

The authors provide the reader with all of the important information about the development of the Czech party system, especially since 1996, and their qualitative and quantitative research is accompanied by many different concepts and approaches to the study of party systems. Although some analyses, like the effective number of parties or the index of volatility, were presented by other authors as well (see e.g. Havlík 2014), it is still a very interesting book which contributes to the study of the Czech party system in a broader context and perspective.

References:

Havlík, Vlastimil. 2014. 'Výsledky voleb.' In: *Volby do Poslanecké sněmovny 2013*. Ed. Vlastimil Havlík. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 141–159.

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ally perfect human beings we should choose capitalism. His book is a debate with Marxist philosopher G. A. Cohen's text *Why Not Socialism?* which claims the opposite. What are Brennan's arguments?

Why Not Capitalism? is divided into four chapters. In the first one, Brennan summarizes Cohen's argument for why socialism is morally superior to capitalism. He introduces Cohen's thought experiment with a *camping trip* among friends. Everyone is equal and works hard for the good of the community and people act like socialists there. Brennan writes that Cohen wants us to imagine how it would look if people there acted as they do in real-life capitalism (they would not be equal, wouldn't be rewarded according to their needs, would be selfish etc.).

Then Brennan explains why socialism cannot work (information and incentive problem) and that even Cohen, unlike some other socialists, admits that capitalism is *more feasible*. This, according to Cohen, however, does not mean it is more *intrinsically desirable*. Brennan disagrees even with that and argues that 'even if people had morally perfect motivations, we would still have grounds to prefer capitalism' which 'is not merely better economics than socialism in the real world' but 'rather, even in utopia, capitalism occupies the moral high ground.'

In the second chapter, he parodies Cohen's argument while using 'the same structure, format and tone' of it to turn his argument into 'an even better argument for capitalism.' To describe an ideal capitalist society, he chooses the Disney children's animated cartoon *Mickey Mouse Clubhouse* and lets the readers find out on their own why Cohen's argument is flawed. And thus, he introduces the ideal people living in the capitalist world. Again, they work for the good of all without the negative, morally bad and egoistic characteristic of the real world.

Brennan, Jason:

WHY NOT CAPITALISM?

New York: Routledge. 2014. 120 pages.

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Jason Brennan, like many political philosophers, has his own vision of a utopian society. Brennan, an American scholar specialized in politics, philosophy and economy, also writes for the 'bleeding heart libertarians' blog which is about combining free markets and social justice (Zwolinski 2011). The question we could ask is: Should our own vision of utopia be capitalist or socialist? Brennan tries to convince us that even if we all were mor-

Then he asks the reader to 'consider what it would be like if the villagers stop acting like capitalists and start acting like socialists' and draws all the bad things which happened in real socialism (mass murders of millions, terror, gulags, five-year economic plans causing economic stagnation etc.). And he asks if the reader would rather live in the capitalist or in the socialist version of the Mickey Mouse Clubhouse Village. Then he describes the moral principles which are implemented in the capitalist version of this village: the principle of voluntary community, of mutual respect, of reciprocity, of social justice and of beneficence.

In the remaining two chapters, Brennan explains what the parody of Cohen's thought experiment means. In the third he writes that thanks to Cohen we know that 'capitalism is not just better than socialism from an economic point of view, but inherently better from a moral point of view.' And he clarifies that, as readers might suspect, his argument is similarly flawed, but unlike Cohen, he knows about it. Why? The problem is that Cohen does not compare like to like, but ideal to real, 'an imaginary, idealized version of a socialist regime to a more realistic version of a capitalist regime,' 'a world of socialism with morally perfect people' to 'our actual world, with real, flawed people.' Therefore, 'relevant comparisons are ideal socialism to ideal capitalism, and real socialism to real socialism.'

Brennan criticizes another Cohen's fallacy – identifying regimes with values or motives (equating socialism with moral virtue of community spirit). And here comes his strongest criticism. He says, 'Cohen is not doing social science' because when he says, 'agents in socialist economies are motivated by altruism and community spirit,' he 'is not making an empirical claim at all,' but only stipulates how it would look in his preferred society. On the contrary, Brennan tries to show us empirically

how economically free countries have a 'higher degree of generalized trust and trustworthiness,' basing it on an example of correlation between economic freedom rating and corruption perception index scores, where the most economically free countries are also the least corrupt.

In the fourth chapter, Brennan explains how Cohen helps us see that capitalism is intrinsically the best system. He also admits that it was hard to imagine ideal capitalism, but he saw it while watching the Mickey Mouse Clubhouse with his son. He saw there 'a voluntary, anarchist, non-violent, respectful, loving, cooperative society.' Then he explains why private property rights are so important, even in utopia, and tries to appeal even to philosophers who had never owned a business, that if they 'can understand why one might want to write a book by oneself, rather than with co-authors or by committee, the philosopher can similarly understand why someone might want to own a factory or a farm or a store.'

Other issues arise when everything belongs to everybody: the necessity to always ask permission to do anything, and a natural human need to feel at home somewhere, or our tendency to have relationships to objects, or the limits of our knowledge and imperfect information (and he shows a very good example with traffic lights on pages 83–84). He also responds to objections against capitalism – of exploitation of workers – and says it would never happen in a utopia similar to Cohen's because people are 'too nice' there. He summarizes that even if we could be without private property in utopia, it 'makes utopia better.'

Then he argues that 'buying, selling, and trading' private property in markets and 'having a wide sphere of economic freedom' are also better for this utopia. He reminds socialists (especially to Cohen) that for real liberty, they need money (and what it represents) and

that 'markets are important to ensure that people can be as prosperous as possible' and that also 'trade is usually – and especially in utopian conditions – a positive-sum game.' Then he admits that in a perfect society the problem with incentives, mentioned earlier, disappears but the information problem remains. Therefore, to cooperate and work together even with billions of others, we need to use markets (because the philosopher king might be morally perfect in utopia, but does not have cognitive superpowers).

In the last part of this chapter, Brennan suggests that it is not just utopia, but a framework for utopias. He shows that his capitalist Mickey Mouse Clubhouse Village is morally superior to Cohen's socialist camping trip when he asks readers which one they would choose – and that they could have the choice only in his utopia because it 'would allow a commune within its borders.' In other words, 'capitalists allow socialism, but socialists forbid capitalism', because capitalism permits people to own property both individually and collectively, but socialism forbids it individually and only allows it collectively. Unlike Cohen's, Brennan's vision of utopia allows a space for other utopias within it.

Brennan closes his book with the statement that 'ideal capitalism is better than ideal socialism, and realistic capitalism (of some sort) is better than realistic socialism.' I understand and in some way I appreciate what he tried to do in his book – to prove that the capitalist utopia is better than the socialist one. And I consider it a very good work regarding the political philosophy debate, but I have a little problem with it. And it is what he put in the brackets in this statement ('of some sort'). He tries to convince readers that market capitalism is better than socialism and he does it well in my opinion. But did he convince us that this kind of *laissez-faire/libertarian/anarchist* version of capitalism is better than state-regu-

lated, e.g., social-market/ordoliberal or social liberal/social democratic version of it? And I mean not only for our real world, but also in his utopia? Of course, it was not the main aim of his book, but it lets us wonder if he does not intend to do so.

One example of what I consider problematic is when Brennan writes about a principle of social justice and mentions that villagers do not use governmental coercion, 'brutal, direct, and antisocial methods', to achieve social justice, but they use a 'more relaxed, indirect, and pro-social way' to do it. He means institutions of civil society and spontaneous order. And I must ask – how is it possible to achieve the best education for everyone, the vertical social mobility, the universal health care, the decent care for elderly people, the useful social services for all without government intervention? Is it possible to achieve it only through markets and civil society? Wouldn't the life of everyone, even in his utopia, be better off with state intervention in such areas?

And then he writes that the people there are not envious, unlike in the real world, but is it really the envy that he criticizes? Isn't it just a claim of social justice? I mean, at least in situations where people have no ability to be wealthier through their honest hard work in spontaneous order, but they know they would have if they had used the government to redistribute some resources or regulate markets to help them achieve it, e.g. through a better educational system for everyone.

However, my other concern about his thought experiment is whether people in such a utopia would not be just too good or nice for capitalism. What if their good intentions would not allow markets to work properly? What if their care for others would not let them buy goods for the lowest price, would not allow the market losers to go bankrupt etc.? Nevertheless, as I mentioned before, I am aware why even this kind of theoretical work

is important, but I think that in social science we should not be so concerned about unrealistic situations with morally perfect people, but we should write political theory for practical purposes. We should think about what would be best, not if people were perfect, but if their legislators voted for the best possible solutions free from their own special interests. This is, of course, utopia too, but a realistic and therefore more desirable one.

Overall, *Why Not Capitalism?* is a very compelling book advocating for market capitalism instead of socialism. If readers want to confront their scepticism of capitalism or if they simply want to think about whether they

would rather live in a socialist or a capitalist utopia, I can only recommend Jason Brennan's book. Moreover, I have not read a more convincing defense of not only market capitalism, but also of a pluralistic society since Leonard Read's essay *I, Pencil* or Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*.

References:

Zwolinski, Matt. 2011. *About Us*. Bleeding Heart Libertarians: Free Markets & Social Justice. 16th May 2011 (<http://bleedingheartlibertarians.com/about-us/>).

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