



Socialism

Introduction to Political Theory
Department of Political Economy
King's College London

PYRAMID OF CAPITALIST SYSTEM

The background of the slide features a political cartoon. At the top, a pyramid structure is supported by three pillars. On top of the pyramid sits a crown. Three soldiers in uniform stand on the pillars, holding rifles. Below the pyramid, a large crowd of people is depicted. Some are holding flags, and others are in various poses of protest or labor. The text 'WE SHOOT AT YOU' is visible in the upper right, and 'WE WORK FOR ALL' is in the lower left. At the bottom, the words 'PYRAMID of CAPITALIST SYSTEM' are written in large, bold letters.

Paper 1 – Nov 8 3 PM

1. Does the republican ideal of freedom as non-domination provide an attractive alternative to liberal freedom as non-interference?
2. Should economic inequalities and market exchanges be limited by Cohen's socialist principle of communal reciprocity?
3. Should we value political and social arrangements because they have stood the test of time?



I. Solidarity, Equality, and Democracy

II. Marx's Democratic Critique of Capitalism

III. Cohen's Egalitarian Critique of Capitalism

Solidarity, Equality, and Democracy

Liberalism: Defense of *private liberty* and the *right to be left alone*

Republicans: But what about the *common good*? About *citizenship*? About our *duties and obligations*?

Socialists: What about *capitalism*?

PYRAMID of CAPITALIST SYSTEM

Solidarity, Equality, and Democracy

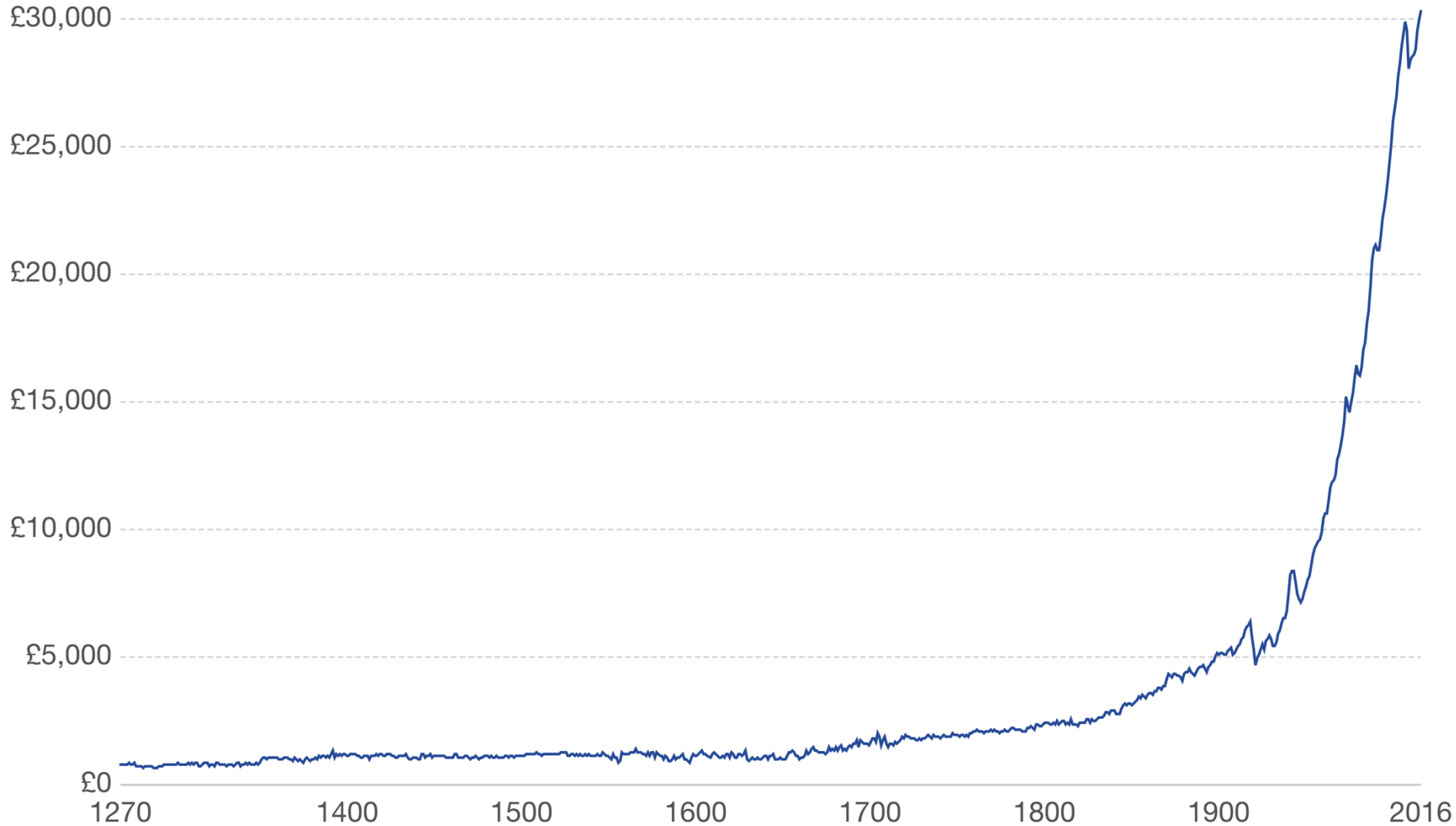
Both liberalism and republicanism fail to appreciate significant historical fact: rise of capitalism

Capitalism: Economic order where *decisions about production guided by profit* and where the *majority relies on markets to sell their labor for material sustenance*

PYRAMID of CAPITALIST SYSTEM

GDP per capita in England since 1270

Adjusted for inflation and measured in British Pounds in 2013 prices

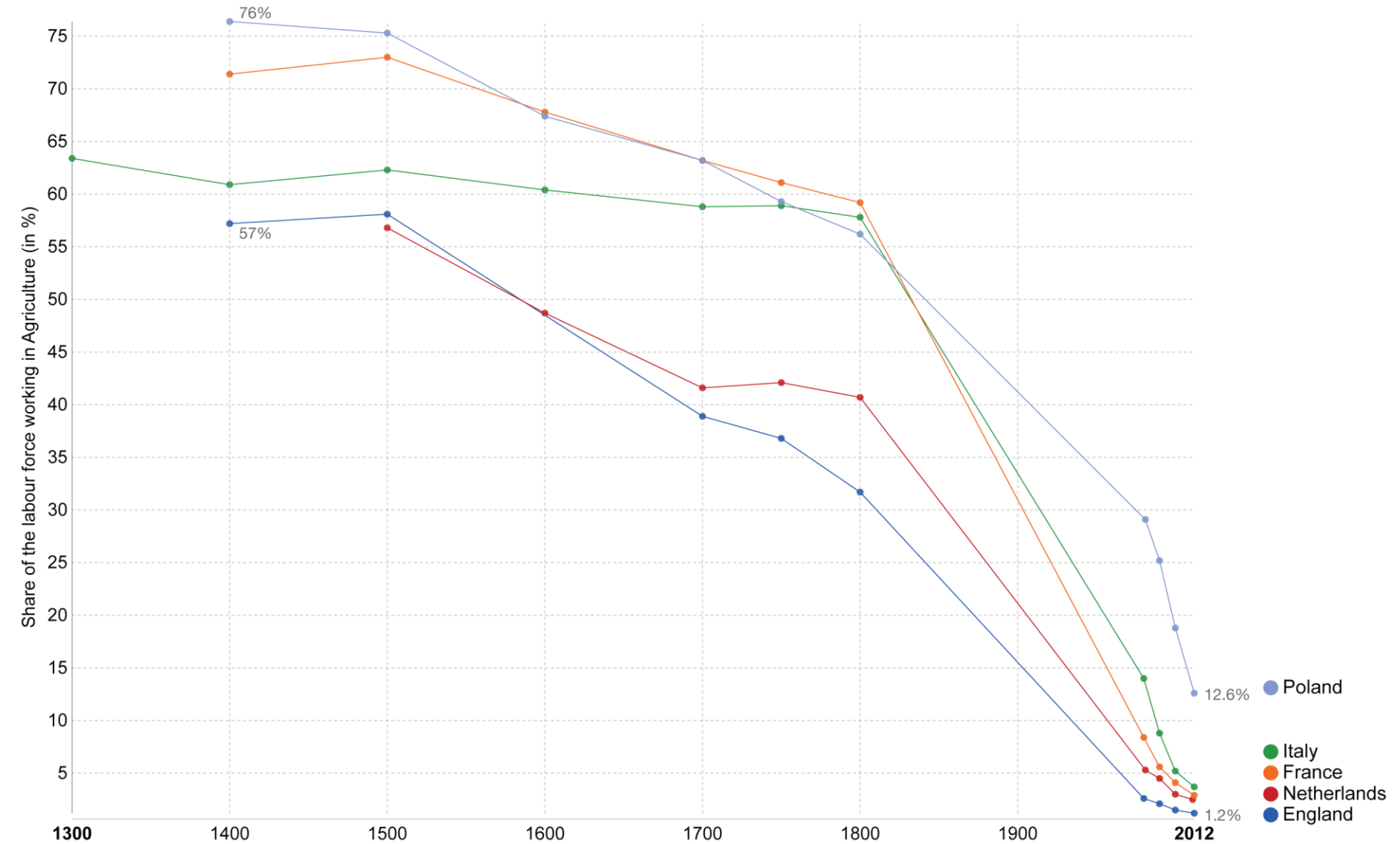


Source: GDP in England (using BoE (2017))

Note: Data refers to England until 1700 and the UK from then onwards.

OurWorldInData.org/economic-growth • CC BY-SA

Share of the labor force working in agriculture, since 1300 – By Max Roser



Data source: Pre 1800 is from Allen (2000), "Economic Structure and Agricultural Productivity in Europe, 1300-1800". Newer data from the World Bank.
 The interactive data visualization is available at OurWorldinData.org. There you find the raw data and more visualizations on this topic. Licensed under [CC-BY-NC-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/) by the author Max Roser.

Solidarity, Equality, and Democracy

Implications of Rise of Capitalism

Concentration of ownership of productive resources

Formation of classes

Politics subordinate to economics

PYRAMID of CAPITALIST SYSTEM

Solidarity, Equality, and Democracy

Two Socialist Arguments

1. Given the nature of capitalism, impossible to realize professed ideals of liberalism and republicanism

Genuine freedom, both as non-interference and non-domination, would require socialism

Solidarity, Equality, and Democracy



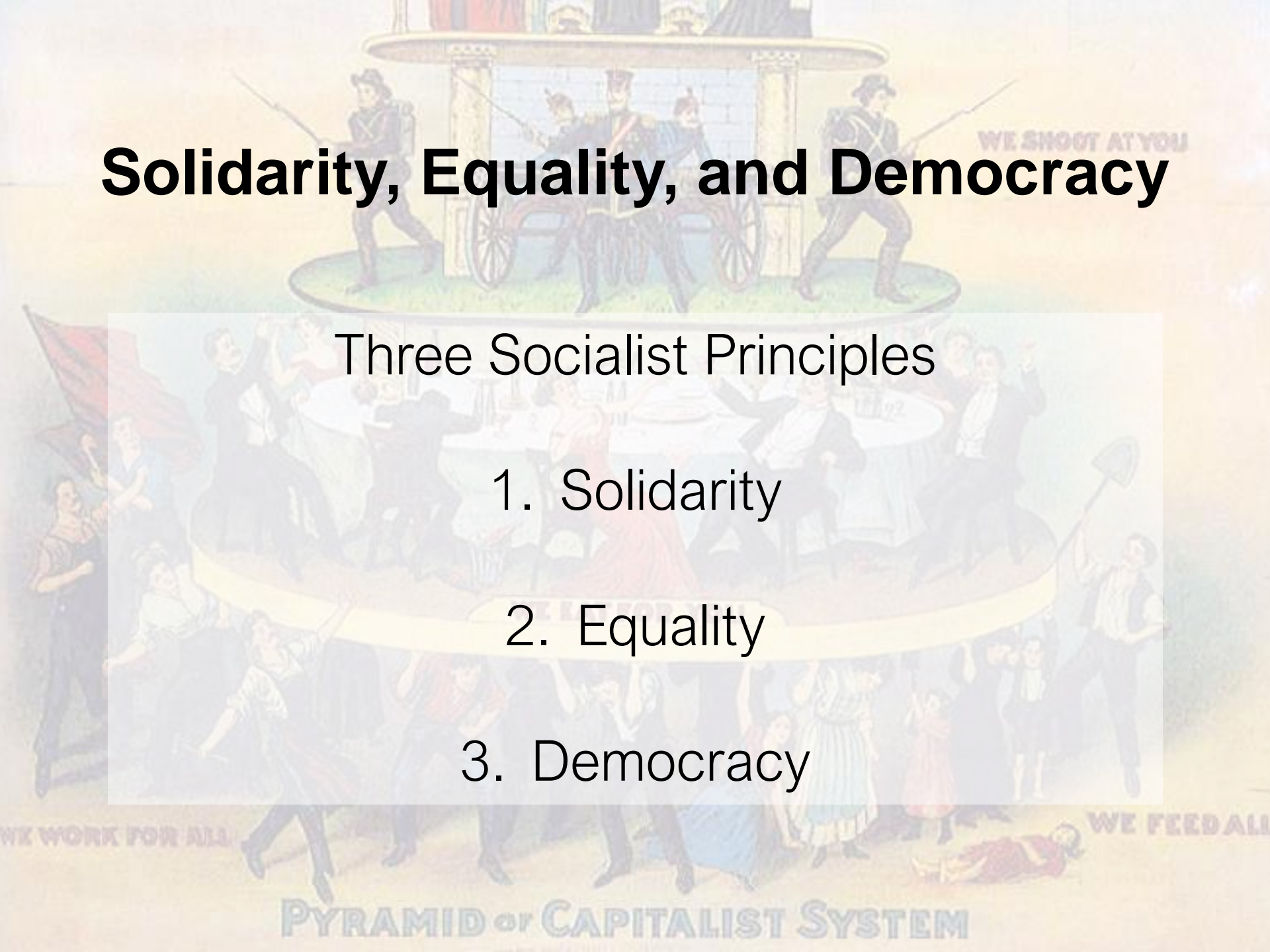
Two Socialist Arguments

2. Both liberalism and republicanism are *ideologies* that justify capitalism by focusing us on *individual freedom* at expense of *equality* and *solidarity*

Solidarity, Equality, and Democracy

Three Socialist Principles

1. Solidarity
2. Equality
3. Democracy



Solidarity, Equality, and Democracy



Three Socialist Principles

1. Solidarity

Human societies require *cooperation*,
which capitalism thwarts

Solidarity, Equality, and Democracy



Three Socialist Principles

2. Equality

Fundamental moral equality means that *work and its benefits should be equally shared by all*

Solidarity, Equality, and Democracy



Three Socialist Principles

3. Democracy

All collective decisions should be subjected to democratic procedures, including within the workplace

Solidarity, Equality, and Democracy

A political cartoon depicting the capitalist system as a pyramid. At the top, a small group of wealthy men in top hats sit on a platform. Below them, a large group of men in military uniforms stand on a circular platform, aiming rifles at the viewer. The text 'WE SHOOT AT YOU' is written above them. At the bottom, a large group of poor, starving-looking people are shown. The text 'WE FEED ALL' is written above them. The entire scene is labeled 'PYRAMID of CAPITALIST SYSTEM' at the bottom.

Some Worries About Socialism

1. Infeasible

Given *complexity* of modern societies,
need division of labor and market-based
information processing mechanisms

Solidarity, Equality, and Democracy

A political cartoon titled 'PYRAMID OF CAPITALIST SYSTEM' at the bottom. The pyramid is composed of several layers. The top layer features a small group of wealthy men in suits. The middle layers consist of a large number of men in various occupations, some holding tools or weapons. The bottom layer is a large crowd of poor-looking people, including men, women, and children. The cartoon is signed 'W. D. Howells' in the bottom right corner. There are also some text elements like 'WE SHOOT AT YOU' and 'WE FEED ALL' visible in the background.

Some Worries About Socialism

2. Human Nature

Humans are cooperative *and selfish*, and we need to assume both impulses when designing political and economic institutions

Solidarity, Equality, and Democracy

A political cartoon depicting the capitalist system as a gun turret. At the top, a gun turret with a barrel pointing downwards is mounted on a circular base. Four soldiers in military uniforms are positioned around the turret, aiming rifles. The text "WE SHOOT AT YOU" is written in the upper right corner. Below the turret, a large crowd of people is shown in various states of distress and poverty. Some are holding flags, while others are being pushed or trampled. The text "WE WORK FOR ALL" is visible on the left, and "WE FEED ALL" is on the right. At the bottom, the words "PYRAMID of CAPITALIST SYSTEM" are written in large, bold letters.

Some Worries About Socialism

3. Anti-Pluralism

Even assuming fully functioning and decentralized democracy, socialism requires *unifying economic decision* under a single political order

Marx's Critique of Capitalism

Marx's *The Communist Manifesto*

Variety of first argument – capitalism thwarts stated ideals of liberalism and republicanism

And an analysis of *how the structure of capitalism leads towards its overcoming*

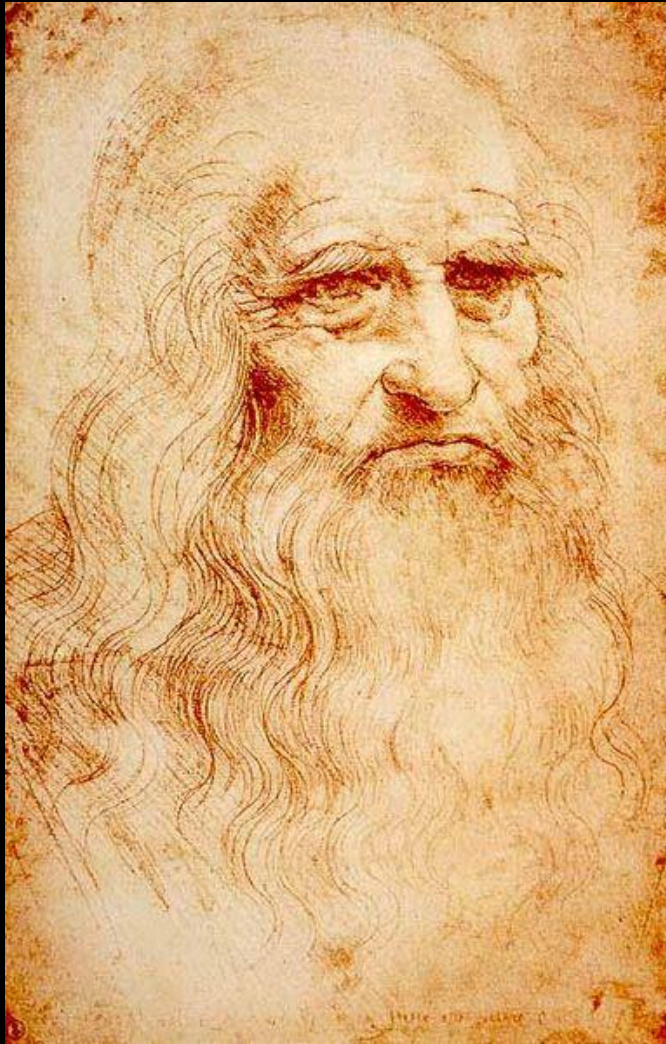
Marx's Critique of Capitalism

A faint, semi-transparent background image of a statue of Karl Marx, showing his head and shoulders, set against a light blue sky with soft white clouds.

Goal: Non-alienated labor

Translation: Labor where we
democratically control the bulk of our
activities

Move from realm of necessity to realm of
freedom



Marx's Critique of Capitalism



Philosophy of History: Is there an underlying structure and progressive direction to human history?

Marx's Answer: Yes, but requires human agency to realize the potential

Marx's Critique of Capitalism



Slave Societies → Feudalism

Feudalism → Capitalism

Capitalism → ?

Marx's Critique of Capitalism

“The bourgeois cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society....All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away...All that is solid melts into air...”

Marx's Critique of Capitalism

Simplifies all of society into two classes:
the bourgeois and the proletariat

“Society as a whole is more and more
splitting up into two great hostile camps,
into two great classes directly facing each
other.”

Marx's Critique of Capitalism

Proletariat

First time in history a class has no
“interest” in dominating any other class,
can represent general interests of society

Marx's Ideal: Free Association of Workers

Cohen's Critique of Capitalism

Why Not Socialism?

Variety of second argument

Liberal and republican views fail to sufficiently value *moral principles of equality and community*

Cohen's Critique of Capitalism

The Camping Trip

Voluntary cooperation

Equitable distribution of chores based on skills

Equal leisure time

Cohen's Critique of Capitalism

The Capitalist Camping Trip

Imagine a camping trip organized around
idea of private rights and mutually-
beneficial exchange

Would anyone enjoy that camping trip?

Cohen's Critique of Capitalism

Some Problems with the Camping Trip

Time-delimited and voluntary

Most camping sites are a form of “private property” that need to be maintained

Cohen's Critique of Capitalism

Cohen's Two Principles

1. Socialist Equality of Opportunity
2. Community

Cohen's Critique of Capitalism

Equality of Opportunity (EO)

Moral intuition: People's rewards should be equivalent to their controllable choices/effort

Cohen's Critique of Capitalism

Bourgeois EO: Remove formal, legal barriers to opportunity

Left-Liberal EO: Remove difference in opportunities based on external circumstances

Socialist EO: Remove difference in inequalities based on inherited traits

Cohen's Critique of Capitalism

Socialist EO

Can we really so clearly distinguish
between endowed traits and effort?

What information would be required to
draw that distinction in practice?

Cohen's Critique of Capitalism

Community

Even socialist EO can allow persistent and large inequalities based on “option luck”

Not equality for its own sake/for fairness
but equality in order to *preserve sense of solidarity*

Cohen's Critique of Capitalism

Feasibility

Cohen assumes principles are desirable,
and only issue is realization

But does he undervalue freedom and
underestimate pluralism?

Neglects *political* objections to socialism
as a threat to pluralism/freedom?