

Michael G. Festl

Between Sentimentalism and Instrumentalism. The Societal Role of Work in John Rawls's Property-Owning Democracy and Its Bearing upon Basic Income

Abstract: In recent years research on John Rawls has experienced a surge in interest in Rawls's elaborations on the economic order of a just society. This research entails the treatment of the issue which societal role Rawls attaches to work. Somewhat dissatisfied with these treatments the article at hand develops an alternative account of the function Rawls has in mind for work. It will be argued that within Rawls's idea of a just society the societal role of work consists of three components: an 'efficiency component', a 'self-respect component', and a 'sense of community component'. Based on that reconstruction of the Rawlsian position I will investigate whether such a position is reconcilable with the demand for an unconditional Basic Income. The article's contribution is mostly exegetical albeit in dealing with Basic Income it elucidates how an oft-proposed policy consideration with a bearing upon work can and cannot be justified.

1. Introduction

The issue of work has had an eventful history over the last 150 years of philosophical thought. In the beginning of that period 'work' was considered a key concept of practical philosophy as, allegedly, it was only a matter of years until working relations would lead to the biggest social reconstruction the world had ever seen. Yet, after the authoritative criticism of Marxist thought in the middle of the last century—for which the names Castoriadis and Habermas stand out—the tide has turned. For the rest of the 20th century the issue of work had, if at all, been brought up mostly as a matter of burial. The 'end of work' (Rifkin) became a foregone conclusion. Now, finally, the waves seem to calm, and a less ideological treatment of work and its role in society is in reach. It is, hence, only logical that the oeuvre of John Rawls—a philosopher with a reputation for sobriety—has recently been investigated with regards to its bearing upon work (cf. Hsieh 2009; Moriarty 2009). Unfortunately, in contrast to his great liberal precursor J. S. Mill, Rawls has not delivered a fully-fledged political economy, and, as a result, there is no clear account of the function work would assume in a Rawlsian society. We will, therefore, never know exactly

what this eminent philosopher thought of the issue. The closest Rawls got to spelling out a political economy are his considerations of a fair economic system, what he calls a Property-Owning Democracy (POD), in his late work *Justice as Fairness*. Thereby, he touches upon the issue of work. It is from these remarks, and a few others, widely scattered over his opus, that those with an interest in Rawls's understanding of work must construct a Rawlsian account of the societal function of work in a just society.

To do so is the main concern of the article at hand. As part of this task it is to be investigated whether a governmental provision of a basic income (BI) is a suggestion that could be endorsed by Rawls's theory of justice. The relation between his theory and BI is a controversial issue. Van Parijs (1995, 94–6) and Birnbaum (2010) argue that BI is a necessary supplement to Rawls's theory and Williamson (2009, 444) claims that BI fits well into Rawls's POD whereas Freeman (2007, 229) provides strong evidence to make the case that Rawls rejected BI. The application of Rawls's account of work to BI is not only of interest as it might extend our understanding of Rawls but also because it sheds new light on the issue of BI as the only one among the more radical proposals to reshape the societal role of work with a real chance to be implemented in a Western democracy in due course. In Switzerland a popular initiative has collected enough signatures to elicit a national referendum on the implementation of what would become a substantial BI.

The argument here presented commences with a reconstruction of Rawls's position on work, a reconstruction that significantly revises Hsieh's (2009) as well as Moriarty's (2009) exegetical accounts of the role of work in Rawls's POD (*section 2*). Subsequently the plausibility of this alternative understanding of Rawls will be strengthened by demonstrating that it neatly dovetails Williamson's (2009) elaborations on the physiognomy of Rawls's POD (*section 3*). In a next step the thus strengthened Rawlsian account of work is called on to examine whether a governmental provision of a basic income is a suggestion that could be endorsed by Rawls (*section 4*). The article concludes with remarks on what Rawls's treatment of the issue of work tells us about the political implications of his oeuvre (*section 5*).

2. Rawls's Account of Work—A Reconsideration

To get a grasp on Rawls's understanding of the role of work in a just society, it is useful to begin with two accounts of work from which Rawls's must be kept apart.¹ The one can be called an instrumentalist, the other a sentimentalist understanding of work. As here invoked, both merely serve the purpose of giving Rawls's understanding of work clearer contours, and we can, hence, refrain from evaluating them. According to what I call an instrumentalist understanding of work, work's one and only function lies in providing the necessary means for a good life. An instrumentalist can account for the fact that some individuals value

¹ This article follows Hsieh's definition of work: "By work I have in mind compensated employment and production outside of the household." (2009, 397)

their work not only for the wage it pays, but also for non-pecuniary benefits it provides. Yet, from the perspective of an instrumentalist, this is not something a society should foster. Rather it should be qualified as an individual taste on a par with, say, an interest in Spanish football or in Buddhist prayers. According to the instrumentalist, society's goal consists in being free from work as work is merely a necessary evil until technology is sophisticated enough to provide the resources needed for fulfilling each individual's conception of the good life without the help of human labor. Thus, from the instrumentalist's point of view, it is perfectly comprehensible, even legitimate, that individuals make use of every possibility to dodge work—e.g. live from social security—as long as this is compatible with their conception of the good life. This attitude towards work is not a mere theoretical artifice but conceptualizes, more or less, the libertarian position on work as it figures, for instance, in Van Parijs (1995, ch. 4).

Whom I dub to be a sentimentalist with regards to work is someone who holds that work, far from being merely a replaceable means to other ends, is a vital part in the building of men's character and identity, and that, hence, people without a job are deprived of a major element in leading a good life. According to the sentimentalist, work forms an integral part of an individual's acquisition of what is often called second nature. Due to the utmost importance the sentimentalist attaches to work, she not only advocates a right to work but propagates a right to *meaningful* work. Thus, the sentimentalist position judges work primarily by its contribution to creating valuable members of society² and only secondarily by its efficiency with regards to producing goods and services that are useful to society. This position is assumed by a motley crowd of thinkers. It is prominently advocated in Sennett's praise for the craftsman (2008) and it provides the base for Schwartz's claim that only an institutional right to meaningful work secures the autonomy of individuals (1982). De Botton even entrusts work with consoling men for the transient nature of life (2009, 318–26). The sentimentalist position can claim support at least as far back as Adam Smith's argument on the detrimental effects “of the progress of the division of labour” that will ultimately yield citizens “as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become” because “the understandings of the greater part of men are necessarily formed by their ordinary employments” (2008[1776], 429).

With the instrumentalists and against the sentimentalists Rawls does not question that work has, first and foremost, the task of efficiently producing the goods and services a society needs to survive and to thrive. Rawls, in general, favors market economies, and this is also true when it comes to the organization of labor (cf. 1999[1971], 240f.). Market organization, just as a few other possibilities for organizing an economy, falls, according to Rawls, within the realm of economic systems reconcilable with the first principle of justice (equal liberties) as well as with the first part of the second principle (fair equality of opportunity). The reason for favoring market organization over other forms not

² Ideas of what exactly it is that constitutes a valuable member of society can, by the way, vary significantly with different sentimentalists. We are—fortunately—not obliged to take up this issue as the content of the concept ‘valuable member of society’ does not make a difference to the argument here presented.

exempted by the justice principles so far, is that, under normal circumstances, market organization is most conducive to the second part of the second principle (the difference principle) in that it efficiently allocates production factors while, at the same time, allowing for distributive regulation by the government—e.g. via adjusting “the overall amount of investment, the rate of interest, and the quantity of money”—with the aim of improving the situation of the least-advantaged members of society (1999[1971], 241). So, *for reasons of justice*, Rawls impresses an efficiency component on work.³

Yet, with the sentimentalists and against the instrumentalists, the function of work in Rawls’s theory is not limited to the efficiency component. Work not only provides the means to acquire what Rawls calls “primary social goods” but is, as I will try to show, inextricably entangled with one of these primary goods, even with what is “perhaps the most important” one of these, namely self-respect (1999[1971], 386). “Without it”, so Rawls elaborates on the special status of self-respect, “nothing may seem worth doing, or if some things have value for us, we lack the will to strive for them. All desire and activity becomes empty and vain, and we sink into apathy and cynicism” (1999[1971], 386). The many “communities and associations” a “well-ordered society” comprises are the Rawlsian antidote to a loss of self-respect:

“It normally suffices that for each person there is some association (one or more) to which he belongs and within which the activities that are rational for him are publicly affirmed by others. In this way we acquire a sense that what we do in everyday life is worthwhile.” (1999[1971], 387)

Rawls is not explicit on this point but it seems natural that the relations that individuals form at work play a significant role in this respect. Taking into account that for a majority of citizens of Western nation states the workplace is the place where they spend most of their time awake, it is of vital importance that they get respect for what they do at work. The least that can be said is that, from a Rawlsian point of view, it is hardly imaginable that an individual can build and preserve self-respect if she is constantly told that her work is not worthwhile, if, in Rawls’s words, her work is refused public affirmation by others.

The link between work and self-respect gets tightened if we take a look at Rawls’s critique of welfare state capitalism (WSC), i.e. the economic system of most Western nation states. According to Rawls, WSC is deficient because it is satisfied with redistributing economic means to the needy, instead of having the ambition “to put all citizens in a position to manage their own affairs on a footing of a suitable degree of social and economic equality”, and thereby turns the needy into objects of “charity and compassion” even if the means distributed are on a level sufficient to lead a decent life (2001, 139). For Rawls it is, hence, not enough *that* individuals have sufficient economic means. Due to the crucial importance of self-respect it also plays a role *how* they get these means. So

³ This is consistent with Freeman’s interpretation of Rawls’s reasons for a market organization of labor (Freeman 2007, 222).

we can infer that, under normal circumstances, acquiring one's means through work instead of depending on governmental redistribution is an integral part in fostering self-respect. This dovetails Rawls's demand for "full employment in the sense that those who want work can find it" (1999[1971], 244).

Hence, besides the efficiency component of work, Rawls's account comprises a self-respect component. The latter clearly separates Rawls from the instrumentalists. As Rawls's position with regards to work can be plainly distinguished from this camp one is tempted to push it too far into the sentimentalist camp. I think that Hsieh (2009, 398) somewhat succumbs to this temptation when he argues that Rawls's preference of POD over WSC can only be explained by the fact that it is of utmost importance to Rawls that individuals have meaningful work. Relying on a common definition of meaningful work, Hsieh determines it as work that "requires the exercise of judgment, initiative, and intellect on the part of workers" (2009, 400). The connection he establishes between meaningful work and the superiority of a POD is that in a Rawlsian POD each individual has capital at her command and therefore more bargaining power in the labor market (2009, 406). In order to lure workers, employers in a POD, so Hsieh continues, are forced to render workplaces more attractive by rendering work more meaningful; otherwise potential workers renounce on work and live, at least for some time, on their capital means instead (2009, 406).

Yet, in opposition to Hsieh, I do not see why WSC could not achieve the same effect that, according to Hsieh, only POD can bring into existence. By paying unconditional unemployment benefits, the traditional welfare state could increase the bargaining power of the workers on the labor market. Individuals will decide against assuming a certain job if the utility it generates is not higher than or at least equal to the utility of the unemployment benefit. Thereby WSC also has means to increase the pressure on the employers to improve working conditions, and the reason Hsieh provides for Rawls's preference of POD over WSC evaporates.⁴

Hsieh's other argument for the supposedly high importance of meaningful work in Rawls's theory of justice is that Rawls subscribes to the Aristotelian Principle understood as: "[O]ther things equal, human beings enjoy the exercise of their realized capacities (their innate or trained abilities), and this enjoyment increases the more the capacity is realized, or the greater its complexity." (Rawls 1999[1971], 374, quoted by Hsieh 2009, 406). That Rawls is devoted to this principle suggests, so Hsieh, that Rawls "recommend[s] meaningful work" as he (Hsieh) has defined it (2009, 406), namely as "[requiring] the exercise of judgment, initiative, and intellect on the part of workers" (see above). One can surely follow Hsieh when he wants to say that Rawls, other things equal, prefers societies that provide more meaningful work over societies with less. Who would not? But, what if push comes to shove, what if there is a trade-off

⁴ It is the case that, by now, more and more welfare states pay unemployment benefits only subject to certain conditions—especially the condition that individuals assume a job if they are offered one. Yet, my argument with Hsieh is not about the empirical question what welfare states nowadays do but about a comparison between what WSC is capable of doing in comparison to what a POD is capable of.

between meaningful work and the efficiency component of work?⁵ Sure, if there is a trade-off in the sense that a massive increase in the meaningfulness of work can be bought with minor losses in efficiency, Rawls is free to allow that, for reasons of justice, one has to go for meaning in this particular case.

Yet, on the level of the basic structure of society, Rawls—again for reasons of justice!—has to give priority to the efficiency component. The reason is that from the standpoint of Rawls’s ideal theory sacrificing the efficiency of work would deprive the least-advantaged members of society from the gains of an efficient labor market; gains that ought to be used to their advantage (at least up to a certain threshold which in most societies is surely not reached yet), a relation between the need for labor markets and the difference principle that is pointed out by Freeman (2007, 222).⁶ As this claim is directly deducible to the second part of the second principle of justice—and, therefore, to be decided at the “legislative stage”—it has priority over the claim that work shall be meaningful, a claim that falls into “partial compliance theory”.

In other words, the efficiency demand with regards to work is incorporated into the basic structure of society whereas the demand for meaningful work is to be negotiated by the relevant societal entities—e.g. between unions and employers. So the unions and the employers are restrained by the demand for efficiency that is built into the basic structure of society and is hence binding for all further agreements (see Rawls’s “four-stage sequence” 1999[1971], ch. 31). To reject that the meaningfulness of each job is an essential feature, which the organization of work in a just society is supposed to fulfill, sets Rawls’s concept of work apart from the sentimentalists.⁷

Still, although it is, I suppose, not what Hsieh thinks it is, there is something to the claim that meaningful work plays an important role in Rawls’s account of work. There is, to be more precise, more than a kernel of truth in Hsieh’s (2012, 153) and Moriarty’s (2009, 457f.) claim that the meaningfulness of work is entangled with what I call the self-respect component of work. In order to spell out what it is, it makes sense to get to the bottom of Hsieh’s remark (2008, 76; 2012, 153) that Rawls’s conception of meaningful work is connected with socialist thinking inspired by Marx. This will shed more light onto the self-

⁵ There is, probably starting with Adam Smith’s investigation of the pin factory, consistent empirical evidence that there is such a trade-off in many, though surely not in all, cases. The trade-off often stems from the efficiency gains of specialization that takes variety out of an individual’s job.

⁶ I thank an anonymous reviewer for shedding more light on this point.

⁷ One might then ask what about potential trade-offs between the efficiency component and the self-respect component? I think that in such a case his theory of justice obliges Rawls, for the reason and with the qualification just mentioned, to give priority to the efficiency component. The reason I think that, nevertheless, the self-respect component can be called a function work has to fulfill in Rawls’s just society whereas the meaningfulness of work shall not be elevated to that status is, first, that Rawls articulates the importance he attaches to self-respect much more clearer and, second, that in the real world there is far more often a trade-off between the efficiency and the meaningfulness of work as understood by Hsieh than between a job’s efficiency and its potential to deliver self-respect to its holder. The rest of the article will shed more light on the latter claim.

respect component in Rawls's concept of work and will bring to the fore a third component of the function of work in Rawls's account.

Axel Honneth distinguishes two influential forms of criticizing capitalist working conditions voiced by socialist thinkers (2012, essay 4). The one laments that capitalism is deficient as it truncates the organic structure of work and with it the objectification of one's labor by cutting up production into different, in itself meaningless tasks. In other words, thanks to capitalism's extreme division of labor, workers can no longer identify with the product of their work as their individual contribution to the creation of the product is negligible. In the times of pre-factory work there supposedly was, in opposition to capitalist work, a high, often even full net output ratio enabling workers to regard the product of their work as an objectification of their skills. Due to that, according to this critique, workers found meaning in their labor, a form of gaining meaning I call *meaning-through-the-use-of-one's-skills*.⁸ The other socialist critique identified by Honneth bemoans that in capitalism the creative cooperation between workers is no longer visible to the workers themselves. As a result, workers in capitalism cannot gain a sense of the importance of their work for the reproduction, let alone for the thriving of society. In pre-capitalist times this was, supposedly, not the case as workers were directly exchanging the products of their work in local markets and could thereby develop a sense of their work's importance to their fellow community members. I call this way of finding meaning in work *meaning-through-one's-contribution-to-society*.⁹

It is neither the bite nor the empirical cogency of these two socialist criticisms I am interested in. Instead, for the here pursued purposes it is important to note that there is a structural difference between the two forms of criticism. The former traces the supposed deprivation of modern work forms back to a worsened relation between an individual and what she does, between the worker and her work, so to speak. The latter traces the supposed deprivation back to a deteriorated relation between an individual and other individuals, between the worker and her fellow members of society.

When, in their accounts of Rawls's understanding of work, Hsieh (2009) and also Moriarty (2009) emphasize the importance of "the exercise of judgment, initiative, and intellect on the part of workers" (see above) they put Rawls in vicinity to the former form of criticism. They implicitly argue that what Rawls finds bothersome about modern work forms is that they deprive workers of satisfying experiences in what they do, of a satisfying relation between them and the object of their work. Yet, I think we can make more sense of Rawls's remarks on work when we put him into the vicinity of the latter socialist critique. Each

⁸ While originally designed for societies producing goods, this idea can, at least partially, be applied to services as also with services it makes sense to speak of a varying real net output ratio.

⁹ Honneth does not make this explicit but both criticisms can be traced back to Marx's concept of alienation. Marx distinguishes four forms of alienation characteristic of capitalist working conditions: The worker is alienated from the product of his work which leads to his loss of gaining *meaning-through-the-use-of-his-skills* (my term), from his productive activity which leads to his loss of gaining *meaning-through-his-contribution-to-society* (my term), from his species ("Gattungswesen"), and from other human beings (2009[1844], 92).

time the issue of work is evoked in Rawls's books it is in relation with the idea of society as a fair system of cooperation or as a social union of social unions.

When speaking of work, Rawls reliably invokes the relation between individuals and their fellow members of society. This is the case in *Justice as Fairness* where he tells us how his theory is able to stay neutral to individuals with a comparatively high propensity for leisure time and, hence, a strong unwillingness to work. He introduces this issue by remembering the reader that his theory rests on the assumption "that all citizens are normal and fully cooperating members of society over a complete life" (2001, 179). It is true when in *The Law of Peoples* he remarks that the lack of "the opportunity for meaningful work" is so detrimental because it makes it hard for individuals to create a "sense that they are members of society" (2002[1999], 50). The connection between the individual and society is also striking when we glue Rawls to the claim that work is an important factor in an individual's creation of self-respect (as Hsieh 2012, 153, and Moriarty 2009, 457f., do, and as I did above) because Rawls is very clear that an individual's self-respect hinges on what other people think of her: besides "having a rational plan of life [...] that satisfies the Aristotelian Principle", to build-up self-respect "our person and deeds [must be] appreciated and confirmed by others" and "unless our endeavors are appreciated by our associates it is impossible for us to maintain the conviction that they are worthwhile" (1999[1971], 386f.). When it comes to work, Rawls is continuously interested in the relation between the individual and society and less concerned with the relation between the individual and what she actually does at work. He is, in my words, occupied with gaining *meaning-through-one's-contribution-to-society*, less with gaining *meaning-through-the-use-of-one's-skills*.

To be aware of this, edges our tools for reconstructing Rawls's account of work. The form of socialist critique Rawls is mainly influenced by implies that for an individual to acquire the feeling that her work is meaningful, it can be sufficient if she is aware that her work is part of a broader system of cooperation. It shows that an individual can get meaning out of her work if she has the feeling that what she does contributes to the reproduction and thriving of society even if the work itself, what she does on a daily basis, neither demands her exercise of judgment nor her initiative nor her intellect. The miners used to be the paradigm case of workers whose day-to-day labor is not only toilsome but also unhealthy as well as dangerous and who still attach a high meaning to and are very proud of their work. The source of this pride has usually been the miners', real or imagined, key role in the reproduction of society.¹⁰

This is nicely captured in a recent interview with a German coal miner, Fritz Neurath, conducted by a group of sociologists. Neurath, so he tells the interviewers, suffers under the fact that his branch of industry has lost its crucial importance for society over the last decades. He used to be very proud of his

¹⁰ This argument is central to Heilfurth's vast research on the work and culture of miners. The miners' identification with their profession is, according to him, unparalleled by any other profession and stems from the miners' conviction that their job is of central importance to society which translated into the saying: "Die Bergwerke haben vielen Ländern gleichsam Herz und Leben gegeben" ("The mines gave a heart and life to a lot of countries") (1983[1981], 11).

occupation as long as his branch of industry was the backbone of German society which had, according to his conviction, been the case for decades as ‘the coal’ has rebuilt the country after World War II and has been, due to the energy crises, indispensable throughout the 70s and, due to the mistrust of atomic energy created by Chernobyl, also in the 80s. Yet by now he has lost his pride in his job as thanks to the new, green energies coal mining has become a burden to society and can only survive thanks to subsidies (Schultheis/Vogel/Gemperle 2010, 90f.). Neurath, by the way, does not complain how tough his day-to-day labor is let alone how much he misses possibilities for initiative and the use of intellect.

This example in the negative of someone who lost meaning in his work demonstrates the high role a job’s perceived or real contribution to society can play in giving meaning to one’s job. With this option of giving meaning to a job in mind we can see that Rawls has good reason to recurrently emphasize the link between work and society. Even toilsome and intellectually unchallenging work can be appreciated by individuals if they are convinced that it is important for the functioning of society. As the acquisition of self-respect proceeds along the same lines—viz. being a relation between an individual and society—, these elaborations strengthen our assumption that self-respect is a primary component in a Rawlsian account of work while, at the same time, the meaningfulness of work understood as the exercise of judgment, initiative, and intellect (Aristotelian principle) is only of secondary importance. We can agree with Hsieh (2012, 153) and Moriarty (2009, 457f.) that, according to Rawls’s theory, in order to build up self-respect, it is as a matter of fact essential for an individual to perceive her job as meaningful. Yet, Hsieh and Moriarty fail to see that the meaningfulness of a job is not exclusively a function of how demanding a job is with regards to the exercise of judgment, initiative and intellect. A job can be perceived as meaningful on different grounds, among them the comforting conviction that it fulfills an essential role in a fair system of cooperation.

It is important at this point of the argument to remind the reader of where in Rawls’s theory we currently find ourselves. Otherwise it could look as if Rawls tried to find an excuse for not improving the experiences of workers at work and consoling them by telling them that their personal sacrifices during the time they work are made up by the thriving of society. This is surely not Rawls’s—or any reasonable person’s—position. Such a repressive understanding of work in Rawls’s theory is precluded by the principles of justice which demand, first and foremost, equal basic liberties, a demand that cuts through the whole of society, through all social unions and thereby also to relations at work. Hsieh, thus, makes an important point when he argues that Rawls’s theory is in no way reconcilable to work that is characterized by “relation[s] between workers and their employers [as] that of a servant to a master” (2009, 405).

Moreover, following the first part of Rawls’s second principle of justice (fair equality of opportunity) it is crystal-clear that every member of society must not only have formal access to but a fair chance to actually get the most self-fulfilling and intellectually demanding job society has to offer. At the same time, Rawls is realistic enough to acknowledge that not all jobs necessary for the

reproduction of society can be made to fulfill the Aristotelian Principle without cutting the job's efficiency on a proportion that is, in the end, detrimental to the life chances of the least-advantaged. By being aware of the *meaning-through-one's-contribution-to-society*-option one can see that Rawls's account of work has something on offer to the ones who hold a job that neither demands initiative nor intellect. With regards to the self-respect component of work this brings to the fore that also a toilsome and deadening job has potential for yielding self-respect, namely the self-respect one gets from the fact that one's hard work fulfills an important function in the reproduction of society. It is quite obvious that Rawls's attention to this component of work brings along a strong criticism of how Western societies often think and speak of its miners, cleaners, garbage men and others, let alone how it pays them.

Furthermore, to interpret Rawls along the lines of the second socialist criticism reveals, I think, that there is a third component to the function of work in Rawls's account. When discussing work, Rawls is, as we have seen, not primarily concerned with the relation between the individual and what she does (the object of her work) but with the relation between the individual and her fellow members of society. Yet until now, we have focused on only one of two directions the relation between an individual and society can assume. We have been attentive to the fact that workers can derive self-respect through being aware of this relation, thereby putting the individual more on the receiving, society more on the giving end (the individuals treat the contribution to society merely as a vehicle to gain self-respect, so to speak).

However, Rawls also takes account of the opposite direction. Individuals are supposed to be aware that it is a reasonable demand that they contribute to society's overall well-being and are not only fixed on their personal well-being. Thus, in Rawls's theory, individuals are by assumption "fully cooperating members of society over a complete life", an assumption Rawls regards as fundamental because it "implies that all are willing to work and to do their part in sharing the burdens of social life" (2001, 179). To work is for Rawls the most straightforward way to demonstrate that one is willing to contribute to society.¹¹ We might now better understand why the ideal of full employment is emphasized by Rawls (see above). If an individual does not get the opportunity to work she is barred from an important possibility to demonstrate her willingness to contribute to society.

But what does the trick? Why is work a straightforward way to demonstrate one's willingness to contribute to society? It is probably not too far-fetched to marry Rawls's account of work to the following, somewhat Hegelian, position: in that the products an individual's work contributes to are sold on anonymous markets, modern work forms have the potential to shape awareness in individuals that each member of society is connected to anyone else in a tightly-knit chain of production. This is the follow-up to the direct trade relations characteristic of pre-capitalist times when individuals produced for their subsistence or, at most, for a modest and manageable number of people.

¹¹ This does not exclude other possibilities to contribute to society such as caring for one's family or volunteer work.

Today, to work is to assume a role in the reproduction of a society that is no longer visible at a glance and, in that, the best way to develop a feeling that one is part of this vast and mostly anonymous society. In working, one is a direct member of the social union of social unions, to use one of Rawls's most cherished expressions, and not only an indirect one in being a member of the social union(s) one is born into—the family—or chooses according to gusto—e.g. the local football club. We can say that Rawls shares the second socialist concern—viz. individuals are only satisfied with their work when they perceive its contribution to society—, but is, with Hegel and against Marx, less pessimistic when it comes to the possibilities offered by modern work relations for developing a sense of one's contribution to society via work.¹² On a policy level this could imply that there should be more efforts to publicly recognize and thereby raise awareness for the important contributions of workers to society, efforts that could encompass such heterogeneous measures as public holidays, prizes, but also books such as the one by De Bottom (2009) that celebrates workers. A lot of these measures could be very effective and still come at much lower costs than efforts to increase the meaningfulness of work by making day-to-day work intellectually more demanding.

Taking this Hegelian line into consideration, I think it is fair to say that there is a third component in Rawls's account of work. Work is supposed to entrench a sense of community in individuals as work provides the best opportunity for individuals to perceive their connection with, i.e. their being a part of, society—a task all the more difficult in the vast and anonymous societies so characteristic of modernity but also duly justified in a well-ordered society because “the good attained from the common culture far exceeds our work in the sense that we cease to be mere fragments: that part of ourselves that we directly realize is joined to a wider and just arrangement the aims of which we affirm” (Rawls 1999[1971], 464).

To embed the claim that work has the role of ingraining a sense of community in individuals into the wider array of Rawls's theory it can be said that in assuming this role work is a crucial factor in an individuals' development of a sense of justice. A sense of justice, that “great social asset” (Rawls 1999[1971], 504), is, according to Rawls's “third psychological law”, the result of feeling connected with other members of society,¹³ something that work is capable of bringing about even under the tough circumstances for doing so that modern societies challenge us with. In being instrumental for the creation of a sense of justice work ultimately has the task of contributing to the stability of society as,

¹² On Hegel, work, and building a sense of community see the first part of Smith/Deranty (eds.) 2012.

¹³ “This law [the third psychological one] states”, so Rawls elaborates, “that once the attitudes of love and trust, and of friendly feelings and mutual confidence, have been generated in accordance with the two preceding psychological laws, then *the recognition that we and those for whom we care are the beneficiaries of an established and enduring just institution tends to engender in us the corresponding sense of justice*. We develop a desire to apply and to act upon the principles of justice *once we realize how social arrangements answering to them have promoted our good and that of those with whom we are affiliated*. In due course we come to appreciate the ideal of just human cooperation.” (1999[1971], 414f.; my italics)

how Rawls (1999[1971], 397) informs us, a sense of justice in citizens is pivotal for stability.

It is time to take stock: I have argued that Rawls's account of work consists of three components, an efficiency component, a self-respect component, and a sense of community component. The latter two components separate Rawls from the instrumentalist position. The importance he attaches to the first component puts him at a distance to the sentimentalist position, a distance that is furthered by Rawls's reluctance to elevate the importance of the meaningfulness of work in the sense of the Aristotelian Principle to the level of the three other components. It matters for an individual's self-respect that she considers her job meaningful but there is more than one way to achieve this. I reason that this interpretation of Rawls's account of work comfortably couches what is probably Rawls's most informative sentence when it comes to his understanding of work:

“The lack of a sense of long-term security and of *the opportunity for meaningful work and occupation is destructive not only of citizens' self-respect*, but of their *sense that they are members of society* and not simply caught in it.” (2002[1999], 50; my italics)

The efficiency component of work is, admittedly, not a part of the sentence. Yet, the sentence very well captures the self-respect and the sense of community component. Furthermore, when it comes to meaningful work in the sense of the Aristotelian Principle¹⁴ the sentence provides a hint that in this domain Rawls is (merely) concerned with providing a fair opportunity to get such work, well aware that there is a constant societal need for jobs that do not fulfill this criterion.¹⁵

3. Work within Rawls's Property-Owning Democracy

In order to strengthen the claim that the here presented account accurately represents Rawls's thoughts on the issue of work I intend to demonstrate its consistency with Rawls's understanding of a just society's economic order, with what he calls—following the economist Meade (1964)—a Property-Owning Democracy. It is thus crucial to determine that the three components of work I laid

¹⁴ It can be assumed that when Rawls explicitly mentions 'meaningful work' he refers to the understanding of meaningful work that Hsieh and Moriarty have in mind and not to the one I introduced here.

¹⁵ Even if there was a big difference that justified a distinction between an early and a late Rawls—what I doubt to be the case—there is no change of position by Rawls with regards to the meaningfulness of work. I think that Moriarty's (2009) argument that the late Rawls, as opposed to the early one, has become a fervent propagator of the importance of meaningful work (in Moriarty's Aristotelian sense) rests on the false assumption that Rawls—the supposedly late one—would demand that the state has to guarantee *meaningful work* and not simply work. The quotes Moriarty refers to (2009, 441) prove that Rawls holds that (a) the state has to assume the role of an employer of last resort and that (b) individuals need to have the opportunity to get a meaningful job. Yet, the two claims are distinct and, hence, Moriarty's assumption (explicit in 2009, 447) is not justified that, according to the late Rawls, there is a connection between (a) and (b) in that the state was supposed to offer a *meaningful* job (in Moriarty's sense) if the state's role of employer of last resort is evoked.

bare in the above find confirmation in Rawls's understanding of the economic order of his ideal society. As Rawls has merely provided a rough sketch of such a POD I will hereby mainly rely on Williamson's (2009) elaborations on Rawls's POD. In doing so, it is not necessary to follow Williamson into all the details of such a POD, but sufficient to focus on the specifications that have a bearing upon work. The main characteristic of such a POD—what distinguishes it from welfare state capitalism—is that, according to Rawls, instead of relying on “redistribution of income [...] at the end of each period”, it, “from the outset, put[s] in the hands of citizens generally, and not only of a few, sufficient productive means for them to be fully cooperating members of society on a footing of equality” (2001, 140). The main instruments to achieve this are investments into education, a substantial inheritance tax, and a focus on consumption taxes rather than income taxes.

Approaching Williamson's elaborations on Rawls's understanding of POD with an interest in the function of work, it is striking that work keeps playing an important role. Those heralding the end of work (Rifkin 2004[1995]) or the negligibility of (industrial) workers for the progress of society (Unger 2005) do not find a supporter in Rawls. Quite the opposite, work is a vehicle to realize the wide spread of productive capital, the POD's main concern. Loosely following Schweickart's (1993) argument for democratically-organized worker cooperatives, Williamson argues that one important element in providing all citizens with sufficient productive means is via the workplace, by “expanding direct employee ownership of firms” (2009, 447). It is, therefore, not surprising that full-employment counts among a POD's goals (2009, 436). This is consistent with Freeman who points out that Rawls's preference of a consumption tax over an income tax is mainly caused by the latter's tendency to discourage “work and productive efforts and contributions” (2007, 228).

According to Williamson's blueprint of a POD, each member of society would have a diversified stock of capital of, at least, \$ 100,000 (2009, 441). Among the different assets that make up that diversified stock, Williamson is particularly concerned with home equity which would account for about a third of assets. His idea seems to be that the value of homeownership is not exhausted by the amount it would deliver were it converted into cash. On top of being economic capital, homeownership is a crucial condition for building up social capital, to borrow a concept from sociology (cf. Fukuyama 1999 and especially Putnam 2000). “[N]ear-universal adult ownership of residential property”, so Williamson lets us know, “might help provide citizens with *self-respect* and contribute to a social order that fostered such respect” (2009, 443; my italics). Furthermore, and this is where social capital comes into the equation, we are told that “[t]he fact of homeownership would give each household a tangible stake in the well-being of their local communities, and would help *cultivate the idea* that *everyone* has an *interest* in the *overall health* of the economic system” (2009, 441; my italics). We hereby meet again two objectives of Rawls that, according to the argument presented above, were already at the heart of the societal function Rawls attaches to work: giving self-respect to as well as entrenching a sense of community in individuals.

It is even, I suppose, a sensible extension of Williamson's Rawlsian account to blend the issue of homeownership with the issue of work. In order to realize the potential social capital of homeownership it must be complemented with stable working conditions. The self-respect and the interest in the local community that homeownership has up its sleeve will not get out into the open if it is not fostered by adjuvant working conditions. As Hochschild (1997) has illustrated with anecdotal evidence and as Hartmann and Honneth (in Honneth 2012, essay 10) have conceptualized in their 'paradoxes of the capitalist modernization' approach, establishing deep and long-term relations with others—an individual's basis for building up self-respect—and awakening community life is reliant upon working conditions that provide a sufficient amount of free time as well as local proximity between work and home.

Besides the self-respect and the sense of community component also the efficiency component of work finds confirmation in Williamson's POD. Williamson leaves no doubt that a Rawlsian POD is a market economy, and that that also holds for labor (2009, 448). Obviously, for a follower of Rawls, this is not the case because the existence of markets is deemed a good *per se* but because of markets' efficiency and consistency with the principles of justice. Moreover, Williamson follows in the footsteps of Rawls in dissociating himself from more utopian ideas for reconstructing modern-day work relations. This is not limited to declarations as when he makes clear that a POD "is not an ideal that valorizes industrial workers or regards them as the necessary agents of social change" (2009, 449) but also reflected in concrete policy considerations. Despite a widely-shared sympathy with the idea of an economy of small entrepreneurs instead of the large-scale, corporate-giants-yielding capitalism of the present day, Williamson plainly rejects any plans for returning to the world of small-scale businesses.¹⁶ In doing so, he drives a coach and four horses through the sentimentalists' ambition to do all it takes to give more meaning to day-to-day labor in the sense of increasing the exercise of judgment, initiative, and intellect on the part of workers.

A small-entrepreneur economy—something akin to the medieval world of the craftsmen as the German Romanticists have idolized it—is the most promising and most straightforward path to giving this sort of meaning to day-to-day labor. Such an economy, in fact, figures as the lost ideal of some of the followers of Marx when it comes to bringing back *meaning-through-the-use-of-one's-skills*. The medieval craftsmen produced entirely on their own, at a max with the help of an apprentice, and, thanks to the thereby reached high real net output ratio, allegedly found meaning in their work through the *use-of-skills*, among them the technical skills required by their trade but also, I suppose, judgment, initiative, and intellect (cf. Honneth 2012, essay 4, for a critical take on this sort of socialist critique). It is, thus, no coincidence that Hsieh points out that it is especially

¹⁶ The reasons Williamson provides are, first, that, once achieved, the world of small-scale businesses might not be stable, second, it is inefficient in industries that rely on economies of scale, third, it makes it difficult to uphold labor and environmental protection, fourth, its legal implementation would be overly complicated, maybe even impossible, and, fifth, efforts to implement it might lead to upheavals (2009, 444–6).

the “highly specialized jobs” in factories “that are routine, boring and devoid of meaning” (2008, 75), just the opposite jobs to the one’s of the lost world of the craftsmen.¹⁷

4. Rawls’s Account of Work and its Bearing upon Basic Income

The implementation of a basic income (BI) is arguably the most debated policy issue with important implications for the role work plays in society. The idea behind BI is that the government guarantees a sum of money to each citizen on a regular basis whereby each gets the same amount no matter whether she works or not, no matter whether she is rich or poor. Citizenship is, hence, the sole condition to qualify for BI. The current proposal in Switzerland, for instance, suggests providing each citizen with 2,500 Swiss Francs (about US-\$ 2,600) on a monthly basis. However, most proposals in the philosophic literature are far below that value and figure rather at around \$ 600 per month. For the purposes of this article we can stay agnostic with regards to the precise amount and rather stipulate that it is above the social minimum. Thereby, BI would give each member of society the opportunity to refrain from working and, in doing so, massively alter the role of work in most societies in that work would no longer be the single most important factor for acquiring the means for survival. After a few more general considerations concerning the relation of Rawls’s POD with BI, I am going to use the account of work here ascribed to Rawls in order to investigate how BI would have to be evaluated from a Rawlsian perspective.

It has been argued that the realization of a POD along Rawlsian lines rendered BI obsolete. According to Hsieh, the widespread ownership of capital (WOC henceforth) that is characteristic of POD reduces an individual’s dependence on work and, in doing so, workers’ dependence on capital owners in the same way BI would (2012, 156). Yet, BI merely substitutes, so Hsieh’s argument seems to run, one dependence by another, namely dependence on capital owners by dependence on the government, in that under a BI regime “the recipient [of BI] depends on the specific decision of the state” to keep on paying BI, something that was not the case when there would be WOC (2012, 156). I can see Hsieh’s point, though I think he overstates the difference between WOC and BI with regards to the issue of dependence on the state. The first thing to note is that an individual’s dependence on a state’s decision under a BI regime can be decreased easily by adding a (constitutional) provision that an inflation-adjusted BI must not be abolished for a certain amount of years—say 30.

Second, in opposition to Hsieh’s assumption, WOC does not provide that much independence from a decision of the state either. For one thing, starting in the here and now, WOC can only be realized by a redistribution of wealth concerted by the state. This is true also for the sensible proposal brought to the

¹⁷ Note that I excluded the question of workplace democracy. It is, I suppose, an issue too complicated to be discussed in such a short treatise. Rawls (2001, 178) seems to sympathize with workplace democracy but one can hardly say that he euphorically embraces the idea.

fore by Williamson (2012), giving the state 20 years to achieve WOC by relying on rather modest increases in taxes. Nevertheless, when a government at one point in time decides to alter the distribution of income so that it yields WOC, it can, under a different majority situation, undo that distribution and bring back the massive inequalities contemporary societies grapple with. For another thing, even a government that would not subscribe to such restorative ends once WOC was reached would be obliged to permanently keep in place policies that uphold the decentralization of capital. The reason is that market societies, at least as we know of them, have a tendency to lead to wealth inequalities. Give \$ 100,000 to each member of society and take away everything else she owns, it will not take long for some to have billions and for others to be broke. So even under a fully-functioning POD, one should not overestimate an individual's economic independence from decisions of the state.

The point that WOC is unstable if not enduringly fostered by the state—which, following Nozick's famous example (1974, 160–4), might be called the Wilt-Chamberlain-problem—even shows that BI, far from being obsolete, could be an integral part of a POD as it could serve as an instrument to help *secure* WOC once it is reached. In guaranteeing a fixed amount of money each month, BI works against the market's tendency to lead to economic inequalities. In that respect it is superior to Ackerman's and Alstott's (1999) suggestion of providing a lump sum payment to individuals—say at the age of 18. The latter is more heavily burdened with the Wilt-Chamberlain-problem as it does nothing to stabilize intra-generational WOC.¹⁸ Furthermore, BI could be an ingredient in the recipe for *reaching* WOC. Under a BI regime individuals have the possibility to continue with their working life and use the additional BI income to build up a stock of capital. As a matter of fact, Williamson suggests using BI as one measure among others for establishing a POD as well as for maintaining it (2009, 444; 2012, 243, n. 9).

However, to argue for BI from a Rawlsian perspective is not only convincing due to implementation and stability considerations but also because there is

¹⁸ The idea of a lump sum payment is at the heart of the stakeholder society sketched by Ackerman/Alstott 1999. There is one caveat with respect to the BI's superiority to a lump sum payment when it comes to the Wilt-Chamberlain problem: There must be a prohibition to take up a loan on the net present value of the BI income stream over an individual's life because taking up such a loan would be the same as converting the BI to a lump sum payment. It is, in my opinion, fairly easy to uphold such a prohibition without running the risk of breaking down the loan market as pictured in Ackerman's and Alstott's bleak account of the effects of such a prohibition (cf. 2006, 49). It can be achieved in that lenders are prohibited to issue a loan based on the value of a BI stream. In case of default they must prove that their assessment of the loan they issued did not take into account money the borrower would receive from BI. If this was the case they would refrain from issuing loans based on the net present value of BI. At the same time, this would not change the loan market as we know it. Just as today, money will be lent based on collaterals different from BI such as property, bailment or a promising business idea. Also Ackerman's and Alstott's (2006, 49) argument that this prohibition would lead to a sinister black market where 'street thugs' lend money based on the net present value of an individuals' BI stream is not carrying force. The debtor can just go to court, and the loan from the street thug will be nullified based on the fact that it depended on BI as collateral. That street thugs usually do not care for court orders, is, as Ackerman and Alstott seem to overlook, not a problem that emerges only after the introduction of BI.

strong reason to suppose that BI provided special benefits to the least-advantaged.¹⁹ Leaving aside the fact that the targeted social welfare systems as practiced in Western democracies provide plenty of room for improvement and solely concentrating on the potential benefits of BI, one could come up with the following points: a BI that provides at least the social minimum might reduce the fear of job loss, might end the phenomenon of working poor, might increase the bargaining power of the suppliers on the labor market, might turn less important the rather unrealistic goal of full employment, and render less harmful the fact that there is no equal access to the labor market due to inequalities in education. There can be no doubt that it is the least advantaged that suffer most from the problems BI would alleviate, maybe even eradicate.

Last but not least, BI caters to the value of neutrality in that each member of society receives an equal amount of money,²⁰ while at the same time having the most impact on the least-advantaged as the amount of money it provides makes the most difference to them in that it increases their income by the highest proportion. These considerations may be far from proving that BI is in accord with Rawls's two principles of justice (cf. Birnbaum 2010 for an effort to prove that) but provide sufficient evidence to allow us to move on and investigate how BI fares with regards to the account of work here ascribed to Rawls.

There is ample reason to assume that a social-minimum-providing BI decreased the percentage of the population that holds a regular job and/or the time people work in their job as work would no longer be indispensable to reach the social minimum. This is, as a matter of fact, the main reason why the majority of its proponents demand the implementation of BI. BI is supposed to free individuals from the need to work (cf. Van Parijs 1995). So we can presume that the introduction of BI will have consequences for the societal functions Rawls attaches to work: the efficiency component, the self-respect component, and the sense of community component.

BI would undoubtedly shift the balance of power on the labor market in the direction of workers as it made them less dependent on work. The impact this supposedly has on the efficiency of our economies does not fall into the domain of the philosopher. Philosophy must hereby rely on economics. When skimming the economic literature on the boons and banes of BI, one immediately feels a connection with Truman's grievance over the lack of one-armed economists.²¹ One economic model predicts that BI is hugely inferior to other economic programs when it comes to eradicating poverty (Harvey 2006); another calculates in a comparative study of four European countries that various BI schemes would,

¹⁹ Van Parijs 1995 is probably the most elaborated case for BI. Yet, as this pro-BI account rests on strictly libertarian grounds and not on any special concern for the least-advantaged, it can, from a Rawlsian perspective, not be more than a right policy recommendation for wrong reasons.

²⁰ I am thus, at least partially, disagreeing with Elster's empirical claim that BI could not find support as it is in contradiction to core values of Western societies (1986, 719).

²¹ I am here alluding to the *bon mot* attributed to the American president Harry S. Truman (1945–1953) who supposedly said he wishes for 'one-armed economists'—i.e. economists that provide clear advice—to replace the usual recommendations by economists that proceed along the lines of: "On the one hand [...], on the other hand [...]".

in most cases, be the most efficient welfare policy (Colombino et al. 2010); while still another estimates that BI would be nice to have but not really make a big difference (Garfinkel/Huang/Naidich 2006).²² This inconclusiveness on the side of the economists is dissatisfying, but provides rather an argument for giving BI a try and, thanks to such an experiment, generate empirical data economists can work with—especially a country as well-off as Switzerland could afford to take such as risk, and be it only in the name of science.²³

I come to the next component that drives Rawls's tripartite account of work. Associations formed at work are an important source for individuals to build self-respect, so was said. As BI would presumably lead to a reduction of the working population (the evidence is also on this point not exhaustive), it might be argued that it narrowed chances for building up self-respect. On the other hand, there is a high positive correlation between belonging to the camp of the least-advantaged and having a job that is not prone to lead to self-respect—maybe even holding a job that due to its low social standing is detrimental to self-respect. Furthermore, there is ample reason to assume that BI mitigates the stigmatization that often comes along with unemployment. Being out of work will become more common and can no longer be equaled to an inability to find work. For that reasons, and because Rawls assumes that for building up self-respect it suffices to find *one* social union where one gets affirmation by others (see above), it might, thus, not be too difficult to replace work as a source of self-respect. BI might even increase the chances for self-respect as individuals will gain time they can devote to other social unions.²⁴

At the same time, BI will presumably not, or only in a minor way, decrease the possibilities for gaining self-respect through work on the side of the ones that heavily rely on work to build up self-respect. It seems unlikely that BI will, for instance, have a negative effect on the public affirmation experienced by physicians and engineers. However, it might be important that the implementation of BI finds broad support in society. Otherwise BI could lead to a stigmatization of the one's who merely receive BI but do not—e.g. via work—contribute to generating the capital needed to pay out BI.²⁵ Nevertheless, all in all, it seems fair to say that there is a Rawlsian case for BI that proceeds along the lines of providing self-respect. The onus of proof is here on the side of the opponents of BI.²⁶

²² So today, at least, one meets one-armed *economists*. Building on Truman, we now wish for one-armed *economics*.

²³ As a matter of fact, there is very little real world experience with BI. The state of Alaska pays the so called 'Alaska Permanent Fund' but with around \$ 1,200/year it is hardly enough to provide a social minimum. Iran has recently implemented something akin to BI on a level that guarantees a social minimum, a reform that was even praised by the IMF (The Economist 2011). Yet, Iran is surely not what could be deemed a test case for Western nation states.

²⁴ Thereby Rawls argues that for building up self-respect it does not matter which occupation it is that generates self-respect in an individual—be it artistic work, going to the opera, joining a football club or watching talk-shows together—because there is, this is at least what Rawls supposes, no measure for the moral worth of an occupation (1999[1971], 387f.).

²⁵ So there is a possibility that BI will generate a paradoxical effect in making work even more important for getting social recognition just as Calvinism and its doctrine of predestination made (economic) success in life much more important as such success was identified with proving that one was among the chosen ones.

²⁶ In opposition to a very helpful anonymous review of this article I think it would be too

With regards to entrenching a sense of community in individuals—the third function I ascribed to Rawls’s account of work—the prospects for BI are less bright. Work is a fertile vehicle for instilling a sense of community in individuals as it has, so it was argued above, the potential to provide the feeling of an immediate connection with society as the social union of social unions. It might be argued that BI has potential to do so as well. After all, individuals receive BI from the state and might therefore be thankful to as well as feel honored by society. Yet a less sanguine and probably more realistic assessment yields that BI runs a chance of creating the feeling that one has a right to get something from society without a need to provide a service in return. This suspicion seems to be behind Rawls’s sideswipe at the ones “who live on welfare and surf all day off Malibu” (2001, 179), an utterance that Freeman interprets in the following way:

“[Rawls] does not regard it as appropriate to provide people with full ‘welfare’ payments if they are able but unwilling to work. By providing a social minimum for all whether they work or not, the welfare state can encourage dependency among the worst-off, and a feeling of being left out of society” (2007, 229),

probably even, as one might add to Freeman’s skepticism of welfare payments to people unwilling to work, provide incentives to behave unfairly.²⁷

What makes this problem especially pressing is that work’s potential for entrenching a sense of community cannot that easily be replaced by other occupations as work’s potential to build up self-respect. To develop a sense of community it does not suffice that an individual becomes a member of an association the aims of which she finds meaningful and that provides her with affirmation by her fellow-members. Being the top-scorer of your local hockey team or the know-it-all in your evening book club might be great for your self-respect but does not instill in you the sense that you are part of a society-wide or even a world-wide system of cooperation, that you are, to repeat Rawls’s words, a member of society and “not simply caught in it”.

However, I do not hold this to be a lethal objection to BI from a Rawlsian perspective. Somewhat with Rawls against Rawls it is probably best to say that proponents of BI are supposed to provide a glimpse on what might replace work’s potential for entrenching a sense of community.²⁸ Moreover, we must not forget that despite work’s potential to instill a sense of community it is far less

narrow to interpret Rawls as saying that the only legitimate way to build up self-respect is via contributing to the well-being of society. In the first section of this article I argued that the relation between the individual and society is a two-way street. On the one side, the individual is allowed to use society to acquire self-respect but it is also legitimate if she acquires self-respect via different means. On the other side, society rightfully expects individuals to contribute to society’s well-being and individuals ought to be aware of that. In that sense one can separate the self-respect component from the sense of community component. It is hence, and here the article agrees with the review’s concern, not sufficient that BI is merely affirmed by the former component, BI is only legitimate if it does at the same time not violate the latter component. To this point we now turn.

²⁷ For the extension of Freeman on this point I thank an anonymous reviewer.

²⁸ Volunteer work is probably the most obvious candidate. Thus, incentivizing volunteer

clear whether work, under the current circumstances, really delivers this effect. Hence, by the implementation of BI we might not lose too much in that respect; we might merely lose a potential not an actualization, so to speak. Nevertheless, when it comes to the third function of work, the onus of proof rests on the side of the proponents of BI.

5. Concluding Remarks

The effort to reconstruct Rawls's account of work out of his few and widely dispersed remarks on the issue allows, on the one hand, to clearly distance Rawls's account of work from the instrumentalist account which is tightly connected with the libertarians' idiosyncratic understanding of individual freedom. On the other hand, Rawls's account of work keeps its eyes on the prize in not falling prey to the ambitious, presumably over-ambitious and thus probably rather detrimental, expectations of the role work can assume in contemporary society that are characteristic of the sentimentalist position. An application of Rawls's account of work to the idea of BI resulted rather in the affirmative while pointing to a potential problem the proponents of BI should attend to. Yet, due to the lack of empirical evidence with regards to the economic effects of BI this investigation involved a lot of guesswork, and, even if the here presented interpretation of Rawls's account of work shall turn out to be correct, the Rawlsian affirmation of BI is merely a tentative one.

Last but not least, I presume it is fair to say that the article at hand has shown that all those who believe that work is not the sole but, nevertheless, an important part in the project of creating a fairer society in which individual as well as community life flourishes can rely on the sense of proportion and the sobriety of John Rawls. Recently there has been much ado about how radical the implications of Rawls's political philosophy really are (cf. Chambers 2012). I do not think it is a coincidence that the here conducted investigation has come across Rawls's sense of proportion—especially when contrasted with the instrumentalists and the sentimentalists. Such a sense of proportion is probably the most salient feature of Rawls's oeuvre, and aptly captured by Simmons when he says that for Rawls it is essential “that we be careful with our political sledgehammers and seek justice thoughtfully” (2010, 36). Usually such a quality is supposed to be at odds with radicalism. In Rawls's case it might be different though: His sense of proportion makes his philosophy rather more than less radical as it leads to, what could be called, sustainable radicalism or, maybe better, radicalism with a lot of staying power.

work might be a favorable companion to establishing a BI regime. The benefits of volunteer work to society are vigorously defended by Rifkin (2004[1995], part V).

Bibliography

- Ackerman, B./A. Alstott (1999), *The Stakeholder Society*, New Haven–London
- /— (2006), Why Stakeholding?, in: Ackerman, B./A. Alstott/P. Van Parijs (eds.), *Redesigning Distribution. Basic Income and Stakeholder Grants as Cornerstones for an Egalitarian Capitalism*, London–New York, 43–65
- Birnbaum, S. (2010), Radical Liberalism, Rawls and the Welfare State: Justifying the Politics of Basic Income, in: *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 13, 495–516
- Chambers, S. (2012), Justice or Legitimacy, Barricades or Public Reason? The Politics of Property-Owning Democracy, in: O'Neill/Williamson (eds.), 18–32
- Colombino, U./M. Locatelli/E. Narazani/C. O'Donoghue (2010), Alternative Basic Income Mechanisms: An Evaluation Exercise with a Micro-econometric Model, in: *Basic Income Studies* 5, Article 3
- De Botton, A. (2009), *The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work*, London
- Elster, J. (1986), Comment on van der Veen and Van Parijs, in: *Theory and Society* 15, 709–721
- Freeman, S. (2007), *Rawls*, London–New York
- Fukuyama, F. (1999), *The Great Disruption. Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order*, London
- Garfinkel, I./C.-C. Huang/W. Naidich (2006), The Effects of a Basic Income Guarantee on Poverty and Income Distribution, in: Ackerman, B./A. Alstott/P. Van Parijs (eds.), *Redesigning Distribution. Basic Income and Stakeholder Grants as Cornerstones for an Egalitarian Capitalism*, London–New York, 143–174
- Harvey, P. (2006), The Relative Cost of a Universal Basic Income and a Negative Income Tax, in: *Basic Income Studies* 1, Article 6
- Heilfurth, G. (1983[1981]), *Der Bergbau und seine Kultur. Eine Welt zwischen Licht und Dunkel*, Zürich
- Hochschild, A. R. (1997), *The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work*, New York
- Honneth, A. (2012), *The I in We: Studies in the Theory of Recognition*, translated by Joseph Ganahl, Malden
- Hsieh, N. (2008), Survey Article: Justice in Production, in: *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 16, 72–100
- (2009), Justice at Work: Arguing for Property-Owning Democracy, in: *Journal of Social Philosophy* 40, 397–411
- (2012), Work, Ownership, and Productive Enfranchisement, in: O'Neill/Williamson (eds.), 149–162
- Marx, K. (2009[1844]), *Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte*, commented by M. Quante, Frankfurt
- Meade, J. (1964), *Efficiency, Equality, and the Ownership of Property*, London
- Moriarty, J. (2009), Rawls, Self-Respect, and the Opportunity for Meaningful Work, in: *Social Theory and Practice* 35, 441–459
- Nozick, R. (1974), *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, New York
- O'Neill, M./T. Williamson (2012) (eds.), *Property-Owning Democracy: Rawls and Beyond*, Chichester
- Putnam, R. (2000), *Bowling Alone. The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, New York
- Rawls, J. (1999[1971]), *A Theory of Justice*, revised edition, Cambridge/MA

- Rawls, J. (2002[1999]), *The Law of Peoples with 'The Idea of Public Reason Revisited'*, Cambridge/MA
- (2001), *Justice as Fairness. A Restatement*, E. Kelly (ed.), Cambridge/MA
- Rifkin, J. (2004[1995]), *The End of Work. The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era*, New York
- Schultheis, F./B. Vogel/M. Gemperle (2010) (eds.), *Ein halbes Leben. Biografische Zeugnisse aus einer Arbeitswelt im Umbruch*, Konstanz
- Schwartz, A. (1982), Meaningful Work, in: *Ethics* 92, 634–646
- Schweickart, D. (1993), *Against Capitalism*, Cambridge
- Sennett, R. (2008), *The Craftsman*, London
- Simmons, A. J. (2010), Ideal and Nonideal Theory, in: *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 38, 5–36
- Smith, A. (2008[1776]), *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, selected edition, K. Sutherland (ed.), Oxford
- Smith, N. H./J.-P. Deranty (2012) (eds.), *New Philosophies of Labour. Work and the Social Bond*, Leiden–Boston
- The Economist (2011), Iran's Bold Economic Reform: Economic Jihad, in: *The Economist*, June 23, URL: <http://www.economist.com/node/18867440> [retrieved on April 27]
- Unger, R. M. (2005), *What Should the Left Propose?*, London–New York
- Van Parijs, P. (1995), *Real Freedom for All. What (If Anything) Can Justify Capitalism?*, Oxford
- Williamson, T. (2009), Who Owns What? An Egalitarian Interpretation of John Rawls's Idea of a Property-Owning Democracy, in: *Journal of Social Philosophy* 40, 434–453
- (2012), Realizing Property-Owning Democracy. A 20-Year Strategy to Create an Egalitarian Distribution of Assets in the United States, in: O'Neill/Williamson (eds.), 225–248