

# Socialism

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# Last Week

- **Libertarianism:**
  - An action is morally permitted iff it does not infringe the rights of others
  - A state morally is not permitted to coerce its citizens to pay taxes beyond those necessary to punish the coercion (police force, etc)
  - **Entitlement Theory:** any exchange of property is legitimate as long it traces back to prior legitimate exchanges until the initial exchange.
- **Communism**
  - History proceeds because of class conflict
  - class conflict is struggle over control of material forces of production

# Bare Bones Definitions

- **Capitalism: private ownership of means of production**
  - Capitalists own and control means of production, and hire workers who, owning little or no means of production, sell their labor-power to some capitalist or other for a wage
  - Two: classes – capitalists and workers
- **Socialism: public ownership of means of production**
  - Every able bodied is a worker (one class) – the workers own and control the means of production

# Pure and Imperfect

- **Objection against Communism:** it is 'good in theory, bad in practice'
- Neilson's Reply: Both capitalism and Communism are ideals with imperfect social implementations
- **Capitalist Ideal:** competitive capitalism
- **Practice:** monopolies, oligopolies, state intervention (corporate bailouts)
- **Socialist Ideal:** communism commune
- **Practice:** bureaucratic state socialisms; where workers aren't fully owners of the means of production, states are partly owners.

# Marx Against Capitalism

- Neilson's Case Against Capitalism expands on some of Marx and Engels criticisms of capitalism
- **Alienated Labor:** Capitalism “estranges” workers from the fruits of their labor, their working conditions, their fellow workers, themselves
  - We can't be free; we can't be our authentic self while being alienated;
- **Exploitation:** Capitalism can only thrive on the exploitation of the working class. Workers do not have control over their own labor and products of their labor, neither does equality exist.
- **Commodity Fetishism:** capitalism results in fetishized value of otherwise useless commodities and the worker is forced to buy them; forced because these values are determined by economic factors and so the worker has no choice but to follow them

# Neilson Summary

- Socialism makes **more people free** and **interferes less** than any form of capitalism
  - **Socialism**: workers are able to determine i) whether they can work; how they work; iii) on what they work; iv) the conditions that they work under (working-days); v) what is done with fruits of productions;
  - **Capitalism**: all of these are determined by owners, managers; majority of people do not get to choose; the majority are less free
  - **Objection**: workers can choose to leave working class and become a capitalist;
  - **Reply**: each worker may be able to become a capitalist; but everyone cannot be a capitalist; then there would be no workers – and capitalism cannot operate
- Society is more **democratic**
  - **Socialism**: workplace democracy possible; e.g. workers choose to liquidate company
  - **Capitalism**: workplace democracy impossible
- Society is more **moral**; Self-respect impossible in capitalist society
  - Because people lack effective control over their own lives, where there are structures of domination, where there is alienated labor, where great power differentials and indifference in wealth lead to different chances of success
  - Hard to maintain self-respect unless struggling against the system; in US this is hopeless

# Freedom

- **An autonomous person** =df someone who is able to set her ends for herself and in optimal circumstances is able to pursue those ends
- **Non-interference** =df absence of unjustified political and social interference in pursuit of one's ends
- a person is **free** =df they live an autonomous life without interference
- **Nielson Thesis:** Democratic socialism makes it possible for more people to be fully autonomous and it interferes less in our lives than any form of capitalism
  - Socialism: workers are able to determine i) whether they can work; how they work; iii) on what they work; iv) the conditions that they work under (working-days); v) what is done with fruits of productions; vi)
  - Capitalism: all determined by capitalist owners, managers; and so majority of people do not get to choose; the majority are less free

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- Objection: workers can choose to leave working class and become a capitalist;
- Reply: taken individually, each worker may be able to become a capitalist; but if many in fact tried, but, the class as a whole cannot – we cannot have capitalism without a working class and the working class is not free within the capitalist system to cease being wage laborers; we cannot all be capitalists
- Democratic socialism bring with it an industrial democracy where workers by various democratic procedures would determine how they are to work, on what they are to work, the hours of their work, under what conditions they are to work, the hours of their work
- So, considered overall, democratic socialism should allow more people to exercise their freedoms than capitalism

# Democracy

- Nielson: socialism society allows for better democracy than capitalism
- Capitalism can at best have a **political democracy**
- Socialism allows **workplace democracy**
- As long as ownership, including the ability to close the place down and liquidate the business, rests in the hands of capitalists we can have no genuine workplace democracy. Socialism, in its pure form, carries with it, in a way capitalism in any form cannot, **workplace democracy**.

# Self-Respect

- Self-respect impossible in capitalist society
  - Because people lack effective control over their own lives, where there are structures of domination, where there is alienated labor, where great power differentials and indifference in wealth lead to different chances of success
  - Difficult to maintain self-respect unless they are struggling against the system – in the US that is hopeless
- Welfare capitalism? more egregious faults fixed.; still life changes of a capitalist much greater than that of a working class