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SOCIALIST

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Gary Chartier

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all attempts to use the force of law to limit the commercial accessibility of remedies desired by health-care consumers.)

- Eliminate agricultural subsidies.

And government officials could also ensure that ordinary people had the resources needed to pay for (newly much less expensive) health care. They could:

- Eliminate licensing, zoning, and related restrictions that help to keep people from starting small, low-capital businesses.
- Eliminate rules that prevent poor people from entering businesses regarded as off-limits (like selling non-approved pharmaceuticals—which could be certified by voluntary, non-state certification services).
- Eliminate rules that force poor people to choose between the kind of housing middle-class planners and neighborhood busybodies prefer—and no housing at all.
- Eliminate import duties.
- Slash the tax burden at the state and federal level as much as possible—sharply increasing the standard income tax deduction and the Earned Income Tax Credit—and make corresponding reductions in spending.
- Eliminate state limitations on collective bargaining, including compulsory arbitration requirements, prohibitions on secondary boycotts, back-to-work orders, and “all state Right-to-Work Laws which prohibit employers from making voluntary contracts with unions.”

Notice how the Tuckerite socialist model would work. It would ensure that poor people had more money. By eliminating monopolies (and quasi-monopolistic market distortions like tax subsidies for particular insurance choices), it would also ensure that prices for health care services—whether purchased directly or provided via insurers—were lower. By keeping a competitive market in place, it would ensure that competitive market pressures would tend to elevate overall product and service quality. And because it wouldn’t involve the installation of yet another czar, or the equivalent, because it would leave people free to make their own health-care choices, it would preserve liberty rather than limiting it. It would achieve all three of the goals proponents of current health-care reform measures say they want.

Putting it on the table could also provide an opportunity to link a variety of other pro-freedom legal changes with (radical) health-care reform. And it would force proponents of statist options to ask more clearly whether they value the goals they say they want to achieve more than they value the opportunity to give more power to technocrats.

While a Tuckerite socialist plan would, indeed, provide a way of achieving state-socialist goals via the economic rather than the political means, such a plan would be anything but a continuation of the *status quo*. Indeed, it would be a dramatic *attack* on the *status quo*, one that redistributed wealth from privileged monopolists to ordinary people, and dramatically increased the likelihood of access to inexpensive, high-quality medical care for all Americans.

1. Framing Left Libertarianism: A First Pass

Left libertarianism (hereinafter LL) can be seen as an exercise in packaging and propaganda. Or it can be seen as a powerful expression of concerns that ought to be at the heart of movements for freedom.

Cynical libertarians and leftists alike might see talking about LL as an exercise in spin. Perhaps it’s an attempt to sell unsuspecting leftists on libertarian ideals that are fundamentally at odds with the left’s agenda. Or perhaps it’s an effort to graft an alien life-form onto the body of the libertarian movement, saddling it with concerns that have no place on a genuinely libertarian agenda.

Neither account of LL is remotely persuasive or appealing.

LL is authentically **libertarian** both because *it is anti-statist* (the LLs who come readily to mind are all anarchists; I take it as a given here that the LL is an anarchist or something close enough for the difference to be irrelevant) and because *it affirms the value of markets and property rights*. At the same time, LL is authentically **leftist** because *it seeks to challenge privilege, hierarchy, exclusion, deprivation, and domination*—both ideologically and practically—and because *it can exhibit a genuine commitment to inclusion, empowerment, and mutual respect*.

And it can do this, not by redefining terms—so that, for instance, freedom from physical coercion turns out to be the only kind of freedom that really matters—but instead by demonstrating the *consonance* between libertarian ideals and principles and a good-faith embrace of the left’s central concerns.

It may do so by *pointing out the radical implications of commonly accepted libertarian principles*.

- Thus, for instance, it may highlight the degree to which a history of violence and collusion with (or sponsorship of) tyranny on the part of economically powerful people and organizations *vitiates the legitimacy of the property* titles held by these people and organizations and justifies the homesteading of their putative property by those who live and work on it.
- Similarly, it may note that the full implementation of libertarian principles related to the injustice and imprudence of monopoly and subsidy would likely *undermine, in multiple ways, the power of hierarchical, centralized business organizations* and facilitate the replacement of many by worker-managed cooperatives and *dramatically enhance the influence of workers* in most or all of the others.
- It may demonstrate that these same libertarian principles rightly lead to a rejection of the kind of privilege that allows influential businesses, professional groups, and individuals to use state power to exploit others (as when well-connected businesses extract tax privileges that provide them non-market advantages over their competitors, or when occupational groups harm both the public and poor potential competitors by maintaining wealth and privilege through expensive licensing requirements imposed or maintained at their behest by the state).

And it may stress that the same principles that condemn the state in general *provide a powerful basis for opposing war and imperialism* in particular.

It can also emphasize the degree to which *the same moral principles* that drive opposition to the state's oppressive power can *provide good reason for challenging the kinds of social inequities* that rightly claim the attention of many people on the left. To the extent that their opposition to state power is rooted in a given moral theory, of whatever sort, they can show how other concerns flow from that theory. Natural law theory, virtue theory, Kantianism, moral pluralism, even (though it still seems to me to be a non-starter, for multiple reasons) consequentialism—all can be shown to ground support for market anarchism, and all can be shown to ground moral concerns independent of market anarchism. And (for instance) the very concern with the *moral equality* of persons that underlies a denial of any “natural right to rule” and the *rejection of collectivist inattention to individual particularity* both render racism, sexism, and heterosexism morally untenable.

Right libertarians may be inclined to reject the left libertarian position on multiple grounds. They may maintain (*i*) that there is *nothing particularly libertarian* about concern with the workplace authority or well being of workers or with, say, racism. Or they may argue, more strongly, (*ii*) that *such concerns are anti-libertarian*.

Whether objection (*i*) is persuasive will depend in part on how one supposes opposition to state power is grounded. To the extent that it is rooted in a particular moral theory, however, that theory itself can likely be used to generate moral judgments about matters other than state power. There is nothing arbitrary about arguing *both* that a given theory grounds regard for liberty *and* that it grounds other moral judgments or attitudes.

Of course, a right libertarian might say that she affirmed the value of liberty as basic, as ungrounded in any more general theoretical judgment. But the left libertarian need not concede a complete disconnection between a concern with racism, or workplace authority, or poverty and liberty conceived of as a basic value. This is so not only because (the left libertarian might say) structures and actions violative of liberty in the right libertarian's focal sense serve to foster the subordination of workers and members of ethnic minority groups and the continued impoverishment of the poor, but also because it seems inconsistent to oppose subjection to the arbitrary authority of state actors while regarding the arbitrary authority of those who don't threaten physical violence as morally neutral.

A standard right libertarian objection at this point might be that authority not rooted in physical force or the threat of physical force cannot justly be opposed using physical force. But this objection is a red herring.

The left libertarian need not regard aggression against anyone's person or property as an appropriate response to non-forcible but morally objectionable conduct. Organized boycotts, shaming, shunning, the use of various public and private bully pulpits, work slowdowns, and other mechanisms for enforcing social norms and rules that do not violate the principle of non-aggression are all available to the left libertarian.

The left libertarian can also emphasize that, while it is (tolerably) clear

the heavy burden of working elsewhere. And sometimes—as when Tulare, California, officials recently shut down a little girl's lemonade stand because it didn't have a license—licensing requirements are just exercises in petty tyranny. Whatever their form or their motivation, the burdens created by licensing requirements fall hardest on poor people.

Those same requirements impact where poor people can find housing: housing that doesn't meet someone else's standards of middle-class acceptability is denied to poor people who could pay for it, but might be able to pay for anything else. And the burden on the poor is only increased when certain kinds of jobs are denied to people at all—like selling medications that the government wants sold only by government approved pharmacists in government-approved pharmacies.

Tariffs also hurt poor people by significantly increasing the costs they need to pay for imported goods (including, often enough, food that would be less expensive than domestic alternatives absent import duties). Often touted as propping up poor workers' incomes, they serve primarily to boost the profits of poorly performing domestic producers at the expense of both domestic consumers (especially poor ones) and foreign producers.

In a perfect or near-perfect market, it might make little difference whether or not everyone was unionized. But in today's un-freed market, state-guaranteed privilege, rather than competitive excellence, is responsible for some corporate profits. In this kind of market, unionization can help to improve workers' economic positions. State limitations on union activity can tend to reduce unions' influence, and so to reduce the incomes of workers who might make more were they free to engage in more radical bargaining tactics.

An Initial Anarchist Agenda

Bottom line: arguably the most important thing government officials could do to reduce health care costs would be to get completely out of the way, to stop privileging favored elites and driving up prices. State functionaries could:

- Stop offering protection to patents and copyrights.
- Eliminate hospital accrediting and professional licensing rules, leaving a variety of flexible, competing market-based certification systems to do the job.
- Limit malpractice awards to actual damages plus the costs of recovery (including reasonable legal fees).
- Repeal regulations that prevent the sale of insurance across state lines and that prevent the operation of what amount to insurance schemes by health professionals.
- Alter the tax code to de-link employment and insurance. (This change would have the potential to boost net taxes, of course, if it weren't made in tandem with the tax cuts for which I've argued.)
- Replace the FDA approval process with alternative, voluntary private certification systems. (Obviously, doing this would include eliminating

munities in which they wish to operate (so that there's as little head-to-head competition as possible).

And there's more: what about the rules that provide tax incentives for employers to purchase health insurance for employees, thus taking responsibility out of the hands of employees with incentives to seek good individual deals? And what about state rules that make it harder, or impossible, for people to seek insurance from out-of-state carriers? Or ones that limit who can be an insurer (hint: not a physician who wants to offer her patients care on a flat-fee-per-year basis)? These constraints create or promote monopolistic or quasi-monopolistic positions for many players in the health-insurance industry.

The FDA approval process is also, of course, a state monopoly that drives up costs and lengthens the time-to-market of many products. It's also one of the factors that helps to make health care unaffordable for many people.

State subsidies to agriculture also contribute to health-care costs by encouraging the purchase of lots of low-nutrition foods. Purchasing these items simultaneously redirects resources that could be used to buy foods that made positive contributions to people's health away from the purchase of such foods and encourages the purchase of items that may actually decrease health and thus boost health care costs.

Finally: it's not a monopoly, precisely, but it is a dubious legal privilege that also drives up costs. A punitive damage award can turn an individual person into scapegoats, someone to be "taught a lesson" on behalf of the entire class of victims of conduct like his or her own. Punitive damage awards drive up costs unnecessarily while forcing health-care professionals and hospitals to focus on defensive medicine.

How the State Can Help to Make Health Care Accessible by Stopping Its War on Poor People

Remember, the driving force behind so much of the debate about health care is accessibility. That's a function of cost. But it's also a function of the incomes of people who might want access to care but can't afford it.

The first step would be to lower taxes. The long-term goal must be to eliminate all the tribute people pay to the state at all levels, but legislators might start by dramatically increasing the standard deduction while, at the federal level, increasing the Earned Income Tax Credit.

It's worth asking, too, about the impact of multiple monopolies on the circumstances of poor people. The state does lots of things that make and keep people poor.

Some kinds of jobs require business licenses, or other kinds of permissions from local actors to start up. Maybe the licenses require costly and dispensable equipment or unnecessary certification, or maybe they just involve prohibitive up-front costs. (Think about how much it costs to obtain a New York taxicab medallion.) Sometimes, they preclude people using the low-cost facilities that are their own homes for business purposes, imposing

what it means to attack someone's body, while the notion of someone's body is a relatively stable one, just what counts as aggression against someone's property will itself be contestable, and will depend, in particular, on just what her property rights *are*. A court in a mutualist community would obviously be quicker to recognize the rights of workers homesteading a shuttered factory than a comparable court in a community with conventionally Lockean property rights. A local jury in one market anarchist community might perfectly well conclude that the commercial property rights it was prepared to enforce didn't include the right to deny someone ordinary services on the basis of race. There is nothing about market anarchism, *per se*, that settles the question just how different communities that all endorse private property rights will or should understand those rights, or just when different courts or protective agencies will be inclined to, say, award tort or contract damages. Which rights should be endorsed by a legal system in a market anarchist community, and what remedies should be available for their infringement, can only be answered in terms of ongoing moral argument—just the sort of argument that allows diverse communities in a market anarchist society to serve as laboratories in which experiments in living are carried on.

Non-libertarian leftists (NLLs) may be equally suspicious of left libertarianism. They may doubt that left libertarians are really concerned about poor people, about workers, about sexual minorities, and others about whom they profess to care. Just as the left libertarian can rightly resist the right libertarian's framing of LL as statist or as irrelevant to liberty, so the left libertarian can rightly resist the leftist non-libertarian's framing of LL as unconcerned with exclusion, domination, and deprivation.

Here, the left libertarian must emphasize to the NLL just how much the state really is implicated in the structures of subordination, impoverishment, and violence they both reject. The left libertarian can rightly stress the role that state-granted monopolistic privileges and subsidies play in underwriting putatively private power. She can offer the NLL a wager: that the removal of the threat of state violence as a back-stop for such power would play an enormous role in defanging it.

She can point out that market anarchism does not, cannot, mean maintaining the current system of property relations, untouched, in the absence of state power—not only because of disagreements about property rules (as between Lockean and mutualists) but also because of the injustice that vitiates so many existing property titles (as to the *latifundia* of Latin America). And she can stress, as to the right libertarian, that adhering to Leonard Read's dictum to limit one's actions to "anything that's peaceful" need not mean abandoning the right to subject the behavior of those who use their property in morally objectionable ways to incisive critique or the capacity to exert significant influence on that behavior.

Left libertarianism represents a particularly radical development of generally acknowledged libertarian moral judgments and an elaboration of the implications of moral principles that can be seen to provide plau-

sible grounds for rejecting statism. It can provide bases for challenging and means for reducing or ending exclusion, subordination, and deprivation that are authentically consistent with market anarchism. Thus, it can outline identifiably libertarian means to identifiably leftist ends, and it can persuasively redescribe those ends and means as both genuinely libertarian and genuinely leftist.

2. The “Left” in Left Libertarian

My previous post regarding the nature of left libertarianism was fairly general and vague about what I mean by “left.” If the notion of left libertarianism is going to make sense, we need to be clear on what is and isn’t *left*.

I don’t think there’s anything wrong-headed about other recent characterizations of the central concern of the left as anti-authoritarianism, openness to the future, or opposition to privilege. I want, though, to offer a different proposal regarding what I take to be the central elements of a leftist agenda and to suggest what may be a thread capable unifying these elements.

An authentically leftist position, I suggest, is marked by opposition to *subordination*, *exclusion*, and *deprivation*.

Subordination

One person, A, is subordinate to another, B, when B has significant, persistent power over A. The power involved may be physical, but it may also be economic, psychic, social, or cultural. The important thing is that B determines, to some meaningful degree, what A does. A is significantly unfree in relation to B, either because B can impose on A some cost that A is unwilling to bear or because A genuinely (but mistakenly) believes that B is entitled to determine the character of A’s conduct.

I *assume* here that subordination is presumptively morally objectionable. That, indeed, is part of what it means to adopt a position I would recognize as leftist. I do not seek to justify this presumption (perhaps that’s a task for another post) nor to suggest how one could correctly identify cases in which it might rightly be defeated. I suspect that most of my readers do not like being subordinated, and might be inclined to accept this dislike as revelatory of something important. But my goal here is not to show them that they *should*.

Note that the question, *Is there a relationship of subordination in a given case?* doesn’t determine the answer to the question, *If there is subordination in this case, what is the appropriate remedy?* I emphasize this because many libertarians and anarchists adhere to what might be called the Principle of the Proportionality of Remedies (PPR). According to this principle, my using physical force against someone is appropriate only when defending myself against a physical threat posed by her to me or someone else; my infringing on her property rights apart from those in her body is appropriate only when defending myself against a threat posed by her to my non-bodily

the cost of care without, realistically, making fewer services, fewer drugs, fewer devices available, as long as current market conditions persist. And that means, of course, interfering with our choices, since it’s hard to choose an option that’s not on the table. With fewer services available, options have been reduced, and, assuming the real value to patients of some available procedures that would be less prevalent as a result of cost-control measures, the quality of services would be reduced. So Goal 1 doesn’t look too achievable.

Of course, we could insist that Goal 1 be achieved no matter what, perhaps along with Goal 3. But then it’s hard to see how Goal 2 could be achieved. Or we could dramatically reduce choice, and perhaps, just perhaps, that might enable us to offer an ample supply of, well, some kind of care judged by someone to be of high quality, while controlling costs. Would the quality be adequate? Without choice, it would be hard to tell, and it would be hard to require quality, since that’s what unrestrained markets do, and since we wouldn’t have anything like an unrestrained market.

So it might seem, at first glance, as if there were a real problem achieving all three goals. But there’s not, if you vary one assumption that isn’t being made explicit in most of the discussions being conducted on-line, on TV, and in the print media by Beltway insiders. That’s the assumption that we need to keep a whole range of monopolistic cartels intact, cartels established by the state at least in part precisely to keep costs up.

A natural approach for anarchists to take is to challenge this assumption, while suggesting that, if it’s *not* endorsed, the three explicitly stated goals can all be achieved at the same time. One way to think about this is as a contribution to the ongoing debate about the meaning of “socialism.” The Tuckerite claim (I’m not precisely a Tuckerite, but I like to think of myself as a fellow traveler) is, I take it, that “socialism” is best understood as naming a series of goals which can be achieved using the political means or the economic means. For the Tuckerite, the economic means turns out to achieve the desired set of goals more efficiently than the political means—and so without the aggression that’s definitionally part of the use of the political means. But what is achieved is still socialism. The Tuckerite socialist can achieve what the state socialist purports to want, but without many of the human and financial costs created by a state-based approach.

What the State Does to Keep Health Care Costs High

Consider the impact of the monopoly power drug companies and medical device exercise by retaining and enforcing patent rights arbitrarily conferred by the government. Or consider the effect on prices when licensing requirements limit who can be a doctor, how many doctors there can be, what kinds of procedures non-doctors can perform? Or the effect exerted by similar licensing requirements that dramatically reduce competition in other health-care professions. Or the effect of limiting the accreditation of hospitals—too frequently in light of the market conditions of the com-

owners of capital (understood to be other than the owners of labor).”

Now, it happens to be the case that I agree with Kevin (Carson), Roderick (Long), and others that this dominance is dependent in large measure on state abuses. But I don’t want simply to emphasize my objection to these abuses—though I certainly do—but also to express my opposition, *per se*, to the dominance of the owners of capital, thus understood. That’s why I am disinclined to regard talk of “socialism” as important, as highlighting, at minimum, the trajectory toward which the market anarchist project be thought to lead, and as identifying morally important values to which my sort of market anarchist, at least, is committed, and which do not seem to me like good candidates for the status of “particular interests,” if these are understood as arbitrary, even if morally licit.

I am avowedly opposed to the institutionalized use of force against persons, and against their (Aristotelian-Thomist) ownership rights, and I am quite willing to say so loudly or clearly. That makes me, by my own lights, a libertarian. But I am not prepared to dismiss my invocation of “socialism” as a label that has not lost its usefulness for the left-libertarian project, as simply an expression of individual preference with which no good libertarian ought to interfere, simply because interference would be unreasonably aggressive. Rather, “socialism” names a set of concerns, including ones regarding attractive patterns of social organization, that there is good reason for left-libertarians whole-heartedly to endorse.

5. State Socialism and Anarchism: How Far They Agree and Wherein They Differ Regarding Health-Care Reform

The current US debate about health-care funding can be understood as concerned with meeting the challenge of doing three things at once: (1) ensuring that everyone can afford to buy ample medical services and (2) lowering the price of care while (3) not interfering with our choices.

An Unnecessary Tension among Health Care Goals—Created by the State

If you assume that most or all of the features of our current health care system should be treated as given, the trilemma really does seem irresolvable. Suppose everyone can afford ample medical care. We know what doctors charge. We know what hospitals charge. We know what drug manufacturers charge. We know what medical device manufacturers charge. And we know what insurers charge to, we’re told, make it all possible. And we know the charges are anything but insubstantial. So, given they way things work right now, if everyone can afford ample medical care, then everyone must be able to spend a lot of money.

If the current pricing of medical care really reflects conditions in the current market, and there’s no reason to think it doesn’t, then there’s no way to lower

property rights. And so forth.

Someone who endorses the PPR may be nervous about the notion that subordination (or domination, or hierarchy—pick your favorite term here) might be exercised economically or psychically. Clearly delimiting subordination, so that the only sort with which one ought to be concerned is physical, provides a check on the use of force. By contrast, appearing to conflate different kinds of subordination runs the risk of justifying the use of force to respond to non-forcible exercises of influence.

But this worry is ill-founded, for several reasons. Among these:

(i) Physical force can be seen to underly many other forms of domination that do not themselves involve physical force. Persistent violence against women in a given social environment may lead to a climate of fear and submission on the part of many women, even in relationships with men who have not themselves behaved violently and might not threaten to do so or be inclined to do so. The knowledge that a strike might be broken through the use of violence might dispose workers in a morally objectionable work setting to avoid initiating the strike in the first place. And so on. An important aspect of objection to the subordination in these cases will be, precisely, objection to this background of physical violence.

(ii) More fundamentally still, someone who acknowledges that subordination comes in different forms need not maintain that all of these forms merit the same kind of remediation. Being on the left means being opposed to subordination, but it needn’t mean supposing that all sorts of subordination should be dealt with in the same way. There is nothing inconsistent about holding *both* that workers in a given firm are dominated in a morally objectionable way by managers and that this morally objectionable domination does not on its own in any way justify the use of physical force against the managers. Acknowledging the reality of subordination as morally objectionable need not involve erasing moral differences among kinds of subordination or responses to them.

Exclusion

Some person, A, is excluded from a group when it is made clear that she does not belong to the group, that she is entitled neither to the material incidents of membership nor to the recognition as a fellow member (and respect) associated with belonging.

Unavoidably, some intimate relationships exclude: close friendships and monogamous partnerships are obvious examples. No credible leftist position will seek simply to eradicate the particularity of these relationships. And it can thus defend no bright-line rule regarding permissible and impermissible exclusion. Roughly, though, I think, it will want to offer at least two kinds of limits on morally permissible exclusion.

(i) It will want to say that, even when particular intimate sub-communities justly exclude someone—for the simple reason that they would cease

to be the kinds of communities they *are* if they weren't strictly limited in size—there is clearly room for her in the broader community of which they are components. She is clearly welcome there, clearly included there.

(ii) It will want to say that, when justifiable exclusion occurs, it ought not to reflect *false beliefs about or unreasonable reactions* to some group to which the excluded person belongs. Perhaps A acts reasonably in declining to marry B because of, say, important differences in the ways in which B and A understand the nature of marriage, differences which might emerge from B's membership in a particular group with a tradition of viewing marital relationships in a certain way. But surely this is quite different from A's declining to marry B either because of (a) the fact that certain visible members of B's group hold beliefs about marriage, even if (1) A does not know that B holds these beliefs or (2) B credibly denies holding these beliefs or (b) A holds to a visceral prejudice against members of B's group, believing, say, that cohabitation with a member of this group would render someone like A unclean.

A credibly leftist position, then, will oppose exclusion-in-general, treating as reasonable exceptions only (roughly) when they don't involve exclusion from large, relatively impersonal, communities and relationships and only when they are not rooted in false beliefs or unreasonable reactions.

Again, it is important to emphasize that treating exclusion as morally objectionable does not determine what counts as an appropriate remedy for morally unjustifiable exclusion. I won't repeat the points I made above with regard to subordination which are, in general, applicable here as well. It is not necessary to justify exclusion as reasonable or morally appropriate, all things considered, to object to the use of physical force as a remedy for exclusion.

Deprivation

A credible leftism will oppose deprivation.

Some person A experiences deprivation if she lacks the resources needed for (i) physical survival and health; (ii) clothing and shelter; and (iii) material circumstances that qualify as minimally dignified in accordance with the norms prevailing in her community.

To oppose deprivation in this sense is not so far to assign blame for anyone's deprived condition. Nor is it—I repeat—to identify any *particular remedy* for deprivation as morally required or permitted. *That* is a separate question. A position is credibly leftist if it regards ignoring the deprivation of others as *prima facie* morally objectionable. But a position can reasonably be regarded as leftist while defending any of a wide range of responses to that deprivation as consistent with (or demanded by) prudence or justice, provided those responses can reasonably be regarded as effective, or likely to be so.

Vulnerability

A position qualifies credibly as a leftist position if it involves clear objection on moral grounds to subordinating people, excluding them from community

Kevin points out to the state-socialist—by sincerely owning the “socialist” label—that she or he shares the state-socialist's ends, while disagreeing radically with the state-socialist's judgments about appropriate means to those ends. This simultaneously sincere and rhetorically effective move allows the market anarchist to challenge the state-socialist to confront the reality that there is an inconsistency between the state-socialist's emancipatory goals and the authoritarian means she or he professes to prefer. It sets the stage for the market anarchist to highlight the fact that purported statist responses to bossism create more, and more powerful, bosses, that the state is much better at causing deprivation than curing it.

Thus, the market anarchist's use of “socialism” creates an occasion for the state-socialist to ask her- or himself, perhaps for the first time, “Am I really more attached to the means or to the end?” I realize that what I intend as a rhetorical question may not—if the state-socialist cares more about power than principle—elicit the intended answer. But it seems to me that, for many state-socialists, the recognition that the left-wing market anarchist sought socialist goals by non-statist means provides the state-socialist with good reason to rethink her attachment to the state, to conclude that it was pragmatic and unnecessary, and that her genuinely principled attachment was to the cause of human emancipation.

This means there's a meaningful opportunity for education—to highlight the existence of a credible tradition advancing a different meaning of “socialism.”

Libertarianism and the Socialist Vision

Now, it is obviously open to a critic to maintain that she has no particular concern with workplace hierarchies or with deprivation, or that they should be of no concern to the libertarian-qua-libertarian, since objections to them do not flow from libertarian principles.

I am happy to identify as an anarchist who favors markets and property rights (though my Aristotelianism and Thomism disincline me to characterize them in the same way as Stephan), as well as individual autonomy. But I do not ask myself whether my appreciation for “socialism” in this sense is something to which I am committed qua libertarian. Rather, my willingness to identify as a libertarian is licensed by a more fundamental set of moral judgments which also make “socialism” in the relevant sense attractive, and which help to ensure that the senses in which I am a libertarian and in which I am a socialist consistent.

At minimum, there seems to be some reason for using the label “capitalism”, so clearly understood to be the alter of “socialism,” for the kind of economic system we have now, backed up so clearly by state-granted and state-maintained privilege. But I think it's worth emphasizing that “capitalism”—both because of its history and because of its superficial content—seems to suggest more than merely state-supported privilege (though surely it implies at least this): it seems to suggest “social dominance by the

Of course, if “socialism” means “state [or para-state] ownership of the means of production,” there is no sense in characterizing Carson or any other market anarchist as defending “clearly pro-socialist positions.” On the other hand, if “socialism” can have a sufficiently broad meaning—one compatible with market anarchism—that it makes sense to say that Kevin (or another market anarchist) does defend such positions, then it is unclear why talk of “socialism” should be objectionable.

Distinguishing Market-Oriented Socialists from State-Socialists

Carson, for one, clearly supports the existence of private ownership rights. And I have seen nothing to suggest that he would disagree with the claim that market interactions have to feature non-state ownership if they are to be voluntary. He’s consistently clear that there could, would, should be alternate kinds of property regimes in a stateless society, but none of those he considers appropriate would be rooted in coercion. So I’m puzzled by the implication that he’s an opponent of private ownership.

None of that means that one can’t point to despicable regimes (Pol Pot, anyone?) who’ve worn the “socialist” label proudly. But surely if the idea is to point to despicable applications of a term, one can do the same with “capitalism” as with “socialism”? (Think Pinochet-era Chile.) The association of “capitalism” with mercantilism and corporatism and the dominance of entrenched elites is hardly a creation of left libertarians and other market anarchists: it’s an association that’s common in the minds of many people around the world and which is thoroughly warranted by the behavior of states and of many businesses and socially powerful individuals.

Beyond Semantics

So, in short, I’m not sure that using “socialism” as the label for a particular sort of market anarchist project, or of “capitalism” for what that project opposes, has to be seen as just an exercise in semantic game-playing.

1. *Emancipatory intent.* For instance: labeling a particular sort of market anarchist project “socialist” clearly identifies its emancipatory intent: it links that project with the opposition to bossism and deprivation that provide the real moral and emotional force of socialist appeals of all sorts.

2. *Warranted opposition to “capitalism.”* Thus, identifying one’s project as “socialist” is a way of making clear one’s opposition to “capitalism”—as that term is understood by an enormous range of ordinary people around the world. The “socialist” label signals to them that a market anarchist project like Kevin’s is on their side and that it is opposed to those entities they identify as their oppressors.

3. *Forcing the state-socialist to distinguish between her attachment to ends and her attachment to means.* A final rationale: suppose a market anarchist like

membership, or tolerating their deprivation. I suggest that concern with subordination, exclusion, and deprivation can be seen as united by a concern with respect for and protection of people who are vulnerable—vulnerable to the power of those who dominate and exclude, vulnerable to the circumstances that lead to deprivation and the risks associated with being deprived. (More broadly, we might rightly include within the concern for the vulnerable that animates positions credibly recognizable as leftist concern for those who suffer the direct violence of the state when it wages war, tortures, or, often, imprisons.)

The Range of Leftist Positions

Morally grounded opposition to subordination, exclusion, and deprivation, perhaps best seen as linked by a concern for the vulnerable, defines what I am inclined to argue is the minimum core of a leftist position. I do not mean to suggest that all those who might claim to be leftists would acknowledge just these commitments—the Stalinist or the Maoist seems unlikely to exhibit much in the way of concern for the *particular* vulnerable person. And I do not mean to deny that many of those associated with the left might go on to hold particular positions about the most effective or just ways of achieving leftist goals. Some might argue, for instance, that a position was not authentically leftist if it failed to involve recourse to the state or the use of physical force against persons to prevent subordination, exclusion, or deprivation. This seems to me to be a possible development of leftism, but not a necessary one. There is, at minimum, no reason why someone who supports the anarchist project of doing without state could not adopt a leftist position of the kind I have described.

I think it is clear that a market anarchist *could* be a leftist. Whether a market anarchist *should* be a leftist is, of course, another matter. Whether she should be will depend on what reasons warrant opposition to subordination, exclusion, and deprivation, and the consonance of those reasons with her reasons for endorsing market anarchism.

3. “Socialism” for Left Liberty

I know I’m coming a bit late to the game, but I wanted to offer some brief responses to Shawn Wilbur’s request (in anticipation of the first issue of *Left Liberty*) for analyses of “socialism,” “solidarity,” and “individualism.” I’ll start with “socialism.”

The socialist definitional free-for-all that has captured the ongoing attention of a number of people on the libertarian left (and others) has put back on the agenda the question whether there is a way of understanding socialism that renders it compatible with a genuinely market-oriented anarchism. If socialism must mean *either* conventional state-socialism *or* state socialism with ownership of the means of production vested in local micro-states *or* some vaguely defined model of collective ownership rooted in a gift economy, then it has to be clear that socialism and market anarchism aren’t compatible.

But it ought to be troubling, then, that one of the founding spirits of market anarchism, Benjamin Tucker, clearly considered his variety of market anarchism to be an alternative to state-socialism—as a form of socialism. Words (nod to Nicholas Lash) are known by the company they keep, and I think it’s worth reminding readers of the diverse company kept by “socialism.” I think it makes sense, therefore, to offer a definition of “socialism” that will make clear why Tucker, at least, clearly ought to be included.

With that in mind, then, I suggest that we understand *socialism* negatively as any economic system marked by the abolition (*i*) of wage labor as the primary mode of economic activity and (*ii*) of the dominance of society by (*a*) the minority of people who regularly employ significant numbers of wage laborers and (*b*) the tiny minority of people who own large quantities of wealth and capital goods. We might understand socialism in positive terms as any economic system marked by (*i*) wide dispersal of control over the means of production; (*ii*) worker management as the primary mode of economic activity; together with (*iii*) the social preeminence of ordinary people, as those who both operate and manage the means of production.

State socialism has attempted to realize socialism through the power of the state. Not surprisingly, given everything we know about states, state socialism has proven in most respects to be a disaster. Coupled with the economic inefficiencies associated with central planning, the secret police, the barbed wire fences, and the suppression of dissent are all elements of state socialism’s disastrous record.

If you want to define socialism as state socialism, be my guest. Many people do so. But the history of the term makes clear that many people have not meant state control or society-wide ownership of the means of production when they have talked about socialism.

4. Socialism Revisited

I’d like to try to tie together and expand my observations re. the great “socialist”/“capitalist” terminological debate that’s been proceeding at The Center for a Stateless Society (c4ss.org) and Austro-Athenian Empire (aeblog.com).

“Socialism” as Genus; “State-Socialism” as Species

I think there is good reason to use “socialism” to mean something like opposition to:

- *bossism* (that is to subordinative workplace hierarchy); and
- *deprivation* (that is, persistent, exclusionary poverty, whether resulting from state-capitalist depredation, private theft, disaster, accident, or other factors).

“Socialism” in this sense is the genus; “state-socialism” is the (much-to-be-lamented) species.

Indeed, using the “socialist” label provides the occasion for a clear dis-

inction between the genus “socialism” and the species “state-socialism.” Thus, it offers a convenient opportunity to expose and critique the statist assumptions many people reflexively make (assumptions that make it all-too-easy for political theory to take as given the presupposition that its subject matter is the question, “What should the state do?”).

I am more sympathetic than perhaps I seem to the claims of those who object to linguistic arguments that they fear may have no real impact on anyone’s political judgment. I wouldn’t dismiss as silly someone who said that no market anarchist could employ “socialist” without creating inescapable confusion.

“Capitalism”: Seemingly in the Same Boat

So the first thing to say, I think, is that the same is true of “capitalism.” It’s a word with a history, and the history is, very often, rather less than pretty.

Consider people on the streets of a city in Latin America, or Africa, or Asia, or Europe, chanting their opposition to neoliberalism and, yes, capitalism. I find it difficult to imagine that hordes of protestors would turn out in the streets to assail po’-lil’-ol’ private ownership. When a great many people say that “capitalism,” is the enemy, that’s surely because, among many people around the world, “capitalism” has come to mean something like “social dominance by the owners of capital,” a state of affairs many people might find unappealing.

In accordance with the kind of libertarian class analysis it’s easy to find in the work of people like Murray Rothbard, John Hagel, Butler Shaffer, and Roderick Long, Kevin Carson—author of the original C4SS article and Stephan Kinsella’s target (to Kinsella’s credit, he is not only blunt but also good-natured)—maintains that this social dominance is dependent on the activity of the state. Remove the props provided by the state, he argues, and “capitalism” in this sense—the sense in which the term is employed pejoratively by millions of people who have no ideological investment in statism or bureaucratic tyranny—is finished.

Socialist Ends, Market Means

That doesn’t mean that the market anarchist must somehow have forgotten her commitment to markets. As Kevin, Brad, Charles, and others have observed, as a historical matter there clearly have been people who have argued for the abolition of state-supported privilege and who have enthusiastically favored freed markets who have worn the label “socialist” confidently. Tucker and Hodgskin wouldn’t have agreed that socialism is synonymous with collective ownership. Rather, they would have said, various schemes for state ownership (or for collective ownership by some quasi-state entity) are ways of achieving the underlying goal of socialism—an end to bossism in the workplace, the dominance of the owners of capital in society, and to significant, widespread deprivation. But, Tucker and Hodgskin would have said, these are both unjust and ineffective means of achieving this goal—better to pursue it by freeing the market than by enhancing the power of the state.