporate governance.
Next, I argued that socialism should have a *workplace democratic industrial regime* that comprise mainly of 1) state corporations with sufficient provision of worker's participation, 2) state- or socially-owned enterprises with full workplace democracy and 3) cooperatives that are owned and administered democratically by the workforce; 4) private enterprises and individual freelancers are allowed, though the former would subject to scale and capital size restriction. Finally, I sketched an alternative international socialist taxation and labor regime that I argued would support those three major pillars of socialist political economy in a globally integrated market. For it can enable the socialist states to exert more comprehensive control to the globalized investment and production chains. I did not argue, however, that it is superior to a Bretton Woods-type capital control regime: which one is better to enable the socialist states to exert democratic control to the capital is, I contend, an empirical question that this theoretical study cannot deal with.

This outline of the socialist political economy can be challenged in two different approaches. It might be argued that other institutional arrangements can better manifest the socialist principles. It might also be argued that for this socialist political economy to be feasible, additional premises other than those specified by the socialist principles and socialist ideal have to be in place. The proposal of Unconditional Basic Income can be considered as a challenge to my proposal along the first approach. Carens's and Miller's proposals can be treated as challenges along the second approach.

### A. Universal Basic Income (UBI)

The idea of UBI is that ‘an income is paid by a political community to all its members on an individual basis, without mean test or work requirement attached’.\(^{46}\) Typically, the income

is paid on a regular basis, rather than a one-off payment: like an income is paid to all members of the community in a regular interval of a month or a year.\textsuperscript{47} In practice, the income is sought to replace mean-tested social benefit provided by the state. For one of the primary aims of many UBI proposals is to remove the so-called ‘unemployment trap’, i.e. since there are no significant positive income differential between not working with benefits and low-paid work, it creates an incentive for people receiving mean-tested benefits to not finding a job.\textsuperscript{48} Notably, in most of the UBI proposals, the guaranteed income stream is not guaranteed to be equivalent to a living wage, so there is no guarantees that everyone’s living to be above subsistence level.\textsuperscript{49} The level of the basic income depends on what kind of funding mechanisms are feasible in a political community.\textsuperscript{50}

The UBI is argued for by egalitarian theorists in many regards.\textsuperscript{51} Relevant to our discussion here is its contribution to enhance people’s possibility of self-realization in productive work. It is argued that the UBI could create economic incentive for employers to create jobs that are more attractive, or to improve the working environment; for all would have a basic income to fall back to, thus the pressure of subsistence on them to accept bad jobs is much reduced; this increases the wage cost needed to employ people for bad jobs, and thus create an incentive for employers to make jobs more attractive in its nature and in its working environment.\textsuperscript{52} Furthermore, UBI also provides workers with an unconditional and inexhaustible strike fund.\textsuperscript{53} In short, UBI strengthen workers’ bargaining power for a better

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid. pp. 4-5.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid. pp. 10-11.
\textsuperscript{50} Van Parijis, ‘Basic Income ’, pp. 16-17.
\textsuperscript{51} See the survey in Barry ‘Real Freedom and Basic Income’, esp. in pp. 243-246, 274-275.
and more humane job, and in this sense it contributes to increase people’s opportunity for self-realization in productive work.

Assuming UBI does bring these economic consequences. Can UBI then do better than the workplace democratic industrial regime in providing maximum opportunity for self-realization in productive work for most people? It is important to note here that the UBI does not imply a relatively equal access to the control of productive resources in a society. Nothing in the UBI proposal impose limits on the scale of productive resources an individual can control. In principle, in a UBI regime employers can still control the means of production, and in virtue of this control to have large if not decisive power in deciding the work process. Only that now every individual worker can have larger bargaining power, for typically in a UBI regime the workers’ means of subsistence is no longer mainly depends on the wages offered by the employers. A better bargain, however, does not imply that workers can thus have substantive control over the work process.54

By contrast, in the workplace democratic industrial regime the full control of the workers as a collective in firms is legally sanctioned. It is true that workers in a workplace democracy must share the control of the work process with other workers equally. Therefore, it is not true that each individual worker can control the work process as substantively as a capitalist controlling his business. But the democratic process can be justified to an individual worker with good reasons, and the decisions made must be supported by good reasons that are being scrutinized in the deliberative process. Therefore, even if the individual worker does not prefer the decisions, the decisions are still in one important sense accountable to her. In contrast, the enhanced bargaining power brought by UBI is, after all, just bargaining power: it is still a market power that no justification with accessible reasons is required to support the bargain outcome. As such, the labor-power is still commodified in the workplace, only that the

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54 Alex Gourevitch, ‘The Limits of a Basic Income: Means and Ends of Workplace Democracy’,
*Basic Income Studies*, 11 (2016) (Online), DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1515/bis-2016-0008](https://doi.org/10.1515/bis-2016-0008) pp. 7-8.
individual workers can now strike a better bargain. Therefore, for maximizing people’s opportunity for self-realization in productive work, the workplace democratic industrial regime fares better than the UBI. In this sense, it fits better to the socialist principles than UBI.

B. JOSEPH CARENS’S PROPOSAL

Joseph Carens proposes that a moral incentive to serve others is essential to maintain both a decentralized efficient market economy and equality of income. The idea is that the post-tax income of everyone will be equally distributed, yet out of a moral incentive or social duty, people work as hard as they could to maximize their pre-tax income, just like people normally respond to material interest in a capitalist society. He argues that through an intensive socialization scheme to make that kind of moral incentive learned by individuals, his proposal would then be feasible. Carens indeed considers his proposal as an interpretation of the socialist slogan ‘from each according to ability, to each according to needs’, where he takes an equality of income as closely approximate to giving each according to needs. At one point, Carens’ qualified his proposal that equality of income needs not be support solely by a sense of social duty, or the ‘socialist duty to contribute’: the love of having a meaningful job that can contribute to other people’s well-being, may as well shape one’s career choice.

One major difference between Caren’s proposal and mine is of course the interpretation of the idea of human need that are entitled to be satisfied. As I argued in previous chapters, the kind of needs that are considered as relevant for socialism should be those capabilities that are contributory to a flourishing life; these needs are also satiable; what those needs are, and how

59 Ibid. pp. 151-152.
they should be satisfied, should also be subjected to democratic deliberation. At the institutional level, they should be satisfied, as I argued in section II in this chapter, by free access to public goods such as basic education and medical services; to the extent that state or public provision of those justified needs are feasible, such justified needs should be satisfied that way; the qualified egalitarian market mediates the matching of people’s remaining genuine needs with people’s supply of goods and services. I believe this is a more sophisticated approximation of how people’s genuine needs are to be satisfied, than the mere equal distribution of income. More importantly, my understanding of the socialist commitment to the satisfaction of needs here, and the way those justified needs are to be satisfied, are sufficiently decoupled from any consideration of distributive equality, which, as I also argued in previous chapters, are closely related to the liberal idea of individual responsibility.60

More relevant to our consideration here is the role of the ‘socialist duty to contribute’. In Carens’s proposal, this duty lies at the center as both a normative or ethical demand and the major motivation on the part of the people to support the socialist project. My institutional proposal of socialism here is different from that of Carens. But is it also true that for it to work, something like Carens’s socialist duty to contribute is necessary either as people’s motivation, or as ethical commitment, or both? It seems that Carens means it as a (moral) duty that one would contribute to the society in a way that she otherwise would not: it is a duty other than one’s commitment to meaningful job, and tends to ‘maximize’ the volume of social products

60 Here it also marks the difference between the political economy of socialism I expound here and John Roemer’s famous proposal of market socialism. To recall, again, what I have surveyed in chapter 1. Roemer argues that socialism is a system ‘in which there are institutional guarantees that aggregate profits are distributed more or less equally in the population.’ He thus designed a system which, in brief, is the same as market economy we have now, except that citizens owns equal shares of stocks, which they can freely invest to different company in a stock market but cannot convert to money. See John Roemer, “Can there be Socialism after Communism?” in Pranab Bardhan and John Romer ed. Market Socialism: The Current Debate. (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1993) pp. 89-107, in pp.89, 96-97; For more details of his program, see also John Roemer, Economic Perspectives, pp. 313-322. In a recent formulation, Roemer explicitly stated that he understands the ethical foundation of socialism as ‘equal access to advantage’ that recognize Ronald Dworkin’s and G. A. Cohen’s contribution in injecting ‘the concept of responsibility in a compelling way into the theory of equality’. See John Roemer, ‘Socialism Revised’, Philosophy and Public Affairs, 45 (2017), pp. 297, 300.
for equal distribution.\(^{61}\) And for Carens, people seem to be motivated by the duty at such, or at any rate be motivated by the duty after intensive socialization.

Understood as such, the political economy of socialism I expound here does not need the sense of having such duty to prevail among people. The only relevant motivation and ethical commitment required by it is the desire to self-realize in productive work (this, in turn, is motivated by the significance of self-realization in productive work to well-being or flourishing life). Built in the structure of such a desire or motivation is that one would like one’s work to be meaningful, in the sense it can be recognized by others in the relevant community as useful to satisfy people’s genuine human needs. If people’s production as motivated by self-realization in productive work cannot sufficiently serve people’s more urgent justified needs, the institutional principle of compensation shall apply to create incentives to induce more people to serve those needs, as I argued in the last chapter. At the institutional level, such incentives can be created by the state applying directly the principle of compensation, or via state-imposed price control, or, as I argued in section II, as arise naturally from the market mechanism. It should be highlighted here that, I contend market material incentives can be consistent with the socialist principles.

**C. DAVID MILLER’S (LIBERAL) NATIONALIST MARKET SOCIALISM**

I think similar considerations also apply to the contrast between the socialist political economy I expounded here and David Miller’s market socialist proposal. Miller argues that socialism is compatible with market, provided economic success spreads among citizens equally by redistribution via different means, including shared ownership of enterprises by its members (i.e. all the enterprises are co-operatives).\(^{62}\) But he argues that socialism should

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substitute nationalism to what he saw as Marx’s incoherently formulated conception of community, to provide enough motivational support for the socialist egalitarian scheme. That is, because of nationalism, citizens have a good reason to be motivated to show solidarity with other fellow nationals, and Miller argues it is necessary, at least instrumentally, for motivating people to forgo their income for an egalitarian distribution.63

In contrast, the socialist political economy I expounded here does not require additional motivational source for motivating people's sense of solidarity, in Miller’s case nationalism, to work. For the socialist political economy, people’s desire to serve others’ genuine needs are supposed to flow from self-realization in productive work: that is, a work can be considered as productive, and therefore can be a source of self-realization, only if it does serve some others’ genuine needs. If some of these genuine human needs are left unsatisfied, then incentives are provided by the institutional principle of compensation to make up the supply. People are provided with roughly equal income in order to align the market demand and urgency and volume of needs. Other than these, no additional income of the better-off citizens is transferred to other citizens for satisfaction of needs, or for equal distribution of income.

Of course, in the socialist political economy, some sort of boundaries are still needed: for any individual, it is not true that anyone’s recognition of her productive work is as good. Typically, the motivation from recognition would be larger if the intended takers of the goods and services are of a closer and more cohesive community with the individual. For instance, one is typically more motivated to work for a close friend than a random pedestrian. Furthermore, as I argued in in chapter 3, products (and more so for service) need a shared network of norms for people to make sense of and to decide their values. As Miller keenly observes, for distribution according to need, we must know ‘which people are to have their

needs considered… [and] what is to count as needs’. 64 He thus argues that nationality is the optimal basis for providing boundaries of membership of a distributive community. 65

But I do not think this follows. Typically, individuals in modern world, especially in the age of globalization, develop multiple identities, or different kinds and levels of identification, to multi-layered communities: to their city, to the region they live, to the nations, and even to social networks developed beyond the geographical confine of nation state. Social relations and practices are more extensively stretched, and more complexly intertwined. 66 And, as Marx argued (and correctly predicted), the development of a capitalist world market where individuals relate to one and other mainly by market exchange of goods and services creates ‘the reciprocal and all-sided dependence of individuals who are indifferent to one another’. 67 This paves the way for an individual to develop ‘the universality and the comprehensiveness of his relations and capacity’. 68 Nationality, therefore, is no longer a dominant source of imagination for people to identify who they care (and therefore who they are willing to serve); this is especially true in the sphere of productive work.

In a socialist state, since many productions are to be governed with state coordination, and are directed by democratic deliberation among citizens, these social practices and relationships do create a community of citizens, and citizenship is therefore very likely to be an important aspect of people’s identity. Indeed, again, as I argued in chapter 3, it is envisioned that a civic friendship is formed among citizens, so that they care the well-being of each other, and have an interest to be equal authors of the shared framework of value. But the source of such a community of equal citizens is the active political participation on the citizens’ part. It is crucially different from nationalism. For Miller also admits that nationality is typically ‘to a

65 Ibid. p. 662.
68 Ibid. p. 53.
greater or lesser extent a manufactured item… requires histories which are to a greater or less extent ‘mythical’. But there is nothing mythical in the sense of citizenship based on collective practices and experiences. Socialism, I contend, should take the idea of citizenship rather than nationality seriously. In any case, for the socialist principles and the socialist political economy defended in this study, I contend, nationalism is not necessary as a source of people’s motivation.

These considerations indeed reinforce the plausibility of the socialist international law regime I outlined in section III. For people’s multiple belongings to community imply that the target audience of their productive work need not be confined to the borders of nation states. Yet the states are still the main locus that taxes are collected and public goods provided. An international taxation regime provides the forum of deliberation for the states to discuss how their taxation income should be portioned. It can also serve as the institutional structure that mechanisms of taxation transfer can be arranged and enforced.

Before ending this section, I think it is important to underscore what implications should be drawn from my arguments above regarding Carens’s and Miller’s concern of the motivational source in a socialist regime. What I have argued is that self-realization in productive work, rather than the ‘duty to contribute’, should be the dominant source of motivation for social production in a socialist regime, and that nationalism is not required for people to identify who they want to produce for. Carens and Miller are thus wrong to think that

70 Elsewhere, Miller himself seems to agree that citizenship is an important source of community that is itself useful for maintaining a socialist regime. Though he characterizes citizenship as a source and a product of nationalism, and therefore are to a large extent the same thing. See David Miller, ‘In What Sense Must Socialism be Communitarian?’, Social Philosophy and Policy, 6 (1989), 70-71. I think this equivocation of nationality and citizenship is confusing and fails to capture the important difference between their sources and structure. But this is a point I do not wish to press on further here.
71 Here I wish to set aside the more protracted and complicated discussion of the general relation between nationalism and Marxism and socialism. For a survey of the literature, see Mike Davis, ‘Marx’s Lost Theory’, New Left Review, 93 (2015), pp. 45-53.
their proposals are what the socialist ideal naturally or logically follows. Yet, I think the concern that lurks behind their proposals is not sufficiently answered by my arguments in this section: at the end of the day, people should have been motivated to produce and distribute sufficiently to respond to people’s genuine needs, and voluntary production, though motivated by self-realization in productive work, short of any additional senses of duties as people’s motivation, cannot guarantee this sufficiency. To guarantee this sufficiency, some mechanism of authoritative coordination of (re)distribution is needed; and the holders of this authority, whether it is the state or other agencies, require justifications for their exercise of power.

I think this is the concern that the socialist duty to contribute or nationalism that is supposed to answer for. Or, at any rate, they can be considered as answer to this important concern. Both provide justifications to the authoritative regulation and distribution of the use of productive resources by the (presumably democratic) state. And because they provide an answer to this concern to sufficiently response to people’s publicly justified needs, and in a non-market and egalitarian way, they are therefore compelling answers for a feasible socialist-friendly regime. But they are not, as I argued, socialist answers to the concern. Indeed, the concern has its root in the socialist dilemma I revealed in the last chapter: since socialism cherishes self-realization in productive work, and freedom of occupation (and thus voluntary production) is a necessary component of it, there are no theoretical space for socialism to guarantee the satisfaction of all genuine human needs in a society, which is also its core normative commitment. In other words, the socialist principles cannot supply a justification to license authoritative coordination by the state to provide for sufficient satisfaction of people’s justified needs.

The institutional principle of compensation or the provision of market incentive as I suggested, are not principled solutions of the dilemma, and probably would disturb the egalitarian outlook of the socialist regime too. Most importantly, it cannot justify in a principled way how the genuine human needs in the society be sufficiently meet by some authoritative
coordination of the use of resources. But I also argue that my solutions are more faithful to the socialist principles or aspiration. For they recognize the socialist dilemma as it is and are not trying to smuggle into socialism’s normative foundation some additional, though probably plausible, ethical demands or motivational sources. Furthermore, as I also noted in the last chapter, it is not true that capitalism, even in its ideal egalitarian liberal form, can guarantee sufficient provision to all important needs. The concern that lurks behind Carens’s and Miller’s proposals may therefore not be as damaging to socialism as one might think.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have expounded a socialist political economy that fits with the socialist principles and socialist ideal I defended in the last chapters. In section II, I argued that market can be consistent with socialist principles, provided it is a qualified egalitarian market. The socialist qualified egalitarian market is a market that is embedded in a background of relatively equal income or buying power, with wide-range of freely accessible public goods provided by the democratic state or by public means, and that there should be ample opportunities for vocational training. I argued that this qualified egalitarian market best responds to the justified needs of the people, given a plausible understanding of the dynamic nature of people’s conception of flourishing life.

In section III, I then argued that another two pillars of a political economy that fit with the socialist principles are the workplace democratic industrial regime and democratic finance. The workplace democratic industrial regime maximizes workers’ democratic participation to enterprises, only under the constraints of the control of key industries by the democratic state and providing spaces for individuals’ free initiatives. To the extent that private enterprises are not eliminable, their capital size is severely restricted. The democratic finance supports the workplace democratic industrial regime. The means of productions, or to be more precise the
means of financial investment, are not centralized in the control of the state. Rather, various types of property ownerships are allowed, and subjected to the regulations imposed by the socialist state. Importantly, non-profit lending institutions will be encouraged and supported, so that via their more community-oriented lending policies, businesses that oriented towards providing public goods, towards underfunded services or goods for genuine human needs, or towards other desirable social goals, can be facilitated.

Finally, in section IV, I contrast this socialist political economy with three other egalitarian or socialist oriented proposals. Against UBI, I argued that this socialist political economy can better ensure and maximize workers’ control to the workplace, and thus maximize people’s opportunity of self-realization in productive work. Against Joseph Carens’s proposal that emphasizes the need of a socialist duty to contribute for a socialist economy to provide sufficiently for people’s needs, I argued that for the socialist political economy people are motivated to provide for others’ publicly justified needs by their motivation for self-realization in productive work, as well as incentives allowed by the institutional principle of compensation.

Lastly, against David Miller’s proposal of market socialism supported by nationalism, I argued that the socialist political economy supported by socialist principles does not require nationalism as an additional source of motivation for redistribution. I also argued that nationalism is also an inadequate approximation of the community that individuals should care about. For globalization means that individuals are typically embedded in multiple layers of social network and practices, identifying different communities in different degrees at the same time. This is especially true in the sphere of productive work, due to the emergence of the capitalist world market.

Yet, I concluded the section with an acknowledgment of Carens’s and Miller’s proposals as compelling, though non-socialist: their proposals can indeed be considered as plausible solution to a concern that has its root in the socialist dilemma I revealed in the last chapter. To
the extent they provide a plausible justification of authoritative allocation of resources to satisfy people’s otherwise unsatisfied genuine human needs, their solutions might be better than the one I suggest for the socialist political economy here (I did not engage in any detailed comparisons here). Yet, I argued, those solutions are not rest on a proper socialist normative foundation.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION: WHY SOCIALISM?

I. Preliminaries

This concluding chapter ties together different threads of arguments in previous chapters. It aims to underscore the theoretical implications and contributions of my explorations of the normative foundation of socialism in this study. Section II first summarizes the major arguments and conclusions of previous chapters. Section III then highlights the affinities and differences of some of them to several prevailing theoretical positions in the contemporary literature of political philosophy and political theory. I argue that the normative political theory of socialism I defended here might be best described as a version of ‘relational-egalitarian-perfectionism’, if it is to be positioned in the map of academic literature. Yet, I also register my skepticism to such a label, as well as the point of labelling the theory with reference to those prevailing positions. The major reason of my skepticism is that, as I will argue in section III, those meta-theoretical positions are not helpful to clarify the reasons for the theory. In addition, I also underscore the distinctiveness of my approach for the justification of socialism by comparing it with two recent alternative approaches, namely, the Rawlsian and the social-theoretical approaches. Finally, section IV explores the policy implications of the investigation of the normative foundation of socialism in this study, especially with reference to the considerations developed in the previous two sections. I argue that the discussion in this study may contribute to the re-focusing of socialist politics to a policy area that was long out of sight in theoretical discussion, yet is increasingly relevant to our time, namely the improvement of the quality of work.
II. A Normative Political Theory of Socialism

The core question of this study is: Is there a coherent and compelling normative foundation for socialism, and, if there is one, what are its limits to the justification of socialist institutions? I started the exploration of the normative political theory of socialism by first arguing what should not be taken as socialism’s normative foundation. Specifically, I attacked what I take to be most important contender to socialism in normative political theory, namely contemporary liberal egalitarianism. In Chapter 2, I argued that a core element in the normative foundation of contemporary liberal egalitarianism, that is the idea of individual responsibility, is problematic. To argue this, I first constructed an ideal-typical account of the normative core elements of liberalism, namely: priority of basic rights, liberal legitimacy and individual responsibility. I argued that they are connected in the sense that the latter two seem to be rooted in the same idea of treating citizens as free and equal and would be led into similar conclusions in their support of basic rights. But I also showed that the idea of individual responsibility is indeed a problematic interpretation of treating people as free and equal.

I argued for this thesis with two major reasons. First, to the extent that choice is valuable as it treats individuals as free citizens, it seems that what matters is individual choosing agents be provided with enough meaningful alternatives to choose from. The liberal idea of individual responsibility allows the interpretation that people's life prospects should be as sensitive to one's choices as possible, given the conditions for their choices are fair, and thus allows those who choose 'better' in the relevant sense to incur maximized advantage to those who choose 'worse'. But this interpretation cannot account for the legitimate state provision of public goods, which is one way to provide meaningful alternatives for individuals. It is because the constraints set by the liberal idea of individual responsibility would render the state to have no legitimate ground to limit the use of resources of those who choose 'better' in the relevant sense to provide for meaningful choices to those who fare ‘worse’, or badly, because of their choices. This, I
argued, contradicts many policies and practices in modern social democracy that make so much sense to people. Yet the idea of individual responsibility would make liberal theorists fail to provide a plausible account for these.

Alternatively, I argued, liberal theorists might formulate the idea of individual responsibility as meaning that social safety net measures, such as state-run mandatory insurance scheme, should be provided equally to everyone, so that no one is unfairly treated; the distributive consequences would then still be sensitive to people choices, but except these measures. They might thus conclude that the provision of public goods can still be accounted for by the liberal idea of individual responsibility. I argued that this formulation, since it welcomes the provision of state-run mandatory insurance for those fall below social minimum regardless of people’s choice, allows too much ethical assumptions of what constitute human goods to be smuggled into the idea of treating people as equal citizens. This, I have shown, is in tension with the foundational intuition of individual responsibility of being neutral to people's conceptions of good life within the bound of liberal justice. Furthermore, even if there exist public goods that are neutral to people’s conceptions of good life, then what justifies the state provision of them is that they are supported by objective reasons, with reference to what constitute human goods. It is precisely because these goods are objectively valuable that no reasonable citizens could reject them being provided by the state. Therefore, the fact that everyone would accept or prefer such neutral public goods is beside the point, or at least secondary in the order of justification. The idea of consequential-sensitivity to choices, which is central to the liberal idea of individual responsibility, is redundant in the justification of the provision of such public goods.

Thus, I concluded in chapter 2 that the liberal idea of individual responsibility is implausible, that those liberal theories that cannot dissociate themselves from it are thus
problematic. Given the idea of individual responsibility is an important tendency within the family of liberal families, and that it can be plausibly shown as having its root in fundamental ideas of liberalism, we have good reasons to consider theories that reject the implausible idea of individual responsibility as non-liberal, and for good. This paved the way for the development of a plausible non-liberal socialist normative political theory. As I briefly surveyed in the Introduction, it happens that many socialist theories and proposals do embrace this liberal idea of individual responsibility. I contended that my arguments in this chapter shows that they are misguided in doing so. I thus shown that the liberal idea of individual responsibility is not a suitable normative foundation for socialism. This is another goal that I wish I have achieved in chapter 2.

This investigation of the liberal idea of individual responsibility in chapter 2 has yet another contribution: that is, if we consider freedom of choice as important to people, it is only to the extent that people are provided with valuable alternatives to choose from. The provision of these alternatives can be supported by the state provision of public goods; and importantly, these alternatives are valuable because they can be shown, with good reasons, to contribute to human goods. I argued that these insights make so much sense to us, as they are deeply embedded in many important practices of social democracy. Yet the liberal idea of individual responsibility cannot plausibly account for those insights. It follows that if socialism can be constructed in a form that is compelling, then it must be able to account for them. In chapter 3, I thus argued that the normative foundation for a political theory of socialism can plausibly incorporate these insights.

In chapter 3, I argued that that the fundamental insight in the tradition of socialist thought is that one's well-being hinges on whether one can self-realize in productive work. Socialism considers a capitalist market economy to be ethically objectionable, because workers work
largely for wages, placing their labor-power under the hierarchical control of the capitalists to secure their subsistence, rather than freely opting for productive work that realizes their ability. For socialism, not only should productive work be driven by one's interest in self-realization; we can self-realize through productive work only if our production also contributes to others' flourishing. I argued in chapter 3 that the interpretation of socialism defended here has an uncontroversial socialist pedigree, for it is built on a reading of three important Marxists’ works, namely György Lukács, György Márkus and Karl Korsch. I attempted to show that their thoughts can be structured and connected as consisting of three components: (a) an ethical critique of capitalism that is built on a reading of Lukács’s idea of reification, to be grounded in (b) an understanding of human essential power that is built on Márkus’s reconstruction of Marx’s idea of human nature, and (c) socialist political principles that are supported by them, mainly built on Korsch’s program of ‘practical socialism’.

Based on this interpretation of the normative foundation of socialism, I argued that socialism as a normative political theory should be understood as consisting of a set of four political principles: (1) freedom of occupation, (2) worker's democratic enterprises, (3) satisfaction of genuine needs that pass the public deliberative assessment, (4) democratic coordination of social production. These principles, I argued, jointly realize the motivation and the effect of the famous socialist slogan: 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!' I then further underscored that the fundamental difference between liberalism and socialism as normative political theories is that, while liberalism takes responsibility-sensitive distributive justice as normatively fundamental, socialism does not.

I argued that this contrast is endorsed by many liberals. As I briefly surveyed in chapter 3, many liberals argue that socialist political principles do not take seriously the idea of individual responsibility. For socialism bans wage labor even if it is contracted freely with people's fair
shares of resources. Liberals, and socialists inspired by them, also argue that socialism cannot determine what needs are to be satisfied without an account of a fair share of resources. I argued that socialism has good grounds to rebut these objections. It is because (i) the value of choices as such do not track the value of freedom unless the options are themselves meaningful, and there are no good reasons to think that being forced by economic necessity of subsistence to put one's labor-power under others' control (i.e. wage-labor) is meaningful; and (ii) what matters to people's well-being, and therefore determines one's entitlement to resources, is whether those satiable genuine needs that are essential to well-being are satisfied, but not whether people have equal or fair shares of resources as such. It shows how the two major features of socialism combined, namely the emphasis on the self-realization in productive work and the satisfaction of the genuine objective needs, mark the crucial difference that distinguishes the ethical outlook of socialism from liberalism.

I also argued that my formulation here may suggest an illuminating unified framework to understand why Marx may at time seem to be ambivalent in considering whether capitalism is unjust. For to the extent that justice is understood broadly as normative claims that specify people's obligation and entitlement, one can of course say that Marx condemns capitalism as unjust for not giving everyone their dues. But if my discussion above is plausible, one can also say that capitalism is wasteful (to the extent that the rich capitalists accumulate more than their needs require) and alienating (most of the wage laborers are driven by economic necessity of subsistence, under hierarchical control in the workplace and deprived of human needs). They are referring essentially to the same thing. It seems to be nothing more than a verbal question to figure out which one the best term is. On the other hand, if justice is understood narrowly as ensuring people's free use of their fair (equal) shares of resources, i.e. as the liberal idea of individual responsibility, then for socialism it simply misses the point. What is important is not to provide everyone with an equal share in some sense and let one freely use or trade whatever
one is entitled to; rather, some options, like wage labor and slavery, are simply not worth choosing; and it is the urgency and satisfaction of genuine needs, properly understood, not equal shares, that should determine what and how much one is entitled to have.

But this normative political theory of socialism is not without shortfalls and limitations. Chapter 4 argued that there is indeed an important defect in the normative political theory of socialism I so far explored. It is that the commitments to self-realization in work and satisfaction of people’s justified genuine needs can conflict with each other, and socialism does not have theoretical resources to adjudicate the conflict. When the two commitments crash, socialists will be left disoriented. This problem is revealed by what I called the socialist dilemma. The dilemma is this. If socialism gives higher normative priority to the satisfaction of freedom of occupation, then it must allow some justified genuine needs of people to be let down. For although people’s self-realization in productive work can be achieved by freely choosing to work for serving other people’s justified genuine needs, there is no guarantee that all other people’s justified genuine needs can be served. Nor is it true that people’s productive work must always serve the most urgent needs of other people. But if socialism gives higher priority to the satisfaction of people’s genuine justified needs, or that the more urgent needs should be served before less urgent ones, then some must be forced to work for those needs. Their freedom of occupation would then be denied.

In chapter 4, after explicating the socialist dilemma, I surveyed two proposals that attempt to argue that satisfaction of justified genuine needs can rightly constrain freedom of occupation, in ways that are compatible with people’s self-realization in productive work. I argued that they fail, but they also contain two instructive insights that socialism should take seriously. First, it is that freedom of occupation alone is insufficient for institutionalizing self-realization in productive work, for self-realization in work is sensitive not only to people’s choices but also
to objective reasons, i.e. what goods can serve others’ objective well-being. Furthermore, workplace democracy contributes to people’s self-realization in productive work independently of the existence of freedom of occupation. These two insights share a common root: they are supported by the fact that people’s exercise of agency in work is constitutive to self-realization in productive work. People’s exercise of agency in work is sensitive to good motivating reasons and enhanced by democratic cooperation. This richer description of the normative structure of people’s self-realization in productive work was revealed by the critical engagement of the two proposals that aspire to resolve the socialist dilemma.

My second task in chapter 4 is to explore what guiding institutional principles are at the disposal of the state if it wishes to institutionalize socialism. Given the socialist normative foundation and its political principles, what policies and institutions are permissible for socialism? The discussion of the socialist dilemma and the proposals that aspire to resolve it serve as springboard for this investigation. For the socialist dilemma reveals that socialist political principles can yield conflicting demands. A pressing question then follows: what can the socialist state do to address this? What institutional principles are available to its hand, in crafting institutions and relevant policies?

I argued that a way out for the socialist dilemma is to minimize the instances that the unwilling talented (and, indeed, also the not-so-talented) are forced to serve people’s more urgent needs. A prevailing socialist ethos, supported by civic education, can contribute to induce more people to consider shaping their aspirations to serve others’ most dire needs. In addition, in this chapter I defended the institutional principle of compensation. For those who are conscripted to serve the dire and justified needs, the state should provide them additional access to advantages, such as resources, services, opportunities or other non-material privileges, as incentives. Such provision should be funded by taxing people’s income in an equal proportion,
so that everyone bears and shares the burdens equally. In the chapter I argued that this principle has many problems, yet it sufficiently attenuates the tension between the policy requirements of freedom of occupation and the satisfaction of people’s justified genuine needs. It is also consistent with other socialist principles.

With these considerations in hand, we are now much well-equipped with normative guidance on what institutions and policy measures are compatible with socialism. Therefore, in chapter 5, I described and defended, in inevitably sketchy form, the basic institutional outline of a socialist political economy that fits with the socialist principles and socialist ideal I defended in the previous chapters. This socialist political economy has several components. First, I argued that market can be consistent with socialist principles, provided it is a qualified egalitarian market. The socialist qualified egalitarian market is a market embedded in a background of relatively equal income or buying power for everyone, with wide-range of freely accessible public goods and ample opportunities for vocational training provided by the democratic state or by public means. I argued that this qualified egalitarian market best responds to the genuine objective needs of the people, given a plausible understanding of the dynamic nature of people’s conception of flourishing life.

I then argued that another two pillars of a political economy that fits with the socialist principles are the workplace democratic industrial regime and democratic finance. The workplace democratic industrial regime maximizes workers’ democratic participation to enterprises, only under the constraints of the control of key industries by the democratic state and providing spaces for individuals’ free initiatives. To the extent that private enterprises cannot be eliminated, their capital size would be severely restricted. The democratic finance supports the workplace democratic industrial regime. The idea of democratic finance is that the means of productions, or to be more precise the means of financial investment, are not under
the centralized control of a bureaucratic state. Rather, various types of property ownerships are allowed, and subjected to the regulations imposed by the socialist state. Importantly and specifically, *non-profit lending institutions* will be encouraged and supported, so that via their more community-oriented lending policies, businesses that oriented towards providing public goods, towards underfunded services or goods for genuine objective needs, or towards other desirable social goals, can be facilitated.

I then contrasted this socialist political economy with three other egalitarian or socialist oriented proposals. *Against proposals of Universal Basic Income*, I argued that the socialist political economy can better ensure and maximize workers’ control to the workplace, and thus maximizes people’s opportunity of self-realization in productive work. *Against Joseph Carens’s proposal* that emphasizes the need of *a socialist duty to contribute* for a socialist economy to provide sufficiently for people’s needs, I argued that in a socialist political economy people are motivated to provide for others’ *justified* needs, that is, needs that are genuine and supported by objective reasons, by their *motivation for self-realization in productive work*, as well as incentives allowed by the institutional principle of compensation. A socialist duty to contribution, i.e. to maximize one’s productive contribution to the society, is *not* needed. Lastly, *against David Miller’s argument that market socialism should be supported by nationalism*, I argued that *a socialist political economy supported by socialist principles does not require nationalism as an additional source of motivation for supporting redistribution*. I also argued that nationalism is an inadequate approximation of the community that individuals should care about. For the fact of globalization make individuals to be typically embedded in multiple layers of social network and practices, identifying different communities in different degrees at the same time. This is especially true in the sphere of productive work, due to the emergence of the capitalist world market, which, incidentally, Marx had predicted.
Yet, I concluded the chapter with an acknowledgment of Carens’s and Miller’s proposals as *compelling, though non-socialist*: their proposals can indeed be considered as solutions to a concern that has its root in the socialist dilemma, which I revealed in chapter 4. The socialist dilemma still lurks behind socialism even in the institutional level. It can still render socialism unable to commit to a theoretical guarantee that all important needs of people can find principled ways to be satisfied. Although it is not true that in a liberal capitalist regime all important need of people can be satisfied, it still shows the limits of even a rather compelling construction of the normative foundation of socialism. Carens’s and Miller’s solutions may be normatively more desirable than the one I suggested for the socialist political economy I defended here, yet, I argued, those solutions are not rest on a proper socialist normative foundation. Therefore, I contended that, in chapter 5, I provided an adequate analysis of, first, the institutional outline of a socialist political economy that realizes the socialist political principles, and second, the limits of a compelling interpretation of the normative foundation of socialism to the justification of socialist institutions.

The conclusion I reached in this study so far can be put in another way. With reference to the criteria I outlined in Introduction, the normative political theory of socialism I explored here is *attractive and coherent*, thus *compelling* enough (Chapter 2 and 3); yet two of its important elements could *conflict* with each other, in the sense that there are no theoretical resources internal to socialism that can resolve the conflict once it arises (Chapter 4). This in turn undermines the *feasibility* of socialism, in the sense that the institutional coherence of a socialist political economy is inadequate, especially when it is compared with David Miller’s and Joseph Carens’s similarly egalitarian though non-socialist proposals (Chapter 5).
III. Why Socialism

This study, as it unfolds in previous chapters, sidesteps many prevailing theoretical positions in the literature of political philosophy and political theory. What are the relevance of the discussions and arguments in this study to those positions? Where can those discussions and arguments be positioned in the map of academic literature? This section first underscores these connections. One question naturally follows: why not embedding the normative political theory of socialism I explored in this study into some of these positions, given their affinities? Why not framing socialism into one or more of these families? Part A of this section is devoted to a discussion of my answers to these questions. Part B further underscores the distinctiveness of my approach of justifying socialism by appealing to well-being. I compare it with two recent important alternative justification to socialism, namely justifying socialism by Rawlsian considerations, and justifying socialism social-theoretically, by grounding it in a theory of historical tendency of expanding inclusion in human community.

A. IS SOCIALISM NORMATIVELY SUI GENERIS?

One might argue that my arguments against liberalism in chapter 2 mistakenly identify liberalism with luck egalitarianism, or at any rate to assume that liberalism can only be interpreted as distributive egalitarianism, thus neglecting the fact that many liberals are indeed relational egalitarians. Relational egalitarians do not take the distribution of resources, and the consequential-sensitivity to choices as of primary normative commitments; rather their fundamental commitment is to ‘a kind of social relation between persons—an equality of authority, status, or standing’, that ‘justice requires the establishment of a society of equals’.

The normative foundation of socialism that I defended here seems to be very similar to this

position: for, in chapter 3, I argued that the socialist ideal of non-alienated society requires the establishment of a deliberative community of equals, that citizens can achieve fusion of horizons as in what productions are valuable. One might then wonder, is the difference as I construe here between liberalism and socialism ultimately just a disguised form of the difference between luck (distributive) egalitarianism and relational egalitarianism?

But this picture is further complicated by the fact that, in endorsing the central role of well-being in normative political theory and arguing that self-realization in productive work as central to people’s well-being, I thereby was defending perfectionism of sorts (See Introduction). In chapter 3, I also endorsed a list of central capabilities of human life as a plausible approximation of what are central to flourishing life or well-being, thus it seems that socialism is also a version of capability approach to political theory. Yet I also argued that, against the liberal idea of individual responsibility, socialism cares about the satisfaction of genuine objective needs (as approximated by the central capabilities of human life), in a way that those with less urgent needs would have lower priority to be satisfied. I argued that a plausible interpretation of the socialist critique of capitalism as alienated is that the benefit of social development cannot be considered as benefiting the least advantaged individuals in a society. Thus, it might seem that the socialism I am defending here is indeed just a version of prioritarianism. Yet I also argued that most needs that are central to human well-being are satiable, that socialists do not need to concern the satisfaction of people’s needs if the satisfaction of which have already reached certain point. In this sense, in endorsing a threshold for our normative concerns, the socialist theory seems to depart from the prioritarian view and comes closer to a sufficientarian view. Why, then, should my study sidestep these important theoretical positions and the related debates, but instead treat a normative political theory of

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socialism as if it is somewhat sui generis?

Here I register my two reservations about embedding a socialist political theory in one or more of these theoretical positions. First, I find these positions unrevealing for the purpose of this study. If my arguments so far are plausible, they do not explicitly or implicitly presuppose the truth of any of the positions above. For example, it may or may not be true that the contrast between liberalism and socialism as I established here can be framed as a standoff between luck egalitarianism and relational egalitarianisms. But whether this is true, the contrast I drawn, I contend, is itself significant, and have substantive implication to (at least) socialist theories. On the other hand, whether the socialist normative political theory I developed here may better be described as perfectionist, prioritarian or sufficientarian, its plausibility and difficulties remain. If anything, I believe the position I developed here might best be described as ‘relational-egalitarian-perfectionism’.

But even this characterization fails to capture the important role played by the idea of self-realization in productive work in socialism. Framing the normative political theory of socialism in these terms may help one to locate it in the map of academic literature, but none of the arguments for it depend on these theoretical positions. Therefore, it seems that it is more fruitful to focus directly on the arguments involved.

My second reason for sidestepping these philosophical positions is that framing the questions I concern here in these terms significantly dilutes their political connotations. Socialism and liberalism are political theories that still command allegiance from many, with sub-groups in both camps still contest about their institutional and policy contents. Their respective systems of concepts are still the central organizing theme of many political

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4 This is inspired by Christian Schemmel’s suggestion of ‘reciprocal-cooperation-perfectionism’, which he used to cast doubt on Andrew Lister’s formulation of the idea of reciprocity, quoted in Andrew Lister, ‘Reciprocity, Relationships and Distributive Justice’, Social Theory and Practice, 39 (2013), p. 91. My further thoughts on reciprocity can be found below, in Part B of this section, when I discuss a Rawlsian justification of socialism.
manifestos and platforms in the world.\(^5\) In this sense, socialist theories and liberal theories are politically relevant, in a way that, for example, relational egalitarianisms or sufficientarian theories are not. The latter two are *philosophical* positions, with respect to the philosophical question of what constitutes the correct grounds of people’s claim to resources. They are thus at a higher level of abstraction. Different socialist and liberal theories all contain different combinations of elements of these philosophical positions. Yet these philosophical positions as such are not political theories: they do not immediately animate the institutional and policy implications that political theories must contain. Granted, for the sake of argument, that the contrast between liberalism and socialism I described here can be framed in terms of, say, a standoff between relational and distributive egalitarians (I argued that it cannot). It seems that the institutional and policy implications of the discussions in this study can still be more explicitly shown by underscoring their bearings to socialist and liberal theories.

**B. SHOULD SOCIALISM BE JUSTIFIED BY INDIVIDUAL WELL-BEING?**

Another distinctive feature of the normative political theory of socialism I explored in this study is the idea that the most compelling normative foundation of socialism is a conception of individual well-being. This is an unusual position within the family of socialist theories and proposals, at least as far as contemporary ones are concern. Leading analytical Marxists like G. A. Cohen and John Roemer, for example, as I surveyed in the Introduction, sought to ground socialism in an account of egalitarian distributive justice. They do not try to justify socialism by appealing to the flourishing life socialism might lead individuals to. In my arguments in previous chapters, summarized in section II, I hope I have already shown why the structure of justification for socialism I explored in this study is different from theirs, any why it is also

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better than theirs.

In the remains of this section, I compare it with another two important, recently developed approaches to justify socialism, namely the Rawlsian justification of (liberal) socialism as political conception and the social-theoretical justification of socialism by Axel Honneth. My ambition here is modest. The comparisons to be drawn serve to highlight what I take be the merit, or improvement, of the justification I explored in this study as compared to them; I do not wish to argue that those justifications are misguided, nor do I attempt to undertake a detailed analysis of them. I argue, rather, that the merit or improvement of the justification I explored here is to take the motivation or the motivating reasons for socialism more seriously; this is precisely the merits of grounding socialism in the idea of self-realization in productive work.

I briefly discussed why a Rawlsian justification of liberalism cannot plausibly do away the problematic liberal idea of individual responsibility, in chapter 2. I did not consider there whether Rawls’s arguments themselves are compelling, and whether they can be considered as good arguments for a more socialist-oriented liberal regime. There is indeed a Rawlsian approach to justify socialism available in the literature of political theory and political philosophy. The Rawlsian justification of socialism can be traced to the later works of Rawls himself. Though widely considered as one of the most important twentieth century liberal philosophers and defenders of welfare state capitalism, in the revised edition of *A Theory of Justice* Rawls declared that

‘[t]o see the full force of the difference principle it should be taken in the context of property-owning democracy (or of a liberal socialist regime) and not a welfare state: it is a principle of reciprocity, or mutuality, for society seen as a fair system of cooperation among free and equal citizens from one generation to the next’.  

Later, in *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement*, Rawls claimed more strongly that it is

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important to distinguish ‘a property-owning democracy, which realizes all the main political values expressed by the two principles of justice, and a capitalist welfare state, which does not’.\textsuperscript{7} He then devoted a considerable space of the work to outline the basic institutions of the property-owning democracy;\textsuperscript{8} and, crucially for our purpose here, he further claimed that in terms of realizing his two principles of justice, ‘we need not decide between a property-owning democracy and a liberal socialist regime’, as both are conceived as doing equally good in ideal descriptions of institutions in terms of satisfying his two principles of justice.\textsuperscript{9}

What exactly is the liberal socialist regime that Rawls had in mind? Rawls’s paradigmatic characterization of a liberal socialist regime, as widely shared by many other theorists, consists of the following features: (i) means of production owned by society; (ii) firms direction and management is elected by, if not directly in the hands of, its own workforce; (iii) free and workable competitive market with freedom of occupation guaranteed; and (iv) a constitutional democracy with the priority of civil and political rights protected.\textsuperscript{10} If we follow this characterization, the socialist political economy I explored in this study might also well be regarded as a version of the liberal socialist regime.

Rawls did not work out the specific arguments from Rawlsian premises to liberal socialist regime. Recently, there are several important works that try to develop those arguments, or to use the Rawlsian arguments to justify something very close to what may reasonably be called a liberal socialist regime.\textsuperscript{11} Although their specific arguments differ, the central organizing idea

\textsuperscript{8} See ibid. pp. 135-140, 148-152, 158-162, 176-179.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid. pp. 138-139.
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid. p. 138.
of their arguments is the Rawlsian conception of reciprocity; following Samuel Freeman’s use, I shall call it ‘democratic reciprocity’. What is the content of democratic reciprocity? In Rawls’s own terms, democratic reciprocity is indeed closely resembled his principle of fraternity, which I briefly discussed in chapter 2:

‘a deeper idea of reciprocity… is that social institutions are not to take advantage of contingencies of native endowment, or of initial position, or of good or bad luck over the course of life, except in ways that benefit everyone, including the least favored.’

For example, Freeman himself uses democratic reciprocity as the central idea to interpret Rawls’s principle of fair equality of opportunity, and in turn uses this interpretation to justify workplace democracy. Freeman argues that the principle of fair equality of opportunity should not be interpreted as a meritocratic social system that rewards talents, that justice should allow ‘to leave the less fortunate behind’ if they lose out in competition; rather, it means to ensure the conditions for even the least advantaged to have greatest possible opportunity to fully develop their capacities. He therefore argues that the principle, understood in the context of democratic reciprocity, ‘requires ongoing opportunities for citizens to exercise economic powers and some degree of freedom and control in their work, thereby assuming a degree of initiative and responsibility’. Workplace democracy, Freeman thus contends, should be included in the Rawlsian package of property-owning democracy.

William Edmundson, to take another important example, argues that Rawls should have favored liberal socialist regime over property-owning democracy, because ‘constitutional entrenched joint ownership of the major means of production’ by the state on behalf of the

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13 Rawls, Restatement 124; cf. A Theory of Justice, pp. 87, 90, 156.
15 Ibid. p. 32.
16 Ibid. pp. 32-33.
public better express reciprocity. For it clearly shows to the public that everyone has equally free access to the control of major productive facilities (via, primarily though not exclusively, democratic elections of principal officials and legislators), and the distribution of wealth thus produced would be regulated by clear public rules. In his important works on property-owning democracy, Martin O’Neill also argues that the most justifiable version of property-owning democracy should be supported by a ‘socialist state’, where important capitals are collectively and democratically owned, since this best realizes the difference principle, which embodies the Rawlsian idea of reciprocity.

I argued in chapter 2 that, whether it is called fraternity or democratic reciprocity, Rawls’s formulation smuggles an under-appreciated communitarian element in an otherwise liberal theory. Now, the question that concerns us here is a different one: whether it should be considered as liberal or not, is it a compelling normative foundation for a liberal socialist regime, which the socialist political economy I explored here can be counted as a version of? More specifically, is it a better candidate for the normative foundation of socialism, than the idea of self-realization in productive work? I will not try to set up a thorough comparison here. I only pinpoint one advantage I think the structure of justification I adopted in this study has over democratic reciprocity in supporting liberal socialist regimes: namely, that it better explains the motivation or reasons for people to accept the justification.

Rawls, as well as the theorists I cited so far, seems to assume that people are already engaged in a social cooperation between free and equal citizens that benefits everyone and be found most beneficial by the least advantaged; or, they would assume that at least people would

17 Edmundson, John Rawls: Reticent Socialist, p. 152.
20 Though I think this is an interesting question for further research.
have sufficiently good reasons to engage in such cooperation.\textsuperscript{21} They did not argue for this assumption. But such a structure of social cooperation is but one plausible form of social cooperation. Why should we assume people already accepted (or had good reasons to accept) it? And why should we lay the normative foundation of a political theory on the contingent acceptance of such structure of social cooperation?\textsuperscript{22}

I indeed find democratic reciprocity to be an appealing normative foundation of socialism; but I think the idea of self-realization in productive work and the accompanied conceptual framework I developed in chapter 3 supply compelling answers to these questions, while those Rawlsian theorists invoking democratic reciprocity evade them. In chapter 3, to reiterate, I argued that people in a socialist ideal society care the well-being of each other because they see each other as civic friends. I also argued that people have an important interest to have their productive work recognized—being considered as valuable—by those they think matter or are significant to them. (Civic) friendship as an egalitarian relationship, I also argued, provided a model for a deliberative and decision-making framework that is suitable for non-alienated production, namely the fusion of horizons. In a socialist ideal society, people should be able to see themselves as equal authors of an integrated framework of valuation. Only then people would have their interest in self-realization in productive work fulfilled, when their productive work is socially recognized, i.e. recognized as serving genuine objective needs that passed the test of democratic deliberation.

This formulation of the socialist ideal is not without difficulties; as mentioned in section II, I analyzed some important ones in chapter 4. However, I contend that they make a compelling case for why people would like to engage in productive work that serves the interest

\textsuperscript{21}See Rawls, Restatement, pp. 5-8; Edmundson, John Rawls: Reticent Socialist, p. 7.
\textsuperscript{22}My argument here is inspired by, and parallel with his critique of relational egalitarians, Kok-chor Tan, ‘In Defense of Luck Egalitarianism’, Journal of Philosophy, 55 (2008), pp. 687-688.
of the others, in an egalitarian reciprocal manner. Democratic reciprocity, however, *assumes* but
never *characterizes and argues for* an account of civic friendship. This is a shortfall of
democratic reciprocity that the socialist idea of self-realization in productive work avoids.

The structure of the socialist ideal of self-realization in work is perfectionist, in the sense
that it tries to identify an element—self-realization in productive work—in people’s structure
of well-being and bases the political ideal on it. This may precisely be the move that Rawlsian
theorists invoking democratic reciprocity wish to avoid: at one point, Freeman explicitly deny
that the fair equality of opportunity understood in the context of democratic reciprocity means
to say that “meaningful work or exercising our socially productive capacities ‘in free
association with others’ are necessary to self-realization and the human good”. But then,
Rawlsian theorists arguing for socialism owe us an explanation of why democratic reciprocity
matters as a normative motivation for citizens. They simply cannot *assume* people would be
motivated by the ideal of a social cooperation between free and equal citizens.

It is for similar reasons that I find the social-theoretical justification of socialism recently
developed by Axel Honneth inadequate. Again I do not want to pursue a detailed, or even
fair, analysis to this important and interesting work. I focus rather to what I find to be his core
normative justification of socialism, namely that socialism better realizes, in our time, the ideal
of social freedom. Extracting from what was embodied in the socialist tradition, especially
Marx’s contribution, Honneth argues that there is a distinctive conception of freedom that
socialism should be grounded in: that is an ideal that people

‘not only regard cooperation in the community as a necessary condition for freedom, but also as the
sole way of exercising true freedom… Social freedom therefore means taking part in the social life of
a community whose members are so sympathetic to each other that they support the realization of each
other’s justified needs for each other’s sake’.

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23 Freeman, ‘Property-Owning Democracy’, p. 34.
25 And, again, I wish I would have the opportunity to further pursue this line of research.
One could ask, once again, why people would have an interest that motivate them to practice this ideal of social freedom? Here, interestingly and importantly, Honneth does provide an answer rather than an assumption: the acceptance of the ideal of social freedom is to be supported by what Honneth called John Dewey’s ‘Historical Experimentalism’.27 According to Honneth, Dewey proposed a historical experimentalism that suggests that the best guideline for ‘the experimental search for the most comprehensive answer to a socially problematic situation’ is ‘the removal of barriers to free communication among the members of society’.28 The epistemic advantage of pooling people’s intelligence somehow poses an ‘evolutionary force’ to society for expanding the circle of social communication, so that making ‘every group excluded from interaction [eventually seeking] to be included’ a ‘historical tendency’.29 He proposes that we should understand the class struggles of labor movement in the socialist tradition as a form of struggle for inclusion of an excluded group.30 He thinks this is markedly different from ‘presenting socialism as purely normative alternative to liberal theories of justice’.31 I therefore called it a social-theoretical approach for justifying socialism.

Like the Rawlsian approach to justify liberal socialist regime, Honneth’s social theoretical approach sought to justify socialism without an appeal to people’s well-being. But instead of providing a reason for people to be motivated for socialism, he proposes that the social progress towards the ideal of social freedom is a historical or evolutionary tendency. Yet, granted for the sake of argument that Dewey’s historical experimentalism is empirically plausible, one could still wonder why an individual would have an interest in social progress, the benefit to whom is so uncertain. As I mentioned in chapter 3, it is indeed a classical Marxist insight that social development does not necessary contribute to individual development: capitalism, for instance,

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27 Ibid. p. 51.
28 Ibid. pp. 60-61.
29 Ibid. pp. 60-62.
31 Ibid. pp. 52-53.
brings social development at the cost of the detriment of the welfare of the proletariats. The truth of the consequence that more inclusive social communication leads to social development and benefits the least advantaged does not entail or presupposes individuals are to be motivated by precisely that. The latter is not necessarily the cause of the former. For individuals are not certain whether, and to what extent, they will be benefited by the social development, and whether the benefits, if any, outweigh their personal cost in bringing in a more inclusive social communication. Therefore, like the Rawlsian socialist theorists, Honneth also owes us an answer as why individuals would have an interest in the ideal of social freedom, and thus support socialism. And, like my reply to the Rawlsian socialist theorists, I contend that the idea of self-realization in productive work supplies a better explanation of the motivations or reasons for individuals to prefer socialism.

Again, I wish to emphasize that the comparisons of the normative political theory of socialism I explored in this study with the Rawlsian and social-theoretical justifications of socialism are selective and partial. It probably does not do justice to both approaches, and I do not claim that the two approaches are therefore misguided. The exploration of their advantages and difficulties deserves more discussions than what I could provide here. And I acknowledge that their arguments for socialism are insightful and compelling, in ways the kind of justification I explored in this study is not. I set up the comparisons here, in this concluding chapter, merely for underscoring what could be considered the merit of the structure of justification of socialism I explored in this study.

IV. Socialism and the Quality of Work

I would like to underscore one final contribution I believe my study might make. I hope my study contributes to draw a closer connection between socialism and a policy commitment to improve people’s quality of work. Strange enough, the importance of the quality of work to
people’s life did not receive much theoretical attentions from contemporary socialists; indeed, the discussion of which is very inadequate in the literature of political theory and political philosophy in general, too.\textsuperscript{32} In this study, I tried to argue that people have an important interest to have meaningful and quality productive work. I hope I also showed that why it takes structural reform of the society to facilitate people’s self-realization in productive work, which involves much institution and policy building, and why socialists have good reasons to commit to such a program of structural reform. I think socialism or socialist political theory would fare better if it follows my suggestion in this study, that is, to put self-realization in productive work as its normative foundation, and concentrate more theoretical energy to explore its structure, content and policy and institutional implications. For then, I argue, socialism can be a normative political theory that helps explaining people’s major life concern in contemporary capitalist market society, and thus also contributes to the articulation of a more relevant political imagination to our future.

Let me explain a bit. A defining feature of the ‘neo-liberal’ capitalist market society we have now is the overwhelming job flexibility and uncertainty created by extreme marketization of the labor process as well as the whole society.\textsuperscript{33} On the one hand, public services and social securities are increasing privatized, and thus are put into the logic of market demand and supply. Instead of focusing on serving people’s needs in the society, as privatized entities they need to make the generation of enough profit for themselves as the primary goal. It follows that a general market crisis, such as the one we have from 2008 onwards, would inevitably let down the public goods that are supposed to serve people’s needs; indeed, even the costs of these

\textsuperscript{32} For an account of such lack of attention, and an instructive contribution to the relevance of the quality of work to political theory, see Anca Gheaus & Lisa Herzog, ‘The Good of Work (Other than Money!)’, \textit{Journal of Social Philosophy}, 47 (2016), pp. 70-89.

market losses are to be socialized to the public.³⁴

On the other hand, since the last two decades of the twentieth century, the power of union was seriously undermined, accompanied by an expansion of rights of choices of individual employees.³⁵ A more flexible labor market means that individuals are compelled to ‘cultivate the spirit of self-entrepreneurialism and adaptation to the demands of employers and the market to remain employable’.³⁶ Yet the benefit of flexibility typically are only accessible for those who have more marketable talents (and, of course, to the capitalists). The drawback of flexibility, i.e. the risks and insecurities due to more flexible labor contract and more severe market competition, however, hit hard mainly to those who have less marketable talents and capitals.³⁷ A viable socialist political theory thus should be able to speak to such a situation: it should be able to explain the normative concern of uncertainty and anxiety in the labor market, and proposes the direction of structural reforms to address the concern. My study of the normative foundation of socialism as self-realization in productive work here, I hope, can contribute at least to the beginning to achieve this.

Focusing on the normative problem brought by a neo-liberal capitalist labor market also helps socialism to draw a sharper distinction against liberalism, or at least against the kind of liberalism that socialists should have good reasons to part company. If my argument in this study, especial chapter 2, is plausible, then liberalism, or at least the liberal idea of individual responsibility, has not much to say about this emergent market society, as Michael Sandel nicely coins it.³⁸ For the institution of market is deemed by the liberal idea of individual responsibility as constitutive to treat people as free and equal. The only constraint it puts on market is that the market should be operated against a background of fair distribution of resources and

³⁶ Ibid. 98-99.
³⁷ Ibid. 100; Azmanova, “Crisis? Capitalism is Doing Very Well”, 360-361.
opportunities. As we have already seen, this makes the liberal idea of individual responsibility compatible with the commodification of labor-power in capitalism. Indeed, the liberal idea of individual responsibility is *in principle* compatible with an extremely marketized society, however risky and insecure it is to people, provided that people’s resources and opportunity are distributed fairly; or, to put it bluntly, provided that people are put into equally risky conditions. Liberals can of course call for a more egalitarian distribution of resources and opportunities among people. Yet, they have no good, principled reasons to object this very *economic structure* of the capitalist market society that creates much flexibility and uncertainties to people.

In contrast, if, following my suggestion in this study, socialism would have a commitment to self-realization in productive work and the satisfaction of genuine objective needs, then socialist political theory would be more relevant to the major life concern of people in such a situation than liberalism. For socialism would then call for a radical de-commodification of the society. The productions of goods and services are to be coordinated in a way that ensures people’s genuine objective needs can be served. In a socialist political economy that commits to the self-realization in productive work, as I have argued in chapters 4 and 5, the labor-process would also be protected from extreme market competition. People can exercise their agency in work by both democratic participation in the workplace and public deliberation in the society-wide level to determine what needs of people are justified to be served. The socialist political principles thus call for a fundamental reconstitution of the economic structure that tackle head-on the problem of extreme marketization and job insecurities. All these could contribute to socialism much more relevant to people’s major life concern in our time than liberalism.

Of course, a mere refocusing of normative concern to the importance of the quality of work, though a good beginning, is not enough for a compelling and viable socialist political theory for our time. More concrete policy and institutional designs are needed. This is not the
place to discuss the many policy and institutional questions pursuing the socialist goal in detail, for that involves much more empirical research than is warranted in this mainly theoretical study. I did discuss some of them in a sketchy form in chapter 5. Here, in closing, I would like to mention a program that socialists who are convinced by my arguments in this study may support, as it points to a similar direction with the normative socialist political theory I explored here. This is to illustrate more vividly that the theoretical discussions in this study are relevant to real world policy and institutional questions. For to the extent that this program might be considered as a realistic and practical program, I argue that, equally, socialism is to that extent not too utopian to make concrete policy recommendations.

In a recent essay, Gene Sperling, an important former policy-maker in the U.S., provides a convincing case that what he called ‘economic dignity’ should be the ultimate normative goal that economic policy reform should aim to achieve.\(^\text{39}\) It means that the labor process should be treated and organized with economic dignity, so that (1) the return to workers’ productive contribution should be able to support their lives and the lives or those who they care about, e.g. their families; (2) that workers should be provided with ample opportunities to exercise their potential in their labor contribution to the economy; and (3) that the workplace and the labor process should be free from domination and humiliation.\(^\text{40}\) He argues that we therefore should replace GDP as the measurement of economic growth with an index on human well-being, or an ‘Economic Dignity Index’ that measure the progress of the three aspects listed above.\(^\text{41}\) As for policy recommendations, he argues that a focus on economic dignity would imply having a full employment monetary and fiscal policy to tighten the labor market, wider degree of grassroots laboratory-of-democracy approach to explore the possibility of a domination-free workplace, and comprehensive skills and higher-education agenda that provide training and re-


\(^{40}\) Ibid. sec. I.

\(^{41}\) Ibid. sec. II.
training to people.\textsuperscript{42}

We can see that these normative concerns are very similar to what I argued in this study that socialism should attend to. More importantly, the policy recommendations Sperling suggested resembles much of the socialist political economy I explored in this study. The crucial difference being that he stops short of recommending full workplace democracy in enterprises, which is a core normative concern of socialism, and that a system of democratic finance consisting of socially and publicly owned wealth for investments, which I argued is importantly instrumental to a socialist political economy, is not discussed at all. Comparing Sperling’s proposal and the socialist political economy, one may question how can Sperling guarantee the social programs he suggested be supported by enough resources and wealth, if the control of those wealth and resources remain largely in the private hands of the capitalists.

Sperling, of course, does not proceed on a socialist ideal to make these suggestions, and it is therefore quite understandable that he did not touch the issue of the control of the means of production or wealth. However, the important point I wish to highlight here is this: if the arguments in this study is convincing, Sperling’s is a set of policy agendas that socialists should have good reasons to support, even if it comes short of a socialist ideal, as it shared much of the normative concerns with socialism. The policy recommendations of them are also close enough to regard each other ally. Therefore, to the extent that Sperling’s program makes practical sense, socialism, as least in the form I explored in this study, is equally realistic, or at least non-utopian.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid. sec. III.


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